

**THE CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF AMERICAN AND  
PAKISTANI AS SEEN IN AISHA SAEED'S *WRITTEN IN THE STARS***

**A GRADUATING PAPER**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Gaining

the Bachelor Degree in English Literature



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Saya menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqasyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris. Atas perhatiannya, kami ucapkan terimakasih.

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**THE CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF AMERICAN AND  
PAKISTANI AS SEEN IN AISHA SAEED'S *WRITTEN IN THE STARS***

By: Bella Nagari (16150054)

**ABSTRACT**

Representation of culture is portrayed in literary works. The representation of culture brings the reproduction of the said culture into public eyes. When the representation of a culture is wrongly done, the country whose culture is being presented takes its burden. This problem is depicted in Aisha Saeed's *Written in the Stars*. Regarding the issue, this research is intended to analyze the cultural representation of two cultures presented by the author in the story using Stuart Halls representation theory. Furthermore, this is qualitative research in which the researcher comprehends social problems based on detailed information in its natural setting on the novel. Based on the analysis, the representation of two cultures, which are Pakistan and America, varies from each other. The cultural representation of Pakistan emphasizes the condition of a third-world country with issues of how women are unfairly treated. In contrast, the cultural representation of America explains the country, aside from their sexes, treats individuals fairly.

**Keywords:** *Written in the Stars, American and Pakistan, Cultural Representation*



# REPRESENTASI BUDAYA AMERIKA DAN PAKISTAN

## WRITTEN IN THE STARS OLEH AISHA SAEED

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### ABSTRAK

Representasi budaya digambarkan dalam karya sastra. Representasi budaya membawa reproduksi budaya tersebut ke mata publik. Ketika representasi suatu budaya dilakukan secara salah, negara yang budayanya dipresentasikan akan menanggung bebannya. Masalah ini digambarkan dalam novel karya Aisha Saeed yang berjudul *Written in the Stars*. Berkaitan dengan masalah tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi dua budaya yang dihadirkan penulis dalam cerita dengan menggunakan teori representasi oleh Stuart Hall. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif di mana peneliti memahami masalah sosial berdasarkan informasi rinci dalam keadaan alaminya seperti yang terlihat di. Berdasarkan analisis representasi dua budaya, yaitu Pakistan dan Amerika, berbeda antara satu sama lain. Representasi budaya Pakistan menekankan kondisi negara dunia ketiga dengan isu bagaimana perempuan diperlakukan tidak adil. Sebaliknya, representasi budaya Amerika menjelaskan negara, selain jenis kelamin mereka dan memperlakukan individu secara adil.

**Kata Kunci:** *Written in the Stars, Amerika dan Pakistan, Representasi Budaya*

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## **MOTTO**

It may be that you hate something when it is very good for you, and it may also be that you like something when it is very bad for you, Allah knows while you do not know.

Q.S. Al-Baqarah : 216





## **DEDICATION**

I dedicated with honor, love and affection

My Beloved Parents (Dwi Krintono and Surani) My Beloved Grandmother (Tumikem)

My Beloved Sister (Atikah Amaliah Maharani) My Big Family of English Literature

Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Literary work deals with the representation of culture (Hall, 1997). Various cultures have been represented in literary works. For example, the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen show England's cultural representation in the late 1700. The cultural representation is concerned with the background of the setting in the novel, the norms and cultural codes that act as the story's background. Cultural representation in literary work is also depicted in Aisha Saeed's *Written in the Stars*. The novel tells the story of a young girl named Naila who struggles to be free from her family's forced marriage. Naila is portrayed as a young girl who lives in America with Pakistani immigrant parents.

Naila, raised in a secular nation like America, has to deal with her strict and conservative Pakistani immigrant parents. Her parents forbid her to hang out with boys. They always pick and drive her everywhere, and she is not allowed to go to any events where girls and boys mingle together. Eventually, Naila breaks her parent's rule by going to the prom with her boyfriend in which her parents find it out. Then, her parents send her to Pakistan for her forced marriage, which Naila knows nothing about. She then tries to break free from the marriage with the help of her boyfriend and his family (Saeed, 2015).

The issue in the novel mostly revolves around the impact of forced marriage. The author herself says that she writes *Written in the Stars* as a reminiscence of what

has happened to her. Saeed, who is Pakistani-American descent, is set up for marriage by her family. Fortunately, both she and her spouse fall in love and support each other's dreams (Saeed, 2015: 179). Saeed states that the story is dedicated to those who do not share the same luck with her. Saeed portrays the girls who are coerced into an arranged marriage, the girls who are taught that they have very little to say about themselves from a young age.

