

CAPITALISM, CANNIBALISM AND HUMANISM: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOVIE “THE PLATFORM”

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ABSTRACT

The existing body of research encompasses a good number of studies on movies and multimodal analysis. Similarly, this research study follows the qualitative multimodal analysis of the movie, The Platform. It is Spanish movie which generally depicts the capitalist mode of Spanish economy through ordinary prisoners and prison. The movie is deeply metaphorical in appearance. Therefore, the researchers in this study have inspected the themes of capitalism, cannibalism, and humanism through multimodal analysis of semiotics. The movie is analyzed through pictorial elements which depict the aforementioned themes. The findings of the study reveal that the movie is a rich portrayal of Spanish political and socio-economic system based on capitalism where the privileged people are more privileged and they economically kill the unprivileged masses. The movie metaphorically also presents people as flesh eater because of hunger. This also generates the feeling of humanity in the audience. The study is important to understand the deep message and discourses of the movie along with understanding other movies through their pictorial representation of hidden discourses. The interpellation of discourses in movies need to be selected very carefully keeping in view the social, cultural and moral values in the global world.

Keywords: Representation, Politics, Economy, unprivileged, Humanity.

INTRODUCTION

Any art is the expression of imaginations or skills, more precisely termed as the creativity of human that is presented in front of the audience in order to be appreciated and to give away any sort of findings or message. The art can be represented in many forms like in writings as in books, verbally as in debates or discussions, visually as in motion pictures and many other. It is basically the inventiveness of human to depict something by choosing the best form. Therefore, visual form of art in the form of a movie has always played a significant role in serving art. It can be defined as a motion picture that tells a story. It is the way of communication that involves value of the images as the semiotic resource. This is why there are a number of movies on every topic and concern now a days. Anything and everything can be showed and portrayed in movies either directly or symbolically. Mostly the movies having psychological aspects involve symbolisms or in other words use semiotic resources. The genre of psychological thriller in movies embrace the elements of mystery, action, suspense and also paranoia. Similarly, the movie “The Platform” originally called “El Hoyo” in Spanish, is a psychological thriller one which incorporates the symbolic representation of the themes of capitalism and cannibalism.

The theme is constructed through the images and dialogues throughout the movie. The visual elements in the movie introduce a new dimension to capitalism. Capitalism is a system having the concept of difference of class in the individuals. This is the term which is used when people started to divide the

society into multiple sectors in terms of class only. The word class here describes the distinction of upper and lower grade people regarding money. And how such people are involved in the injustice. The other conviction of cannibalism abstracted out of this movie is the action to consume any other individual or human being in order to survive or for any other reason. This act cannot be done only in the case of survival but is mostly done for living matter when there is no other choice. Then the notion of humanism is for telling the value and intervention of human beings, either communally or individually. Its meaning differs with the successive logical movements that have been identified and which is also elaborated in the movie. By this way it can be seen that many things of the movie are focusing and pointing many other meanings, which seeks attention. Some renowned methods will be used to get such double meanings out of it to get the clear picture.

Problem Statement

As, people watch movies and they have an implicit impact upon the audience. People take strong effect of the movies upon them. The analysis of this article is about the features that are representing capitalism in the movie. It is about the highlights of the cannibalistic elements so to give a humanistic view to the concept given through this visual piece of art. As it is a semiotic picture with multiple deep interpretations at many periods, and in order to get through its profound meanings, this research is a necessary part.

Significance of the study

This study reveals that the movies can be seen by considering its meaning in multiple ways. Various themes and concepts can be extracted out of a single clip of movie. The study exposes the human behavior in all the circumstances that are created by capitalism and class distinction in the society. Such problems and such responses exist till date as class system has found its roots in most parts of the world. This study explores the rich imagery and symbolic appearances found in the movie and can be used in grasping clearer essence out of it. The study can also be used in understanding the versatile nature of human for one another with transparency.

Research objectives

This study focuses on some of the following objectives:

To underscore discourse of human behavior portrayed in the selected movie.

To identify the visual representation of capitalism and cannibalistic elements in the selected movie.

Research questions

The identified research gap leads towards the creation in multiple sorts of research questions. The purpose of writing these questions distinctly is to clearly respond each and every matter in detail. Some questions arose in this study are as follows:

How are capitalism and cannibalism viewed through the lens of imagery?

