THE SOCIAL CLASS IN FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY*

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THE GREAT GATSBY

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Today, August 9, 2024, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by AL MADYAH CHAERUNNISA (F041171010) entitled, **THE SOCIAL CLASS IN FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY* NOVEL,** submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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The thesis by **AL MADYAH CHAERUNNISA** (F041171010) entitled, **THE SOCIAL CLASS IN FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY* NOVEL,** has been revised as advised during the examination on August 9, 2024 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by herself. This thesis does not contain any materials have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except the quotations and references.

Makassar, 30 July 2024

Al Madyah Chaerunnisa

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The writer,

Al Madyah Chaerunnisa

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ABSTRAK

Al Madyah Chaerunnisa. 2024. ***Kelas Sosial Dalam Novel The Great Gatsby karya Fitzgerald*** (Dibimbing oleh **M. Amir P** dan **Abbas**)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan perbedaan kelas social pada novel *The Great Gatsby*. Penelitian ini juga menjelaskan dampak dari perbedaan kelas social pada tokoh utama, Jay Gatsby.

Metode yang digunakan penulis pada penelitian ini ada deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini adalah novel, *The Great Gatsby* karya F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dalam menganalisis, penulis menggunakan pendekatan strukturalisme dan pendekatan sosial kelas oleh Karl Marx untuk menganalisa perbedaan kelas pada novel termasuk dampak perbedaan kelas yang dialami tokoh utama, Jay Gatsby.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga perbedaan kelas dalam novel seperti kelas atas, Tengah, dan bawah. Ketiga kelas ini dapat diidentifikasi melalui perilaku, pekerjaan, pakaian, dan tempat tinggal. Hasil lain dari penelitian ini adalah dampak dari perbedaan kelas pada Jay Gatsby sebagai tokoh utama. Dia memiliki kenyamanan dan kemewahan namun perjuangan Gatsby untuk melintasi batas-batas sosial berujung pada kehancurannya, sehingga memperlihatkan betapa sulitnya mengatasi perbedaan kelas dalam masyarakat yang terstratifikasi.

Kata kunci: *kelas sosial, Pendekatan Strukturalisme, Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby.*

ABSTRACT

Al Madyah Chaerunnisa. 2024. ***Social Class In Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*** (Supervised by **M. Amir P** and **Abbas**)

This study aims to describe the social class in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. This study also explains the impact of social class of the main character Jay Gatsby in the novel.

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative method. The data source in this study is the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. To support the data in analysis, the writer used structuralism approach and used social class of Karl Marx approach to analyze the social class of the novel included the impact of social class of the main character, Jay Gatsby.

The result of this research shows that there are three social class in the novel such as upper, middle and lower class. These three classes can be demonstrated through their behavior, job, clothes, and residence. The other finding is the impact of social class to the main character, Jay Gatsby. He has comfort and luxury but Gatsby's struggle to cross social boundaries leads to his downfall, thus showing how difficult it is overcome class differences in a stratified society.

Keywords: *social class, Structuralism Approach, Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby.*

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer discusses about introduction, which consists of background, identification of problem, scope of problem, statement of problem, objective of writing and sequence of writing.

1.1. Background of The Study

Literature is a human creativity that tries and retell the reality that happens in society. In addition, it is as a mirror of human life. According to Kennedy (1995: 47), literature is a kind of art that can offer pleasure and illumination. It gives the beauty, fact, event, imagination born from the process of contemplation or observation of social phenomena as living the impact of the reality and the restlessness of human being. The purpose of literature is to give pleasure and entertainment to people who read it. It can be concluded that the main reason of studying literature is to get pleasure. Literature is commonly divided into many kinds of. One of them is the novel. Danziger (1973: 17) defines that novel is a piece of literary which attempts to describe the universe in which we live and try to give a special value, for it can learn so much from it. It presents something that can be seen in daily life. So, it can learn about the world we live in as well.

Novel and social life are related to one another that it cannot separate the novel from the cultural background of the society where the book was written. Novel is a story with the prose form in long shape; this long shape means the story including the complex plot, many character and various settings (Doddy, 1996:29). Besides, the structure contained within a novel, there is a message to be

conveyed by the author to the reader. The message covered with the novel can be assessed by theory of social class.

