

**CULTURAL MATERIALISM IN CORMAC MC CHARTY'S NO COUNTRY
FOR OLD MEN**
MATERIALISME KULTURAL DALAM NOVEL NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN
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Abstrak

No Country For Old Men adalah novel karya Cormac Mc Charty yang berlatar belakang di perbatasan Mexico dan Texas. Ceritanya berpusat pada karakter, Chigurh yang berprofesi sebagai pembunuh bayaran di era kejayaan bos mafia dan bandar narkotika. Lingkungan telah memberikan sumbangsih besar terhadap kepribadiannya didalam nilai atas baik dan buruk. Diceritakan bahwa kuasa terbesar terdapat pada bandar narkotika dan mafia yang merupakan penguasa doktrin kehidupan di daerah barat. Kebalikannya, polisi sebagai penegak hukum tidak berdaya dalam memerangi kejahatan yang digambarkan dengan lamban serta tidak berdayanya seorang sheriff untuk menangkap Chigurh si pembunuh berantai. Dalam mengkaji fenomena ini, metode induktif diterapkan untuk memahami relasi kuasa yang bermuara pada doktrin yang mempengaruhi pola kehidupan Chigurh sehingga berakhir menjadi seorang pembunuh psikopat. Membunuh menjadi hal yang biasa bagi seseorang yang setiap harinya membunuh. Terlebih lagi, lingkungan mengharuskan dia bersikap seperti itu. Senjata api menjadi sahabat setia dan uang menjadi prioritas bagi kebanyakan orang Dengan lingkungan yang ganjil ini, Chigurh tumbuh dan berkembang menjadi pembunuh berdarah dingin dengan motif yang berbeda dengan kebanyakan orang. Uang bukan lagi menjadi tujuan utama baginya, namun lebih pada kepuasan dan prinsip hidup. Lingkungan yang kacau balau ini telah melahirkan ideologi baru, sebuah cara pandang yang membentuk materialisme kultural. Raymond William sebagai penurus ajaran Marxist telah membuktikan bahwa kemungkinan besar ada latar dalam masyarakat yang mengharuskan setiap individunya beradaptasi dalam keadaan paling sulit, mengingat adanya struktur kelas dalam kelompok sosial. Di bagian akhir novel diceritakan bertahannya kekuatan keburukan dan ketidakmampuan dari kebajikan untuk melawan relasi kuasa yang ada. Hal ini mengajarkan bahwa doktrin dapat berpengaruh kuat terhadap kepribadian dasar seseorang.

Kata kunci: baik dan buruk, ideologi, marxist, materilisme kultural, psikopat, relasi kuasa, struktur kelas

Abstract

No Country For Old Men is written by Cormac Mc Charty which is set in the boarderline of Mexico and Texas. The story centers on Chigurh who is a professional paid killer during the glorious time of the drug dealers and mafia. The environment has highly influenced his personality about vice and virtue. In the story the strongest order comes from the capital drug dealers which make them rule the way of life. In contrast, the police as the agent of virtue can not be a great benefactor to the citizen, since in the story the sheriff is never be able to catch or even meet Chigurh in person during his act as a peculiar serial killer. To study this phenomenon, the inductive method is employed to understand the position of power which leads to strongest doctrine that has major influence to influence Chigurh's behavior as a psychopath. Killing people becomes habit for such man who sees and kills people in daily activity. Furthermore, the environment forces him to do so. Gun becomes friend, and money is the purpose. By this peculiar environment, Chigurh has grown into a psychopathic killer with his own motive that was different by the other people. Money is no longer his sole purposes but pleasure and determined principle. This chaotic environment has established a new ideology which continues to the process of cultural materialism. Raymond William as the successor of Marxist teaching has proven that there is a way for people to adjust with his environment no matter how far it is peculiar since there is a class structure in the society. The final chapter of the novel ends with the survival of the evil and inability of the virtue. The story teaches that the strongest doctrine of the time could triumph over someone's nature.

Keywords: class structure, cultural materialism, ideology, marxist teaching, psychopath, relation of power, vice and virtue,

1. Introduction

Cultural materialism is a theory which sees culture as a productive process. Raymond Williams initiates this theory in his book *Culture and Society* (1958). As the pupil of Marx, cultural materialism is always a Marxist theory which performs as an elaboration of historical materialism. For that matter, this theory also puts a high consideration in way of understanding the diverse social and material production that results in cultural materialism. Hence, cultural production is material, as much as any other sector of human activity. Thus, culture must be understood both in its own terms and as a part of its society. Focusing both internally on its' hegemonic class system and portrayal of literature within the novel. The theory is going to explore the novel as a whole in its historical and economical society.