How does the discourse in the movie “The Platform” portray human behavior?

Delimitations

This study is only done in context to a single movie “The Platform” and in the mode of multimodal analysis. However, other analyses can also be done. In the same way, any other subject can also be picked for the analysis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many analyses have been done on numerous films with respect to many aspects. The settings of the scenes of movies deeply effect human by creating the possibilities of renewing the same traumas, effects, frustrations, fears and conflicts among the people of society, watching them. Through the actions and characters, hidden states of mind have been revived. This is mostly seen in case of suspense containing movies. Also, the psychodynamic interpretation of the movies gives an exploratory approach to the understanding of such psychological dilemmas that are confronted by the capitalistic society; which is most often suppressed by its residents (Diaz, *et. al.*, 2020).

The foremost interest and basic postulate in the interpretation of movies and films is the comprehension of the dialogues and texts of the films which is not only the matter of straight forward decoding of the semiotic resources, but also, it is the process of extracting out the content logically, by taking help of other resources and knowledge. The meanings of texts are not found but are formed as there

is a dual process for the comprehension of texts of film, the top-down for the strategic and abstract ones while bottom-up for the automatic and compulsory psychological processes (Wildfeuer, 2012). In filming, the resources that possess cataloged associations with some distinguishable social behaviors, stances and groups are frequently positioned in such a manner so to exploit all the social meanings (Callier, 2014).

A number of researches on the multimode discourse have been done using variable aspects worldwide (Bo, 2018). It can be done on movies, dramas, sculpture, paintings or any other form of the art therefore, Van Leewuen and Kress (2006) explained this analysis with respect to visuals and imagery; Bo (2018) enlightened the same analysis of a multi-party debate happened in Australia (Bo, 2018). Halliday's theory for language which is based on social semiotics and social signs places great importance on semiotic practices of any specific culture of a specific community. There was a concept that all the discourses fundamentally possess nature of the multimodality (Bo, 2018).

Capitalism, by its literal meaning involves the inequality of human beings among themselves due to the hold of some people on significant positions. It includes variations in the behavior of a group or a single person of the society because of their class or any other strategic status. This behavior places the individuals so differentially according to their attitudes, interests, occupation, living-locations, age and many others. There lies a noteworthy leveling in the patterns, through which they treat children, engage in multiple activities, get education, have income, have the rights of freedom and perform many other necessities of life, in-between upper, middle and working class. This class difference has been represented in its various forms in multiple films and other social platforms (Bell, 1972).

Many tales, myths are related to cannibalism and were documented in so many places where human and his civilization were discussed. Cannibalism in human has remained a controversial topic in history, while many of its cases were reported and then denied as no solid evidence was found. This concludes that no convincing evidence has been there for the cannibalism in humans except for the survival of the individual in the extreme conditions due to starvation. It does not only occur in humans, but in many other species too. The reason for this to happen is not only the starvation but it could be for population control, for a sign of strength and authority by the leading and dominant member. The animal or the person eating any other individual from same kind is termed as cannibal. The movie contains all the reasons of cannibalism according to the nature of its context. Psychological movies mostly contain this side of human behavior to involve more thrill and fear (Ferna, *et. al.*, 1999).

The word humanism meant different to different people, if the history is studied, and it remains the same today too. In intended sense, humanism is the behavior and nature of viewing people. It is the way human beings are able to recognize or see other humans, by considering them a member of the same species. This includes the thinking of taking people from both the cognitive and perspectival dimensions. It is that viewing nature of human through which it accepts the fellow human as the member of the common humanity or in other words *Homo sapiens*, purely as a person. By this view, one will consider the other fellow human for having the same capacities, social relations, values, rights and norms (Manne, 2016). Also, this condition compels any person for treating the other one humanely, with more kindness, soft nature, also, equaling both the genders. The movies then involve the scenes which portray the sense of humanism or dehumanization through the discourse (Diaz, *et. al.*, 2020).

The authoritative positional function in mainstream journalism is being challenged by the development of contemporary computer technological advances. Discourse analysis extends outside discourse by including additional semiotic elements including picture, audio, and animations within the purview. Kress and van Leeuwen presented the grammar of design aesthetic like a pioneering method for interpreting graphic compositions combining pictorial meaning, interacting significance, and composed sense. The researchers attempted to have an informative debate on how semiotic tools function in realizing the visual content of film advertisements using an interpretation method (Chen & Gao, 2014).

