

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the establishment of research background, statement of problems, research objectives, research significances, previous studies, and the definition of literary terms.

1.1 Research Background

This research is aimed at pursuing the construction of adventure formula through the film element. As regards that, the *Revenant* was showing a survival film. The understanding about the survival notion is symptomized by the representation of how harsh wild nature is and filmed as what is already there. In the context of early colonialism in America. In another position, this signification of survival narrative is left the problem of formula. Survival has limited the traditional formula in such appearance of character, yet still the film element in *The Revenant* has shown that there is no need to bear much character and scene to generate the formula. Which is already covered by the movie element.

This is based on the indication where the guidance/mentoring phase for the main character also existed in the narrative. Which is interesting in a way where the film uses flashback method to show that Glass is mastered the skill of surviving. Moreover, even it created Hugh Glass in *The Revenant* can be considered a hero, particularly within the framework of the adventure formula theory and Campbell's Hero's Journey. However, his heroism is more complex and ambiguous than traditional heroic figures like Odysseus or Superman, because *The Revenant* explores themes of survival, vengeance, and human endurance in a harsh natural world. This created the film element is indicate the as an active constructor to build such an symptom of strategy.

Therefore, the adventure formula is one of the many genres that exist today. According to Cawelti (in Saricks, 2009: 15), this genre shows an adventure fiction as the story of individual or group heroes in the face of obstacles and dangers, and to complete important missions. In addition, this genre also alludes to the archetypical nature of this story pattern, which can be traced back to ancient myths

and epics. In the adventure genre, the audience is presented with the story of the hero's journey to a place with the aim of completing missions filled with challenges and puzzles. The missions that can be in the form of searching for a person, a specific object, the answer to an unsolved event or even saving humanity (Moxnes, 2017). Simply said, the adventure genre allows the audience to feel the tension of the dangers that lie ahead as well as a new experience because it will be taken to amazing places that will be passed by the hero on his journey.

Historically speaking, the adventure genre in literary works tells of a hero who fights against the forces of evil. Like Beowulf fighting Grendel or Grendel's Mother. With the development of the times so that popular literature emerged, stories in the adventure genre also developed and had various other stories. As Cawelti (1976: 15) said that knightly adventure stories, which were very popular in the nineteenth century, no longer hold a significant role in adult adventure literature. Currently in social contexts such as crime and its pursuit, war, life in the West, international espionage, and sports have replaced battles with dragons and the quest for grail.

Stories in the adventure genre no longer must be about a hero with spiritual powers fighting off evil forces or monsters (Campbell, 2004). Adventure stories have now evolved to suit the situation in the era and because the purpose of popular literature is also entertainment, of course, adventure stories have also developed. According to Adi (2016: 48), in the modern adventure genre, the main character does not have to be described as an individual who carries out the initiation in the story, but is described as an experienced person who tries to repair and restore a situation as before. It starts with an impending danger that causes the main character to get involved and must try to overcome the situation.

Elements of popular fiction can be called formulas, according to Cawelti (1976), literary formulas are dramatic convention structures used in a large number of individual works. The concept of formula refers to the convention elements of popular literature, such as in the formation of the popular fiction genre, which can be a combination of various formulas in popular fiction. There are many formulas classified under various genres in popular literature such as detective, mystery,

romance, fantasy, adventure, science fiction, and others. The elements or characteristics of the adventure genre according to Saricks (2009: 16) include, generally fast pacing, a plot that focuses on action, the presence of a hero, a setting that is set 'in another place', the existence of a life-threatening situation, as well as language and jargon.

The adventure formula is one of the genres included in popular literature. Popular literature itself is a product of humans where popular literature is created from human culture that continues to develop over time. According to Nachbar and Lause (1992: 24), popular literature is the product of popular culture. Culture is divided into three types including elite culture or high culture, folk culture, and popular culture. Elite culture or high culture is a culture created by certain people who have specific interests, training, or knowledge, and are not ordinary people. While folk culture refers to the culture created and developed over the centuries from generation to generation that is communicated directly between limited communities.

