

THE UNREACHABLE DREAM OF LABOR IN JOHN STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*

(MIMPI BURUH YANG TIDAK TERCAPAI DI DALAM KARYA JOHN STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*)

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Abstract

The Grapes of Wrath is a fiction novel which explores about American society in 1930s. Especially, this novel explains about the life of labor in that time. In 1930s, the great depression happened, this condition made the life of labor became harder. The labors not only become homeless but they also become jobless. They are also hard to find another job and the government cannot help anything. The main topic of this research is unreachable dream of labor. This research uses qualitative research method. The data collection are about the information related to unreachable dream of labor in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The discussion is begun with the analysis of the unreachable dream in the novel. In analyzing the problem, this research uses Genetic Structuralism by Lucien Goldman. The theory is used to find out the unreachable dream in the novel. Then, the next discussion is to show the worldview which prevails in the society. The last is to find the ideology of Capitalism constructed in the society. The result of this research is the unreachable dream of labor happens because the effect of great depression and capitalism. The capitalism makes the labor becomes object exploitation. In this condition the high class becomes the superpower and the lower and middle class do not have power to fight them.

Keywords: *American Society, Capitalism, Genetic Structuralism, Sociological Fiction, The Grapes of Wrath, Unreachable Dream.*

Abstrak

The Grapes of Wrath adalah sebuah novel fiksi yang mengangkat keadaan masyarakat sosial pada tahun 1930an. Secara khusus, novel ini menjelaskan tentang kehidupan kaum buruh pada tahun tersebut. Pada tahun 1930an, Great Depression terjadi, para buruh tidak hanya menjadi tunawisma tetapi mereka juga menjadi pengangguran. Mereka juga sulit untuk menemukan pekerjaan lain dan pihak pemerintah tidak dapat memberi bantuan apapun. Topic utama dalam penelitian ini adalah mimpi yang tidak tercapai oleh para buruh. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Data yang terkumpul adalah semua informasi yang berhubungan dengan mimpi yang tidak tercapai di dalam novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Diskusi dimulai dengan menganalisis bagaimana sebenarnya mimpi yang tidak tercapai di dalam novel tersebut. Di dalam menganalisis masalah tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan teori Strukturalisme Genetika oleh Lucien Goldmann. Teori tersebut digunakan untuk menemukan mimpi yang tidak tercapai dari para buruh. Kemudian, diskusi selanjutnya adalah untuk menunjukkan pandangan dunia apa yang berlaku di masyarakat. Masalah yang terakhir adalah untuk menemukan bagaimana ideologi kapitalisme di bangun di masyarakat. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah mimpi tersebut tidak tercapai karena efek dari Great Depression dan kapitalisme. Kapitalisme membuat kaum buruh menjadi objek eksploitasi. Di dalam kondisi ini kaum kelas atas menjadi pemegang kekuasaan dan kaum kelas bawah tidak memiliki kekuatan untuk melawannya.

Kata Kunci: *Masyarakat Amerika, Kapitalisme, Strukturalisme Genetika, Fiksi Sosial, The Grapes of Wrath, Mimpi yang Tidak Tercapai.*

Introduction

The Grapes of Wrath is the phenomenal book written by John Steinbeck. The book published at 14th April 1939 by The Viking Press - James Lloyd. This novel shows about the American people life in 1930s, especially the labor life. Through the novel, Steinbeck shows the terrible effects of

great depression for lower and middle class. The great depression has caused the labor or lower and middle class lose their home and job. Then, they are also hard to find another job because the capacity of job is not suitable with the capacity of unemployed people. Even they find a job, they only become object exploitation of high class. They work all day long but they get a minimum salary, moreover

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they do not get money. They only get a check or slip to be exchanged in the store of factory owner.

Steinbeck wants to tell to the world how bad the life of labor in that era is. The condition becomes harder because the ideology of capitalism prevails in that time. Actually, Steinbeck wants to criticize the ideology of capitalism which takes side with high class. The capitalism makes the high class becomes richer but it also makes the lower class becomes poorer. The high class controls the market system and the condition in that era even there is a president. Moreover, Steinbeck mentioned the bank or high class as a monster, because they absorb the lower class until nothing left.

Steinbeck shows the bad treatment of high class through his novel. The high class confiscates the labor's home and land without replacement. It makes the labor confused what should they do to face this condition. Even they move to another place the treatment that they get same as the first place. Steinbeck wrote the events inside the novel same as the real event in 1930s. The events in 1930s are not only inspired Steinbeck but it also forces Steinbeck to change the condition through his novel. Through his novel, Steinbeck brings the idea and the hope of his social class.

In finding the answer of problem, this research uses genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann. The theory is used to find the human fact, transindividual subject, and the worldview inside the novel. Besides, the theory is also used to describe how the unreachable dream of labor actually.