Art pieces are multimedia types of advertising that use a mixture of visual and verbal components to promote a film. Their particular goal is to demonstrate that such intricacy of multimedia, which include cinematographic literature, somehow doesn't prohibit the researchers from evaluating the stylistic components of movies in particular. The goal of this research would be to unify the meaning of many aspects; representational, interactive, and textual. Its aim is to examine how these aspects interact to

generate a cohesive discourse. In modern literature, literary organization is achieved not just by language indicators, as well as by design, color, and font at both the "clause" and "discourse" levels (Wei, 2015).

The lexical items have been emphasized in discourse analysis. Discourse having brought revolutionary changes from fixed to fluid multimodal discourse analysis, which includes audio, text, picture, and movement. Multimodal discourse refers to the use of a visual and sensory inter symbolic purpose of transmission using a variety of ways and signs like characters, picture, voice, or motion (Zhang, 2019).

By thorough reading of many articles and other related material, it can be deduced that there were many different sorts of researches that were done on matters related to capitalism, cannibalism and humanism. Still, there is way other stuff left for studying regarding the other aspects of it. Very few researches are there specifically on the movie "The Platform". The gap which is leftover in the previous studies will be discussed here such as the concept of multimodal analysis has not been done for it and is much necessary to get the sense of the perception of the movie and the correct idea of it.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers have followed the following methodology to conduct the whole study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is the lens through which movie "The Platform" will be observed. It includes the concept of the analysis of multimodality. This concept includes the situation and context in terms of human nature for the need of survival. Another idea is included, the analysis of the communication, particularly the depiction that has the integration of more than two semiotic resources, usually called as multimode analysis. The movie "The Platform" is observed through the themes of capitalism, cannibalism and humanism that can be seen in its different intervals.

Multimodal discourse analysis is a method of examining several lines of communications, including textual, color, as well as visuals. This provides indeed a rhetorical analytical technique that examines not only what particular styles transmit, yet also the way those interplay with each other that form semantic meanings. According to Kress (2010) who goes on to argue, "Using three modes in one sign - writing and image and color as well - has real benefits. Each mode does a specific thing: image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names what would be difficult to show. Color is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message" (p. 1).

Research Method

The method of the research is qualitative. It follows multimodal analysis as a theoretical framework. It generates three themes; capitalism, cannibalism and humanism in the analysis section. It is based on the movie, The Platform (2019). The movie was watched online.

Research Design

Descriptive study is used as a research design to this study.

ANALYSIS

The researchers here, after developing the whole background of the study, bring the analysis of the selected movie. The analysis is divided in three themes; capitalism, cannibalism and humanism. The specified pictures are brought here from the movie to contextualize the aimed themes through multimodal analysis approach.

Capitalism

Capitalism is a theoretical analysis of the economic system of a state and country. It involves private property and expanding it more and more in the realm of its investment and profit. Adam Smith is considered the father of capitalist economic system. Countries like America, France, India and Pakistan, etc. have based themselves on the shoulders of capitalist economy. In contrast, Marxist theology of socialism and communism stand against it which try to breakdown the existing body capitalist economic system. According to Marxism, capitalism is a disease which has caused the class discrimination and conflict throughout the history (Eagleton, 1999). Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels are considered the founder

of this doctrine. Similarly, the selected Spanish movie, *The Platform* (2019) retains such criticism which reveals a story of a prisoner who is socialist in mindset. The prison is divided into three hundred and three cells which are built on floor over floor. These distinctions of multiple floors manifest the class system of Spain. The following pictures show the sight of prison.



