# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

A film is a form of storytelling that is perceived through a series of pictures and videos that are recorded and then edited and put together. Film as the younger form of storytelling medium makes use of several aspects in other forms of storytelling such as novels and short stories do not. In the world of novels or short stories, authors make use of descriptive language in an effort in conveying their message while also obtaining the audience's interest. What differentiates the film from its counterparts is that it does not solely rely on dialogues and narratives as ways of conveying certain meanings or stories. Filmmakers can make use of various elements such as color design, performance, sound, editing, composition, and framing, all of which fall into the category of either visual or audio which plays important roles in a film (Bordwell et al., 2019). Furthermore, these elements that have played parts in a film can support a film in telling its story.

The visual and auditory aspects of a film are used to create or convey meanings that help the audience understand a certain context. These elements can be noticed in every film. First, visual which is one of the important elements of a film can take part in an important role in explaining a certain context to the audience whether it is in a form of color design, performance, editing, framing, or composition. Second, auditory helps to create a context for a scene. It creates comprehension for the audience which can control the audience's perception toward a film. In this case, this

research discusses specifically the use of one of the visual elements that are color (Bordwell et al., 2019).

As mentioned earlier, several aspects can be used to help a film tell its story. One of them is visual which has been used by filmmakers to create layers of meaning in their films. Components that fall into the category of visual refer to it as *mise-en-scène* including setting, costume and makeup, lighting, as well as staging (Bordwell et al., 2019). Each one has a purpose of supporting a film telling its story. Almost similar to Bordwell et al.'s statement on visual elements, Kuhn and Westwell (2012) describe what the audience sees at a particular time creates fundamental as well as a secondary level of meanings used to give certain information about a particular situation at a given moment or scene. By applying certain visual elements to a film, they can play as supporting narrative tools by which they trigger the audience to create certain interpretations of the film.

There are several forms of meaning in visual elements in a film. One of the forms of meaning that can be conveyed through the visual is the implicit meaning or the purpose of one of the forms of meaning in a film as stated by Bordwell et al., (2019). It means that certain meanings or messages are subtly referred to in a film, specifically in this case through the medium of visuals be it in a form of color, settings, lighting, staging, or costume where it gives effects that affect the audience's judgments toward the film. As for this research, the writer specifically focuses on implicit meaning through the medium of color.

Color as part of visual or *mise-en-scène* in film can create meaning that can help a film in conveying meanings in the form of visuals. Color as part of visuals in film can create certain effects. Wei et al., (2004) described it as something that contributes to the atmosphere that the creator wants to show in a particular scene. Therefore, it can be applied as an additional effect. According to Elliot and Maier (2014), colors give various reactions to anyone who sees them in that they affect feelings, and aesthetic judgment, among many others. Bellantoni (2005) mentioned several purposes of color in the film besides the most common one which is the psychological meaning of each color that is often being used in film such as how blue represents melancholy or red in its association with something evil. It can also be used to indicate changes that occur to a story or character. Furthermore, Bellantoni also stated that one particular color can be chosen in a film to play a major influence on a film. Usually, that one particular color is associated with a certain character or meaning within the film which adds layers to the story. Examining how color is being used in a film can help the audience understand the intention behind a filmmaker's use of color.

The main subject of analysis in this study is *Blue is the Warmest Colour*, a French film released in 2013. The film presents the story of Adèle, a high school student in finding her sexual identity. She begins to discover her identity when she meets a female art student named Emma who turns out to be a lesbian. As she gets closer over time with Emma, she begins to discover her sexual identity. The relationship that she has with Emma helps to lead her to her sexual awakening where she realizes that she is attracted to women. The story centers around Adèle's romantic life from the

beginning of her time as a high school student until the time she finished school and became a preschool teacher.