Popular literature is one of the literary works that are currently in demand by the public because it serves to entertain, in this case, Neuberg (2013: 12) stated that in its simplest form, popular literature can be defined as works chosen by the general reader for entertainment. This function makes popular literature very popular with the public, especially those who want to fill their free time from the fatigue of real life. According to Tudor (in Adi, 2011: 197), that the flexibility of popular fiction causes this fiction genre to be determined by the audience or readers. This makes popular literature prioritize the tastes of readers and viewers rather than prioritizing aesthetic values in literary works.

The film element of *The Revenant* (2015) is significant for research because it exemplifies a masterful combination of visual storytelling, minimalistic dialogue, and character-driven narrative structure. Written by Mark L. Smith and Alejandro G. Iñárritu, the script relies heavily on atmosphere, subtext, and non-verbal communication to convey emotion and conflict, making it a compelling case study for analyzing how screenplays function beyond traditional dialogue-heavy formats. The film's narrative structure aligns with classical storytelling models such as Syd

Field's *Three-Act Structure* and Joseph Campbell's (2004) *Hero's Journey*, yet it also subverts certain conventions by emphasizing survival, revenge, and existential themes in a slow, burning, immersive style.

Moreover, *The Revenant* presents a rich subject for research in character development and psychological transformation through screenplay techniques. The protagonist, Hugh Glass, undergoes a significant arc driven by physical suffering and inner turmoil, which the script conveys through sparse yet impactful lines, action descriptions, and environmental interactions. The antagonist, John Fitzgerald, serves as a contrast, offering a study in morally ambiguous character writing. Analyzing their dynamic provides insight into how screenplays construct layered, multidimensional characters while maintaining narrative tension.

From a structural perspective, the film's element treatment of time, pacing, and visual metaphors makes it a valuable text for examining experimental approaches to film element. The nonlinear flashbacks, surreal dream sequences, and reliance on visual motifs (such as Glass's recurring visions of his deceased wife) illustrate how a screenplay can transcend conventional storytelling by integrating poetic and symbolic elements. This aspect of *The Revenant* invites scholarly discussion on the intersection of film element theory and cinematic language.

Furthermore, the film's element is significant for research in the context of *film element* and script integration (Astuti et al., 2024). Since *The Revenant* is a film that relies heavily on immersive cinematography and environmental storytelling, the script serves as a foundation for the visual and thematic environment depth of the film (Mikić, 2017). This research may establish the analysis screenplay provides cues for cinematographic decisions, such as long takes, natural lighting, and the use of landscape as an active narrative force. This makes *The Revenant* an excellent example for studying film narratology execution in auteur filmmaking.

This film has indicate a very thick adventure aspect. The film, directed and written by Alejandro G. Iñárritu, was released in 2015 with a story set in 1823. The indication over this narrative is where at that time humans still adhered to the laws of nature, whoever is strong then he is in power (McKee, 2021). This film tells the journey of a man named Hugh Glass who survived an attack by the Ree tribe who

killed his group indiscriminately. With a few remaining members forcing them to go home but the return journey is not as easy as one would like. Long journeys through cold rivers, valleys, forests and mountains and wildlife is a challenge given by nature, indeed indicating human vs nature (Avruch & Black, 1990; Soraya & Tussa, 2023). The journey is quite difficult for them, coupled with the betrayal that resulted in Hugh Glass's son being killed, and this is the turning point for Hugh Glass to become 'The Revenant' or a human who rose from the dead. Hugh Glass's struggle to return home and complete his mission of revenge makes the adventure genre in this film very prominent.

From the background above, the researcher is interested in analyzing *The Revenant* film because this film presents a crucial concept of Hugh Glass who became 'The Revenant' or a human who rose from the dead to fulfill his desire for revenge. Accordingly, in this study, the researcher is trying to analyze the adventure genre and the script mechanics in *The Revenant* film by qualitatively describing adventure formula and how they were portrayed in the film.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Based on the research background above, the researcher formulates the following two questions.