Source: *The Platform* (2019)



Source: *The Platform* (2019)

The above displayed pictures manifest the semiotic meaning of class discrimination, upper and lower class. The visual discourse of these pictures portrays the symbolic interpretation of class struggle caused by capitalism. The movie reflects back to the human history as theoretically presented by the Marxist ideologies. The pictures have lower and upper floor of the cell. The prisoner protagonist of the movie resides in the middle floor of eighty-three. The discourse of this semiotic arrangement of multimodal presentation represents the social struggle between the prisoners: it stands as a metaphorical description of Spanish economic system based on capitalism causing class struggle. The upper class is more privileged and lower class is always manipulated for the greed and inhuman desires of wealth of upper class. The same happens in the movie as well. The multimodal analysis of the movie suggests the Spanish class difference and presents the critique of capitalism that how such unequal society takes breathe in such dismantled system

of othering people on the basis of economic values. This has to highlight the social system of economy which culminates the poor class as unprivileged and upper class privileged more than their need and hard work. In the movie, this scene is presented as a jail setting in which different cells have different privileges. Upper cells always receive food of their own need and desire, they leave the eaten food for the lower cells and their prisoners. It metaphorically shares the multimodal interpretation of stages which causes the looting of economic assets in the existing society of Spain. The following example further clarifies the structural organization and delivery of food in the prison crossing through the different cells and prisoners in the selected movie.



Source: The Platform (2019)



Source: The Platform (2019)

The pictures displayed above clarify the distribution of food in the prison. The multimodal, semiotic and visual interpretation shows the abundance of food starting from the first cell. It says that upper cells are more privileged with food in the movie. They are allowed to have as much as they want to eat. In the movie, they eat a lot barbarously. The designed table of food with delicious different dishes of different flavors visualize the interpretation of symbolic nature. It portrays the wealth in the capitalist economy of Spain. The upper class has a lot of money crossing the boundaries of the needs and desires, yet they retain the greed to have more, and share less to the needy person. Similarly, in the movie, the food eaten by the upper cell is decided by their own with their intention, desire and need. They use the food more than their need and acquire it to the highest peak of their greed. Such discriminatory and of gaining more and more is the nature of capitalist economy. Hence, it does not care for anyone but itself. The same happens in the movie which is visualized in the picture.

The multimodal discourse analysis portrays the abundance of wealth, its need and greed. The upper cell uses more food than their need and sends the uneaten or half eaten food to the lower cell. The second picture visualizes the meaning of looted food by the upper cell. Relatively, the Marxist criticism of capitalism argues the same that people with more wealth exploit the people with low wealth. This happens same in the movie, the upper cell eats a lot of food, which causes no specific and quality food for the lower and middle cell. This symbolic interpretation explains the looting of food by the upper class because of their greedy nature, lust and desire. This happens to be the same in the collective interpretation of the movie when it comes to the food, the lower cell receives no food at all and stays hungry and dies sooner or later in their own cells demanding the food of their need. This shows that the death of the prisoners in the lower cells is caused by the extra consumption of food by the people in the upper cells. In simple words, capitalism and lust for wealth is causing trouble for the world, which causes the death of the common poor masses of the Spanish society and the world.

Cannibalism

Cannibalism is usually known as a ritual in which the same kind of animals eat the flesh of same kind of another animal. It has a metaphorical standing of capitalism in which one elite ruling class sucks the blood of other working class. Their biology is same, their gender is same. Their roles are same. Like animals eat the flesh of other animals, human also suck the blood of other humans. By eating the flesh of same sort of animals, it may mean poverty, lust, greed and dominancy or authority over the subdued ones. Similarly, in the selected movie *The Platform* (2019) humans eat the flesh of other humans. They are in prison and they do not receive the food equally to their needs, so they eat the flesh of other animals to fill their deprived hunger. The multimodal visuals are presented here to depict and justify the theme aptly. The pictures are analyzed with the help of multimodal analysis, which display the visual effect of the theme and its relation to the visual.



Source: *The Platform* (2019)

This pictorial scene from the selected movie gives the representational meaning of cutting the mass of some body. In the movie the old prisoner accompanying the young comrade tries to cut his mass to eat. This happens when the prisoners are shifted to the lower cell where they hardly receive food, so the old man tries to eat the mass of his prison friend to survive. The knife in the hands of this man suggests the power and authority and source to cut the mass of the body. Similarly, it happens in the scene. The old man cuts his mass and eats it, but the young socialist is saved by his friend who is a female in the story. The next visual is more relevant to this theme which provides the scenario of cutting the mass of humans.