Most of literary works are social facts. Novel gives variety phenomenon by words, such as economics, politics, social and culture. By reading a novel it can find soul experience of someone and their lives in society. It shows that there is a relationship between literature and social. This is the background why the literary works become the material to study the social life of a society.

The existence of social status in a society leads to the emergence of various social classes. Sometimes, the social classes also intended as a social layer based on the economic elements. Abercrombie and Warde (1988: 949) divide the social classes into three types. The first is the upper class. It is the class of the society because they are famous for their wealth, their business relationship and power. They have a greater opportunity to do all the things they want. Their lifestyle is very different from other groups, from the way dress, speak, behave and education. The second is the middle class. It is included into the middle class of society, including office workers, supervisors, corporate leaders and entrepreneurs such as shop owners, and merchants. The third is the lower class or often working class. These are people who fall into the lowest social classes of the two groups above. Those who occupy this social class are the peasants, day laborers and housemaid. They do not have the opportunity to get a decent education because they do not have a sufficient wealth.

Wellek and Warren (1978: 94) said that "literature 'represents' 'life'; and 'life; and 'life' is, in large measure, a society reality, even though the natural

world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary 'imitation'". The results of social reality indicate that literature is rooted in a particular culture within the community. All things are mimed in literature cannot be separated from human problematic both individually and collectively. This case amplifies the theory that the study of literature is the study of human beings in society.

One of novel which depicts the social class is *The Great Gatsby.* It is a 1925 novel by American author F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Great Gatsby is depicts first-person narrator Nick Carraway's interactions with mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby and Gatsby's obsession to reunite with his former lover, Daisy Buchanan. The novel presents a critical portrait of the American dream through its portrayal of the 1920s New York elite. The characters in the novel are divided into different social classes, and each character has their own distinct class. Overall, "The Great Gatsby" presents a complex portrait of 1920s American society with its norms and rules, and explores the impact of social class on the character's lives and relationships.

The writer chose this novel because interesting to read and it is kind of a satire of the society at that moment, happened in society this history educate husband and wife or family to keep their relationship story one and another. Lifestyle like hedonism give bad effect, it could change one's character into arrogant and to easy on everything. The writer used structuralism approach to know about the intrinsic elements in the novel. Moreover, the writer used Karl Marx's theory to analyze the social class of the novel included the impact of

social class of the main character, Jay Gatsby. Therefore, the writer constructs the tittle of this thesis is *Social Class in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*.

1.2. Identification of The Study

After reading the F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby,* the writer found and identified some problem below:

1. American dream portrayed.
2. Class struggle in capitalist society.
3. Hedonism in the novel.
4. Social class in the novel.

1.3. Research Question

As already mentioned, there are various problems that can be analyzed in the novel of F. Scott Fitzgerald entitled *The Great Gatsby*. However, this study focuses on the social class in the novel. Based on the identification of problems, the writer formulated the statement of the problem as follows:

1. What is the social class described in the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald?
2. How the social class influence to the main character's life in the novel?

1.4. Objective of The Study

According to the statement of the problem above, the writer determines two objectives of research, as follow:

1. To find out the social class in the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

2. To elaborate the impact of social class to main character in the novel.

1.5. Sequence of The Writing

This research contains five chapters. First. Chapter one is an introduction. It covers the outlook of the whole writing which includes, namely background of writing, identification of problem, scope of problem, statement of problem, objective of writing and sequence of writing. Second, Chapter two explains the literature review which provides review of some previous studies and applies some theories to support this analysis. Third, Chapter three consists of the kind of methods the writer uses in analyzing the novel, including method of collecting data and method of analyzing data. Fourth, Chapter four is the analysis of the social class in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. Fifth, Chapter five is the conclusion and suggestion for the readers is involved in this chapter of the study.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer explains previous related studies, structuralism approach, theory of social class by Karl Marx, and social condition of American society in the 20th century.

2.1. Previous Studies

Description of the previous related studies are reviewed in this section. This is useful to compare those studies with this one. This previous related studies which has been written in different theory and yet same object or the novel. Additionally, there are also previous related studies which has been written in same theory however different object or novel. So, the writer presents some previous related studies that can be used as references to support this research, namely Jumianti (2015), Dian (2018), and Ilham Amir (2023).

