

THE REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS

IN *AMERICAN EAST* MOVIE (2008)

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining

the Bachelor Degree in English Literature



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ABSTRACT

The population of Muslim immigrants in America grows rapidly even though the black history of 9/11 attacks make them struggle in life since being a Muslim also means being a terrorist in America. This research is deserved to be done because it sees something differently. This research is not to identify how Americans portray Arabs, but it identifies how Arabs portray themselves. This research also criticizes Hollywood movie production which assumes that Muslims and Americans cannot live together in peace even after 9/11 attacks. This is a qualitative research that applies representation theory by Stuart Hall and *Mise-en-scene* theory by Ed Sikov as film theory. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the film maker wants to emphasize the voice of Muslim immigrants who live in America after 9/11 attacks. First, the racialization of Muslim immigrants by Americans that see them as terrorists is triggered by their Middle Eastern looks. Second, Western media should be responsible for the negative stereotype created towards the image of Muslims that causes them to be the target of suspicion.

Keywords: *Muslim immigrants, Terrorists, Western Media, Stereotype.*

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ABSTRAK

Populasi imigran Muslim berkembang pesat di Amerika meskipun sejarah kelam serangan 9/11 membuat mereka harus berjuang karena menjadi seorang Muslim berarti menjadi seseorang teroris. Penelitian ini layak untuk dilakukan karena penelitian ini memandang sesuatu dengan berbeda. Penelitian ini bukan mengidentifikasi bagaimana orang Amerika merepresentasikan orang Arab, tetapi bagaimana orang Arab merepresentasikan diri mereka sendiri. Penelitian ini juga mengkritisi produksi film Hollywood yang menilai bahwa Muslim dan orang Amerika tidak dapat hidup berdampingan dengan damai setelah serangan 9/11. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif yang menggunakan teori representasi dari Stuart Hall dan teori *Mise-en-scene* sebagai teori film. Setelah menganalisis data, peneliti mengetahui bahwa pembuat film ingin menekankan suara para Muslim Imigran yang tinggal di Amerika pasca tragedi 11/9. Pertama, Muslim Imigran telah menjadi korban rasialisasi oleh orang Amerika karena wajah mereka yang terlihat seperti seseorang yang berasal dari Timur Tengah. Kedua, Media Western harus bertanggung jawab karena menciptakan stereotip negatif pada citra imigran Muslim yang menyebabkan mereka selalu dicurigai.

Kata Kunci : *Imigran Muslim, Teroris, Media, Stereotip.*

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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

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

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Saya menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqasyah untuk memenuhi sebagian syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatian yang diberikan, saya ucapkan terimakasih.

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MOTTO

Your story may not have such a happy beginning,

but that doesn't make you who you are.

So, who are you?

It always seems impossible until it is done.

(Nelson Mandela)



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this graduating paper to;

My beloved father and mother

My beloved brother

English Literature Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta



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Yogyakarta, 26th of April 2019



Retno Dwi Wulandari

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Literature refers to anything in the world of fiction and imagination. Literature can be found in some traditional genres of literary works such as lyric, epic, and drama (Wellek, 1949: 11). Lyric and epic are kinds of literary works presented in written forms, but drama is another kind of literary works shown through visualization. Thus, literary works are not only about something that is written but also anything that carries meaning through visualization.

Moreover, there is another kind of literary works that also appears through visualization, and it is called *movie*. Saroosh Fatima and Lal Zaman state that movie is a narrative with moving images (2016:41). The images shown represent culture, traditions, and the way of life that are actually part of their lives. The audiences tend to be more excited when they watch something that is very close to their life. The power of visualization also makes the moving images seem like real events. This makes the audiences often perceive that anything they have seen is true and believable.

According to Amy Vilarajo, movie not only gives sensations, perceptions, and responses in and over time but also appeals to our memories, our archives of what we know and have known, of what we experience and have experienced (2007: 25). Movie has a big influence for changing minds, feelings, and beliefs of

the audiences because the experience of the audiences is determined by what they have seen. Thus, movie does not only have a function to entertain the audiences, but also to deliver some message to the audiences.

