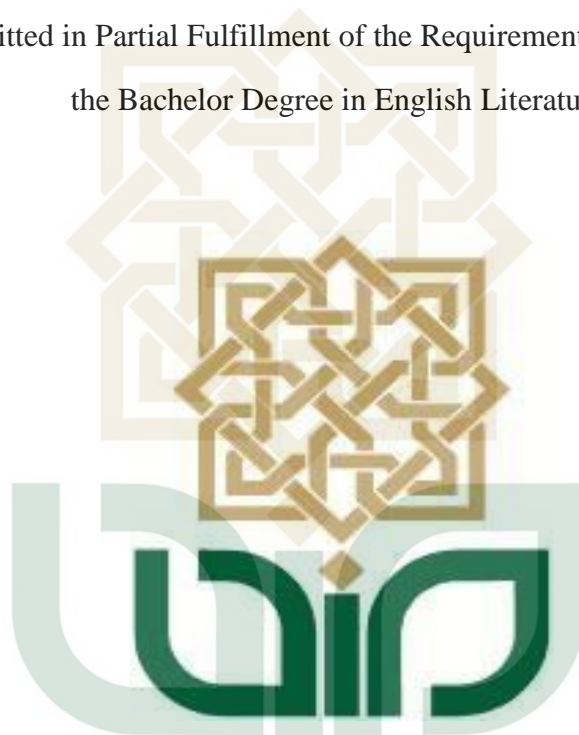


THE REPRESENTATION OF WHITE PEOPLE

IN *12 YEARS A SLAVE* FILM

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining
the Bachelor Degree in English Literature



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2018

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this thesis is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this thesis. Other writer's opinions or findings included in the thesis are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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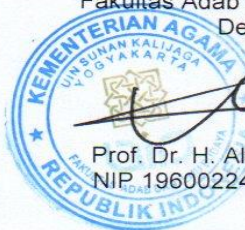
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Atas perhatiannya, kami ucapkan terima kasih.

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**THE REPRESENTATION OF WHITE PEOPLE
IN 12 YEARS A SLAVE FILM**

By: Iwan Prabowo

Abstract

Film is part of literary works that have a big effect to society. A film chosen as the object of research in this paper is *12 Years a Slave* directed by Mc Queen and produced by Brad Pitt. The theme of this film is about slavery, and this film tells about Solomon Northup who becomes a victim of abduction and slavery. The researcher uses qualitative method and applies the supporting theory that is eligible to the data. The researcher deploys the Representation theory proposed by Stuart Hall as the main theory. The problem statement in this research focuses on the domination of white people. In this film, the white people become the main characters to decide the story, but the black people only become the object for the white people. This research aims to find out kinds of the representation of white people shown in this film and also to identify the white's construction through the film. Furthermore, the researcher concludes that there are several representations of white people, and the white's construction tries to counter and change their stereotype through this film.

Key words: film, slavery, representation, construction

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THE REPRESENTATION OF WHITE PEOPLE IN *12 YEARS A SLAVE*

FILM

Oleh: Iwan Prabowo

Abstrak

Film adalah bagian dari karya sastra yang berpengaruh besar bagi masyarakat. Film yang digunakan sebagai objek dalam penelitian ini adalah *12 Years a Slave* yang disutradarai oleh Mc Queen dan diproduksi oleh Brad Pitt. Tema film ini adalah tentang perbudakan, dan film ini bercerita tentang Solomon Northup yang menjadi korban penculikan dan perbudakan. Dalam tulisan ini, peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif dan menerapkan teori pendukung yang sesuai dengan data. Peneliti menggunakan teori Representasi yang diusung oleh Stuart Hall sebagai teori utama dan teori Pasca-Kolonial oleh Ashcroft sebagai teori pendukungnya. Masalah dalam penelitian ini berpusat pada dominasi orang kulit putih. Dalam film ini, orang kulit putih menjadi karakter utama untuk menentukan cerita, tapi orang kulit hitam hanya menjadi objek orang kulit putih. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana representasi orang kulit putih di dalam film ini mengidentifikasi konstruksi kulit putih melalui film ini. Peneliti dapat menyimpulkan bahwa ada beberapa representasi orang kulit putih. Konstruksi orang kulit putih mencoba untuk melawan dan mengubah stereotip mereka yang ditunjukkan dalam film ini.

