

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The Hurt Locker is the best American feature film yet made about the war in Iraq. *The Hurt Locker* is a near-perfect movie about men in war, men at work. Through sturdy imagery and violent action, it says that even Hell needs heroes. The movie is a viscerally exciting, adrenaline-soaked tour the force of suspense and surprise, full of explosions and hectic scenes of combat.

The Hurt Locker is based on accounts of Mark Boal, a freelance journalist who was embedded with an American bomb squad in the war in Iraq for two weeks in 2004. It stars Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie and Brian Geraghy as members of the EOD unit and follows their tour of duty contend with diffusing bombs, the threat of insurgency, and the tension that develops among them. The film was shot in Jordan within miles of the Iraqi border, because Bigelow wanted to bring greater authenticity to the film.

Director Kathryn Bigelow was familiar with Boal's work before his experiences, having turned one of his *Playboy* articles into the short-lived television series *The Inside* in 2002. When Boal was embedded with the squad, he went with the members 10 to 15 times a day to watch their tasks, keeping in touch with Bigelow via email about his experiences. Boal combined his experiences into a fictional retelling of real events. He said of

the film's goal, The idea is that it's the first movie about the Iraq War that purports to show the experience of the soldiers.

While working on the script with Boal in 2005, Bigelow began to do some preliminary, rough storyboards to get an idea of the specific geography she would be working with because bomb disarmament protocol requires a containment area. She wanted to make the film as authentic as possible and put the audience into the Humvee, into a boots-on-the-ground experience.

The story depicts how the fictional character Sergeant First Class William James, a battle-tested veteran, arrives as a new team leader in Bravo company of a U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). In the summer of 2004, Sergeant J.T. Sanborn and Specialist Owen Eldridge of Bravo Company are at the volatile center of the war, part of a small counterforce specifically trained to handle the homemade bombs, or Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), that account for more than half of American hostile deaths and have killed thousands of Iraqis. A high-pressure, high-stakes assignment, the job leaves no room for mistakes, as they learn when they lose their team leader on a mission.

When Staff Sergeant William James takes over the team, Sanborn and Eldridge are shocked by what seems like his reckless disregard for military protocol and basic safety measures. And yet, in the fog of war, appearances are never reliable for long. Is James really a swaggering cowboy who lives for peak experiences and the moments when the margin of error is

zero or is he a consummate professional who has honed his esoteric craft to high-wire precision? As the fiery chaos of Baghdad swirls around them, the men struggle to understand and contain their new leader long enough for them to make it home. They have only 38 days left in their tour of Iraq, but with each new mission comes another deadly encounter, and as James blurs the line between bravery and bravado, it seems only a matter of time before disaster will strike.

The Hurt Locker premiered at the Venice Film Festival in Italy during 2008. After being shown at the Toronto International Film Festival, it was picked up for distribution in the United States by *Summit Entertainment*. The film was released in the United States on June 26, 2009 but received a more widespread theatrical release on July 24, 2009. Because the 2008 film was not originally released in the U.S. until 2009. Starting with its initial screening at the 2008 Venice International Film Festival, *The Hurt Locker* has earned many awards and honors. It has also earned its place on more Top 10 lists than any other film of 2009. It was nominated in nine categories at the 82nd Academy Awards and won in six: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Sound Editing, Best Sound Mixing, and Best Film Editing. It lost the award for Best Actor to *Crazy Heart*, Best Original Score to *Up*, and Best Cinematography to *Avatar*. This makes *The Hurt Locker* the lowest-grossing film to win Best Picture and Bigelow the first woman to win an Oscar for best director.

The Hurt Locker was also nominated for three Golden Globe awards. Kathryn Bigelow was awarded the 2009 Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Achievement in Feature Film for the film, the first time a female director has ever won. The film won six awards at the BAFTAs held on February 21, 2010, including Best Film and Best Director for Bigelow. The film swept most critics groups awards for best director and best picture including Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Boston, and Las Vegas film critics associations. *The Hurt Locker* also became only the fourth film to win all three major U.S. critics group prizes (NY, LA and NSFC) joining *Goodfellas*, *Schindler's List* and *L.A. Confidential*.

The film was criticized by some Iraq veterans and embedded reporters for inaccurately portraying wartime conditions. Writing for *The Huffington Post*, Iraq veteran Kate Hoit said that *The Hurt Locker* is "Hollywood's version of the Iraq war and of the soldiers who fight it, and their version is inaccurate". She described the film as being more accurate than other recently released war films, but expressed concerns that numerous errors in the portrayal of military conditions would prevent service members from enjoying the film.

