

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the research paper. This part consists of the background of the research, the research question, the aim of the research, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, research methodology, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1. Background of the Research

Nowadays, dystopian novel is one of people's most wanted fictions. Basically, the term "dystopia" refers to the Greek words "dys" and "topos" that are translated as "bad place" (Gerhard, 2012). Dystopian literature commonly pictures a negative and desolated society which suffers unfortunate living and an entity has main control over it (Wackfelt, 2012). It can be said that this genre of fiction focuses on a society's danger which is effected severely by flawed ruling of an organization. There are many novels that bring this theme in their story; such as *Uglies* (2005) written by Scott Westerfield, *Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins, and *Divergent* (2011) by Veronica Roth. These books have the characteristics that a dystopian novel must possess. For instance, as mentioned in Readwritethink (2006), the story must involve propaganda to control the society, uniqueness and individuality are restricted, the citizens are under official's inspection, natural world is reformed, and the citizens are treated as if they are not human being.

Spencer (2015) believes that, "the uniqueness of these novels made them immensely intriguing to people and famous in today's society" (p. 1). Moreover, this genre is even able to grab most of young adults' attention because it involves heroes or heroines in their age in the story. As explained by Glenn, Ginsberg and King (2013), "...these books fulfill a special role for teenagers, given their unique situation standing between childhood and adulthood" (p. 5). It is also explained by Jasperse (2009) that it is essential for young adults to read about dystopian fictions which could encourage them to see their world as something valuable. It can be said that this genre mostly tells how young adults actually are capable on

encountering hardships of living in horrifying places and trying to save the society.

Additionally, the success of dystopian novel in catching attention does not stop there, many dystopian novels today are adapted into movies. Tedman (2015) explains that the young adult movies that are adapted from dystopian novels provide space for heroic adventure. She further mentions that the movies emphasize on the aesthetic of the combination between classic dystopic and science fiction drama. Furthermore, young adult's adaptation has made great sale in box office, one of the examples is a movie version of *The Hunger Games* that was directed by Gary Ross. The movie earned \$152.5 million on the premiere, an opening success before the trilogy continue to be made into movie (Tedman, 2015). It can be said that this kind of accomplishment might also encourage other authors to write dystopian-themed novels.

Discussing the era of dystopia might not be complete without utopia (Gopal, 2015). Utopia is an opposite idea from dystopia, a land where everything is perfect (Ferris, 2014). He further mentions that in this case, the desire of living in a perfect world is possessed by every human being. Therefore, a utopic idea emerges, the American Dream. American Dream requires people to work hard in order to have a fulfilled life, both financially and psychologically. Many people come to America with this ideal purpose. While in fact, Murphy (2010) states that, "Though the idea of the "American Dream" is typically seen as a glimmer of hope and happiness, is it really just a false pretense for disappointment" (p. 1). The American Dream is considered as a false promise—the wish of having a better life in a better place is offered— as if it can come into realization; while it is not as easy as it is expected. In Addition, American Dream notion appears in many dystopian novels. For instance, in the novel *Divergent* (2011) by Veronica Roth, the idea of a perfect world is offered in a post-apocalyptic and reformed society by dividing it into five fractions. Gerald F. Fitzgeralds' *The Great Gatsby* put the American Dream as the main theme in the novel and Harris (2014) categorizes this novel as a dystopian, "for its treatment of a society dominated by wealth and material pleasure and its disillusioned portrayal of the American Dream" (p. 19).

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In his view, a dystopic situation might appear although the fantasy of living a wealthy life is possible, since there is always hardship that comes along the way. This shows that the idea of American Dream might come along in a dystopic story.

Another novel that contains the theme of American Dream in a dystopian situation is a novel written by Chang-Rae Lee in 2014 entitled *On Such A Full Sea*. Lee is one of *New York Times* version best selling authors for his novels (*New York Times*, 2014). This novel is written by Lee based on his own experience going to the factory towns outside of Shenzhen and passing by the neglected area in Baltimore. This experience led him to keep remembering about the condition in both towns (Leyshon, 2014). To this date, one of the analyses about this novel found is ‘*On Such a Full Sea and the Logic of Redevelopment*’ by Strombeck (2015). He discusses Lee’s idea about how urban redevelopment by China immigrants in Baltimore (it is called B-Mor in the novel) is built in the novel and how it takes effect on economic development and immigration in the region. Different from this previous study about the book, this research tries to look at this novel in a different point of view regarding on society’s American Dream achievement in a reestablished world.

