

**THE REPRESENTATION OF A MUSLIM CHARACTER NAMED
YAHYA IBN UMAR IN *ROBIN HOOD* (2018)**

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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

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saya menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, saya ucapkan terima kasih.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF A MUSLIM CHARACTER NAMED YAHYA IBN UMAR IN *ROBIN HOOD* (2018)

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ABSTRACT

Hollywood film production is often accused of perpetuating constant stereotypes and misrepresentations of Muslim. However, *Robin Hood*, a Hollywood movie released in 2018, suggests a construction of Muslim that is different from the existing stereotypes and bias point. This discrepancy is worthy of further investigation, and this research aims to analyze the representation of a Muslim character named Yahya ibn Umar and to examine the role of the film producers in the construction of the Muslim character. Hopefully, this research could provide a different understanding of how Muslims are represented in Hollywood film production. Using the representation theory by Stuart Hall and *Mise-en-Scene* element by Ed Sikov, this research explores more deeply the construction of a Muslim character. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that Yahya is constructed as a formidable Muslim character, who is capable of dominating with his adherence to religion, intellectual, and interpersonal ability to fight the devilish Government. This research also found the important role of film producer and director in the representation of Muslim through Yahya ibn Umar, by not being tied to the repeated stereotype and emphasizes moral value and awareness in representing Muslim or Islam. Based on the analysis, the researcher concludes that the meaning making process is defined not only by the thing that exists but also from where the meaning comes from. That explains the construction of Muslim in this film.

Keywords: Representation, Muslim Character, Hollywood film

REPRESENTASI KARAKTER MUSLIM YANG BERNAMA YAHYA IBN UMAR DALAM *ROBIN HOOD* (2018)

Oleh : Farah Nailil Izzah

Film produksi Hollywood sering dituduh melanggengkan stereotip dan representasi yang keliru tentang Muslim. Namun *Robin Hood*, sebuah film Hollywood yang dirilis tahun 2018, mengisyaratkan sebuah konstruksi umat Islam yang berbeda dengan stereotip dan bias yang ada. Ketidaksesuaian ini perlu diteliti lebih lanjut, dan penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi tokoh muslim yang bernama Yahya ibn Umar dan untuk mengkaji peran produser film dalam pembentukan karakter muslim. Diharapkan, penelitian ini dapat memberikan pemahaman yang berbeda tentang bagaimana Muslim direpresentasikan dalam produksi film Hollywood. Menggunakan teori representasi oleh Stuart Hall dan elemen *Mise-en-Scene* oleh Ed Sikov, penelitian ini menggali lebih dalam tentang konstruksi karakter Muslim. Berdasarkan analisis, peneliti menemukan bahwa Yahya dikonstruksikan sebagai karakter Muslim yang tangguh, yang mampu mendominasi dengan ketaatan pada agama, intelektual, dan kemampuan interpersonal untuk melawan Pemerintah yang jahat. Penelitian ini juga menemukan peran penting produser dan sutradara film dalam representasi umat Islam melalui Yahya ibn Umar, dengan tidak terikat pada stereotipe yang berulang-ulang dan mengedepankan nilai moral dan kesadaran dalam merepresentasikan Muslim atau Islam. Berdasarkan analisis tersebut, peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa proses pembuatan makna tidak hanya didefinisikan oleh hal yang ada tetapi juga darimana makna tersebut berasal. Itu menjelaskan konstruksi Muslim dalam film ini.

Kata Kunci: Representasi, Karakter Muslim, Film Hollywood.

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MOTTO

The most powerful emotion is fear, and the greatest fear is fear of the unknown.

-Edgar Allan Poe-



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this graduating paper to;

The Almighty Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala

Prophet Muhammad Sallahu'alaihi Wasallam

All my Teacher in my life

My dearest Parents

All my Family and Friends

English Literature Departement of UIN Sunan Kalijaga

The Readers and Researchers.



