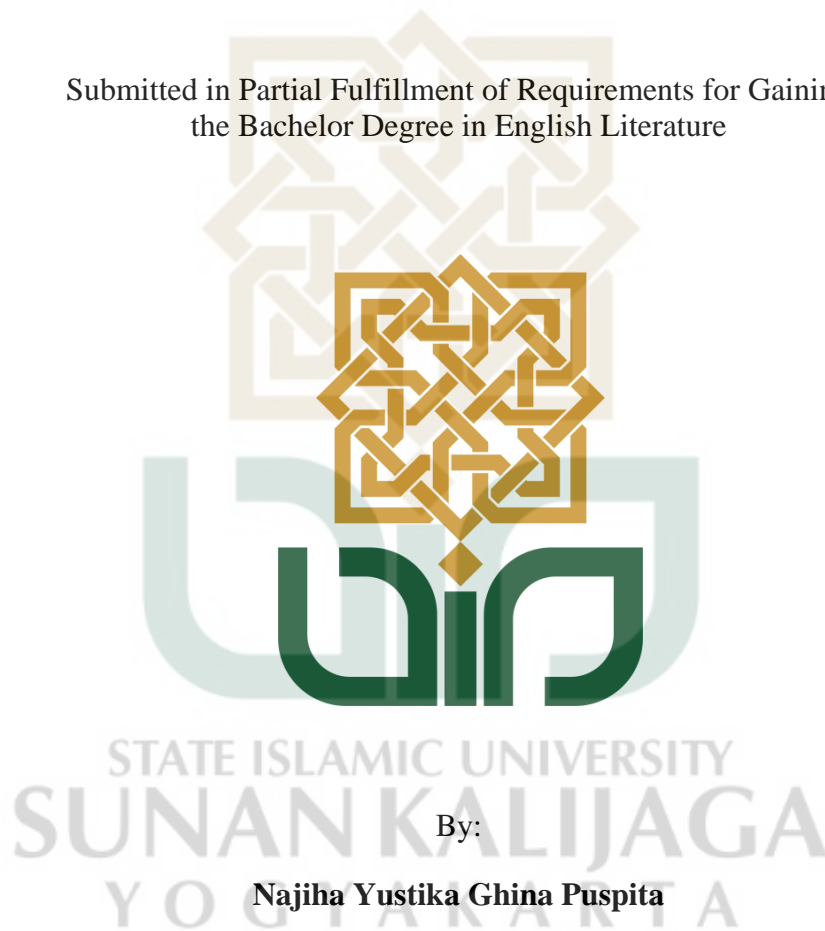


READING RAEF HAGGAG'S *THE MUSLIM CHRISTMAS SONG*

LYRICS: A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY ANALYSIS

A GRADUATING PAPER

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



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2022

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 this thesis are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

Yogyakarta, January 14th, 2022

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LYRICS: A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY ANALYSIS

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Atas pertimbangannya, saya ucapkan terima kasih

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READING RAEF HAGGAG'S *THE MUSLIM CHRISTMAS SONG* LYRICS: A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Muslim Christmas Song is a controversial Islamic religious song because it raises the pros and cons of public opinion. The existence of the word “Christmas” in the song title and the words “Jesus” and “Mary” in the song lyrics are the problems that make this song be studied in this reserch. The researcher uses the lyrics of *The Muslim Christmas Song* by Raef Haggag as the object of research in this graduating paper. This study uses the semiotic of poetry theory by Michael Riffaterre. Close reading is the data collection technique used in this study. This research uses the qualitative method. In addition, in this graduating paper the meaning of the song can be found in several stages, namely (1) indirect expression, (2) heuristic and hermeneutic reading, (3) matrix, variant, and model. *The Muslim Christmas Song* is a song with lyrics that contain upholding Islamic values. The song has a subtle message of tolerance and the lyrics contain sentences of praise.

