

THE DEPICTION OF CAPITALIST IN SORRY TO BOTHER YOU MOVIE

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Abstract

A movie as development of literature technique which according to Marxism is part of superstructure derives from the social process. Karl Marx himself divides society into two different groups: a capitalist class and a proletarian class. A capitalist who owns a mode of production has control over a proletariat whose life depends on the sale of labor to capitalists. This often leads to class conflict. That phenomenon also reflected in *Sorry to Bother You*, an American movie produced in 2018 and directed by Boots Riley, as data source used in this study. The story revolves around the struggle of a character named Cassius Green who works in Regalview, a telemarketing company. After being promoted, he faces a big company named Worryfree as his client. Later on, he revealed the cruelty of Worryfree owner that triggering him and another worker to fight the company. Thus, the objective of this research is to find out how a capitalist is being depicted in *Sorry to Bother You* movie. The research analyzed using a qualitative method also using Marxism and cinematography theory. The result indicates that the movie portrays the capitalist not only as a rich man but also manipulative as he changes the worker into a people-horse creature to produce cheap and strong labor. Besides, he is backed by the government despite condemned for slave labor. The conclusion from such depictions proves that the capitalist will do anything to gain profit even though he must exploit the workers.

Keywords – capitalist, Marxism, movies

Introduction

Although movies are widely used as a medium of entertainment, it cannot be denied that movies contain some issues that can be studied through certain theories. According to Klarer (1999:56), a movie is actually a progression of literary techniques that evolved as an advance of technology. Thus, it can be said that movies are influenced by literature. In addition, according to Eagleton (2002:05),

literature, as part of art, in Marxism is viewed as superstructure, a product of social interaction between a man with the means of production or material life between them. Therefore, it is not exaggerated if movies are a representation of the real world. Moreover, according to Klingender stated in Hemingway (2006:70) said that in Marxism, any kind of art is not only a representation of reality

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but also a medium for the transformation of the condition of society.

One of the representations that often appear in movies is the issue of work-life, either representation of worker or employer. Hence, many movies are offering an issue about the relationship between worker-employer. One of the movies representing that issue is *Sorry to Bother You* as the data source of this research.

The movie is released in 2018 and directed by Boots Riley. *Sorry to Bother You* is his first movie on his career as a director, formerly he is the founder of The Coup, a rap music group in which the lyric of the music is provocative on a social issue like capitalism. Besides, he was also a community organizer that helped farmer community and an activist of some social movement. He even proclaimed himself as a communist as he believed that wealth should be democratically controlled. Thus, the movie is influenced by his background as a director.

The movie center on the story of the main character, a young American black-colored man, named Cassius Green who is struggling in achieving his financial career. As someone who comes from low-economic strata, he Accepted to work as a telemarketer in Regalview with self-doubt. This is mainly because he feels incompetent in doing the job, though the company provided him a manual instruction that does not help him. The condition is reversed when he is told by the senior worker to do a white voice style when doing calling when telemarketing. This way makes him promoted and becomes a power caller, a high rank in telemarketer position that works in a convenient workplace than low-rank telemarketer which one of the clients is a

big company named Worryfree. That promotion makes his financial condition much better and reaches what he has been expected. However, the position made him noticed by the owner of Worryfree company who then offered him to work in his company as he amazes by Cassius's skill on telemarketing since he up through the highest rank of telemarketing. Worry-free business model is providing workers to some business. However, before signing the contract, he found that Worryfree conduct exploitation to the worker. it also proving what the society has long told about the company, condemn the exploitative act, whom he denied before. Knowing this, he then opposes the company.

Therefore, from the above explanation, the problem that arises in this research as a research question is how the capitalist class as the owner of the company depicted in the movie. Thus, the aim of this study is to discover the depiction of the capitalist class in *Sorry to Bother You* movie.

The theory of Marxism is used to answer that question. It is because Karl Marx itself, the person behind Marxism critique, divides society into two different groups based on its relation to mode of production; a capitalist class and a proletarian class. A capitalist class that owns a mode of production has control over a proletariat whose life depends on the sale of labor to capitalists. This creates unfair interrelationship, which often leads to class conflict because capitalists seek cheap labor while proletary seeks a high salary. Thus, Marxism theory especially about capitalism is used to explain the problem. In addition, as the data source is a movie, besides representing something, a movie has a certain way in which something is represented. Hence the

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theory of cinematography is used to explain the visual aspect of the movie. According to Heiderich (2018:3) cinematography is the art of visual storytelling that determines how an image is presented.

