

**INJUSTICE IN RIDLEY SCOTT'S *GLADIATOR* MOVIE:
A MARXIST APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

As human beings, people have many problems in their lives. The problems are round up about education, welfare, gender, social relation and stratification. In this paper, the researcher only focuses on social relation especially injustice. Injustice means an act that inflicts undeserved hurt. Injustice applies to any act that involves unfairness to another or violation of one's rights (the injustices suffered by the lower classes). It is the fact that happens in the society that becomes basic reason of the researcher to create a work of art; in this case, the researcher focuses on the fact that happens in the society described in *Gladiator* movie.

Gladiator is a 2000 epic film directed by Ridley Scott, starring Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Connie Nielsen, Oliver Reed, Djimon Hounsou, Derek Jacobi, and Richard Harris. Crowe portrays General Maximus Decimus Meridius, favorite of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius who is betrayed and murdered by his ambitious son, Commodus (Phoenix). Captured and enslaved along the outer fringes of the Roman empire, Maximus rises through the ranks of the gladiatorial arena to avenge the murder of his family and his Emperor.

Released in the United States on May 5, 2000, it was a box office success, receiving generally good reviews, and was credited with briefly reviving the historical epic. The film won five [Academy Awards](#) in the 73rd

Academy Awards ceremony, including Best Picture and Best Actor (Russell Crowe).

Scott grew up in an Army family, meaning that for most of his early life his father - an officer in the Royal Engineers - was absent. Ridley's older brother, Frank, joined the Merchant Navy when he was still young and the pair had little contact. During this time the family moved around, living in (amongst other areas) Cumbria, Wales and Germany. After the Second World War the Scott family moved back to their native north-east England, eventually settling in Teesside (whose industrial landscape would later inspire similar scenes in *Blade Runner*). He enjoyed watching films. Among Scott's favourites were (and remain) *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Citizen Kane* and *Seven Samurai*. Scott studied in Teesside from 1954 to 1958, at Grangefield Grammar School, Stockton and later in West Hartlepool College of Art, graduating with a Diploma in Design. He progressed to an M.A. in graphic design at London's Royal College of Art from 1960 to 1962.

At the RCA he contributed to the college magazine, 'ARK' and helped to establish its film department. For his final show he made a black and white short film, 'Boy and Bicycle', starring his younger brother, Tony Scott, and his father. The film's main visual elements would become features of Scott's later work; it was issued on the 'Extras' section of 'The Duellists' DVD. After graduation in 1963 he secured a job as a trainee set designer with the BBC, leading to work on the popular television police series 'Z-Cars' and the science fiction series 'Out of the Unknown'. Scott was an admirer of Stanley Kubrick

early in his development as a director. For his entry for the BBC traineeship Scott remade 'Paths of Glory' as a short film.

He was assigned to design the second *Doctor Who* serial, *The Daleks*, which would have entailed realising the famous alien creatures. However, shortly before he was due to start work a schedule conflict meant that he was replaced on the serial by Raymond Cusick. At the BBC, Scott was placed into a director training programme and, before he left the corporation, had directed episodes of *Z-Cars*, its spin-off, *Softly, Softly*, and adventure series *Adam Adamant Lives!*.

Five members of the Scott family are directors, all working for Ridley Scott Associates (RSA). Brother Tony has been a successful film director for more than two decades; sons, Jake and Luke are both acclaimed commercials directors as is his daughter, Jordan. Jake and Jordan both work from Los Angeles and Luke is based in London.

Roman General Maximus Decimus Meridius leads the Roman Army to victory against Germanic barbarians in the year A.D. 180, ending a prolonged war, and earning the esteem of elderly Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Maximus Decimus Meridius is a fictional character partly inspired by Marcus Nonius Macrinus, Narcissus, Spartacus, Cincinnatus, and Maximus of Hispania. As the battle ends, a son and daughter of the Emperor arrive, Commodus and Lucilla.

Although the dying Aurelius has a male heir, Commodus, he decides to appoint temporary leadership to the morally-upstanding Maximus, with a

desire to eventually return power to the Roman Senate, effectively reviving the Republic. Aurelius informs Maximus and offers him time to consider before informing Commodus, who, in a bout of jealousy, murders his father. Declaring himself the emperor, Commodus asks Maximus for his loyalty, which Maximus, realizing Commodus' involvement in the Emperor's death, refuses. Commodus orders Maximus' execution and dispatches Praetorian Guards to murder his wife and son. Maximus narrowly escapes his execution, but is injured in the process. He races home only to discover his family's charred and crucified bodies in the smoldering ruins of his villa in Hispania. After burying his wife and son, a grieving Maximus succumbs to exhaustion and blood loss as a result of his injuries and collapses on their graves.

