

Research Article

Class Struggle and Systematic Exploitation: A Marxist Analysis of Social Inequality in "The Purge: Anarchy" (2014)

Ravinda Syaiful Bustammi ^{1*}, Teguh Kasprabowo ²

¹ English Literature Department, Faculty of Law and Language, University of Stikubank Semarang; e-mail : ravinsya7@gmail.com

² English Literature Department, Faculty of Law and Language, University of Stikubank Semarang; e-mail : teguhkas@edu.unisbank.ac.id

* Corresponding Author : Ravinda Syaiful Bustammi

Abstract: This study examines the representation of class struggle and systematic exploitation in "The Purge: Anarchy" (2014) through a Marxist theoretical framework to understand how contemporary dystopian cinema critiques capitalist social relations. The research addresses how the film represents class struggle and illustrates systematic exploitation as mechanisms of social control using qualitative descriptive methodology with Marxist literary criticism approach. Analysis was conducted through multiple systematic viewings of the film, focusing on character interactions, narrative structures, and visual elements that demonstrate class conflict and social inequality. The main findings reveal that the film effectively portrays class struggle through character conflicts that embody class tensions, spatial arrangements that physically manifest class divisions, and narrative structures that reveal institutional mechanisms of oppression. The study demonstrates that systematic exploitation is illustrated through power dynamics between social classes, government institutions that facilitate class-based violence, and visual representations that make economic inequality concrete and immediate. The film's hunting auction scenes, where wealthy elites pay \$200,000 to hunt poor citizens, exemplify how dystopian narratives transform abstract Marxist concepts into visceral narrative events accessible to mainstream audiences. The research concludes that "The Purge: Anarchy" succeeds as a contemporary critique of capitalism by integrating class struggle and systematic exploitation as interconnected mechanisms. The film uses its dystopian setting to make visible the violence underlying everyday capitalist relations while serving as a vehicle for developing class consciousness through popular entertainment.

Keywords: class struggle, systematic exploitation, Marxist theory, dystopian cinema, social inequality, film analysis, popular culture, capitalism critique

1. Introduction

Film analysis reveals how cinema functions beyond mere entertainment, serving as a reflection of society's deepest tensions and contradictions. Literature and cinema have consistently served this dual purpose, functioning both as artistic expression and social mirror. As Eagleton [1] suggests, cultural products emerge from specific material conditions and inevitably carry the imprints of the power structures that shape them, making them valuable resources for examining social relations. Williams [2] further emphasizes how cultural forms reflect the dominant social relations of their time while simultaneously containing possibilities for challenging those relations.

This relationship becomes particularly significant when examining how contemporary films address issues of social inequality. Modern cinema, especially dystopian narratives, has developed increasingly sophisticated approaches to making visible what often remains concealed in everyday social experience. Films possess the unique capacity to transform abstract economic theories into visceral, immediate experiences that audiences cannot easily dismiss.

Cinema's distinctiveness among artistic mediums lies in its ability to combine multiple layers of meaning simultaneously. While literature might describe class divisions through exposition, cinema can demonstrate these divisions through spatial arrangements, lighting choices, costume design, and casting decisions within a single frame [3]. Prabowo's recent analysis of cinematic signs and symbols [4] demonstrates how films employ temporal and

Received: June 03, 2025

Revised: June 17, 2025

Accepted: July 01, 2025

Published: July 07, 2025

Curr. Ver.: July 07, 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open

access publication under the

terms and conditions of the

Creative Commons Attribution

(CC BY SA) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

visual structures to create meaning, providing methodological insights for examining how narrative elements work together to represent social commentary. This visual density enables filmmakers to communicate complex social dynamics that might otherwise remain abstract or distant.

The effectiveness of dystopian cinema stems from its capacity to render the familiar strange. By projecting contemporary social problems into imagined futures or alternative presents, these films create cognitive distance that provides sufficient separation from immediate reality to reveal patterns that might otherwise escape notice [5]. This narrative strategy proves particularly effective because audiences can engage with challenging social critiques when they appear within the framework of speculative fiction. As Jameson [6] argues, this process enables what he terms "cognitive mapping," helping viewers understand complex social totalities that are typically invisible in everyday experience.

