

Capitalism and Social Mobility Presented in Paul King's *Wonka* (2023)

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze: 1) the representation of capitalism in Paul King's Wonka (2023), and 2) the capitalism leads to social mobility in Paul King's Wonka (2023). This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the film of Wonka (2023) directed by Paul King as the object of research. The data collection methods include watching, reading, identifying, classifying, and selecting. The researcher utilizes Karl Marx theory of Capitalism to analyze the data through the steps of displaying, explaining, and interpreting. The result of this research shows that: 1) the representation of capitalism in in Paul King's Wonka (2023) including capitalism is shown through the practice of exploitation, class inequality, and monopoly by the upper class that controls the means of production, 2) the capitalism leads to social mobility in Wonka (2023). Including collective resistance to an oppressive system. The protagonist and his colleagues managed to improve their social position not because the capitalist system provided opportunities, but because of their class consciousness and collective struggle against injustice.

Keywords: *Wonka, capitalism, class inequality, monopoly, exploitation, social mobility.*

Introduction

This research aims to analyze: 1) the representation of capitalism in Paul King's *Wonka* (2023), and 2) the capitalism leads to social mobility in Paul King's *Wonka* (2023). This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the film of *Wonka* (2023) directed by Paul King as the object of research. The data collection methods include watching, reading, identifying, classifying, and selecting. The researcher utilizes Karl Marx theory of Capitalism to analyze the data through the steps of displaying, explaining, and interpreting. The result of this research shows that: 1) the representation of capitalism in in Paul King's *Wonka* (2023) including capitalism is shown through the practice of exploitation, class inequality, and monopoly by the upper class that controls the means of production, 2) the capitalism leads to social mobility in *Wonka* (2023). Including collective resistance to an oppressive system. The protagonist and his colleagues managed to improve their social position not because the capitalist system

provided opportunities, but because of their class consciousness and collective struggle against injustice. economic resources such as education, employment, and capital. This leads to structural inequality, where individuals from the lower classes experience barriers to social mobility, while the upper classes have the ease to maintain or even improve their position (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, social mobility is not solely determined by individual hard work or ability, but also by the political and economic structure underlying the capitalist system itself.

Literary Review

Sociology of Literature

Sociology of literature is a branch of literature that examines problems in literature, which includes aspects of economics, politics, traditions, morals, ethics, and relationships, that is one of the topics of the sociology of literature. Sociology broadly encompasses the study of society, focusing on the dynamics of social relationships among individuals within groups.

Literature is an expression of human's feeling, including experience, thoughts, motivations, and confidence in using language to describe concretely. They express their feeling and thoughts into a writing object, so it also can be use full for the other people, because they can read his writing.

Literature aims to depict human relationships within family, society, politics, religion, and other domains, offering aesthetic ways to shape and influence societal dynamics (Swingewood, 1972:12). Both sociology and literature focus on society, exploring interactions between individuals and the resulting social processes. This perspective sees literature as having an independent existence that can be studied through its elements, distinct from sociology. Literature, as an art form, transcends objective scientific explanation by delving into human emotions and experiences (Swingewood, 1972: 12).

Capitalism

According to Marx (1867) this system creates two opposing social classes, namely the bourgeoisie as the owners of capital and the proletariat as workers who are exploited to create more value, In this system, the majority of people, the

proletariat (workers), do not own the means of economic production and only have their labor power to sell in order to survive. In addition, capitalism is also blamed for environmental destruction due to the logic of unlimited growth that ignores ecological sustainability (Foster, 2002).

Principles of Capitalism

Capitalism is based on several main principles that underlie the way of thinking and working. One of the basic principles of capitalism, according to Marx, is the existence of unequal class relations between the owners of capital (bourgeoisie) and the workers (proletariat). Also, the principle of private ownership of the means of economic production means that resources such as land, machines, factories, or even ideas, are owned by certain individuals or groups, not by society collective (Marx, 1867).