This research is expected to give benefit in two aspects; theoretically and practically. Theoretically, as the research uses Marxism critic, this research is expected to enrich the knowledge about Marxism on capitalist explanation, especially in Sorry to Bother You Movie. While practically, this research is expected to encourage the reader to think critically on the issue about Marxism when watching the movie as well as provide a reference for the other researcher when analyzing movies on Marxism critic.

Methodology

This research is conducted using a qualitative method as stated by Creswell (2018:43):

“Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging question and procedure, data typically collected in participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretation of the meaning of the data.” (Creswell, 2018:43)

The design of this study is descriptive to describe the case in as much detail as possible. This is following Azwardi (2018: 33) which says that the method of literary research, as a qualitative study, precisely used descriptive method, so these two

terms are often combined as descriptive-qualitative methods.

The subject of the research is the two characters that act as the capitalist in Sorry to Bother You movie. They are Regalview company owner and Worryfree company owner named Steve. Both of them are the subject of the research as they act as sources of information that would provide accurate information about the problem of the research.

The procedure of collecting data is done first by watching and understanding the entire film until finding out the issue of social class. In this study, writers focus on the capitalist class that is displayed through the characters in the film. After that, the writers note the time of the scene when the character of the capitalist class appeared in the movie. Then the writers take screenshots in the scene when the capitalist class appears in the movie, which is used as research data. In addition to screenshots, the writers also use dialogues from the capitalist character as research data. After collecting all the data, it was found that the capitalist class in the film was represented by two figures, so the data was classified based on the two capitalist figures; owner of the Regalview company and the owner of the Worryfree company.

Since the research is conducted through a qualitative method, the instrument of the research is the writers itself. According to Sugiyono (2009:305), the position of researcher in qualitative research as a human instrument should be validated through their understanding of the research methods, mastery of insight of the study field, the readiness of researchers to enter the object of research-both academically and logically.

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The data analysis technique is done firstly by displaying data in the form of screenshots or dialogue of capitalist figures in the film. After that, the data is given the context or an explanation of the occurrence of the data. The data is then analyzed using theory to get meaning. After the meaning is found, then conclusions are drawn from the explanation of the data.

The research procedure is done firstly by selecting and watching the movie; in this case *Sorry to Bother You* movie. after that, the writer seeks and finds problems in the film, chooses research approaches and theories, formulates research titles and hypotheses, collecting the data, and finally writes the research to find out the answers to the problems found using theory.

Finding and Discussion

In his theory, Marx (1992:22) stated that society divides into two. One of them is a capitalist class that owned mode of production. It is, in short, could be manifested as the one who owns a company. The movie shows two kinds of companies in it. The first is Regalview where Cassius green, as the main character, applies for a job. Regalview whose owner is an American black man is a telemarketing company that consists of two kinds of telemarketing; encyclopedia as well as fire and manpower.

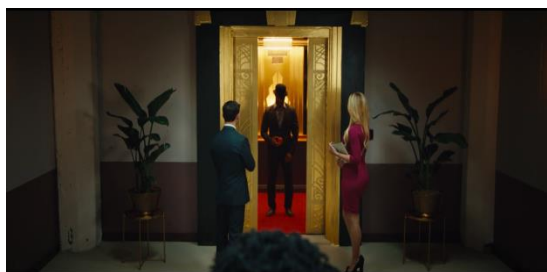


Figure 1. the owner of Regalview in the luxurious elevator.

Figure 1 above is a scene when the owner of Regalview down from the top floor of the office by using an elevator. The scene is taken using a subjective point of view shot technique. According to Boggs and Petrie (2018:110), subjective point of view provides intensive emotion of the character participating in the action. This shot also leads the audience to see what the character sees in a sense to become a character.

The shot is taken from the point of view of his worker named Cassius green who works in the basement as a low-level telemarketer to save his life as facing economic problems. He stares at the Regalview owner standing in the elevator. It can be seen the owner of Regalview is wearing a black suit and holding an orange. Historically, a suit has a positive association as projecting elegance, authority, and mastery of a profession. Moreover, Hollander (2016:83) stated that suit was the uniform of official power, not manifest force or physical power, which suggests diplomacy, compromise, civility, and physical self-control. Therefore, it suggests that what he wears in accordance with his position as the owner.