Marxist theory provides a particularly robust framework for understanding how films represent and potentially challenge systems of inequality. Marx's insights about class struggle and systematic exploitation extend beyond 19th-century observations, offering enduring analytical tools for examining how power operates across different historical contexts [7]. When applied to film analysis, these concepts help decode not only what movies present but how they construct their presentations, and perhaps more importantly, what they reveal about contemporary social structures.

Recent scholarship has begun mapping this analytical territory more systematically. Jin's examination of dystopian cinema [8] reveals how films like "Hunger Games" employ speculative scenarios to critique present-day class divisions, while Fabrianne and colleagues [9] demonstrate how movies like "Parasite" have revolutionized the portrayal of class consciousness in mainstream media. Meanwhile, studies by Al Hassani [10] and Panjaitan et al. [11] illustrate how contemporary films increasingly incorporate explicit social commentary while maintaining commercial viability. Kellner [12] also demonstrates how Hollywood cinema has become increasingly engaged with political themes, particularly in response to social and economic crises that demand critical examination.

"The Purge: Anarchy" (2014) presents a particularly compelling case for Marxist analysis through its systematic portrayal of class warfare. The film depicts a dystopian America where, for twelve hours annually, all crime becomes legal. While this premise initially appears as straightforward horror-thriller material, the narrative systematically reveals its true focus: the mechanisms through which economic inequality translates into literal life-and-death consequences.

The film's analytical value lies in its capacity to render abstract Marxist concepts concrete and immediate. When wealthy elites bid \$200,000 for hunting rights over poor citizens, the narrative presents more than fictional violence. It dramatizes how economic power translates into power over life itself. The film's dystopian framework allows it to externalize and amplify the violence that Marx argued was implicit in capitalist social relations but typically concealed by legal and ideological structures.

The film's analytical complexity emerges through its integration of multiple levels of class critique. Beyond merely depicting economic inequality, the narrative systematically reveals how state institutions, media narratives, and spatial arrangements collaborate to maintain and justify these inequalities. Characters experience not simply individual hardships but encounter what Jameson [13] terms the "totality" of capitalist social relations made visible through the film's speculative framework.

This study examines how "The Purge: Anarchy" functions as both entertainment and social critique, employing Marxist theoretical frameworks to analyze its representation of class struggle and systematic exploitation. Rather than treating these phenomena as separate elements, this research explores how the film presents them as interconnected mechanisms that together reveal the structural violence underlying contemporary capitalism.

Through detailed analysis of specific scenes, character interactions, and visual strategies, this research demonstrates how popular cinema can serve as a vehicle for sophisticated social analysis while remaining accessible to mainstream audiences. The film's effectiveness stems not merely from its entertainment value but from its capacity to make visible social relations that typically remain concealed. The narrative transforms abstract economic concepts into immediate, visceral experiences that audiences cannot easily dismiss.

The analysis addresses two central research questions: How does "The Purge: Anarchy" represent class struggle through its narrative and visual strategies? How does the film illustrate systematic exploitation as a mechanism of social control? Through systematic examination of the film's techniques and content, this study explores how dystopian cinema can function as

social criticism that speaks directly to contemporary concerns about inequality, violence, and power structures.

2. Literature Review

This section examines the theoretical foundations and related research that inform the Marxist analysis of class struggle and systematic exploitation in contemporary cinema, particularly focusing on dystopian narratives and their social commentary functions.

Previous Studies on Class Representation in Cinema

Several significant studies have examined class struggle and systematic exploitation in contemporary cinema, providing crucial context for analyzing how "The Purge: Anarchy" represents class conflict through cinematic elements. These studies reveal growing academic interest in how popular films address social inequality while maintaining commercial appeal.

Al Hassani [10] examined how contemporary films adapt Marxist themes for modern audiences in her analysis of "Mirror Mirror." Her study focuses particularly on wealth inequality and social mobility, demonstrating how filmmakers incorporate critiques of capitalism and class hierarchies while maintaining mainstream appeal. The research reveals how modern cinema balances social criticism with commercial viability. However, Al Hassani's work focuses primarily on fairy tale adaptations, leaving room for more detailed analysis of how specific filmic elements contribute to class representation in dystopian contexts.