First, the thesis entitled *The Social Classes of Characters in Bronte's Agnes Grey* is written by Jumianti (2015) student of Hasanuddin University Makassar. She analyzes a novel by Anne Bronte, Agnes Grey. Her thesis focuses on analyzing the social stratification based on economic criteria which still exists in society, especially in the life of the characters in the novel. Then, the author used structuralism approach is an approach that only focuses on the intrinsic elements in a fiction such as character, plot, theme, and setting.

Meanwhile, another thesis comes from Dian (2018), the student of Hasanuddin University Makassar who wrote her thesis entitled "*Social Setting in John Steinbeck's Tortilla Flat"*. She analyzes a novel by John Steinbeck, Tortilla Flat. The aim of her thesis is to describe how the social condition in the novel.

This thesis uses descriptive method, a method that describes the work. In analyzing data the author uses structural approach that focus on intrinsic elements that construct a literary work.

The last is study from Ilham Amir (2023) student of Hasanuddin University Makassar under the title *The Social Discrimination in Larsen's Passing.* This study aims to analyze the racial act of the character John Bellew in the novel *Passing* by Nella Larsen and to explain the racial discrimination impacts that experienced by Irene and Clare Kendry in the novel. This study uses a structural approach which it focuses on the intrinsic elements such as character, plot, setting and theme.

All the previous study's topic above is about social but all of them use a descriptive method and structuralism approach. In this thesis, the writer's analyzes is also about the social but focusing on identifying the social class by using social class of Karl Marx about the upper, middle and lower class.

2.2. Structuralism Approach

Structuralism first comes to prominence as a specific discourse with the work of a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, who developed a branch of linguistics called "Structural Linguistics". The study of Saussure could not be separated from the linguistic aspects, so his ideas about structuralism are related to the language. Structuralism, as developed by de Saussure, consists in viewing abstract linguistic objects (especially meanings, but everything that he calls linguistic reality) as values of elements of the system of the expressions that make up language (Peregrin, 1995: 86). Structural approach in language means that the

approach that considers language as a system with certain characteristics. It means that the language can be used to analyze the system of signs or symbols in various aspects.

In this research, the writer used a structuralism approach. It is a literary approach that give attention to literature, regardless of the extrinsic aspects of a literary work. According to Aminuddin (1987: 52) that literature is a verbal structure which has its own autonomy apart from other elements outside it. Structuralism is focuses on literary text and intrinsic elements as the major analysis to understand the meaning, the message, and the value that are informed in the text. In addition, Semi (1993: 67) says that literary work as creative ones have to be seen as independent creation free from other elements outside of themselves. So, the writer analyzed this thesis by using this approach, focuses some elements inside it which build up the work itself. Therefore, structural approach is one of the literary approaches which analyze the elements from inside of the literary work.

Literary works have several elements like character, plot, setting, theme and so on. Those elements are called the structure of story text. Wellek and Warren explain it as follows:

> Structural approach, which consists of material and structure of text of the literary works. The material includes elements that are called formal. While a structure is a concept including both content and form so far as they are organized for aesthetic purpose (1956: 140-141).

So, it can be concluded that the structural approach to the study of literature that works analyzing the structure elements that build literary works from the inside such as characters, plot, theme, setting and so on, as well as

finding the relevance or relationship of these elements in order to achieve unanimity meaning. Structural element used to split the structural after the analysis to make it more arranged in a simple element. Those elements include the character, plot, setting, and theme.

2.2.1. Characters

Character is one of the most important elements in literature. Character holds the main role in a story of literature such as novel, drama and poem. Characters as the person that presented in the literary work, that their appearance is interpreted by the reader as being endowed with desires, motivation and emotional qualities that are expressed in their saying and action in the story.

Character is related to the opinion of Abram (1981: 20) that characters as the person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say, they dialogue and what they do the action. Another idea about character remarked by Perrine is as follows:

> An author may present his character either directly or indirectly. In direct presentation, he tells us straight out, by exposition or analysis, what a character is like, or has someone else in the story tells us what he is like. In indirect presentation, the author shows us the character in action, we inter what he is like form what he thinks or says or does (1974: 68).

In story of the novel, there are two kinds of character that can be seen in the story. They are main or major character and supporting or minor character. A major is the central figures or the focus of the story. Usually, major character emerged from the beginning to the end of the story. On the other hand, minor

character is a character that only accompanied or followed the existence of the main character.