The shot also shows that he came out of a luxurious elevator. It is marked by the gold covering all the layers of the elevator. According Butt & Hough (2009), gold has been considered as a valuable commodity, to be gained and admired, and to be traded and warred over for the past 5000 years of human history. Moreover, Schoenberger (2011) stated that the fact that gold is beautiful as the color has similarity to the sun as one of the object of worship and the fact that gold is rare makes gold has high social value. Therefore it owned by a small number of very high-status people. The same thing also applied to the lamp used to irradiate the interior of the elevator. It

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spreads golden rays similar to the surface of the elevator to add a luxurious and bright feel as stated Bear (2008) that the gold color is associated with royalty, wealth, and opulence in western society. Beside the covered-gold elevator, the floor as the interior of the elevator also covered by a red carpet that according to Qiang (2011) the use of the red carpet is to indicate that the person or guest is important and honored. There is also two plant's pot in both sides of the elevator. According to Kaplan (1993) stated that presenting plants in the office has a positive impact on the brain of a worker. In addition, the shot is also showing two workers, the man wore a neat black suit while the woman wore a purple formal dress and holding a document in her hand, waiting for the owner of Regalview out of the elevator before entering the elevator. They are a power caller which the job is calling for a big and important client who needs a worker and weapon.

Through that explanation, the use of the subjective point of view shot technique from Cassius's direction as a low-level worker is to emphasize what Cassius saw and felt as compared to his boss. The shot shows that as the owner of the company, he works conveniently in a luxurious facility in contrast to the working environment of Cassius as a low-level worker who works in the basement office. That two power callers are waiting for him to enter the same elevator indicates that the owner has more interest in them as they produce more profit for him than to low-level workers like Cassius. The distinct treatment between the power caller and low-level telemarketer like Cassius is a sign that the Regalview owner views his worker based on how much money they will produce for him. This is also in accordance with one of the characteristics of the capitalist economy, which is looking

at humans, in this case, workers, based on how much money they will produce for themselves (exchange value) called commodification. According to Tyson (2014), commodification is the act of relating object or person in terms of their exchange value.



Figure 2. the owner of Regalview offering the salary

Figure 2 above is the scene when the owner of Regalview company invited Cassius green to his room office for signing a promotion contract as a power caller, the highest rank of telemarketing in the company. The scene is taken using medium and low angle shot. According to Bordwell et al (2017), medium shot is taken from the waist up and makes gesture and expression visible, while Petrie & Boggs (2018) stated that low angle is a shot taken below eye level which makes the size and important subject is exaggerated.

On that scene, the shot captured him wearing a black suit and white shirt also standing with his loyal assistant. He is explaining the Regalview business model, which is providing telemarketers to other companies, to Cassius. One of the company's biggest clients is Worryfree company whose field is providing a life-contract worker for other companies. Cassius doubts to sign the contract because he thinks the job is offering slave labor through the phone as many people have said so. But the owner of Regalview showing a smile and asked his loyal

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assistant to show Cassius a high salary if he accepts the job as seen in figure 2. As Cassius sees the number, he accepted the job and denies the fact that he is working for Worryfree. As a consequence of being a new power caller, the Regalview owner ordered Cassius to work until late to learn to be a power caller as he said "You'll be working here until late. We need you in the mix right away". This statement indicates that he needs Cassius to be ready and be adapted to his new job as soon as possible, so he ordered Cassius to work until late though there is no other worker.

From the explanation above, the use of medium and low angle shot in that scene is indicating that the owner of Regalview is the powerful man in the company. It also can be seen from his expression and gesture to his loyal assistant holding a job contract document as he ordered the assistant to give the document to Cassius. In addition, the treatment of Regalview owners who ordered Cassius to work until late, as a new power caller, when nobody working until the late-night is also indicating the characteristic of capitalism; that he has power over his worker. Power itself according to McQuarie & Spaulding (1989) is conceptualized in terms of the structural places of social classes determined by the relations of production. It means that as he owns a mode of production or a company, he can do anything to his worker.

The second company in the movie named Worryfree that owned by a white American man called Steve. Worry-free business model is offering affordable workers to another company in need. As a new company, Worryfree quickly gains popularity as promoted through advertisement in several media. However, popularity does not come without a

problem, because some people protested his business model.



Figure 3. Steve giving a clarification

Figure 3 is a scene when Steve is interviewed in the Oprah television program. Oprah is the highest-rated television talk show in United State whose host is Oprah herself who popularly known as the most influential woman in the United States. The scene is taken using a close-up shot. Bordwell et al (2017) stated that close-up function is showing part of a body or small object to emphasize facial expression, gesture, or significant object.