Fabrianne and colleagues [9] conducted a comprehensive analysis of class consciousness in contemporary cinema through their study of Bong Joon-Ho's "Parasite" using Marxist theory. Their research demonstrates how modern films have transformed the portrayal of class consciousness in mainstream media. The study examines how narrative structures and visual elements work together to critique social inequality, revealing sophisticated techniques for representing class divisions through cinematographic elements, spatial arrangements, and character development. Although their geographical focus centers on East Asian cinema rather than the American context of "The Purge: Anarchy," their methodological approach provides useful frameworks for analyzing class representation across different cultural contexts.

Jin [8] provides important insights into how dystopian cinema has become a primary vehicle for examining systemic inequality through comparative analysis of "Hunger Games" and "Arrow: The Ultimate Weapon." The research demonstrates how dystopian narratives use speculative scenarios to critique present-day class divisions, revealing patterns in how futuristic settings enable social commentary. Jin's work establishes important connections between dystopian cinema and class critique, showing how these films create cognitive distance that allows audiences to perceive familiar social problems in new ways. Jin's analysis reveals that dystopian settings function as analytical tools that make abstract economic relationships visible through concrete narrative events.

Panjaitan and colleagues [11] analyzed social class and discrimination in "Saltburn" (2023), examining class conflict and discrimination in contemporary cinema. Their study reveals how modern films increasingly incorporate explicit social commentary while exploring complex class dynamics and power relations. The research demonstrates evolving techniques for representing class consciousness in recent cinema, particularly through visual symbolism and narrative structure. While their research provides valuable insights into contemporary class representation, it does not specifically address how these themes function within dystopian narratives or American cinema contexts.

Huang [14] analyzed visual representations in American cinema, focusing on how cinematographic elements evolve to represent social themes in war films. The research provides detailed examination of technical elements that contribute to thematic representation, offering methodological insights for visual analysis. Although primarily focused on war themes rather than class struggle, the study's approach to analyzing how visual techniques convey social commentary provides valuable analytical frameworks for examining cinematographic representation of class dynamics.

Prabowo [4] demonstrates how films employ signs and symbols within temporal structures to create meaning in his analysis of "Atonement." His work provides methodological insights for analyzing how visual and narrative elements work together to represent complex themes in cinema. The study reveals how cinematographic techniques can encode social commentary through symbolic representation, offering analytical approaches applicable to examining class representation in other films.

This review of existing scholarship reveals several gaps in current research. While studies have examined class themes in contemporary cinema [10], social class representation [11], and visual techniques [14], there remains a need for integrated analysis that examines how narrative elements, character dimensions, and visual symbolism work together specifically in American dystopian cinema. Additionally, while recent studies have explored class consciousness representation [9] and dystopian elements [8], few have thoroughly investigated how these elements function within the context of American dystopian cinema to critique systematic exploitation.

Marxist Theory: Class Struggle

Class struggle represents a fundamental concept in Marxist theory that provides an essential framework for analyzing social conflict in contemporary cinema. According to Marx [7], "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," establishing class conflict as the driving force of historical development and social change. This statement positions class antagonism as the primary mechanism through which societies evolve and transform.

Marx identifies two primary opposing classes in capitalist society: the bourgeoisie, which represents the ruling class that owns the means of production, and the proletariat, which represents the working class that sells their labor to survive. This class division extends beyond mere economic categories to shape all aspects of social life. As Marx [7] explains, "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat." This fundamental division creates inherent conflict as these classes possess opposing interests within the capitalist system.

Class struggle emerges from the exploitation inherent in capitalism, where the bourgeoisie seeks to maximize profits by extracting surplus value from workers' labor, while the proletariat struggles for better wages and working conditions. This conflict extends beyond economic resources to encompass political power, cultural expression, and social identity. Marx argues that class position determines not just economic status but shapes consciousness, social relations, and access to power structures [7].