In addition, Lee’s choice on using first person plural ‘we’ as the narrator in the novel can be considered unusual for novels published in 2000s. This choice of narrator presents a notion that the dystopic story is experienced by many numbers of society in the novel. These are the reasons why this novel is chosen for this research to further study the theme of American Dream in a dystopian novel.

1.2. Research Question

The aim of this research is formed into this following question:

- How does American Dream manifest in Chang-Rae Lee’s dystopian novel *On Such A Full Sea*?

1.3. Aims of the Research

The aim of this research is to show how the idea of American Dream is manifested by Chang-RaeLee's dystopian novel *On Such A Full Sea*.

1.4. Scope of the Research

This study about Chang-Rae Lee's *On Such A Full Sea* will be limited around three characters who are involved in the American Dream notion. The settings in the story and the main character's role might be useful in order to support the analysis.

1.5. Significance of the Research

It is expected for this study to contribute to the analysis of dystopian fiction and American Dream, particularly when the idea of the challenged American Dream is discussed.

1.6. Research Design

This study attempts to analyze the idea of American Dream that appears in Lee's novel *On Such A Full Sea* by using qualitative approach in a form of textual analysis. This research also employs Cullen's (2009) theory of American Dream, specifically the indicators of American Dream. Cullen (2009) states that the dream of a good life involves freedom, equality, upward mobility, and home ownership. Thus, the research focuses on how the characters in the novel deal with the American Dream they have, and whether or not in the end they accomplished their dreams based on Cullen's indicators of American Dream.

1.6.1. Data Collection

The data for this research are in forms of textual evidence collected from Chang-Rae Lee's dystopian novel *On Such A Full Sea* as taken from words, phrases, sentences of the novel. The characters' experience about the American Dream are selected as the basis of this research. Other intrinsic elements of the novel such as settings or plot might be put in the analysis to support the research.

1.6.2. Data Analysis

This research is guided by these following steps:

1. Understanding the idea of American Dream and the indicators of American Dream by Cullen (2009);
2. Identifying the characters who have American Dream;
3. Classifying the American Dream had by the characters in the novel;
4. Identifying how the characters struggle for their American Dream;
5. Making conclusion on how does American Dream manifest in Chang-Rae Lee's dystopian novel *On Such A Full Sea*.

1.7. Clarification of Terms

American Dream : “The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.” (James T. Adams, 1931, p. 404)

Utopian Fiction : “Utopian ‘ideal states’ have been a significant part of the Western literary and philosophical imagination ever since antiquity, but the term itself is more recent, a neologism coined by Thomas More in 1516, as a Greek pun in Latin between ‘ou topos’, or no place, and ‘eutopos’, or good place.” (Milner, 2009, p. 827)

Dystopian Fiction : “A ‘dystopia’, then, would be a negative utopia, a place in which everything is imperfect. A dystopian fiction centers on a dissenting person or group in a supposed perfect society, awakened to inhumanity and willing to affect a change.” (Ferris, 2014, p. 5)

1.8.Organization of the Paper

This paper is arranged into five chapters which ordered as follows:

CHAPTER I

This chapter contains the introduction of the research and is divided into eight points: the background, the research question, the aims of the research, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the research methodology, the clarification of the terms, and the organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II

This part presents the review of the literature used for this research. This part also provides the theoretical framework as the grounding for this research.

CHAPTER III

This chapter presents the research methodology and the steps that are used to conduct this research.

CHAPTER IV

This chapter contains the findings and the discussion of the textual evidence.

CHAPTER V

This part consists of conclusion drawn from the analysis and the researcher’s suggestion for future study related to the topic discussed in this research.

APPENDICES

REFERENCES

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