

**THE PORTRAYAL OF THE EAST IN *WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT*  
(2016)**

**A Graduating Paper**

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By :

Rielia Ayu Puspasari

16150025

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY  
SUNAN KALIJAGA  
YOGYAKARTA

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**FACULTY OF ADAB AND CULTURAL SCIENCES**

**SUNAN KALIJAGA STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY**

**YOGYAKARTA**

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## A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

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

Yogyakarta, 18 May 2020

The Writer



**Rielia Ayu Puspasari**

16150025

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY  
**SUNAN KALIJAGA**  
YOGYAKARTA



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA  
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN KALIJAGA  
FAKULTAS ADAB DAN ILMU BUDAYA  
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto Telp. (0274) 513949 Fax. (0274) 552883 Yogyakarta 55281

## PENGESAHAN TUGAS AKHIR

Nomor : B-912/Un.02/DA/PP.00.9/06/2020

Tugas Akhir dengan judul : THE PORTRAYAL OF THE EAST IN THE WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT (2016)

yang dipersiapkan dan disusun oleh:

Nama : RIELIA AYU PUSPASARI  
Nomor Induk Mahasiswa : 16150025  
Telah diujikan pada : Jumat, 29 Mei 2020  
Nilai ujian Tugas Akhir : A-

dinyatakan telah diterima oleh Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

### TIM UJIAN TUGAS AKHIR



Ketua Sidang  
Danial Hidayatullah, SS., M.Hum  
SIGNED

Valid ID: 5ee831d345f56



Penguji I  
Febriyani Dwiratna Lestari, SS., MA  
SIGNED

Valid ID: 5ee36ee43df8b



Penguji II  
Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S. M.Hum.  
SIGNED

Valid ID: 5ee7e103784ee

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SUNAN KALIJAGA  
YOGYAKARTA



Yogyakarta, 29 Mei 2020  
UIN Sunan Kalijaga  
Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya  
Dr. H. Akhmad Patah, M.Ag.  
SIGNED

Valid ID: 5ee9a7ed669b2



---

**NOTA DINAS**

Hal: Skripsi  
a.n. Rielia Ayu Puspasari

Yth.  
Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya  
UIN Sunan Kalijaga  
Di Yogyakarta

*Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.*

Setelah memeriksa, meneliti, dan memberikan arahan untuk perbaikan atas skripsi saudara:

Nama : Rielia Ayu Puspasari

NIM : 16150025

Prodi : Sastra Inggris

Fakultas : Adab dan Ilmu Budaya

Judul :

**THE PORTRAYAL OF THE EAST IN *WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT***

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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STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY  
SUNAN KALIJAGA  
YOGYAKARTA  
Yogyakarta, 09 Juni 2020

Pembimbing

Danial Hidayatullah, S.S, M.Hum

NIP. 197600405 200901 1 016

# THE PORTRAYAL OF THE EAST IN *WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT*

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By: Rielia Ayu Puspasari

## ABSTRACT

This research discusses the Orientalism issue which is portrayed in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film. This film tells about Kim Baker, an American journalist who initially works as a producer at the national station. She is assigned to cover the war between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2003. This film contains cultural conflict between the West and the Afghans as the East. This research aims to identify and explain the Orientalism issue in the film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* such as how the East is stereotyped in the Western perspective and what racism appears from the West to the East. Since the researcher uses qualitative research, this research analyzes the way Orientalism is portrayed through narrative and visual aspects by using Orientalism theory proposed by Edward Said and film theory. Then, the result of the analysis is that the East is portrayed as barbaric, uncivilized, conservative, patriarchal, and irrational people. Meanwhile, the West is portrayed as the best, modern, and rational people. The researcher also finds that the distorted image by the West is considered to humiliate the East.

