CLASS CONFLICT IN PARASITE FILM USING MARXIST CRITICISM

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Abstract
For a long time, films have taken responsibility to spread cultural diversity, information and entertainment. It can be a medium to portray philosophical discussion and arguments, like class conflict. The writer analysis a film entitled “Parasite” by Bong Joon-ho. This film was published in 2019 and became one of the most popular films of the year. The purpose of this research is to understand the matter of class conflict that arises in Parasite film. The research method used is descriptive qualitative to dissect in detail the problem. According to issues that happened in the Parasite film, this research uses Marxism theory by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For further analysis, the writer analyses the relation of narrative and cinematic structure, so class discrimination that occurs in the film can be more portrayed. The result of this research show that the theme of this film describes about hope of the working-class to improve their live inside capitalism society. At the end, the theme of hope portrayed in a letter, imagining a better life for a working-class family, even after all they have experienced.
Keyword: Film, Class Conflict, Marxism

Abstrak
Kata Kunci: Film, Konflik Kelas, Marxisme
I. INTRODUCTION

Film is a visual product of art. It represents the expression of ideas, feelings and imagination of the filmmaker conveyed to the audience. Film is created for both business and entertainment purposes. It has now become a large industry that is quite popular around the world, where feature films are always awaited by their presence in theatres. Apart from that, as a work of art, film often interpreted several art elements to meet intellectual and spiritual needs.

The origin word of Film is Cinematographie which comes from the words Cinema (motion), Tho or Phytos (light), and Graphie or Grhap (writing, picture, image). So the meaning of Film is picturing motion with light” (Riadi, 2012). By what Riadi expressed, it means that film represents the expression of ideas, feelings and imagination of the filmmaker conveyed to the audience. Film as a mass communication medium cannot be separated from the relationship between film and society itself. It has now become a large industry that is quite popular around the world, where feature films are always awaited by their presence in theatres. Films

For a long time, films have taken responsibility to spread cultural diversity, information and entertainment. Pratista stated that “Film in general can be divided into two elements of formation, namely, narrative elements and cinematic elements” (Hidayat, 2019). It can be concluded that film has various structure and elements that can be divided into audio and visual but still related to each other. The structural elements in film are the essential part of how the audience will apprehend the story; It binds action and idea into one unified whole. A specific philosophy can be described through film in several different ways. It can be a medium to portray philosophical discussion and arguments. Summarily, a filmmaker represents a theoretical situation and leaving the audience to interpret how the film expresses philosophical content.

According to Pratista, the narrative element is the material to be processed, while the cinematic element is the way to process it (Nurul K & Nugroho, 2019). By this opinion it means that between narrative and cinematic elements are bound closely to create a good story.

Parasite is a dark comedy film directed by Bong Joon-ho. Dark comedy or black comedy is usually satire that makes fun of
something serious or taboo. It often uses shock value to elicit laughter into common themes include death, violence, insanity, racism, and other things that would mostly be considered unfunny. This film released on May 30 2019, tells about class discrimination that draw on the relationship between the wealthy Park family and the poor Kim family. At 92nd Academy Awards on February 8 2020, Parasite film won 4 Academy Awards; It was the first time South Korean film has won an Academy Award and the first time a non-English film has won the Best Picture award as well. Parasite film is interesting to be analysed more deeply from its narrative and cinematic elements to find class discrimination issues. This research also helps the writer to understand the class conflict in Marxism theory.

Marxism and the Marxist theory have described through films for many years. It put forward by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx saw class not just as a theoretical concept or social construct, but as defining tension of the capitalist system. The most notable of all theories is Marxism. It can be bound to domain like philosophy, politics, economics, history, media and more.

There are several definitions of Marxism according to experts. “Marxism is a scientific theory of human societies and of the practice of transforming them” (Eagleton, 2003). “Marxism is an ambitious and elegant theoretical project in which class analysis provides a central part of the explanation of what can be termed the epochal trajectory of human history” (Wright, 2000). “Marxism is more than just a theory, it is a way of understanding the world and acting upon it” (Joseph, 2006). From these definitions, it can be concluded that Marxism is an ideology that describes the structure of human society and explains how society works.