Keywords: *Lyrics, Michael Rifaterre, Semiotics of Poetry, Tolerance, The Muslim Christmas Song*

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READING RAEF HAGGAG'S *THE MUSLIM CHRISTMAS SONG* LYRICS: A SEMIOTICS OF POETRY ANALYSIS

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ABSTRAK

The Muslim Christmas Song adalah lagu religi islami yang kontroversial karena menimbulkan pendapat pro dan kontra dari masyarakat. Adanya kata “Christmas” pada judul lagu serta kata “Jesus” dan “Mary” pada lirik lagu menjadi masalah yang membuat lagu ini dikaji pada penelitian ini. Peneliti menggunakan lirik *The Muslim Christmas Song* karya Raef Haggag sebagai objek penelitian dalam skripsi ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori semiotika puisi oleh Michael Riffaterre. *Close reading* merupakan teknik pengumpulan data pada penelitian ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Selain itu, pada skripsi ini makna lagu dapat ditemukan dengan beberapa tahap yaitu 1) *indirect expression*, (2) membaca secara *heuristic* dan *hermeneutic*, (3) *matrix*, *varian* dan *model*. *The Muslim Christmas Song* adalah lagu yang memiliki lirik yang berisi menjunjung tinggi nilai keislaman. Lagu tersebut memiliki pesan toleransi yang halus dan liriknya berisikan kalimat-kalimat pujian.

Kata Kunci: Lirik, Michael Rifaterre, Semiotika Puisi, Toleransi, *The Muslim Christmas Song*

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MOTTO

“Life is the art of drawing without an eraser”

-John W Gardner

“Great things are not done by impulse,
but by a series of small things brought together”

-Vincent van Gogh



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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to:

My beloved parents

My beloved brothers and sisters

My great lecturers

My lovely friends

Harsiwi Fajar Sari, SS., M.A., my dearest advisor

English Literature Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga,

and last but not least,

Myself

Yogyakarta, January 14th, 2022

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Song is a sound that contains music and conveys a message through the lyrics. Each song has a voice, music, and lyrics with different special arrangements. Jon War (2015) said that song is a composition composed of lyrics and music, with the intention of the lyrics being sung, to produce a proportionate emotion or feeling concerning a particular problem. The lyrics in the song are included in the type of poetry. According to Abrams (2009: 179), lyric is any relatively short poetry delivered by a single speaker that expresses a state of a process of the perception or mind, idea, and feeling. Through the lyrics, the listeners or readers will know about the topic or theme of the song. The song lyrics are equated with poetry because lyrics use literary devices, identical with poetry commonly, and they usually exist in poetry such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, repetition, and rhyme. The song also creates imagination and expression of what someone has felt, heard, seen, and experienced before.

When songwriters express their experiences, they also use literary methods to create the appeal and uniqueness of the lyrics. The song lyrics are a kind of literary works that express human's imaginations, emotions, and feelings. According to Awe, the song's lyrics are a concise word arrangement (2003: 12). It is how a human describes what he has heard and seen by arranging the words and the language to attract his poems or lyrics. The song is formed from a relationship

between the elements of poetry and music. In this condition, song is a little way to deliver messages from the writer as the communicator and tell the hearers as the communicant in prominent media.

Jan van Luxemburg (1989: 175) said that the definition about the texts of poetry does include not only in the types of literature but also about an expression of the maxim character, the message of an advertisement, poetry, pop songs, slogans of politics, and prayers. Lawrence Ferlinghetti (2020) said poetry is a shadow cast by our streetlight imaginations. Most poetry is used as a song because music can provide aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language and help give the audience a more profound sense of poetry to make it easier to convey the messages of poetry with more exciting things.

The Muslim Christmas Song is a song by Raef Haggag, an American musician of Egyptian descent born in Washington D.C. He is an influential songwriter whose songs are aimed at Muslims and faith-based communities worldwide. He created this song in 2016, which caused controversy because Christian and Islam were compared. There are some perceptions about this song. Many comments and some reaction videos from the listeners of *The Muslim Christmas Song* on YouTube and any social media show that there is controversy because not all people accept this song. However, some articles such as *Lagu Natal Islam, Sebuah Paradoks Kebhinekaan, Lagu Natal yang Indah dari Seorang Muslim yang Menghargai Perbedaan, Marhaban Ya Natalan, and Lagu Natal untuk Muslim / HM Guntur Romli* are support this song.

