

**CLASS STRUGGLE DEPICTION IN BEN OKRI'S  
"THE FAMISHED ROAD"**

**THESIS**

By :  
**Nabilah Mursyidah**  
NIM 16320177



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM  
MALANG  
2023**

**CLASS STRUGGLE DEPICTION IN BEN OKRI'S**

***“THE FAMISHED ROAD”***

**THESIS**

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S)

By :

**Nabilah Mursyidah**

NIM 16320177

Advisor :

**Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.**

NIP 19840207 201503 1 004



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM  
MALANG**

**2023**

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled **Class Struggle Depiction in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*** is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2023

The Researcher

A handwritten signature in black ink is written over a rectangular postage stamp. The stamp is yellow and red, featuring the Garuda Pancasila emblem and the text '10000', 'METERAI TEMPEL', and the alphanumeric code 'B42AKX481695826'.

**Nabilah Mursyidah**

NIM 16320177

## APPROVAL SHEET

This is to certify that Nabilah Mursyidah's thesis entitled **Class Struggle Depiction in Ben Okri's "The Famished Road"** has been approved for thesis examination at Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S).

Malang, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Approved by

Advisor,

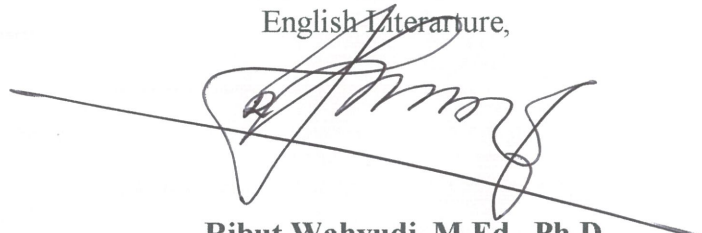


**Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.**

NIP. 198402072015031004

Head of Department of

English Literature,



**Ribut Wahyudi, M.Ed., Ph.D.**

NIP. 198112052011011007

Acknowledged by

Dean of the Faculty of Humanities,



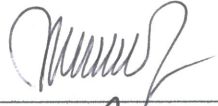
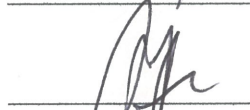

**Dr. M. Faisol, M.Ag.**

NIP. 197411012003121004

## LEGITIMATION SHEET



This is to certify that Nabilah Mursyidah's thesis entitled **Class Struggle Depiction in Ben Okri's "The Famished Road"** has been approved for by the Board of Examiners as one of the requirements for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S) in English Literature Department.

Malang, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Board of Examiners		Signatures
1. <b>Dr. Mundi Rahayu, M.Hum</b> NIP 196802262006042001	(Main Examiner)	
2. <b>Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.</b> NIP 198402072015031004	(Advisor)	
3. <b>Whida Rositama, M.Hum</b> NIP 198804222019032010	(Chair)	

Approved by

Dean of Faculty of Humanities,

  
  
**Dr. M. Faisol, M.Ag.**  
NIP 197411012003121004

## MOTTO

### *Que Sera Sera*

(Whatever will be, will be. The future is not ours to see. Don't worry, if it's supposed to happen, it will.)

You can't skip chapters, that's not how life works. You have to read every line, meet every character. You won't enjoy all of it. Hell, some chapters will make you cry for weeks. You will read things you don't want to read, you will have moments when you don't want the pages to end. But you have to keep going. Stories keep the world revolving. Live yours, don't miss out.

-Pillow Thoughts II

“Expectation is the root of heartache”

-William Shakespeare

For a closing chapter. After all the things that were left undone, may you still have hope for things to come. May you carry on with peace and the grace filled belief that you are worthy of being loved and you are worthy of being seen. You are free to truly feel everything that happened in this chapter, and you are also free to anticipate all the good that comes after. Wisdom and courage to brave toward something new, while delighting in the beautiful and meaningful life that is right in front of you.

-Morgan Harper Nichols

## **DEDICATION**

I proudly dedicate this thesis to someone whose existence always remained living in my heart my late father, Ahmad Asy'ari Sajid; my mother, for her incredible patience in raising me, Afifah Noor; my sister and brother who always scolded me and always by my side; all of my family member who has been excellent support for me; and especially for my self who has been through the thick and thin, ups and downs, the roller coaster of life and feelings. You are amazing; this is evidence that all of your negative thoughts were not true, you have overcome this so far, and you will always be in the future, do not be too hard, and believe in yourself.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise be to Allah SWT, the lord of the universe. The researcher finally has finished this thesis entitled: **Class Struggle Depiction in Ben Okri's "The Famished Road"**

The pride, joy, and other feelings that can't be expressed in words enveloped the researcher's heart because of this long awaiting moment. The researcher realizes while writing this thesis the researcher wouldn't have finished without the guidances and the assistances which come from various parties. Therefore, in this occasion, the researcher would love to give the greatest gratitude and highest appreciation to :

1. To the to the Chancellor of the State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang Prof. Dr. M. Zainuddin, MA., the Dean of Faculty of Humanities Dr. M. Faisol, M.Ag., the Head of English Literature Department Ribut Wahyudi, M.Ed., Ph.D., and all of the lectures of English Literature Department.
2. To my advisor in finishing this research Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A. for invaluable understanding, guidance, encouragement, and corrections.
3. To my academic supervisor Rina Sari, M.Pd., for her outstanding support and valuable advice during my academic years.
4. To the final examiners, Dr Mundi Rahayu, M.Hum and Whida Rositama, M.Hum, for the guidance and suggestions for better and well-written research.
5. To my family, my late father Ahmad Asy'ari Sajid, my mother, Afifah Noor, my sister, my brother, and my beloved big family who I couldn't named one by one.
6. To my beloved friends Retno, Audy, Hana, Zummia, Zahra, and Alisha.



7. To my high school friend who always been there for me Ruqoyyah Alawiyah.
8. To my second family and friends who has been show me the true meaning of genuine friendship during my junior high school.
9. To everyone on the twitter especially Collegemenfess base who always give people supports even though we are stranger to each other and share lots of tips about thesis related.
10. To the lectures on the internet who encourage and help the confused students like me with their amazing and helpful educational contents.

Malang, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023

**Nabilah Mursyidah**

## ABSTRACT

Mursyidah, Nabilah. 2023. *Class Struggle Depiction in Ben Okri's The Famished Road*. Minor Thesis (*Skripsi*) Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.. Advisor Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.

**Keywords** : Class Struggle, Social Class, Proletariat Class, Bourgeoisie Class.

---

*The Famished Road*, written by Ben Okri, is a novel that tells the journey of Azaro, a spirit child known as an *Abiku*, who was born into a world with an impoverished family and a lack of resources. Ben Okri described the class struggle endured and encountered by the working-class characters in his novel. The paper examines the class struggle depicted in *The Famished Road* and the challenges faced by the working classes during the class struggle viewed from Karl Marx's theory of class struggle. Based on this background, the researcher formulates two research questions, namely 1) How is the class struggle depicted in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*? 2) What challenges did the working class face during the class struggle described in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*? The researcher used literary criticism to achieve the research objectives, including identifying, analyzing, and interpreting literary works. The source of data is Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road*. The data that the researcher analyzes are every word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph from *The Famished Road* novel. After analyzing, the researcher describes the class struggle carried out by the lower class with a sociological approach. Then the last step is to write the conclusion of the whole research.

The research results in two findings. First, there are two social classes. The Azaro family, the photographer, and the residents of the compounds belong to the working class. Another social class is the bourgeoisie, represented by Madame Koto, politicians, and landlords. Then, the novel's depiction of class conflict begins with individual class struggles, such as limited class mobility, political corruption, and provocation. Furthermore, they were then described through the labour movement, specifically the lower class protest against politicians and exposing unrest and injustice. Second, based on the data that the researcher had found, it shows that the class struggle carried out by the working class was unsuccessful because there were several challenges that the working class had to face during the class struggle. The challenges that hindered the proletariat's class struggle, among others, were economic inequality, exploitation, violence, and political oppression. Thus, the analysis conducted by the researcher shows that the working class depicted in the novel *The Famished Road* has failed to carry out their class struggle due to the obstacles they encountered while fighting for their class interest.

## ABSTRAK

Mursyidah, Nabilah. 2023. *Penggambaran Perjuangan Kelas dalam The Famished Road Ben Okri*. Skripsi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.. Pembimbing Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.

**Kata Kunci** : Perjuangan Kelas, Kelas Sosial, Kelas Proletar, Kelas Borjuasi.

---

*The Famished Road*, yang ditulis oleh Ben Okri, adalah novel yang menceritakan perjalanan Azaro, seorang anak roh yang dikenal sebagai Abiku, yang terlahir di dunia dengan keluarga miskin dan kekurangan sumber daya. Ben Okri menggambarkan perjuangan kelas yang dialami dan dihadapi oleh karakter kelas pekerja dalam novelnya. Penelitian ini mengkaji perjuangan kelas yang digambarkan dalam novel *The Famished Road* dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh kelas pekerja dalam perjuangan kelas tersebut ditinjau dari teori perjuangan kelas Karl Marx. Berdasarkan latar belakang tersebut, peneliti merumuskan dua pertanyaan penelitian, yaitu 1) Bagaimana perjuangan kelas yang digambarkan dalam novel *The Famished Road* karya Ben Okri? 2) Apa saja tantangan yang dihadapi kelas pekerja dalam perjuangan kelas yang digambarkan dalam novel *The Famished Road* karya Ben Okri? Peneliti menggunakan kritik sastra untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian, termasuk mengidentifikasi, menganalisis, dan menginterpretasikan karya sastra. Sumber data yang digunakan adalah novel *The Famished Road* karya Ben Okri. Data yang peneliti analisis adalah setiap kata, frasa, kalimat, dan paragraf dari novel *The Famished Road*. Setelah menganalisis, peneliti mendeskripsikan perjuangan kelas yang dilakukan oleh kelas bawah dengan pendekatan sosiologi. Kemudian langkah terakhir adalah menuliskan kesimpulan dari keseluruhan penelitian.

Penelitian ini menghasilkan dua temuan. Pertama, terdapat dua kelas sosial. Keluarga Azaro, fotografer, dan para penghuni kompleks termasuk ke dalam kelas pekerja. Kelas sosial lainnya adalah kelas borjuis yang diwakili oleh Nyonya Koto, politisi, dan tuan tanah. Kemudian, penggambaran konflik kelas dalam novel ini dimulai dari perjuangan kelas secara individu, seperti mobilitas kelas yang terbatas, korupsi politik, dan provokasi. Selanjutnya, mereka kemudian digambarkan melalui gerakan buruh, khususnya protes kelas bawah terhadap para politisi dan mengungkap keresahan dan ketidakadilan. Kedua, berdasarkan data yang telah peneliti temukan menunjukkan bahwa perjuangan kelas yang dilakukan oleh kelas buruh tidak berhasil karena ada beberapa tantangan yang harus dihadapi oleh kelas buruh selama melakukan perjuangan kelas. Tantangan-tantangan yang menghambat perjuangan kelas kaum proletar antara lain adalah kesenjangan ekonomi, eksploitasi, kekerasan, dan penindasan politik. Dengan demikian, analisis yang dilakukan oleh peneliti menunjukkan bahwa kelas pekerja yang digambarkan dalam novel *The Famished Road* telah gagal dalam melakukan perjuangan kelasnya karena adanya hambatan-hambatan yang mereka hadapi ketika memperjuangkan kepentingan kelasnya.