In capitalist labor relations, workers create surplus value that they do not fully enjoy. The profits earned by the company come mostly from the labor of the workers, but the workers themselves only get wages that are worth much less than the results of their work (Eagleton, 2011). This leads to recurring economic inequality across generations. And this became the center of Marx's critique of capitalism, as the surplus value produced by labor is absorbed by capital owners without fair compensation (Marx & Engels, 1848).

Capitalism also operates through market competition, which at first appears fair and open. However, Marx argued that this competition creates monopolies and concentrations of economic power. Small firms will find it difficult to survive, while large firms will get stronger, creating structural inequalities that are increasingly difficult to eliminate (Milios et al., 2002).

Goals of Capitalism

The primary objective of capitalism is the unlimited accumulation of capital. In this system, production is not directed towards meeting social needs, but rather to enlarge capital and increase the wealth of the bourgeois class (Marx, 1867). This system continuously promotes the accumulation of wealth and encourages competition, leading to periodic economic crises. According to Marx, capitalism brings internal contradictions. The more productive the workers, the greater the capitalist profits, but the workers continue to live in deprivation (Gul et al., 2017).

Systematically maintains the dominance of the bourgeois over the proletariat. This system contains the seeds of its destruction as the contradictions it creates will trigger recurring economic and social crises. In other words, capitalism not only produces goods and services, but also produces and reproduces class inequality (Harvey, 2010).

The ultimate goal of Marx's understanding of capitalism is the transition to socialism, where the means of economic production are collectively controlled and the value of labor is fairly valued (Marx, 1867).

Social Mobility

This system sees social mobility as the result of a meritocratic system, where individuals who have talent, hard work, and ability will rise to higher social positions. In capitalist societies, social mobility is often seen as an indicator of success, as if everyone has an equal chance to move up if they work hard enough. However, the reality is not that simple. Mobility is considered something natural and healthy for society, as it allows the screening of the best individuals to occupy important positions in the social structure. Social mobility has a major impact on society; it is considered an indicator of social justice and meritocracy, where individual achievement is based on effort and ability rather than inherited family status. However, on the other hand, low social mobility can reinforce social inequality (Payne, 1989).

As a result, social mobility is difficult to achieve as the structure of capitalist society is designed to maintain the inequality between the upper and lower classes (Marx & Engels, 1848). Individuals from the proletariat class can work hard for a lifetime, but still be unable to break out of the cycle of wage labor, consumerism controlled by the logic of capitalism.

Class Conflict

The history of human society is essentially a history of struggle between social classes with conflicting interests (Marx & Engels, 1848). In a capitalist society, the main conflict is between the bourgeoisie, the owners of the means of economic production, and the proletariat, those who only have labor to sell. The existence of two divided classes and the conflict that occurs between them is inevitable due to the fundamental difference in interests; the bourgeoisie seeks to

maximize profits, while the proletariat strives for decent working conditions and a better life. Marx believed that class conflict was the driving force of social change that would eventually lead to revolution, leading to a classless, communist society (Marx, 1867). This form of conflict not only appears in the economic realm, such as strikes and demands for wage increases, but also the political realm through labor movements and labor parties, as well as in the ideological realm through the value struggle between capitalism and socialism (Parsons, 2002). This conflict is also political and ideological, where upper-class domination is maintained through the legal system, media, and state policies that tend to favor the owners of capital. Over time, the forms of class conflict became more complex and covert, appearing in the form of unequal access to education, health, decent work, and social security (Parsons, 2002).

Class Struggle

Class struggle is a tangible form of tension between social classes in a capitalist society. After understanding the structural conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, it is important to see how the working class responds to these injustices in real life. According to Karl Marx, the history of human society is essentially the history of class struggle.

Class struggle is not always revolutionary or violent. It can come in the form of everyday struggles for decent work, access to education, housing, and basic rights such as health insurance. All of these are part of the proletariat's efforts to escape the oppressive conditions they experience due to the capitalist system. Marx called this process a form of resistance to alienation, a condition in which people feel alienated from the results of their labor and society due to capitalist exploitation (Marx, 1867).