Based on the explanation, the writer understands that the character is the most important in literature. Character is created by the author to get better understanding through the description above, the reader must able to understand what the character's do. So, a story can be told interesting when it depends on the play the characters, because the characters are the key of the way of story life. In this case someone, things although the author can be the character.

2.2.2. Plot

Plot is an important element of literary work, because the plot tells the important events that occur in a story. The structure of action is used to indicate almost any kind of action that found in a story, including the closed, the open and the straight narrative with little or no serious complication (Bocker, 1963: 91).

There are some elements which are included the parts of plot according to Sumardjo and Saini (1991: 51).

1. Exposition is the first elements as the introduction in which the author introduces the characters, scene time and situation.
2. Complication is the advanced introduction that depicts how new conflict is increased in intensity until they reach a climax.
3. Climax is the continuation of complication. It is where the complication comes to further development and to a moment of crisis.
4. Resolution shows how the conflicts are resolved. All the problem of the story which is emerged by the characters will end.

5. Conclusion is the last situation of the whole characters and be the end of the story.

So that, the writer concludes that plot is the sequence of event in a work of literature formed by stages event that has a causal relationship. Plot is also an important element in literature for clarity about the linkages between the events depicted in literature facilitate, the understanding of the reader in the story are displayed.

2.2.3. Setting

Setting is not only related to place, time and event, but it also related with tradition, characters, social behaviors and people perspective by the time when the story is written. According to Aminuddin (1993: 67) that setting is background events on the literature as place, time and also event, and fiscal and psychological function. It can be the nature, political, temporary environment including everything that characters know and own. It is including the time, location and everything in which a story take place and initiates the main backdrop and mood for a story.

Setting has been referred to as story world to include a context beyond the story. It is also including the background, namely aspect of atmosphere, a series of details, nuances which give a certain shape to theme and plot. Stanton (2007: 35) said that setting is the environment that surrounds an event in the story, the universe that interacts with the events that are taking place. Backgrounds can also intangible fixed times (day, month and year), the weather or period of history.

So that, the writer understands that setting can be categorized into three parts, namely the setting of the place, setting of time and setting of atmosphere. A story in the novel must happen in certain time and place because it is very important thing in a story. With setting, people who read a novel know when the event occurred in the society or the situation of place where the character live and could know where the characters are.

2.2.4. Theme

Theme can be represented as a view about life and how people behavior. The theme is not intended to teach or peach. In fact, it is not presented directly at all. People extract it from the characters, action or setting that makes up the story. In other words, the writer must figure out the theme in it. The theme is generally have the character of neutrally, in means that author do not mention it directly, hence, reader is free to determine it by himself from the story according to his understanding of the fiction.

According to Nurgiyantoro (1998: 70), the theme can be seen as the basic story or general basic idea of a novel. It means that the story once the story's main goal. If development continues at the bottom of the story, it is intended that the basic, common basic idea or something human being want to put forward to be accepted by the reader. The theme of a literary work is always associated with the meaning (experience) or life. The presence of the theme in a literary work is one element in building a story together with other element to form a unity. The theme is often also referred to as the basic story according to Sudjiman (1990: 79) that

the theme is the nation, idea or the main thought in both the revealed literature and that has not been revealed.

Based on that, the writer conclude that the basic idea of theme is the stories that expose the fundamentals of the development for a story that animates the whole story, as well as being the starting point of the author in the work of creation. Themes cannot be separated from the problems or life which recorded by the literary work.

2.3. Theory of Social Class

Theories of social class were fully elaborated only in the 19th century as the modern social sciences, especially sociology, developed. Political philosopher such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau discussed the issues of social inequality and stratification, and French and English writers in the late 18th and early 19th centuries put forth the idea that the nonpolitical elements in society, such as the economic system and the family, largely determined a society's form of political life. This idea was taken farther by the French social theorist Henri de Saint Simon, who argued that a state's form of government corresponded to the character of the underlying system of economic production. Saint-Simon's successors introduced the theory of the proletariat, or urban working class, as a major political force in modern society, directly influencing the development of Karl Marx's theory of class.

For Marx, what distinguishes one type of society from another is its mode of production such as the nature of its technology and division of labour, and each mode of production engenders a distinctive class system in which one class

controls and directs the process of production while another class is, or other classes are, the direct producers and providers of services to the dominant class.

The social class or social group refers to the stratification between human beings or group in society. Based on the characteristics of social stratification, the division has several classes or groups in society. Class is considered as a social stratification in a society that is defined by a particular position in the production process (Magniz, 2001: 45).