Through close-up shot, it enables the audience to see Steve clearly in the show and how he responds to the question asked by Oprah. By wearing a blue suit and white scarf sit down and crossed the leg, Steve's expression and gesture indicate that he is confident enough and enjoying the show to answer the question. In Oprah, he answered about the allegation of the issue that Worryfree, his business, is a new form of slavery. The accusation was expressed by protesters that joined a movement called the left eye on the fourth day of violent protest. They claimed that Worryfree had made some jobs lost because it was replaced by Worryfree.

“Our workers do not sign contracts under threats of physical violence so, therefore, the comparison to slavery is just ludicrous and offensive. We're transforming life itself. We're saving the economy. I mean,

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we're...we're saving lives. It's all highlighted in my book. I lay out the whole thing.” (Bongiovi, N. G. Et al. Riley, B., 2018, 00:20:57-00:21:14)

The above statement is the answer of Steve when Oprah asked about the issue. In the first clause, Steve defense himself by saying that he does not make any violation to his workers. Instead of admitting to what protesters have said, he, in the next clause, told that the accusation told by the protester is **“ludicrous and offensive”**. Moreover, he thinks that what he does in Worryfree precisely opposite with the accusation. He says it sequentially in the next sentences with positive words such as **“transforming life”**, **“saving the economy”** and **“saving lives”**. These words, he believed, are the quality of his business offered in Worryfree company. He even said in the next sentence that all the quality of his business has been written in his book entitled **“I’m on top”**.

From the explanation above, it can be inferred that the use of the shot in this scene is to capture the way he answered and respond to the question asked by Oprah. It can be seen that although he accused of slavery, he can present himself calmly and refuse to admit the accusation. That can also be implied by the statement he says on the show that instead of agreeing to what the protesters said, he believes he has been helped his worker's life, or human generally. Moreover, he said that he has put all the business explanation in his book, meaning that the protesters should be knowing that fact in the book. As he created a book, it is also a sign that he has good intellectual quality. In Marxism, according to Eagleton (2002:5), literature or book is one of a superstructure that contains an ideology, a definite form of social consciousness, that

the function is to legitimate power of the capitalist.



Figure 4. the owner of Worryfree with a gun pointing out to Cassius

Figure 4 is a scene when Steve is offering Cassius to work in Worryfree as knowing that Cassius has brilliant achievement in Regalview. The scene is taken using a medium close-up shot. Bordwell et al (2017) stated that a medium close-up shot captures the body from chest up. The use of medium close-up is to focus on the subject and show the facial expression of it.

It can be seen that Steve who is using a black suit and white shirt is sitting and holding a gun pointed to Cassius. This is because Cassius wants to leave him after watching the video explanation of the job offered by Steve. The video itself started by explaining about the history of humankind on using tools. It shows how humans have made a tool to help to survive their life. As humans evolve, the tool humans used is also changing; from rock that was used in prehistoric times to pencil, hammer, boxer gloves, and remote control in today's era. The same principle, changing a rock into several types of tools, also used by Worryfree company in its business model in providing workers for other companies. The video explains that a worker, as a human, has limitations on doing their job. Worryfree is changing that characteristic by creating a substance that can change a human into horse shape in order to be strong, cheap, and efficient

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workers. By doing so, Worryfree also would be a profitable company in the world. In the video, Cassius is offered to be one of the stakeholders of Worryfree company. However, just before watching the video, Cassius asks permission to go to the toilet. In the toilet, he found someone asking for help. As he opens the door, Cassius found a number of strange creatures, humans but in horse shape, asked for help as they felt hurt. Therefore, after watching the video and knowing that human in horse shape is part of Worryfree program to make Steve richer, Cassius wants to leave him.

"I just didn't want you to think I was crazy. That I was doing this for no reason. Because this isn't irrational." (Bongiovi, N. G. Et al. Riley, B., 2018, 01:19:32-01:19:39)

The sentences above are the dialog of Steve after watching the video demo with Cassius. He said that what Cassius witnesses in the toilet is a misunderstanding. Therefore the video gives the full explanation and clarification about the business model in order to Cassius does not think that he is crazy, **"I just didn't want you to think I was crazy"**. Moreover, the content of the video shows that the reason behind making humans into horse shape is for making workers stronger, cheaper, and more efficient so Cassius would not think that Steve doing that **"for no reason"**. The video also explains that the process of how Worryfree turns human into horse shape by giving certain medicine is based on science and history so Steve views the changing human into that shape as a great achievement and **"isn't irrational"**.

