

Social criticism in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*

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Abstract

Exploring literary work means exploring the social condition of the place where the work created. The function of literary work is not only to amuse but also to criticize. Social criticism implies that many authors convey their view and critics toward their society using literary work. Thus, it is essential to study social criticism in particular literary works. This study is aimed at identifying the social condition of the English society when the work published and to reveal how the author presented the social criticism in his work. Library research was used in this study. The approach that applied was genetic structuralism since any attempt to evaluate a literary work should be in the light of its social context and the proper conditions under which it has been produced. Having analyzed *She Stoops to Conquer*, it was found that in the eighteenth century the English society was to absorbed in vanity and affectation. Most people, especially women, put fashion and physical appearance at the most. The author criticized various aspects of life, including lifestyle, social class and family relationship. The author presented his social criticism through the dialogue and attitude of the characters of the play.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is a social phenomenon. It is connected with author, reader and human life aspects. Literary work becomes a tool of author to reveal his attitude and reaction toward the social condition in which he exists. Social condition is a condition related to circumstances or situations in a particular society that are related to social circumstances (Hidajati et al., 2017). Therefore, it is said that exploring literary work means exploring social life where the work arises. Thus, the function of literary work changed. At first, literary work was used only to entertain, but later on, the function added. Literature was not only to amuse but also to criticize. It is based on one of characteristics of

literature which expressed by Abrams which is known as mimetic theory. The theory explains that literature is an imitation of nature (Fard, 2016). What is in the real world also exists in literary work since the environment affects author to create literary work resembling his surroundings.

Social criticism or also called sociological criticism is one of approaches to find out the use of literary work in order to uncover the social condition in which the works composed. It examines literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written. It contains the author views of the world, his attitudes towards the social content and becomes his strategies to convey critics towards his surroundings (Wibowo,

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2018). The author uses the literary work to convey his critics since the plot of the story represents the social condition. Literature is persuasive and magnetism so it can be a weapon to propagandize the readers (Peck, 1921).

It is important to investigate social criticism because it helps us to understand the real world of the society when the work arises. In addition, studying social criticism will help us to understand much more about life.

Identifying social criticism means that the writer has to understand the social condition of the work when it arises. Literary work becomes the reflection of the author's life and era so to understand the work, historical/biographical background of the author needs to be explored in order to find out political, economic and sociological context of his time (Fard, 2016). Literary work can act as document of history. Thus, we can see that many authors convey their view and attitude towards the social condition in which they live, and many researchers are interested in studying about the critics within their works. In addition,

She Stoops to Conquer is a drama which was first performed in 1773 in London. The story tells about Mr. Hardcastle who has plan to match his daughter, Kate, with his friend's son, Marlow. The central of this story is when Marlow, accompanied by his friends Hastings, goes to meet Kate for the first time in her house but he thinks that the place that he reaches is an inn and the lady that he meets which is actually Kate is a barmaid.

This drama is written by Oliver Goldsmith. He is a playwright of the 18th century and also predecessors. Goldsmith produced a wide variety of literary works reflecting the social condition of the period (Hassanzadeh et al., 2020). In the restoration age of Charles II, that was 1660, theaters were reopened and wit was employed mostly in the dramas to the pleasure of king; playwrights came out with witty dramas depicting the courtly life, gentlemen of upper class, aristocratic ladies, scenes of coffee-houses, clubs, and pubs and hence language was corrupt (Sharma, 2020). Furthermore, the theatres as a public art form became essential tools to subvert

Puritan norms and restrictions since the plays with the support of the restored monarchy were primarily written to entertain the king and his court coming from France (VURAL ÖZBEY, 2018).

Some studies have been conducted on the aspects of *She Stoops to Conquer*. Sharma (2020) has analyzed wit and humor in this drama as they were mostly employed in the play when the work published to please the king. Moreover, Hussein (2013) has studied the use of forms of address in this play for the restoration period the forms of address were based on social status so they varied from class to class, age to age and place to place. Furthermore, Evans (2011) has explored the masculinities of man characters in the play. Also, VURAL ÖZBEY (2018) has investigated the witty stratagem for love and the marriage in which he determines the contexts of love and marriage in Goldsmith's age that he affirms in the relationships between parental figures and children and in the affairs of couples in the play. Finally, Hasan & SanAhmad (2020) have explored the role of woman, in this case Kate, played in the 18th century and he found that Kate has a good role in this play considering all the abnormalities. However, none of them has explored the social criticism of this play. Whereas there are so many critics that the author addressed within the drama.