**Keywords:** *West, East, Racism, Stereotype, Film Theory, and Orientalism Theory.*

# THE PORTRAYAL OF THE EAST IN *WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT*

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas isu Orientalisme yang digambarkan dalam film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*. Film ini bercerita tentang Kim Baker, seorang jurnalis Amerika yang awalnya bekerja sebagai produser di stasiun nasional, kemudian ditugaskan untuk meliput perang antara Afghanistan dan Pakistan pada tahun 2003. Film ini berisi konflik budaya antara orang Barat dan Afghanistan sebagai orang Timur. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menjelaskan masalah Orientalisme dalam film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* seperti bagaimana orang-orang Timur distereotipkan dalam perspektif Barat dan apa rasisme yang muncul dari Barat kepada Timur. Penulis menggunakan penelitian kualitatif sehingga penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana Orientalisme digambarkan melalui aspek naratif dan visual dengan menggunakan teori Orientalisme yang dikemukakan oleh Edward Said dan teori film. Kemudian hasil analisis penelitian ini yaitu orang-orang Timur digambarkan sebagai orang-orang yang biadab, tidak beradab, konservatif, patriarki, dan irasional, sedangkan orang Barat digambarkan sebagai orang-orang terbaik, modern, dan rasional. Peneliti juga menemukan bahwa representasi negatif yang ditampilkan oleh orang Barat di dalam film dianggap untuk merendahkan orang Timur.

**Kata kunci:** *West, East, Racism, Stereotype, Film Theory, and Orientalism Theory.*

**MOTTO**

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease”

(Q.S 94:6)

“LISTENING CLEARLY, SAYING CAREFULLY”

-Rielia



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## DEDICATION

Sincerely, this graduating paper is dedicated to:

The Superhero in my world, my father, Mr. Danang Apri Riyanto

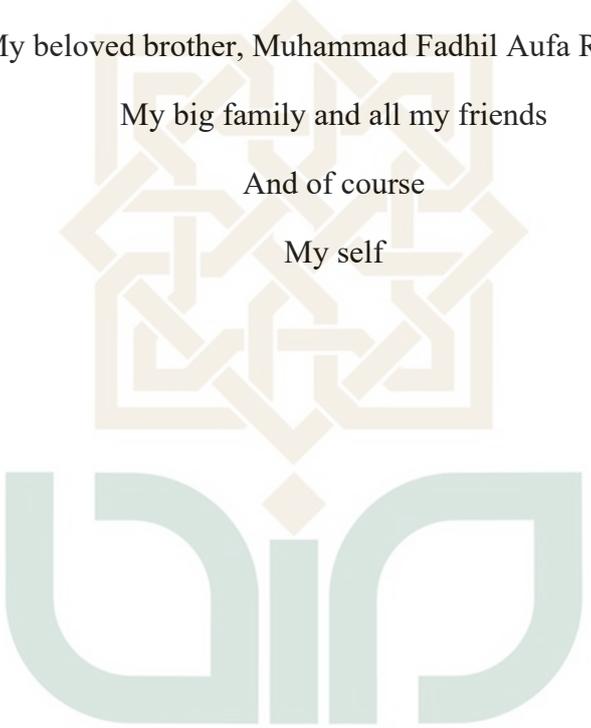
The Superwoman on Earth, my mother, Mrs. Wiwin Yuliatun

My beloved brother, Muhammad Fadhil Afa Robbani

My big family and all my friends

And of course

My self



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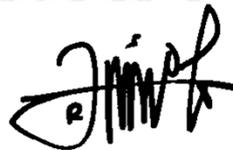
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The researcher realizes that this paper is very far from perfection because of the lack of knowledge of the researcher. Therefore, any criticism and suggestions are always welcomed for the researcher in improving this paper.

Last but not least, the researcher hopes this graduating paper can be useful for education and can inspire everyone.

Yogyakarta, 18 May 2020

The Writer



**Rielia Ayu Puspasari**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

*Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* (2016) film tells about the story of Kim Barker who is sent to Afghanistan to be a war correspondent during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). In Afghanistan, she meets Fahim Ahmadzai as her tour guide. She also meets Tanya Vanderpoel and Iain MacKelpie who has the same profession as war correspondents. She starts her job with interviewing marines and she also bravely goes along with the marines to capture the combat incidents. Fahim as her tour guide is also following her everywhere. Moreover, Kim also goes to every village in Afghanistan such as Kandahar to observe the condition of the war there. The setting of places in this film is Afghanistan, so there are so many portraits of its culture, religion, ethnicity, and others. The story of the Western who comes and settles in Afghanistan shortly shows the relationship between the West and the local people of Afghanistan (the East).

*Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film is written by Robert Carlock and directed by Glen Ficarra and John Requa. It is based on the memoir by Kim Baker titled *The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. It was released on March 4, 2016 in the USA which has grossed over \$24.9 million worldwide. It starred Tina Fey as Kim Baker, Margot Robbie as Tanya Vanderpoel, Martin Freeman as Iain MacKelpie, and Christopher Abbot as Fahim Ahmadzai.

*Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film has a war comedy-drama genre. War is genre of the film that has a war background. Although the film has war genre, it tends to be comedy-drama genre. The comedy-drama genre is the combination of two genres into one film (comedy and drama) and it has each definition itself. The characteristic of drama is representing the realistic characterization and setting that show a daily life. The characteristic of comedy is a simple story consisting of joke, whether it is from its dialog or from its action. Generally, comedy-drama genre has a serious story. Although it has a serious story, the film extends it easily with its comedy.

As stated by Hamadi (2014:39), “since European colonialism, the domination relationship between the West and the East affected many regions all over the world”. Since the relationship between the West and the East is brought out to this film, it also emerges a focus that the West and the East are shown differently through the story itself. Although sometimes the West is shown as bad people, they are still portrayed as heroes, but the East is only shown as bad people. Naturally, Kim Baker, one of the Western characters in this film, is sometimes depicted as careless and clumsy, but sometimes she is depicted as a tough, caring, and generous woman. On the other one, the women in Afghanistan are depicted as weak, powerless, and conservative. As the Western character in this film, Kim, Tanya, and Iain who are war correspondents in Afghanistan show how they see the Afghan (the East).

The imbalance between West and East that appears in this film is mostly related to stereotype and racism. The difference between black and white, their

costumes, and their attitudes are observable. Moreover, it tends to disfigure the East. According to Allport (1954), stereotyping 'knowledge' could become embedded in culture and society and institutionalized in language, institutions, literature, and media. Islam and Arabs keep receiving negative stereotypes in American media (Abraham, 1994). This film clearly shows the stereotype and racism towards the East. It gives the focus of attention to the places and the character itself. However, what is inside the film is not completely the real situation and not completely the imaginary situation, but this happens to represent what usually happens.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that the East is shown differently from the West. In this research, the researcher will find out how the East is depicted including the racism and the stereotype that appear in this film, whether it is negative or positive and whether it is about culture or about religion by using Orientalism theory.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background of study explained in this research, the researcher discusses about the following questions.

1. How is the East represented in the film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*?
2. Why is the East depicted in such a way in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*?

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

1. This research aims to identify how the East is represented in the film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*
2. This research aims to explain why the East is represented in such a way in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*.

### 1.4 Significances of the Study

The significance point of this research will be to prove that stereotype and racism still exist even will not disappear especially in this modern era. Stereotyping and being racist are still used as a culture to humiliate other people since it usually happens in this world. In this film, it brings the East to their bearings. By analyzing this film, the researcher expects to get deeper comprehension about the East issues and to give a reference to other researchers.

### 1.5 Literature Review

The researcher finds a research that also uses this film as an object to analyze. The difference of this research with the previous research is on the theory and the focus of the research. The research is thesis written by Samuel Ross Belcher, M.A. (2017), as a student in The University of Texas, Austin. The title of this thesis is "*Hostile Relations: Representing Arabs and Muslims in Historically Based War Films*". In this thesis, he analyzes four war films and one of them is *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*. He focuses on the representation of Arabs and Muslims and how the aforementioned populations in their retelling of history based on the war films.

The thesis uses representation theory of encoding and decoding by Stuart Hall (1980). The encoding of Arabs and Muslims includes the Space, Characterization, Violence, Language, and Civilians. He also uses the academic discourse on politics of fear process by establishing the xenophobia allocated to Arabs and Muslims. According to Jephias Matunhu in African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies entitled “*Re-Visiting the May 2008 Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa*”, Xenophobia is a latent or obtrusive dislike of foreigners. Belcher concluded that the representation of women in Taliban-controlled which is depicted in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* portrays that intervention as beneficial because it helped liberate women, to an extent.

The differences between this research and the previous research above are that this study applies the theory of Orientalism and more focuses on the portrayals of the East. Then, this research only focuses on one object, *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film, while the previous research focuses on many objects.

## **1.6 Theoretical Approach**

The researcher will apply the Orientalism theory by Edward Said to this research since the object of this research deals with Orient and Occident situation. Primarily, the issue about how the West sees the East is considerably viscous, so the researcher sees that Orientalism approach is suitable for the issue. The researcher also uses the film theory to support this analysis.