Kata kunci: *film, perbudakan, representasi, konstruksi*

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MOTTO:

“Success requires ...
Patience and Persistence”.



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Finally, I realize that there are many errors in writing this paper. Therefore, any kinds of suggestion and advices are allowed to improve this paper.

Yogyakarta, March 11, 2018

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Iwan Prabowo

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Literature is one of media for human to express the idea in imitating reality of human life. As the imitation of life, literature becomes an object of study. In literature, human expression sits as the object of study delivered by the authors into their works, “literature is primarily to express the feeling or temperament or creative imagination of its author” (Abrams, 2009: 348). Furthermore, literature is also a medium for human to describe and capture the history into the imaginative and fictional works such as poetry, prose, and drama. According to Abrams, literature is imaginative and fictional writings including philosophical, historical, and even scientific works that are especially well-known in form, expression, poetry, prose fiction, and drama (Abrams: 177-178).

Film is one of literary works and the art of motion picture that contains text and audio-visual. The text in the film is formed as a script, and a script is a document that outlines every aural, behavioral, and lingual element required to tell a story (www.screenwriting.info/01.php). The audio-visual is one of big aspects that differ a film and other literary works. Films can make audiences feel the experience more than the other literature works such as poem or prose, because readers only use imagination when they read it. In film, the audiences can create imagination by listening to the audio of the film and by seeing the visual of the

film. Thus, the audiences can feel the atmosphere deeply. Besides the imagination, the audio-visual in film is the important part to make the audiences enjoy the film. According to Gaudreault, the reason why films are more attracted is because a film presents different sensations in our senses of vision and even hearing, and this attraction reigns in a sensational manner and is incorporated into film sometimes without cause in order to heighten their appeal (2011: 49).

From the film makers' point of view, film can be a medium to present the film makers's ideas that contain criticism or expression related to society, culture and other issues happened in the world. Then, the film itself presents a human life that can influence the society around the world from the past until now. The role of the film maker is essential to determine and to attract the audiences because the audiences watch a film just for an entertainment. Moreover, after watching a film, the audiences can get a moral value and the meaning behind the story of the film.

The researcher chooses to analyze a film because it has a big and massive effect to audiences given through the content, value and meaning in the film. In this era, films also become a popular and effective media to deliver anything. It is because film is a literary work that can deliver meaning which is easier to understand than the other literary works, but the content or meaning in a film is difficult to analyze. Moreover, the film art contains several elements of literary works such as drama, poem, and prose. Like a drama, a film needs characters to deliver the meaning or the story of the film to the audiences. A screenplay can contain elements of prose and poem.

Literary works are fiction that needs imagination to create it. Literary works usually refer to drama, prose fiction, poetry, film, and song. According to Eagleton, literature is an 'imaginative' writing in the sense of fiction - writing which is not literally true. Literature itself refers to imaginative and fictional works, such as drama, prose fiction, poetry, film, and song (Eagleton, 1996: 1).

There are other various films like *12 Years a Slave*, such as *Django Unchained*, *Blood Diamond*, *The Birth of a Nation*, and *Gone with the wind*. The researcher chooses *12 Years a Slave* produced by Brad Pitt because this film does not only has an interesting story but also has a moral value that is inspiring, especially from the character of Solomon Northup. Then, the film tells about how dangerous and cruel slavery was. Furthermore, in 2014 this film had a big effect to the society, especially in Western. At that era, slavery was a legal institution and ruled in a law, but being a slave is not a choice or a job because most of the slaves are just victims. According to Jim Crow, in August 1619 "Twenty and odd" Africans probably were seized from a Portuguese slave ship, carried to Jamestown, Virginia, and traded for provisions. They were classified as indentured servants. In 1641 Massachusetts became the first North American colony to recognize slavery as a legal institution (Jim Crow, 2014).