Slave traders find Maximus and take him to Zucchabar, a rugged province in North Africa, where he is purchased by Proximo, the head of a local gladiator school (and a freed gladiator himself). Distraught and nihilistic over the death of his family and betrayal by his empire, Maximus initially refuses to fight, but as he defends himself in the arena his formidable combat skills lead to a rise in popularity with the audience. As he trains and fights further, Maximus befriends Hagen, a Germanic barbarian, and Juba, a Numidian hunter, the latter becoming a close friend and confidant to the grieving Maximus, the two speaking frequently of the afterlife and Maximus' eventual reunification with his family.

In Rome, Commodus reopens the gladiatorial games to pay tribute to his father and gain the goodwill of the people, and Proximo's company of

gladiators are hired to participate. During a reenactment of the Battle of Zama from the Second Punic War, Maximus leads Proximo's gladiators, in the guise of Hannibal's forces, to a decisive victory against a more powerful force. This happens much to the amazement of the crowd, who expected a historically accurate depiction of Rome's triumph over Carthage. Commodus descends into the arena to meet the victors and instructs "The Spaniard" to remove his helmet and tell him his name. An angry Maximus reluctantly shows his face and says, "My name is Maximus Decimus Meridius, Commander of the Armies in the North, General of the Felix Legions, Loyal Servant to the true Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Father to a murdered son, Husband to a murdered wife; and I will have my vengeance, in this life or the next." The Emperor, unable to kill Maximus because of the crowd's roaring approval for him, sulks out of the arena. As the games continue, Commodus pits Maximus against Tigris of Gaul, Rome's only undefeated gladiator, in an arena surrounded by chained tigers with handlers instructed to target Maximus. Following an intense battle, Maximus narrowly defeats Tigris and awaits Commodus' decision to kill or spare Tigris. As the audience urges for death, Commodus signals to Maximus to kill Tigris. However, Maximus spares Tigris, deliberately insulting the Emperor. Instead of booing him, the crowd cheers Maximus, bestowing him the title "Merciful". His bitter enemy now known as "Maximus the Merciful", Commodus becomes more frustrated at his inability to kill Maximus, let alone stop his ascending popularity while his own shrinks.

Following the fight, Maximus meets his former servant Cicero, who reveals that Maximus's army remains loyal to him. Maximus forms a plot with Lucilla, Commodus' sister, and Senator Gracchus to reunite Maximus with his army and overthrow Commodus. Suspecting his sister's betrayal, Commodus threatens her young son and forces her to reveal the plot. Praetorian guards immediately storm Proximo's gladiator barracks, battling the gladiators while Maximus escapes. Hagen and Proximo are killed in the siege while Juba and the survivors are imprisoned. Maximus escapes to the city walls only to witness Cicero's death and be ambushed by a legion of Praetorian guards.

Concluding that legends born in the Colosseum must die there, Commodus challenges Maximus to a duel in front of a roaring audience. Acknowledging that Maximus' skill exceeds his own, Commodus deliberately stabs Maximus with a stiletto, puncturing his lung, and has the wound concealed beneath the gladiator's armor. In the arena, the two exchange blows before Maximus rips the sword from Commodus's hands. Commodus requests a sword from his guards, but Quintus, still having latent loyalty and respect for Maximus, order the men to sheath their swords. Maximus drops his own sword, but Commodus pulls a hidden stiletto and renews his attack. Maximus then beats Commodus into submission and kills him with his own stiletto, plunging it into his neck. As Commodus collapses in the now-silent Colosseum, a dying Maximus begins seeing his wife and son in the afterlife. He reaches for them, but is pulled back to reality by the Praetorian prefect Quintus, who asks for instructions. Maximus orders the release of Proximo's

gladiators and Senator Gracchus, whom he reinstates and instructs to return Rome to a Senate-based government. Maximus collapses and Lucilla rushes to his aid. After being reassured that her son is safe and Commodus is dead, Maximus dies and wanders into the afterlife to his family in the distance. Senator Gracchus, Quintus, and Proximo's gladiators carry his body out of the Colosseum. That night, a newly freed Juba buries Maximus' two small statues of his wife and son in the Colosseum, and says that he too will eventually join them, but not yet.

In this movie, director leaves theme about injustice faced by Maximus. Maximus gives his ears to get freedom. Maximus is one of the General who is very respected by his opponents and plays important role to bring Roman team to reach victory in every encounter. Because his greatness, he becomes Emperor Marcus Aurelius loved.

In the Colosseum Maximus is dead. He sacrifices his soul to get independence of the slaves. He dies as a real statesman that more prioritizes the importance of his society than his private bussinese. He is very great meritorious warrior and will always be respected by Roman society.