Research Method

The research method which is used in this research is qualitative research. Based on Creswell (2014), qualitative research means for understanding about the meaning individual and also groups ascribe to social or human problem.

The object in this research is film under title *Wonka* (2023) directed by Paul King that published in 2023. A fictional film that is imaginative, but implies

issues of social reality. The types of data that is used are main data which is collected from the dialogue's film, and supporting data which is collected from some sources, like books, internet, and journal that can support the research.

The method of collecting data in this research is by doing observation. The procedures are watching the movie and reading the scripts, identifying the data from the scripts and subtitle, classifying data and selecting the data.

After the data are collected, the next step is analyzing data by following: Displaying the data, explaining data, and interpreting data.

Finding and Discussion

The research analyzes the issue in this chapter. The issue of capitalism and social mobility condition found in the several characters of *Wonka* movie (2023).

The Representation of Capitalism in Paul King's *Wonka* (2023)

Class Inequality

Class inequality in capitalist society reveals how the system creates an imbalanced and unfair social structure. The bourgeoisie, who control the means of production, continue to dominate, while the lower class or proletariat remains disadvantaged.

It can be seen under this dialogue:

Prodnose : Too good.
Fickelgruber : And what's more, he only charges a sovereign a chocolate. So anyone can afford them, even the...You know, the...
Office 1 : The poor?
Fickelgruber : Oh, dear. I've just been a little bit sick in my mouth. Could you please refrain from mentioning that demographic in my presence?
Prodnose : He doesn't like it when people say "poor".
(*Wonka*, 2023, 00:30:11-00:30:29)

This situation occurred when police 1 came to the chocolate cartel to conspire to get rid of and even kill Wonka. And Fickelgruber also realized that the price of chocolate sold by Wonka was so cheap that all people could buy it, including the lower class or the poor.

Fickelgruber, who cannot pronounce or listen to the word, so that police 1 connects Fickelgruber's words, saying poor, making Fickelgruber feel disgusted or uncomfortable. Then cartel friend, Prodnose, explains Fickelgruber feels

uncomfortable hearing the word poor, Every time he hears the word, Fickelgruber feels disgusted and wants to vomit. The class gap in the movie is also evident in the way the upper class views and treats the term “poverty”. The word seems to be something taboo to utter, reflecting ideological oppression. In this case, the reality of poverty is not only hidden but also deliberately ignored. This situation reflects a form of hegemony, where upper class domination not only occurs through economic control but also through cultural and linguistic influence. When the word “poor” is forbidden to be mentioned, it shows that inequality is not only about economics, but also how people are directed not to realize or even deny the existence of injustice.

Exploitation

In the movie, the exploitation is controlled by Mrs. Scrubbit and her partner. This is the famous lodgement and Wash House in Geleries Gourmet. She dominates the exploitation of guests who for stay. It can be seen in the some quotations below:

Noodle	: How much do you owe them?
Willy Wonka	: Ten thousand.
Noddle	: Count yourself lucky. I owe 30.
Willy Wonka	: What? How do you owe them money? I thought they found you down a laundry chute.
Noddle	: Oh, they did. Took me in out of the goodness of their hearts and charged me for the privilege.
Willy Wonka	: What a pair of monsters.
	Noddle: The greedy beat the needy every time, Mr. Wonka. Guess it’s just the way of the world.
	(<i>Wonka</i> , 2023, 00:22:21-00:22:41)

The dialogue above presents a Willy Wonka and Noddle talk about the greed of Mrs. Scrubbit and Blacehor. Mrs. Scrubbit exemplifies the behavior of class inequality where the owner of the means of production has the power, although she adopts Noddle happily, Mrs. Scrubbit said it is still considered a debt. In the world of work, greedy or cunning people always look down on the lower class, and they consciously employ the lower class under the pretext that they have power over the means of production they own.