Thus, this paper investigates the social condition of English society when the work published and how the author presented the social criticism in his work. This study provides description of social condition of English society in the eighteenth century, what aspects that were criticized by the author and how he presented his criticism in his work.

METHODS

The design of this research was named "library research" which is classified as qualitative research. Library research is identical with text or discourse analysis which investigates an event, either a deed or writing to be studied in order to obtain accurate conceptual and theoretical fact (Hamzah, 2020). In this kind of research, various books and articles related to the object of writing

were found. The approach used was genetic-structuralism which proposed by Lucien Goldman (Faruk, 2010). Genetic structuralism is one of literary critique approaches and believes that literary work are derived from the ideology governing the class of society, and focuses on study of stories and their structures to know the social structures (Mahmoodi, 2017). Genetic structuralism was used to analyze literary work both internal and external structure of it. The term 'genetic' means history of literature which includes the author background and historical reality which affects the creating of the work. Genetic structuralism theory always considers that the relationship between literature and society through world view or ideology which it expresses (Faruk, 2010). Historical background, era and society have a tremendous impact on work, either on its content or form. The existing of the author in specific social environment also influences his creation. Thus particular society which exists around the writer will automatically influence the work produced.

To analyze the data, some steps were used. Firstly, intrinsic elements of the play, including character, setting, plot and theme were analyzed. Then, the social condition of England as the background as the background of the author in creating the play was explored and described. Next, the social criticism that was presented in the play was explored and analyzed. After that, the social setting of the work was related with the social background of English society when the play had been published. Then, how the author presented the social criticism in his work was explored and described. Finally, all results of data analysis were arranged into well arrange writing with a clear explanation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were divided into two parts; intrinsic element and extrinsic element. The intrinsic element involved characters, setting, plot and theme; while the extrinsic element is social condition which is reflected in the drama. The understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic of the story are very essential in order to analyze the social

criticism. Studying about the social aspect of the story are not complete without studying the intrinsic element since some of the element symbolizes the real condition of the real life.

Intrinsic Elements

Characters

There are eight characters in this drama. They are Mr. Squire Hardcastle, Mrs. Dorothy Hardcastle, Miss Kate Hardcastle, Charles Marlow, Tony Lumpkin, George Hastings, Constance Neville and Sir Charles Marlow.

The first character is Mr. Squire Hardcastle. He is a middle-aged gentleman who lives in an old mansion in the countryside about sixty miles from London. He likes war stories and always brings it to conversation. He prefers simple life and old-fashioned things and style. He intends to match his daughter with his friend's son but he still gives deliberacy to her to choose her husband. He is perfectionist and very patient. He does not like Tony Lumpkin, his step son.

The second is Mrs. Dorothy Hardcastle. She is Mr. Squire Hardcastle's wife. Unlike her husband, she admires high society life and hate old things. Although she admires the town's life style, she never goes to town. This reality makes her unhappy with her husband who does not like modern style. She feels jealous with her neighbors who always spend a month every winter to go downtown. She loves her son, Tony Lumpkin, even though her husband considers Tony as a cruel boy. Despite her love to Tony, she does not like Tony's friends since they belong to lower class while her son belongs to upper class. She is fond of high-valued things therefore she wishes to match her son with her niece, Constance Neville, to keep Constance's inheritance.

The third is Miss Kate Hardcastle. She is Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle's pretty daughter. Like her mother, she is also interested in fashion ad modern life. Like a woman in general, she considers appearance important. She wants to be matched with the son of his father's friend, Charles Marlow; however she and her father have different criteria of good husband.

The fourth is Charles Marlow. The son of Mr. Squire Hardcastle's friend who will be matched with Kate. He is young, handsome and admirable. He is educated man since he spends most of his life in college. However, he is very shy around the well-mannered ladies. He is also bashful and reserved.

The fifth character is Tony Lumpkin. He is he is the son of Mrs. Hardcastle from her first husband. He is fat and childish. Even though he is from upper class, he is uneducated. He is drinker and naughty.

The sixth is George Hastings. He is Charles Marlow's friend who accompanies him to acquaint with Kate. He falls in love with Constance Neville and plans an elopement when he accidentally meets her in Hardcastle's mansion and notices that Constance will be matched with Tony Lumpkin.

The next is Constance Neville. She is a niece of Mrs. Hardcastle. She loves George Hastings but her aunty plans to match her with Tony Lumpkin to keep her inheritance.