Nowadays, movies grow so rapidly, and Hollywood movie is considered as the potential field in American entertainment industries. Additionally, it is going to be one of the media that successfully shared American propaganda over the world. Zaman said that Hollywood movies have been projecting misrepresentation of Muslims over the world, and they are mostly represented in negative ways (2016:40). It is the reason why the audiences sometimes get misinterpretation or false information about Muslims from the movie they have seen.

According to Stuart Hall, the process of shared meaning to the world is called representation, and he also added that it is the process when meaning is produced and exchanged between members of culture (1997: 15). Here, Hollywood movies use this media to spread their messages over the world. The purpose is to show that they are a superpower nation and no country in the world which can destroy America because of their advanced technology especially on military industries. They unceasingly spread this message because America had a black history in the past with the tragedy of 9/11 related to terrorist attack.

One of the Hollywood movies which contains the issues of 9/11 attacks is *American East* movie. The researcher is interested to analyze the movie because the creator and director of this movie is an Arab-American, Hessaam Issawi. This

movie was produced by an Egyptian film maker, Sayed Badreya. This movie also has successfully won as the Best Creative Short Film at the New York International Festival. (http://web.archive.org/web/20071016232610/http://americaneastmovie.com/bios_inline.html). Furthermore, this movie was also nominated at the Cairo International Film Festival. (<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/dec/23/entertainment/ca-american23>).

Beside the achievement and the story of the movie, another interesting thing to analyze this movie is because it was never released in American movie theaters, but it was just released in DVD format (<https://www.arabamerica.com/hanania-american-east-movie-review-a-powerful-portrayal-of-arab-americans-after-sept-11/>). There is no theater that would show the film to Americans because this movie contains knowledge about Arab Americans in the history 9/11 attacks. Moreover, another article also states that there is no American distributor who helps the creation of this movie. (<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/dec/23/entertainment/ca-american23>).

This research is deserved to be done because it sees something differently. This research is not to identify how Americans portray Arabs, but it identifies how Arabs portray themselves. The movie tells about Muslim immigrants in the United States. Muslims perceive that America is the right country for chasing their dream so that they move to this land for getting prosperity that is better than their previous country. Because of this, the population of Muslim immigrants in America grows rapidly. Unfortunately, they have to be treated badly since they moved there exactly after 9/11 attacks. One of the bad treatments they got is when

they are seen and judged as terrorists. Then, the conflict began when Mustafa and his son pick up his cousin in the airport. Unluckily, Mustafa lost his son. He was so panic and screamed using the Arabic in the airport. Suddenly some FBI agents directly arrested him.

This movie also tries to criticize Hollywood movie production which thinks that Muslims and Americans cannot live together in peace after 9/11 attacks. In fact, it shows that Muslims and Americans can be partner in economic field such as building Middle East Restaurant together. In brief, this movie is chosen because the filmmaker is Arab American, and this movie is also a form of social protests for the Hollywood movie production that generally represents Muslims as terrorists after the history 9/11 attacks through the Western Media.

1.2. Research Question

How are Muslim Immigrants portrayed in *American East* movie?

1.3. Objective of Study

The objective study of this research is to find out the representation of Muslim Immigrants represented in *American East* movie.

1.4. Significances of the study

This research is conducted significantly, first, to make the researcher understand about the movie; second, to find out the voice of Arab-Americans as Muslims who live in the post 9/11 attacks through the representation of Muslim immigrants in *American East* movie; third, to prove that Western media create the negative stereotype towards Muslim and make them the target of suspicion;

fourth, to be one of the references for those who want to analyze some cases using representation theory.

1.5.Literature Review

After doing preliminary reading, the researcher could not find any researches that use the same object for the analysis, but the researcher reviews other researches that apply the same theory. The first research is entitled “*Representation of Whiteness in The Movie 12 Years A Slave*”. This research is a graduating paper written by Arfianto Adi Nugroho that aims to determine the representation of white figure in *12 Years A Slave* movie. He uses data qualitative method and representation theory proposed by Stuart Hall. The analyses were performed with three levels, the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. The result of the research shows that the white figure is described as a superior race while the black figure is represented as the people who are weak and helpless.