## أثر فني تجريدي

مرسية ، نبيلة. 2023. تصوير الصراع الطبقي في "طريق الجوع" لبن أوكري. أطروحة فرعي (سكريبسي) قسم الأدب الإنجليزي ، كلية العلوم الإنسانية ، جامعة الإسلام نيجري مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج ، المستشار : M.A. Agung Wiranata Kusuma ، الطبقة الاجتماعية ، طبقة البروليتاريا ، الطبقة البرجوازية .  
**الكلمات المفتاحية:** النضال الطبقي ، الطبقة الاجتماعية ، طبقة البروليتاريا ، الطبقة البرجوازية

---

الطريق الجائع ، كتبها بن أوكري ، هي رواية تحكي رحلة أزارو ، الطفل الروحي المعروف باسم أبيكو ، الذي ولد في عالم مع أسرة فقيرة ونقص في الموارد. وصف بن أوكري الصراع الطبقي الذي عانته وواجهته شخصيات الطبقة العاملة في روايته. تدرس الورقة الصراع الطبقي الموصوف في طريق المجاعة والتحديات التي واجهتها الطبقات العاملة أثناء الصراع الطبقي من خلال نظرية كارل ماركس للصراع الطبقي. بناءً على هذه الخلفية ، يقوم الباحث بصياغة سؤالين بحثيين ، وهما (1) كيف يتم تصوير الصراع الطبقي في طريق الجائع بن أوكري؟ (2) ما هي التحديات التي واجهتها الطبقة العاملة خلال الصراع الطبقي الموصوف في كتاب بن أوكري الطريق الجائع؟ استخدم الباحث النقد الأدبي لتحقيق أهداف البحث من تحديد وتحليل وتفسير المصنفات الأدبية. مصدر البيانات هو رواية بن أوكري الطريق الجائع. البيانات التي يحللها الباحث هي كل كلمة وعبارة وجمل وفقرة من رواية طريق الجوع. بعد التحليل ، يصف الباحث الصراع الطبقي الذي تقوم به الطبقة الدنيا بمنهج اجتماعي. ثم الخطوة الأخيرة هي كتابة خاتمة البحث بأكمله.

نتائج البحث في نتيجتين أولاً ، هناك طبقتان اجتماعيتان. تنتمي عائلة أزارو والمصور وسكان المجمعات إلى الطبقة العاملة. طبقة اجتماعية أخرى هي البرجوازية ، وتمثلها مدام كوتو والسياسيون وأصحاب العقارات. بعد ذلك ، يبدأ تصوير الرواية للصراع الطبقي بالصراعات الطبقيّة الفردية ، مثل الحراك الطبقي المحدود ، والفساد السياسي ، والاستفزاز. علاوة على ذلك ، تم وصفهم بعد ذلك من خلال الحركة العمالية ، وتحديدًا احتجاج الطبقة الدنيا ضد السياسيين وفضح الاضطرابات والظلم. ثانيًا ، استنادًا إلى البيانات التي وجدها الباحث ، يُظهر أن الصراع الطبقي الذي قامت به الطبقة العاملة كان غير ناجح بسبب وجود العديد من التحديات التي كان على الطبقة العاملة مواجهتها أثناء الصراع الطبقي. كانت التحديات التي أعاققت الصراع الطبقي للبروليتاريا ، من بين أمور أخرى ، هي عدم المساواة الاقتصادية ، والاستغلال ، والعنف ، والقمع السياسي. وهكذا ، يُظهر التحليل الذي أجراه الباحث أن الطبقة العاملة التي صورتها رواية الطريق الجائع قد فشلت في خوض نضالها الطبقي بسبب العقبات التي واجهتها أثناء نضالها من أجل مصالحها الطبقيّة.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP .....	i
APPROVAL SHEET .....	ii
LEGITIMATION SHEET.....	iii
MOTTO.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
ABSTRACT .....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	xi
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Background of the Study .....	1
B. Problem of The Study.....	7
C. Significances of the Study .....	7
D. Scope of Limitations .....	7
E. Definitions of Key Terms .....	8
<b>CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>9</b>
A. Sociology of Literature.....	9
B. Social Class.....	13
C. Class Struggle Concept.....	15
<b>CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHOD .....</b>	<b>19</b>
A. Research Design.....	19
B. Data Source.....	20

C. Data Collection .....	20
D. Data Analysis .....	21
<b>CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
A. Social Class in <i>The Famished Road</i> .....	22
1. Proletariat .....	23
a. Azaro’s Family .....	23
b. The Photographer .....	27
c. The Compound People.....	32
2. Bourgeoisie .....	35
a. Madame Koto .....	35
b. The Landlord .....	38
c. The Politician .....	40
B. Class Struggle Depiction .....	43
1. Individual Struggle .....	44
a) Limited Class Mobility .....	44
b) Political Corruption and Provocation .....	45
2. Labor Movement .....	46
a) Lower-Class Protests Against Politicians .....	46
b) Exposing Unrest and Injustice.....	48
C. The Challenges The Working Class Face during The Class Struggle ..	49
1. Economic Inequality .....	50
2. Exploitation .....	52
3. Violence .....	53
4. Political Oppression.....	54
<b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION .....</b>	<b>56</b>
A. Conclusion .....	56
B. Suggestion.....	59

BIBLIOGRAPHY .....61

CURRICULUM VITAE .....67

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Class struggle not only occurs in history but continues until today. The dispute between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the working class, and the landowner became a prominent issue in modern society. Based on Karl Marx's theories, this is concerned with economic and social class differences and the implications and complications of the capitalist system: Marxism seeks to reveal how our socioeconomic system is the ultimate source of our experience (Tyson, L. 2006). Therefore Marx focuses primarily on capitalist society as the source of social stratification, eventually leading to the class struggle (Castle, G. 2007). According to the reason above the researcher decided to use Karl Marx's theory of class struggle because it provides a distinctively sociological perspective on the role of the lower classes and how they fight for their class rights, which are exploited by the upper classes.

The terms bourgeoisie and proletariat in a class struggle show a social class difference. Class differences in society are created by economic inequality in the form of property or financial ownership, which significantly impacts their social status and role in society. Based on this, the role of the economy itself is very influential on human survival, especially in society. Society uses economic principles to satisfy its needs or increase its wealth. Working is one way to get



money and improve people's economies; working is something that everyone should do in order to make money; however, not everyone who works receives the same results and wages; even workers who work directly in the field or factory and devote more energy and effort receive less than capital or business owners. Engels stated in his book *Labor Movements* that the worker class' efforts could not change the economic law that wages are determined by the relationship between supply and demand in the labor market. Consequently, the Unions are powerless against all significant forces influencing the relationship. (Engels, 1845).

According to Marx in Ritzer, a human is a social creature produced to meet people's needs in nature. Life has a social structure in which people always have relationships with one another. When two or more groups form a relationship, they form a system related to one another. The result of the connection, whether they realize it or not, creates the structure for each other (Ritzer, 2005). It means that inequalities and class divisions within society emerge from those differences.

The difference in power in the economy and ownership creates inequality inside the community itself, eventually creating class differences that are very prominent in society. According to him, society is divided into two large classes. The two classes are the capitalist and the proletariat, and they are at constant war with each other, and the latter is oppressed. Lindsey German stated in her reflections on the Communist Manifesto,

*The working class or the proletariat - meaning literally those without property - is the unique product of capitalism, which creates a class of wage labourers who have no means of subsistence other than to sell their labour power (German, 1998).*

The proletariat class is the working class society in which most people today who live in the middle to lower class have to work for sustenance. These were the class of people that Marx tried to defend.

Therefore, the other class is the bourgeoisie, even though it comprises a minority population. The Communist Manifesto defines the bourgeoisie as the class of modern capitalists, the owners of the means of social production, and the employers of wage labor. In other terms, they are the owners of the production lines, and the proletariats are the workers. The bourgeoisie is those who take advantage the foremost from capitalism. They pick up all the benefits while the proletariats do all the work. Capitalists oppress the proletariat to maintain their superior position. This was aligned with what Marx (2002) stated about the ruling class: the bourgeoisie perpetually seeks to expand their global market share. It must nestle everywhere, establish connections everywhere, and reside everywhere. This also shows their will to dominate the class position.

On the other hand, those in the laboring class strive for better circumstances by advocating for their entitlements that they feel are being stripped from them by wealthy business owners. Consequently, individuals who belong to this group must put forth strenuous effort to progress within their social standing and create a more prosperous lifestyle. Nevertheless, the current

structure presents significant obstacles which impede upward mobility among working-class citizens. Karl Marx was one of many engaged with this predicament and established an ideology recognized as "class struggle."

Class struggle and class conflict can occur in different communities, but they are connected. This conflict motivates some people to struggle with their social position. According to Selwyn (2007) the class struggle at the heart of capitalist society is the logical conclusion of a historical process that began when the working classes seized the modes of production. The statement implies that class conflicts are caused by the conflict within the ruling and lower classes. From a different perspective, the ruling class appears to rule and exploit the lower classes. And according to Marcus and Menzies (2007), "social class is essential for understanding and organizing social change." Class conflict is one of the perspectives in Marxist theories. Marxism is both a theory and a practice aimed at creating a classless society. Marxism, as a theory, is a set of conceptual tools used by the ruling class of a particular society to maintain their privileged position in society (Marcus & Menzies, 2007).

*The Famished Road* (1991) novel is the first book in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* trilogy, which also includes *Songs of Enchantment* (1993) and *Infinite Riches* (1998). There are numerous reasons why the author chose this novel. According to Tunca (2011) Ben Okri achieved a lot of prize first, in 1991, the same year the novel was published, Ben Okri won the Booker Prize for fiction for his work *The Famished Road*. Second, he received an Arts

Council Bursary in 1984. He also received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa and the Paris Review Aga Khan Prize for Fiction In 1987, among many other achievements. These facts confirm that the novel and the writer are especially popular due to his outstanding achievements throughout his career and having a certain quality to analyze. This analysis will provide a full understanding of the story and the ideas and humanity values contained within it.

Several previous studies are giving contributed in analyze literary work, such as Hanifah (2018), Hanum (2019), Awan & Nasir (2018), Bibi, Ashfaq, Ullah, & Abbas (2021), Rasiah (2020), Aly (2020), and the last one is Mulyati & Manar (2022). All the previous researchers mentioned above have the exact similarity in that they have been analyzing their research using Karl Marx's Class Struggle theory. Still, the distinction was that they all used different literary objects, such as novels or even films. The results showed from those researcher analyses that Karl Marx's Class Struggle theory helped differentiate and define the social class in society like the proletariat class and the beorgouisie or the ruling class. With Karl Marx's view, the researcher could describe the class struggle experienced by the characters in the literary works they used to analyze.