According to Eagleton [15], class struggle in Marxist theory operates on multiple levels. Economic struggle involves workers fighting for better conditions within the capitalist system. Political struggle represents the contest for state power and political representation. Ideological struggle encompasses conflict over dominant ideas, beliefs, and cultural representations that either justify or challenge the existing order. These different levels of struggle often intersect and reinforce each other in complex ways.

The concept of class consciousness proves essential to understanding class struggle dynamics. Marx distinguishes between a "class-in-itself," which refers to objective economic position, and a "class-for-itself," which refers to subjective awareness of shared interests. Lukács [16] develops this idea further, arguing that class consciousness emerges when workers recognize their shared position and collective interests within the capitalist system. This consciousness becomes crucial for transforming individual experiences of exploitation into collective resistance movements.

Class struggle manifests in concrete social conflicts rather than remaining merely theoretical. As Harvey [17] explains, "Class struggle is about appropriation versus expropriation of social power." The ruling class seeks to maintain control through various mechanisms, including legal systems, cultural institutions, and in extreme cases, direct violence and repression. The proletariat develops forms of resistance ranging from workplace organizing to revolutionary movements.

In cinematic representation, class struggle often appears through character conflicts that embody class tensions, social environments that physically represent class divisions, narrative structures that reveal power imbalances, and resolution patterns that either reinforce or challenge class hierarchies [18]. These cinematic elements can be analyzed to understand how films like "The Purge: Anarchy" represent class struggle in their fictional worlds, offering commentary on real-world class relations.

Marxist Theory: Systematic Exploitation

Systematic exploitation forms the second key Marxist concept essential for analyzing contemporary cinema's treatment of social inequality. According to Marx [19], exploitation is not merely individual abuse but a structural feature of capitalism. He describes capital as "dead labor, that vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks," capturing how capitalism fundamentally depends on extracting value from workers' labor.

The mechanism of this exploitation lies in what Marx calls "surplus value." Workers produce more value through their labor than they receive in wages, with the excess appropriated by capitalists as profit. As Marx [19] explains, "The rate of surplus-value is therefore an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labor-power by capital, or of the worker by the capitalist." This exploitation is systematic because it is built into the very structure of capitalist production rather than being an aberration or failure of the system.

Exploitation in Marxist theory possesses several important characteristics. It is structural, meaning it is not dependent on individual intentions but inherent in capitalist relations. It is normalized, appearing as natural and inevitable through ideological justification. It is comprehensive, extending beyond the workplace to affect all aspects of social life. It is concealed, hidden by the appearance of fair exchange in labor markets [20].

Jameson [13] extends Marx's concept of exploitation to cultural analysis, arguing that cultural products often conceal or naturalize exploitation through narrative and representational strategies. He argues that "The function of ideology is to legitimize social practices that would otherwise appear as exploitation by making them seem natural." This insight proves particularly relevant for analyzing how films might both expose and potentially normalize systems of exploitation.

Central to Marx's understanding of exploitation is the concept of alienation. Through exploitation, workers become alienated from multiple aspects of their humanity. They become alienated from their labor, as work becomes an external, forced activity rather than freely chosen expression. They become alienated from the product of their labor, as workers have no control over what they produce. They become alienated from their human potential, as creative and social capacities are reduced to economic functions. Finally, they become alienated from other human beings, as social relationships become mediated by market relations [21].

Wood [22] applies these concepts to film analysis, arguing that "Cinema can function as a site for both reinforcing and challenging the alienation inherent in capitalist society." Films may depict alienation through character experiences, visual symbolism, or narrative structures that reveal the dehumanizing effects of exploitation. This analytical approach helps identify how cinema represents the psychological and social consequences of systematic exploitation.

The state plays a crucial role in maintaining systems of exploitation. As Althusser [23] explains, "The State apparatus secures by force the political conditions for the reproduction of relations of production, which are in the last resort relations of exploitation." This occurs through both repressive state apparatuses, such as police, military, and legal systems, and ideological state apparatuses, such as education, media, and culture. In dystopian cinema like "The Purge: Anarchy," these mechanisms of state control are often exaggerated to make visible the violence that underlies everyday exploitation.