The story of the novel is about brutal murdering. The setting of this novel is in the border between United States and Mexico. Through this novel, Cormac McCarthy describes the actions of Chigurh as a main character who has done several brutal murders and actions in a certain area and situation. The main character of this novel begins with his thrilling action by murdering people. He kills somebody even with no reason. Sometimes, he kills a person randomly without considering logical or social norms.

This thesis is going to examine how culture can affect Chigurh's personalities as a psychopath, which is reflected in the novel. The psychopath is introduced as the description of antisocial personality disorder in which the disorder leads Chigurh to behave irresponsibly towards others. In other way, this thesis will analyse how a person like Chigurh does a brutal action such as killing an ordinary person, robbing a drug store and even doing a coin toss to kill his victim without regret. For us as an ordinary person who lives in law based on Country, Chigurh actions do not naturally happen in daily life and situation. This madness is an unbelievable action that cannot be thought as a normal person.

Through *No Country For Old Men*, Cormac McCarthy elaborates the characters and all aspects of psychopath that is reflected by Chigurh. In this manner, theory is to answer how the cultural materialism could produce a Chigurh as a psychopath, and how could the society approve his existence with a very peculiar

behaviour as godless killer. Cultural materialism is taken into account since the setting is in the borderline of Texas and Mexico which is generally known as wild west. That is why the study focuses on how the setting could strongly affect Chigurh personality, not in terms of psychology but cultural materialism. The psychopath characteristic of Chigurh needs a further analysis. He is such a mysterious and brutal as he is clever and cunning. He is vividly illustrated as the person who has experienced the abnormal psychology. His abnormality is included into Antisocial Personality Disorder or Psychopath. The explanation of the term psychopath will be discussed in the second chapter, the Theoretical Framework.

2. Research Method

In completing the thesis, the writer uses library research. Blaxter et al (1997: 151) state that library research aims at producing a critical synopsis of an existing area of research writing. Books and Internet websites as the data sources in the research are very helpful to elaborate theoretical framework and the topic that will be analyzed.

The type of data in this thesis is qualitative data. Qualitative studies are those in which the description of observation is not ordinarily expressed in quantitative terms. McMillan (1992:9) claims that qualitative data are based on a research that focuses on understanding and meaning through verbal narratives and descriptions rather than through numbers. This kind of research gives several advantages for us in making conceptual analysis, clear interpretation, and appropriate perspectives as well.

In collecting data of the thesis, the writer focuses on books and internet websites as the sources of the data. The first step is through to get the primary source that is the novel, they are the setting of the story, the crime events, the violence display and other negative atmosphere. Next, the data of Chigurh as the main character are sorted to the depiction of psychopath, such as murders, breaking the rules, living alone and many others. The second step is to explain the Raymond William theory of Cultural Materialism in conjunction with the factors of shaping the Chigurh's characters. Those data are clearly explained to get a new finding that there is a relation between setting and someone's natural

character. The last step is showing the finding to the readers and giving final conclusion for the remark of literary criticism. The method used in this thesis is inductive method. It is the method of analysis in doing research by reasoning from particular point to general point.

3. Result

The character, Anton Chigurh is a man and yet he stands outside of society because he does not live by the laws. He lives by rule which is rooted from the major force of drug dealers in the crime city. He lives outside the laws that define what it is to be human, a social being. Chigurh is a beast created by the long process of killing people. His vast experience of killing people with no mercy has made him into a monster. His motive is no longer money, or pleasure, he just simply kills people because he believes in his peculiar coin toss rules. The society which is weak, the law which can not bring justice, and huge numbers of drug dealers shape his mind that killing people is no longer a vice. Yet, he is a beast that requires one to become like a beast to defeat him. The sheriff understands that he cannot defeat him because the system has changed and he cannot change himself. He can only defeat such a creature by changing the system that created him and allows him to flourish. He cannot change the system and the only way he could defeat Chigurh is to change himself like a Chigurh. He is unable to do either and thus admits defeat. Using these scopes of data, Raymond William Cultural materialism theories gives a crystal clear explanation on how the major force dominate the the society and spread the ideology. By the growing of the crime state the major force will later create a monster like Chigurh who beliefs the sole justice is by killing people and there is no hesitation to do so because it just simply rights. The oppressed ideology, the law is weak before the corrupt city. Moral has no place in the city, only the one who has money and power could survive, The class structure then emerge to depict the relation of power.