Marx developed an entire theory of history and created the paradigm of Conflict theory. He believed society have two groups or classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The concept brought by Marx to understand the relationship between both of them. Whenever one class start to build dominion then a different class lost power, and it becomes a cycling hassle over limited resources. Occasionally, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat struggle with each other because of inequality, which is called Class conflict.

Marxist critics are interested in how the proletariat or working-class are oppressed - in everyday life and literature. Vladimir Lenin
and Sergei Eisenstein were political leaders to see a film that had the potential to be a powerful tool for social and political influence. Marxist film theory is known as a Marxist approach to filmmaking. It applied to many films by contemporary filmmakers because of popularity throughout the second half of the 20th Century. Marxist film theory highly differs from other theories; It is less about analysis of film and more about production.

In this research, the characteristic of Marxist theory helps the writer to approach the study critically. The writer tries to apply the Marxist theory to help understand the arts we consume and enjoy every day and identify society and its structure. The film which has been taken by the writer for the case study is Parasite directed by Bong Joon-ho. One of the most obvious themes in the film is class. In the beginning, we got introduced to the Kim family; They struggle to live under poor conditions. When they get jobs to work for the wealthy Park family, they see how some people live luxuriously. Throughout the film, they dream of the lives of their employers and get caught up in a struggle with Moon-Gwang and her husband, who are also trying to benefit from the wealth of the Park family. For the reason above, the writer is interested in searching for conflicts happen between classes in Parasite film. Therefore, the writer chooses “Class Conflict in Parasite Film Using Marxist Criticism” as the title.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Approach Of The Study

This research uses a qualitative method with a narrative approach. The writer tries to understand context of the film from a Marxism perspective in descriptive form. “Television and films influence everyday life; Qualitative research uses these to tell us about the social construction of reality” (Flick, 2009). From this theory, it can be concluded that visual media for research purposes, such as film, has interpreted truthful phenomenon and also reflect history.

Therefore, it is portrayed how the general view about the class conflict occurs in reality through Parasite film. “A narrative discussion is a written passage in a qualitative study in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis” (Creswell, 2014). Based on this theory it can be concluded that writing narrative form for research purposes is helpful to report and represent one element to another. This research describes the stories that occur in Parasite film.
coherently in transcript narrative form, which means written based on the scenes and times during the duration.

2. Data Analyzes

The object of the analysis is a film entitled *Parasite*. Considering that *Parasite* film has interesting story, the writer hopes to reveal the moral values inside the film. This film is an adaptation of a novel. But the analysis only focuses on the class conflict based on Marxism approach. In analysing data, the writer uses descriptive method. The aim of this method is to give a description of a condition in a situation systematically, accurately, and factually. So, it will be easier to reveal and comprehend the class conflict presented in.

For research methodology, the writer uses descriptive method is a method which is concise in order to get and to analyze data much easier that relate to the matter being studied on this film. By using the descriptive method, the writer tries to find out the exact and enough description through process and object.

According to Nazir “In the Research Method Sample Book, descriptive method is a method in examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class of events in the present.

The purpose of this descriptive research is to make a systematic, factual and accurate description, picture, or painting of the facts, characteristics and relationships between the phenomena being investigated. (Nazir, 1988:63).

Based on the above opinion, it means that descriptive method is a method which gives a description factually and accurately of the data. so that the result of the analyze is easy to understand and it is not stray far from the source of the analysis.

Furthermore, the writer describes and analyses the object of the analysis by revealing its scenes that help finding the class conflict of the film precisely.

Through this method the writer hopes to the readers will get the real descriptions about the class conflict of Bong Joon Ho works well. By revealing the data, the writer will find its message in each scene of *Parasite* film.