Usually, some religious songs are accepted by everyone according to their perspective religions. *The Muslim Christmas Song* received mixed reactions from listeners. There are positive reactions and negative reactions. There are those who support and some do not support this song. According to the comments and reaction videos on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, the song still has pros and cons opinion from Muslims and Christians. Muslims are Raef's target of writing this song because the lyrics support and mention their God and Muslim prophets, namely Allah, Prophet Muhammad SAW, and Prophet Isa AS. Christians are also related because in this song the Prophet Isa AS and his mother are mentioned with Jesus and Mary, which is what Christians usually say.

The Muslim Christmas Song is issued to coincide with the birthday of Prophet Muhammad SAW and Christmas in the year when the song was published. In the song, some lyrics mention Mary and Jesus. The lyrics also convey the majesty of Allah SWT and Prophet Muhammad SAW. Some people still do not accept *The Muslim Christmas Song* because they consider it to insult each other's religions.

QS.Yunus 40-41:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

And of them is he who believeth therein, and of them is he who believeth not therein, and thy Lord is Best Aware of the corrupters. (40)

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ أَنْتُمْ بَرِيءُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

And if they deny thee, say: Unto me my work, and unto you your work. You are innocent of what I do, and I am innocent of what you do. (41)

These two verses of QS. Yunus explain that there are Muslims who believe in Al-Qur'an, but some do not believe in the Qur'an, deny Muhammad, and do not worship Allah, including people who are not Muslims. This verse explains that your religious affairs (non-Muslims) are still your business and not my (Muslims) responsibility. In this verse, there is an implicit meaning, namely the existence of tolerance between religious communities, which is the matter of each religion without any debate. One word that is in the revelation in verse is "peace".

Tolerance is peace and the desire to tolerate behaviors or opinions that are not the same as ours, do not agree with us, or dislike us. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the definition of tolerance is a willingness to accept beliefs and behaviors even if they differ from yours, whether you agree or disagree. Tolerance is about respect, appreciation, and peace. Wasino (2006: 35) said the relationship between religious communities in certain areas causes them to contact and have social interaction.

Many opinions support *The Muslim Christmas Song* in several articles, such as the article written by A.Bilandoro (2017) by the title *Lagu Natal Islam, Sebuah Paradoks Kebhinekaan*. The article explains that Raef sang the song to inform listeners about Jesus from an Islamic perspective while spreading love through his music. *The Muslim Christmas Song* can be a paradox of such deep beliefs for some of its adherents, which of course, still needs to be respected. It can also be a creative art medium that is fun to listen to, with acceptable tolerance in diversity and is not awkward to live side-by-side.

There is one of the examples of a statement that does not support *The Muslim Christmas Song*. Abdi Malik makes the contrary statement in a video on the AbdimalikTV YouTube channel. In the video, the first he responds that he likes the song because the lyrics are good, and the song has positive vibes such as like total energy and happiness. However, he concludes that he does not support the song after that. Abdi Malik has thought that the song has practiced and celebrated Christmas for fear that it would give the wrong message to the children who know the song.

The two examples of reaction stated above shows the different possibilities on how people accept or interpret this song. Concerning the title, it shows the words "Muslim" but "Christmas". Christmas is a big day for Christians, while the big day for Muslims is *Ramadhan*. Thus, it is strange to see the song by the title *The Muslim Christmas Song*. Further, there is also a mention of "La ilaha illa Allah", which means a part of creed or *syahadat*, where the songwriter's background is a Muslim. Besides, there are the use of the words Jesus and Mary which are known closely related to Christian.

The focus of the problem in this song is that there are two words that do not fit into one sentence title in a Muslim religious song, namely *The Muslim Christmas Song*. Another problem is the existence of the words Jesus and Mary in the lyrics of the Islamic song which not all Muslims usually use to pronounce Prophet Isa AS and Maryam. This problem is the basic reason in the end for the analysis by means of researchers looking for the meaning of each song lyric.

Based on some problems mentioned above, the researcher is interested in seeing the meaning of *The Muslim Christmas Song*. Accordingly, to understand and find out more about the song's meaning, the researcher uses the semiotics of poetry theory by Riffatere. From the meaning of the song, the researcher will relate to the expression of tolerance as seen in the song. Riffatere's concept is helpful to get the significance related to tolerance in Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song*. The selection of this theory is suitable because the aim of the researcher is to find out the details of the meaning of the lyrics of *The Muslim Christmas Song*. Semiotics of poetry is a theory that is used to find the meaning of poetry by finding (1) indirect expression, (2) heuristic and hermeneutic reading, (3) matrix, model, and variant (4) hypogram. Therefore, *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics are treated as poetry.

