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Representation of Individualism in Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby (2013): A Structuralism Approach

(Representasi Individualisme pada Jay Gatsby dalam The Great Gatsby (2013): Sebuah Pendekatan Strukturalisme)

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Abstract

Individualism is a fundamental perspective that shapes how a person constructs meaning and defines their existence in society. In literary and film works, this concept often creates moral tension and internal struggles. This research aims to analyze the representation of individualism in the character of Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby (2013). The study employs a qualitative descriptive method using a structuralism approach proposed by Scholes, which examines the relationships among structural elements such as characterization, dialogue, actions, conflicts, and relationships between characters. The primary data source is the screenplay of The Great Gatsby directed by Baz Luhrmann, supported by relevant literature on individualism. The findings indicate that Jay Gatsby represents three specific types of individualism. First, Possessive Individualism is demonstrated through his continuous pursuit of wealth, luxury, and social status as a measure of personal value. Second, Expressive Individualism is reflected in his effort to define himself by creating a completely new identity, transforming from his original background as James Gatz into Jay Gatsby. Third, Psychological Individualism is shown through his strong determination, personal ambition, and unwavering belief in his ability to shape his own destiny and recreate his past. The study concludes that the representation of Gatsby's individualism is constructed thoroughly through the interconnected structural elements within the film.

Abstrak

Individualisme merupakan pandangan mendasar yang membentuk cara seseorang membangun makna dan mendefinisikan eksistensinya di dalam masyarakat. Dalam karya sastra dan film, konsep ini sering memunculkan ketegangan moral dan pergumulan internal karakter. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi individualisme pada karakter Jay Gatsby di dalam film The Great Gatsby (2013). Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan strukturalisme dari Scholes, yang mengkaji hubungan antar unsur struktural seperti penokohan, dialog, tindakan, konflik, dan hubungan antar karakter. Sumber data utama yang digunakan adalah naskah film The Great Gatsby yang disutradarai oleh Baz Luhrmann, serta didukung oleh literatur yang relevan dengan individualisme. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Jay Gatsby mewujudkan tiga jenis individualisme yang spesifik. Pertama, Possessive Individualism ditunjukkan melalui pengejaran yang tiada henti terhadap kekayaan, kemewahan, dan status sosial sebagai tolak ukur nilai pribadinya. Kedua, Expressive Individualism tecermin dalam usahanya untuk mendefinisikan diri dengan menciptakan sebuah identitas

baru, yang bertransformasi dari identitas aslinya yaitu James Gatz menjadi Jay Gatsby. Ketiga, Psychological Individualism diperlihatkan melalui tekadnya yang sangat kuat, ambisi pribadi, dan keyakinan utuh pada kemampuannya untuk menentukan nasibnya sendiri dan mengubah masa lalu. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa representasi individualisme pada karakter Gatsby dikonstruksi secara utuh melalui hubungan antar unsur struktural di dalam film tersebut.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Individualism operates as a concept emphasizing autonomy, independence, and self-determination in shaping identity and life choices (Callero, 2013). It serves as a philosophical perspective where the individual functions as the central agent in decision-making. Individualistic values, such as personal freedom and achievement, exist as inherent human tendencies (Bellah et al., 1985). Modern individualism is defined by the capacity of individuals to determine their own values, rooting the concept in personal autonomy (Taylor, 1989). This perspective influences everyday behaviors, dictating how people balance personal interests with ethical considerations.

The representation of individualism can be identified across various aspects of daily life and cultural phenomena. A tangible example in society is the celebration of birthdays, which functions as an opportunity to recognize and emphasize personal identity. Individualism also shapes broader cultural concepts such as the American Dream. The American Dream refers to the idea that individuals have the opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work and personal initiative (Adams, 1931). These phenomena illustrate how personal freedom allows individuals to define their existence.

Individualism is consistently portrayed in visual entertainment, particularly within drama films. Drama films frequently focus on the internal struggles of characters, exploring themes such as freedom, identity, and moral choices (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010). Characters in this genre typically undergo personal development through their struggles to discover and define their identity. While protagonists seek personal freedom, antagonists demonstrate selfishness and prioritize personal interests over others. This dynamic creates moral tension and illustrates how personal freedom can lead to conflicts.