Source: The Platform (2019)

The above picture now retains the clear multimodal meaning of visual. It shows that somebody is cutting the mass of a body with a knife. It highlights the pictorial semiotic meaning of image that humans in hunger can eat each other. Hunger can make somebody do anything beyond law and order. In the movie, this happens because of the lack of food in the Spanish prison where prisoners are enemies to each other. This more accurately presents the symbolic interpretation of the capitalist system where people eat and retain beyond their needs, and this greed causes inflation in food, security and economic system of general society. The same happens in the movie as well, where people do not focus on their side of need, rather they are greedy to eat the food on a large scale, which causes the lack of food in the prison. This lack of food causes hunger in prisoners. They want to survive and live. For that, they start cutting the mass of each other to eat. This basic mechanism of cannibalizing human bodies by humans is caused by the capitalist mindset of humans who not only fight for their unfulfilled bellies but also over expanding their mind and belly with more power, lust, money, wealth and capital for investment, more and more. The scene in the movie occurs because of symbolic class discrimination between the prisoners. The upper cell prisoners and the lower cell prisoners: they eat the food distributed by the administration unequally which results in hunger, and then they eat the flesh of their own humans because of their hunger, life and survival.

Humanism

Humanism is one of the major factors in the human life and literature. In English literature it was much more emphasized during the reign of renaissance. Humanism generally deals with the emotions of humans, commodification of humanity, human feelings and caring the other human with love and respect. Humanism is the basic soul of all the world religions, especially Islam focused more on humanism and the soul of humanity. Relatively, in the selected movie, humanism comes as a major factor. It not only rises the human emotions of sympathy and empathy inside the audience but it also incorporates the similar factors in the characters of the movie as well. The prisoners are always fighting with each other, looting their food, cutting their own mass to eat. This highlights the major influence of humanism in the mind and heart of audience. The multimodal analysis of the following visual comes as its justification, validity and authenticity of the theme of humanism in the movie. It interprets to this single point where humans have emotions for each other.



Source: The Platform (2019)

The aforementioned visual is a representation of human emotions, care and longing for other humans. These multimodal visuals display the meaning of human connection between humans themselves. This happens in the movie when a prisoner in the cell is tried to be cannibalized by some other persons. They want to eat his flesh, but the protagonist of the movie who is socialist in nature saves him from this tyrant act of other prisoners. He has feelings for his human fellows. The writer of the movie wants to depict the scene in favor of socialist ideology. It generates the discourse that socialists are always humanists. They believe in care, survival and rights of human. This happens to be the same in the movie when other prison fellows want to eat the flesh of their fellow, but he is saved by the socialist prison fellow. It has a connection between capitalism, socialism, cannibalism, communism and humanism. Such reliability on humans is a greater genre of humanity which saves humans from other fellow inhuman humans. Thus multimodal analysis has presented this movie as a humanistic movie.

CONCLUSION

The research introduced the whole conceptual framework, related literature and developed the methodology. After this whole background the researchers have analyzed the data with reference to the specified theoretical framework of multimodal analysis. The analysis is divided into three prime themes; capitalism, cannibalism and humanism. These themes are justified through the visual discourse analysis with respect to multimodal analysis. This whole study is conducted on the Spanish movie – The Platform (2019). The movie is about some prisoners who live in cells structured as up and down. The prisoners are not given equal food that causes their death, and cannibalistic activities. The researcher has analyzed the movie to explore the themes of cannibalism, capitalism and humanism through the model of multimodal analysis. The findings reveal the idea that the movie The Platform (2019) is replete with its critique of capitalism existing in Spanish economic system. It criticizes this system symbolically and generates the connection of evil with capitalist mechanism. The cannibalism in the movie is caused by capitalist class discrimination and social strata that are later enhanced and supported by Marxist/socialist ideology as a human relation. In short, the researchers have reached a comprehensive conclusion that the movie is a critique of capitalism and supporting Marxist view of political system, and it blames capitalism for violence and dehumanized human life. Moreover, this research may not be absolute in its analysis, findings and conclusion. The movies and the other media representations are, in some way, a source of changing minds in society wherever as per their interpellation is concerned. In addition, it is also important that the media for people is also a source of sensitization and exposure to whatever is shown in movies; hence, the producers, writers and directors need to assess the social and moral values before such movies are ready

for approval. The upcoming researchers may criticize and conduct the same study with similar or different lenses.

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