

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature as one of the major media must have a value including moral value so that a literary work not only gives its readers a pleasure but also provides values and lessons (Mahendra and Amelia, 2020). Literature and film at their core have the same function, namely entertaining and providing something particular insight into the reader or the audience. In popular literature studies, films are literary works. Muller (2006:33) stated that *“Using film as literature still favors students with a strong grasp of narrative analysis skills, for it, focuses mostly on the elements that film shares with literature, not on the unique ways a film expresses its narrative.”* Therefore, the study on film is considered the development of a new form in understanding human life. Through these media, literature learners and researchers are expected to apply literary studies theories easily to grasp what human life issues exist in the film produced by humans. Film as one of the media has gained its position in American film or Hollywood in delivering people a message.

Detroit is an American period crime drama film directed by Kathryn Bigelow, written by Mark Boal on July 28, 2017. This film stars Chris Chalk, Mason Alban, Bennett Deady, Andrea Eversley, and many other players. This film has gained attention from the audience as *Detroit* is a film based on a true story about the riots occurring in Michigan, Detroit, the U.S. Regarding the public awareness on this film, Gleiberman (2017) gives his review and critic:

Bigelow sketches in the emotional and logistical dynamics of a late-'60s urban riot: the violence that erupts out of the city's residents without warning and, seemingly, without rational justification, because there's no agenda behind it - it's protest in the form of a spasm. The fact that we're seeing African-Americans trash their own neighborhoods expresses something that's profoundly implosive yet necessary: an incendiary had-it-up-to-here hopelessness tinged with a weary nothing-more-to-lose masochism.

Other critics on *Detroit* (2017) stated that the film seems “*terrible by having brutality fight on unbearable level*” (Orr, 2017) and “*more disturbing by its surprising contemporary relevance*” (Kermode, 2017). Those comments appear different from the achievement gained. The film, which has a duration of 2 hours 23 minutes, won a rating of 7.3 from 48,048 users of the IMDb site. This film successfully grossed \$16.8 million in the United States and Canada and \$7.3 million in other territories for a worldwide total of \$24.1 million, against a production budget of \$34 million. This film has also received several awards, such as *CASTING Society of America, USA 2018* and *Globes de Cristal Awards, France 2018*.

This film is based on a true story in Detroit, United States, in 1967, which is a story of racial issues that divide American society. *Detroit* film is a snapshot of a real-life event, a police raid on the Algiers Motel in Detroit in 1967. The film starts in the setting on Sunday, July 23, 1967. On the 12th Street Riot, there begins a celebration held for black veterans returning home from the Vietnam War. There is gunshot suddenly, and the mob sets fire to several buildings along the street. The city mass seems to panic and the police or the city's elected official finds difficulties in handling the riot. The president sends paratroopers into the city to try to help. After what seems to be sniper fire from the place, police storm the building. The

officer in charge, Krauss has already shot one black looter in the back, and it is clear that he intends to use all means to learn who it was that shot at the police. He lines up black youths and two white women found with them against the walls of a hallway and unleashes a brutal mix of beatings, murder threats, and mock executions. A black security guard, Melvin Dismukes witnesses the whole scene but later finds himself accused of committing the crimes himself. Those acquitted of the murder resumed their lives with varying degrees of success. The film ends with the characters' exposure to their success. The conflict between Kraus as white people and wrong judgment to black security cause riot. This marks the class conflict among them. Like all movements, the black struggle was caused by social structures and human activity.

Jalata (2002, p. 3) stated that the existence of “*the African American movement has sought to redefine the racially distorted black cultural identity, liberate blacks from the racial caste system, and introduce fundamental social transformation in the black community*”. This means that the class struggle occurs because of a movement carried out by a group, such as black people. Class struggle cases continue to date and researchers found events that lead to class struggle itself. The recent example can be seen from what happens in the U.S. of BLM (Black Live Matter) movement. In 2020, black man was prosecuted criminal acts committed by the U.S. white policeman. This action leads to death. Eligon (2020) noted that there was another demoralizing shooting of a Black man by the police. This caused another angry outcry in the streets, another disturbing trail of destruction that had the potential to overshadow the message of the need to end police violence and racism. The

movement caused of discrimination action by White group also happens to the Asian American group in the U.S. nowadays. This means that the discrimination and racist action lead to class struggle for minorities group in the U.S., for Black and the Asian people group.

Class conflict and class struggle relate to each other and usually happen to different communities. This conflict motivates some efforts in struggling with their position in the communities. *The class struggle at the heart of capitalist society is the logical outcome of a historical process, which would conclude after the working classes seized the modes of production*, (Selwyn, 2007, p. 108). The statement implies that class struggles arise from conflict between the ruling and lower classes. The domination of ruling class appears to rule and exploit the lower classes for a different perspective. Marcus and Menzies (2007, p. 4) stated, “*social class is essential to understand and organize social change*”. Class struggle is part of perspectives in Marxist theories. Marxism is a theory and a practice united in the objective of achieving a classless society. As a theory, Marxism is a body of conceptual tools that means the ruling class of a particular society deploy to hold onto their privileged position in society (Marcus & Menzies, 2007). The theory of class struggle as a part of Marxist theories can be applied in literary analysis including the analysis in Marxist film.

Marxist film theory is one of the oldest forms, world film culture for over a hundred years, even if this influence is often denied. The struggle for control of the means of film production in the cultural sphere is part of and develops concerning the

broader work among the upper classes for the total means of production. At the beginning of the 20th century, as capital struggled to turn a new medium into a profitable commodity, the international working class reclaimed this new medium of cultural production as the dominant historiographic forms had done.

Marxist theory tools are considered helpful for understanding the art people consume and enjoy every day and how consumption adds up to a culture (Kornbluh, 2019, p. 5). Culture is the complex whole that man has acquired as a member of society and the culture shows the result of the behavior and habits of the societies of its place (Efrilia and Setiawan, 2020). The movie has played its role in delivering the message on Marxist issues, such as class struggle. This issue has been known and developed in many movie productions. It is filmed from different themes, angles, and narratives. The interest on the issues has evolved and it can be seen from the popularity of class struggle studies in film studies. Though some researchers have discussed a lot, the detail of analysis varies from one and another, especially by using Marxist film theory.

The researcher applies Marxist theory about the class struggle as the films shows black people fight for justice, more acts of violence and skin colour. This conflict results from prejudices from people judgment of a person or group, attitudes, and behavior. The research discussion includes the analysis in film studies focusing on dialogue, picture, camera angle, and others, which centers on class struggle analysis. The film analysis focuses on representation theory, semiotics' Barthes and Marxist theories on class.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of study, the writer formulates the research question: How is class struggle represented in *Detroit* film?

1.3 Research Objective

From the research questions above, this study's objective is to find out the representation of class struggle in *Detroit* film.

1.4 Use of Study

1.4.1 Practical Use

This research can raise the awareness of society about the existence of class struggle. It can give society more in-depth insight and knowledge about the definition of class struggle and the issue of class conflict in society. The information written in this research can also be used by future research who wants to analyze the same film, topics, or issues.

1.4.2 Theoretical Use

Other future researchers can use the theory used inside this research to conduct a more in-depth analysis of class struggle from Marxist perspectives. This study hopes to give more views on studies in film and semiotic's Barthes. It can also use it for the researcher who wants to research sociology criticism.

1.5 Scope of the Study

In this study, the writer analyzes class struggle in *Detroit* (2017) film. This study is limited to film analysis using the Marxist approach and Marxist theories on the class struggle to avoid broader discussion. This study centers on film studies by using representation and Barthes's semiotics theories. It also applies cinematography approach to analyze the movie.

