

SNOWPIERCER FILM AS A REFLECTION OF CLASS STRUGGLE: A MARXIST STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF POPULAR CULTURE

Ercika Fitria Suandi¹, Farah Khairunnisa², M. Rafi Alfazari³

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung¹², UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta³

Corresponding email: ercikasuandi@gmail.com

Abstract

Snowpiercer (2013), directed by Bong Joon-ho, is a science fiction film set in a post-apocalyptic world where the remnants of humanity inhabit a massive train that perpetually circles the globe. The train functions not only as a means of survival but also as a representation of an entrenched and highly stratified social hierarchy. The film portrays systemic inequality and class conflict, making it a compelling subject for analysis through a Marxist theoretical lens. This article examines how class division, labor exploitation, and the struggle between the oppressed and the ruling elite are depicted through the film's narrative and character development. Using a descriptive-qualitative method and a critical Marxist approach, this study reveals that *Snowpiercer* serves not merely as visual entertainment but as a potent medium for social critique—challenging capitalist systems and the ideological domination reinforced by structural inequality. The film's portrayal of resistance among the lower class suggests the emergence of collective consciousness as a response to systemic injustice. As a work of popular literature, *Snowpiercer* demonstrates how cinema can transmit ideological messages, foster social awareness, and provoke critical reflection on contemporary conditions. Accordingly, the film merits recognition not only as a creative work but also as a politically and educationally relevant tool that stimulates public consciousness.

Keywords: *Snowpiercer*, Marxism, Class Conflict, Popular Culture, Ideology

INTRODUCTION

Film is a medium of mass communication media from various technologies and various elements of art (Baskin, 2003). In popular literature studies, film is understood as a literary work that is audiovisual, with the medium of moving images and sound that can create a narrative meaning. Films as part of popular literature, bear witness to the state of society, social life, and the thoughts and feelings that exist in society. Films can also be seen as entertainment media that can entertain and also have a didactic function, ¹conveying cultural messages.

Snowpiercer (2013), directed by Bong Joon-ho, is a notable example of science fiction cinema that delivers an in-depth critique of social structure and class inequality. The film vividly portrays the reality of class struggle, making it well-



suited for analysis through a Marxist theoretical lens. As a form of popular literature, *Snowpiercer* functions not only as entertainment but also as a reflection of societal conditions, illuminating the injustices and conflicts that persist within contemporary social systems.

Through a narrative that depicts human life trapped in a rigid social class system, *Snowpiercer* presents an allegory that is in line with Karl Marx's theories of capitalism and class conflict. This article aims to explore the representation of class struggle in this film, as well as analyze the ideological messages contained in it. Using a descriptive-qualitative analysis approach and Marxist critical theory, this study will reveal how this film reflects the dynamics of class struggle, criticism of capitalism, and the function of politics as a form of popular literature.

This study uses a qualitative approach with the method of film text analysis, based on the theory of Marxism as the framework of analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because it was necessary to understand the symbolic meaning, narrative, and representation of ideologies embedded in popular culture texts.

The main source of data in this study was the film *Snowpiercer* itself, which was analyzed as a cultural text. Researchers conducted repeated screenings and observations of the film to identify the dynamics of the class fight. The focus of the analysis is directed at how the film reflects social inequality, the relationship between the bourgeois class and the proletariat, and the process of ideologization in the closed social structure depicted in a train.

To support the analysis, this study also uses literature studies in the form of references to Marxist theories as well as about popular culture and film as an ideological medium also used to enrich the perspective of analysis. The data collection technique is carried out through observation of film texts by recording key scenes, visual symbols, relationships between characters, and discourses that appear in dialogue. The data analysis technique is carried out in a descriptive-interpretive manner, by relating the findings in the film text to Marxist concepts such as class conflict, hegemony, alienation, and ideological reproduction.

Through this methodology, the research aims to uncover how *Snowpiercer*, as

part of popular culture, not only become can entertainment product, but also as a mean so reflection and social criticism of class structures in capitalist society.