Among the issues stated above, the researcher wants to focus on the cultural representation in the novel. As written earlier, literary works deal with the representation of culture. Taken from Hall's definition of culture, he (1997: 2) argues that culture shares values within a group or society. Representation of culture in literary works can be understood as the shared values people in their respective groups within the story distribute with one and another. In *Written in the Stars*, two distinct cultural backgrounds influence the story. The first one is America, and the other is Pakistan. The two different backgrounds shape the characters in the story, representing each of their cultures through the way they are.

The problem in representation arises when the representation in the story is being treated as the representation of the culture in real life. Even more, individuals who represent the culture have not done proper research about the culture itself. According to Hall (1997: 01), in his circuit of culture, representation brings identity, then production to consumption to regulation and move back to representation in a never-ending circle. When the representation is wrongly done, the circuit of culture will produce the wrong representation over and over again until someone who has done proper research about the culture clarifies.

In *Written in the Stars*, the author who acts as the one who represents the two cultures has the burden of how to represent both cultures in her writing. The author, Saeed, has the freedom to portray the two cultures in the story as she wishes. As stated above, the author says that she writes the story as a reminiscence of her own story with a twist. Then, the author's background as Pakistani-American raised influences the cultural background of the story. As the story is heavily influenced by the cultural background of America and Pakistan, it will show how the author delivers the cultural representation of both countries. Moreover, based on the problem statement above, the researcher will use the representation theory by Stuart Hall to analyze this research. The researcher intends to study the cultural representation of America and Pakistan portrayed in the novel.

### **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background of study explained above, the researcher arranges the following question which is how are the cultural representation of America and Pakistan as presented in Aisha Saeed's *Written in the Stars*.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the problem statement, this research aims to explain the cultural representation of America and Pakistan which is portrayed in Aisha Saeed's *Written in the Stars*.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

First, the researcher hopes that this research can contribute to literary research explaining about portrayal of culture. Second, this research aims to show people how the

cultural portrayal of ethnical cultures are being presented by someone who is originally comes from the community. Third, it is hoped that this research also contributes to demonstrate how the portrayal of culture explain by Hall's theory of cultural representation.

### 1.5 Literature Review

The researcher finds similar research discussing about *Written in The Stars* entitled “Negative Impacts of Forced Marriage in Aisha Saeed’s *Written in The Stars*” (2020) by M. Manugeran Kahfiatika submitted in Journal of Language volume 2 number 1. This research explains about the negative impacts of forced marriage in *Written in The Stars* and to describe the negative impacts of forced marriage. This research uses aqualitative descriptive study because this research shows the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of study. Then, the result of this study shows that the implementation of forced marriage only brings negative impacts either to one or both parties. There are two forms of negative impacts found in this research; violence and loss of social relationship. Violence is divided into two forms; physical violence and verbal abuse.

Furthermore, the researcher finds a paper with similar theory about representation by Stuart Hall, entitled “The Representation of Muslim American in Karan Johars Movie *My Name is Khan*” (2015) by Sarah Widita Putri, submitted in partial fulfilment of requirement for gaining the bachelor degree in English Department of Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Brawijaya University. The object in this research is a movie by Karan Johar entitled *My Name is Khan*. In addition, this research applies Representation Theory by Stuart Hall to help the researcher analyzes the data of the study



more accurately and objectively. The researcher also uses the *mise en scene* to help interpreting the meaning from figures of the movie in order to reveal the representation of Muslim American after 9/11 tragedy. The problem in this object is the movie *My Name is Khan* has a characteristic of moral value which aims to correct misconception about Islam. The misconception about Islam is Islamic Fundamental, Al-Qaeda, and so on, which is not all society know about it. This research reveals the representation of a Muslim American that is represented as the victim of misconception about Islam. Besides, they are as well defined as tolerant and religious, and people who praise humanity based on five pillars of Islam and its Islamic fundamentals. Furthermore, Karan Johar represents Muslim Americans after 9/11 through Rizwan, which Americans mistreat, and many scenes prove it.

Continuously, the researcher finds similar theory about representation by Stuart Hall in a paper entitled “The Representation of Muslim Immigrants in American East Movie (2008)” by Retno Dwi Wulandari (2019). It is submitted in partial fulfilment of requirement for gaining the bachelor degree in English Department, State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga. This research is deserved to be done because it sees something different. This research identifies how Arabs portray themselves. This research also criticizes Hollywood movie production, which assumes that Muslims and Americans cannot live together in peace after 9/11. The researcher uses a qualitative study that applies representation theory by Stuart Hall and *mise en scene* theory by Ed Sikov as film theory. The result of the research is the filmmaker wants to emphasize the voice of Muslim immigrants who live in America after the

9/11 attacks. First, the voice is about the racialization of Muslim immigrants by Americans that see them as terrorists 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.