III. FINDING AND RESULT

1. Bong Joon Ho

Bong Joon Ho is a South Korean film director, producer, and screenwriter. He was born in Hanja, September 14, 1969, South Korea. During the course of his career, he has produced several good works, one of them is *Parasite* film which was released in 2019.
*Parasite* film was a very successful film. And this film which also made Bong Joon Ho become a very famous director in South Korea at this time. Because of *Parasite* film, Bong Joon Ho was named as best director and won an Oscar award in 2020.

*Parasite* film is the first South Korean film has won an academy award and the first non-English film won the best picture award as well. *Parasite* film is a dark comedy film. Dark comedy or black comedy is usually satire that makes fun of something serious or taboo. It often uses shock value to elicit laughter into common themes include death, violence, insanity, racism, and other things that would mostly be considered unfunny. The story tells about the difference castes that draw on the relationship between the wealthy The Park family and the poor Kim Tek family.

2. Marxism

Many studies have done on class structure and class conflict in society based on Marxism philosophy. However, there is still some scope to do research on films using the ideologies of Marxism. Despite the same formal object and theory, this research has a different focus, such as analysing the structure elements of film with a Marxist perspective to find class conflict and class discrimination in *Parasite* film.

The term Marxism founded by German philosophers Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels. “Marxism is an ideology that describes the structure of human society; It explains how society works. Marx also concerned about capitalism; He believes the conflict in a capitalistic system would abolish oneself. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into great classes directly facing each other-bourgeoisie and proletariat”.(Karl Mark, 1948). It means that Marxism is a view to describe the structure of social life.

Marx stated that the working-class needed to unite to carry out a revolution; Revolution to overthrow the capitalist system to create a classless society. The ideology brought by Marx and socialist figures is an essential tool to analyse class struggle, especially in finding a way to liberate the working-class from exploitation. Marx's perspective allows everyone to see the existence of inequality under a capitalist system that on the outside seems free and fair. In essence, Marxist theory has gone validation process throughout the struggles of the
working-class since the 19th century and proven to be still relevant until today.

3. Class Conflict

Marx’s ideology is specific to economic conflict because he stated the essence of Conflict Theory. Conflict theory is the basic idea of looking at power dynamics and analysing how struggles over power drive societal change. The concept brought by Marx to understand the relationship between the oppressor group and the oppressed group. These groups are struggling with each other over the scarcity of resources. In Conflict theory, resources are not always tangible; It includes every concept like power or time and happens in every aspect of society. It means that he developed an entire theory of history and created the paradigm of Conflict theory.

Marxism is based on the social class structure. He saw classes not just as a theoretical concept or social construct, but as defining tension of the capitalist system. The concept of Conflict theory create class conflict brought by Marx to understand the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Whenever one class start to build dominion then a different class lost power, and it becomes a cycling hassle over limited resources.

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class-struggles” (Marx & Engles, 1948). By what Marx and Engles stated, it means that the problem that arises in almost all human historical period is a class struggle or class conflict. Class conflict is the struggle between classes that occur in society; It happens because of inequality in wealth and power. In capitalism, the upper-class exploited the labor-power from the working-class to make a profit. That means that the bourgeoisie attempt to reduce labor’s wage and pushed the proletariat to work over intensively. The exploitation proletariat faced would eventually leads to revolution.

As in the Communist Manifesto Marx stated, “The proletariat can at best lose its shackles” (Suseno, 1999). They try to lead social change in the class structure. Because they are oppressed they expect change for liberation and the oppressing class must be overthrown with violence. Through this revolution, the proletariat tries to lead social change in the class structure and create class-less society. In conclusion, Marxism theory eventually looking at questions of power, inequality inside society and how these things can drive social change.
4. The synopsis of the film

Ki-woo visits the Parks’ spacious home, where he introduced to Mrs. Park. He also meets the teenager he will be tutoring Da-Hye and her younger brother Da-song for whom Mrs. Park is trying to find an art tutor. Ki-woo sees an opportunity to get his artistically talented sister, Ki-Jung, a job. He says that he knows someone named Jessica who went to college in Illinois. Ki-Jung gets the job after impressing Mrs. Park with some psychology insight, and she hires her as both a tutor and an art therapist. Soon enough, Ki-woo and Ki-Jung secure positions in the Park family for their parents as well. They get Kim-Taek a job as Mr. Park's driver and Chung-sook takes over as the housekeeper.