Based on the explanation above, the scene is taken using a medium close-up shot for showing how Steve attitude as boss toward

Cassius while offering the contract. Through that shot, it can be seen that the gun is used to force Cassius to stay and follow his order to watch the full video. This indicates that as the owner of the company, Steve has the power to force the worker to do what he wants. The act of changing humans into a horse to gain more profit and his belief that the act is not irrational is indicated that Steve as a capitalist only concerned with being rich and ignoring humanity. This is in accordance with Marxism stated in McQuarrie & Spaulding (1989) that expanding the profit is the objective interest of every capitalist.



Figure 5. Steve celebrates Worryfree stock market success with the representative

Figure 5 is the scene when Steve celebrated her success in the stock market that appeared on the news on television. The scene is taken using a close-up shot. Bordwell et al (2017) stated that close-up function is showing part of a body or small object to emphasize facial expression, gesture, or significant object.

Through the shot, it shows that Steve stands in the center of the stage with four representatives. He is also facing a hammer that will be used to inaugurate his achievement in the stock market. The title of the news from CNN, with C, is reversed, also can be seen clearly and shows the title **"Worryfree genetic stock market cause largest stock market rally in history"**. Such reporting from the

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media, that Worryfree's price increases in the stock market for genetic advancement, is because the video of Steve changing his worker into horse creature is leaked by Cassius as he denies to join with Steve in Worryfree. The video that is recorded using Cassius's phone that left when he went to the toilet contains the confession of equisapien, another term refers to humans in the shape of a horse, who is tortured and exploited by Steve. Cassius shares the video with some media until he gains popularity in the public. At the same time, Cassius also warns the people of America to call their representative to stop the Worryfree company. However, the representative took the Steve's side as positively narrated by the news:

“Since the viral celebrity leak to the world new scientific achievements made by Worryfree and their genius CEO, Steve Lift which caused Worryfree stocks to skyrocket at a rate faster than any other company in history. House and Senate leaders joined Lift in ringing the bell to celebrate the record stock market rally”.(Bongiovi, N. G. Et al. Riley, B., 2018, 01:34:43-01:35:02)

The narration above gives advantages for Steve because even though the video of him doing exploitation to the equisapien is revealed to the public, the narration of the news told positively by saying it as "**new scientific achievement**". By that incident, his company price also increases in the stock market than any other company as stated in the narration as "**caused Worryfree stocks to skyrocket at a rate faster**". In addition, although he has been reported by Cassius as humiliating human and ask the public to call the representative, on the contrary, the representatives supported Steve because the price of his company is increasing in the stock market as stated in the sentence

"House and Senate leaders joined Lift in ringing the bell to celebrate the record stock market rally". According to britannica.com, the American democratic system consists of two legislature or lawmaker that usually called as a bicameral system, those are house representative who represents the individual district and popular will while senate represents their entire states and the role is to check and approve laws proposed by the House of Representatives.

Based on the explanation above, the use of a close-up shot is to show Steve expression who is accompanied by house representatives to appear clearly. Steve looks so happy and proud as his company is successful in the stock market. The shot also to emphasize the contrary result of what is expected as Steve ought not to be in that position, that Steve should get punishment as doing exploitation. Meanwhile, as Steve supported by the representatives, it proves that the position of the state is not neutral. The state has a strong relation to the capitalist as stated Obo & Coker (2014) that in Marxism state is a tool for capitalists to dominate and exploit the working class. Moreover, the state itself is the creation of the capitalist class to suppressing and oppressing the other class (working class) and to recreate the capitalist class.

Conclusions

In Marxism, society is divided into two kinds of class which are a capitalist class who own mode of production in another word company, while the other is proletarian or worker who works to capitalist class. Sorry to Bother You movie consist of two Capitalist Character. They are the owner of Regalview company and the owner of Worryfree company named

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Steve. Through the use of the cinematography theory, mainly camera angle, the depiction of them can be revealed. As a result, the camera angle used to represent the capitalist class in the movie are a subjective point of view, medium and low angle shot, and close-up. Through the shot, the movie portrays the capitalists are commodifying workers. As a rich man who has the power to control the worker, they also have good intellectual quality as well as manipulative by changing the worker into a people-horse creature to produce cheap and strong labor to gain more profit. In addition, the is backed by the government despite condemned for slave labor. Such depictions prove that the capitalist will do anything to gain profit even though he must exploit the workers.

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