There are also a few previous studies contributing to analyzing *The Famished Road* novel by Ben Okri. First is Yihua & Yanbing (2019), next is Ogbazi & Osita (2021), and the last one is Kuriakose (2021). All those

researchers have similarities in that they analyzed the same object or novel, *The Famished Road*. The distinction that some of them had that the theory or topics they decide to discuss, such as in Ogbazi & Osita (2021) and Kuriakose (2021) research, they were analyzing and focused on the magical realism elements contained within the novel; meanwhile, Yihua and Yanbing (2019) want to conduct an in-depth examination of the perspectives in *The Famished Road* and gain insight into Ben Okri's writing intentions, language use, and writing approaches to learn more about this book and deepen the overall understanding of the novel.

Based on the mentioned research above, the researcher discovers some information. The few studies only focused on class struggle theory with various objects such as films and novels. The other several previous studies concentrated on analyzing Ben Okri's book *The Famished Road*, mainly the magical realism themes found within the narrative. As a result, the previous studies encourage the researcher to research class struggle analysis using Karl Marx's theory but with a different object and focus. This study tries to analyze Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road*, published in 1991. The gap focuses on class struggle depiction and the challenges that face by the working class during the class struggle which contained in the intrinsic element of the novel (setting, character, and plot).

## **B. Problem of the Study**

Based on the background of the study above, this study aims to discover the class struggle depicted in the novel by trying to answer the following question:

1. How is the class struggle depicted in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*?
2. What challenges did the working class face during the class struggle described in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*?

## **C. Significances of the Study**

The researcher expected to give some significances of knowledge and information about the study of the class struggle. There are two points on the significance of the study: 1) Theoretically, the researcher expected to contribute to the literary theory related with the class struggle, and 2) Practically, this analysis is expected to provide a reference for similar researches in studying *The Famished Road's* novel, especially about the class struggle. Also, the results of this analysis are expected to contribute to undergraduate students of the English Literature department of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang who want to conduct the same subject as a reference of literary criticism, particularly from Karl Marx's perspective of class struggle.

## **D. Scope and Limitation**

In this research, the researcher analyzes the class struggle depiction in *The Famished Road* novel by using the theory of Karl Marx's class struggle.

The research focused on the class struggle depiction and challenges that arise from Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* novel.

#### **E. Definition of Key Term**

**Class Struggle:** the conflict that results from two opposing classes competing for their class interests. (Harnecker, M, 1981)

**Social Class:** a division of a society based on social and economic status (Harvey, L, 2022).

**Proletariat Class:** the laboring class or the working class is the lowest social or economic class of a community (merriam-webster, n.d.).

**Bourgeoisie Class:** the ruling class of the two basic classes of capitalist society, consisting of capitalists, manufacturers, bankers, and other employers. The bourgeoisie owns the most important of the means of production, through which it exploits the working class (dictionary, n.d.).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the theories employed by the researcher to support the analysis. The researcher has some books, theses, journals, and other relevant works that support the theory applied in her thesis to obtain the related literature in her study.

#### A. Sociology of Literature

According to Abdu Syani (1994), "Sociology can mean the science of society," which could mean that sociology is the scientific and systematic study of human society. Alan Swingewood (1972) also states that: "[s]ociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and social processes; it seeks to answer the question how society is possible, how it works, why it persists." Swingewood (1972) believes that the overall social structure can only be formed with careful analysis and examination of various social institutions such as society, religion, politics, and economics. "Sociology is a science based on an aggregation of categories forming an intellectual structure, then these categories and this structure are themselves social facts that sociology brings into relief," state Lucien Goldmann (1975).

On the other hand, Merrill defines *sociology* as the study of society in interaction. Humans "take each other into account" in this process and react more or less appropriately to the behavior of others and themselves. Culture is



the result of social contact; it comes from past engagement and influences present and future interaction. Culture shapes the personalities of those raised in society; personality is, thus, in a sense, "the subjective part of a culture" (Merrill, 1967).

Because such institutions are contextualized in literature, it is an appropriate medium for studying them. In contrast, literature is a work of fiction that results from social creation, relationships, and other natural feelings. W. H. Hudson stated in Meiliana (2019) that literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced, and what they have thought and felt about those aspects that have the most immediate and enduring value for all of us. It is, in fact, an expression of life through language.

The definition of literature has developed throughout history, beginning with Plato and continuing to the present age. Most definitions, however, state clearly or implicitly that literature is a reflection of life and the result of various factors, including social, political, economic, and cultural factors, to mention a few. In the *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren (1953) use the following definition: Literature is a social institution that employs a social creation as its medium language. Literature portrays life, and "life" is primarily a social reality, even though the surrounding habitat and the individual's inner or subjective world have also been literary focuses.

Literature, as a social institution, portrays social reality. It has a close relationship with specific social institutions. In truth, literature is not a

component of a social institution; it is a social institution. Like his works, the author is a part of society, conveying his experiences and perspectives on life and society. Wellek (1953) stated that the artist conveys truth, and necessarily historical and social truth. Because they are monuments and works of art that serve as records (Meiliana, 2019), he views literature as an expression of society's social process and the fundamental essence.

The sociology of literature approach is a subfield that applies sociological theories and concepts to the analysis of literary texts. This approach seeks to understand the relationship between literature and society and to examine how literary works reflect and shape cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs. Watt (2001) argues that "sociology and literature share the same issues. As well as sociology, literature is also dealing with human beings in society as human people struggle to fit in an effort to transform society". As a result, the novel attempts to recreate the social world of human connections with family, the environment, politics, the state, and the economy, which is also a sociology topic.

One of the key contributions of the sociology of literature approach is that literary texts are not just expressions of individual creativity but are also products of social, historical, and cultural contexts. This perspective highlights how literature reflects and influences the values, attitudes, and beliefs of a particular society and its members (Ortega, 2019).

In *the Sociology of Literature* book, Meiliana explains that the sociology of literature focuses on the relationship between a literary work and the social framework in which it is formed. It proves that the existence of literary creation has influenced social situations. Because there is a mutual relationship between literary phenomena and social structure, the sociological study of literature is beneficial in understanding socioeconomic situations, political issues, writers' worldviews and creativity, the system of social and political organizations, the relationships between specific thoughts and cultural setups in which they occur, and determining factors of a literary work (Meiliana. 2019).

According to Laurenson and Swingewood (1972), although sociology and literature differ in some ways, they can help explain the meaning of literary texts. As a result, the primary focus of literary sociology is the literary work itself and its relationship to the society in which it is produced. Endraswara (2011) stated that literature and sociology examine human life. The distinction is that literature analyzes man as a creation of the author's mind, whereas sociology examines man as a divine creation in real terms.

Another important aspect of the sociology of literature approach is the idea that literary texts can be used to explore social and cultural change. For example, some scholars have used literary texts to study changes in gender roles, the experiences of different social classes, and the impact of technological innovations on society (Bourdieu, 1984).

In addition to exploring the relationship between literature and society, the sociology of literature approach also often employs a critical perspective that seeks to challenge dominant cultural narratives and expose power dynamics within society. For example, feminist literary criticism has used this approach to analyze women's representation in literature and challenge patriarchal representations and narratives. Furthermore, several theoretical frameworks have influenced the sociology of literature approach, including Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial theories. Each of these frameworks brings a unique perspective to the analysis of literary texts, and they often overlap and intersect in significant ways.

This literature review demonstrates the depth and breadth of the sociological approach to literature, highlighting the key debates and contributions in the field and the ways in which this approach has been used to understand the relationship between literature and society. Based on the previous explanation above, the researcher concluded that a sociological approach to literary criticism is one form that evaluates literature in its cultural, economic, and political context. Furthermore, literature, as a reflection of human life, is intrinsically tied to the base of society.

## **B. Social Class**

The concept of social class has been widely studied and analyzed within sociology and related disciplines. The definition and understanding of social class can vary depending on the framework and methodology used to analyze

class structures. However, it generally encompasses the idea that society is stratified into groups based on relative power, privilege, and resource levels.

Social class refers to a group of people in a society who share similar economic, cultural, and social statuses. According to Max Weber (1978), a German sociologist, social class is determined by three factors: wealth, power, and prestige. Wealth refers to the amount of money and property a person has, power refers to their ability to control resources and people, and prestige refers to the respect and honor they receive from others (Weber, 1978).

One of the most influential perspectives on social class is the Marxist framework, which views society as divided into two main classes: the ruling class and the working class. The ruling class, or bourgeoisie, owns and controls the means of production, while the working class, or proletariat, sells its labor in exchange for wages. This view emphasizes the importance of economic relations in shaping class structures and hierarchies (Wright, 2005).

Furthermore, according to Marx social class was a way to divide people into groups that were different from social groups. If social groups focused more on putting people into groups based on differences across the board, social classes put people into groups based on differences in their skills. People are divided into classes, such as high, middle, and lower classes, based on their social status. The problem with this society's social life is that people always hang out with people from the same social class. From these different social classes, conflicts form, which cause the proletariat to suffer. Marx's ideas

inspired the proletariat to start a revolution, which destroyed the whole social and economic order and put a stop to it. On the other hand, the wealthy did not want to give up their wealth (Candranegara, et. al. 2021).

### **C. The Class Struggle Concept**

In every society, numerous problems must be faced. The Marxist theory employs class conflict to describe one of these concerns. This term describes a social dispute involving different social classes. This term is also known as class struggle and typically refers to the struggle of the lower class or proletariat class against the higher class or bourgeoisie class. According to Karl Max, economic status is most societies' primary cause of class conflict (Fabrienne, et al. 2022).

Class conflict is the class differences between groups that are being repressed and groups that are in power which causes conflict; then leads to social change. Karl Marx said that social class conflict is the most essential and powerful driving force behind all social change; this theory is based on that idea. Moreover, conflict happens all the time in all parts of society. And the basic idea behind conflict theory is that conflict and social change are always built into the structure of society (Zuhroh, 2017). And the changes could be changes in how people live, economy, religion, culture, and language (Dewi, 2020).

Marx in Martha (2011), stated that class struggle is the ongoing struggle for economic and political dominance within the capitalist and working classes.

The most common methods are violence, proletarian revolution, and proletariat (lower class) dictatorship. Marxism is a scientific theory regarding society and the actions necessary to alter it whether the society or the system. Economic conflict is believed to produce classes such as wealthy, middle class, and poor and that classes produce conflict. Marx believed that society was more likely to be divided into three or two primary classes. The bourgeoisie (upper class) and the proletariat (lower class) are the two major social classes that face each other directly, according to Harold (1959). Maclver (1937) defined a *social class* as any portion of a community distinguished from the other groups due mainly to social status and not limitations based on language, locality, function, or specialization. This distinction within classes creates a conflict where there are contact restrictions within two classes belonging to different worlds.

At the level of the political conjuncture, social classes can only be conceptualized through their "class practices" because classes are groups with different interests; these class practices have the nature of the class conflict. In class societies, the driving force of history is this class struggle, which takes place within the limitations created by the social structure. The battle within these two classes, ultimately leads to overthrowing the ruling class and establishing a socialist society in which the means of production are collectively owned and controlled (Marx, 1875).