The aim of this study is to understand how the film *Snowpiercer* presents the dynamics of class struggle in society through Marxist theory. This study seeks to reveal how the narrative, characters, and visual elements in the film reflect the conflict between the bourgeois class and the proletariat. In addition, this research aims to explore the role of popular culture, especially film, as a medium that not only functioned as entertainment, but also as a mean so social criticism of socio-economic inequality and power relations in capitalist society. By analyzing the process of ideologization and hegemony shown in the film, this research is expected to contribute to understanding how class and popular culture representations help shape social consciousness and discourse on social justice among modern audiences.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Bong Joon-ho's *Snowpiercer* (2013) depicts a post-apocalyptic world where humans are trapped in a giant train that keeps moving. In this context, the car not only became a symbol of survival, but also reflected hierarchical social structures and injustices. The upper class, represented by Wildford and other bourgeois characters, while the lower class, or proletariat, suffered in the rear. This inequality creates a class conflict that is the main focus of this film.

From the point of view of Marxist theory, the social structure in *Snowpiercer* strongly reflects the concept of class and class struggle as put forward by Karl Marx. The relations of production and distribution of resources are strictly regulated by a handful of elites, represented by the character of Wildford, the owner of the train. Wildford controlled the entire system of life in the train, including the arrangement of food, education, adventure production, creating conditions in which the lower classes remained trapped in dependency and helplessness.

Marxist theory, as explained in the previous study, explains that society is divided into two main classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In *Snowpiercer*, we can see how these classes interact and conflict, where the upper classes exploit the lower-class workforce. A significant example is Mason's statement reminding the

lower classes to "know their place", the saying affirming the dominance of the bourgeoisie.

Throughout the film, several ideological symbols appear that reinforce the hegemony of the ruling class or bourgeoisie. For example, the propaganda about the "eternal order" of the train that must be maintained so that there is no chaos is a representation of ideological hegemony in capitalist society, as explained by Antonio Gramsci. Through teaching children in the front car, the value system that supports elite dominance is subtly reproduced to maintain the status quo.

The film shows various forms of class conflict, from peaceful protests to bloody uprisings. Curtis, as a representative of the proletariat, led the resistance movement against oppression. Dialogues such as "We control the machines, we control the world" show a willingness to reclaim power from the hands of the upper class. The character of Curtis, as the leader of the proletarian uprising, depicts the class consciousness that develops in the midst of oppression. The journey of the uprising to the front carriage reflects a dialectical process: the clash between the bourgeoisie class and the proletarian class that ultimately gives birth to change. Although the end of the film shows that change is not entirely utopian- because revolution also involves violence and sacrifice. The narrative of *Snowpiercer* still emphasizes that an unjust social order is not something natural or eternal, but rather a product of a system that can be captured. This shows that this resistance is not only physical, but also involves a collective consciousness that arises in response to systematic injustice. This film serves as a social critique of the capitalist system that creates injustice. *Snowpiercer* depicts the real impact of class segregation, including cannibalism and rebellion, as a result of exploitation.

As part of popular culture, *Snowpiercer* has significant significance. This film not only serves as entertainment, but also invites the audience to reflect on the social realities that occur in the real world, where economic inequality, exploitation, and hegemony are still the main problems. By wrapping social criticism in the form of a compelling science fiction narrative, *Snowpiercer* expands the discourse on social justice to a wider audience, while showing how popular culture can be an important ideological terrain in the class struggle in the modern era.

Finally, *Snowpiercer* shows that movies can serve as powerful tools of social criticism. Both depict the complex dynamics between social classes and their struggle to convey ideological messages. This research is in film analysis, which can provide deeper insights into issues of social injustice that are still relevant today

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the film *Snowpiercer* is a strong representation of the class struggle in capitalist society. Through the narrative, characters, and visual symbols show the film depicts systematic social inequality and oppressive power relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Using a Marxist perspective, it can be seen that the social structure in the *Snowpiercer* train reflects the relations of production and ideological hegemony that allow for the continuity of bourgeois class domination. Furthermore, the film also shows that class consciousness can grow in the midst of oppression, which then encourages the birth of resistance. The narrative of rebellion carried by the characters in the film shows the potential for social change despite being faced with severe challenges. In the context of popular culture, *Snowpiercer* plays an important role as a medium of social criticism that encourages audiences to be more sensitive to the issues of inequality and social justice that are still ongoing in the real world. Thus, this film is not only a work of entertainment, but also a cultural discourse that can strengthen people's critical awareness of class structure in the capitalist system.

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