### 1.6.1. Orientalism Theory

Orient (East) is the opposite of Occident (West). Orient refers to the Middle East and Asia while Occident refers to the West countries. The researcher uses East and West instead of Orient and Occident in order to make the focus of this research more clearly. According to Said (1928:43), Orientalism was a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”). Literally, Orientalism is a paradigm which distinguishes the East from the West. According to Hübinette (2002), Orientalism is the thought of the exotic, strange, dark, and inferior East that defined the West itself through those contrasting images. An Orientalist, Edward Said, has explained his works about the Orientalism through literature, anthropology, and narrative. He showed how the West painted a picture about the East.

According to Edward Said (1994), Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, its peoples, and its localities. The researcher assumes that the East is placed as an object since they are usually judged by the West through their behaviour. In Carter (2006:116), Edward Said distinguishes the term of Orientalism into three definitions. First, Orientalism creates a long history about the relationship between Europe and Asia-Africa. Second, it creates sciences as a specialist in oriental language and culture. Third, colonialism creates stereotypes and ideology about “*the Orient*” which is identical with “*the other*” or different from “*the Occident*” (*the self*). The two of the issues of Orientalism in this film appear in stereotype and racism

between the East and the West that sometimes show a hierarchical culture where the West is superior while the East is inferior.

Stereotype is generalizing a group by seeing from the action and behavior of an individual. According to Edward Said (1978:26),

*“One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes, by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media’s resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds.”*

Bhabha (1994) stated in his book *The Location of Culture* that stereotype is a form of knowledge and identification that hesitates between what is always “in place”, already known, and something that must be fearfully repeated. It is used to create an identity with a large group of people, whether it is true or not.

In colonial discourse, racism is the superiority of one race and the degeneracy of another. According to Dayal (2018), racism is subscribing to the belief that the human population can be classified into races with differential abilities and dispositions, which in turn may motivate a political ideology in which rights and privileges are differentially distributed based on racial categories. Racism can also be said to describe a condition in society in which a dominant racial group benefits from the oppression of others, whether that group wants such benefits or not, Blay (26 August 2015). Racism is therefore a representational form which, by designating discrete human collectivities, necessarily functions as an ideology of inclusion and exclusion: for example, the signification of skin color both includes and excludes in the categorization

process. Furthermore, it is the negative characteristics of the Other which mirror the positive characteristics of the Self (Roediger, 1994).

### 1.6.2. Film Theory

In order to support this analysis, the researcher will use film theory since the object of this research is film. This theory assists the researcher to find out the meaning in visual content. As stated by Abram, et al (2011), a visual content of the film is an important part producing a certain meaning and becoming a large extent on how story is told. The researcher will apply *mise-en-scene* concept. *Mise-en-scene* consists of setting, props, lighting, and figure behaviour. According to Sikov (2010), all the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed are called *mise-en-scene*. The elements placed in the film give some meanings to the reader such as in lighting. Lighting is fundamental to film because it creates a visual mood, atmosphere, and sense of meaning for the audience. How figure behaviour appears in the film also gives some meanings to the reader. It can be seen by the facial expressions or their gestures. Besides, the film cannot be separated from setting or costume. The setting also helps the audience to find out the meaning that is implemented through the film. Also, the costume can show the social class, lifestyle, and identity of the character in the film.

Camera Angle marks the specific location at which the movie camera or video camera is placed to take a shot. Sikov (2010) defined some shots in camera angle. First, when the camera is placed at the level of an adult's eye, it is called

**Eye-level shot.** Second, it is called **low angle shot** when the object is shot from a lower position. Otherwise, the object that is shot from an upper position is called **High-angle shot.** **Close-up** is a shot that isolates an object in the image, making it look large, and **a long shot** is taken from a long distance.

Camera angle has a meaning from where the shot is taken (Turner G, 1999:60). According to Utdallas.edu, they divided the elements into several parts.

*“The horizontal camera angle explains that the scene shows more than one character. A high camera angle can be used to provide a general overview of the situation while a low camera angle is required to show the position of character in relation to something else. High and low camera angle are used to represent the power of relationship between the characters and also to show the character that become the subordinate or the dominant.”* (Turner G, 1999:60)

## 1.7 Method of Research

### 1.7.1. Type of research

This research will use qualitative method to describe data. Shank (2002:5) explained a qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”. The meaning of *systematic* is “planned, ordered, and public”. The meaning of *empirical* is that the type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. The meaning of *inquiry* is that the researchers try to understand how others make sense of their experience. According to Creswell (2003:9), “qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field”. Therefore, the researcher will make the interpretation of meaning of the data.

