

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

According to Ranney. D. J (1938), literature is defined as a fine art that serves as an interpretation of life. This definition suggests that literature surpasses mere entertainment or storytelling by delving into the profound aspects of human existence. It is capable of providing valuable insights, reflections, and interpretations of life's intricate complexities. This implies that literature can be used to explore and critique the multifaceted nature of human society, by presenting narratives that both reflect and shape our perception of the world.

Furthermore, literature has the ability to contribute to social change in addition to serving as entertainment, aesthetic expression, or personal exploration. Literature has a special strength that goes beyond individual pleasure and introspection. It has the potential to affect social change by shedding light on social injustices, challenging the oppressive structure of society, and encouraging empathy and understanding. Literature has the power to expose the realities of marginalized communities, confront dominant ideologies, and call into question established power structures through vivid storytelling and complex characterizations. (Idowu, 2013)

To interpret the complex layers of meaning in literary works, it is important to use a variety of approaches and theories. Literary works can be analyzed through a variety of lenses, including formalist criticism, psychological criticism, Marxist

criticism, and feminist criticism. Formalist criticism examines a text's formal elements, such as structure, style, and language, in order to uncover inherent aesthetic qualities. Psychological criticism investigates characters' psychological motivations and depths, shedding light on their inner workings. Feminist criticism explores gender representation and power dynamics in literature. Marxist criticism, on the other hand, focuses on the underlying power dynamics, ideological conflicts, and class struggles within a given work. Each of these approaches brings its own distinct perspectives and methodologies to the interpretation and understanding of literary works, enriching the overall literary criticism discourse. (Fard. S. F, 2016)

This paper has attempted to interpret a short story from Herman Melville that is *Bartleby, The Scrivener*. This story is claimed to be one of the most complex stories ever written by Melville, and perhaps by any American writer from the period (Fisher, 1977). "Bartleby the Scrivener" was first published in 1852 as a two-part series in Putnam's Monthly Magazine. When this short story was first published, the title was "Bartleby, the Scrivener. A Story of Wall-Street". According to Fisher (1977), Melville's intention for the extended title was likely to emphasize the intense and dramatic Wall Street setting in which the law office represents a place where employees are physically and metaphorically trapped by their job circumstances and societal expectations imposed by their employer. Because of the rigid class structure, they cut off from any possibility of advancement or personal fulfillment. These physical and social factors contribute to an atmosphere of separation and division in the story.

This Melville's work is a piece of fiction like any other short stories. However, it has a different level of technical complexity. As L. Marx (1953) describes the story as having a unique feature in that, beneath its serene and enigmatic exterior, it seems to express very little clearly. But there's a strong indication that much more is being communicated underneath the surface. The story's style is a wonderful reflection of its theme: beneath Bartleby's obviously absurd or strange actions is a universally applicable lesson.

To decipher the complex layers of meaning in the story of Bartleby, the Scrivener, this paper uses Erich Fromm's theoretical framework. Erich Fromm's theory, which is the alienation theory, integrates elements from both Marxist and psychoanalytic frameworks. It reveals the social and psychological aspects of the story, such as the reasons why the characters in the story act as they do, and the characters' complex relationships with work, society, and themselves in the context of the story's capitalist setting, which is Wall Street America.

Using Erich Fromm's lens, it can be understood that the setting, which is Wall-street, plays an important role in the story, and also influences the characters in the story. That was during a period of rapid industrialization and the rise of capitalism in America in the mid-nineteenth century. Working conditions were characterized by long hours, hazardous environments, repetitive tasks, economic insecurity, gender and class inequalities, and few opportunities for advancement. The hardships endured by the workers were immense, and they had a significant impact on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. (*America at Work / Articles and Essays / America at Work, America at Leisure*, n.d.)