Research Methodology

The type of this research is qualitative research. This research is used to explain information and facts about the unreachable dream in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The kind of data in this research are two. There are primary data and secondary data. The primary data are the information related to unreachable dream in the novel. The secondary data are the facts or information which support the analysis of problem such as the theory, the information about the American life in 1930s, etc.

This research analyzes the unreachable dream of labor, the worldview that prevail in the society, and the construction of capitalism ideology. The first step, this research analyzes the unreachable dream of labor, in finding the unreachable dream, this research use human fact and significant structure. In applying the human fact and significant structure, this research will find the sameness of the structure in the real life and in the novel. Besides, by understanding the human fact and significant structure, this research will find the factors that make the dream becomes unreachable. Then, in finding the worldview, the term of transindividual subject is used. The transindividual subject will show the position of the author in the society and which worldview that prevails in the society. The last, in finding the ideology of capitalism construction, first, this research analyzes the human fact phenomena and the significant structure. Further, this research analyzes the effects of the ideology in the society.

Result

The unreachable dream happens because the effect of great depression and capitalism. In great depression people are hard to get what they want as American dream has offered. Besides, the capitalism makes the lower and middle class become object exploitation of high-class.

Discussion

This research discusses three problems. First problem is the unreachable dream of labor in the novel. Then, the ideology prevails in the novel. The last is the construction of capitalism ideology.

1. The Life of Labor in United State in 1930s

This chapter deals with the explanation of the life of labor in United States in 1930s. Here, I will explain about the life of labor based on the problems that they faced, the treatment that they got, and their struggle to get a better life. Besides, I will also explain about the factor that makes them live in sorrowful. Then the data will be connected with the term of genetic structuralism theory. In this chapter I will use human fact and significant structure to connect the data with the theory.

American people in 1930s faced great depression. Great depression is the time when American people lost their prosperity. As I read in English.illinois.edu/maps/depression/about, the great depression was an economic slump in North America, Europe, and other which began in 1929s and finished in 1939s. Based on the article I read, the great depression gave economic impact that made American people lost their prosperity suddenly. Here, great depression was like a nightmare for American people. In great depression they did not only become jobless but they also became homeless.

In 1930s the labor's life is hard. They decide to move to another place, but their life still never changed. The condition becomes worse because the president in that time does not know what he should do. The president and government only hang up the solution of this problem into The God. Until the new president has selected, the condition was still same. Then, time by the time the new president introduces the new policy to change the condition. Even though it is hard in the first time and it still cannot make them release from great depression but the new policy gives the better effect to the society.

2. The Unreachable Dream of Labor in The Grapes of Wrath

I will explain about the life of labor through the novel, capitalism in the novel, and the capitalism in American society in 1930s as the last explanation in this chapter. The analysis of the data will be connected with the term of genetic structuralism. Here, I will use transindividual subject, worldview, human fact, and significant structure. The explanation of each part will be explained below.

a. The Life of Labor in *The Grapes of Wrath*

This subchapter deals with the life of labor through the novel. The specification of this subchapter based on the treatment of high class through the labor, the unreachable

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 dream of labor, and the surviving of labor. As we know from the previous chapter that the labor lived in pain and they are hard to reach their dream. Here the reason of unreachable dream will be explained clearly based on the quotation and analysis using genetic structuralism.

The American people especially the labor in the novel faced a same problem as the reality, related to the American society life in 1930s. They faced a great depression and dustbowl period in the novel. They lost their home and land. They became unemployed because they had debt with bank and they cannot pay it. Then, they only saw their land and home were handled by bank. They only stood in silent looking their prosperity became vanish.

The society get a big pressure from this condition. They think that they are better to leave this land and move to another country to find a new hope. The land is not good enough to plant again. The society and Joad family decided to move to California. They heard that California has a good land to farm, good place to get job, and good condition to live in. They hope that they can find a new joy of life in California. If they forced to live in this land they will never have a long life because nothing can be eaten.

Even though they reach in California, their life were still hard. It does not same as their expectation that they can find a better life in California. Although they live in California their dream is unreachable. The dream is reachable when they can prove and show their dream to the world. Besides, it was said reachable when they can enjoy their hard work. The dream was unreachable when their dream is not same as the reality. Then, they also did not change their life to be better. They still lived in sorrow until the death pick up them.