The debt system is used to enslave the lower classes, not knowing how they got trapped in the lodgings. This illustrates exploitation through ignorance designed by the bourgeoisie. This dialogue shows that exploitation in capitalism

does not always occur in crude forms such as forced labor or slavery. It can even appear in more subtle forms, such as debt wrapped in rules, or work systems that look legitimate but put workers in a weak position. In this case, Noodle, who has never been free with Mrs. Scrubitt, feels that the system she lives in is not fair.

Monopoly

The monopoly is controlled by the chocolate cartel, which always restricts new competitors from coming forward. They do this in collaboration with the police chief. It can be seen under dialogue:

When the Officer 2 : We've had some complaints about you, sir.
Willy Wonka : Complaints?
Officer 2 : You're disrupting the trade of other businesses.
I'm regrettably obliged to move you on and to confiscate your earnings.
Willy Wonka : Hey!

(Wonka, 2023, 00:16:21-00:16:31)

The above quote features a dialogue between policeman 2 and Willy Wonka. At that time, Wonka was selling and promoting his chocolates as the beginning of his career at Galeries Gourmet right in front of the chocolate cartel shop. However, one of the chocolate cartels who saw the incident got angry and asked his assistant to call the police. The three chocolate cartels meet Wonka and shake hands as a symbol of their business rivalry.

Wonka offered the chocolate to the cartels for tasting, with an amazing taste they were very upset and afraid of their chocolate being rivaled. Soon the police came and approached Wonka, the police told him that there was a complaint that Wonka had interfered with other people's business, the police confiscated his income, the police said that rules are rules. Confused, Wonka gave up and asked the policeman for a sovereign.

This situation is portrayed as a form of strengthening the power of the upper class (bourgeoisie) through the tools of the state. Capitalism in its monopolistic form not only distorts the economy but also shapes unequal social structures. When law and power are used to protect monopolized market interests, the little people have no place to thrive. Those who do not have access to capital will continue to be left behind, while those in power can make rules at will.

Capitalism Leads to Social Mobility in Paul King's *Wonka* (2023)

One of the main promises of capitalism is the opportunity for anyone to move up the social ladder if they are willing to work hard. However, as Karl Marx criticized, this promise is often a false illusion. The capitalist system is designed in such a way that the ruling class, or bourgeoisie, remains in control, while the working class hardly gets access to resources and means of production. In *Wonka* (2023), this struggle is seen through the main character, Willy Wonka, who strives to realize his dreams despite having to face an economic system full of injustice and exploitation.

Meritocratic Fallacy

It can be seen under dialogue:

Police 2 : No daydreaming.

(The policeman pointed to the ban on the shop door that read “For Rent, no daydreaming \$3 fine”, and Wonka gave the money to the policeman.)

(Wonka sings)

Wonka: In this city. Anyone can be successful. If the've talent and work hard, or so they say. But they didn't mention it would be so stressful. Just to make a dozen silver sovereigns.

(*Wonka*, 2023, 00:04:23-00:04:43)

Wonka expresses the commonly held belief in capitalist society that anyone can succeed if they have the talent and are willing to work hard. However, afterwards, he conveys the harsh reality that the struggle is grueling and stressful, even just to earn a little bit of money. The words “or so they say” imply that the assumption is just sweet words that are not true in real life, a hope that looks beautiful but does not match the actual social conditions.

This scene conveys a strong satire of the ostensibly fair system, where people are believed to be able to succeed just by hard work and ability. However, the reality is not that simple. Those without power or wealth are further oppressed by a system that supposedly provides opportunities.

According to Marx, the capitalist system makes people believe that they live in a fair world and everyone has equal opportunities. The reality is no. Many people think that anyone can be successful as long as they put in the effort, but in reality, only a handful of people who already have power and wealth have access

to success. This belief is just an illusion created to cover up the real inequality in society.

