

FITZGERALD'S CRITIQUES ON AMERICAN CAPITALISM IN HIS "THE GREAT GATSBY"

Tsamratul'aeni

tsamratulaeni3@gmail.com

Cokroaminoto Palopo University

Abstract

The research aims to describe Fitzgerald's criticism presented through the novel, and to identify the capitalism concept portrayed in the novel. The research reveals the existence of the capitalism in the form of literary work. Method in the research is the qualitative descriptive method with the literary sociological approach. Data in the research are the characters and narrator's expressions performed and uttered throughout the work. The expression are situated in several fragments in the work and they are analyzed continually. The research result indicates that capitalism is portrayed through the attitudes of the characters in the novel. They represents the materialism and capitalism which has certainly created the gaps in the social life by indicating the different places of the West Egg and East Egg. The other gap is the different status that the characters belong to. The capitalism is repeatable in our current life because morally the community nowadays has also been corrupted as has been presented in newspapers everyday, as the examples murder, rape, divorce, and abuse. Moral decadence is the result of lack of spiritual values, the impact of money or materialism, lack of performing religious duties, and like violating the social rules.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan kritik Fitzgerald yang disajikan melalui novelnya dan mengidentifikasi konsep kapitalisme yang digambarkan dalam novel. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosiologi sastra. Data penelitian adalah ungkapan-ungkapan para pemain dan narator yang dilakukan atau diucapkan melalui novel '*The Great Gatsby*'. Mereka berada dalam beberapa fragmen dan dianalisis secara terus menerus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kapitalisme tergambar melalui tingkah laku para tokoh novel tersebut. Mereka mewakili materialisme dan kapitalisme dan sudah pasti telah menciptakan kesenjangan kehidupan sosial dengan membedakan tempat antara *West Egg* dan *East Egg*. Kesenjangan lainnya adalah perbedaan status yang dimiliki oleh para tokoh novel tersebut. Kapitalisme juga berulang pada kehidupan kita saat ini karena masyarakat juga secara moral telah rusak seperti diberitakan berbagai surat kabar setiap harinya, misalnya pembunuhan, pemerkosaan, perceraian, dan penyalahgunaan wewenang. Kerusakan moral terjadi akibat kurangnya nilai-nilai spiritual, pengaruh uang atau materialisme, kurang menjalankan tugas-tugas agama, dan pelanggaran aturan-aturan sosial.

Introduction

A novel as part of literary works is built up from its interrelated intrinsic elements such as theme, subject matter, plot, characterization, mood, setting, and point of view. In creating the story of a novel, the authors may choose a social problem taken from society for their theme of their story.

The authors in expressing their ideas on those problems may take one of the characters to be their spokesman. We know that a story of the ideas of the authors could be expressed by several ways through what is called point of view. Thus, point of view may convey the author's ideology through the spokesman or a narrator. Point of view refers to ideas, opinions and attitudes of the characters in their interactions with other characters. As an element of a novel, it plays in determining the side of the narrator that takes upon. Jones (1968: 29) defines point of view in a novel as *"an important element in telling a story because it determines how much the readers must know, and can know what is happening"*. A historical novel tends to be fictive. The historical figures and events are used merely as historical fact that becomes the basic issue of the story. While the way the elements arranged in a story is all imaginative. Historical novel is not merely giving an understanding to history, but also giving a dialectic between past time and the contemporary of literary society in general (Ratna, 2005: 49).

The novel, "The Great Gatsby" is one of the greatest literary documents by Scott Fitzgerald in 1920 and published in 1925. Fitzgerald is the one of brilliant young novelist in twentieth century. That novel is worth being restudied again because it deals with human values that embody the existence and relationship with human and environment, such as: money, love, materialistic, and killing each other are matters that relate to earning a living and social exchanges. These issues are still being quieted up to now and they can be viewed from the language, attitudes, behaviors and ways of reactions characters in the novel. All cyclically presents of human's life. The novel tries to expose the social classes. They are the upper and the lower class in different roles. These issues are still remain existing that can be shown in the forms of the language, attitudes, behaviors, and evolving interactions among the characters in the novel.

Additionally, the novel also contains concepts of capitalism includes their dreams to achieve freedom, certainly related to happiness and money. The beliefs are based on the assumption that each people, no matter what his origins are, can succeed in changing his social position and making his dreams come true through his own efforts in getting a new, free, and better life. The American Dream became a quest for a new material and luxurious life. Fitzgerald is the author who respectively made the picture of the situation of America at that time. Through of “The Great Gatsby” Fitzgerald draws a picture concept of capitalism in American desire and ambition, in which the American economy soared, bringing unprecedented levels of prosperity to the nation in 1920’s period.