The second research entitled “*The Representation of Miranda Priestly in the Devil Wears Prada*” is a graduating paper written by Tri Utami Widayati. She also employs representation theory and constructionist approach by Stuart Hall. The result of this research explains that there are two constructed meanings why Miranda Priestly is represented as a superior career woman. The first meaning is that women cannot share the role of public and domestic at the same time. The second meaning is that the life of career women is not as simple as what described so far, success, glamorous, and happy, but there is a dark side behind this life.

The third research written by Nurmala Rejeki is entitled "*The Representation of Black Consciousness as Seen in Chappie's Movie*". This research is a graduating paper that uses a qualitative method and applies representation theory by Stuart Hall to analyze the object. The results of the research identify two constructed meanings; those are why Chappie is represented as otherness and inferiority. First, Chappie includes Black Consciousness in South Africa who struggles to have the freedom of race. Second, Chappie is a robot which is represented as an independent person.

After reviewing some researches above, it can be concluded that this research is different from the prior researches. What makes this research different from others is that the researcher wants to analyze the representation of Muslim Immigrants who live in America after 9/11 attacks.

1.6. Theoretical Approach

Representation according to Stuart Hall is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of culture (1997: 15). Here is the function of what we call representation. It is about meaning from the concept in our head that then we express it through language. According to Stuart hall, those meanings are constructed by two systems of representation. The first is the system which discusses about the relation between all of objects, people, and events. The second is language which discusses about how meaning are constructed.

Ferdinand De Saussure (via Jonathan Culler, 1976: 19) said that the production of meaning depends on language. Language is a system of signs;

sounds, images, written words, painting, photographs and others. They are used as a sign within language only when they serve to express communicated ideas. Saussure analyzed the sign into two further elements. The first is *signifier* that contains the actual word, image, photo and others, and the second is *signified* that contains the idea or the concept that carries on our head. Thus, the sign is the form of signifier (signifier) and an idea (*signified*) (Hall, 1997: 31).

As cited in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, there are two relevant suggested meanings for the word. First, to represent something is to describe or depict it; second, to represent also means to symbolize, stand for or substitute for. The sounds, words, notes, gestures, expressions, clothes are part of the elements that are linked together. These elements function as a sign arranged with other sign into a system which is capable carrying and expressing meaning. Therefore, representation is the link between the concept and language which enable us to differ between the real world and the imaginary world.

Related to the problem of this research, the researcher also uses the concept of stereotypes, which is called as representational practice. According to Stuart Hall:

Stereotypes get hold of the few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characteristic about a person, reduce everything about the person those traits, *exaggerate* and *simplify* them and fix them without change or development of eternity. So the point is firstly *stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fix difference*.

Secondly, *stereotyping deploys a strategy of 'splitting'*. It divides the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable. It then excludes or expels everything, which does not fit, which is different. So, another feature of stereotyping is its *practice of 'closure'* and exclusion. Stereotyping, in other words, is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. Thirdly, *stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power* (Hall, 1997: 258).

There are three approaches in representation theory; they are reflective approach, intentional approach, and constructionist approach. Here does the researcher use constructionist approach because this approach relates to the problem of the research. According to Stuart Hall, constructionist approach recognizes the public, social character of language (1997: 25). In the constructionist approach, the meaning does not depend on the material quality of the sign but as symbolic function.

Furthermore, the researcher also applies film theory by Ed Sikov as the secondary theory of this research. The film theory which the researcher uses is *Mise-en-scene*. *Mise-en-scene* is the step to understand how film is produced and reflected through the meaning. *Mise-en-scene* consists of the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed such as settings, props, lighting, costumes, make up, figure behavior, camera angle and cinematography (Sikov, 2010). Those detail elements carry some meaning to the audiences, and it is why the researcher uses *Mise-en-scene* theory.