One prominent film depicting individualism is The Great Gatsby (2013), directed by Baz Luhrmann. Adapted from F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, the film explores social class and the American Dream. The story follows Jay Gatsby, a wealthy man who throws extravagant parties to rekindle a romance with Daisy Buchanan. The depiction of individualism is highly specific in Gatsby's character. He demonstrates absolute freedom in his actions without considering the interests of others as he pursues his life goals, making him an ideal subject for analysis.

Several previous studies have examined individualism in different media contexts. Wardani (2024) explored the impact of individualism in the Korean drama Happiness utilizing John Fiske's semiotics. Khumphan and Pattana (2021) analyzed individualism in pop and country songs winning the American Music Awards by employing content analysis based on Hofstede's concept (2005). Londa et al. (2022) examined the aspects of American individualism reflected in the main character in the film The Pursuit of Happyness using Emerson's theory of self-confidence and self-reliance.

Among the studies reviewed here, previous researchers have applied different objects, approaches, and theories to analyze individualism. This article addresses a distinct gap by analyzing individualism in the character of Jay Gatsby using the structuralism approach proposed by Scholes (1974). The analysis focuses on three types of individualism, namely possessive individualism, expressive individualism, and psychological individualism. These dimensions provide a focused framework to understand how structural elements construct character identity within the narrative.

Based on the background and the identified research gap, this study formulates a clear direction for the analysis of the selected film. The research problem focuses on how individualism is reflected in the character of Jay Gatsby in the story. Consequently, the objective of this research is to thoroughly analyze the representation of individualism in the character of Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby (2013). This analysis reveals how individualistic values shape his existence, actions, and structural relationships.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Structuralism Approach

Structuralism functions as an approach that views a literary work as a comprehensive system consisting of various interconnected parts (Scholes, 1974). A literary work possesses an internal organization in which each element contributes directly to the formation of the entire text. Reading a work involves analyzing it as a system and clarifying the relationships among its various parts. The researcher directs attention to the work itself and examines how its internal elements function together. Consequently, the meaning of a specific element depends entirely on its position and its relationship within the complete structure. Structural analysis requires a focus on the connections among the elements rather than examining each element as an isolated entity.

In a film, several specific elements operate as parts of the overall structure to construct meaning. These structural elements include characterization, dialogue, actions, conflicts, events, and relationships between characters. Characterization refers to the method by which a character is presented and developed throughout the narrative. Dialogue supplies information about what characters think, feel, believe, or intend to execute. Actions demonstrate how characters respond to situations and pursue their established goals. Conflicts reveal problems or tensions experienced by characters, while relationships indicate how their actions and decisions connect to one another. Characterization develops systematically through repeated dialogue, behavior, decisions, conflicts, and interactions.

The character of Jay Gatsby provides an appropriate focus for structural analysis because his identity and individualism are constructed sequentially through various elements throughout the film. His dialogue reveals his personal beliefs and desires, while his physical actions demonstrate his continuous efforts to achieve his goals. The conflicts he experiences reveal the external and internal obstacles that challenge his ambitions. Furthermore, his relationships with other characters, particularly with Daisy Buchanan, demonstrate how his personal desires dictate his decisions. These structural elements operate together to construct the representation of Gatsby as an individual possessing strong personal ambitions.

2.2 Concept of Individualism

The concept of individualism emphasizes the importance of the individual as an independent person possessing the ability to make decisions and determine the direction of life. Individualism places attention on personal freedom, autonomy, self-development, personal achievement, identity, and motivation. Personal freedom refers to the ability to make choices based on personal decisions, while autonomy is the capacity to act according to one's own intentions. Self-development concerns the effort to improve abilities and achieve goals, and identity relates to how individuals define themselves. An individual acts as an active agent capable of shaping life according to personal values and aspirations.