Marx certainly did not uncover classes or class struggles. His significant contribution was to move from describing the existence of social classes to

understanding their origins; thus, he gave us the law that controls the class struggle. According to Engel in Harnecker (1981), Marx was the first to discover the great law of the motion of history, which states that all historical struggles, whether they take place in the political, religious, philosophical, or some other ideological domain, are only the more or less clear expression of struggles of social classes, and that the existence and collisions within these classes are in turn conditioned by the degree of development of their economic position, by oppression. This law is as important to history as the law of energy change is to natural science (Harnecker, 1981).

Marx also believed that the state and the laws it enacts serve to maintain the ruling class's power and that the working class must therefore engage in collective political action to achieve its goals. This view is in stark contrast to liberal theory, which emphasizes individual rights and the protection of private property (Marx, 2002). Marx argued that the ruling class, or bourgeoisie, exploits the working class, or proletariat, by taking the surplus value generated by the working class's labour. This exploitation leads to a constant conflict within the two classes for control of the means of production and distribution of the wealth produced by these means (Marx, 1990).

Harnecker (1981) argued that class struggle is the conflict that arises within two antagonistic classes when they compete for their class interests. Class conflict occurs when one class confronts another in action; thus, it can only exist at certain times in society's evolution. In other stages of its



development, the class struggle may only show up in its earliest stages, such as when workers in some factories fight with their bosses alone or when the whole class fights, but the fight doesn't reach the level of the actual class interests, or when there is no open struggle but only hidden discontent and quiet opposition (Harnecker, 1981).

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, the researcher presents and explain the method used in the research, which is devided into several parts. The research method of the study provides clear information about the research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis.

#### A. Research Design

The study design of this analysis is literary criticism. Literary criticism asserts that a work of literature was made to attract readers with its sharpness of taste, sensitivity to aesthetics, and insight into knowledge (Muzakki, 2020), and here the researcher will try to analyze the literary work to deepen the understanding about the topic that will be discussed later. The purpose of this study in this design is to identify the depiction of class struggle, particularly as experienced by the working class people in Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road*. As a result, the researcher employs Karl Marx's class struggle theory to analyze the issue depicted and contained within the novel.

This study used qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is used to know, observe, explore, and understand the meaning of individuals or groups leading to social or human problems (Cresswell, 2009). Even according

to Bodgan and Biklen (2006), qualitative methods are methods or methods of analysis that form the data in the form of text, words, phrases, and sentences.

In this design, this analysis aims to determine the class struggle depiction and the challenges that faced by the working class people during the class struggle in the novel. So, the researcher uses the class struggle theory of Karl Marx to analyze the character of the novel, especially the working class characters such as Azaro's family, the photographer, and the compound people in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*.

## **B. Data Source**

The source of this research is *The Famished Road* novel by Ben Okri. It was published by Jonathan Cape in London on 14 March 1991. The data might present in the forms of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and dialog throughout the novel, describing the class struggle depiction and challenges that Azaro's family, the photographer, the compound people experienced as the lower class people in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*.

## **C. Data Collection**

To obtain the data from Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* novel as the source of this research, the researcher will use several steps: first, understanding the novel by reading it repeatedly. Second, use the note-taking step to enrich the data collection from literary works by using underlines, highlights, and marking

in the novel. Third, classify the needed data to analyze and pick the relevant data to the research problem.

#### **D. Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, the researcher would continue with the data analysis. At this step, the researcher started by checking the collected data. Then the researcher prepares the data to be analyzed. According to the novel, the data analyzed is every moment of the class struggle experienced and depicted by Azaro's family, the photographer, and the compound people. After exploring, the researcher tries to identify the social class and describe the class struggle depiction also the challenges that face by the working class during the class struggle from it through a sociological approach and Karl Marx's class struggle theory. The last step is concluding, and this procedure is making a conclusion based on the data analyzed by the researcher.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the description of the results covers (1) the analysis of social class distinction in the novel *The Famished Road* using social class theory based on Marxism. Two classes are categorized as a) the proletariat class and b) the bourgeoisie class. (2) the class struggle depicted in the novel *The Famished Road* by analyzing the working class act to fight for their class interest. (3) the forms of the class struggle in the novel. (4) and the challenges that face by the working class during the class struggle which described in *The Famished Road* novel.

#### A. Social Class in The Famished Road

In this subchapter, the researcher examines the social class that existed in *The Famished Road* novel. The researcher applied Karl Marx's social class concept, which divided society into two classes: proletariat and bourgeoisie. The difference points out the distinction in social economic strata. We cannot deny that there is a distinction between these two classes in society, which eventually becomes the main point of social stratification. This is also the stage at which class struggle occurs.

According to Barry in the *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* book "Marxism sees progress as the result of a battle for power between different social classes. The concept of history

as class struggle considers it to be 'driven' by competition for economic, social, and political advantage" (Barry, 2009). The sentence above demonstrates the appearance of distinct social classes because the upper class is more powerful than the lower class in economic, social, and political matters.

In the following section, the researcher will try to answer the first research question about how the novel depicts the class struggle. However, before that, the researcher will try to determine their social class by showing the data that eventually make the characters belong to their classes. Then after that, the researcher will try to show the class struggle depiction throughout the novel experienced by the main character, Azaro's family.

## **1. Proletariat**

The proletariat, or lower class, works for the upper class. The proletariat class has no social or financial strength. They even lack the necessary education to have a prosperous life. The researcher finds out three lower-class or proletariat characters in this novel: Azaro's family, compound people, and the photographer.

### **a. Azaro's Family**

Ben Okri delves into complex societal issues in his novel *The Famished Road*, taking readers through poverty, injustice, and political conflict that plagued Nigeria during the twentieth century.

The focal point of this work is centered around class-based struggles which pit society's wealthy against its impoverished citizens - oppressing them with their powerlessness. In rich detail, Okri adeptly portrays the stark reality faced by working-class people who routinely struggled to make ends meet amidst an economy fraught with economic disparities borne out of inequality entrenched deep within Nigerian social structures at large. Azaro serves as the protagonist throughout these events. He is a spirited kid born from low-income circumstances whose story gives voice to many Nigerians' daily hardships imposed upon them because they were economically disadvantaged compared to others living amongst higher socioeconomic classes in their situation at that time, one where even basic human needs proved complex challenges beyond reckoning for most struggling simply trying hard every day survive each moment.

Furthermore, in *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri, Azaro's family is depicted as part of the proletariat class, which refers to the working-class people who earn wages or salaries for their labor. Researchers found some evidences in the novel that illustrates the conditions of Azaro's family who are very poor and make them belong to the proletariat. Here are the data that researchers have found.

Dad worked hard carrying heavy loads at the garage and marketplaces and he earned very little money. Out of what he earned he paid the creditors, who came to our room every evening to remind us that they were still alive. And out of what was left we could barely manage to pay the rent and eat. (Okri, 2016. p. 90)

She hadn't made much and the sourness of her face told me she was wondering whether walking the streets of the world, day after boiling day, crooning out her provisions till her voice was hoarse, was worth the little she earned at the end of it all. She sighed and I knew that in spite of everything she would carry on hawking. (Okri, 2016. p,107)

'I carried loads today till I thought my neck and my back and my soul would break. Then I threw down the load and said: "Never again!" But I earned nothing, and I have a family to feed, and I carried the load and said: "There must be another way of earning money," and I thought, "I will join the army," (Okri, 2016. p,109)

The "lower" or "working" class, the members of which must under capitalism sell their labor in order to earn a living. In the quotations above, it shows that Azaro's father is a laborer who struggles to make ends meet: Throughout the novel, Azaro's father is depicted as a hardworking laborer who struggles to provide for his family. In quotation, it is mentioned that "Dad worked hard carrying heavy loads at the garage and marketplaces and he earned very little money" which is indicative of his low economic status. Meanwhile Azaro's mother is a market trader: Azaro's mother is also part of the working class, as she earns a living as a market trader. In the quotations, it is mentioned that "she was wondering whether walking the streets of the world, day after boiling day, crooning out her provisions till her voice was hoarse, was worth the little she



earned at the end of it all" which shows how she works hard to support the family.

We were eating some pap and bread in the room when Mum said:  
 'From today I will start at the market. One woman allowed me to rent her stall. I will not go hawking very much any more.' (Okri, 2016. p, 114)

Dad worked hard carrying heavy loads at the garage and marketplaces and he earned very little money. (Okri, 2016. p,90)

'There's not much money in the house,' Mum said. 'You haven't been working.' (Okri, 2016. p,559)

Based on those quotations, it shows that because they also do not have means of production, so automatically the only things they could sell was their labour or their services. This suggests that Azaro's family relies on manual labour for their income and is part of the working class. In addition, the deprivation that Azaro's family experienced is also clearly seen in the novel, when they have to starve for days, it illustrates how deprived they are, such as the data below.

Dad said: 'The only power poor people have is their hunger.' (Okri, 2016. p. 83)

After a while I heard Mum say: 'I'm going to warm the food.' We hadn't eaten since the morning. We had been going to sleep on empty stomachs for days. (Okri, 2016. p. 91)

It was as if Mum and Dad had moved in, dumped their possessions wherever there was space, and had never found time to arrange anything. The more I took in the cracks in the walls, the holes in the zinc ceiling, the cobwebs, the smells of earth and garri, the cigarette and mosquito coil smoke, the more it seemed we hadn't moved at all. Everything felt the same. The only difference was that I wasn't used to the sameness. (Okri, 2016. p. 38)

Our surroundings were poor. We didn't have a bathroom worth speaking of and the toilet was crude. But in that room, in our new home, I was happy because I could smell the warm presences and the tender energies of my parents everywhere. (Okri, 2016. p. 39)

Throughout the novel, the living conditions of Azaro's family are depicted as poor and cramped. In those quotations it shows how Azaro describes their home as a small, dilapidated house, with few comforts and little space which highlights their economic struggles.

Mum returned late and told us of the preparations for the great rally. She said women were earning a lot of money cooking for the event and that Madame Koto had offered her a job. She asked Dad if she should accept. (Okri, 2016. p. 405)

Moreover, because of those reasons Azaro's family faces numerous economic and social challenges due to their low economic status. For example in those quotation Madame Koto tries ask Azaro's mother to join her in her business which indicates their low economic status.

Overall, these examples highlight how Azaro's family is part of the proletariat class and faces numerous economic and social challenges due to their low economic status. The novel depicts their struggles against poverty and social inequality, and their fight for survival in a society that is heavily divided by class.

#### **b. The Photographer**

Besides the Azaro family, there are also other characters who belong to the proletarian class, namely the photographer. Here are

some examples and explanations from the novel that demonstrate why the photographer is part of the proletariat class.