The last character is Sir Charles Marlow. He is the father of Charles Marlow. He is together with his friend, Mr. Squire Hardcastle, to match their children. The result of analysis the characters show that each character resembled the real people at the time. There were many varieties of characters within society that were symbolized by the characters in the drama.

Setting

The setting of this drama is divided into two; setting of place and setting of the time. Setting of place is mostly in Hardcastle's mansion in English countryside, about sixty miles from London. The mansion is old but comfortable. The setting of time is an evening of eighteenth century. The understanding of the setting helped the reader to deeply comprehend the story.

Plot

The plot of this drama is 'man in a hole' which consists of five actions: introduction/exposition, beginning of action/complication, middle of action, end of action and resolution. The introduction of the

drama is when Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle remarks that they never go down town and their basic difference: Mr. Hardcastle loves old style while his wife admires modern style. Beginning of the action is when Tony is in an alehouse and he is told that there are two gentlemen lose their way. The middle of action is when Marlow and Hastings arrive in Hrdcastle's mansion which they think it is an inn. The end of action is when Marlow's father arrives at the mansion. Finally, the resolution is when Marlow knows that the barmaid he loves is Kate and plan to get married. The understanding of plot helped the reader to know the order of the story within the drama.

Theme

The theme of this drama consists of two types; central theme and minor theme. The central theme is 'do not judge a man by his appearance because appearance may deceives', while the minor themes are 'loves ignores social boundaries' and 'coming from upper class and being wealth does not assure the happiness. The themes were very important to understand what the story is about.

Extrinsic Elements

The extrinsic element of this drama is the social condition reflected in the story. The story reflects English society in the eighteenth century. At the time social class played important role. The society consisted of three classes; they were upper class, middle class and lower class. Besides, matching was always done. Furthermore, the women at the time were too absorbed to the fashion and modern life. The social condition of the story is the core of the author to deliver his social criticism.

Eighteen century is well known with vanity and affectation. Hypocrisy was revealed and absurd incongruities are exposed (Reaske, 1966). So, in the period, the comedy of manner was born. The play usually concerned themselves with the manners and customs of the very syntactic or artificial highbrow society. They much more talked about the society and consisted of social criticism. The author, in this work for instance, presented his

social criticism through the dialogue and attitude of the characters of the drama. The critics were delivered explicitly and implicitly. The explicit critics refer to the critics which are clearly mentioned in the dialogue of characters; while implicit critics are those which are understood although they are not clearly understood or conveyed by the author. So, the critics were presented through the plot of the play. The Explicit critics cover life style and social class; while the implicit critics include relationship within family and contrast. The details of critics are explained above.

Explicit Critics

Life style

Country people, especially woman, are too absorbed in fashion. They always spend their time, particularly winter, and their money just to go down town and hunt new-fashioned trend and follow it. They think that the nobleness level is in how often they go down town. So, when they come back to the country, they will be arrogant and bring their pride for the whole year. The following remarks are between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle.

“I vow, Mr. Hardcastle, you are very particular. It there a creature in the whole country but ourselves, that does not take a trip to town now and then, to rub of the rust a little? There is the two Miss Hoggis, and our neighbor, Mrs. Grigsby, go to take month’s polishing every winter.”

“Ay, and bring back vanity and affectation to last them the whole year.” (Goldsmith, 1773)

The quotation above implies Mr. Hardcastle’s dislikeness to the habit of taking trip to town. He considers that it is vain activity since those who do it bring vanity and affectation when they come back.

This finding is in line with Evans’ (2011) who says that in the eighteen century young men went on Grand Tour and returned with a new European style which affected foreign tastes and fashions. Hasan & SanAhmad (2020) further find that new model trend had impact on life since it make a clear gap between the wealthy and the poor.

Social class

In the work, social class is very influential. This finding goes in line with Hussein (2013) and Hasan & SanAhmad (2020) who found that social class plays important role in the restoration era. The social intercourse towards people from other class is limited. There are so many discriminations of those who are from the lower class. the following remarks are between Hastings and Marlow.

“If you could but say half the fine things to them that I have heard you lavish upon the barmaid of an inn, or even a college bed-maker---”

“Why, George, I can’t say fine things to them; they freeze, they petrify me. They may talk of a comet, or a burning mountain, or some such bagatelle; but to me a modest woman, dress out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.” (Goldsmith, 1773)

The quotation implies Marlow’s critic that social class is not important. People in the world, including barmaid and bed-maker have equal position since none of them asks to be born in certain class.