Systematic exploitation in cinema can be identified through power dynamics between characters from different social classes, institutional structures that facilitate exploitation, visual representation of economic inequality and its consequences, and narrative development that reveals how exploitation is maintained or challenged [24]. By applying Marx's concept of systematic exploitation to analyze "The Purge: Anarchy," researchers can examine how the film represents the structural nature of exploitation in its dystopian society and offers critique of real-world capitalist relations.

3. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology with a focus on Marxist literary criticism to analyze class struggle and systematic exploitation in "The Purge: Anarchy" (2014). The primary data source is the film itself, with analysis conducted through multiple systematic viewings to identify scenes demonstrating class conflict and social inequality. The theoretical framework draws on classical Marxist theory, particularly Marx's concepts of class struggle and systematic exploitation as developed in "The Communist Manifesto" and "Capital" [7], [19], supplemented by contemporary Marxist film analysis approaches from Wayne [18] and Jameson [13]. The study applies Wayne's analytical framework examining

narrative elements, character dimensions, and visual symbolism to understand how cinematic techniques represent class relations and social conflict. The film was selected because it explicitly addresses themes of class conflict and social inequality through its dystopian narrative framework, making it particularly suitable for Marxist analysis of how economic disparities translate into violent consequences.

The data collection process involves multiple viewings of the film to document relevant scenes, dialogue, and visual elements that demonstrate class struggle and systematic exploitation. Each scene is analyzed through the lens of Marxist theoretical concepts, focusing on how the film represents class antagonism, economic exploitation, alienation, and ideological structures. The analysis examines character conflicts that embody class tensions, social environments that physically represent class divisions, narrative structures that reveal power imbalances, and resolution patterns that either reinforce or challenge class hierarchies [3]. Data analysis employs thematic coding according to Marxist theoretical categories, followed by synthesis and interpretation to understand how the film's cinematic elements function as vehicles for social critique of contemporary capitalist relations. The study acknowledges limitations in focusing solely on textual analysis rather than examining production contexts or audience reception, but this approach enables detailed examination of how the film constructs meaning about class relations through its narrative and visual strategies.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of "The Purge: Anarchy" through the Marxist theoretical framework, examining how the film represents class struggle and systematic exploitation as mechanisms of social control. The findings reveal that the film effectively uses its dystopian narrative to critique contemporary capitalist systems through explicit portrayal of class conflict and institutional violence.

Representation of Class Struggle

The analysis reveals that "The Purge: Anarchy" represents class struggle through four primary mechanisms that directly embody Marx's theoretical concepts. The film portrays class conflict most explicitly through character interactions that demonstrate class antagonism. The hunting auction scene provides the clearest example, where wealthy elites bid \$200,000 to hunt poor citizens. The announcer states: "Ladies and gentlemen, since this is the last Purge of the evening, the entry price will be \$200,000." This scene directly embodies Marx's concept of class antagonism, showing the bourgeoisie literally hunting the proletariat and transforming class exploitation into entertainment for the wealthy.

Eva's father's sacrifice represents another form of class conflict, where economic desperation forces him to sell his life to wealthy families for \$100,000. His letter reveals: "I'll be a martyr for a wealthy family tonight. They paid me for this service." This transaction illustrates Marx's analysis of how capitalism forces workers to commodify themselves due to economic necessity, demonstrating the ultimate extension of labor commodification where life itself becomes a sellable product [19]. The scene shows how economic pressure creates situations where the poor must literally sacrifice themselves to survive, while the wealthy purchase these sacrifices as services.

Diego's misdirected violence against Eva and Cali demonstrates how class tensions are often redirected within the working class itself. His declaration that "Every fucking day, you pass me by in the hallway, like I ain't shit! Well, now, that shit fucking changes!" shows legitimate class resentment being channeled against fellow workers rather than the system that oppresses them all. This exemplifies Marx's analysis of how capitalism divides the working class against itself, preventing them from recognizing their shared interests and common enemy.