In the nights we heard him raving, abusing everyone for not paying up, shouting that it was people like us who drove honest men to crime and corruption. His clothes became shabby and his beard turned wiry and brown. But even his hunger couldn't extinguish his spirit and in the afternoons he still went up and down the place, taking pictures with demented eyes and in a constancy of bad temper. (Okri, 2016. p. 164)

And so the football remained in the cabinet with the smashed glass and the browning photographs. The adults who went past shook their heads in bewilderment at this strange new form of photographic montage. The football was still in the cabinet when it rained. Water flooded the images. Insects bred in the cabinet and curious forms of mould and fungi grew on the innocent subjects of his industry and we all felt sad that the photographer had lost interest in his craft. He wasted away in his tiny room, trembling in the grip of an abnormal fever, and when we saw him he was always covered in a filthy black cloth. (Okri, 2016. p. 164)

After two weeks, the vigilantes disbanded. We sank back into our usual lives. The photographer vanished altogether. His room had been wrecked. His door was broken down, his clothes shredded, his mattress slashed, his available pictures and negatives destroyed, and some of his cameras broken up. His landlord, who had no sympathy for heroes, went around looking for him, demanding that his door be repaired. (Okri, 2016. p. 210)

The photographer is portrayed as a struggling artist attempting to make ends meet throughout the book. The photographer's studio, for instance, in those quotations, photographer studio described by Azaro as being "cramped and messy" with "photographs thrown everywhere." This implies that the photographer is not well off financially and struggles to support himself.

Towards noon Jeremiah came round with photographs of the party. Mum told him he'd have to come back. He grumbled about

how expensive it was taking pictures of poor people, but he left without creating a scene. (Okri, 2016. p,138)

The photographer was very pleased with the results and quoted prices for copies. One of the creditors said he would get his copy when Dad paid up. (Okri, 2016. p,105)

One day I saw him looking hungry and miserable and when I asked him what was wrong he snarled at me, snatched up the tripods of his camera and, screaming that no one ever paid for their photographs, pursued me down the street. He was quite fierce that day. His hunger and bitterness made him ugly, and I avoided him for a while. (Okri, 2016. p. 164)

The photographer's work is consistently portrayed in the book as being underappreciated and undervalued. For instance, in those quotations, it can be seen that the photographer mostly only takes pictures of people in the compound, where most people there are from the working class. Because the working class itself has a lack of capital and, of course, buying photos from photographers is undoubtedly not their priority. For this reason, the photographer complains about how difficult it is to take photos of the poor because they do not need the photo and cannot buy it; it makes the works or photos taken by the photographer underappreciated and undervalued by the compound residents. It also shows that the photographer is underpaid for his abilities and cannot charge high prices for his work because of the state of the compound residents, who mostly come from the working class.

And it was only when the police were pulling away that we saw the faces of those taken in for questioning. The photographer was one

of them. He had managed to get rid of the evidence that was his camera. He looked stony-eyed and brave. He waved at us as they dragged him away. (Okri, 2016. p. 179)

The photographer was released three days after he was taken away. He said he had been tortured in prison. He was louder and more fearless than before. Prison seemed to have changed him and he went around with a strange new air of myth about him, as if he had conceived heroic roles for himself during the short time he had been away. When he arrived the street gathered outside his room to give him a hero's welcome. He told us stories of his imprisonment and of how he had survived fiendish methods of torture inflicted on him to get out the names of collaborators, planners of riots, destabilisers of the Imperial Government, and enemies of the party. (Okri, 2016. p. 179)

The photographer was hiding behind the well, taking pictures of the stars and constellations. His camera flashed and thugs in dark glasses appeared from the flash and proceeded to beat him up. The camera fell from the photographer's hands. I heard people screaming inside the camera. The thugs jumped on the camera and stamped on it, trying to crush and destroy it. (Okri, 2016. p. 200)

Those in positions of authority repress the photographer: The photographer is shown as being oppressed by those in power, including the police and politicians, throughout the book. For instance, in the quotations above, the photographer who was photographing a political demonstration was detained and assaulted by the police and the thugs who also worked for the politician. This implies that the photographer is vulnerable to being abused by those who are more powerful and influential than he is.

When I got tired and hungry I would ask the photographer for food. Sometimes he would complain that I was disturbing him, but mostly he would give me a piece of bread, saying:  
'Your father hasn't paid for his pictures yet.' (Okri, 2016. p. 163)

We feared that the photographer had been murdered. His glass cabinet remained permanently shattered. It looked misbegotten. It became a small representation of what powerful forces in society can do if anyone speaks out against their corruptions. And because the photographer hadn't been there to record what had happened that night, nothing of the events appeared in the newspapers. It was as if the events were never real. They assumed the status of rumour. (Okri, 2016. p. 210)

The photographer is sympathetic to working-class struggles. The photographer is shown as sympathetic to the struggles of the working people throughout the book. For instance, the quotations demonstrated that he always took their picture every time the compound people were going through something and at one point, it helped them to get acknowledge their issue nationally when it got published in a newspaper and when Azaro asked him for some food he also gives him something to eat even though he also not doing that good financially. This implies that the photographer is sympathetic to and empathizes with the situation of other working-class people.

Altogether, the photographer's financial struggles, underappreciated work, vulnerability to oppression, and empathy for working-class conflicts support the idea that he belongs to the proletarian class.

### c. **The Compound People**

In *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri, the people who live in the compound where Azaro's family resides are depicted as part of the proletariat class. Here are some examples and explanations from the novel that illustrated why the compound people are part of the proletariat class:

Dad worked hard carrying heavy loads at the garage and marketplaces and he earned very little money. (Okri, 2016. p. 90)

Mum went down the street, swaying, moving a little sleepily, with one more burden added to her life. Soon she was merely a detail in the poverty of our area. (Okri, 2016. p. 270)

During the story, the compound people are shown to be employed in low-paying jobs, including street vending, physical labour, and domestic service. For instance, in those statements, Azaro's father is described as a labourer and his mother as a street vendor. This implies that the compound's residents are working class and earn a living through manual labour.

The poor also belong to one country. Our surroundings were poor. We didn't have a bathroom worth speaking of and the toilet was crude. But in that room, in our new home, I was happy because I could smell the warm presences and the tender energies of my parents everywhere. (Okri, 2016. p,39)

You think I want to live in this dirty area with no electricity, no toilets, no drinking water? If you think so you are mad! You are a small boy and you don't know anything. Your people are not serious. (Okri, 2016. p. 284)

Our street turned into one big stream. Water flooded into our rooms from the gutters. Sometimes it rained so much the compound began to stink because of the water that flowed past the pail latrine. During

that time children fell ill, and many people caught strange diseases and had to be rushed home to their villages for special herbal treatments. Those who could afford it built little cement dams in front of their rooms to stop the bad waters going in. The rest of us sat helpless in our rooms and watched the water rise. (Okri, 2016. p. 350)

People in the compound live in terrible conditions. The compound people are shown as having poor living circumstances and little access to necessities like toilet facilities and clean water throughout the book. For example, those quotations describe the water in the compound as "dirty and foul." There is also no electricity. This implies that the compound people are working class and marginalized by society.

‘What is it?’ someone asked.

‘Politicians.’

‘They want votes.’

‘They want our money.’

‘They have come to tax us.’

‘I saw them when I went hawking. They keep giving reasons why we should vote for them.’

‘They only remember us when they want our votes.’

The man in the van spoke for himself.

‘VOTE FOR US. WE ARE THE PARTY OF THE RICH, FRIENDS OF THE POOR ...’

‘The poor have no friends,’ someone in the crowd said.

‘Only rats.’ (Okri, 2016. p, 141).

‘They have poisoned us with the milk!’

Dad’s statement became a cry of understanding that was carried from one mouth to another, almost a rallying call, till the words gained ascendance over the ugly noises of vomiting. The women got out their containers and basins of the politicians’ milk and emptied them on the street. The heaps of rotten milk grew. Other compounds also had their heaps and as I looked along the street I saw the pilings of powdered milk like mirror-images in front of stalls. The inhabitants of the area gathered and held a long public meeting about the rotten milk of politics. (Okri, 2016. p. 151).



The bourgeoisie oppresses the people of the compound: The bourgeoisie class is shown throughout the book as oppressing the compound people and using their wealth to keep the working class under their control. For instance, in those quotations, Azaro witnesses a group of people visiting the compound and trying to take advantage of the residents for their amusement. This implies that the compound residents are working-class people easily exploited by the bourgeoisie.

The inhabitants of the area gathered and held a long public meeting about the rotten milk of politics. (Okri, 2016. p. 151).

The meeting went on for hours. The street was angry and someone suggested burning down the local offices of the rich people's party. They were angry but they were also helpless and they couldn't decide on the best course of action. They talked, could find no solutions, and as night fell they dispersed to their rooms, hobbling, wracked by spasms, exhausted of anything to vomit. (Okri, 2016. p. 152).

The people of the compound express their support for other working-class people. The compound residents feel connected with other working-class people who are likewise marginalized by society throughout the book. For instance, as seen in the quotes above, the people in the compound immediately discussed handling the situation when Azaro's father realized and told the compound people that they were poisoned by the milk powdered given by the party for the rich when they campaigned in their compound. This

shows that the people of the compound sympathize with and support the hardships of other working-class members.

Thus, the proletariat class' categorization of the compound people is supported by their low wages, poor living, vulnerability to bourgeois exploitation, and sense of solidarity with fellow working-class people.

## **2. Bourgeoisie**

Due to their ownership of the means of production, significant financial or economic power, level of education, and political influence, the bourgeoisie, or upper class, is the dominant social class in a capitalist society. The researcher discovered characters considered to be of the higher class in the novel: the politician, the landlord, and Madame Koto represent the bourgeoisie or upper class in the book. These are the proofs that they are members of the bourgeoisie.

### **a. Madame Koto**

In *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri, Madame Koto is depicted as part of the bourgeoisie class, which refers to the wealthy or upper-class people who own the means of production and have significant economic power. Here are some examples and explanations from the novel that demonstrate why Madame Koto is part of the bourgeoisie class:

The moment someone came into the bar Madame Koto treated them respectfully. What she hated was people standing outside uncertain. She preferred them to go away rather than come in. She was very decided in this respect. (Okri, 2016. p,86 ).

On the other side of the van I saw Madame Koto engaged in negotiations with the man at the megaphone, pointing vigorously in the direction of her bar. (Okri, 2016. p, 142)

Madame Koto owns a successful business. Throughout the novel, Madame Koto is depicted as the owner of a successful bar that attracts wealthy customers. This suggests that Madame Koto has significant economic power and is part of the bourgeoisie class.

'I'm not like the other people.'  
 'What other people?'  
 'The people you owe and who ...'  
 She stopped, looked at Dad, and then at me.  
 'I will forget the money if you let your son come and sit in my bar now and again.' Dad looked at me.  
 'Why?' he asked.  
 'Because he has good luck.' (Okri, 2016. p,74 )

Each life flows to all the spheres; and as Dad slept he lived out a whole lifetime in another continent, while we listened to the rumours of Madame Koto's meetings with powerful women in her bar, meetings in which they planned the numerous arrangements for the rally and the responsibilities of organising votes for their party. (Okri, 2016. p. 553)

On the other side of the van I saw Madame Koto engaged in negotiations with the man at the megaphone, pointing vigorously in the direction of her bar. (Okri, 2016. p. 142)

Madame Koto puts her economic influence on others. Throughout the book, Madame Koto is portrayed as using her financial impact on the behaviors and decisions of others. For instance, those quotations show how Madame Koto convinced Azaro's father she could make Azaro work in her bar by dismissing

their debt. She also negotiates with the politician to come to her bar and persuades the politicians who frequent her bar to support her bid for a seat in the local council. This reveals Madame Koto's capacity to use her money and influence to shape her society's political and economical situation for her benefit.