1. How does the adventure formula used through film element in *The Revenant* film by Alejandro G. Inarritu?
2. How to apply the adventure formula toward the film *The Revenant* by Alejandro G. Inarritu adheres the narrative mechanics over the Hugh Glass character development?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to analyze the integration of film element character dimension in *The Revenant* (2015) through its film. This study aims to explore how visual elements such as setting, lighting, costume, and composition contribute to the depth and development of Hugh Glass as a character. By examining these aspects, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of

how cinematic techniques shape narrative and character portrayal in the film as follow:

1. Identify the adventure formula used through film element in *The Revenant* film by Alejandro G. Inarritu?
2. Examine the applied adventure formula in the film *The Revenant* by Alejandro G. Inarritu adhere narrative mechanics over the Hugh Glass character development?

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to have some theoretical and practical significance. The following are the significance.

1.4.1 Theoretical significance.

Theoretically, this research expands discussions on adventure narratives by analyzing *The Revenant* aligns with or diverges from established screenplay mechanics, particularly in relation to character development. Theoretically, this research broadens the discourse on adventure narratives by closely examining how *The Revenant* adheres to and deviates from established screenplay structures, especially the Hero's Journey as outlined by Joseph Campbell and Christopher Vogler. By applying narrative theory to the film, the study reveals how the adventure formula is both followed and subverted through the psychological and physical evolution of Hugh Glass. Rather than simply portraying a linear heroic transformation, the film invites a more complex interpretation of character development, one shaped by trauma, silence, and moral ambiguity. In this way, *The Revenant* exemplifies how contemporary cinema reshapes classical narrative frameworks to reflect more nuanced and existential themes, contributing to a richer understanding of how adventure stories can move beyond archetypal resolutions.

Moreover, the study strengthens the intersection between film theory and narrative mechanics by demonstrating how cinematic elements, such as lighting, costume, camera movement, sound actively participate in character construction and emotional expression. This integrated analysis emphasizes that meaning in film is not solely derived from plot or dialogue but is equally shaped by visual

storytelling. For instance, Glass's transformation is conveyed as much through his decaying appearance and hostile environment as through his actions or choices. By merging formalist film analysis with narrative structure, this research offers a holistic model for understanding film texts, positioning cinematic storytelling as a dynamic and evolving language. This approach not only enriches theoretical discussions but also provides a methodological blueprint for future studies examining the complexity of character and genre in modern cinema.

1.4.2 Practical significance.

This research provides insights for filmmakers, screenwriters, and film analysts by examining how *The Revenant* adheres to or deviates from conventional adventure formulas and film element. By identifying the structural elements of adventure storytelling within the film, this study helps practitioners understand how narrative techniques influence audience engagement and character development. Additionally, the findings can serve as a reference for filmmakers who seek to craft compelling adventure narratives by balancing traditional screenplay structures with artistic innovation.

Moreover, this study contributes to film education by offering a detailed analysis of character dimension in *The Revenant*. Students and educators in film studies can benefit from understanding how visual storytelling techniques impact the audience's perception of a character's journey. By examining Hugh Glass's transformation through cinematography, setting, and performance, this research aids in developing a deeper appreciation of film as both an art form and a storytelling medium.

1.5 Previous Studies

In this study, the researcher also used several previous research to help better understand what will be studied because there are many theories related to this research. The sources include theses that have topics similar and object to this research as its based of consideration.

As regards where the *revenant* is premiered in 2015 which is actually based on the novel by Punke is a historical fiction work inspired by the real,life story of Hugh Glass, a 19th,century frontiersman and fur trapper who was mauled by a grizzly bear and left for dead by his companions. The academic field has responded in significant enthusiasm which signifies the status of *The Revenant* as a contrast contribution in the industry and any field of academic especially linguistic, literary critique and others approach and methods.

