

POWER AND SOCIAL STANDING OF CHARACTERS IN THE 1997N FILM TITANIC: A REVIEW OF MAXIMISM

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Abstract

One of the most well-known movies about a tragic love story is Titanic (1997). In addition, the film conveyed the social and cultural context of the early 20th century. Using a Marxist perspective on the conflict between the upper and lower classes, the study aims to examine Rose's position in the film in terms of power and social status. The study used Karl Marx's theory to divide social class into two categories: occupation and economic background. The qualitative and descriptive method was used in the study. Based on the Marxist perspective of the film, the identity of the characters and statements containing social class serve as the basis for this study. According to the theory, class stratification in society is the cause of class conflict. In the literary work, Marxist literary criticism also takes into account the classes that separate the upper and lower classes.

Key words: characters , power and social, maximism, review, Titanic

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between social classes fall into two categories. Classes represent social groups at all levels (Sari & Pranoto, 2021), (Suprayogi, 2019). The upper class, or bourgeoisie, is the first class. According to social class, this class has power and controls aspects of society like the economy and education (Gulö, 2018), (Nurmalasari & Samanik, 2018). The proletariat, or lower class, is the second class and is considered to be a class that works for the upper class (Kardiansyah, 2019), (Amelia, 2021b). In point of fact, it is not sufficient to merely categorize the two classes according to their shared meaning based on their explanations in social life (Kuswoyo & Indonesia, 2021). This is because there is social class conflict between the two classes (Hutauruk & Puspita, 2020). We can observe how the two classes interact with one another in society, and those interactions can determine how conflicts arise (Mulyah et al., 2020). According to (Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020) in a

given situation, social interaction occurs when two people meet and greet one another: both the upper and lower classes. Handshakes, conversations, and even fights with the class are all examples of interactions (Asia & Samanik, 2018), (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020).

A class must know what its class is in order to fight against it in a social conflict. "The conflicts in society will be coming up if they really realize about their own class (Fakhrurozi et al., 2021), (Journal et al., 2021), "writes Karl Marx in Ritzer and Goodman. Since "the history of class struggles is the history of all society that has ever existed (Setri & Setiawan, 2020). "In a nutshell, oppressor and oppressed, freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, stood in constant opposition to one another (Puspita, 2019), carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in the common ruin of the competing classes or in a revolutionary reconstitution of society as a whole (Al Falaq et al., 2021), (Puspita & Pranoto, 2021). This statement serves as the foundation for this study, which investigates the question of whether or not there are classes in society (Suprayogi et al., 2021), which indicates whether or not there will be conflicts (Afrianto et al., 2021). Because they are aware of their social status and position. They also fight for their class and create conflicts in real life because social class differences divide them into groups.

Those social classes are well-presented in works of fiction (Nababan & Nurmaily, 2021), (Kuswoyo & Siregar, 2019). The inspiration of the setting, culture, and event of works of fiction mostly inspired by the condition during certain era, and lots of them were well-described (Ngestirosa et al., 2020). Job of fiction is the same as the social science job description, that is to describe a society as entertain and as understandable to the audience (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021), (Samanik & Lianasari, 2018). There are lots of works that use capitalism and social class differences that suited Marxist theory (Mertania & Amelia, 2020), such as Animal Farm and Spongebob Squarepants. One of the remarkable fictions that succeed in conveying an emotional tragic love story but still showing the capitalism and the bad things of it is Titanic (1997) that written and directed by James Cameron. By combining action and love, and hints of politics and capitalism, Titanic becomes movie that still gain audiences and will be relevant after years (Nurmala Sari & Aminatun, 2021).

(Fithratullah, 2021). Based on the above explanation, this study aims to analyze the power and the social class conflict problem of the Titanic. In order to understand and analyze the conflicts in the literary realm, the medium in which the social value is best expressed is the movie because it tells not only fiction but also real life. Titanic (1997) movie portrays the conflicts in society at the time, especially between the upper and lower classes. Another consideration for doing this research is reflected in characters that are in different classes but still try to connect. The upper-class Rose DeWitt Bukater (Kate Winslet) fell in love with the lower-class Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio), and on the Titanic, they believe that even both were from different ranks, but they went through it together (Puspita & Amelia, 2020), (Afrianto & Ma'rifah, 2020). This study suggests that behind the social level of the Titanic, there is a social class conflict between the upper class and the lower class, like Marxist thought. With the help of this study, we will conduct and detect social class conflicts and classify them according to social aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marxism sees works of art or literature as the results of historical forces that can be studied by looking at how they were made (Gulö et al., 2021), (Fithratullah, 2019). The conflict that exists between the repressed and dominant classes in any given age is typically the primary focus of the Marxist theory (Pradana & Suprayogi, 2021). To put it another way, the premise of Marxist literary theory is that literature must be understood in relation to the social and historical reality of a particular society (Qodriani & Wijana, 2020b). As stated by (Pranoto & Afrilita, 2019), they also noted that the struggle between the two classes led to the proletariat's revolution. As declared by (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2021) that the proletarian revolution took place as a result of pressure from the bourgeoisie and developed over a prolonged period. The theory has been used to analyze literature, particularly political and social economy class studies. For instance, Siahaan's journal titled Marxist's Ideology and Revolution Analysis of George Orwell's Novel "Animal Farm" is a study that looks at how George Orwell's critics viewed the political situation in the Soviet Union in 1945 in relation to Animal Farm. The study demonstrates how literature incorporates Karl Marx's theory of society. Animal Farm's characters serve as a model for

politicians because of their influence over society (Qodriani & Wijana, 2020a), (Afrianto & Restika, 2018). It also talked about the revolution that the characters started to fight the story's antagonist, the bourgeoisie.