Madame Koto's face had broken into the smile she reserved for the customers who spent the most. There were a lot of people outside. They were elegantly dressed in bright kaftans and agbadas and safari suits. They laughed and talked in animated tones. There were many women amongst them. The strong scent of their perfumes was heavy and inescapable on the evening air. (Okri, 2016. p. 250)

The two thugs who had earlier led the man away stepped into the bar. They surveyed the place as if to ascertain whether it was big enough for the celebration they planned. They did not look like thugs. In spite of the bandage and the animal expression in their eyes, they looked like modern businessmen, contractors, exporters, politicians. Dressed in lace kaftans, with matching hats, they were wonderfully high-spirited. They went out, came in again and, walking towards Madame Koto with the dignity of honourable crooks, said:

'It will do. We want to celebrate here. You are our friend and supporter. Since you have been good to us, we will bring business to you.' (Okri, 2016. p. 250-251)

It is shown that Madame Koto is connected to a bigger network of affluent people. Throughout the book, Madame Koto is portrayed as part of a bigger network of upper-class people who use their influence in politics and the economy to control society. For instance, Azaro observes that the guests who come to her bar are wealthy businessmen and politicians with deep wallets and serious faces in the quotations above. This shows that Madame Koto is part

of a bigger group of wealthier people who use their position of influence to maintain their privilege and control over society.

Madame Koto's classification as a member of the bourgeoisie class is generally supported by her ownership of a successful business, her use of economic power to influence others, and her links to the larger group of affluent people who use their power to maintain domination in society.

**b. The landlord**

The next character is the landlord. The landlord is portrayed as belonging to the bourgeoisie class in "*The Famished Road*" by Ben Okri, a term for the wealthy or upper-class people who own the means of production and hold significant economic power. Here are a few quotations and explanations from the book that show the landlord's status as a member of the bourgeoisie class:

He was from the landlord. He was the bearer of a message. We were informed that our rent had been increased. Apparently we were the only ones to suffer an increment in the compound. After he had delivered the message, which included an option to move out if we didn't like the new rent.' (Okri, 2016. p, 269)

It got so awful that we couldn't find a place that wasn't leaking. We ended up settling for having the water drip on our feet. Dad complained to the landlord, but he merely threatened to increase the rent further if he fixed the roof. We couldn't afford the rent as it stood so we had no choice but to settle for being soaked through at night. (Okri, 2016. p. 349)

Azaro's family is said to reside in a small, rickety home in the previous quotation, and the quote above demonstrates how the

landlord "had a penchant for exploiting his tenants" by charging high rents after learning that Azaro's family shared a different political view with the landlord. This suggests that the landlord has substantial economic influence and control over the tenants and is abusing this power to benefit financially from the tenants' labor.

Striding as if he were on stage, waving his hands angrily, the landlord said:

'Why do I have to come and pester you for my rent, eh? When you wanted the room you came and begged me. Now I have to come and beg you for my rent, eh?'

'Things are hard,' Mum said.

'Things are hard for everybody. All the other tenants have paid. Why are you so different, eh?' (Okri, 2016. p,224-225)

The landlord dismisses the Azaro family. The quotation demonstrates how the landlord dismisses Azaro's family economic situation when he charged his mother rent. The landlord also underestimated the financial condition of Azaro's family and did not care much about it. This dismissive demeanor implies that the landlord is not interested in the well-being of the working-class tenants and is instead using his financial influence to maintain control over them.

But as we prepared to leave the room there was a knock on our door. Mum opened it and found the landlord standing outside.

'Tell your husband', he said, without the slightest formality, 'that if he repeats what he did last night I will throw him out. I don't care if he is called Black Cricket. I myself am a lion. If necessary I will send my boys to beat him up. If he gives me any more trouble, if he

borrow money from anybody in this compound again, if he threatens to burn down my house, he better go and find himself another landlord, you hear?' (Okri, 2016. p. 114)

'God knows,' the landlord continued, 'that I want the best for my tenants. But the tenant that doesn't want a good thing should go. There's power and there's power: anyone who looks for my trouble will get enough trouble for life. I am a peaceful man but the person who spoils my peace will find that I am a LION. I am an ELEPHANT. My THUNDER will strike them. And on top of that I will send my boys to beat them up!' (Okri, 2016. p.226)

The landlord employs force to maintain his power. When Azaro's father refuses to pay the high rent, the landlord threatens him with violence in the above quotation. The bourgeoisie frequently employs this method of violence to maintain their economic and social dominance over the working class.

Altogether, the characterization of the landlord as a member of the bourgeoisie is supported by his economic power, status, and privilege as a member of the upper class and his use of violence to maintain control over the working-class tenants.

### **c. The Politician**

Finally, the politician is the last character in the bourgeoisie class. In the book, the politicians are shown as belonging to the bourgeoisie class. The bourgeoisie comprises wealthy or upper-class people who own the means of production and have much

economic power. Here are some examples and explanations from the book that show why politicians are part of the bourgeoisie class:

The politicians' vans rode up and down, blaring their party music, making their interminable announcements and promises. It became quite confusing to hear both parties virtually promise the same things. The Party of the Rich talked of prosperity for all, good roads, electricity, and free education. (Okri, 2016. p. 437)

'AND TO PROVE TO YOU THAT WE ARE NOT EMPTY WORDS BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO US. WE ARE GIVING AWAY FREE MILK! YES, FREE MILK FROM US, COURTESY OF OUR GREAT PARTY!' (Okri, 2016. p. 141)

The politicians oppress the working class with their economic power. Throughout the novel, various politicians are portrayed as exploiting and oppressing the working class with their economic power. In these quotations, for instance, politicians take advantage of the working class to vote for them by promising many things that, of course, make the confidence and stance of the proletariat waver with their very unstable economic conditions. As mentioned above, when politicians compete to promise so many great things to the compound residents to gain their trust and also try to take their hearts by distributing free rotten milk powder to the poor compound residents. This demonstrates the politicians' indifference to the well-being of the working class and their willingness to use their economic power to exploit the labor of others for profit.



'I have told this to all my tenants. Anybody who wants to live in my house, under this roof that I built with my own hands, should vote for my party. Did you hear me?'

Mum did not nod. She stared grimly at the twitching candle.

'It doesn't matter if you answer or not. I have said what I have to say. If you have ears, listen. If you want to be my tenant, when the election comes you will go and vote for my party man.' (Okri, 2016. p, 226)

'It's simple. All you have to do is press ink next to his name. A simple matter. My party will bring good roads and electricity and water supply. And remember this: we have people at the polling station who will be watching you. We will know who you vote for. Whether you vote for our man or not we will win anyway. But if you don't vote for him there will be trouble. You might as well begin to look for another place now and see if you can find another landlord as good as me.' (Okri, 2016. p, 226)

Politicians are demonstrated to have substantial political and social power. The politicians are portrayed as having a lot of social and political influence throughout the book. Using the quote as an example, it is made clear that politicians have the ability to influence election results, thus also affecting the social, political, and economic state of their societies.

I have told this to all my tenants. Anybody who wants to live in my house, under this roof that I built with my own hands, should vote for my party. Did you hear me?'

Mum did not nod. She stared grimly at the twitching candle.

'It doesn't matter if you answer or not. I have said what I have to say. If you have ears, listen. If you want to be my tenant, when the election comes you will go and vote for my party man.' (Okri, 2016. p, 226)

The two thugs who had earlier led the man away stepped into the bar. They surveyed the place as if to ascertain whether it was big enough for the celebration they planned. In spite of the bandage and the animal expression in their eyes, they looked like modern businessmen, contractors, exporters, politicians. Dressed in lace kaftans, with matching hats, they were wonderfully high-spirited. (Okri, 2016. p. 250)

I heard stories of politicians, who were members of secret societies, who tried to hold back the rain because of the grand rally which they had to keep postponing. I heard that Madame Koto had joined them. (Okri, 2016. p. 387)

Politicians are shown to be associated with the ruling class: The politicians are portrayed as having connections to the bourgeoisie class throughout the entire book. For instance, in the scene above, Madame Koto tells Azaro that the wealthy business people and politicians who frequent her bar have serious faces and deep pockets and frequent her business. This implies that the politicians are part of a larger group of affluent people who use their influence in politics and the economy to maintain their privilege and control over society.

Generally, the notion that politicians are members of the bourgeoisie class is supported by their wealth, social status, and connections to a larger group of affluent people who use their positions of power to maintain social control.

## **B. Class Struggle Depiction**

This sub-chapter examines the class struggle depicted in *The Famished Road*. Based on the data that researchers found above, namely the classification of the social class of the characters in the novel, researchers found that the main characters and supporting characters of this novel,

namely the Azaro's Family, the photographer, and residents of the Azaro compound turned out to be part of the proletarian class or working class, therefore researchers will explain further about the class struggle depicted directly by the characters in the novel. What are the efforts of the characters to improve and fight for their class? Besides classifying it into two parts, namely individual struggle and labour movement. Researchers found the following data in the novel *The Famished Road*.

### **1. Individual Struggle**

In *The Famished Road*, a book by Nigerian author Ben Okri, there are distinct indications of a class struggle at the individual level. This is shown by the main character, Azaro, a spirit child or called as an Abiku who is born in an unnamed African city. The impoverished compound condition showing the harsh realities of class struggle in Africa after it gained its independence.

#### **a) Limited Class Mobility**

The impoverished face everyday challenges to survival while being deprived of chances for social mobility or advancement. Azaro is a young man who lives there and has to scrape by every day. His family also has to work hard to make ends meet. The family of Azaro in the book is an excellent illustration, as they are constrained by their ongoing struggles for food and shelter. Here is the evidences that shown their unfortunate condition.

Dad worked hard carrying heavy loads at the garage and marketplaces and he earned very little money. Out of what he earned he paid the creditors, who came to our room every evening to remind us that they were still alive. And out of what was left we could barely manage to pay the rent and eat (Okri, 2016. p, 89).

We hadn't eaten since the morning. We had been going to sleep on empty stomachs for days (Okri, 2016. p, 90).

We had cut down our food. That morning we had pap and bread. Mum went off to the market, went hawking her boxes of matches, sweets, cigarettes and odds and ends down the roads on a quite empty stomach. She looked much leaner and her blouse hung from her and the straps fell over her shoulders as if she had shrunk in her clothes (Okri, 2016. p, 92-93).

## **b) Political Corruption and Provocation**

A corrupt political system divides society along party lines, with each faction seeking power through unethical means. This is shown by the political parties distributing rotten milk to the residents of the compound where Azaro lives, primarily the poor, in order to gain votes. The politicians show that they are taking advantage of the deprived condition of the compound residents for their benefit or own interest, which shows that the lower class or proletariat is very vulnerable in such situations. The political tensions of Azaro's village community, caused by political instability, are highlighted as key contributing factors to the desperate living conditions.