The story of *12 Years a Slave* tells Solomon Northup who became a victim of slavery. The story started in the city with black majority. Solomon is a Negro. In this film, Solomon was a free Negro who has a family, has a happy life, and has a job as a violinist. One day, Solomon met two White guys who offered him a job in the circus show. Then, Solomon took that job, but unfortunately, the job is a

fake, and those guys deceived him. When Solomon met the two White guys in the restaurant, Solomon is drunk, and these two White guys brought him to some bedroom. In the morning, Solomon woke up in the dark room with his hands and feet chained. Then, he realized that he became a victim of human trafficking, and in that room Solomon also met other Negroes. Solomon was taken by the ship with the other Negro, and he was sold to a man, and his name was changed into Solomon. He was sold to a new owner named Ford. Solomon worked as a logger tree, and he was treated better by Ford. The situation changed after Solomon fought with Tibbeats, and he tried to kill Solomon by hanging him on a tree. Ford knew Solomon's situation, and he saved Plat because Ford realized that Solomon was not a slave, and Ford decided to move Solomon to Edwin Epps.

With his new owner, Edwin Epps, Solomon became a cotton picker. Edwin Epps treated Solomon like a slave, and he would punish Solomon if he did not gain the target in picking cotton. When Solomon worked for Edwin Epps, he faced many problems from his master, White guys and some workers. Solomon Northup was different from other slaves because he was an educated slave. From the other sides, slavery and human trafficking are wrong and very inhuman. Solomon is a symbol of slave who tries to survive from his master by obeying and following the command of his master. Solomon tried against the slavery and got back into his freedom of life. From this story, Solomon Northup has a great survive because he tries to escape from the slavery.

From the explanation above, this research focuses on the representation of white as seen in the film *12 Years a Slave*. This film tells and has the main story

about the slavery in the past. This slavery practice becomes a dark history to the white until now. In this film the white people are treated as the master and the Black people as the slave. The white people mostly assume that the black people are a property who can be treated as the white people's wish. The white people as a master treats the black people bad and cruel. They do not care about the condition of their workers or slaves.

Bad things found in this film that can be illustrated by the white people is the villain. One of the characters can be represented as the villain is Mr. Epps because he is the most cruel person and Negro breaker in this film. However, there are several characters of the white people illustrated as a hero for the black people in this film. Mr. Bass is one of the characters illustrated as a hero because he wants to help and defend the black people based on the reason of humanity and human right value. Hence, the characters of Mr. Ford and Mr. Bass in the film are depicted only as camouflage to cover the "Black history" of the White people about slavery, so this film is only to fix the White people's image.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of study stated in this research, the researcher discusses a following question:

1. How is the representation of White people in the film *12 Years a Slave*?

1.3 Objective of study

This research aims to explain and identify the representation of white people as seen in the film *12 Years a Slave* by using the Representation theory.

1.4 Significance of Study

The significant aspect of this research is to be one of references to the other researcher who want to deploy the representation theory. This research is also to give the explanation about the representation of white people through the film *12 Years a Slave* and to understand the white's construction that wants to be constructed by the film makers by using the white people characters. Moreover, through this research the researcher wants to show and explain the slavery and racism.

1.5 Literary Review

The researcher found several researches that used the film *12 Years a Slave* to be their object of study. First, Bagus Ardian Hakim wrote his graduating paper *Human Right Violations in 12 Years a Slave Movie*. Ardian was a student of English Department in State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga. In his paper, he deployed New Criticism theory and focused on the human right and violations that occurred in the film. In his graduating paper, the problem statement is "What are human right violations found in the *12 Years a Slave* movie?" Ardian focuses on the violations which happened in the film *12 Years a Slave* by considering laws obtaining in United State, UDHR and Preamble United Nation. In his research, Ardian found 12 kinds of violations that existed in the film *12 Years a Slave*. In

his conclusion, he also gives some evidences of laws and cases which violated human rights written in United Nation laws.

The second researcher is Herjuno Widi Yulianto. He was a student of English Department of Udayana University Bali, and his graduating paper was entitled *Representation of Racism against Black Man*, and he also used the representation theory. He focuses on the racism in the media and films as the message constructions.

The third researcher is Rachelle M. Turple, and the title is *12 Years a Slave: An Essay 2013, A Review* by Rachelle M. Turple, she describes the terms of history and violence of human being. In her article, she uses feminism about the definition of a woman who has to get life worthy. The character of Patsey represents a black woman existed for several reasons.