The movie 'Titanic' deals with tragic and romantic love story and at the same time depicts the true story of the social class that can cause social conflicts. Since the purpose of movie is story-telling, same as written literature, there are numerous study that use literary approach to analyze the movie itself (Amelia, 2021a), (Ivana & Suprayogi, 2020), such as Herawati and team's journal with the title A sociological approach of the woman's position and right in James Cameroon's movie of Titanic which use feminism theory as the study approach, point out more specifically to the gender (female) that positioning the characters under the pressure, and Women First: 'Titanic' (1997), action-adventure films and Hollywood's female audience by Krämer that focus on the impact of the female audiences and culture effect among the audiences overall. Based on the theory and previous studies, this research will analyze the practice of Marx's social class theory by taking evidence from Rose's perspective and her surroundings.

METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method by describing and analyzing the movie. Qualitative means that the analysis is based primarily on a constructivist perspective, including historically and socially constructed individual experiences. The data source is Titanic (1997) movie while the data are the scene, picture and dialogues from the movie, which will be analyzed with Marxist social class theory. The research use semiotics theory as part of the data. Roland Barthes said that semiotics is the science of form, but the form referred to here is the meaning of signs. He examined symbols and then stated that there are two main aspects of semiotics: signifiers and signified. Signifier is the physical form of signs that human can physically interact with, while the signified has mental form, such as idea and mental illustration. The main focus is from Rose's perspective in interacting with her surroundings, including her family and Jack –the person that will make Rose fell in love. The author also uses an objective approach in this essay. This approach will help the

writer to analyze the film. The most important thing in this approach is that the analysis must be carried out objectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The film shows some oppositions that are delineated from the pictures and dialogues. The oppositions are First Class passengers (including Hockley), Rose DeWitt Bukater and Jack. First Class passengers represents the aristocrats who have wealth and positions in the society. Rose DeWitt Bukater represents the middle class and Jack represents the lower class of proletariat.



Scene 1 (Minutes 01:12:41): The Social Class of Rose DeWitt Bukater

Quotation 1

Ruth : This is not game. Our situation is precarious. You know the money's gone. Rose : Of course, I know it's gone. You remind me every day.

Ruth : Your father left us nothing but a legacy of bad debts hidden by a good name. That name is the only card we have to play. I don't understand you. It is a fine match with Hockley. It will ensure our survival.

The first scene is about Rose DeWitt Bukater, one of the members in Bukater family and her mom, Ruth, who are still making the conversation. Both of them looks elegant by wearing expensive dress and jewelries in the era. Rose's mom asks Rose to obey her wish

as her father left them in debts. Her mother said, "*Your father left us nothing but a legacy of bad debts hidden by a good name*". In this scene, Rose needs to marry Caledon Hockley from Hockley's family to keep 'a good name' of his father.

This scene portrays that there is the social class in Rose's life as her mom asks her to keep the social status they have. It is by marrying the man from the Hockley's family. This means that Rose's mom realizes their position. The social class is important for Rose's mom. By asking her daughter to marry someone from the upper class, Hockley's family, their social class will be kept. Rose's mom does not want to be the part of lower class as she has no wealth anymore caused of the bankruptcy from his husband. This scene also portrays that the economic domination by wealth is important for Rose's mom. She thought to keep dominating the power by having the marriage of her daughter. When there is the need of economy power, there raises the conflict in the society. This scene focuses on the economic, social, and political implications as Marx theorized that the system, premised on the existence of a powerful minority class (the bourgeoisie) and an oppressed majority class (the proletariat), created class conflict because the interests of the two were at odds, and resources were unjustly distributed among them.



Quotation 3 (Minutes 00:55:29): Symbol of the Social Status

Rose and Jack were spitting, while Mrs. Calvert and two aristocrats came. Rose then introduces Jack to them.

Rose : May I introduce Jack Dawson? Mrs. Calvert : Charmed, I'm sure.

Old Rose's narration: "*The others were gracious and curious about the man who'd saved my life. But my mother looked at him like an insect. A dangerous insect which must be squashed quickly.*"

Quotation above shows the difference of both classes through their clothes and Rose's narration. Clothes here are functioned as symbol of the social status, and it could be seen by the model and the color of the clothes. The bourgeoisie use fancy model and bright clothes which is used by Rose, and also accessories such as flower hat and hand-held fan which is used by Ruth, and Countess. In contrast, Jack as the proletariat use dark and simple cut clothes which really different and looked disheveled with his surroundings in that scene.