The research has put an effort into pursuing previous studies which finally found several interesting in evaluating *The Revenant*, yet still left the gap. As followed Jimmi, Sayyid Khairunas, and Krismunandar Yulianto(2022), in their article titled “*Analysis of Survival Aspect Faced by The Main Character in The Revenant’s Movie*” published in *JL3T (Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Language Teaching)* Vol. 8 No. 1, explore the survival experiences of the protagonist, Hugh Glass, in *The Revenant* film. The authors utilize Dwi Yuni’s classification of survival types—jungle, sea, desert, and Antarctic survival—alongside strategic survival elements derived from Sun Tzu’s military concepts such as planning, raid tactics, power, mobility, and strategic positioning. Their analysis offers valuable insight into the psychological and situational dimensions of survival as portrayed in literary film adaptations.

In another spectrum , Syahrudin Said(2023) and colleagues, in their article “*Personality in Michael Punke’s Novel The Revenant: A Novel of Revenge*” published in *Journal of Language* Vol. 5 No. 2, apply personality theory to analyze the protagonist’s psychological profile in the novel version of *The Revenant* by Michael Punke. With a specific focus on traits such as bravery and strength, and drawing up theories by Maslow, Funder, and others, the study investigates Hugh Glass’s inner motivations and resilience in the face of betrayal and abandonment. Their findings highlight how these psychological traits significantly shape his behavior and capacity for survival, reinforcing the novel’s thematic depth.

In a linguistic approach Aziz and Zahrida(2018), in their study “*An Analysis of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts Performed by Main Character in the Movie Revenant Script*” published in *Journal of English Education and Teaching* Vol. 2 No. 1, examine the pragmatics of the main character’s speech. Using Yule’s theory of speech acts, the researchers categorize utterances into direct and indirect types and identify their functions, such as requests, questions, and statements. The results show a predominance of direct speech acts, suggesting the protagonist’s linguistic behavior is shaped by the life-threatening and urgent nature of his environment. This work offers an insightful linguistic dimension to the film’s narrative.

Marijana Mikić(Mikić, 2017), in her article “*Environment and Emotion in The Revenant: A Cognitive Approach*” published in *aspeers: emerging voices in American studies* Vol. 10, adopts a cognitive film theory perspective to examine how the natural environment in *The Revenant* evokes emotional responses in audiences. She argues that the environment operates not merely as a backdrop but as an active narrative force, eliciting feelings of awe, fear, and empathy. Additionally, the study identifies an implicit environmental critique in the film, drawing attention to the history of environmental exploitation. Mikić’s work effectively bridges ecological awareness and affective cinematic experience.

Followed by Jaelani (2024), in his master’s thesis “*Relationship Between the Main Character and Nature as Reflected in The Revenant Novel by Michael Punke: An Ecocriticism Study*” submitted to Hasanuddin University, applies ecocriticism and ecocentrism to investigate the relationship between Hugh Glass and nature in the novel. The study reveals a complex dynamic wherein Glass both relies on and exploits nature, resulting in an imbalanced relationship that mirrors broader patterns of environmental degradation. Through this lens, the thesis contributes to understanding how frontier narratives portray human,nature interactions and ecological ethics.

Lastly, Yastanti and Widhiyanto (Yastanti & Widhiyanto, 2018) in their article “*Persistency of the Main Character in The Revenant Movie Directed by Alejandro G. Iñárritu*” published in *Progressive* Vol. XIII No. 1, focus on the theme of persistence exhibited by the protagonist. The authors identify four key traits—passion, self-discipline, adaptation, and endurance—as defining Hugh Glass’s character. They also discuss the outcomes of this persistence, including moral responsibility, stubbornness, and credibility. The study emphasizes the film’s moral lessons, particularly those relating to perseverance, self-belief, and mutual protection, thus highlighting the ethical and inspirational dimensions of Glass’s journey.

However, this study has limited the exploration about the mechanization over the film in presenting the representation of adventure formula. The contribution has polluted the analysis and critique which is only presenting what is already there and happened in the story. Any means and intention over how this film constructing the served appearance are still lack in the configuration and the scope. That is to say, this study is filling the gap of how the film constructing the adventure formula using the film capacity and its modality.