The fourth research is a graduating paper by Muhammad Syaeful Rizal entitled “The Representation of Islam and Nationalism In Lion Of The Desert (1981)” in 2019. The writer was an English Department student at State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The researcher uses the representation theory by Stuart Hall, the theory of movie and cinematography by Amy Villarejo, and also theory of nations and nationalism by Ernest Gellner. In this research, the researcher uses a qualitative method that refers to things' meaning, concept, and characteristics. The researcher concludes that the Islam depicted in the film is defined by staunch Bedouin Muslims and the Islam that forms the nationalism of the Libyan people. Islam represented as such in the end creates a national identity that unites the Libyan people. From the analysis of this film, it can be concluded that Islam is represented as a strong Bedouin Muslim who breaks the stereotype of their depiction as backward and poor. Islam is also represented as pious, which is seen through social practices and rituals. Both Italy and Libya are stereotyped represented by each other through accidentalism and paradigms.

The fifth research is Iva Nadhirotun Nafi'ah's thesis paper entitled “The Representation of Jewish and Muslim friendship in Arranged (2007). The writer was a student of English Department at State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Her thesis was written in 2019. The researcher wants to know about how Jewish and Muslims are portrayed together with each religion and constructed

meaning from the relationship. The writer uses representation from Stuart Hall to get meaning from the movie based on the scenes, images, dialogues, and the other elements of the movie. The writer describes Rochel and his family as Jews with conservative thoughts and appearances. This is evidenced by the criticism from the people around them and the mystical behavior they still maintain. On the other hand, Jews are also described as believers who carry suspicions against Muslims. It is evident from the moment of rejection of Rochel's mother when Nasira, a Muslim, visited his house. Later, the author portrays Nasira and her family as being conservative in appearance and thinking like Jews. Still, they are portrayed as people who are fighting to eliminate Islamophobia in America. In addition, a Muslim is described by the author as a person who has excellent tolerance in his life.

Another literary review is graduating paper entitled “The Representation of Black Consciousness as Seen in Chappies Movie” by Nurmala Rejeki (2017), a student of English Department, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Science, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. The researcher observes the representation of a robot man by concerning with otherness and inferiority. The aim of this research is to understand Chappie's representation of otherness and inferiority. This paper uses the theory of representation by using the constructionist approach by Stuart Hall. Qualitative description methods are used as the research method. Using the qualitative description method, the researcher answers the problem statements that there are two constructed meanings why Chappie is represented as otherness and inferiority. First, Chappie is included as Black Consciousness in South Africa who

struggles for having the freedom of race. Second, even though Chappie is a robot, he is represented as an independent person.

The last one is the research entitled “The Representation of Miranda Priestly in the *Devil Wears Prada* Movie” by Tri Utami Widyawati (2014), submitted in partial fulfilment of requirement for gaining the bachelor degree in English Department, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Studies, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. The researcher observes one of the characters in the *Devil Wears Prada* movie named Miranda Priestly by concerning in superiority. Miranda Priestly is a female character who can represent the superiority of a career woman. This research aims to understand Miranda Priestly's representation of superiority and to find the meaning of representation. This paper also employs the theory of representation by using the constructionist approach by Stuart Hall. This research explains that there are two constructed meanings why Miranda Priestly is represented as a superior career woman. First, women cannot share the role of public and domestic at the same time. Second, the career woman's life is not as simple as what described so far; success, glamorous, and happy, but there is a dark side behind this life.

This research and the researches above have similarities in terms of object and theory. However, what distinguishes this research from others is this research focuses on how the cultural representation of America and Pakistan in the novel is described as *Written in the Stars*. To conclude, this research discusses the context of cultural representation in *Written in the Stars* using representation theory.

## 1.6 Theoretical Approach

In this research, the researcher uses the theory of representation by Stuart Hall. The researcher uses the theory because the theory is relevant to answer the research question as formulated previously. It is believed that representation theory by Hall can answer and assist the research to analyze the cultural representation of America and Pakistan portrayed in Aisha Saeed's *Written in the Stars*.

Representation understands the reproduction of the meaning in mind through language (Hall, 1997: 17). It is a process of how human minds create or produce a meaning which can be explained through language. Representation also can be understood as a way to explain things through language from one person to another. To produce meaning, representation uses a symbol and a particular sound through the language as a sign then delivers the meaning. Hall (1997) argues that signs may also have material dimension. The material dimension can be pictures printed on photo paper, a canvas full of painting, and another material dimension the creator wishes to convey. The meaning of the representation is not based on the quality of the material as sign, but the symbolic function of what the work means (Hall, 1997: 25-26).

