

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Racial discourse in movies is usually associated with the representation of non-white characters in the film through African – American or Black, Latin, Asian actor or actress. This can be seen in movies such as *Rush Hour Trilogy*, *Bad Boys 1 & 2*, *Black Panther*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse* and many more. There was a time when Hollywood film industry was invaded by films which focus on black culture, in which these films were also played and even directed by black people. This phenomenon is commonly known as Blaxploitation. Manthia Diawara, in his book entitled *Black America Cinema*, stated that the Early Black Cinema is a term that alludes to films made, directed, and starred by black filmmakers, showing the aesthetic culture and targets the black audiences (Diawara 1993). Similar to Diawara statement, Blaxploitation according to Guerrero is the production of the 60s Hollywood movies that focused on black narratives, featured black people playing out different action/adventures in the ghetto, and were released generally in 1969 until 1974 (Guerrero 1993).

As the time goes by, due to the economic and social conditions, the white community sees this as an opportunity. Tommy L. Lott in his concept of *A No-Theory Theory of Contemporary Black Cinema* argued that in the second era of black cinema, there was a major shift caused by white intervention which influenced the contemporary black cinema to express a more negative stereotype of

blacks as opposed to the aesthetic culture in the early period. Since he could not simply describe the meaning of Black Cinema, his previous statement led him to compose the new kind of Blaxploitation genre referred as the *Third Cinema* (Lott 1995). *Third Cinema Blaxploitation* refers to the films that not only contain both black aesthetic culture but also well-packaged black negative stereotypes to fulfil the satisfaction both of blacks and whites, but additionally contained such political introduction inside hegemonic structures of post colonialism (Lott 1995). Lott's *Third Cinema* concept of Blaxploitation is well represented in *The Hitman's Bodyguard*, this movie delivered the racial discourse in a subtle and good way, which will be further discussed in this study.

*The Hitman's Bodyguard* (2017) is a film directed by Patrick Hughes and produced by Millennium Films cooperated with Cristal Pictures. This movie was released worldwide on 18 August 2017 (IMDB). According to Rotten Tomatoes, this movie gained about 67% of audience score about with the average rating of 3.7/5 from the total 26,592 audience score, and gained 42% tomatometer from 209 professional reviewer (Rotten Tomatoes). However as indicated by IMDB, this movie received 7 nominations and won 1 award, in which it gained the average rating about 6.9 from the total of 143,884 user ratings (IMDB). *The Hitman's Bodyguard* tells the story about Michael Bryce (Ryan Reynolds) as a bodyguard who pursues to restore his good name as AAA (re: triple-A), where he must protect and escort Darius Kincaid (Samuel L. Jackson), a hitman who also happens to be an international fugitive to testify in The Hague in order to release his wife from

jail. The point where both of main characters must do something first in order to achieve their respective goals leads to the racism issues in this movie.

This film is interesting to discuss due to the well-packaged racial discourse as it succeeded to unconsciously deliver the issue to the audience through the cinematography, such as the dialogue and the scenes. The identity of the director, Patrick Hughes, as a white man, is also interesting to be discussed because he used the 'blackness' of the main character to attract the audiences in purpose to gain high income from it. *The Hitman's Bodyguard* gained approximately \$176 million dollars at the world-wide gross, while it was estimated only cost about \$30 million dollars for its production budget (IMDB).

There are many studies that previously discussed movies with racism issues. One of them was conducted by a former student of Faculty of Humanities, Dianita Rachmawati, in her thesis entitled '*The Representation of Blackness in Megamind Character of Tom McGrath's Megamind*'. She examined that the main character, Megamind, who came from other planet, represents blackness. Rachmawati proposed that Megamind's character stereotype, social status, and psychology are the same as those of black people. She argued that a racial issue can be found in any media, especially animated movie that targeting the children audiences to unconsciously build social perspective's towards the black community. Another study that discussed the racism in movie was conducted by Vinita Navyona Kurnia Arifin, who is also a former student of the Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Airlangga, entitled '*The Construction of Racial Issue in 'Get Out' (2017) Movie*'. She emphasized that racial issues can still be seen in this movie because the whites

still consider the blacks as inferior, which can be controlled by the whites. She focussed on how the main character is represented in the movie, as seen from their behaviour which reflects the negative stereotype of black negative people. The studies that have been mentioned contain some similarities with this thesis since the main is the negative stereotypes of the black community as a racial issue. The difference between this study and what have been conducted previously lies on the discussion of Blaxploitation.

This study also using *Narrative Structure* theory by A. J. Greimas where this theory have a role to reveals the racism in *The Hitman's Bodyguard* movie. This theory divided the relations between actants that have function in sequences and find the narrative text pattern that makes the story works. From those narrative text pattern, the writer can determine the main theme in the movie that led into any racial discourse. The main focus of this study is analysing the portrayal of race in *The Hitman's Bodyguard* movie and see if the Third Cinema Blaxploitation concept was applied in this movie.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Due to the issue that discussed in the background above, the writer of this study would like to propose the statement problem:

- How is the portrayal of race represented in *The Hitman's Bodyguard* movie?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the research question above, the writer determines the objective of the study is:

- To reveal how the portrayal of race represented in *The Hitman's Bodyguard* movie.

#### 1.4 Significance of Study

Since this study examines racist discourse in the movie, the significance of this study is to reduce racism around the world. Hopefully this study could also give its reader the understanding on the issue of racism and how the concept of racism spread out to society under the expectations people can prevent the racism in this world, especially through media such as movie.

The writer also expected that this study may contribute to the education world by enriching the knowledge of its reader on cultural studies and broadening the insights of students, especially those of the English Department of Universitas Airlangga, who studies similar research topics.

#### 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

There are several key terms which are rarely used in everyday vocabulary that mentioned in this study. In this sub-chapter, the writer gives the definitions of those key terms:

**Black Stereotype** : An act of generalization toward a social of group or a member of that social group attitudes, belief and culture (Reisigl and Wodak 2015).

**Blaxploitation** : The production of the 60's or so Hollywood movies that focused on black narratives, featured black

people playing out different action/adventures in the ghetto, and were released generally in 1969 until 1974 (Guerrero 1993).

**Narrative Structure** : Narrative structure base from Greimas assumption that the narrative text consisted of structural dyadic analogies in Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory together with Vladimir Propp's narrative theory (Karnanta 2015).

**Racism** : Refers to the belief that on the basis of the differences, there are certain genetic and racial groups who innately become a powerful or superior to other racial groups in attitudes, intelligence, and temperament (Charles A. Gallagher 2014).

**Third Cinema Blaxploitation** : The merger of two previous Blaxploitation eras that contains hidden ideology, targeting the film to be accepted by both black and white audiences. (Lott 1995).