One day, the Parks go on a camping trip for Da-song’s birthday. The Kim family moves in for the weekend and enjoy themselves in a luxurious way inside the house. It is all fun until Moon-Gwang, the former housekeeper shows up. She insists that she left something at the Parks’ house. The rest of the Kim family hides as Chung-sook lets her in. Moon-Gwang runs inside the house and reveals a bunker in the basement. The bunker installed by the architect who built it, which the Parks do not know. Down in the bunker is Geun-sae, Moon-Gwang’s’s husband, who is hiding from his debt. Moon-Gwang begs not to say anything to the Parks, but Chung-sook threatens to tell them.

Suddenly, the Kims fall down the stairs. Realizing that they are all related, Moon-gwang takes a damning video of them and threatens to send it to the Parks. A fight occurs in the living room, but the Kims manage to get Moon-gwang and her husband down into the bunker again. However, Mrs. Park suddenly calls and tells Chung-sook that they are heading home after the campgrounds flooded from a rainstorm. The Kims trapped hiding under the coffee table when the Parks arrive home. When Moon-gwang tries to go up the stairs and reveal herself, Chung-sook kicks her down and accidentally kill her. Since the Parks arrive, Mr. and Mrs. Park sleep on the couch to watch over Da-song, when he wants to sleep in a tent outside that night. Eventually, the Kims can escape; They find their apartment flooded when they return home.

The next day, Mrs. Park calls each of them to work on Da-song's birthday party, which will take place in the garden. At Da-song’s birthday, Ki-woo goes into the bunker but Geun-sae attacks him and hit him in the
head with the rock. Geun-sae then emerges onto the garden party, stabbing Ki-jung in the chest with a knife. As Da-song faints in shock, Mr. Park yells at Ki-taek to throw him the car key so they can take Da-song to the hospital. When Ki-taek throws the key, it lands under Geun-sae, who is fighting with Chung-sook. In the fight Chung-sook stabs Geun-sae with a meat skewer. Mr. Park grabs the keys from under him, but in the process, disgust at Geun-sae's smell. This trigger Ki-taek to stabs Mr Park in the chest and then running away into the basement bunker unseen.

After that, Ki-woo awakes in the hospital and learns about what happens. He stands in the woods near the Parks' house, which has been bought by a different family. He observes that the censor light is turning on and off in a pattern—Morse Code. He translates the code and realizes that it is a message from his father, Kim, who is living in the bunker. Ki-woo writes his letter back, in which he dreams about buying the house for himself and reuniting his family.

5. The Kim family’s house

Parasite film begins with the scene of the Kim family's house, which is a dirty semi-basement house as if his family has not lived below the surface. They stole Wi-Fi from their neighbours and found stinkbugs crawling everywhere. Semi-basement house is prevalent in Korea. These houses are only half-underground; People who lived here usually developed chronic coughs and skin condition. Parasite film brings this concept of space to portray the poverty of the Kim family. The Kim make very little living, trying to find dignity in an economic system that constantly shuts them down.
6. The Park family’s house

The position of The Parks’ house is going up to the hill. The high location of the house with many climbs and stairs owned by Mr. Park. This house is above ground; Most of the film took place in this location. In this scene, Ki-woo, from the working-class Kim family, ascends a staircase towards the Park family’s house. It describes the sheer amount of separation, vertically, between two houses. The elevation is used continuously in the film to portray class separation or class discrimination between these families.