Erich Fromm's theory of alienation was deeply influenced by Karl Marx. In Karl Marx's book "Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy," he explains the notion that the alienation of man is the fundamental evil prevailing in capitalist society (K. Marx et al., 1964). The concept of alienation is central to Karl Marx's critique of capitalism, which he identified as a result of the capitalist mode of production. Workers, according to Marx, are separated from the products they create in capitalist systems. Their labor becomes a commodity that capitalists own and control, resulting in a sense of disconnection and loss of control over the fruits of their own labor. Furthermore, the repetitive and monotonous nature of labor under capitalism further alienates people from the process, reducing them to cogs in the production machine. (Rosen. M, 2005)

According to Erich Fromm in his book (Marx's Concept of Man), Marx was deeply concerned with the dehumanizing effects of capitalism in the 19th century. He argued that capitalism, as an economic system, leads to the alienation of individuals from their own labor, the products they create, their fellow workers, and their essential human nature. However, expanding upon Marx's ideas, Erich Fromm, further explored the concept of alienation. Marx's primary concern is economic and labor alienation within the capitalist system. Fromm, on the other hand, broadens the concept to include social and psychological dimensions, examining how people can feel disconnected not only from their work but also from meaningful social relationships. Fromm's approach emphasized the importance of individuality, self-expression, and the pursuit of authentic and meaningful lives as

a means of combating alienation and reclaiming human agency. (Asatulloyev. I, 2019)

In the context of "Bartleby, the Scrivener," the theme of alienation resonates strongly with the main character, Bartleby. He displays a profound sense of alienation, as evidenced by his withdrawal from society and refusal to conform to the demands and expectations placed on him. Bartleby's actions and his iconic phrase "I would prefer not to" highlight his opposition to the dehumanizing effects of capitalist labor as well as his struggle for autonomy and authenticity. In a historical sense, one could argue that Bartleby is trapped by the emerging capitalist economy, which requires him to sell his time and labor for low wages. We can gain insights into the broader critique of capitalism and its impact on human lives by examining Bartleby's alienation experiences within the short story.

There are already research papers that discuss alienation. In their research paper, Ishtiaq et al (2019) explore the theme of alienation from a Marxist perspective in the book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" by Mueenuddin. The main objective is to examine how class distinctions and power struggles contribute to the experience of alienation among different social classes during the twentieth century as depicted in the stories. The paper recognizes the presence of gender concerns and inequalities in the narratives, highlighting the intricate power dynamics between characters such as masters and servants, parents and children, spouses and lovers.

Similarly, this research paper (Radu, 2016) explores the theme of alienation in the works of Herman Melville, which is the same short story this paper tries to

examine, and Charles Dickens. Both authors portray protagonists who are trapped in their situations due to societal factors, resulting in alienation and a sense of hopelessness. Dickens criticizes corrupt systems that make people passive and destroy their lives, whereas Melville depicts industrial society's dehumanizing effects. The paper investigates how alienation affects characters, their coping mechanisms, and their ultimate fate. The study emphasizes the works' similarities and differences, emphasizing the significance of space as a symbol of isolation. Both authors create compelling depictions of alienation and its impact on individuals in their respective societies through their narratives.

In previous studies, such as Louise K. Barnett's essay 'Bartleby as Alienated Worker' (1974), the theme of alienation in Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' has been examined through the lens of Marx's concept of the alienated worker, demonstrating capitalism's cold and uncaring nature. This thesis study, on the other hand, takes a unique approach by examining the theme of alienation within the context of capitalism through the theoretical lens of Erich Fromm. Using Fromm's theories of alienation and individuality, this research provides a new and different perspective on the alienation experiences depicted in the short story.

The theoretical lens used in this study is different from that used in Barnett's essay. While Barnett focuses on Marx's concept of the alienated worker, this thesis investigation delves into Fromm's theories, which provide a framework for understanding the social aspect that alienates the characters and the characters' experiences and reactions to alienation in the capitalist system. This study, by using

Fromm's lens, sheds light on the complexities of alienation within capitalism and provides a different analytical perspective.

Furthermore, this study takes a multidimensional approach to alienation by examining the experiences and responses of various characters in 'Bartleby, the Scrivener.' Rather than focusing solely on Bartleby, this study investigates the viewpoints of other characters such as The Narrator, Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut. The study provides an analysis of how different individuals embody and confront alienation within the capitalist system through this examination.

This study also investigates possibilities for individual resistance and liberation within the capitalist system. The analysis, which draws on Fromm's ideas, provides insights into how individuals can resist and navigate the dehumanizing effects of capitalism. By emphasizing the possibility of resistance and liberation, this study adds a practical and empowering dimension to the study of alienation in 'Bartleby, the Scrivener.'