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The researcher is very aware with the imperfection and deficiencies both in the writing and analysis of this graduating paper. Therefore, the researcher humbly asks to all of the reader for the critics and suggestion in order to improve and develop this graduating paper.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, a chairman of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK, Islamophobia is defined as the fear and or hatred of Islam, Muslims, as well as Islamic culture and history. Islamophobia can be characterized by the belief that all or most Muslims are religious fanatics, have violent tendencies towards non-Muslims, and reject as directly opposed to Islam such concepts as equality, tolerance, and democracy” (RISC, 2011). Meanwhile, Henk Dekker and Jolanda Van der Noll on their journal entitled *Islamophobia and its origins* state that Islamophobia was originated from the Crusades, where Muslims are often depicted as enemies by the Western. Since then, the West begin to feel more secure and comfortable with people who are identical to them, of the same skin color, and come from one country. In fact, they tend to start blaming Islam (IMISCOE, 2007: 3). Furthermore, the negative attitudes of Islamophobia can be shown in different ways in society, ranging from not believing in a Muslim community and developing to negative portrayals and stereotypes used by the media and literary works to represent Islam based on fear.

Jack G. Shaheen in his book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifying a People* states that the repetition of negative stereotypes as old views of Islamophobia in Hollywood film production and literary works makes people believe stereotypes and points of bias as general truths (Shaheen, 2003: 171). Furthermore, the issues of Islamophobia and negative repetition in literary works are constructed by writers and media creators. They have the ability to construct and control what happens in the story to create and convey a certain ideology (Gifford, 1999: 23). It makes writers

consciously or unconsciously align readers' opinions, even if their creations and the way they convey ideology are misleading. For instance, in countless Hollywood films such as *Commando* (1968), *Rules of Engagement* (2000), *Taken* (2012), *Sheik Steps Out* (1937), and *The Ambassador in Hostage* (1986) is considered as a film which shows the misrepresentation. Somehow, the films try to generalize the representation of Muslims in the existing Hollywood film and to wrap in that all the Muslims are a religious fanatic, brute murderers, sleazy rapists, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women (Shaheen, 2003: 173).

However, Muslims are not always depicted badly, and it is supported by the official statement of the United Nations agency in charge of Education Science and Culture (UNESCO), which states that “Islam is the most peaceful religion in the world” as a public effort to restore positive portrayals of Islam. The statement above then influences other people to support peace and changes the negative representation of Islam in the film. In *King Richard and the Crusaders* (1954), *Malcom X* (1992), *Green Zone* (2010), and *Kingdom of Heaven* (2015) shows the role of Muslims who are humane, peace, and leadership against injustice. The difference in the representation of Muslims becomes an interesting topic to analyze. However, it goes against the negative portrayal of Islamophobia and shows there is various portrayal of Muslims on Hollywood film production. Therefore, the researcher is curious about the different depiction of Muslims in Hollywood films as well as the factors that allow for the variation in the depiction of Muslims. Based on the statement above, the researcher aims to explore more about the representation of Muslims in *Robin Hood* (2018) as a Hollywood work film and the role of the film production in the construction of the Muslim representation.

As the object of analysis, the researcher uses *Robin Hood* (2018), produced by Lionsgate. This film tells the story about the Crusade with the elements of conflict in religion, history, and cultural

values. Somehow, *Robin Hood (2018)* has a specific difference compared with another remake of this film. It tells about two characters named Yahya ibn Umar and Robin Loxley. They meet as an enemy in the Crusade at the end of the eleventh century and become an ally to resist against the devilish government. This film depicts Yahya ibn Umar as a Muslim character who fills the role of John The Little. With the existing character change, Muslim figures have contributed to the resistance movement that maintains peace, justice, safety, and humanity. Fortunately, this object has never been studied before, the depiction of Yahya as a Muslim character has many aspects to explore indicated to the various representations. Even though this film is produced by Hollywood, the interesting point is the way they tend to give voice to the Muslim character.

The analysis will be examined using Stuart Hall's constructionist approach from his representation theory, by revealing cultural elements, social conventions using discourse to reveal Muslim representations (1997: 15). Through the events, dialogues, and other elements in the film. Furthermore, the researcher also uses the film theory of *mise-en-scene* by Ed Sikov to help define the element of the film. Therefore, the researcher can understand, comprehend, and support the analysis of representation.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of study above, the researcher aims to analyze the following research questions.