Historically, individualism as a concept finds its roots in the Enlightenment era of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thinkers during this period emphasized the critical importance of personal liberty, self-determination, and the fundamental rights of the individual over collective obligations. In the American context, individualism developed into a defining cultural and social value. The cultural emphasis on personal freedom prioritizes autonomy, suggesting that any individual can achieve success through hard work and determination regardless of their original background. This context reinforces the idea that individuals hold responsibility for shaping their own destiny through personal agency.

2.3 Types of Individualism

Possessive individualism operates on the principle that individuals are the exclusive owners of their own abilities and the products of their labor (Macpherson, 1962). Within this perspective, a person's inherent value is frequently measured by what they possess and what they have accomplished. This type of individualism is commonly associated with modern societies that place a high emphasis on wealth, status, and personal achievement. The core elements include the ownership of property, the pursuit of social status, and material success. These material achievements function as a symbol of identity and a standard measure of personal worth.

Expressive individualism emphasizes the concepts of self-expression and authenticity in personal development (Taylor, 1989). Individual identity is shaped significantly by inner feelings, personal desires, and subjective values. This type highlights the freedom of individuals to construct and express their unique identities without conforming to social pressures. Self-definition allows individuals to define who they are according to their own beliefs. Self-expression involves communicating one's unique identity to others openly. Authenticity requires people to remain true to their inner selves, living according to their true desires and convictions.

Psychological individualism is understood effectively through Self-Determination Theory, which argues that individuals are driven by internal motivations rather than external pressures (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This perspective explains that human behavior is primarily influenced by intrinsic motivation, autonomy,

competence, and relatedness. The core components of psychological individualism include self-determination, intrinsic motivation, and confidence in one's ability. Individuals demonstrating this trait trust their capacity to control the direction of their lives and overcome perceived limitations. Personal desire and determination hold more importance than social expectations or objective reality.

These three perspectives provide distinct methods for classifying and interpreting the representation of individualism in Gatsby's character. Possessive individualism is applied to examine his wealth, material possessions, and relentless pursuit of social status. Expressive individualism is utilized to analyze his transformation and the conscious creation of his new identity. Psychological individualism is employed to evaluate his personal motivation, determination, and strong confidence in his ability to achieve his desired future. By applying these theoretical perspectives to the structural elements, the research identifies the specific forms of individualism represented in the film.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method combined with a structuralism approach to analyze the representation of individualism in Jay Gatsby's character. The study focuses directly on the structural elements of the film, particularly characterization, dialogue, actions, conflicts, and relationships between characters. These elements are examined systematically as parts of a larger system rather than independent components. By observing their relationships with one another, the researcher identifies how these interconnected elements construct the overall representation of individualism. The qualitative descriptive method functions effectively to describe and interpret the selected scenes and dialogues found in the film text.

In qualitative research, data analysis is conducted to build hypotheses and provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between the observed reality and the theoretical framework. The primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and analyze real phenomena, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups (Sukmadinata, 2007). Furthermore, the descriptive method in descriptive research aims to describe, compare, differentiate, classify, analyze, and interpret entities and events that shape various fields of study (Tavakoli, 2012). This methodological framework provides the necessary tools to systematically interpret the structural components of the film.

3.2 Data Source

The primary data source for this research consists of the screenplay of The Great Gatsby (2013), directed by Baz Luhrmann. This cinematic work is an adaptation of the classic novel of the same name written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The screenplay text was obtained from publicly available internet archives, specifically scriptslug.com. The primary data extracted from this document include dialogues, monologues, narrative descriptions, actions, conflicts, and relevant character relationships. These specific textual elements are selected because they contribute fundamentally to the construction of Jay Gatsby's character and the representation of individualism in the film.

The screenplay was chosen as the primary object of study because it portrays individualism clearly through Gatsby's pursuit of the American Dream. The text provides extensive evidence of his ambition to achieve material success and win the love of Daisy Buchanan. In addition to the primary text, supporting data are obtained from books and scholarly articles related to structuralism, individualism, and the analysis of literary texts. These secondary sources are utilized to establish a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing the structural elements of the film and identifying the specific types of individualism represented through the main character.