Implicit critics

Relationship within family

The work also criticizes the relationship within family. Parents should not obtrude their will to the children. Mrs. Hardcastle, for instance, force Tony to marry Constance, whereas both of them do not love each other and ignore the plan. By ignoring the match, Tony saves Constance since she is in love with Hasting, Marlow’s friend (Shalini & Devi, 2017). Beside, Mrs. Hardcastle also fondles Tony so much therefore he becomes the spoilt one. A good parent character is shown by Mr. Hardcastle towards Kate and Sir Charles Marlow towards his Son, Charles Marlow. Even though Mr. Hardcastle and Sir Charles Marlow intend to match their children, they do not force them to get married if they do not want to. They listen to their children aspiration before making decision. In addition, Mr. Hardcastle who admires old-fashioned style and censures modern style gives Kate deliberacy to dress in her own way under the agreement that in the evening she has to wear plain dress like her father wants. Moreover,

Sir Charles Marlow asks his son to acquaint with Kate but he does not merely ask him to go alone. He shows his responsibility as a father by coming afterward to Mr. Hardcastle's mansion to make sure that the acquaintanceship run smoothly and to find out Marlow's opinion about Kate and vice versa directly from themselves. The match most happened between the wealthy families as stated by Hasan & SanAhmad (2020) that in the 18th century, arranged marriages mostly done between the wealthy families and landowners to get real estate and power of each other.

Contrast

There are so many contrasts within the work. The characters show different behavior to the people from the other class. Marlow subjected Mr. Hardcastle like an innkeeper and Kate as a barmaid. His attitude is very different when he knows that they are from reputed family. This finding is in line with Hussein (2013) that the way people to the interlocutor is based on their social class. Besides, there are also differences between appearance and reality. An inn said by Tony is not an inn, but Mr. Hardcastle's mansion. Barmaid met by Marlow is not a barmaid like what he thinks, but Kate Hardcastle. Mrs. Hardcastle considers herself modern, but in fact she is a hick. Mr. Hardcastle appears like commoner, whereas he is in fact come from middle class, so does Kate when she wears plain dress. Constance pretends to love Tony to please Mrs. Hardcastle. In addition, Marlow feigns to consider social class is important, on the contrary he in fact regards social class is not important at all. Moreover, Tony pretends to help Marlow and Hastings to reach Mr. Hardcastle's mansion, but he tells them that the mansion is an inn.

Finally, the work also shows that there is contrast between what people want to do and what they are supposed to do. In the beginning of the story, Marlow shows his will that there has to be no different attitude among people from other classes; however, the custom at the time does not allows people from other classes to be subjected in the same way. Tony wants to live freely, yet his mother asks him to behave righteously according

to his class. Both Constance and Tony ignore the match, but Mrs. Hardcastle forces them to get married. This finding supports VURAL ÖZBEY's statement (2018) that in the second half of the 18th century, young people insist on marrying those with whom they fall in love.

CONCLUSION

She Stoops to Conquer reflects the social life when this drama first played. In the eighteen century, English society was very absorbed in vanity and affectation. Most people, especially women, put fashion and physical appearance at the most. Social class played important role within the society.

There are some aspects of society that were criticized by Oliver Goldsmith through this play. The author condemned some aspects of life, including life style, social class, family relationship and contrast. For lifestyle, the author censured the habit of country people, especially woman, who were too absorbed in fashion and always spent their time and their money just to go down town and hunt new-fashioned trend and follow it. Moreover, in term of social class, he further arraigned the social intercourse towards people from other class that is very limited. There are so many discriminations of those who are from the lower class. Furthermore, with regard to family relationship, the author intended that parents should not obtrude their will to the children and they not to force them to get married if they do not want to. They have to listen to their children's aspiration before making decision. The play also shows that arranged marriages were mostly done between the wealthy families and landowners to get real estate and power of each other. Besides, In the matter of contrast, the characters show different behavior to the people from the other class. The work also shows that there is contrast between what people want to do and what they are supposed to do.

Finally, it has found that the author presented the social criticism through the dialogue and attitude of the characters of the play. Several dialogues imply the author 's view towards the

social condition of the era when the play is written. Besides, the characters' attitude also shows the critics which mostly influenced by their social classes. So, through this play, the author conveyed his thought and described the condition when he write the drama.

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