

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Today, the genre of horror film has developed in some ways such as the changing form of the monsters as the horror manifestation, which is influenced by everyday fears and social anxiety in those times, and the emergence of new subgenres of horror film. John Russel Taylor said that horror is insecurity, uncertainty, the dawning conviction that our worst fears cannot hold a candle to the enormity of the reality they half reveal, half conceal from us (qtd. in Derry 15). Different from romantic genre, which gives its audience the way to escape in the sweet romantic world, or comedy that is designed to make its audience laugh, horror film is on the contrary. It makes the audience frightened and their heart beat is faster. By watching horror films, the audience enters the scary world without actually being in danger. Boss approvingly quotes J.P. Tellote who says about horror film “horror film is the film that is designed to evoke a specific response from its audience, whether it is a shiver of fear, a vague uneasiness, or a sense of relief the dispelling of some great threat” (qtd. in Boss 8). In line with Tellote’s description about horror film, Charles Derry said that films are much like dreams and horror films are like nightmares because it connects with our profound and subconscious need to deal with the things that frightened us (21).

Horror of Armageddon is one of modern subgenre of horror genres theorized by Charles Derry. He examined the evolution of the horror film

especially the fifties until today's horror films. Horror of Armageddon is derived from the development of the science-fiction horror of the fifties. It becomes the insightful critical examination of horror films since it demonstrates how horror films reflect social anxieties and everyday fears time by time and represents the nation's ideological and political values.

The examples of the horror of Armageddon films that reflect the social anxieties and fears are *Right at Your Door* (2006), *Testament* (1983), and *10.5* (2004). *Right at Your Door* is a film that reflects the fears of HIV/AIDS virus. This film tells about the "dirty bombs" which are emitting toxic clouds. People who are contaminated by this toxic must be avoided in order to prevent contaminating other people. In other words, people are separated with someone that is contaminated by the toxic, indeed someone that they love most. In this film, "dirty bombs" are the metaphor of the HIV/AIDS virus, the virus that can segregate society into those people who have been contaminated and people who have not.

If the *Right at Your Door* reflects the fears of the HIV/AIDS virus, *Testament* is a horror of Armageddon film that reflects the anxiety of atomic bombs. This film was made in Reagan era, the era of the renewal of atomic bomb anxieties (Derry 234). This film shows the death of a family in the aftermath of nuclear war. *10.5* is a film that expresses the fears of the weather-based apocalypse. There are many films that are inspired by the natural disaster such as tsunami in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. *10.5* is one of the films inspired

by tsunami in 2004. This film tells about the horrible earthquake that destroys a part of America and makes the Americans sunk into the sea.

According to Derry, there are three great themes or the major elements of horror of Armageddon; *proliferation*, *besiegement*, and *death* (59). *Proliferation* is one of the major elements in horror of Armageddon films in which horror comes from the metaphorical symbol of the existential forces that proliferate. *Besiegement* is another major element of horror of Armageddon in which horror comes from the metaphorical symbol of the existential forces that surround and besiege certain place. Furthermore, *death* is another element of horror of Armageddon in which the existential horror causes death.

*Battleship* has those three major elements. It belongs to the *proliferation* theme of horror of Armageddon since it uses fleets of aliens rather than one alien. They come to the earth as a response from the signal array that is build by NASA. In this proliferation theme, the aliens function as *the object of proliferation*. This film also belongs to *besiegement* theme of horror of Armageddon since aliens besiege the waters in Honolulu, Hawaii. The aliens make a force field in the water in Hawaii and trap the three battleships that exercise in the Rim of The Pacific Exercise 2012 (RIMPAC 2012). It causes the battleships cannot come out from the force field and the outer helpful effort cannot go into the force field. The water in Hawaii is the object of besiegement. In this war, there is humankind as the victims. They are killed and fall into the fear of the coming death caused by the alien's invasion.

There are metaphorical symbols that lie in the manifestations of horror in horror of Armageddon films. The metaphorical symbols are related to the everyday fears or social anxiety in those times. In *The Birds*, the birds are not simply the animals that attack humans. They work as the metaphor for the human condition. As Derry explained, the final bird attack in *The Birds* transcends itself; these birds are not merely birds, they are metaphor for existential struggle and horror (58). *Battleship* also has the metaphorical contents within it. The Aliens as the metaphor of object of proliferation are not merely aliens. They are the symbols of the existential of social anxiety.