3.3 Data Collection Technique

The data collection process was conducted systematically by closely reading the screenplay of The Great Gatsby (2013). During this reading phase, the researcher identified and selected relevant scenes, dialogues, monologues, actions, conflicts, and character relationships. These selected textual elements specifically relate to the representation of individualism in Jay Gatsby's character. The researcher focused heavily on locating scenes that contain clear elements connected to the theoretical framework of individualism. The extracted data were then documented carefully and organized according to their direct relevance to the structural elements of the narrative.

Following the initial documentation, the collected data were categorized based on the specific forms of individualism examined in this study. The researcher organized the selected scenes to align with possessive individualism, expressive individualism, and psychological individualism. This categorization process ensured that every piece of qualitative data was prepared adequately for further structural analysis. The selected scenes were recorded accurately to maintain the context of the dialogues and actions within the broader story. This collection method guaranteed that only highly relevant structural elements advanced to the final analytical stage.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using a structuralism approach by examining the film as a system consisting of interconnected elements. The analysis focused on the relationships among characterization, dialogue, actions, conflicts, and relationships between characters. This process was conducted sequentially through five main steps. First, the identification of data involved selecting the specific scenes, dialogues, monologues, actions, and character relationships relevant to the representation of individualism. These selected pieces of data were examined strictly as structural elements within the film text. Second, the structural analysis was executed by examining the relationships among the identified elements to understand their contribution to Gatsby's character. Dialogue, actions, conflicts, and relationships were examined in relation to one another rather than as isolated segments.

Third, the classification of individualism was performed after thoroughly analyzing the structural relationships. The researcher classified the representation of individualism based on the three specific types utilized in this study, namely possessive individualism, expressive individualism, and psychological individualism. Fourth, the interpretation phase involved connecting the structural relationships found in each scene directly with the relevant type of individualism. This interpretation focused on how the elements of the film work together to construct the representation of individualism in Jay Gatsby. Fifth, the conclusion step organized the final results of the analysis. The conclusion was drawn based entirely on the structural relationships identified throughout the selected scenes and their connection to the three theoretical types of individualism.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Overview of the Research Object

The Great Gatsby (2013), directed by Baz Luhrmann, functions as the primary object of this research analysis. This film operates as a modern visual adaptation of the classic novel of the same title written by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925. The narrative takes place in the United States during the 1920s, a period widely recognized for rapid economic growth and a highly luxurious lifestyle following the conclusion of the first World War. The story is presented systematically through the perspective of Nick Carraway, a young man who relocates to New York. Nick becomes the immediate neighbor of Jay Gatsby, a highly wealthy but profoundly mysterious individual known throughout the area for hosting massive and extravagant parties. Gatsby utilizes his immense wealth to attract public attention, although he maintains a deeply hidden personal motive behind his actions.

His primary ambition focuses entirely on winning back his former love, Daisy Buchanan, who is currently married to a wealthy man named Tom Buchanan. Tom possesses a strong and somewhat controlling personality, which creates the central conflict of the narrative as Gatsby attempts to revive his past relationship. The film highlights that the lives of wealthy individuals contain significant conflicts, emotional emptiness, and lies operating behind the glamorous surface. Gatsby started from a simple background and built himself into an influential figure, demonstrating how an individual attempts to create a new version of himself. The character of Jay Gatsby serves as the focal point because he clearly represents strong individualistic values through his actions. To understand this representation thoroughly, the analysis examines six specific scenes from the film, which are categorized into three distinct types of individualism based on their structural elements.

4.2 Possessive Individualism

Possessive individualism emphasizes the principle that individuals measure their personal value through what they possess and what they have accomplished (Macpherson, 1962). This specific dimension of individualism is reflected significantly in the continuous pursuit of wealth, luxury, and social status. The analysis identifies a critical representation of possessive individualism in Scene 6, which occurs during a dialogue between Nick and Gatsby outside the house after a party (1:20:45 / 1:20:55-1:21:03). Nick attempts to advise Gatsby regarding the situation by stating, "I wouldn't ask too much of her.". Gatsby immediately responds, "Wouldn't ask too much? Beg your pardon, old sport. It's just... It's so sad, because it's so hard to make her understand. I've gotten all these things for her, and now she just wants to run away.".