Marx's analysis about how human relationship that occurred views from the relationship between each positions of means production, which viewed from different businesses in getting resources. He noted that the difference of means is not always the cause of intergroup conflicts. Marx assumed that position in structure always encourage them to take action that aims to improve the lot of them. Nevertheless, the interest groups are not perceived as the most important in the sociology of Marx (Ritna, 2013).

According Karl Marx, the actors of social change are not the individuals, but social classes. Individuals will not be able to make changes in a broad scope, because there is selfishness. But the real social class can change the social situation. Accordingly, it is known that the social classes in society, there was something already there one of them is the establishment power structure. With this people may know that people who fall into the power structure certainly not ordinary people, so there is a sense of connection, either in the way of honor or obey. The working classes are those who serve the employer with running working tools (Romba, 2013).

While the employers are the class that has those working tools, such as machinery, factories and land (for landlords). The working class also does the job, but since the workers do not have the tools work, then they sell the power to the owners of capital/ people who have the working tools (the employer). The works produced by the workers do not belong to the workers, but the work belongs to the employer. Between the upper class, middle class and lower class have the relationship because they need each other, workers need jobs of the employer/ owner of the work, while the owner of the work also requires power to run production. The employer will profit if the house chores has done well. However, the relationship between the workers and the employer does not provide jobs. However, contrary to the employer, that they can survive a long time even though the workers cannot carry out their duties properly because they can still live off the land they own (Siahaan, 1986:56).

The special feature of the capitalist is the presence of the bottom and the top. The bottom is occupied by the workers and the top of which is occupied by the bourgeoisie (people who have the capital and as working tools). The bottom will forever be subject to the requirements specified by the capitalists in any tasks. Lower class people were given jobs when they worked for the benefit of the upper class. Work in excess of the time required by workers to meet their needs is an advantage for working owners (Ritzer, 2011: 65).

Thus, it can conclude clearly that the ideology of Marx is in accordance with the existing reality. Because the theories that have been advanced by Karl Marx contain elements of truth that ultimately justified by the evidence which

grown in society. If related with the society, the development of soaring labor was grown high, because of the large number of factory, automatically labor categories required in large quantities. But people do not fully understand the situation is. People are more proud of the profession in the labor elaborated. They looked instead of social class, but they look out of income which they got (Magniz, 2001: 32).

The benefit derived from the upper class of the position that they do not have to work alone, because it can live of the profits of the workers who work. The relationship between the upper class, middle class, and lower class is a relationship of power with the goal of workers in order to keep working for the benefit of the employer by using the power of labor. Therefore, the upper class is the class of oppressors for the lower classes (Brewer, 1999: 25).

So, the writer conclude that each class has the difference characteristics. The upper class is usually known by their large amounts of property and cash, and the distinctive lifestyle that they live. The upper class in modern societies composed of the wealthiest members of society, who also wield the greatest political power. The members of the upper class society are typically knowledgeable and have been educated in particular college. They have traditionally joined exclusive clubs. They also like party, shopping and socializing. The upper class much more satisfied with their current financial situation than are those in the middle and lower classes because they would get income from their land.

Then, the middle class is the largest majority in society while the characteristic of the middle class has an average income. The middle class still maintain the values and ideas in their lives even though they have achieved considerable status and income. They should keep some kind of home appliances as supply the necessities of life. They have a high spirit of hard work and responsibility. According to them, education is very important because they are still able to finance their children school.

The last, lower class did not exist in large numbers. Instead, most people were part of the labour class, a group made up of different professions such as servant and governess. The lower class would get a wages monthly or yearly. In the story of *The Great Gatsby* reflects the social and economic conditions of the 1920s through its portrayal of 1920s consumer culture and the impact of historical and social phenomena on American society. The novel explores the themes of the post-war era, cultural and economic development, and the Roaring Twenties, providing a vivid and rich portrayal of the time period. It also delves into the concept of the American Dream and the pursuit of wealth and success, highlighting the influence of social ideologies and the consequences of false consciousness and alienation. Additionally, The Great Gatsby addresses moral decay, the loss of personal responsibility, and economic inequality, which were prevalent issues during the Jazz Age. The enduring influence of the novel in popular culture further demonstrates its reflection of the social and economic conditions of the 1920s.