4. Discussion

It is universally accepted that killing people is something intolerable. The consequence of killing people should be dragged into court. This moral violation to take someone's life is considered as a serious crime. However, in *No*

Country For Old Men, Chigurh's action of killing deputy goes beyond any moral in the world. The environment which is full of crime, and killing people is considered to be something acceptable to run the life. Chigurh's long history as an expert assassin has made sanity goes into opposite direction of major moral. The problem occurs as the dominant power, the mafia boss orders him to do so. The practice of killing time by time has made him to turn into a being with no humanity and respect for other living being.

There is a scene where Chigurh attempts to kill the deputy. The deputy is indeed no ordinary person, the deputy is someone who is in power to make an influential command. The problem is that when Chigurh comes with evils scheme to kill the deputy with no mercy. The way he moves is very skillful, as if everything has been planned. With straight face and cold-blooded nature within, he has been trained to kill in an extraordinary way, he also knows how to make his victims to experience every minute of death. Not to mention, his past experience, he has grown merciless to see someone's death body.

Chigurh is indeed a hitman with no remorse or compassion for other human being. A deputy just brought Chigurh into the police station. The deputy is on the phone in the foreground and in the background sits a handcuffed Chigurh who slowly rises up and walks behind the deputy throwing his arms around the deputy's neck, they fall back onto the floor, Chigurh digging his handcuffs into the flailing deputy's neck. The manner in which this deputy is killed and the disposition of Chigurh is shocking and it immediately shows that Chigurh is capable of any brutal act.

A few minutes later, Chigurh uses the police car to pull a random driver off the road. He kills the driver and drives off in the new car. He kills an innocent driver to get a car, using a gun made for slaughtering cattle. From that point on, the criminal, Chigurh walks around with one or two of these huge guns, often evoking nervous laughter just by his sheer appearance and serious way he goes about his fiend job.

He simply eliminates anything or anyone that gets in his way, using whatever means are available to him. The plain fact that he favors an efficient tool for quickly dispatching cattle which is something common in Texas ranch country reinforces how little emotion he attaches to the killing of most of his victims. He'll just as soon

strangle them or shoot them. Or maybe he won't, if he has nothing to gain. Chigurh could be seen as the embodiment of capitalism or materialism who runs amok. Chigurh needs to be reduced to a symbol of something, it's ruthless, indifferent force in the single-minded pursuit of any goal whether religious, financial, political, or genocidal, his environment dictates him to act according to the power of the money. In extreme cases he lets his darkest side control his sanity.

Next, there is this a guy names Llewelyn. He steals a suitcase filled with two million dollars, but feels unable to help the only survivor, who is critically wounded after gunfire in an open field. However, during the night, in the trailer home he shares with his wife Carla Jean. The feeling of guilt prompts Llewelyn to go back to the site with a jug of water for the suffering man. However this event leads him into a dangerous journey since he took the load of the money with him. There, he must run for his life from armed thugs associated with one of the parties in the failed drug exchange who have come to retrieve the goods. He barely escapes, but realizes afterward that he still can be found by the license plates on his truck, which he was forced to abandon. To ensure his wife's safety, Llewelyn sends Carla Jean to her mother's house and then takes a room at the Regal Motel in a different town. Later, at the site of the shootout, Chigurh meets with two Mexican Gangsters who represent another party in the drug deal, in order to recover the money and heroin. His silent but deadly face gives no sign but mood of killing is always present.

Finally, Chigurh comes to the hotel to track down the money taker. When Chigurh enters the hotel room and encounters the Mexicans, he shoots the guy on the bed. He then shoots the wall next to the TV. Chigurh kills the three Mexicans after he comes out of the bathroom when Chigurh takes off his socks. Chigurh is indeed a skilled tracker. He knows how to track down his pray real quick. No hesitation in killing people, and his target making him a deadly monster. If there is person question or being an obstacle in attempt to accomplish his will, he will just terminate with any weapon he can find. In below quotation, there is also AK-47, a Russian gun which somehow can be easily found in Texas in 1980. This is also a proof that the place happened to be a place where people can easily buy gun. It is not allowed but more

into benign advice, judging from the environment that may force them to protect themselves from high city crime rate. Crime is just daily story, bloodshed never goes dry.

Every gunfight, and killing people scene are based on violent drug gangs and Wild-West-style gun battles which completely stands for reality in Mexico's border region. The organised crime and drug trafficking has become a daily menu for both Texas and Mexican citizen. The criminal cartels that have grown ever-more bloody, particularly for Chigurh who grows in this very unsupportive environment should go with his own moral of justice when no one can be trusted.