This dialogue demonstrates clearly that Gatsby evaluates the worth of his personal efforts directly through the wealth and status he has accumulated in his pursuit of Daisy. The specific phrase "I've gotten all these things for her" highlights his intense focus on material acquisition resulting from his own hard work. Throughout his life, Gatsby engaged in deliberate actions to gather vast wealth, construct a luxurious mansion, and organize extravagant parties. These possessions and events do not function merely as symbols of general financial success or public prestige. Instead, they represent years of personal ambition directed specifically toward the singular goal of winning Daisy's love and securing his desired future.

From the theoretical perspective of Macpherson (1962), individuals define their inherent value through their ownership and tangible achievements. Gatsby experiences profound frustration and disappointment because Daisy fails to fully recognize the significance of the material wealth he has gathered specifically for her. He assumes that his substantial material success should act as sufficient evidence of his devotion and personal capability. Gatsby believes that his massive wealth should convince Daisy to choose him over Tom Buchanan. This assumption reveals exactly how closely he connects his personal identity and self-worth to his material ownership and social achievements.

The structural elements within this scene operate together systematically to construct the representation of possessive individualism. The dialogue connects directly to the physical actions Gatsby took prior to this moment, specifically his systematic accumulation of wealth and hosting of grand parties. These past actions are challenged directly by the central conflict, which manifests as Daisy's desire to run away rather than accept the wealthy life he offers. Furthermore, the relationship between Gatsby, Daisy, and Nick highlights this tension, as Gatsby relies on Nick to help facilitate the romantic connection with Daisy. The structural relationship among these narrative elements emphasizes that Gatsby's material success defines his characterization.

Gatsby views his massive house, immense wealth, and elevated social status as a direct extension of himself. These material elements are never separated from his identity; they form the absolute foundation of how he defines his personal success. The wealth establishes his perceived right to pursue a romantic relationship with Daisy despite her existing marriage to another wealthy man. His severe disappointment in her reaction confirms that his entire self-concept relies heavily on material validation and acceptance. Therefore, the structural relationship between his dialogue, his actions of acquiring wealth, and his conflict with Daisy fully constructs the representation of possessive individualism within the film

4.3 Expressive Individualism

Expressive individualism focuses fundamentally on self-definition, self-expression, and the capacity of an individual to construct an authentic identity (Taylor, 1989). This form of individualism is represented clearly in Scene 1, during a conversation between Gatsby and Nick inside a car (00:35:00–00:38:00). Gatsby initiates the topic by asking, "what's your opinion of me anyhow?" and subsequently states, "I'm going to tell you something about my life". He adds, "I don't want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear". He then claims to be the son of wealthy people from the Middle West and states that he was educated at Oxford due to family tradition.

Through this interaction, Gatsby actively attempts to take control of his own narrative and shape how he is perceived by others. He recognizes the vast gap between circulating public rumors and the specific identity he wishes to project to the world. By rejecting the inaccurate stories constructed by society, he demonstrates a strong desire for personal self-expression. Rather than passively accepting external judgments and assumptions, Gatsby chooses to define himself firmly through his own voice. This dialogue illustrates that he views identity as something that an individual can actively shape and communicate, reflecting the core principles of self-definition.

The structural relationship between dialogue and characterization is highly evident as Gatsby constructs a specific image of himself during the drive. He deliberately presents a background associated with generational wealth, prestige, and high education because these elements align perfectly with his internal self-image. The factual accuracy of his claims holds less importance than his conscious choice to dictate his identity to Nick. This action reflects the view that identity does not function as an inherited trait but rather as a construct shaped actively by the individual. Gatsby's effort to manage Nick's understanding represents his complete independence from standard social judgments.

This effort to define himself continues directly in Scene 2, which extends the ongoing conversation in the car (00:35:00–00:38:30). Gatsby explicitly states, "I didn't want you to think I was some nobody," and reinforces this motivation by adding, "I thought you ought to know something about my life". These specific statements reveal his deep internal concern regarding how his constructed identity is evaluated by those around him. He refuses entirely to be viewed as an ordinary or insignificant person, demanding recognition for the sophisticated image he has carefully built. This concern highlights the critical need for his self-created identity to receive external validation.