Resistance

In the movie *Wonka* (2023), several scenes illustrate this Resistance:

Willy Wonka : There's gotta be some way outta of here.
Piper : You don't think we've tried? There are bars on the window, and there's a dog on the door.
Abacus : And even if you could get out, that contract is watertight.
(*Wonka*, 2023, 00:19:14-00:19:19)

Wonka wants to get out of the Wash House to find a way out, a place that limits his dreams. Piper explains that they have also been looking for a way out but all the obstacles are difficult for them to pass. And if they could get out they could come back by being arrested by the police.

The iron bars on the window and the guard dog at the door can be interpreted as symbols of the various structural barriers that exist in the capitalist system- barriers that are not only physical, but also reflect deeper and systematic limitations. Willy Wonka's desire to find a way out reflects the spirit of resistance and the drive to make changes to an oppressive situation. However, the responses from Piper and Abacus show the harsh reality that upward social mobility, especially for those in the lower class, is not an easy thing to achieve.

In Karl Marx's view, capitalism creates a rigid class structure, where conflict between the working class and the owners of capital is ongoing. In this system, opportunities to rise to higher social positions are limited, as the laws and regulations in place are designed to protect the interests of the upper class and maintain inequality.

Consciousness

In the movie *Wonka* (2023), several scenes illustrate that capitalism leads to social mobility in the context of consciousness:

(THE GROUND RUMBLED, CHOCOLATE POURED OUT THROUGH FOUNTAINS AND THE CROWD EXCLAIMED)

Prodnose : What is that?
Slugworth : It's our chocolate! (CRYING)
Fickelgruber : All our chocolate!
Prodnose : We're ruined!

Willy Wonka : Hey, don't worry, gentlemen. You'll come down eventually. Probably, i think. But until then, ladies and gentlemen. Willy Wonka and friends invite you to enjoy our chocolate.

Woman : Yay! Magic Wonka!

(*Wonka*, 2023, 01:42:21-01:42:50)

The ground rumbled, chocolate came out of the fountain, and people cheered, watching the cartels fly as they ate the flying chocolate made by the Wonka. The cartels were sad and crying as they lost their entire supply of chocolate, which made them bankrupt. Meanwhile, Wonka smilingly announced to the townspeople at the Geleries Geourmet to enjoy his chocolates. Chocolate factory owners who previously had complete control over the market now had to face the harsh reality of losing all the wealth and power they had enjoyed. At the same time, Wonka emerged into the public eye, not as a businessman, but as a change maker. He distributes chocolate for free, as if to show that production does not always have to be monopolized for profit, but can be presented as a form of concern for others. It is the success of an individual in beating his business competitors. More than that, it is a powerful illustration of a drastic change in social structure, where those who were once oppressed now take over the role of leaders, and previously unheard voices now take center stage. True social mobility demands a complete change in the way wealth and the means of production are managed and distributed in society.

Karl Marx argued that social mobility in the capitalist system is an illusion used to disguise structural inequality. Capitalism maintains the power of the upper class by controlling the means of production, while creating the false impression that everyone has an equal chance of success. Wonka does not follow the path of capitalism, he does not compete in the free market or rely on money. Instead, Wonka built his distribution channels, which tacitly defied the logic of the capitalist market. His victory was not just a matter of beating the competition, but also a symbol of great social change. A previously oppressed figure now takes over a position of power and leadership. His previously unheard voice is now the center of attention. It shows that shifts in class position can happen not through conventional means, but through actions that challenge the oppressive system.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the analysis in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that capitalism and social mobility is reflected in *Wonka* (2023). The researcher concludes two focuses on the discussion. Those are representation capitalism and capitalism leads to social mobility in the movie. Reflection of the 3 chocolate cartels that have power in Galeries Geourmet, with their power they can ask for help with law enforcement to do anything even crimes to instead of being paid with chocolate. Meanwhile, Wonka (the main character), a chocolate maker who wants to have a shop in Galeries Gourmet, is always hindered by the 3 chocolate cartels. Wonka, who is just an ordinary chocolate maker with no money or power, always loses, but with a strong spirit and dream he always believes a miracle will come, this analysis uses Marxist theory.

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