Next, Moss tries to get some sleep in his hotel room but he can't. He then looks into the satchel and feels around for anything that's not supposed to be in there. As he flips through bundles of cash, he finds a tracker device that might be used by Chigurh to locate himself. On alert, he hears someone coming up in the elevator. He phones the clerk downstairs, but he doesn't respond. Moss can hear Chigurh walking along the highway and the beeping of the tracker. Moss grabs his shotgun and sits on his bed, watching Chigurh's footsteps through the light in the hallway. Moss tries to silently cock his shotgun, but Chigurh hears him. He turns off all the lights in the hallway, and then blasts the lock off with the cattle gun. The lock hits Moss in the chest, and Moss fires through the door with his shotgun. He throws the satchel outside and jumps out of the window, narrowly being shot by Chigurh.

The data shows how skilled Chigurh in killing people by making a very little noise. His insanity drives his way of killing. He is now like a robot that can not be aborted just right after it is turned on.

A new character comes up, Wells who is hired by the drug dealer. Moss asks Wells what he thinks of Chigurh, and he says that he's a psychopath. Nonetheless, Wells is hired to take out Chigurh and retrieve the money. In this subchapter Chigurh again shows his merciless face by killing Well the assassin who is paid to kill him because Chigurh is too uncontrollable. Chigurh actually never follows any orders, he just lets his carnal nature speak on behalf of his insanity. Even to the very death, Chigurh answers Well's will to kill him.

Chigurh rarely answer's someone

question by words or sentence. He only reacts a little and kills in an instance. This psychopathic figure of his is truly the symbolization of wild west environment of Texas and Mexico. A display of violence is the most effective communication to teach someone to behave. By this rule, Chigurh has gotten a proper idea of life.

The next event is in Mexico when Moss wakes up to be greeted by Wells. He assures him that he's not the one hunting him, and Moss says that he has already known that. Wells is amazed that Moss has seen Chigurh and is still alive. Moss asks him to describe Chigurh, and Wells tells him that he is lack of humor. He will probably still kill Moss even if he hands over the cash, due to his warped principles. Wells knows that Moss is a Vietnam War veteran, the same as him, and urges him to reveal where he stashed the money. Moss refuses, and Wells says that Chigurh will undoubtedly find him and will track down Carla Jean as well. In this subchapter there will be no explanation on how Chigurh kills his pray, but more into the evidence of his inhuman crime. Moss in the story is depicted to be barely recognized due to the injuries he got during the fight with Chigurh.

This despicable finds no rest. Chigurh is indeed a personification of evil, the fruit of the crime city. No slightest hesitation in killing, and in occasion he enjoys torturing the victims. By this crime habit, it is easy to identify his work on the dead body. The remark of Chigurh is vastly-known by the sheriff but no one could possibly stop him. Justice is too lame in the wild west city.

The third scene involves Moss's wife. Earlier in the story, Chigurh talks to Moss on the telephone and tells him that it is too late to save himself. If he gives himself up then Chigurh will not harm his family. Moss refuses and so Chigurh finds himself much later sitting with Moss's wife, again with gun in hand, explaining that due to Moss's earlier decision he has no choice but to kill her. It is almost as though Chigurh is to kill her on principle, because he gave his word to Moss. He will not harm his wife if Moss gives himself up but the story goes another way round, Chigurh returns to kill Moss's wife even he has killed Moss.

For Chigurh, "the justice of it" is important because again the decisions that various people have taken throughout their lives have led to the point at which he sits with Moss's wife. He tells her: "For things at a common

destination there is a common path. Not always easy to see. But there." She loses the coin toss but, like Wells, she resists his argument and he does not yet act. He tries to explain further and she finally resigns and accepts her fate, like Wells. He killed Llewellyn's young wife, despite the fact he already had the money he wanted.

The key, in Chigurh's view, is not the way to understand him as a cold blooded murderer but as the means by which the world undertakes its accounting. He does not kill because he enjoys it or because he refuses to let people live as they might; instead, he kills precisely because the world leads him to do so. This is what cultural materialism about, the relation of power, ideology and hegemony shapes the personality so strongly so that in extreme cases he can not take off the personality he carries along the way.

There is nothing particularly extraordinary or jarring about this description. During Chigurh's first moment in the book, he acrobatically gets himself out of a pair of handcuffs, brutally strangles a police officer to escape custody, kills a man on the interstate with a cattle gun, and then steals his car. These events all take place in two and a half pages without any background information, physical description, or reason why Chigurh would do such a thing. Forty pages later, McCarthy offers a very brief physical description of Chigurh through the lens of a terrified gas station owner, revealing Chigurh's inner nature. He writes, "The man looked at Chigurh's eyes for the first time. At once glistening and totally opaque. Like wet stones" (Mc Charty, 2004: 35). This brief passage is one of the few physical descriptions the reader gets of Chigurh, and it describes Chigurh in an extremely vague fashion. The passage's strongest language illustrates that Chigurh's eyes are related to stones. Obviously, stones do not posses human qualities. They are also elemental things that have been around as long as the Earth itself.