Inside the Park house has a bunker. The reveal of the bunker also uses descent. The bunker is the basement floor which is the lowest vertical structure in Parasite film. The staircase feels almost impossibly long to emphasizes the descent as much as possible. Surprisingly, the film has another family live under the Park’s; This basement bunker is a living place for Geun-sae and Mon-gwang. This set design helps us understand what the film is really saying about class structure.
Throughout the film, the distance between the Park family house and the Kim family’s house not illustrated well. However, until this scene, both pictures above clearly represent the descent that reflects their position in social structure; As the family runs from the Parks to their house leads them.

Judging from the setting of this film, it’s also depicts two very different economic classes. That is background with properties, like tables, chairs, cars and so on. According to Indi Wire, Bong Joon-ho asked his production designer to create an open-set built on an outdoor lot. Most audiences may not realize that the entire set was built from scratch. The setting in Parasite film is placed according to the context of the story itself. Parasite is a tale of two houses; One working-class and one upper-class. As we know, the film masterfully layered about two different families.

Each house has a noticeable window. Begins in a semi-basement house of the Kim, displayed with some socks hanging high on the ceiling next to the window which equivalent to the surrounding street. More or less, the window’s view gives a sense of non-privacy, where the Kims completely uncovered from the outside. For example, fumigation gas, floodwater and a drunk guy who urinates right outside of their window. These show how low the position of the Ki-Taek family house is. On the other hand, the window at the Parks’ house is facing their beautiful garden. Regardless of their garden, the view also blocking them from the outside world. Instead
of worrying about the floodwater, the Parks enjoy and appreciate the rain.

And the uses of light in Parasite film explains too how lighting itself help deliver class discrimination. Whether from the type of indoor lighting that realistically used in Korean semi-basement apartments and luxurious mansions to the amount of sunlight available in each particular space.

The indoor lights inside Kims’ house installed with low-end lamps. It looks grey and has a green glow which usually used by Korean households. Apart from that, their access to sunlight is limited to a small window in a semi-basement. Otherwise, the Parks’ house used warm-toned and dim light as their interiors. These lights represent luxury and exclusive to rich households. Different from the Kim who live half-underground, the Park receive excessive sunlight during the day.

In a matter of fact, light is a metaphor for hope in Parasite film. From the picture above, it is a scene where Min-hyuk, a friend of Ki-woo, arrives at Kim house. Someone is puking and pissing next to Kim window before Min-hyuk came. He arrives with a beacon of light and brings the lucky stone for the Kim family as a present. Until then, the lucky stone always symbolizes Ki-Woo desire to climbing out of poverty.

Then Framing is a technique for placing the camera by the given scene. Mostly, scenes in Parasite film frames the pair of its characters with a line dividing their social class structure. The picture above is one of the scenes that portray how Parasite film divides its characters by their positions in the class structure. This is a scene when Ki-woo meets Mrs. Park for the first time with a line between them, separating the poor and the rich. In a way, this line is made by the rich to set their boundaries from the poor. This means they are never like the rich in any aspect.
Class conflict on Parasite film points a clear portrayal of class discrimination between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie through the wealthy Park family and the poor Kim family. The storyline is mostly about the struggle of the Kim family as the proletariat or the working-class to climb the social ladder. The Kim family not only had to fight against poverty but they are also struggled hard to find their way to a more stable life. However, this film shows opportunities are given to people who already have opportunities, and these do not always reflect the standard. This is demonstrated after Ki-woo is hired as a tutor, he arranges for every member of his family to get a job at the Park family. While Parks have no clue about not only the fake qualifications of their employees, but they are also part of the same family.

Visually, it can be seen that the service status is only an object to be used. If the proletariat and the bourgeoisie interact in the same place, the position of the proletariat is always at disadvantage. Not only poor characters have a lower quality of life, but also their entire existences are at risk. Parasite film portrays the class inequality between the Park and the Kim in the sequence of the rainstorm.