1. How is the representation of Muslim through Yahya Ibn Umar in *Robin Hood (2018)*?
2. What is the role of the film production in the construction of the Muslim representation?

1.3 Objective of Study

Based on the research questions of this study, this research aims to examine the representation of Muslim through Yahya ibn Umar in *Robin Hood* (2018) and to figure out the role of film producers in the construction of Muslim character.

1.4 Significance of Study

Hopefully, this research could provide a different understanding of how Muslims are represented in Hollywood film production. Although Muslims are often misrepresented in Hollywood, it is not always the case. This research is expected to help emphasize the importance of seeing the role of producers in the construction process of an image in the Hollywood film, especially in *Robin Hood* (2018).

1.5 Literature Review

The researcher has not yet found any other researches that discuss *Robin Hood* (2018). However, the researcher finds some researches that either discusses similar topic or uses the same theory.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

As a way to analyze the object, the researcher uses representation theory as the main theory and film theory as the secondary theory. Representation theory by Stuart Hall, and this research applies the constructionist approach which helps explain the meaning using a representational system and discourses. The film theory by Ed Sikov named *mise-en-scene* deals with how the elements in the film describe the actual condition which can support the way the researcher represents the issues.

The first research is a journal article entitled “*Rethinking Orientalism of in Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s Infidel*” written by Abu Bakar Isa and Sadiya. The Journal was published in the *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* in 2019. The analysis aims to unread the misrepresentations which is described by stereotypes in the representation of colonized people. This research identifies the cultural details, and its analysis uses a contrapuntal reading by Edward Said and representation theory. This study counter-narrates the distortion of Islam by drawing upon authentic Islamic sources.

The second research is entitled *The Representation of Islam and Nationalism in The Lions of The Dessert* written by Muhammad Syaeful Rizal (2009) from Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. This research focuses on analyzing Islam and Nationalism depicted in the film. The analysis uses the historical facts to represent Islam and Nationalism and analyze the data uses representation theory by Stuart Hall and nation nationality theory by Henler. The difference between this research and the research above is the object taken on this research. Both analyses use different film and novel. Meanwhile, the prior researchers use the same representation theory by Stuart Hall and engage the analysis with the cultural and historical aspects.

1.6. Theoretical Approach

As a way to analyze the object, the researcher uses representation theory as the main theory and film theory as the secondary theory. Representation theory by Stuart Hall, and this research applies the constructionist approach which helps explain the meaning using a representational system and discourses. The film theory by Ed Sikov named *mise-en-scene* deals with how the elements in the film describe the actual condition which can support the way the researcher represents the issues.

1.6.1 Representation Theory

As cited from Stuart Hall, representation theory is described as the way of producing meanings through language. Furthermore, the representation describes as "a substitute or copy of reality in the form of a particular image" (Bolt, 2004: 12). In other words, the representation here represents something in the mind through speech, writing, graphics, or visuals within language.

The language is described as an extraordinary function as a way to make sense of meaning that exists. The representation has three divided approaches of divining meaning. The first one is reflective approach, which puts language as a mirror to give the same meaning already owned by the true existence (Hall, 1997: 24). For instance, when someone says a bird, it refers to the real bird that has true existence and appearance, as an animal which has ability to fly and has beak on their mouth. The meaning cannot be interpreted in less meaning.

The second one is intentional approach, which puts the actual speaker and author as the person who creates and controls meaning (Hall, 1997: 25). Somehow the reader or listener has no right or ability to define the meaning out of what the author or the speaker is trying to say. The third approach is constructionist approach. The constructionist approach is chosen by the researcher as the way to analyze the character named Yahya ibn Umar. Constructionist approach defines the meaning socially, which means not trying to call things in themselves but in individual as the other users to fix the meaning (Hall, 1997: 26).