The narration of Rose described how the upper-class people look the lower-class people. '*But my mother looked at him like an insect. A dangerous insect which must be squashed quickly.*' Those sentences define how Ruth, as the bourgeoisie, look down to Jack, as the proletariat, even though he saved her daughter's life. She was afraid that Jack presence around Rose will affect how people look at their family and ruin her family name. Those also described in the next conversation when Rose and Ruth are alone in their room.

Quotation 4 (Minutes 01:12:18)

On the next day after meeting Jack, Rose and Mrs. Calvert had a talk.

Mrs. Calvert : You're not to see that boy again. Do you understand me? Rose, I forbid it.

Rose : Oh, stop it, mother. You'll give yourself a nosebleed.

Mrs. Calvert : This is not game. Our situation is precarious. You know the money's gone.

Rose : Of course, I know it's gone. You remind me every day.

Mrs. Calvert : Your father left us nothing but a legacy of bad debts hidden by a good name. That name is the only card we have to play. I don't understand you. It is a fine match with Hockley. It will ensure our survival.

Rose : How can you put this on my shoulders? Mrs. Calvert : Why are you being so selfish?

Rose : I'm being selfish?

Mrs. Calvert : Do you want to see me working as a seamstress? Is that what you want?

To see our fine things sold at auction? Our memories scattered?

From the quotation above you can see that everything that Rose does is orchestrated by her mother. Her mother is very dominant, she protected their status at all cost. She did not want anything or anyone tarnished their looks as part of aristocrats, especially people from lower-class like Jack. Mr. Bukater directly look down on Jack since the first encounter. On the other side, Rose herself had difficult position due to the oppression of her mother. Even though Rose is part of upper-class, she has neither the right to allow herself to own nor the right to express her desires. It could be seen that the practice of Marxist theory which had been stated in Selden's work, domination and exploitation as part of the social and economic order will determine the culture of the society (Selden, 2005, p. 83), is shown in Mrs. Bukater's domination of her daughter.

The Duality of Rose's Position and Rose's Revolution

Based on the previous quotation, depending on Rose beauty, they try to survive and defend their position by marriage of Rose and a nobleman named Caledon Hockley. She is,

indeed, suffering from the pressure from her mother and her surroundings. She doesn't love Hockley or even like him, but she still chooses to marry him because she cannot resist her mother, until Jack persuades her to let go of Hockley and live like whatever she wants (to go with him instead).

Quotation 5 (Minutes 01:02:10)

Old Rose's narration before the scene where Rose tried to kill herself:

“I saw my whole life as if I’d already lived it. An endless parade of parties and cotillions yachts and polo matches. Always the same narrow people, the same mindless chatter. I felt I was standing at a great precipice with no one to pull me back. No one who cared or even noticed.”

Quotation 6 (Minutes 01:17:54)

Jack : Come on. (pulling rose inside the room) Rose : Jack, this is impossible. I can’t see you. Jack : I need to talk to you.

Rose : No, jack, no. Jack, I’m engaged. I’m marrying cal. I love cal.

Jack : Rose... you’re no picnic. You’re a spoiled little brat, even. But you’re the most amazingly astounding, wonderful girl, woman That I’ve ever known, and ... You jump, I jump. Remember? I can’t turn away without knowing you’ll be alright...

Rose : Well, I’m fine. I’ll be fine. Really.

Jack : Really? I don’t think so. They’ve got you trapped, Rose. And you’re gonna die of you don’t break free. Maybe not right away because you’re strong. But sooner or later that fire that I love about you, Rose, that fire is gonna burn out.

Rose : It’s not up to you to save me, Jack.

Jack : You’re right. Only you can do that.

The quotation above shows that the power of society lies in the rich people and the nobility, and how they took over Rose’s life for all this time. They can force or choose what they want. People who are low or weak do not have the right to determine their own lives and occupy a low position. But in contrast, Rose saw Jack as the representation of lower-class people, has things that she never had, rights and freedom, the power of controlling her own life. Jack’s words motivate Rose to break do whatever she wants, breaking the social class norm and enjoying her own life with Jack. For the first time, Rose has her own life purpose and she try to objectify it by doing things against her mother’s

and her fiancé's will. The choice that she finally made represents the revolt the under-controlled do to fight against the life-time pressure.

CONCLUSION

Titanic, released in 1997, became a huge movie phenomenon. James Cameron brought not only a tragic love story to the screen but also the social issue of capitalism and the social gap that existed between the upper class (aristocrats) and the lower class in 1912. The main character, Rose DeWitt Bukater, who serves as a model for aristocrats, had to fight for her position and power. She is oppressed by Mrs. Calvert, her mother, in order to maintain their position and name. Rose, on the other hand, meets Jack as a member of the lower class, and he shows her a world she has never seen before. Rose made the decision to defy the social norms of aristocracy and acquire her self-control with Jack's encouragement, despite the fact that the mother does not want Jack to tamper with their position. The social class issue and power struggle between the upper and lower classes, as well as within the upper class itself, can be interpreted as a representation of Karl Marx's theory about society—that those with power control those with less power, and that the oppressed could organize a revolution to oppose the upper class. Titanic (1997) is an illustration of how individuals convey their ideas and depict a social issue through literature.

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