It can be said from the explanation above that the labor face a human fact related to Goldmann theory. The human fact is the result of human behavior as Goldmann stated in his book. By this statement, I can say that the human facts of the novel are the economic crisis, the great depression era, the dream of labor, the unity of the society, and the family love. Then, the whole significant structures of this novel are the struggle of people, the great depression effects, and the human exploitation. It is because these phenomena are always exist and discussed from the beginning of the novel until the ending of novel. The existential of the structure is called as the significant structure (Goldmann, 1981:8-11).

b. The Capitalism Effects on The Labor in *The Grapes of Wrath*

The capitalism gave a bad effects through the labor life. The capitalism made the condition of the labor became harder. They are not only cannot reach their dream, but they are also hard to take a breath. First, we must understand the meaning of capitalism to say the bad effects of capitalism. As I quote from oxford dictionary, the meaning of capitalism is an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit rather than by the state. The quotation explains that the market is controlled by the factory owner. In this side, I can understand that the factory owner is the high class position. Besides, the quotation also explains that the factory owner is stronger than the government. Then, by the quotation, I can

understand that the position of lower and middle class are hard. Here they only become exploited by high class. Further, to make my understanding and quotation of capitalism stronger, I also quote the meaning of capitalism from Adam Smith. Adam Smith through his book *The Wealth of Nation* written in 1776 said that capitalism derives from the word *capital*, itself deriving from the Latin word *caput*, meaning *head* (as a head of cattle, a moveable wealth). He also said that in capitalism money takes the place of cattle as the unit of movable.

It can be seen from quotation above how terrible the capitalism for the labor life in 1930s was. The lower and middle class do not have a power to fight the factory owner or the high class. They only approve the treatment of high class. In this time, capitalism kills the lower and middle class little by little. The capitalism can be seen in *The Grapes of Wrath* and the society of American in 1930s. The Capitalism gives a bad effect through the society, especially lower and middle class. The capitalism also makes the labor dream unreachable. Besides, the capitalism does not give a chance for labor to dream because living in capitalism era makes the labor hard to find a job, even to take a breath. The effect of capitalism will be explained clearly below.

Related to the previous explanation, the capitalism effects are not only in the American society in 1930s, but it is also in the novel too. Steinbeck wants to show the enormity of capitalism through the novel. He explains the effects of capitalism from the character conversation and the author narration. Steinbeck wants to criticize the capitalism ideology through the novel.

Steinbeck shows the capitalism through the bad treatment of the high class through the labor. He mentions that the bank as high class has superior position. It is because the bank holds the condition. The bank confiscates the land and forces the labor to leave their land and home without replacement.

The capitalism treats the labor in bad treatment. Through the novel, I can conclude that the capitalism is not suitable with the social phenomena in that time. It refers to the impact that the labor or lower class got. They became unemployed and lost their prosperity. Moreover they were also hard to find a job, even they moved to another place, they still lived in pain and got unfair treatment.

c. The Ideology of Capitalism in America in 1930s

This subchapter deals with the explanation about Capitalism ideology in America in 1930s. The explanation will be connected with the term of Genetic Structuralism. The term that is used in this subchapter is transindividual subject and worldview. Transindividual subject is used to explain the position of author. Then the worldview is used to explain which vision or idea that prevail in the society or novel. The meaning of worldview is the phenomena of social condition in certain community made a unique vision or idea in that time (Goldmann, 1981:112). The worldview of every certain community is different from another.

The position of the author is as transindividual subject. The transindividual subject means that the author not only becomes the individual who writes the novel but he also becomes the part of community who has an idea to convey.

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In this novel, Steinbeck represents his community. Steinbeck came from moderate family. It means that he came from middle class and he will represent the idea of middle class.

Here, through the analysis of the data, it can be said that the ideology of capitalism kills the labor little by little. It killed the labor little by little because the ideology of capitalism was not suitable with the social condition in 1930s. The labor in 1930s faced great depression, the effect of great depression was hard, and then the capitalism also treated the labor bad too. It can be said that the labor life is like a person who falls then someone else steps him. The great depression and capitalism make the dream of labor becomes unreachable.

Steinbeck wants people in the world realize how terrible capitalism is through his novel. The capitalism is not a wrong ideology but the government or the society need to be wiser in using the capitalism ideology. Steinbeck explains that in capitalism high class becomes luckier than lower or middle class. The high class can control anything and the labor cannot do anything. Even the labor gets a job, they cannot fulfil their daily needs. Through his novel, Steinbeck wants to represent his class idea that they want to get a better life and release from capitalism and great depression. They are too tired to be object exploitation.

Conclusion

The Grapes of Wrath is a novel written by John Steinbeck. This novel was published in 1939. This novel shows about the American people life in 1930s, especially the labor life. Through the novel, Steinbeck shows the terrible effects of great depression for lower and middle class. The great depression has caused the labor or lower and middle class lose their home and job. Then, they are also hard to find another job because the capacity of job is not suitable with the capacity of unemployed people. Even they find a job, they only become object exploitation of high class. They work all day long but they get a minimum salary, moreover they do not get money. They only get a check or slip to be exchanged in the store of factory owner.

Steinbeck wants to criticize the ideology of capitalism through his novel. Here he does not absolutely disagree with capitalism, he only offers the solution to face the capitalism. It is because the capitalism is not a wrong ideology but the wrong position in this problem is the people who take a profit from the capitalism. The people who get profit by exploiting other people. The most wrong position in this problem is the people who seize the labor dream to get a better life.

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