According to Hall (1997), there are three approaches in representation; reflective, intentional, and constructionist. This research focuses on the constructionist approach because this approach is more eligible to analyze and answer the research question as stated above. Hall (1997: 24) continues that the constructionist approach understands a language's public and social character.

Things are meant to be constructed using the representational system, which is concept and sign. It is called constructionist approach because it is intended to be built.

Constructionist approach recognizes that the user of the language cannot fix the meaning. Still, it also does not deny the material world the language comes with (things, people, symbolic, practice and process). The material world does not deliver the meaning of the language, but it is the system in which the language user tries to provide the meaning behind the language. It is the social actor who makes the world meaningful using the concept of culture, linguistics, and other conceptual systems to construct meaning. This approach states that people mean to construct language through concepts and signs. People construct their own meaning in the object through their own language (Hall, 1997: 25).

## **1.7 Methods of Research**

This part explains the type of research, data source, data collection technique, and data analysis technique.

### **1.7.1 Type of Research**

In this paper, the researcher uses library research that applies the qualitative method. Research that is guided by the qualitative paradigm is defined as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.” (Creswell, 1994).

The researcher analyzes the same way; the understanding, the problems, and

reporting detailed informant views that emphasize socially shaped reality, close relationships between researcher and those studied, and the characteristics of value-filled research.

### **1.7.2 Data Sources**

The researcher uses two different kinds of data in this paper, there are primary data and supporting data. The main data in this research is taken from a novel entitled *Written in The Stars* by Aisha Saeed. All words, phrases, paragraphs, and discourse related to the cultural representation are the researcher's primary data. The secondary data in this research are taken from representative books, journals, articles, and websites that related to the issue.

### **1.7.3 Data Collection Technique**

In this research, there are several steps to collect the data. The first step is data preparation. The researcher has to read and comprehend the novel for collecting the data. The second step is the researcher has to classify the main data into several variables based on representation theory by Stuart Hall. The next step is analyzing the story by interpreting how the cultural representation of American and Pakistani in the novel. The last step is the researcher draws conclusion for the data.

### **1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique**

Firstly, the researcher identifies the events that relate to the cultural representation of America and Pakistan. Secondly, the researcher sorts the evidence collected from the story into several relevant categories and variables based on representation theory by Stuart Hall. Thirdly, the researcher analyzes the data found using representation theory by Stuart Hall combined with the issue in literary works

in order to answer the research question. Lastly, the analysis provides a summarized answer to the research question.

### **1.8 Paper Organization**

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter contains the background of study, research question, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, methods of research, and paper organization. Chapter two is about the intrinsic elements in *Written in The Stars*. Then, chapter three is the analysis of *Written in The Stars* contents in reference to the conception of the theories. Lastly, chapter four is the conclusion and suggestion of the research.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of how is the cultural representation of America and Pakistan as seen in *Written in the Stars* using representation theory by Stuart Hall, it can be concluded that the representation of culture can be seen through the dialogue and action taken by the characters in the story. The representation then brings up the image of the culture in the media.

The variables which the researcher has constructed from the novel and the theory indicate the cultural representation shown in the novel. The variables are Pakistan as a country with patriarchal society, Pakistan as a third-world country, America as country with valued individual freedom, and America as developed country. These variables contradict one and another as the result of the cultural representation that is presented in the novel.

Pakistan, as a country with a patriarchal society serves as the representation of how Pakistan treats women. It is explained in the analysis that this variable is divided into more categories which are female oppression and male supremacy. These categories explain how women, especially young women, are treated with less to no respect. Pakistan as a third-world country is added in to underline how developing countries deal with their problem and how they treat their people. America, as country with valued individual freedom highlights how people aside from their sexes are treated fairly. The representation shows the freedom

someone gets as an American citizen. The author shows the differences between living in America and Pakistan in this variable. America as a developed country also acts as the background that underlines America's modernity that other influences how people are being treated in the country.

To sum up, the representation of both countries is being described very differently. The representation in the novel indicates how the author wants to deliver her message of the culture and condition of both countries as she prefers. As said earlier, Hall (1997) stated that representation is an ongoing process of production. These representations show how both countries are being shown in the media. The researcher understands that not all media represents both countries the same way as the novel does, but it adds to the reproduction of some cultures.

#### **4.2 Suggestions**

Aisha Saeed's *Written in the Stars* tells the story of a young girl named Naila who struggles to be free from the forced marriage her family set upon her. She is portrayed as a young girl who lives in America with Pakistani immigrants' parents. Naila, raised in a secular nation like America, has to deal with her strict and conservative Pakistani immigrant parents. The issues in the novel mostly revolve around the impact of forced marriage. Hopefully, other researchers or thesis writers will learn the novel and select the other theme of the novel that can be analyzed by using other theories such as Feminism theory or Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory.

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