Gatsby's dialogue demonstrates a lifelong process of self-creation, representing his transition from his original status to his current wealthy persona. His active choice to share his story proves that he values the identity he has created and expects others to acknowledge it respectfully. The structural relationship between his dialogue and his relationship with Nick demonstrates how expressive individualism operates practically. He uses interpersonal communication deliberately to solidify his self-expression and protect his constructed authenticity from external doubt. This effort proves that expressive individualism requires continuous maintenance of the expressed identity in social settings.

The foundation of this self-created identity is explained further in Scene 3 through Nick's narration regarding Gatsby's past (1:08:27). Nick states clearly, "In his own imagination, he was a son of God". This narrative description connects directly to Gatsby's complete transformation from James Gatz, a boy from a poor farming background, into the wealthy Jay Gatsby. As noted in the discussion section, Gatsby essentially sprang from his own Platonic conception of himself. This narration indicates that Gatsby imagined a significantly higher and more ideal version of himself rather than accepting the identity dictated by his original social circumstances.

This rejection of his inherited past highlights the purest form of self-definition according to the theoretical concepts established by Taylor (1989). Gatsby did not allow his family background or surrounding society to dictate his existence or limit his potential. Instead, his identity emerged entirely from his personal vision and internal aspirations for greatness. By dedicating his life to becoming this imagined person, he demonstrated the ability to create authenticity based strictly on inner desires rather than external conditions. The structural element of narration works together with Gatsby's actions to construct a character who embodies expressive individualism completely.

4.4 Psychological Individualism

Psychological individualism operates on the fundamental principle that individuals are driven primarily by internal motivations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theoretical perspective emphasizes autonomy, competence, and self-determination as the main forces behind human behavior. An individual demonstrating psychological individualism trusts heavily in their personal capacity to control the direction of their life. This trait involves a strong belief in one's ability to overcome external limitations and achieve specific personal goals. Internal motivation guides decisions more strongly than social pressure or environmental expectations. Within the film, Gatsby exhibits this form of individualism through his continuous determination to reshape his reality according to his own desires.

The most prominent representation of this psychological individualism occurs in Scene 4, immediately following a large party at his mansion (1:20:55-1:21:03). During a critical dialogue, Nick states, "You can't repeat the past.". This statement represents a common social belief that historical events are permanent and impossible to recreate. Gatsby immediately challenges this established assumption by questioning, "Can't repeat the past?". His reaction demonstrates that he absolutely refuses to accept society's standard view of reality automatically. He evaluates the situation entirely according to his own personal beliefs rather than conforming to conventional wisdom. This specific interaction illustrates a highly independent mindset and profound confidence in his personal perspective.

Gatsby subsequently reinforces his position by declaring, "Why of course you can.". This definitive statement reveals his unwavering belief in his personal ability to influence and manipulate reality. He firmly believes that through intense determination, consistent effort, and personal will, he can perfectly recreate the relationship he previously shared with Daisy. He envisions restoring the exact life he imagines they were meant to have together. Rather than accepting the clear limitations imposed by time or existing circumstances, Gatsby places complete trust in his own capacity to achieve a goal that others consider fundamentally impossible. His declaration proves that his internal desires dictate his understanding of the world.

From the perspective of self-determination theory, Gatsby's response reflects an exceptionally strong sense of personal agency (Deci & Ryan, 1985). He views himself as an active agent possessing the necessary power to direct his own life and pursue his objectives regardless of external obstacles. His massive confidence suggests that personal desire holds significantly more importance than social expectations or objective facts. Furthermore, this dialogue highlights his powerful internal motivation. His belief is not driven by the opinions of others but strictly by his own personal conviction. He remains committed to his dream because it aligns perfectly with his inner aspirations, which is a central characteristic of psychological individualism.

Another clear representation of psychological individualism appears in Scene 5 through Nick's narration regarding Gatsby's past (1:08:35). Nick describes Gatsby's departure from his original life with the specific phrase "ran far, far away". This description emphasizes Gatsby's absolute willingness to break away from the severe limitations of his historical background. His decisive action to leave was driven entirely by internal motivation rather than any external pressure. Society did not force him to abandon his family or his home. Instead, he made a conscious personal choice based purely on his immense ambition and strong belief in securing a much better future for himself.