During the rainstorm, the Parks have to return home and cancel their camping trip, but Da-song can spend the night in a fairly waterproof tent in the garden. For the Kim family, they return to find their home and their neighbourhood is completely flooded with rental waste. By showing these scenarios, it demonstrates something that harmless to the rich family is actually harmful to the poor family. It can be concluded that the working-class is not just a matter of not having the same luxuries as the upper-class, but more importantly, a problem of greater vulnerability to extreme weather, to disease, to environmental and infrastructure destruction.
Even though Parasite has its twisted mixture of surprise, class conflict is a prevalent theme as the film is driven by the “rich vs. poor” tension all the time. The class conflict that Parasite film depicts is directly connected to the inequalities built into a capitalistic system. Through many events after Moon-Gwang discloses her secret of her husband to the Kim, both proletarian families become aware of their terrific situations and try to take advantage of each other's secrets to dig themselves out of poverty. The picture above demonstrates two working-class families struggle to assert their dominance over the other, in a house where they both have been enslaved, but not their own; This means, in a capitalistic system, the ones who usually struggle are the proletarians. They struggle with each other to climb the social ladder and improve their position in social structure.

Furthermore, the Parks’ house is not a neutral space in which people simply live. The house creates a capitalist fundamental and violent site of class conflict. It presents desire for both the Kim and Moon-Gwang couple where their competition takes place. This idea plays beautifully through scenes leading up to the climax. At Da-song’s birthday party, Ki-woo is fighting for his life against Geun-Sae in the bunker, but there is a grand party upstairs with games, food, and laughter. Conclude that the Parks’ house displays peace for all while involving violence for capitalist elements of society to exist.

The imbalance proletarian faced under the class privilege will eventually lead to chaos. In the climax of Parasite film, after Geun-sae free from the bunker to reach the ground, he breaks through the crowd and the crime surge with life and death. The whole lie collapse as the Kims forced to reveal their identities when Geun-sae stabs Ki-jung. This grand birthday party turns nothing but a bloody conflict that covers the whole house. This scene resonates with Karl Marx’s thought of class conflict revolution that the working-class are the ones who should wage an armed struggle against the upper-class. Parasite film ended with a portrayal of class mobility in capitalism. In the scene after the birthday party crimes occur,
Kim-Taek replaces Geun-sae in the bunker, the rest of the Kim family remain in their semi-basement, and a newly wealthy family replaces the Park family.

Though there is movement in the system, the overall effect of capitalism remains static. There are always individuals occupying the proletariat and the bourgeoisie roles as the elements of society for capitalism to function. At the end, the theme of hope portrayed in a letter, imagining a better life for a working-class family, even after all they have experienced. Ki-woo dreams to be rich and buy the house himself to provide his father climb the stairs reaching above ground.

IV. CONCLUSION

First, Parasite film has Kim and Moon-Gwang families as the lower-class and Park family as the upper-class. Each character's class attributed to the existence and duration of appearance in the film and also attributed to their influence on the storyline from the beginning to the end of the film.

Second, the elements the writer discuss are setting and lighting. It is very interesting because they help to deliver class discrimination and inequality. Both setting and lighting describe the imbalance of each class receive in capitalistic system. Apart from that, the element of cinematography Parasite film has, especially framing, clearly deliver the separation between families. An obvious “line” continuously appear throughout the film to portray class boundaries.

Furthermore, the result of class conflict analysis using Marxist criticism. Class struggle is portrayed when the proletariats are unable to find jobs or are being oppressed by the bourgeoisie. In Parasite film, it can be seen the protagonist, Kim family, is going through the same experience, where they find it very difficult to find a job. In the other hand, Geun-Sae goes mad after the Kim family accidently kill his wife; He experiences the inequalities and fighting for revenge.

Lastly, The film also portrays the Kim family’s hard work to end the difficulties of being the working-class who are exploited by the Park family, thereby planning to end the rule of an existing employer. It is stated that class conflict, class struggle, and economic struggle leading to revolution against the capitalist. However, the class conflict that occurs in Parasite film leading to class mobility. At the end, the theme of hope portrayed in a letter, imagining a better life for a working-class family, even after all they have experienced.
REFERENCE