The film uses spatial arrangements to create powerful visual representations of class divisions. Working-class neighborhoods appear as dense, vulnerable spaces with minimal security, while wealthy areas feature fortified mansions with advanced security systems. This geographical segregation reflects what Harvey [17] describes as the spatial manifestation of class relations under capitalism. The business district provides another spatial representation where the Sergeant notes: "The business district's always quiet on Purge Night. The banks move their money, so no one's ever down here." This reveals how financial institutions protect capital while abandoning areas where working people live, physically manifesting the separation between capital and labor.

The narrative structure progressively reveals the true power structure behind the Purge. Initially presented as random citizen violence, the story gradually exposes systematic government targeting of specific populations. Big Daddy's revelation that "Unfortunately, the citizens aren't killing enough. So, we supplement it all to keep things balanced" completes the narrative exposure of how state power serves ruling class interests, aligning with Marx's theory of the state as an instrument of class domination [25]. This revelation demonstrates what Althusser [23] describes as the repressive state apparatus functioning to maintain class relations through direct violence.

Systematic Exploitation as Social Control

The film illustrates systematic exploitation through institutional mechanisms that maintain class hierarchies and facilitate the oppression of subordinate classes. The New Founding Fathers of America (NFFA) system provides legal framework for class-based violence, with the emergency broadcast system functioning as what Althusser [23] terms ideological state apparatus. The broadcast frames exploitation as patriotic duty: "Blessed be our New Founding Fathers, and America, a nation reborn." This demonstrates how state ideology transforms class violence into civic responsibility.

Power dynamics between characters from different social classes reveal clear imbalances where wealthy characters possess economic power to purchase safety and even the right to kill, while poor characters face vulnerability and limited choices. The hunting auction epitomizes this dynamic, where the wealthy literally purchase power over life and death. The relationship between Eva's father and the wealthy family who purchase his life illustrates Marx's concept of exploitation through apparently voluntary exchange that is actually coerced by economic necessity [19]. The transaction appears as a free market exchange, but economic desperation removes any real choice from the equation.

Government surveillance and targeting systems specifically identify poor neighborhoods for "cleansing," showing how state institutions systematically facilitate exploitation of subordinate classes while protecting ruling class interests. The discovery of military monitoring showing buildings "all around the projects" marked for attack reveals systematic targeting of the poor. The withdrawal of public services during the Purge further demonstrates institutional abandonment. The emergency broadcast announces: "Police, fire and emergency medical services will be unavailable until tomorrow morning at 7:00 a.m." This forces citizens to rely on private security, creating market opportunities for the wealthy while abandoning the poor.

The film's visual representation of economic inequality makes abstract class relations concrete and immediate. Wealthy spaces appear bright, secure, and spacious, while poor areas are dark, cramped, and vulnerable. The hunting auction takes place in an elegant room with classical music and formal attire, while victims kneel on the ground, creating visual hierarchy that reflects social hierarchy. Camera angles reinforce power relationships, often showing wealthy characters from below suggesting dominance and poor characters from above suggesting vulnerability. These visual techniques make economic relationships viscerally apparent through basic viewing experience.

The contrast between Eva's workplace and wealthy environments visually represents class division. Her job as a waitress in a modest diner contrasts with the luxurious settings where wealthy Purgers gather, making visible the different material conditions that define class experience. Costume and styling choices throughout the film reinforce class distinctions, with wealthy characters appearing in refined evening wear while working-class characters wear everyday clothing that becomes increasingly damaged as they struggle to survive.

Integration of Class Struggle and Systematic Exploitation

The analysis demonstrates that class struggle and systematic exploitation function as interconnected mechanisms in the film's social critique. When Eva's father sells his life to wealthy people for \$100,000, this represents both systematic exploitation through economic pressure forcing this "choice" and class struggle through creating direct conflict between rich and poor. The hunting auction works similarly, demonstrating systematic exploitation through institutionalized violence while simultaneously generating class conflict through literal antagonism between hunters and hunted [9].

The film's treatment of resistance through Carmelo's revolutionary movement shows how systematic exploitation generates organized class struggle. Carmelo's analysis that "The Purge is not about containing crime to one night. It's about one thing. Money" provides

explicit class consciousness, while his call to "fight back" represents organized resistance. His forces' battle cry, "Fuck the New Founding Fathers! Fuck your money! And motherfuck the Purge!" explicitly rejects both political authority and economic power, embodying what Marx described as revolutionary consciousness [16].