1.2 Research Question

According to the background of the research, the research in this graduating paper is intended to find the answers to the following question: What is the significance of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics?

1.3 Objective of Study

According to the research problem, this research aims to figure out the significance of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics.

1.4 Significance of Study

There are two kinds of significance in this research, theoretically and practically. Theoretically is still relevant to find the meaning of poetry, especially in the song, which is about the lyrics. Semiotics is the theory necessary to use the

structuralist paradigm to find the meaning. Semiotics of poetry can be applied in the lyric as poetry and prose by modifying the methods. Semiotics of poetry is the theory that used to find the meaning from *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics.

Practically, the research can enrich the discussion of the meaning of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* through semiotics of poetry's reading. It can be discussed from the song lyrics in style regarding figurative language. The discussion about the song lyrics can contribute to academic research and the following literature research.

1.5 Literature Review

There is no research using *The Muslim Christmas Song* by Raef Haggag as the object of research before. Likewise, some researchers are using the semiotics of poetry theory by Michael Riffaterre.

The researcher finds five types of research with similar theories from the researches before. The first study is a graduating paper from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta in 2016 with the title of *Reading the meaning of War in Nathalie Handal's "War": A Semiotics of Poetry Analysis*. It was written by Anisah Haidaratul Hanifah. The researcher seeks the meaning of the word war because it is still a polemic until today in her graduating paper through Riffaterre's semiotics of poetry theory. It tells about the significance of poetry like heuristic and hermeneutic reading; models, matrix, hypogram, and variant. This paper reveals that there is war in Palestine related to the hypogram in the Qur'an Hajj: 40, Al-Maidah: 21, and Al-Maidah: 26.

The second is a graduating paper from Hesti Rohmaniasari by using the semiotics of poetry theory by Michael Riffaterre entitled *Reading Swinburne's the garden of Proserpine: A Semiotics of Poetry Analysis* from UIN Sunan Kalijaga in 2017. The matrix of the poem is the lamentation from goddesses, and the hypograms of the poem are the poems by George Herbert entitled "Death", by Homer entitled "Hymn to Demeter", and by Henry Vaughan entitled "The World".

The third study is a graduating paper by using the semiotics of poetry theory by Michael Riffaterre entitled *Reading The Meaning of Love in World Interfaith Harmony Week's Anthem: Semiotics of Poetry Analysis*. It is written by Wakhyu Arif Pambudi from UIN Sunan Kalijaga in 2018. In that paper, the researcher uses *The Gift of Love Song*, and he needs to find the meaning of "love". His final research shows that the meaning of "love" in the song's lyrics is that he has a message to love God and human beings. From the lyrics of the song, the researcher gets the hypogram with verses in the Qur'an and the Bible that are Ash-Shura: 40, Al-Anbiya: 107, Al-Baqarah: 195, Matthew 5: 39, Luke 21: 1-4, and Colossians 3: 13.

The fourth study is a graduating paper by M.Azroi from UIN Sunan Kalijaga in 2019. The title of this paper is *Reading Bob Marley's I Shot The Sheriff Lyric: A Semiotics of Poetry Analysis* by using the semiotics of poetry theory by Michael Riffaterre. The researcher uses heuristic and hermeneutic reading. This research aims to find the fights from the narrator to government

control, and these lyrics are hypograms of the main song of burnin' and lotin lyrics from the Burnin' Album.

The last is a graduating paper entitled *Reading the Meaning of Death in Rudyard Kipling's The Gift of Sea Poem: A Semiotic Poetry Analysis*. The researcher is Watsiqotul Azizah from UIN Sunan Kalijaga in 2019. This research uses the semiotic of poetry from Riffaterre's theory and uses heuristic and hermeneutic reading. The matrix of this poem is the sacrifice of the widow to the sea as she prays to let her child start life in the afterlife. The hypogram of his poetry is by the title of *A Hopeless Dawn* from Frank Bramley's painting.