As the example of constructionist approach where a bird appears in the picture, the meaning can be different depending on the individual who sees it. For instance, bird depicted in the Two Nations Association can be described as a symbol of reconciliation if viewed

from the circuit of culture that refers to political matters. Stuart Hall describes that the meaning of things is not based on the material quality of a sign, but it is a symbolic function. Therefore, the word 'bird' can have another symbolic meaning in another function. For instance, a bird in the advertisement of beauty soap is to represent beauty and softness as the attractive point for people to use their product. Both examples above are the depiction where a message is decoded by the audience. Also, it is a great example of how the five elements of the circuit of culture can help the constructionist approach to define it as a true meaning to the audience.

Meanwhile, Stuart Hall says in the constructionist approach that meanings are not easily defined by people, but they are the result of social convention. The social convention always engages with culture and shares meaning one another, which consists of the elements of the circuit of culture (Hall, 1997: 6). There are five elements of circuit of culture, consisting of representation itself, identity, production, consumption, and regulation as an initial stage to define the topics and context being used in interpreting a phenomenon.

1.6.2 Film Theory

The researcher uses film as the main data and uses film theory to analyze and describe the structure and element in *Robin Hood (2018)*. By the structure and elements, film theory can describe and explore the meaning of the film. Ed Sikov in his book entitled *Film Studies* says that *mise-en-scene* can help deal with the problem of reality and representation, by divining the assumption and the problems, and by proceeding logically toward the evidence in these elements (Sikov, 2009: 6). To reveal the research question shown above the researcher needs to open up and reveal all the hidden intention and meaning that exist in the film.

Based on Noel Carrol books entitled *Theorizing the Moving Image*, there is an element that is used to analyze the film called *mise-en-scene* (Sikov cited in Carrol, 1996:26). The *mise-en-scene* elements consist of the required description of location, color, props, costumes, and performance. With the help of *mise-en-scene* analysis, film can show more complex and complete depiction than the written one with its various genres.

The element of *mise-en-scene* can help the audience get the meaning and the mood of the film from the beginning until the end. In addition, it can show a thrill in a horror movie or show a melancholy in a drama movie, which also delivers messages and ideas. The audience is served with the way the film can communicate to express the narrative pattern.

According to Ed Sikov as mentioned above, the first element of the *mise-en-scene* is setting and design. It can help the researcher analyze the sense of place and situation from where the character is depicted. The second element is lighting. It deals with the color to sign a mood, for instance, red as danger and white as calm. Lighting also deals with the amount of light toward the character and where the light points out, They help import the center, moods, and meaning for the audience's experience. The third one is called as costume. As the element that deals with social status, era, and nationality of every character, costume element is also described as the most noticeable aspect where every character must have certain kind of costume style based on their custom, social, and identity from every actor. The fourth element is properties, deals with how the room or the scene is set up with various furniture, merchand, and attribute to give deeper meaning on how the researchers analyze the film. The last element is called acting. As part of the cinematic terms that depicts real life, film needs actor(s) as the face of the film. The actor then plays a different role in the

film that depicts different characterization to help the audience identify the meaning and its correlation to the film.

Moreover, the elements of *mise-en-scene* are categorized as signs, which can help organize into language and be contributed to share the same thoughts (concept) into word in different language (Hall, 1997: 18). Furthermore, Hall states that a language is not only linguistic things. Every writing, spoken, visual, mechanical, electronic, and digital form which is used to express meaning between one and another is also categorized as shared language. In relation with the elements of film, facial expression, gesture, costumes, lighting, and even music can be used as a reference of actual sign. They are organized with other signs into system which carry and express the meaning from the film production (cited in Hall by du Gey, 1997: 19).



1.7 Method of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

The researcher uses qualitative research method. As cited in the Oxford Dictionary, the purpose of the qualitative research is to help the researcher do research, with the quality of being well planned and organized (*Oxford Dictionary*). According to Berg, "Qualitative Research (QR) are those which refer to the meaning, concept, definition, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions of things" (As cited in Satori and Komariah, 2010: 23). Furthermore, Bogdan and Taylor state that by using the descriptive data the researcher can deliver the analysis in the form of written or oral words by observing and explaining the elements that exist in the film such as culture, social, and film elements which are connected in representing a meaning, and it will be a reference to the definition, concept, meaning definition, characteristic, and symbol (Moleong, 2010: 4).