The narrative development of resistance follows a pattern that mirrors the development of critical consciousness. Initially focused on individual survival, characters gradually recognize the systematic nature of their oppression and begin forming bonds of solidarity. Eva's decision to help the Sergeant despite his deception, and his choice to protect the group rather than pursue personal revenge, demonstrates how shared struggle can overcome individual self-interest. This reflects Marx's concept of class consciousness development through collective experience [25].

The climactic battle where Carmelo's forces confront government troops represents direct challenge to state power. Their confrontation demonstrates how resistance emerges when systematic exploitation becomes too visible and brutal to ignore. The film suggests that extreme forms of exploitation eventually generate their own opposition, consistent with Marx's analysis of how capitalism creates the conditions for its own transformation.

Contemporary Relevance and Critique

The film's effectiveness as social critique becomes particularly relevant when considering contemporary social conditions. The extreme wealth inequality, government surveillance, and institutional violence depicted in the film mirror real-world trends that have intensified since the 2008 financial crisis. The movie's portrayal of how economic desperation forces people to sell themselves resonates with current issues like medical debt, gig economy exploitation, and student loan crises. By exaggerating these conditions through its dystopian setting, the film makes visible the violence that underlies everyday economic relationships in contemporary capitalism.

The film's limitations as a commercial product within the capitalist system it critiques must be recognized. Operating within Hollywood's commercial framework, the movie must balance social criticism with entertainment value, creating what Marx would identify as an internal contradiction. The film uses capitalist production methods to critique capitalism itself. The focus on action and thriller elements sometimes overshadows the social message, and the resolution through individual survival rather than systematic change reflects Hollywood's preference for personal rather than political solutions.

Despite these limitations, "The Purge: Anarchy" succeeds as a Marxist critique by demonstrating that class struggle and systematic exploitation are interconnected aspects of capitalist social relations. The film's dystopian setting allows it to make typically hidden relationships visible and dramatic, providing what Jameson [13] terms "cognitive mapping." This helps viewers comprehend complex social relations that structure their lives but often remain invisible. Through its combination of explicit class conflict and systematic institutional violence, the film offers a comprehensive critique that makes difficult social and economic concepts accessible to mainstream audiences while maintaining analytical rigor consistent with Marxist social analysis.

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that "The Purge: Anarchy" effectively represents class struggle and systematic exploitation through its dystopian narrative, providing a compelling critique of contemporary capitalist social relations. The film successfully portrays class conflict through character interactions that embody class tensions, spatial arrangements that physically manifest class divisions, and narrative structures that reveal institutional mechanisms of oppression. The analysis reveals that the movie illustrates systematic exploitation through power dynamics between social classes, government institutions that facilitate class-based violence, and visual representations that make economic inequality concrete and immediate.

The hunting auction scenes, where wealthy elites pay \$200,000 to hunt poor citizens, exemplify how the film transforms abstract Marxist concepts into visceral narrative events that mainstream audiences can understand. Eva's father's sacrifice for \$100,000 demonstrates how economic desperation forces the commodification of life itself, while Diego's misdirected violence shows how capitalism divides the working class against itself. Through its exaggerated dystopian setting, the film makes visible the violence underlying everyday capitalist relations, helping viewers comprehend complex social structures that typically remain hidden. The government's systematic targeting of poor neighborhoods while protecting

wealthy areas illustrates how state institutions serve ruling class interests rather than providing neutral public services.

The research contributes to understanding how contemporary popular cinema can serve as a vehicle for social critique while maintaining commercial appeal. The film's integration of class struggle and systematic exploitation as interconnected mechanisms reveals the sophisticated ways dystopian narratives can address real-world social issues through speculative frameworks. This finding extends previous research by demonstrating how American dystopian cinema specifically employs Marxist concepts to critique contemporary capitalism. The study shows that "The Purge: Anarchy" succeeds not merely as entertainment but as a form of cognitive mapping that helps audiences understand how economic power translates into political control and social violence.