The fourth researcher is Mohamad Zaim, and he was also a student from English Department in State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga. His graduating paper was entitled *Plight of the Slave's Life as Seen in Solomon Northup of "12 Years a Slave"*. In his graduating paper, he used Structuralism proposed by Saussure, and the paper focuses on the plight as seen in Solomon Northup being the slave. In his graduating paper, the problem statement is "What are plights of a slave life as seen in Solomon Northup of *12 Years a Slave*?". In the conclusion, it is also written that Solomon Northup is a victim of human trafficking in the slavery era. This film presents plight a slave's life in details, how a slave can be traded as commodity, how a slave becomes an animal in human shape, and how a slave obeys the order of his master. In this film, becoming a slave has no period

because it is forever, and this film expresses the practice of slavery in American history.

However, this research is different from the other researches mentioned above. The researcher focuses on the representation of the white people by using the theory of representation as the main theory.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

The researcher in this paper uses the Representation theory as a main theory. The researcher also deploys the film theory to analyze the film *12 Years a Slave*. The researcher applies representation because the researcher wants to get the data and solves the problem more detailed. The researcher chooses the representation theory as the main theory because the problem of this research is more suitable to answer using it. Then, the *12 Years a Slave* has a setting of time in the colonialism era in America so that the researcher chooses the representation theory to get the construction of white people who have a power and supremacy over the black people.

1.6.1. Representation Theory

In order to elaborate the literary theoretical approaches, the researcher uses representation theory stated by Stuart Hall as a supporting theory to analyze and collect the data. Representation is a process how humans' mind can create or produce a meaning and then can be explained through the language. According to Stuart Hall, Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language (Hall, 1997: 17). Furthermore, representation is a process of human to explain through the language to other people. According to Stuart,

Hall representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the word meaningfully, to other people.

Representation is the activity of human to produce meaning uses a function of symbol and a particular of sound through the language as a sign, then deliver the meaning. Stuart Hall argues that signs may also have a material dimension. Representational systems consist of the actual sounds we make with our vocal chords, the images we make on light-sensitive paper with cameras, the marks we make with paint on canvas, the digital impulses we transmit electronically. Representation is a practice, a kind of 'work', which uses material objects and effects. However, the meaning depends not on the material quality of the sign, but on its symbolic function. It is because a particular sound or word stands for, symbolizes or represents a concept that it can function, in language, as a sign and convey meaning – or, as the constructionists say, signify (sign-i-fy). (Hall, 1997: 25-26).

In the theory of representation, there are three approaches according to Stuart Hall, the reflective approach, the intentional approach, and the constructionist approach. In this research the researcher focuses on and uses the constructionist approach because this approach is more eligible to analyze and to answer the problem statement stated in this research. Stuart Hall argues that the third approach recognizes this public and social character of language. Things do not mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems- concepts and signs. Hence, it is called the constructivist or the constructionist approach to meaning the language (Hall, 1997: 24).

This approach recognizes that the users of language cannot fix the language meaning, but it also does not deny the material world (things, people, symbolic practice and process). However, the material world does not deliver the meaning of language, but it will be the system of language users to deliver the meaning. It is the social actors to make the world meaningful using the concept of culture and the linguistic and other conceptual systems to construct meaning. This approach states that people construct meaning through concepts and signs- we produce our own meanings to objects through our own language.

According to Stuart Hall, the third approach recognizes this public, social character of language. It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things do not mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs. Hence it is called the constructivist or constructionist approach to meaning in language. According to this approach, we must not be confused with the material world, where things and people exist, and the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate. Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate that world meaningfully to others. (Hall, 1997: 25).

1.6.2 Film Theory

Film is one of media for human to express their ideas, and film becomes a dynamic medium. According to Vallerejo, film has been a dynamic medium that puts to use others than those of the commercial narrative form (2007: 23)

Film study is like a language that could be defined into two aspects, form and rules. Film analysis – the name for the study of film as “like a language” through a taxonomy of its form and an examination of its rules – similarly brackets film history, theory, the philosophy of the image, fandom, technological shifts, industrial organization, and so on (Vallerejo, 2007: 27). Furthermore, Vallerejo also stated that film study lends itself most powerfully to the study of narrative film, a dominant form, to be sure, but, as we have seen, by no means the only one. (Vallerejo,2007: 27)