Practically, this study is intended to provide several ways to promote elements of American Capitalism. The structure of this literary work contains elements of American Dream in which one of them is capitalism that caused great social and economic changes. Viewing such great changes, Fitzgerald delivers messages in the novel by describing his critics on capitalism. The result of the study is expected to be of some help workable in any literary class activities.

Literary Sociological Approach

The society is an assemble place to make communication each other. In the society, they have behavior, culture and same custome which show their character and their life. Alimanda (1993: 11:43) said that sociology is the central of human life include system, value, relationship and class.

Talking about literary sociological approach, an explanation before certainly reveals close relationship with literature. Literature is regarded as “*The expression of society, as speech is the expression of human*” (Levin, 1973: 56). In this case, the sociologist said that novel is a mirror of the real condition which reflected the society in that period. Sociological theory discussed about that possibility which analyzes the relationship between the novel and the real condition of the society in that period (Crossman in Ratna, 2005: 72). Endraswara (2008: 77-95) has also stated that literary sociology as a branch of literary research is considered reflective. With this approach, writers are interested in exploring literature as the reflection of society. The assumption is because social life causes a literary work to exist and a literary work is considered to be

successful if it is able to reflect its era when the literary work was written. On the connection between literary work and society, and scientist's idea of literary work as reflection of social reality as mentioned above, this writer involves three elements in order to better understand the American Capitalism: *The Great Gatsby*; Fitzgerald as its author; and situation of America when the literary was written.

The sociology talks about people and environment. Literary study talks about the meaning the meaning of human's life and everything about this life. Sociology and literary study have the similar object of the study, as Endraswara (2008: 78) said both of them study about human. Despite sociology and literary study have the different field of study, but they can complete each other. Literature and the world we live in influence each other, it is understood that from literature we can get information about certain social document we like to observe. The important perspective of sociological approach is that literature is not only the effect of social causes but also the cause of social effect. It shows the relation between sociology and literature, these two influence each other. This research also takes into account social background and social conditions of America when the novel was created. In other words by using the literary sociological of the social situations of America when *The Great Gatsby* was written in order to better understand this novel as a reflection of the social situation of America at the day of age.

This study is laid out within the use of sociological approach to examine the text of Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby' and relate it to American society at the day of age in twentieth century when the novel was written, and the author's background. The research firstly explores the characters, setting, plot are relate to *The Great Gatsby's* novel. Second, this research examines capitalism concept portrayed in the characters in his novel because from his description is the decay of the social reality in America relate to the money and materialism, include morals, values, and the frustration of a modern society. Third, the writer try to deliver topics that were important, controversial, and interesting back in 1920's America. The novel is an exploration of the American Dream as it exists in a

corrupt period of history. Exactly, that illustration conveys that blind ambition can result tragedy in any society.

Social Aspects of Capitalism

The case above remind us 18 and 19 centuries. Capitalism appeared in the French country where the state adopts a monarchy. Only the Aristocrats and the right to rule over land ownership, land rent tax increase to the people especially the lower middle class. However, after the government system turned into a republic where democracy appears, then it limits the movement of the aristocrats. Lower middle class who are diligent and trying to get tenure as a source of business as long as they are able to buy and pay for the resources they get. But however, capitalism which was originally aimed at the welfare of the people in the end became a separate threat to society. Capitalist explore the natural resources to the point of extreme and exploit natural and human resources on a large scale devastating socio-economic system in which they are only concerned with material values without considering the social and community welfare. Welfare is for those elite classes, while the working class or lower class is getting worse and miserable. Veblen (1994) also added that the search for wealth, pleasure and goods through unfair competition is part of a predatory instinct (29). Life is a lot of fun as well as suppression of victory (44), including the gambling is category of barbarian.