‘AND TO PROVE TO YOU THAT WE ARE NOT EMPTY WORDS BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO US. WE ARE GIVING AWAY FREE MILK! YES, FREE MILK FROM US, COURTESY OF OUR GREAT PARTY!’ (Okri, 2016. p, 140).

The crowd poured after the van as if in a holy crusade. The thugs on the back of the van, resorting to a diversionary tactic, tore open a hidden sack and began throwing pennies and silver pieces in the air. The coins landed on our heads, we caught them with our faces,

were sometimes blinded by their force as we surged, and we scrambled for them, forgetting the milk, while the van drove away, crackling its announcements, its party promises, and the venue of the party's next great public spectacle (Okri, 2016. p, 143).

## 2. Labor Movement

The labour movement is an under-examined topic in *The Famished Road*, yet it can provide rich insights into the complexities of the post-independence landscape in Africa. According to Schmidt (2009) *labour movements* term can be broadly defined as all forms of organizations and collective actions which improve the economic, social, political, and cultural circumstances of people in the working class (Schmidt, 2009). These movements also aim to improve the social status of workers by offering better opportunities and benefits, boosting morale and fostering a sense of community within the labour force.

Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road* strongly emphasises the labour movement as a significant issue. The story follows the adventure of Azaro, a spirit child navigating the hardships and political fervour of a newly independent country. The following are examples of how the labour movement's main points of emphasis are reflected in the book:

### a) Lower-Class Protest Against Politicians

The labour movement in the novel *The Famished Road* is shown as follows. The first is a protest by the compound's residents after they experienced a mysterious disease outbreak which turned out to be

caused by powdered milk given by one of the political parties campaigning. The protest then ended in riots between compound residents who belonged to the working class or lower class and representatives of political parties. This protest action is a form of labour movement described by compound residents who demand fraud committed by the upper class or political parties, resulting in compound residents experiencing mass disease outbreaks that are detrimental and dangerous for their families. This movement proves that this is one of the steps taken by the working class, like the residents of this compound, to try to change the existing political system in society to make it even better. The following quotations shown the labour movement that had been done by the residents compound.

‘TRUST US! TRUST OUR LEADER! TRUST OUR GARRI!  
OUR PARTY BELIEVES IN SHARING THE NATIONAL  
GARRI AND ...’

‘LIES!’ someone cried from the crowd.

‘THIEVES!’ said another.

‘POISONERS!’

‘MURDERERS!’ (Okri, 2016. p, 175).

The thug lifted his great fist again and the photographer ducked into the crowd, screaming, and the men went on offering pans of garri, and the politician went on with his claims, and suddenly a stone smashed the van’s window and undammed the fury of angry bodies. Several hands clawed at the van; someone cracked the politician on the head and he screamed into the loudspeaker. The driver started the vehicle; it jerked forward and knocked a woman over (Okri, 2016. p, 176).

The people went on stoning the side windows till they gave completely and then they threw rocks at the men handing out garri. The men shouted, blood appeared on their faces; the politician appealed for calm; (Okri, 2016. p, 176).

**b) Exposing Unrest and Injustice**

The next is the labour movement represented by the photographer who managed to publish and exposed the fraud and injustice committed by politicians in the newspapers, and it became the news headlines. The photographer took pictures of all the events that occurred in the compound, starting from the mysterious disease outbreaks, protest riots carried out by compound residents on political parties, and all the events that were happened in their compound. When the politicians discovered this, they sent messengers to hunt down the photographer. This shows that the labour movement, which is indirectly represented by the photographer who also comes from the working class, is successful, and the photographer's action of exposing the arbitrary treatment of these politicians is a form of voicing the injustice that the lower class is experiencing and demanding more better changes in society, especially for the working class or lower class.

It was only when I got back from school that I understood the excitement. For the first time in our lives we as a people had appeared in the newspapers. We were heroes in our own drama, heroes of our own protest. There were pictures of us, men and women and children, standing helplessly round heaps of the politicians' milk. There were pictures of us raging, attacking the van, rioting against the cheap methods of politicians, humiliating the thugs of politics, burning their lies. The photographer's pictures had been given great prominence on the pages of the newspaper and it was even possible to recognise our squashed and poverty-ridden faces on the grainy newsprint. There were news stories about the bad milk and an editorial about our rage. We were astonished that something we did with such absence of planning, something that we had done in such a small corner of the great globe, could gain such prominence (Okri, 2016. p, 179).

### **C. The Challenges The Working Class Face During The Class**

#### **Struggle**

According to Karl Marx's theory of state and class, the state is a tool the ruling class uses to control the populace. This theory explains further that because the state is the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, it protects the property and interests of the bourgeoisie (Olson in Otobo, 2005). The state is an instrument of hegemony in the hands of the governing class, not a benign entity. The history of state formation in Nigeria during the colonial and post-colonial periods reveals the state as a site of power struggles between diverse interest groups. "The state is a tool in the hands of the ruling class, which manipulates it to accomplish its goals" (Tar, 2009).

It is clearly show that the state represent the bourgeoisie class, while the workers represent the proletariat, the oppressed class, who must sell their labor to the bourgeoisie, and the government is always willing to serve as a tool of the bourgeoisie, by providing the legal backing to oppression through the enactment of laws and implementation of regulations. In general, the economically dominant class controls the state, allowing it to maintain its control over the exploited classes (Egbanubi, 2016).

Based on that statement, it is possible to conclude that the state is one of the bourgeoisie's tools for preventing the lower class from improving their life, and getting a better opportunities. Because the state is one of the



weapons controlled by the upper class or bourgeoisie, indirectly, it shows that the state and its contents, such as the government, security forces, and other institutions, are under the control of the bourgeoisie. It also shows that people or groups who think they have more power, authority, wealth, greed, etc., and therefore think they can control weaker people or groups, and this causes oppression (Istiadah, 2021).

Therefore, all the efforts made by the working class, as depicted by the Azaro family and other proletariat classes during their class struggle to obtain their rights, were in vain, as the bourgeoisie class has indirectly dominated various aspects of society, making it difficult for the working class to fight for their class interests, their rights and forcing them to face various obstacles or challenges. Evidently, this impacts and determines their class struggle's success or failure. The following are the challenges faced by the proletariat in their class struggle in the novel *The Famished Road*, as identified by researchers.

### **1. Economic Inequality**

In *The Famished Road*, the proletariat class is depicted struggling to make ends meet while those belonging to the bourgeoisie enjoy luxuries. Some examples, namely, when the Azaro family lived in a cramped and dilapidated house, while the owner lived in a large and comfortable house. This economic gap between the bourgeoisie and the

proletariat reinforces the cycle of poverty for the proletariat, making it difficult for them to improve their standard of living.

Furthermore, when the Azaro family struggled to make ends meet, they could not afford to send Azaro to school and often had to miss meals because of a lack of money. On the other hand, the Azaro family, their compound landlord, is wealthy and lives in a large, comfortable house. He charged very high rents for his properties, making it difficult for the proletariat to buy decent housing at affordable prices. Apart from that, Madame Koto's customers who visit her bar are also described as part of the bourgeois class. They could afford cheap alcohol for him, in contrast to the proletariat struggling to put food on the table.

Other characters are also like politicians described as part of the bourgeoisie class. They often spread promises to improve the living conditions of the proletariat class to get their vote in elections. However, they often fail to fulfill their promises after they get selected. The various examples described above show a striking economic inequality between these two classes, namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in the novel that the researcher is studying, *The Famished Road*.

## 2. Exploitation

People belonging to the class of the bourgeoisie are depicted as exploiting people of the proletariat class for their benefit. Some examples are when Madame Koto's customers and politicians use the poverty of the proletariat for their benefit, either by buying Madame Koto cheap alcohol or by making promises to them to improve the living conditions of the lower classes in exchange for votes. This exploitation by the bourgeoisie created a feeling of hatred and distrust between the two classes.

Another example is when the Azaro Family was exploited by their landlord, who charged exorbitant rents for their squalid little house. Politicians also exploit the proletariat and make promises to improve their living conditions in exchange for the proletariat being willing to vote. However, in reality, they break the promises they have made. Furthermore, there is the character Madame Koto who is described as a very successful businesswoman, but Madame Koto is also proven to have exploited her customers. Madame Koto charged high prices for her cheap alcohol and frequently tricked her customers into spending lavishly at her bar.

Some examples mentioned above show the various forms of exploitation in *The Famished Road*. This novel also highlights the role of exploitation in perpetuating poverty and social inequality because

they are the people of the proletarian class who are the most vulnerable and most likely to be exploited by the upper class, namely the bourgeoisie.

### **3. Violence**

The depiction of the ensuing obstacles that occur during the proletariat's class struggle in *The Famished Road* novel also leads to violence and riots. Some examples are as follows: when there was a violent clash between the police and people in the Azaro compound, which resulted in death and injuries on both sides. This violence highlights the deep-rooted tensions and conflicts between the two classes and emphasizes how difficult it is to resolve the class struggle peacefully.

The following example is political violence, the background of this novel is taken during political unrest and violence in post-independence Nigeria, and this is reflected in the story. For example, this is shown when there are frequent clashes between political groups, and Azaro's environment is often caught in the middle of these conflicts. Another type of violence that occurs is inter-class violence. For example, when landlords and other members of the bourgeois class physically attacked Azaro's father and other members of the proletarian class in their compound.

The examples above show the various forms of violence and rioting that existed in *The Famished Road* and became obstacles for the proletariat during the class struggle.

#### **4. Political Oppression**

In *The Famished Road*, the wealthy people also oppress the working class and the impoverished using their political influence, reducing their chances for upward social mobility and economic growth. For instance, the corrupt politicians and police who use their position of authority to keep their dominance and control over the working class and the poor are one example of how the bourgeoisie's political oppression is depicted in the book. One instance is when a landlord requires tenants to choose the political party he supports in elections or else he will raise their rent and kick them out from his property. It is clear that the wealthy are abusing their position of influence for both political gain and social wellbeing. The bourgeoisie could care less what the proletariat thinks; whatever happens, occurs to them.

The difficulties stated above highlight how intricate and difficult the class conflict in *The Famished Road* is. This book highlights the significance of addressing this division in order to create a more just society by illustrating the struggles the proletariat must endure in order

to achieve social and economic fairness in the face of deeply established class division.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This final chapter consists of two sections: the conclusion and the suggestion. The summary of the discussion is what the conclusion of this section matters regarding. In order to better comprehend the class struggle, the suggestion is pointed out to future researchers interested in the same field and to literature students.

#### **A. Conclusion**

Based on the first question, the researcher concludes that the Azaro family is a proletarian class based on the social class theory of marxism; that is, they sell labor in return for wages. Besides the Azaro family, researchers have found other characters in *The Famished Road* novel such as the photographer and the compound people that strengthen the class struggle division. Besides, the researcher also identified another social class, namely the bourgeois class consisting of Madame Koto, the landlord, and the politicians.

And then the first research question is about the depiction of class struggle in *The Famished Road* which is illustrated through the Azaro family, the photographer, and the compound people where they are characters who belong to the working class or lower class. Researchers found some data that showed the existence of class struggle and classified

it into two parts, namely class struggle that entered into individual struggle and class struggle that entered into the labor movement.