After searching for several studies from the graduating papers of UIN Sunan Kalijaga's students of English Literature department that are evidently similar to this study, the researcher does not find the material objects that use the lyrics of *The Muslim Christmas Song* in their studies. However, the researcher finds all of the studies that use the semiotics of poetry theory by Michael Riffaterre for the theory. *The Muslim Christmas Song* as an object of this paper has never been analyzed before in the graduating paper.

The contribution to this kind of research is to know the significance of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* by Michael Riffaterre's theory about semiotics of poetry. This research analyzes the song lyrics that are still being debated about whether it is true or not, good or bad, regarding the purpose of this song being made.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

The researcher uses the theory to find the meaning of poetry in this research. Semiotics of poetry by Michael Riffaterre is the theory used in this graduating paper. The researcher wants to find out about the meaning of the song lyrics of *The Muslim Christmas Song* by Raef Haggag. This Riffaterre's theory uses an objective approach; this approach aims to find the poetry's significance. This theory uses structure and form to create a text for the paradigm, called the structuralist paradigm. The variables of semiotics use signifier and signified.

Riffaterre says that there are four main things to produce the poetry meaning, namely: (1) indirect expression, (2) heuristic and hermeneutic reading, (3) matrix, model, and variant, and (4) hypogram.

The poetry expresses a concept indirectly, and the alteration from one to another meaning happens in indirection. Thus, this concept makes the poem's language has a different language and character from daily language. According to Riffaterre's book entitled *Semiotics of Poetry*, a poem says one thing and it means another (1978: 1). This opinion is the expressed concept and things by indirection, and after that, to know the structure meaning of poetry, it can search the indirection. Riffaterre's book explains that indirection is produced by displacing, distorting, and creating meaning in semantics indirection. The researcher must pay attention to the next about three important things: those are displacing meaning, distorting meaning, and creating meaning (Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*, 1984: 2). Displacing is when a sign that transferred from one meaning to another and it happens in metaphor and metonymy. Distorting is the

situation when ambiguities, contradictions, or nonsense exist. Creating is when textual space cannot be meaningful in other contexts to create signs from linguistics units. In this graduating paper, there are no lyrics that include distorting meaning.

There are two essential terms, heuristic and hermeneutic. This term is the first important thing to appeal to in the process of understanding poetry. The terms are commonly referred to as heuristic reading and hermeneutic reading related to the semiotics approach. Heuristic is process of the reading based on normative, morphological, semantics, and syntactic grammar (Riffaterre, 1984). Riffaterre said that heuristic is the first interpretation takes place because the meaning is apprehended during this reading (1978: 5). Hermeneutic reading is reading for the second interpretation (Riffaterre, 1984: 5). Hermeneutic which Riffaterre also calls retroactive reading, critical reading, and requires repeated (Nurgiyantoro, 2009: 33).

The next important thing that needs to be clarified is the meaning of a poem such as finding a matrix, model, and variant. This indirection is what makes poetry unique from other literary works to deliver the message. Riffaterre tells in his book that matrix is minimal and literal sentence that becomes a long, complex, and non-literal periphrasis (1984: 19). Matrix can be in the form of one word, a combination of words, simple sentences, parts of sentences, translated into a longer, and more about the complex translation (Riffaterre, 1978: 25). Riffaterre said the matrix can be conveyed in just one word, which of course will not appear in the text. It is always actualized through a variant sequence; the form of these

variants is governed by primary or the first actualization, namely model. Matrix, model, and variant are the text of same structure (1978: 25). Thus, the model is the main actualization of the successive variants and the matrix which is present in the text. The variant is the transformation of models, and the researcher can find it in rows, stanzas, lines in poetry, or even in other parts of fiction.

In this graduating paper's analysis uses three stages of Riffaterre's theory, namely indirect expression, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, and matrix, model, and variant to get the meaning of the *The Muslim Christmas Song*.

1.7 Method of Research

To analyze the lyrics of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song*, the researcher needs the method of research to guide the research to be easier to understand. The parts of methods are about the type of research to explain the type of the research, qualitative or quantitative research. The second is data sources to tell the data object that the researcher uses to make this paper. The third is data collection technique to explain what strategies to collect the research data whether it is a close reading or open reading. The last is data analysis technique to show some steps to analyze the lyrics of *The Muslim Christmas Song* such as indirect expression, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, matrix, model, and variant or keywords.