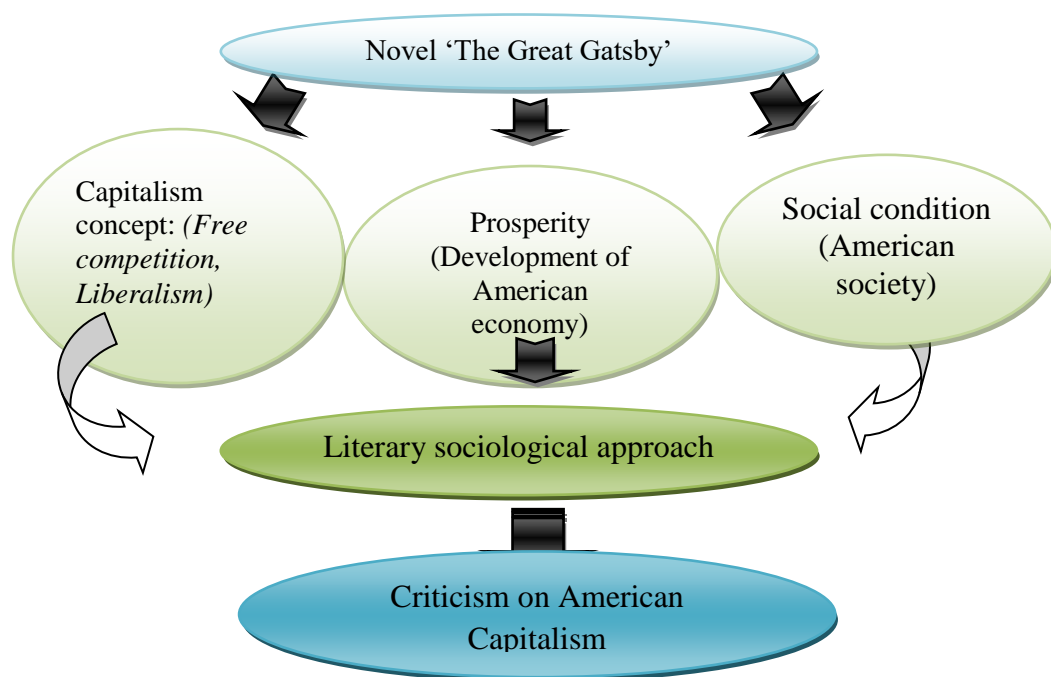
Capitalism therefore rests on the desire to have a way to work but the ambition to achieve something that requires a competition to guide the effort of each individual. On the other is innovation: Businesses in capitalism will always try to get ahead of the game by trying to create something new for the consumer. It is good enough to drive the spirit but a lot of negative impacts arising from capitalism. There is no perfect competition but monopolistic competition beside that creates class conflicts, exploitations, propaganda and so on. Capitalism point is that just causes misery in communities particularly impacted on the lower classes.

Research Design and Methodology

The primary data are the direct expressions expressed by the characters in Fitzgerald's novel 'The Great Gatsby' that consists of 9 chapters and 193 pages published by Charles Scribner's Sons. This novel was published in 1925. The secondary data are of any information concerning Fitzgerald's historical background and social situations of America in twentieth century when the novel was written. The method used to collect the intended data is the form of documentation. This research uses descriptive method to analyze the data. The sociological approach was then applied to analyze the data includes intrinsic element in the form of a comprehensive analysis.

Conceptual Framework

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Findings

Finding relates to the social aspect of capitalism that have been converted in the form of critiques. To what extent Fitzgerald's novel represents his own critics and How is capitalism concept portrayed in the novel characters? The writer concludes that Fitzgerald as an author not only gives an overview of the situation of America in 1920s through the characters in the novel, but from the pictures it creates some criticisms that:

- a. Fitzgerald criticizes American society at that time (1920s) due to the delirious as a result of the ambitions and desires in pursuit the wealth. They do anything to earn money as much as possible. They justify any means to get what they want.
- b. Fitzgerald's novel also presents a very glamorous lifestyle of the modern woman emerged. It becomes a challenge for the older generation in the face of the younger generation who are free interaction including sex practices justifies a result of the changes and shifts in moral values and the changing mindset of society in the modern era. Therefore, the author of the novel serves as a warning that the problem is not very good and hurt the woman herself. In this case such an approach is necessary in the moral education from the family in order to shield themselves from the promiscuity that could ruin them. In addition, provides the opportunity for women to get a decent

education both at school and higher education levels again in order to hone their skills in positive terms so that they are more creative as modern women, do not like the modern woman in mind, they are free to do anything and contains negative values.

- c. Finally, that of all picture in the novel, Fitzgerald said that the slump that occurred in America in the 20th century completely destroying American society. The novel becoming a warning to the people that come from any social status (the upper class and the lower classes) that religious education is very important as a form of approach to God so that humans are always grateful. Besides, people in trying to, not only put forward the sheer ambition and desire to accomplish something but coupled with practice worship.