### **1.7.2. Data Resources**

This research will use three data sources. The first is called primary data and the second is secondary data. The primary data is from *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film. The secondary data is by analyzing the shot and the dialogue in the film that contain Orientalism issue such as the stereotype and racism. The third data is from several sources such as websites, journals, reviews, articles, and books which are related with this analysis.

### **1.7.3. Data Collection Technique**

The researcher uses some steps to collect the data of this research. First thing first, the researcher reads the film to get the data from the dialogues, scenes, and events. The researcher initially finds the dialogues and events that contain elements of stereotype. In the stereotype, the researcher divides the data into three part, they are stereotype of setting, stereotype of culture, and stereotype of ethnicity. After being collected, the researcher sorts the data again to find out which one that exactly contains the stereotype.

To collect the data in scene, the researcher collects it by screencapturing the scene that is related to dialogues and events. For the secondary data, the researcher will take the experts' arguments to support the researcher's arguments about Orientalism and its variables from books, journals, or online references.

### **1.7.4. Data Analysis Technique**

The data that has been collected will be explained descriptively. The researcher divides the data into several parts by examining the scenes and dialogues of the film. First, the researcher will explain about how the East image

that is painted by the West. Second, the researcher needs to find out the relationship between the data and interpret what this film wants to represent.

The researcher will analyze the data by seeing through the *mise-en-scene* and explain each frame of the film. The next step to analysis the data is interpreting them based on Orientalism and film theory to find the meaning of the issue. The last step, the researcher will draw the conclusion of this research.

### **1.8 Paper Organization**

There will be four chapters in this research. The first chapter contains the background information about the research. The second chapter will explain about the elements of the film. The third chapter will discuss about the analysis of the data using postcolonial theory. The fourth chapter will be the conclusion part and the result of the analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 Conclusion

*Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film is one of popular objects which bring out Orientalism idea. This film portrays the racism between the Eastern (Orient) and the Western (Occident) character and the stereotyping of the East from the narrative and visual aspects that exist in the film. The film shows the negative images of the East. It is shown by how Tanya creates the rate between Afghan women and West women that emerges a hierarchy between them.

This film also tries to give general stereotypes that Afghan is barbaric, uncivilized, conservative, irrational, and racist through several scenes which have a relation with Islamic religion and Afghan culture. The scene is when an Afghan woman screams at Kim that she is whore, for she is not covering her head. Furthermore, Afghan women are also represented through this film. There is Afghanistan with the patriarchal society. It is shown when the women's school is bombed. It shows that they do not deserve an education. Afghan as racist people is also depicted through this film. It is depicted by Pacha Khan who just wants to be interviewed by Muslim.

The stereotyping of the East country can be seen through the setting and the dialogue. The East stereotyping is Afghanistan as a dessert and war country. Since Kim is sent to Afghanistan to cover the war, Afghanistan as a war country is

seen through the film. Several scenes show that Afghanistan is dusty and polluted. Fahim tells Kim that the air is polluted with feces. Besides, the mysterious appearance is also the stereotype that is strongly attached to Afghan women.

The stereotype and the racism that are portrayed in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* film appear in order to make the culture of the West and the East look different. The differences in skin color, religion, and the portrayal of the ethnic that leads to the stereotypes are very clearly seen in this film. However, the stereotype and the racism make the inequality among humans.

From the analysis, most of the scenes in this film depict the negative side of the East while the West is positive. It can be concluded as racism and stereotypes that appear in this film go hand in hand to provide negative depictions of the East. The researcher concludes that this film is one part of media which represents Islam by giving a representation of the Afghans and Muslim in the popular media to show that the West is more predominant so that they can persecute the East in those ways.

#### **4.2 Suggestion**

This research is only concerned to portray the relationship between the East and West using Orientalism theory. How the East keep receiving negative stereotypes from the West. The researcher suggests to the next researchers to employ another theory to analyze this film such as feminism theory or representation theory. In addition, the next researcher may find another interesting character that can be analyzed using other theories.

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