The researcher takes *Gladiator* movie as data source because this movie is interesting to be studied in some reasons. The first, the movie has a good story, it is about injustice faced by Maximus. Even he is a big General before, then becoming a slave or gladiator later because of he gets injustice treatment by Commodus, he still works hard to get the justice.

The second reason is about helping people. Maximus sacrifices his life to get independence of Roman society. Even his family become victims of his effort to get the justice of his society.

The third reason, this movie has a good genre that relates to fantasy world, adventure, nature, and also action. There are not only one theme of this movie, many themes in this movie; they are hope, love, power, and reputation. Good character is often shown when the character in the story has to live in Africa to becoming slave or gladiator. Then, he backs to Rome to reach his dream, it is the justice of Roman society.

The fourth reason, this movie is great. There are feeling patriotism and nationalism to get justice. Especial the major character that always works hard to get equation degree. Everybody has same rights and obligations.

Here, the reseacher will use Marxist theory to analyze the movie, especially the injustice that by Maximus. This theory is used because in this movie there are a lot of injustice. The people always become victim of the power, they cannot get the right to live to independence without grinded. The writer would like to analyse injustice that is faced by Maximus.

B. Literature Review

Actually, the researcher is not the first person who analyzes about the movie of *Gladiator* by Ridley Scott. However, it does not mean that the researcher only the plagiarism the previous studies. To prove the originality of the research, the researcher presents the previous studies.

The first research is *Coping Behavior of Maximus in Ridley Scott's Gladiator Movie* by Erwan Sumiyanto (2008) student of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. He employed an Individual Psychological approach. He concerns with character of Maximus to be analyzed in how he copes with the life problem is faced.

The second research is conducted by Amy Biancolli (2006), the title is *Gladiator' Rules New Ridley Scott Epic A Truly Awesome Experience*. She used psychoanalytic approach in her research. She concerns in Maximus emotion, which is very amazing. Although his life is threatened and his soul is depressed and so down because of the death of his family, Maximus raises up and keeps struggle for the society of Romawi.

Based on the studies above, the researcher has different focus on the research, although the researcher concerns the same object about *Gladiator*. In this research, the researcher emphasizes Maximus that used Marxist Approach face injustice. The researcher is trying to complete or extend the previous research about *Gladiator*. There is no research about *Injustice in Ridley Scott's Gladiator Movie: a Marxist Approach* before this research. The researcher is the only person who is conducting it. Therefore, the researcher proves the originality of the researcher's current study.

C. Problem Statement

Based on the background of choosing the subject above, the problem is "How injustice faced by Maximus reflected in this movie?"

D. Objective of the Study

The objective of the research is to expose injustice faced by Maximus based on the Marxist approach by Karl Marx.

E. Benefit of the Study

The benefits expected from this research are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

To give some contributions to the larger body of knowledge particularly studies in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*.

2. Practical Benefit

To give deeper understandings in literary field as the reference to the other researcher, and enriches the literary study, particularly among the students especially on Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

F. Research Method

1. Types of the Study

These types of research are qualitative, in which the researcher does not need statistic to collect, to analyze, and to interpret data.

2. Types of the Data and the Data Source

In this research, the writer takes two kinds of data:

a. Primary Data

Primary data is the main data obtained from all the words, dialogues, phrases, and sentences occurring in the movie related to the topic.

b. Secondary Data

Secondary data are the supporting data taken from literary books, criticism, and some articles related to the movie.

3. Object of the Study

The object of the research is the movie of Ridley Scott *Gladiator* . Released in the United States on May 5, 2000.

4. Method of the Data Collection

In this research, the researcher uses library research. The data are collected from the books related to the topic. The first step is watching the movie *Gladiator* many times to identify the problem and find the data. Then it is continued by reading the relevant theory with the subject, finally is collecting the supported data.

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique of data analysis is descriptive in which the researcher uses Marxist approach especially Marx's theory and draws a conclusion.

G. Research Organization

This research consists of five chapters. *Chapter I* is Introduction, which consists of background, literary review, research problem, research objective, research limitation, research benefit, research methodology, and the last is research organization. *Chapter II* comprises of the Underlying Theory, which presents notion of Marxist, the structure of personality, and theoretical application. *Chapter III* is the social background of United States society in early 21 century that consists of Social Aspects,

Economic Aspect, Political Aspect, Science and Technology Aspect, Cultural Aspect, and Religious Aspect. *Chapter IV* is Structural Analysis of the movie, which is involves the structural elements of character and characterization, setting, point of view, plot, style, theme and discussion. *Chapter V* constitutes Marxist analysis of the personality. The last is *Chapter VI, which* contains conclusion and suggestion.