Discussion

This part the writer gathers some informations that relate to the topic is Capitalism. That informations surely containing fragments of capitalism and critiques from the author and other man of letter. The importance of money / capitalism in the novel. Money and capitalism seems to be the essence of this novel. In this case, the writer shows some of sentences related to money in the novel:

- a) *"I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew".* (Fitzgerald,1925:6)
- b) *"His family were enormously wealthy-even in college his freedom with money was matter for reproach".* (Fitzgerald,1925:8)
- c) *"Here's your money, go and buy yourself ten more dogs"* (Fitzgerald,1925:31).
- d) *"My dear,'she told her sister in a high mincing shout,'most of these fellas will cheat you every time. All they think of is money".* (Fitzgerald,1925:34)
- e) *"They say he's a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's. That's where all his money comes from."* (Fitzgerald,1925:36)
- f) *"They were, at least, agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a view words in the right key".* (Fitzgerald,1925:46)
- g) *"I was gas blue with lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars".* (Fitzgerald,1925:48)
- h) *"My family all died and I came into a good deal of money".* (Fitzgerald,1925:71)
- i) *"I handed the money to Katspaugh."* (Fitzgerald,1825:75)

- j) *"The day before the wedding he gave her string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars". (Fitzgerald,1925:82)*
- k) *"Why, I tought-why, look here, old sport, you don't make much money, do you?" (Fitzgerald,1925:88)*
- l) *"Well,this would interest you. It wouldn't take up much of your time and you mught puck up a nice bit of money". (Fitzgerald,1925:88)*
- m) *"It took me just three years to earn the money that bought it". (Fitzgerald,1925:96)*
- n) *"And it was from Cody that he inherited money-a legacy of twenty-five dollars". (Fitzgerald,1925:108)*
- o) *"Her voice is full of money". (Fitzgerald,1925:128)*
- p) *"I need money pretty bad and I was wondering what you were going to do with your old car". (Fitzgerald,1925:131)*
- q) *"What do you want money for, all of a sudden?" (Fitzgerald,1925:131)*
- r) *"What do I owe you"?, "Dollar twenty". (Fitzgerald,1925:132)*
- s) *"He came to us dead broke. He was very glad to pick up some money, old sport". (Fitzgerald,1925:143)*
- t) *"She wanted her life shaped now, immediately-and the decision must be made by some force-of love, of money". (Fitzgerald,1925:161)*
- u) *"Come on have some luch with me, 'I sid. He ate more than four dollars' worth of food in half an hour". (Fitzgerald,1925:182)*
- v) *"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy-they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast careless". (Fitzgerald,1925:191)*

Moral values related capitalism and the effects of it in social environment, therefore, the writer classifies as the following statements :

- a) Capitalism in this study is refer to money oriented or materialis
- b) Capitalism is repeteable in our current time, because society today is also morally corrupted. In the newspaper on any given day stories appear of murder, rape, divorce, and abuse, all examples of moral corruption.
- c) An idea of moral corruption has been continuously existing and is available anywhere as seen or read or watched from recent issues in the newspaper or on television. Moral corruption is the result of lack of spiritual values, the influence of money or materialism, lack of performing religious duties and like violeting social rules.
- d) As an author through the novel, Fitzgerald said that in working hard to earn money and gain a lot, not only put forward the ambition and desire on material but it needs to pay attention and care about social values that promotes welfare, prosperity and safety, mutual benefit between social classes both upper class and lower class without creating social inequality.

- e) Author does not mean advocating such acts of corruption, exploitation and so on in the novel, but urge the reader to reflect on the problems experienced people that capitalism issue, so just put the issue appropriately. Because if people are so adored capitalism, then themselves would lose. Welfare destroyed, the community felt it was not safe and prosperous again.

Conclusion

Fitzgerald's criticism of Capitalism can be seen as a move to subtly promote his an ideology. Fitzgerald's novel stands as a mocking critique of American capitalist culture and the ideology that promotes it. One of the most effective ways, *The Great Gatsby* criticizes capitalist culture is by showing the concepts of capitalism in the novel. For example is the novel shows the different social status among the characters, their ambition to achieve properties, beside that the novel shows the characters with their crime activities and other descriptions related the capitalism. In this case, the wealthiest man in the novel is Tom. He relates to the world only through his money: for him, all things and all people are commodities.

Fitzgerald implies that the Capitalist system is flawed because at the conclusion of the novel, all of the characters that represents typical of American Capitalism fall from grace to the world of utter despair. Fitzgerald's criticisms work to warn 1920's Americans of their behavior. Additionally, *The Great Gatsby* delivers some description of 1920's America that a capitalistic society is corrupt. It corrupts the American Dream because solely desire wealth and material creates class struggle and conflict each other.

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