However, the study acknowledges the film's limitations as a commercial product within the capitalist system it critiques, reflecting broader tensions between artistic critique and market constraints. The focus on individual survival rather than systematic change, while dramatically effective, ultimately reinforces Hollywood's preference for personal solutions over political transformation. The film's reliance on thriller and horror elements sometimes overshadows its social message, demonstrating the challenges of delivering radical critique through mainstream entertainment formats.

Future research could extend this analysis by examining other films in The Purge franchise to understand how class themes evolve across multiple installments and whether commercial success affects the development of social critique. Comparative studies with international dystopian cinema could explore how different cultural contexts shape class representation and social commentary. Additionally, audience reception studies could investigate how viewers from different social backgrounds interpret and respond to the film's class critique, providing insights into the effectiveness of popular cinema as a medium for developing class consciousness and social awareness. Research examining how production factors like budget constraints and studio requirements influence the representation of class themes in mainstream cinema would also contribute valuable insights to the field of cultural studies and film analysis.

References

- [1] H. Al Hassani, "Adapting the Grimms: Going Against Patriarchy in Singh's Movie *Mirror Mirror*," *Journal of College of Education for Women*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 36–52, Sep. 2022, doi: 10.36231/coedw.v33i3.1618.
- [2] L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York University Press, 2001.
- [3] R. Baccolini and T. Moylan, Eds., *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*. Routledge, 2003.
- [4] D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, and J. Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 20th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2020.
- [5] A. Callinicos, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx*. Haymarket Books, 2012.
- [6] T. Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2002.
- [7] T. Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*. Yale University Press, 2018.
- [8] N. Fabrianne, D. Sucahyo, and I. Wardani, "Class Struggle in Bong Joon-Ho's Film *Parasite*: An Analysis by Using Marxist Theory," *E3L: Journal of English Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 29–38, 2022.
- [9] B. Fine and A. Saad-Filho, *Marx's "Capital"*, 6th ed. Pluto Press, 2016.
- [10] D. Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital*. Verso, 2010.

- [11] R. Huang, “Visual Representation of War Themes in American Cinema – A Case Study of the Evolution of War Films,” *Communication and Humanities Research*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 239–242, Nov. 2023, doi: 10.54254/2753-7064/13/20230340.
- [12] F. Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, Eds., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990, pp. 347–357.
- [13] F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 2013, doi: 10.2307/j.ctv12100qm.
- [14] D. Y. Jin, “Class Struggle in Contemporary Films: *Hunger Games* vs. *Arrow*, *The Ultimate Weapon*,” *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, vol. 14, no. 1, May 2016, doi: 10.31269/triplec.v14i1.696.
- [15] D. M. Kellner, “Hollywood’s 9/11 and Spectacles of Terror,” in *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era*, Wiley, 2009, pp. 98–131, doi: 10.1002/9781444314809.ch2.
- [16] G. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Radical Reprint). Pattern Books, 2021.
- [17] K. Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *Communist Manifesto* (Works of Harold J. Laski), no. February 1848, Routledge, 2014, pp. 103–106, doi: 10.4324/9781315742564-9.
- [18] B. Ollman, *Alienation: Marx’s Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society*. Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- [19] J. F. Panjaitan, L. Anggraini, L. T. A. Beru Sembiring, and D. A. Putra, “An Analysis of Social Class and Discrimination in the Movie *Saltburn* 2023,” *JALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literacy)*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 273, Sep. 2024, doi: 10.25157/jall.v8i2.14302.
- [20] B. A. Prabowo, “Cinematic Chronology: Exploring the Signs and Symbols of Time in *Atonement*,” *Humanitas: Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 49–60, Dec. 2024, doi: 10.30812/humanitas.v11i1.4377.
- [21] M. Ryan and M. Lenos, *An Introduction to Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film*. Continuum, 2012.
- [22] S. Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011, doi: 10.1057/9780230309142.
- [23] M. Wayne, Ed., *Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives*. Pluto Press, 2005.
- [24] R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Marxist Introductions). Oxford University Press, 1978.
- [25] E. M. Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017.