The Hurt Locker is an interesting movie: there are four aspects that make this movie really interesting. The first is *The Hurt Locker* has the uncommon story: This is an historical film about historical events. That history is about an American bomb squad in the war in Iraq for two weeks in 2004. action thriller, a vivid evocation of urban warfare in Iraq, a penetrating

study of heroism and a showcase for austere technique, and a trio of brilliant performances. Kathryn Bigelow practicing a kind of hyperbolic realism, distills the psychological essence and moral complications of modern warfare into a series of brilliant movie. The transformation of event that make the hurt locker be very success in building the character of academy award.

The second aspect is the visualization and the cast of the movie. For the film, Bigelow sought to immerse audiences "into something that was raw, immediate and visceral". The cast of this film also have a valuable part. Jeremy Renner as Sergeant First Class William James, the leader of the EOD squad. He is an Army Ranger, the most experienced of the squad, having served in the War in Afghanistan, and having defused over 873 explosives. James is reckless, and this causes tension between him and his team. Renner's performance as James earned him a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actor. Mackie plays Sergeant J.T. Sanborn and describes his experience filming in Jordan in the summer. Brian Geraghty as Specialist Owen Eldridge, the youngest member of the EOD squad. Outwardly tough, he suffers mental anguish and believes that he is responsible for the death. The film focuses on three men whose contrasting temperaments knit this episodic exploration of peril and bravery into a coherent and satisfying story.

The third is the passion for humanity that is reflected in this movie. *The Hurt Locker* is a near perfect movie about men in war, men at work. Through sturdy imagery and violent action, it says that even hell needs heroes. What would possess him with all of his power, to risk his own life to save the

lives of thousands people in Iraq. It shows to the audience that even in the most hopeless of circumstances, humanity can prevail and the thinking and motivation behind the James`s actions. And that is shown in the film, the hurt locker is one of the most effective recruiting vehicles for the U.S. Army that the writer has ever seen.

The last is the bravery of a military bomb squad which is reflected in *The Hurt Locker* is one of appealing aspects that is interesting to be studied. The movie is a viscerally exciting, adrenaline-soaked tour de force of suspense and surprise, full of explosions and hectic scenes of combat, but it blows a hole in the condescending assumption that such effects are just empty spectacle or mindless noise. Kathryn Bigelow, the director, wants the audience to underline that the high bravery and high anxiety that happened in Iraq war in 2004. In this way the full impact to the society especially in social aspect.

Based on the previous reasons the writer will observe the bravery of a military bomb squad in *The Hurt Locker* movie by using sociological theory. So the writer constructs the title **THE BRAVERY OF MILITARY BOMB SQUAD IN KATHRYN BIGELOW `S THE HURT LOCKER MOVIE (2009): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.**

B. Literature Review

The *Hurt Locker* is interesting to be analyzed. As long as the researcher knows, there is no previous research which has been conducted the movie *The Hurt Locker*. Based on the researcher's observation, at least in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Sebelas Maret University and Gajah Mada University.

C. Problem Statement

The problem statement of this study is how the bravery of military bomb squad are reflected in Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* viewed from sociological perspective.

D. Limitation of Study

The study is limited to the major character of *The Hurt Locker* movie based on sociological approach.

E. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study can be formulated as follows :

1. To describe *The Hurt Locker* based on its structural elements.
2. To describe the bravery of military bomb squad in Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* based on sociological approach.

F. Benefit of the Study

The result of this research is expected to give some benefits as follows :

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to give a contribution to the knowledge about literary study especially sociological perspective toward the literary work.

2. Practical Benefit

This study is expected to give benefit to the writer in comprehending Kathryn Bigelow`s *The Hurt Locker* from sociological approach.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the Study

This research belongs to descriptive research because it does not need a statistic to explore the facts.

2. Type of the Data and the Data Source

This research consists of two data sources :

a. Primary Data Source

The primary data sources is *The Hurt Locker* written by Mark Boal and directed by Kathryn Bigelow.

b. Secondary Data Source

The secondary data source contains information from internet and other books that support the analysis.

3. The Data Collection

The technique of collecting data is observation. The technique is as follow :

- a. Watching the film and reading the script carefully and repeatedly in order to get comprehension of its structure element.

- b. Taking notes of the important data for analysis.
- c. Classifying the data into several parts based on its category of element of literary study.
- d. Reading related reference and understanding the data.

4. The Data Analysis

Data analyzing technique in this study is descriptive analysis. The writer tries to describe the structural elements of the drama and sociology of literature. The collected data will be interpreted and analyzed in detail through sociology of literature. In this case by showing the bravery of military bomb squad in Kathryn Bigelow`s by sociological Research approach.

H. Paper Organization

This research paper consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 is Introduction, which explains the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research Method, and paper organization. Chapter II is dealing with the underlying theory, it consists of sociology of literature, types of sociology of literature, structural element the movie and theoretical application. Chapter III contains the social historical background of American society in late twenty one century. Chapter IV is structural analysis; the writer wants to explain the structural element of the movie and discussion. Chapter V is sociological analysis of the movie. Finally, in chapter VI the writer concludes her paper into conclusion and suggestion.