A previous study of the same film was conducted by Putri (2021) entitled *The Development of Homosexual Identity of Adèle in Blue is the Warmest Color.* Putri's study analyzed the changes or development of the identity of the main character in relation to her sexual orientation. In this study, Putri applied Vivienne Cass' theory on the development of Adèle's identity. Furthermore, in the research, Putri found Adèle's identity development which goes through six stages. First, confusion when Adèle meets a blue haired-woman to which she begins to have an emotional attachment to. Second, comparison stage, Adèle begins to feel alienated which leads her to explore a new unfamiliar community and starts comparing it with one she is familiar with. In this stage, Adèle also denies her true identity due to the fear of rejection from her surroundings. The third stage is tolerance, in this stage, Adèle begins to tolerate her sexual identity as a homosexual but has yet to fully accept it. Fourth, is acceptance, in this stage, Adèle is fully certain about her identity and is confident about it. The fifth is the stage of pride where Adèle becomes fully committed to her identity as a homosexual. And finally, the sixth and last stage is synthesis, which is where a person has become open with one's true identity. However, according to Putri's findings, Adele is yet to make it to this stage as she is still not able to open up about her homosexuality to her surroundings. In conclusion, the study concluded that Adele goes through five out of six stages of Vivienne Cass' theory (Putri, 2021).

In this proposal, the focus of the study is different from that of Putri's. The objective of this study is to figure out the use of color as a storytelling tool specifically in the film *Blue is the Warmest Colour* using Bellantoni (2005)'s theory of color in visual storytelling which consists of three forms of purpose. Those forms of purpose are color creating a psychological reaction, changes of color indicating changes that happen to a character, plot, or any other element of the film, and lastly, one particular color in a film is associated with a certain character or idea. Colors that appear in forms of *mise-en-scène* elements are often utilized to support a film, creating subtle messages that are meaningful to the story of a film which connects many scenes and sequences into one complete story (Bordwell et al., 2019). The color usage in films is found to be crucial in impacting the audience's reaction emotionally which furthermore, crucial to the progress of the stories (Bellantoni, 2005), hence the idea behind this thesis. By applying these theories the writer intends to find out the use of color in terms of supporting the film *Blue is the Warmest Colour* to tell its story. The writer perceives that the colors of the selected major scenes seem to hold figurative meanings whose relationship with the image varies. These relationships can be transformative or associative.

## 1.2 Field of the Study

The field study of this research is a Film Study which mainly discusses certain key elements of a film.

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**1.3 Scope of the Study**

This study will focus solely on finding out how color plays a part in the film *Blue is the Warmest Colour*, specifically in supporting the story of the film.

**1.4 Research Questions**

How do colors help Abdellatif Kechiche's *Blue is the Warmest Colour* tell its story?

**1.5 Objectives of the Study**

From the question above, it can be concluded that the objective of this research is to find out how color in the film *Blue is the Warmest Colour* helps the film tell its story.

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to provide the reader with an interpretive reading on the use of color in the film *Blue is the Warmest Colour* based on the theory of color in cinema by Patti Bellantoni (Bellantoni, 2005).

**1.7 Definition of Term**

1. According to Kuhn and Westwell (2012), several elements can be used as a way to measure color.

   ● Hue

Hue is the actual color itself or the main color (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). Each color holds a different meaning as to how it affects the audience or the characteristics that

each one possesses, in Bellantoni (2005) the hue or color is divided into six namely red, yellow, blue, orange, green, and purple.

● Saturation

Saturation is the intensity of the color, be it pale or vibrant (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). The saturation of a color can determine the meaning behind it. Bellantoni (2005) stated that paler color reflects powerlessness, especially for the psychological purpose.

● Value

Here value refers to the brightness level of color (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012) In certain cases, an object is more contrasting or standing out than other objects around it to draw the audience's attention to a particular object.

2. *Mise-en-scène*

Every film has elements of visuals that are being used to support the film itself. *Mise-en-scène* can be categorized into this group. It is defined as something as everything that appears in a scene (Bordwell et al., 2019). It is what the audience sees at one particular time (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). Elements of *Mise-en-scène* include but are not limited to settings, lighting, costume, and makeup (Bordwell et al., 2019).

3. **Color as a Storytelling Tool**

It refers to the use of color in cinema in relation to its use in supporting a film which can appear in many forms of *Mise-en-scène* elements. This, furthermore, creates layers of meaning in the major scenes and supports films in telling their stories.

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4. **Movie, Film, and Cinema**

The terms movie and film are interchangeably defined as any kind of motion picture or series of shots edited or being put together. Film can also be defined as the entirety of the motion picture industry which in this case it is interchangeable with the term cinema. However many researchers created a distinctive difference between film and cinema in terms of motion picture industry, where cinema is more about its pictures as a form of art such as image or frame compositions (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012).