1.7.2 Data Source

The researcher arranges two different types of data. The primary data of this research comes from *Robin Hood* (2018). The data are taken from the scene, event, dialogue, intrinsic element, and the *mise-en-scene* elements which explain the representation of Muslim through Yahya ibn Umar. The secondary data are taken from the theory, journals, articles, websites, books, and other academic critical works that have a relation to the film, the theory, and the analysis from the previous research.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

In this research, the researcher uses the documentation technique to collect the data. First, the researcher watches *Robin Hood* (2018) and looks for the data which are related to

the representation of Muslim in Yahya ibn Umar by collecting and capturing the frames (to understand the plot, character, settings, scene, and dialogue). Furthermore, to answer the second research question, the researcher also collects the data from external info such as articles, interviews and reviews from *Robin Hood* (2018) which is related to the role of the producer and the production of this film.

1.7.4. Data Analysis Technique

The researcher applies representation theory by Stuart Hall in analyzing the representation of Muslim character named Yahya Ibn Umar in *Robin Hood* (2018) and the role of film producer in the construction. The researcher uses content analysis techniques. To answer the first research question, the analysis is divided through several steps. Firstly, the researcher obtains a deep understanding of the film and theory, and collects the frames and dialogues as the data of analysis. Secondly, the researcher divided the data into three categories. These categories are representations of Yahya Ibn Umar in terms of his religiosity, in terms of his interpersonal value, and in terms of his intellectual virtues. lastly, the researcher applies the representation theory in the constructionist approach by connecting the data set to theory. To answer the second research question, the researcher connects the interpretation between extrinsic elements from articles, interviews, and film review related to the depiction of Muslims in the film, to get your conclusion what are the factors that construct the representation of Muslim characters in this film.

To answer the second research question, the researcher connects the interpretation between extrinsic elements from articles, inreviews, and film review related to the depiction of Muslims in the film, to get your conclusion what are the factors that construct the representation of Muslim characters in this film.

1.8 Paper Organization

This paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter consists of background of the study, research question, objective of study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter consists of the explanation of the character and characterization, setting, and plot as the intrinsic elements of the film. The third chapter provides the analysis of how Muslim character through Yahya Ibn Umar in *Robin Hood (2018)* is represented. The analysis is done using Hall's representation theory and *Mise-en-scene* theory. In the final chapter, the researcher concludes the analysis and gives suggestion for the future researchers.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSSION & SUGGESTION

3.1 CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the objectives of the research, the researcher aims to analyze how and why Muslim perceives and represents the characterization in the *Robin Hood* (2018). This research uses the constructionist meaning analysis to see the definition Muslim representation trough character named Yahya ibn Umar.

Based on the analysis, the researcher concludes that representation is constructed out of a complex process of meaning-making, in which things do not mean by themselves. Instead, people construct it through the representational system. Therefore, the individual experiences, social, culture, and several elements can be the points how to define the representation, and thus the stereotypes cannot be patented as a representation. Representation process can be interpreted by understanding those aspects and meaning inside the film. People need to define the meaning not only about whether the thing exist but also where meanings comes from.

This research finds variation in the representation of Muslim in *Robin Hood* (2018). Instead of being depicted as totally powerless, backward and evil, Yahya ibn Umar is portrayed as a person with positive attitudes or characteristics as a Muslim. He is depicted as a religious and intellectual figure with good interpersonal skills, which are needed during the resistance movement against the tyrannical government system in Nottingham. Rather than focusing on the misrepresentation of Muslim character, this film portrays the collaboration and strong bond between good Christian and Muslim against tyrannical government and corrupted Church and to fight for justice and

humanity. This research also finds that all this construction is inseparable from the role of the filmmakers.

4.2 SUGGESTION

The researcher suggests for the future researcher to analyze *Robin Hood's* (2018) using other perspectives, such as comparative literature, by comparing the original story of Robin Hood and the remake film. Then, post-colonialism theory, by analyzing the object as a form of new occupation after colonialism and they also can use Occidentalism Theory, by analyzing it from an Eastern perspective. The researcher aims that the results of this representation analysis can help can and open up the opportunities for further analysis.



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