The form of Chigurh's actions is violence in order to make the point, not because it has to be. If people are free to choose their own course in this life then people do not reflect any major force, the sole motive of life then becomes absurd. However, Texas is a different story, the drug dealers and bandits are taking over the justice. The speaking of horror and madness become the logic of this city, leading its people to believe that there is a danger awaits. The Texas ranger, sherrif and other officer are lame before

the dominating crime force. This notion of weak justice is even strengthened by the remark of the sheriff, making cultural materialism even more flourish. Only the dictates of the crime will be applied if the people want to live a life a little since protection from the sheriff is never the answer.

In this story, the sheriff realizes that he is overmatched. He cannot protect his flock. He also realizes that what he has been protected has been changed. The problem is not just, what he confronts directly in upholding the law but more into shifting value of moral. Instead, he realizes that the wider context, what makes the law, what makes civilization, is changing. He sees it in the figure of Anton Chigurh. To the sheriff he remains unnamed although real. Chigurh represents something new, something for which the sheriff is unprepared to meet. Chigurh, a monster that is produced by the hellish society sticks around like death wish. This symbolization makes Chigurh a great reminder for other people that the death is near.

Chigurh is thus the embodiment of the argument that people cannot truly reconcile. Chigurh never necessarily has freedom or free will but the society determines his destiny. People are free to choose their paths but when they arrive at the dominant power, they can not deny it. The protocol asks Chigurh to continue, even though he has to work alone and without any complaint. The force of dominant power and ideology are carried in the book via the character of Chigurh. He is an assassin because the same argument and he has to endure everything on his own. The evil environment and regular scene of crime become the major factors to shape his fiendish character. His existence should not be known by his victim, and he has to leave no track in order to keep him save. By this habit, he has grown stronger and well aware about taking care himself. In the data below, there is a display where he has to take out a bullet from his own leg without any help from medical experts.

What he did to himself is the symbol of ignorance and anti social. The process of taking out bullets from the open wound is indeed no trivial matters but he is already accustomed to working on his own. The world is too cruel to know himself because to live among the society brings a greater cost. The bullet is just a simple example; there is also another scene that shows his most anti social aspects. There is a time just

right after he killed Moss's wife, he breaks his own arm due to car crash. The bone sticks out, costing him so much blood but he still insists to go without bothering his wound or asking for help. This scene happens just right after he killed Moss' wife.

The two notions above are the proofs that Chigurh has done outrageous things to his life. His thought of abandoning social activity is conflicting with human basic needs of care and love. Chigurh rather stays alone to live a life rather than to cope with human social activities because he knows no one can be trusted in this godless city where drug dealers, robbers and other kinds of crime are very flourish. The cops and the drug dealers become his enemy, no one could stop him because the justice has fallen. His path of life requires him no friend since letting people to know about his existence makes him weak and unsafe. The only thing that makes him survive is living in loneliness.

5. Conclusion

Using these scopes of data, Raymond William Cultural materialism theories gives a crystal clear explanation on how the major force dominate the society and spread the ideology. By the growing of the crime state the major force will later create a monster like Chigurh who believes the sole justice is by killing people and there is no hesitation to do so because it's just simply right. The oppressed ideology, the law is weak before the corrupt city. Moral has no place in the city, only the one who has money and power could survive, The class structure then emerges to depict the relation of power.

Justice, in this story is performed by the image of a sheriff. He sees the problem as infusing every strata of society. How we change that or recover that is uncertain. What is certain is that within the changed world, there will be Anton Chigurh. He exists and thrives within such a lawless world because he brings a certain order to it. In effect, he shows that the wages of sin are death. He also shows, by other killings, that he does not judge by God's law. Instead, he lives and acts by his own law which is derived from the heartless society. In a sense, the finding of this research could consider him to be the nature of the society. Nature may not be reasonable, acting without justice, thought it acts according to laws. Yet, he is not simply nature, chance, or fate. Instead, he represents something

that civilization has taught him. As the result, this thesis is able to describe the relation of cultural materialism to shape a personal identity within Chigurh in which he becomes the essence of the injustice society, the ultimate product of the people with no humanity, only violence, money and power can speak.

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