*Battleship* was directed by Peter Berg. This is an American navy military war film. The film stars Taylor Kitsch as Alex Hooper, the talented but indiscipline slacker man who is forced by his older brother to join in the U.S. Navy. This film tells about the war between U.S. Navy and alien fleet. The aliens arrive to the earth in response to the NASA signal. In 2005, the American scientists discover a planet which they call Planet-G. This planet is believed to have a climate nearly identical to earth and habitable for human. In 2006, NASA launches The Beacon Project located in Oahu, Hawaii, in order to get feedback and access to exploit Planet-G. This deep space communication project transmits a powerful signal from a communication array. Five alien's spacecrafts come in the direction to Hawaii. The aliens are the occupants of Planet-G. One of the spacecrafts which function as their communication device collides with a satellite and crashes in Hong Kong while the four others land in water near Hawaii, the

place where the RIMPAC 2012, the world's largest international maritime exercise, is held.

Alex Hooper drives up to the alien's mother ship. The alien's mother ship reacts and creates a force field that traps the three warships, the USS Sampson, USS John Paul Jones, and JDS Myoko. The aliens attack only the things that are considered to endanger them. The alien's spacecraft sends weapons to the island that destroy the military equipment and infrastructure but leaves the ordinary people/noncombatants alive. They also destroy the three warships they trapped in force field. Some of alien foot-soldiers land on Oahu in order to use the NASA array. In this case, Samantha, Alex's girlfriend thinks that the aliens plan to use the NASA array to signal their home planet to invade earth. In other words, a larger invasion may occur. Sam tries to get a communication device to contact Alex and warns about the threat.

Alex Hooper and the surviving crew of the battle return to harbor and plan to reactive the USS Missouri, the old USA battleship that had been converted into a museum. They come back to the force field to battle the aliens. In the end, Missouri has the last shell. Alex decides to use it to destroy the communication array on the island than destroying the last alien's spacecraft. The shattered array makes the war end. The alien's spacecraft is crumble immediately.

In this film, Berg used the real Missouri with the retired U.S. Navy veterans. Berg, since his childhood, has been getting along with the naval world. He studied naval from his father who is a naval historian. He spent a lot of time on ships and naval museums to listen his father telling story about U.S. Navy and

their grandeur at the World War II. In his high school, Berg wrote his thesis about the Battle of Midway, one of the most important U.S. naval battles of World War II. He wanted to make a film about John Paul Jones, the founder of the U.S. Navy, before finally had a deal with Hasbro, the combat board game company that produces “Battleship” board game. He admits that he loves naval world, as he stated in an interview, “I am a huge fan of the navy, I am studying naval battles forever” (Carnevale). Did not stop in *Battleship*, he produced another naval film in 2013 titled *Lone Survivor*, the fact-based story about a navy SEAL team who is sent to Afghanistan.

This film was released in 2012. In the film, the aliens’ attack in Hawaii happens when USA is under the period of president Barack Obama. It is shown by the real image of President Obama who is giving his statement about that incident via television’s screen. In the post 9/11 event, horror of Armageddon films was still influenced by the event of 9/11 and the War in Iraq. According to Derry,

Other recent films in Armageddon subgenre, if not dealing directly with the events of 9/11, have been nevertheless influenced by the geo-political aftermath of these events. In fact, the conflation of 9/11 issues with the War in Iraq resulted in an interest in all things apocalyptic.....other films influenced by the geo-political aftermath of 9/11 were decidedly fictional, particularly those films which show death and the dead proliferating as the world is attacked by zombies.....or by aliens from other planets.... (261-162).

For example, horror of Armageddon films which is directly influenced by 9/11 tragedy are *United 93*, a film that takes 9/11 as its story, and *The Path to 9/11*, a film that reveals the disturbing behind the scene realities leading up to the 2001 terrorist attack to America. On the other hand, there are many horrors of

Armageddon films that are influenced by the geo-political aftermath of 9/11 tragedy, for instance *War of the World* (2005) and *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). *War of the World*, a film starring Tom Cruise, tells about the earth is attacked by Martians. They attack the earth using the “tripods” as their weapon. These tripods uproot streets, buildings and bridges. It also disintegrates people into odd pieces that explode and dissolve into the air. In his analysis of this film, Derry said that the “tripods” are the alien’s weaponized vehicle. The aliens have waited patiently till the best moment to attack (270). The aliens are the metaphorical symbol of the terrorists who have waited patiently to attack United States. Likewise, *Shaun of the Dead* also influenced by the geo-political aftermath of 9/11 tragedy and War in Iraq. In this film, Shaun, the character in the film, gets hundreds of dead to leave his friends alone by standing above the zombies and appealing to them to follow him. Derry concluded this scene as a political metaphor: Tony Blair and George W. Bush leading their countries of unthinking zombies in the “War of Terror” or War in Iraq (266).