The phrase strongly represents psychological individualism because it illustrates self-determination, personal agency, and the unwavering belief that an individual can dictate their own destiny. Gatsby's early decision to leave his old life behind perfectly demonstrates the individualistic belief that success is shaped by personal choices rather than predetermined by social origins. He took full responsibility for his future by separating himself from an environment that did not match his internal vision. His capacity to run away signifies the ultimate exercise of personal freedom, confirming that his psychological drive to succeed overpowered the circumstances into which he was originally born.

4.5 The Interrelation of Structural Elements

The representation of individualism in Gatsby does not rely on isolated actions or singular statements. Instead, it is constructed comprehensively through the interrelation of various structural elements within the film. Following the structuralism approach, a literary or cinematic work functions as a system where meaning is produced through the relationships among its parts (Scholes, 1974). Characterization, dialogue, actions, conflicts, and relationships between characters operate together to form a cohesive picture of Gatsby's identity. His individualistic traits do not exist independently of one another; rather, they intersect and support each other continuously throughout the narrative to build a complex character.

The connection between possessive individualism and expressive individualism provides a clear example of this structural integration. Gatsby's deliberate actions to accumulate vast wealth and host extravagant parties represent possessive individualism. However, these material achievements are not simply accumulated for the sake of financial security. The wealth serves as a necessary tool to construct and validate his new identity as Jay Gatsby, which represents expressive individualism. Without the massive house and the expensive possessions, his self-created persona would lack physical evidence. Therefore, his possessive actions directly support his expressive characterization, demonstrating how structural elements depend on each other to establish his new social existence.

Furthermore, both possessive and expressive individualism are structurally linked to his psychological individualism. The entire purpose behind creating a wealthy identity and expressing a sophisticated persona is to achieve a highly specific personal goal. His psychological drive to repeat the past and reclaim Daisy Buchanan motivates all his material and expressive efforts. The dialogue where he insists he can change the past connects directly to his actions of buying the house across the bay from her. His internal motivation acts as the foundation for his external behaviors, illustrating a deep structural relationship between what he thinks, what he says, and what he physically accomplishes.

Finally, the conflicts and relationships within the film solidify these interconnected elements. Gatsby's central conflict with Daisy's hesitation and Tom's interference tests the limits of his individualistic beliefs. His relationship with Nick operates as a structural device to reveal his internal motivations and past actions to the audience. Every conversation and interaction forces Gatsby to defend his wealth, his identity, and his psychological beliefs simultaneously. By examining these structural elements collectively, it becomes evident that the theory of structuralism accurately explains how the three types of individualism merge to construct Gatsby's character (Scholes, 1974). The structural relationships ensure that his individualism functions as a complete, unified system.

4.6 Social Meaning of Individualism

Based on the structural analysis of Jay Gatsby, the individualism portrayed in the film carries significant social meanings extending beyond mere personal freedom. The specific manner in which Gatsby constructs his identity and pursues his goals reflects a broader transformation of values in modern society. Success is no longer viewed strictly as something determined by birth, family background, or inherited social status. Instead, success becomes heavily associated with personal effort, ambition, and achievement. Gatsby represents this fundamental shift by demonstrating that an individual can build both an identity and a powerful social position through intense determination. His character reflects a movement toward a more open social structure where mobility is possible.

The concept of social mobility and personal achievement connects directly to the historical ideal of the American Dream. The American Dream suggests that every individual possesses the opportunity to achieve prosperity through hard work regardless of their economic background (Adams, 1931). Gatsby's journey from a poor farm boy to a wealthy socialite embodies this cultural promise. However, his individualism also reveals a massive tension between the individual and society. Even though he succeeds in creating a new identity and achieving material wealth independently, he constantly seeks recognition and acceptance from the established social environment around him. This behavior suggests that personal independence requires external validation.