1.7. Method of Research

1.7.1. Type of Research

According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, method is defined as a particular way of doing something. This research applies qualitative method, and according to Robert E. Starke in his book entitled “*Qualitative research: Studying How Things Works*”, he defines qualitative method as interpretive research because the core of interpretive research is investigation that relies heavily on observers defining and redefining the meanings of what they see and hear (2010:36). Furthermore, the researcher also uses interpretation technique to obtain the meaning and the representation of Muslim immigrants in *American East* movie.

1.7.2. Data Sources

In this research, the data sources are divided into two, the main data and the supporting data. The main data are taken from the object of analysis, *American East Movie*, which was released in 2008, with its movie script as primary references. The researcher also searched some books, journals, and other sources as the supporting data that are connected to the topic and the object of this research. Moreover, this research uses movie study and the scripts to get other data that might support the subject matter of this research.

1.7.3. Data Collection Technique

There are some steps to collect the data of this research. First, the researcher watched the movie closely to find the meaning in *American East* movie that could be understood by looking at the intrinsic elements of the movie

intensively. Second, the researcher listed the events of the story based on representation theories variable such as stereotyping, discrimination, religious and social conflict. Third, the researcher looked and screen shot the frames related to the representation theory. The researcher also added the frames with movie dialogues and timing to make them more detailed.

1.7.4. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis technique aims to find the relation of the research data found. After the data are collected, the researcher analyzes them based on cause and effect relation of the variables. The researcher also applies *Mise-en-scene* theory to analyze the data and film theory to support and prove the analysis. Therefore, movie pictures and scripts are taken as well to be the evidences and to make the data analysis more valid.

1.7.5. Paper Organization

This paper consists of four chapters. The first chapter describes background of study, research question, objective of study, significance of the study, literature reviews, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. Chapter two deals with intrinsic elements of *American East* movie. Chapter three discusses the analysis to answer the research question that relate to movie pictures and script. Chapter four draws the conclusion and suggestion for further researchers that are also interested in this study.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1. Conclusion

From what have been analyzed in the previous chapter, the conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that the film makers are able to present *American East* movie as the response of bad treatment experienced by Muslim immigrants in America in the post 9/11 attacks. In this movie, the film maker shows that Muslim Americans are perceived as terrorists. They are racialized because of their Middle Eastern looks such as from dress, skin color, accent, and language which are assumed as the threats for Americans. Muslim Americans are also treated badly and experienced the discrimination in public space and limitation in employment.

The film maker also emphasizes the judgment from Americans towards Muslims that make them feel depressed. It gives impact toward the religiosity of Muslim Americans itself. The film maker shows how Muslim faces religious and social conflicts because they have to defend their religion in the place where Muslim is perceived as the terrorists.

Furthermore, the researcher also found how Muslim are depicted as bad people in Western media after 9/11 attacks. They are represented through negative stereotype such as violence, misrepresentation of religious Islamic concept, and uncivilized. Those negative stereotypes make American often misunderstand

Muslims. As the impact, Muslim immigrants are treated as they are not as citizen in the nation. Therefore, Western media should be responsible for shaping Muslims as negative stereotypes because it makes Muslim become the target of suspicion.

4.2. Suggestion

American East movie tells about life of Muslim immigrants who live in America after 9/11 attacks. For the next researchers who are interested to analyze this movie as well, the binary opposition theory and postcolonial theory can be used to examine this movie because this movie also shows the life between the East and the West.

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Skills

- Able to speak English, Indonesian, and Javanese.
- Public Speaking
- Computer Skill: OS (*Operating System*) & Peripheral Installation, Networking Installation, MS Office & Excel, Design (Corel Draw), Multimedia (Vegas, Camtasia, Macromedia).

Formal Education

2004-2010 SD Negeri Sawah

2010-2012 SMP Negeri 2 Panggang

2012-2015 SMK Negeri 1 Saptosari, Teknik Komputer dan Jaringan (TKJ)

2015-2019 Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Program Studi Sastra Inggris

Organizational Experience

- 2016-2019** Koperasi Mahasiswa UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
- 2017-2019** Lembaga Pendidikan dan Pelatihan KOPMA UIN Sunan Kalijaga (LP2KIS)
- 2018** Himpunan Mahasiswa Jurusan (HMJ) Sastra Inggris UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