Although *Battleship* did not succeed in box office, *Battleship* is interesting to be analyzed since it has some nominations and awards, for example as the best special effects on Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films (USA) (2013), the best animated effects in a live action production on Annie Awards (2013), the outstanding visual effects and simulation animation in a live action feature motion picture on Visual Effects Society Awards (2013) and won on BMI Film & TV Awards (2013) and Teen Choice Awards (2012).

The writer uses this film as the object of her research because it has criteria that relates to the topic of the research. It has some elements of horror of Armageddon. This film also worth to be analyzed since this film is one of the films that are categorized as the science-fiction genre by the viewer but beneath it all this film can be categorized as horror of Armageddon subgenre. By analyzing *Battleship*, the readers are expected to have the broader insight in reading the genre of the other Armageddon films. Besides that, the writer chose *Battleship* as the text of the study since it presents the real image of President Barack Obama while the other films such as *Transformer: Dark of The Moon*, etc., use an actor who very much like President Obama. This presence of the real image of President Obama strengthens the exploitation of social anxiety or everyday fear of the audience because this real image of President Obama blurs the line between what is real and what is not real.

The studies of subgenre of horror of Armageddon are still counted in a small number. Even there is no study about horror of Armageddon in English Department, Universitas Airlangga. It makes this topic worth to be explored and applied in this study. Moreover, horror of Armageddon is about widespread destruction such as monster, invading aliens, pandemic infections, atomic bombs, terrorisms, nuclear disasters or even environmental degradations. The horror of Armageddon films always has connection with these issues in the real world because these films are influenced by the cultural and political events that happen in those places and times. It makes this topic interesting to be studied. Through



studying the subgenre of horror of Armageddon, the reader will understand the issues within *Battleship*.

Horror of Armageddon is the new subgenre that continues the linear development of the horror film from the science-fiction horror of the fifties (Derry 55). Not all of the sci-fi films can be included as the Armageddon subgenre. Sci-fi films have the characteristics such as scientific, visionary, imaginative, and usually visualized through fanciful, imaginative setting, advanced technology gadgets such as robots and spacecrafts, scientific developments. This genre also features time travels or fantastic journeys, set either on earth, outer space or into the future times (Dirks). There are many sci-fi films that become hybrid or blurred since they shared characteristics with other genres or subgenres, for instance horror of Armageddon genre. In other words, not all the films which have the elements of science-fiction genre can be included in Armageddon subgenre. For that, in her study, the writer analyzes the elements of horror of Armageddon in *Battleship* in order to identify whether this sci-fi film can be categorized as horror of Armageddon or not. The writer argues that *Battleship* is one of horror of Armageddon films because it has major elements of this subgenre.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

From the issue occurred in the film and the topic that has been explained before, the writers composes the statement of the problem, that is:

1. How is *Battleship* categorized as a horror of Armageddon film?

### **1.3 Objective of The Study**

In this thesis there is objective that the writer wishes to be accomplished. The objective of the study is going to answer the arising question. Moreover, this study is to answer the statement of problem, that is:

1. To reveal how *Battleship* is categorized as a horror of Armageddon film.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Concerning the objective of the study, there are some points of significance of the study. Firstly, horror of Armageddon film is significant to be analyzed since the film reflects social anxieties and everyday fears of society that happens in those times. Through this study, the readers will be easier to understand the issues of the anxieties. The study is also expected to contribute to a broader point of view for the students who take literature and cultural studies as their major in analyzing their work of horror genre and a valuable insight for students interested in the horror films, especially horror of Armageddon films. The study of this Armageddon subgenre is quite new and the study of this new horror subgenre still in a small number, especially in literature studies of Universitas Airlangga.

### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

There are several terms used in this study which may not be familiar and commonly used in our daily life. So, the section to define the key terms is needed

to help the reader in understanding the terms. The definitions of key terms are taken from credible sources.

*Alien* : As an adjective, it is defined as unfamiliar, unacceptable or repugnant, foreign and being of other worlds. As a noun, it is defined as foreign-born resident who is not naturalized or being from another world (Tate 95 ).

*Communication array* : The array that belong to NASA's Beacon Project. It functions to transmit the communication signal to the aliens' homeland named Planet-G (Battleship).

*Everyday fears* : The human's fears such as fear of atomic and nuclear bomb and terrorist which are played upon the horror film and become the hallmark of the contemporary horror of Armageddon films (Derry 235).

*Social anxiety* : The anxiety of the audience that is exploited by the horror of Armageddon films (Derry 235)

*Unthinkable weapon* : The aliens' advanced technology weapon that is used to destroy Hawaii and able to destruct American and Japanese battleships (Battleship).