This tension proves that individual freedom is never completely separate from existing social structures. Individuals may attempt to define themselves independently, but their established identity often depends significantly on how they are perceived and accepted by others. Furthermore, the form of individualism presented in the film acts as a strong critique of a society that places excessive emphasis on status and materialism. Gatsby's aggressive pursuit of wealth is not simply about personal success, but rather about reaching a specific ideal shaped heavily by society. The narrative ultimately reveals that the material values he chases are entirely superficial and empty.

Because literary and cinematic works function as a reflection of social reality, Gatsby's story exposes the limitations of wealth in providing genuine satisfaction. Individual effort aimed at achieving happiness becomes trapped within shallow social standards. Individualism in the film operates as both a symbol of freedom and a reflection of severe contradiction. It empowers individuals to pursue their ambitious dreams and

define their own paths, yet it shows how those dreams can be limited by societal expectations. Gatsby's journey highlights how personal ambition can lead individuals into a destructive cycle of chasing ideals shaped more by society than by genuine personal fulfillment.

The findings regarding Gatsby's individualism provide a distinct perspective when compared to previous studies. Wardani (2024) observed that individualism in a Korean drama produced negative impacts such as selfishness, isolation, and a disregard for others. This aligns with Gatsby's extreme focus on his personal desires, which ultimately blinded him to reality and isolated him from genuine connection. Conversely, Londa et al. (2022) highlighted self-reliance and self-confidence as tools for achieving success in their film analysis. Gatsby similarly demonstrates immense self-confidence and personal agency in building his wealth. However, this current study uniquely demonstrates how these possessive, expressive, and psychological traits are structurally intertwined to construct a singular identity, rather than operating merely as isolated behavioral consequences.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed comprehensively to analyze the representation of individualism in the character of Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby (2013) film through a structuralism approach. The analysis focused systematically on the relationships among structural elements of the film to identify the forms of individualism represented through Gatsby's character. Based on the detailed findings and thorough structural analysis, the research successfully addressed the established objective by demonstrating that Jay Gatsby clearly represents three major types of individualism. These specific types operate collectively to define his personal motivations, public actions, and central identity throughout the narrative.

First, Gatsby represents possessive individualism through his relentless pursuit of wealth, absolute luxury, and high social status. His vast possessions and massive material achievements contribute directly to the construction of his identity and are closely related to his personal goals. Second, he represents expressive individualism through his active creation and open expression of a completely new identity. His conscious transformation from his original background as James Gatz into the sophisticated Jay Gatsby demonstrates his strong desire to define himself according to his own aspirations. Third, Gatsby represents psychological individualism through his strong determination, deep personal ambition, and unwavering belief in his absolute ability to control his own destiny. His persistent effort to achieve his goals, particularly his intense desire to recreate the past and reunite with Daisy, highlights this psychological independence.

These three forms of individualism are not isolated traits, but rather they are constructed comprehensively through the interconnected structural elements of the film. The characterization, dialogue, physical actions, narrative conflicts, and relationships between characters operate together systemically to construct Jay Gatsby as an individualistic figure. The structuralism approach provides a reliable basis for understanding how these forms of individualism depend on the relationships among the narrative elements to function successfully. The relationship between what Gatsby says, the material wealth he gathers, and his conflict regarding Daisy demonstrates that his individualistic character is built through the continuous interaction of these structural parts rather than through independent moments.

5.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several suggestions can be proposed for future researchers and readers interested in analyzing individualism, while acknowledging that this research was limited to a single character and primarily utilized data from the screenplay. Future researchers are highly encouraged to explore individualism from entirely different theoretical perspectives to gain a broader understanding. Future studies may apply related concepts such as self-identity, the American Dream, social mobility, or existentialism. Furthermore, researchers may compare the representation of individualism in The Great Gatsby with other literary works or different film adaptations to understand how individualistic values are portrayed across contexts. Future studies should also examine the relationship between individualism and other social issues represented in the film, particularly class inequality, immense wealth, and materialism. Finally, for readers, this study strongly suggests that individualism should always be balanced with an accurate understanding of reality and social relationships. While personal ambition and self-determination remain important, individuals must recognize the limitations of their circumstances and maintain healthy connections with others to achieve a meaningful life.

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