1.2. Statements of the problems

This study seeks to answer several questions relating to the issue of Alienation and its impact on individuals as stated below:

1. How does the theme of alienation in Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' manifest within the context of capitalism?
2. How does Erich Fromm's mechanisms of escape provide a unique perspective on the experiences and responses of the characters in the story?

3. How can characters in the story find liberation within the capitalist system, based on Fromm's ideas?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve three main goals, as shown in the following:

1. To find out how the theme of alienation manifests itself in the context of capitalism in the short story of 'Bartleby, the Scrivener.'
2. To apply Erich Fromm's mechanisms of escape to the experiences and responses of the story's characters.
3. To draw on Fromm's ideas to explore potential avenues for individuals in the story to find liberation within the capitalist system.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study analyzes Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' to examine the theme of alienation and the characters' escape mechanism in the context of capitalism. In order to investigate the characters' experiences and responses, the research will primarily rely on Erich Fromm's theoretical framework of alienation. The research will be limited to a qualitative analysis of the text, with no empirical data or quantitative measurements collected. Additionally, the investigation of resistance and liberation within the capitalist system will be explored conceptually based on Fromm's ideas from his book "Fear " without conducting interviews or surveys with real-world individuals.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the existing literary scholarship on an analysis of Melville's work and shed light on the complexities of human experiences within economic systems. This study also adds to the existing body of research on Fromm's theories and their application to literary analysis, by the application of Erich Fromm's theoretical framework of alienation that provides a unique perspective and allows for a deeper understanding of the characters' behaviors and motivations. Lastly, by exploring the possibilities for resistance and liberation within the capitalist system, based on Fromm's ideas, this study offers insights into the potential for individual agency and empowerment in the face of alienating societal structures. This study has implications for readers, scholars, and individuals who want to understand and challenge the effects of alienation in capitalist societies.

1.6. Approach of the Study

This study employs a literary research approach to analyze the theme of alienation, mechanisms of escape, and possible liberation in Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' within the context of capitalism, by applying Erich Fromm's theoretical framework. The primary method of data collection will involve a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the literary text through close reading and textual analysis. Key themes, symbols, and character interactions related to alienation will be identified and critically analyzed to uncover the nuances and manifestations of alienation within the capitalist context. The findings will be interpreted and discussed in light of Fromm's theoretical concepts of alienation, and

mechanisms of escape. Secondary sources such as scholarly articles, books, and theoretical works will be utilized to support and enrich the analysis. The study will adopt an interpretive and exploratory approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

1.7. Organization of the Study

This research is divided into five chapters to ensure a clear and coherent research paper. Chapter one is an introductory section, which serves as a starting point for the study, providing background for the research topic and emphasizing the importance of analyzing the theme of alienation in the context of capitalism in 'Bartleby, the Scrivener.' In addition, the introduction describes the study's objectives, research questions, research approaches, and overall structure.

The second chapter consists of a synopsis and biography of the short story. A short story's synopsis gives a brief summary of the story's main themes, plot points, and important elements. It facilitates readers' comprehension of the story's meaning and correlation to the study immediately. The author's life, works, and influences are all covered in the biography section.

The third chapter is a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework section will provide a thorough examination of relevant research on alienation, capitalism, and literary analysis of 'Bartleby, the Scrivener.' It will investigate existing scholarly perspectives and theories, with an emphasis on the theoretical framework of alienation. In addition, it looks into Erich Fromm's theoretical framework of alienation and its mechanisms of escape. This chapter's goal is to set

up a solid theoretical foundation for the research and to provide a theoretical lens through which the following analysis.

The fourth chapter is findings and discussion. This chapter, it provides a detailed examination of 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' through the lens of alienation and mechanisms of escape in the context of capitalism. It will look at key themes, symbols, and character interactions related to the concept of alienation, drawing on the theoretical framework established in previous chapters. To strengthen the analysis, the findings will be supported by relevant textual evidence.

Lastly, the fifth chapter is the conclusion and suggestion. It summarizes the study's key findings, highlighting the contributions made to the field of study. It also highlights potential future research directions on the analysis of 'Bartleby, the Scrivener.'

In addition, to ensure transparency and acknowledge the scholarly contributions of others in the field, the references are added to provide a comprehensive list of all sources cited throughout the study, using the proper citation style.