In *The Famished Road*, there are clear indications of class struggle at the individual level. The researcher found the following data, namely the first limited class mobility, the poor face daily challenges to survive while they have no opportunity for social mobility or advancement. Azaro was a young man who lived there and had to struggle hard every day. His family also has to work hard to make ends meet. Azaro's family in this book is an excellent illustration, as they are limited by their constant struggle for food and shelter. The last individual class struggle is the Political Corruption and Provocations that exist in society. A corrupt political system divides society along party lines, with each faction seeking power through unethical means. This is demonstrated by political parties distributing rotten milk to residents of the compound where Azaro lives, especially the poor, to gain votes. The politicians showed that they were taking advantage of the deprived conditions of the compound residents for their own benefit or interest, which shows that the lower class or proletariat are particularly vulnerable in such situations. The political tensions of the Azaro villagers, caused by political instability, are highlighted as a major factor contributing to the deplorable living conditions.

The next depiction of class struggle is through the labor movement. Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road* strongly emphasizes the labor movement



as a significant issue. The following are examples of how the main points of the labor movement are reflected in the book: the first is the lower-class protest against politicians. The labor movement in *The Famished Road* is shown during the protest by the residents of the compound after they experienced an outbreak of illness caused by rotten milk powder from a political party. This protest is a form of labor movement portrayed by the residents of the complex who demand fraud committed by the upper class or political parties, resulting in the residents of the compound experiencing mass disease outbreaks that are detrimental and dangerous to their families. This movement proves that it is one of the steps taken by the working class, such as the residents of this compound, to try to change the existing political system in society for the better.

The last labor movement is to take action to expose unrest and injustice. This action is represented by a photographer who managed to publish and expose fraud and injustice committed by politicians in the newspapers and became news headlines. The photographer captured all the happenings in the compound, from mysterious disease outbreaks, riot protests by the residents of the compound against political parties, and all the happenings in their compound. When the politicians found out about this, they sent messengers to hunt down the photographer. This shows that the labor movement indirectly represented by the photographer who also comes from the working class is successful, and the photographer's actions exposing the

arbitrary treatment of these politicians is a form of voicing the injustices experienced by the lower class and demanding better changes in society, especially for the working class or lower class.

The second research question concerns the challenges that face by the working class during the class struggle. In the novel *The Famished Road*, the researcher finds several challenges that must be faced and experienced by the working class, which is also a factor in their failure to move up a class. The challenges are economic inequality, exploitation, violence, and political oppression. The researcher sees that the things that have been mentioned are very influential in the class struggle carried out by the Azaro family, the photographer, and the compound people and no matter how much effort the working class has made to fight for their class interest and social status in society, it will mean nothing if it is from the upper class itself. The bourgeoisie is dominant and powerful regarding capital and status, so they will do anything to maintain their position. The ownership of capital also plays a vital role if they want to move up in class. Nevertheless, the working class people had no capital and power, which made them fail in the class struggle that was being carried out.

## **B. Suggestion**

For the readers who interested in undertaking the same research by using this novel as an analysis unit are advised by researchers to gather much evidence before analyzing it. The reader must read attentively and

focus on each passage of text and significant exchange that might point to a fruitful area for analysis.

Nevertheless, the reader can also use other theories and advise the readers who interested in conducting the same study by using this novel as an analysis unit to read novels repeatedly and thoughtfully and comprehend the story well before analyzing it. However, the readers can examine various parts of this book using theories and other methods. The readers can still find intriguing elements in this book, such as the postcolonialist perspective. Finally, the researcher hopes this study will be informative for English literature majors who wish to analyze characters in other fields using Karl Marx's social class and class struggle theory.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aly, M. H. (2020). *The Struggle of Proletarian Class Against Oppression Described in George Orwell's Animal Farm 1945* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim).
- Ashari, M. I., & Rasiah, R. (2020). The Portrayal of Class Struggle in Victoria Aveyard's Novel *Red Queen*. *ELITE: Journal of English Language and Literature*, 5(2), 85-93.
- Awan, A. G., & Nasir, A. A. (2018). Matrimonial issues and Marxist approach in "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austin. *Global Journal of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(3), 651-676.
- Barry, P. (2009). *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. In *Beginning theory*. Manchester University Press.
- Bibi, A., Ashfaq, S., Ullah, Q. M. S., & Abbas, N. (2021). Class struggle in "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy (A Marxist analysis of the novel). *Review of Applied Management and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 295-305.
- Bodgan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative Research For Education: An Introduction to Theory and Method* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. USA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of Taste*, trans. Richard Niche. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Candranegara, I. M. W., Mirta, I. W., Jika, I. K., & Ramdani, M. T. (2021, December). Analysis of Gender Equality in Education Through the Pisuke

- Tradition in Padamara Village, East Lombok District: Karl Marx's Conflict View. In 2nd International Conference on Business Law and Local Wisdom in Tourism (ICBLT 2021) (pp. 190-194). Atlantis Press.
- Castle, G. (2007). *The Blackwell guide to literary theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Collins, R. (2019). *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*. Columbia University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Designs: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: Sage.
- Dewi, M. S., & Rahayu, M. (2020). Rwandan genocide conflict represented in the novel *Led by Faith*. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Sastra*, 2(1), 21-30.
- Dictionary. (n.d.). *Bourgeoisie*. In Dictionary .com. Retrieved Jan 15, 2022. From <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/bourgeoisie>
- Egbanubi, A.M. (2016). *Working Class Movement: Quest for Freedom, Social Justice, and Democratic Governance in Nigeria*. South Africa: 11<sup>th</sup> Gopal Labour University Conference.
- Endraswara, S. (2011). *Metode Penelitian Sastra: Epistemologi, Model, Teori, dan Aplikasi*. Yogyakarta: CAPS.
- Engels, F. (1845). *The Condition of The Working Class in England*. Panther, Moscow.

- Fabrianne, N., Sucahyo, D., & Wardani, I. (2022). Class Struggle In Bong Joon-Ho's Film Parasite: An Analysis by Using Marxist Theory. *E3L: Journal of English Teaching, Linguistic, and Literature*, 5(1), 29-38.
- German, L. (1998) *Reflections on the Communist Manifesto*, *International Socialism*. Retrieved Jan 18, 2023. <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/german/1998/xx/manifesto.htm>.
- Goldmann, L., & Sheridan, A. (1975). *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (p. 1). London: Tavistock Publications.
- Hanifah, F. (2018). *Alienation and Class Struggle As Seen in Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs Film* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta).
- Hanum, N. L. (2019). *Class struggle against totalitarianism in kass morgan's the 100: Homecoming* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim).
- Harnecker, M. (1981). The Class Struggle. *Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line*.
- Harvey, L. (2022). *Class*. In Social Research Glossary Quality Research International. Retrieved Jan 15, 2023. From <https://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/socialresearch/class.htm>
- Huang, Y., & Yanbing, Z. E. N. G. (2019). A Study on The Perspectives in The Famished Road. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 19(3), 69-74.
- Kochupurackal, J. K. (2021). Magical Realism in Ben Okri's Novel The Famished Road. *Albaha University Journal of Human Sciences*, p-ISSN, 1652-7189.

- Istiadah, I., Furaida, A., & Nabillah, D. R. (2021, August). Multiple Oppression Suffered by Javanese Female Characters in Okky Madasari's The Years of The Voiceless. In *Annual International Conferences on Language, Literature, and Media* (No. 1, pp. 140-158).
- Laski, H. J. (1959). *Communist Manifesto Socialist Landmark*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Laurenson, D., & Swingewood, A. (1972). *The sociology of literature*. New York: Schocken.
- Maclver, R. M. (1937). *Society: A Textbook of Sociology*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. Inc. Publishers.
- Martha, B. J. (2011). *Class Struggle a Case Study of Festus Iyayi's Violence and Animata Sow Fall's The Beggars' Strike*. University of Ilorin.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2002). *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones. *London: Penguin*, 229, 258.
- Marx, K. (1990). *Capital, Volume 1*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Marx, K. (1875). *Critique of the Gotha Program*. Retrieved Feb 09, 2023. From <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/index.htm>
- Meiliana, S. (2019). *Book: Sociology Of Literature*. Tangerang: PT. Pustaka Mandiri.
- Menzies, C. R., & Marcus, A. A. (2007). Towards a Class Struggle Anthropology. *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, 1(1), 14-39.

- Merrill, F. E. (1967). The sociology of literature. *Social Research*, 648-659.
- Mutiara, G., Mulyati, S., & Manar, M. (2022). Class Conflict in Parasite Film Using Marxist Criticism. *Akrab Juara: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Sosial*, 7(2), 180-194.
- Muzakki, A. (2020). Unveiling Thaha Husein's controversy on classical Arabic literature existence (critical methodology of the book 'Fi al-adab al-jahili'). *Lingua*, 15(1), 11-22.
- Ogbazi, I. J., & Osita, I. L. (2021). Magic Realism As A Postmodern Device for Postcolonial Criticism: A Study of Ben Okri's The Famished Road. *Nigerian Journal of African Studies (NJAS)*, 3(2).
- Okri, B. (2016). *The Famished Road: A Novel*. Open Road Media.
- Otobo, D. (2005). *Industrial Relations: Theory and Controversies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Malthouse Press Limited, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Ritzer, G. (Ed.). (2004). *Encyclopedia of social theory*. Sage publications.
- Schmidt, J. (2009). *Labor Movements/Labor Unions*. New York: Springer.
- Selwyn, B. (2007). 'Labour Process and Workers' Bargaining Power in Export Grape Production, North East Brazil *Journal of Agrarian Change*.
- Swingewood, A. (1975). *Marx and Modern Social Theory*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Syani, A. (1994). *Sociology Schemata*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Tar, U. A. (2009). Organized Labour and Democratic Struggle in Nigeria, *Journal of Information Society and Justice*, Volume 2 No 2, June 2009: pp165-181.
- Tunca, D. (2011). Okri, Ben (1959-). 9780195382075.



- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York. Routledge.
- Watt, I. (2001). *Sociology of Literature*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Vol. 2). University of California press.
- Webster, M. (n.d). *Proletariat*. In Merriam Webster Dictionary. Retrieved Jan 15, 2023. From <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proletariat>
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1956). *Theory of Literature* (Vol. 15). London: Jonathan Cape.
- Wright, E. O. (Ed.). (2005). *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- y Gasset, J. O. (2019). *The dehumanization of art and other essays on art, culture, and literature* (Vol. 67). Princeton University Press.
- Zuhroh, N. M. (2017, November). Trend the globalization of the globalization proof of the constitutional constitution of local wisdom and the conflict resolution in the community. In Proceeding of International Conference on Islamic Education (ICIED) (Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 229-232).

## CURRICULUM VITAE



**Nabilah Mursyidah** was born in Jepara on July 31, 1998. She graduated from MA Raudlatul Ulum Guyangan Trangkil Pati in 2016. She started her higher education in 2016 at the Department of English Literature at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and finished in 2023. During her study in university she had volunteer in Starkey Hearing Foundation for free hearing aid distribution event, volunteer in the English Corner Program held by English Literature Department, and she also joined Social Network and Extra Teaching (SWEAT) program held by University of Islam Malang.