There are two important aspects how to analyze a film according to Vallerejo, the first is Mise-en-scene, and the second is cinematography. Mise-en-scene has functions to make the film more realistic, and how to make it real Mise-en-scene has six components to support it to become real. According to Vallerejo, there are six components to *mise-en-scène* if you believe it strongly, as I do, that “hair” deserves its very own, to wit: setting (set and props), lighting, costume, hair, make-up, and figure behavior (Vallerejo, 2007: 29). Furthermore, to consider that mise-en-scene is one of the elements in the cinematography, and other elements of cinematography are camera, the angle, and the camera movement, and anything to do with camera belongs to cinematography. According to Vallerejo, the camera angle and distance may remain constant or change with the camera’s

movement during the shot. Anything to do with the camera, that is, belongs to the realm of cinematography (Vallerejo, 2007: 26).

According to Vallerejo, there are several points to film analysis that has evolved an anthropocentric taxonomy for describing distance, that is, using the human body as the reference point for each designation “(Vallerejo,2007: 38):

- a. The extreme long shot (ELS), in which one can barely distinguish the human figure and environment;
- b. The long shot (LS), in which humans are distinguishable but remain dwarfed by the background;
- c. The medium long shot (MLS), or plan americain, in which the human is framed from the knees up;
- d. The medium shot (MS), in which we move in slightly to frame the human from the waist up;
- e. The medium close-up (MCU), in which we are slightly closer and see the human from the chest up;
- f. The close-up (CU), which isolates a portion of a human (the face, most prominently);
- g. The extreme close-up (ECU), in which we see a mereportion of the face (an eye, the lips)”.

1.7 Method of Research

This part of research contains the type of research, data sources, data collecting technique, data analysis technique, and paper organization.

1.7.1 Type of Research

Method is a tool of a researcher to gain and to reach the purpose of the research and study. According to *Oxford Dictionary*, A method is a way of doing something (pg. 734). The researcher in this paper uses qualitative method. The researcher searches data sources in library to gain the important sources that are required by the researcher. The sources from the libraries through books, journal, pdf, and other texts needed by the researcher and related to the topic and object.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The researcher uses two sources, the primary and secondary data sources. The primary data is taken from *12 Years a Slave* film. The unit data of it comes from the film descriptions (dialogs, scenes, and script) regarding the representation of the White people over the Black people as seen in *12 Years a Slave* film. The Representation theory as the main theory is deployed to analyze the film. The secondary data is chosen from the other data which contain the information and ideas about the concepts that the researcher needs to analyze, and the data are also taken from books and internet (journals, e-books and other related resources).

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The data in this paper are taken and selected from the dialogs, scenes, and scripts of the film as the main resources. The researcher uses several steps to gain

the data. The researcher employs the qualitative analysis method to analyze the film. The method is done by describing the data that then are explained based on the theory. In data collecting technique, the researcher conducted some steps to analyze the data.

First, the researcher read the film to collect the data, and the data then were divided into several variables based on the Representation theory. The variable of this research is taken from the film related to the theory and problem statement, such as the White's stereotype, the White as a human Trafficker, the cruelty of White, and the White treats the Black like animals.

. Second, the researcher read the meaning of the film deeply and intensively until the researcher got the data that is need to analyze. The meaning of the film means that the researcher reads the film each scene from the angle of actors, lighting, and camera technique. Moreover the data from the film are such as intrinsic elements which contain theme, characters, characterization, plot, and setting.

Third, the researcher collected the data by screen-shooting the scene of the film that then put it into the tabels (using Microsoft Excel) and explained each frame of the film. Fourth, the researcher divided the data from the film into the table and the picture from the film based on each variable. Fifth, the researcher applied the Representation theory with the data found in *12 Years a Slave* film.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis technique starts with collecting the data and evidences on literary research. In this research, the researcher analyzes the film using

qualitative descriptive analysis method because this method works to collect the data that are explained by the theory used. The researcher analyzes the representation of the White people over the Black people as seen in *12 Years a Slave* film using the Representation theory. The classified data are arranged based on main ideas of the representation in the White people over the Black people as seen in *12 Years a Slave* film.