1.7.1 Type of Research

The researcher uses a qualitative method to analyze this research. Qualitative research is the study of a social problem, and it is concluded by interpreting the meaning (Creswell, 2009: 1). This method explores the meaning

of the problem by inductively involving the data collected from researchers and the subjective interpretation from the qualitative. It pays exceptional attention to the meaning and the message following the cultural study. Because the researcher focuses on the text or in this case means lyrics, this research type is library research. It is related because the researcher has chosen *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics as the object of this research.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The data used in this research is *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics by Raef Haggag. The unit data in this research is the complete lyrics – the sentences, lines, phrases, and stanzas. This research also uses the supporting data from some books, dictionaries, and the internet to help this research be done comprehensively.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher uses two steps: close reading technique and classifying data to collect the data obtained from Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song*. Close reading is the analysis and work process that includes multiple the meanings of figurative and verbal components, complex interrelationships in detail, and depth (Abrams, 2009: 217). Close reading means noting the detail on Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* as the primary data of this research. The classifying data in this research based on the semiotics of poetry theory are models and variants.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

The researcher uses several steps suggested by the book *Semiotics of Poetry* (1984) by Michael Riffaterre to analyze the data. In interpreting the song's lyrics, *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics by Raef Haggag, there are four steps to produce the meaning of poetry. The first step is identifying the indirect expression in the lyrics of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* by displacing meaning and creating meaning. The second is understanding the object of this research by using heuristic and retroactive reading or hermeneutic readings. The third step is finding the matrix or keywords, model, and variant of Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* lyrics. The last step taken in data analysis is to conclude the data of this object that has been analyzed and get the research results.

1.8 Paper Organization

This research consists of three chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction that includes the background of the research, the research question, the objective of the research, the significances of the research, the literature review, the theoretical approach, the methods of the research (including the type of the research, the data sources, the data collection technique, the data analysis technique), and the paper organization.

The second chapter elaborates on the discussion and analysis from *The Muslim Christmas Song* by Raef Haggag to find the significances of tolerance in the song's lyrics. The last chapter is the conclusion which includes the results in the invention from the analysis and the suggestion for the readers of this research and the following researchers in the same field.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

3.1 Conclusion

The meaning of *The Muslim Christmas Song* is a part of delivery of peace from a Raef Haggag to the listeners of the song that he created. This song conveys that people need to remember Allah and the prophets. In this case, the prophets of Allah SWT are the Prophet Muhammad SAW and Isa AS. This song aims to give the listeners a good message without any sense of offending or bringing down other religions.

Raef Haggag aims to make this song universal for anyone and anywhere. He wanted to give the listener understanding that the pronunciation of Jesus and Mary for all Muslims is not a problem because Raef's goal in writing *The Muslim Christmas Song* is to convey a message of tolerance to all song listeners. The words "Jesus" and "Mary" are used as only another way of expression to call the prophet Isa and his mother, Maryam.

Meanwhile, as a good human being, it can be practiced as saying, "don't judge a book by its cover". If associated with the song, which is the object of this research, namely the song's title that is unusual for anyone who sees it, the song's content does not have a bad meaning and influence on the listeners. Tolerance is commendable behavior, and it will be in the true sense of respecting and not hurting each other. Tolerance can be exercised properly by strong people in their respective religious beliefs.

In this case, the message of tolerance in this song is subtle in its delivery because it is not explicitly mentioned. It can be done by providing space for Christian religious beliefs without cursing and a form of tolerance for Muslims, namely accepting what they believe is their truth. Likewise, Christians are expected to understand the purpose for which *The Muslim Christmas Song* was written.

3.2 Suggestion

This research is still far from perfect research. There are limited sources of data, knowledge, and others. Researchers hope that further research in the same field will be better than this research. The first suggestion is that further researchers should dig deeper and in detail about the meaning and intertextual meaning of the song by using the theory of semiotics of poetry. Second, the next researcher can find some new discoveries about Raef Haggag's song entitled *The Muslim Christmas Song* and use other theories such as stylistic theory, reader response theory, or other theories. Third, the researcher hopes that if this research can help Raef Haggag's *The Muslim Christmas Song* listeners find the true meaning and message, it will not cause misunderstandings. Finally, the researcher also hopes this research can be helpful and be used as a reference for the other researches and help create peace and mutual respect between people.

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