

ABSTRACT

Rini, Handayani (2007) **John Steinbeck: The Man and the Environment (Intertextuality in the Social Awareness of Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, and The Grapes of Wrath***. Yogyakarta: Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University.

In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, and The Grapes of, are related in the stories and written by the same writer, John Steinbeck. These novels reveal the social realism issues. The writer lives during the Great Depression in America in which people dream of the future land and the prosperity. In the *Promised land*, California, all their dreams are ruined and the poor remain poor. Every character tries to struggle and reach his or her dream. It is obvious that John Steinbeck uses his own research and interview with the migrant people to give the detail condition of the lower class people. Steinbeck sees the dominant ideologies neither communism nor capitalism actually bring a better hope for its participants.

Therefore in this study on social awareness, there are two questions that should be answered to reveal the intertextuality in the social awareness of John Steinbeck's novels. The questions are (1) How are the lower class's sufferings described in Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, and The Grapes of Wrath?*, (2) What possible background may have influenced John Steinbeck's tendency to vocalize the lower class's sufferings and their struggle in the term of social issues?

There are two approaches of the study used in analyzing the problems. They are Marxist approach and History-biographical approach. Both approaches are used to have a deep understanding on John Steinbeck's social awareness of the lower class people.

The discussion of problem one points out the characteristics of each character in Steinbeck's novels as the part of the lower class people who often suffer and they can not control the holistic system. The ruling class people try to preserve their position and prosperity for themselves. During the Great Depression, most of depressed people, represented by the lower class people posses impossible dream.

The discussion of problem two is the possible background may have influenced John Steinbeck to vocalize the suffering and the way of the lower class people struggling. Steinbeck lives in the period of the Great Depression and settles in California. He himself is a poverty witness. He is obsessed with the ideology of communism. Then, he changes his mind after realizing that communism also exploits its participants. He is still on the side of the poor, but he is not a member of communist party.

The conclusions of those discussions on each character in John Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, and The Grapes of Wrath* and the possible background may have influenced Steinbeck to vocalize the lower class's sufferings and the way of their struggling are the changing step of Steinbeck to bring the democracy spirit and to respect all of kind of humanity.

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In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, dan The Grapes of Wrath adalah novel-novel yang saling berhubungan dikarenakan ditulis pengarang yang sama, yaitu John Steinbeck. Kita bisa mengetahui isu-isu realisme sosial. Hidup di masa Depresi tahun 1930an, orang-orang cenderung memiliki impian yang tidak dapat terwujud, yaitu tentang kemakmuran. Orang-orang bermigrasi ke California yang dipercaya sebagai "Tanah yang dijanjikan", sayang, seluruh mimpi orang-orang kelas bawah hancur di negeri yang korup ini. Dalam karya-karya Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, dan The Grapes of Wrath* terlihat gambaran penderitaan orang murba. Ia sadar bahwa apapun itu ideologinya, komunis ataupun kapitalis merugikan bagi yang mengikutinya.

Karenanya dalam studi kesadaran sosial, ada dua pertanyaan mendasar yang dijawab untuk menyingkap studi dalam karya-karya Steinbeck. Pertanyaannya adalah (1) Bagaimana penderitaan kaum bawah dalam tiga novel tersebut digambarkan? (2) Kemungkinan apa saja yang melatarbelakangi Steinbeck untuk menyuarakan penderitaan kaum kelas bawah dan daya juang mereka selama masa Depresi?

Pendekatan yang digunakan untuk menganalisis permasalahan tersebut adalah pendekatan secara Marxis dan pendekatan sejarah-biografi tentang Steinbeck. Pendekatan-pendekatan ini digunakan untuk mendapatkan pengertian kesadaran sosial bagi kaum marginal, dan berdasarkan biografi sang pengarang, penulis bisa berasumsi bahwa Steinbeck dipengaruhi lingkungannya untuk membela kaum lemah ini.

Dalam diskusi pada permasalahan pertama menghasilkan gambaran penderitaan kaum murba. Kaum kapitalis berusaha mempertahankan kemapanan dan kenyamanan hidup serta menolak berbagi dengan kaum murba. Bagi kaum murba, hidup dalam masa Depresi memungkinkan mereka memiliki impian yang tak pernah terwujud.

Pada diskusi bagian kedua adalah kemungkinan yang melatarbelakangi Steinbeck untuk membela kaum murba. Pada awalnya, ia terobsesi dengan komunis di Amerika lalu berubah pikiran setelah ia menyadari bahwa sistem komunis juga memperdaya pengikutnya. Ia terus berpihak pada kaum murba, namun bukan berarti ia adalah pengarang yang beraliran komunis. Kesimpulan dari diskusi tentang karakteristik setiap tokoh dalam karya Steinbeck dan latar belakang Steinbeck untuk memihak kaum murba adalah mencerminkan perubahan sikapnya untuk menyuarakan semangat demokrasi dan kemanusiaan.