First, the researcher uses the Representation theory to find the categories of the paper. The researcher divided the categories into two main categories, the White as a hero and the White as a villain. Second, After getting the categories, the researcher tried to find the variables related to the problem statement, and the researcher also found several variables, such as the White's stereotype, the White as a human Trafficker, the cruelty of White, and the White treats Black like animal as the part of White as a villain category and the White as a savior, the wisdom of the White and their kindness.

Furthermore, the researcher classified the data regarding the representation of the White people over the Black people as seen in *12 Years a Slave* film using the chosen theory to prove the representation of the White people. Furthermore, the film pictures and dialogs which contained the problem of research are taken for some evidences to make a valid data analysis. The researcher also uses the film theory especially semiotic and *Mise-en-scene* by Vallerejo to identify the signifier and to determine the signified of the scenes. The film theory supports the analysis of this research to prove the analysis of this paper.

After getting all of the data needed, the researcher continued to find the construction of the White through this film. After the analysis was complete, the researcher made the conclusion from the whole analysis data.

1.8. Paper Organization

This research paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the research. This chapter contains the background of study, problem statement, objectives of study, significances of study, literary review, theory approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter consists of the elements of *12 Years a Slave* film which is presenting the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The third chapter is the analysis of the problem statement which deals with the film and the script as the evidence. The fourth chapter is the conclusion that is found by the researcher about the representation of White people and the construction meaning through *12 Years a Slave* film.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1. Conclusion

The conclusion is drawn based on the Representation theory applied as the main theory. Moreover, the data on this research can be found from each category in the analysis. The research's objective is to explain and to understand the representation of white people and the construction of white in this film. The researcher proves how the white people construct their stereotype using two categories, such as the white as a villain and the White as a hero. From both of the categories, the researcher uses several variables.

By using the Representation theory, the researcher attempts to elaborate the white representation and the construction through the black people. The black people in this film also become the object of the researcher that is used to conclude the villain and hero of this film through the white people's characters. The purpose of the White in this research was separated into two. This is to make more specific in gaining the data from each character and event in the film.

Based on the data of analysis, the conclusion that can be drawn from this research is there are two kinds of White who represent the villain and the hero. According to the characters. first, the white people's representation of villain, it shows all of the characters in this category are represented as the cruelest, evil, brutal, rude, intolerant, and racist. The characters who belong to this category are Mr. James, Mr. Freeman, Mr. Tibbeats, Mr. Epps, and Mrs. Epps. All of those

characters are represented as the villain because their bad attitude, negative statements, and inhumanity over the black people. The existing equations of those villain characters are racism and stereotype of the black people. Second, the white people are represented as the hero, and it means that the characters have a sense of the humanity and become a savior and anti-racist to others especially to the black people. The characters that belong to this category are Mr. Ford, Mr. Chapin and Mr. Bass. Those characters are represented as heroes.

At last, the researcher concludes two kinds of white construction through this film. First, the white or the film maker wants to counter their stereotype. Second, the white wants to change their stereotype. All of those constructions of the White can be seen in the White characters and events. Through the hero characters the construction of the White can be delivered explicitly. Mr. Bass is one of the White characters who has a big effect to construct the White stereotype because he is a man who was illustrated as a good person especially to the Black, and as portrayed here he even has no evil character in this film. Mr. Bass is also a man who defended Mr. Epps and saved Salomon from the slavery.

The researcher, as a Muslim, is aware of the slavery practice that is also forbidden if it is seen from the Islamic perspective, and Islam also refuses the discrimination of race, skin color and genre. The concept of domination and dominated also cannot be accepted and tolerated in Islam. Verses in Al-Qur'an also said that every human in the eye of Allah is the same and created equally.

santified by Allah except in just cause; 131this He has enjoined upon you so that you may understand;”

4.2 Suggestion

The issues of racism and discrimination are difficult to end and still exist until now. The representation of those issues can be seen in the film that has a theme about it, and in this era there are so many film makers who bring up that theme. One of those film is *12 Years a Slave* talking about slavery, racism and discrimination. The researcher has decided that the Whites' character is one of the cases that can be analyzed from this film. This graduating paper focuses on the White characters that also can be related to the Black directly, such as the relation between the master and the slave. There are many cases and aspects that can be analyzed to the next researcher from this film, such as the alienation of the Black as seen in this film by using Marxism theory, the heroes journey of the White characters, and others.

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