

**THE WESTERN REPRESENTATION OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN IN  
*ROBOCOP* (2014)**

**A GRADUATION PAPER**

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



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Atas perhatiannya, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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## MOTTO

*“If you don’t take risks, you can’t create a future!”*

*-Monkey D. Luffy-*



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this graduating paper to:

My beloved parents; Nur Jatmiko and Saringatun,

My lovely sisters; Amanah Putri Dewi and Nur Hanifah,

My lovely brothers; Hanif Yoga Pratama and Permadi,

The people who support and trust me,

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*Wassalamu'alaikum wr. wb*

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# THE WESTERN REPRESENTATION OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN IN *ROBOCOP* (2014)

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to analyze *Robocop* (2014), which the researcher believes contains a Western-Middle Eastern issue. This research focuses on the domination and authority of the West over the Middle East. The research utilizes Edward Said's Orientalism Theory, which states that Orientalism leads to Western dominance over the Orient. "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it.....: in short, Orientalism is Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 2003:32). Film theory is applied to assist the researcher in analyzing shots and anything related to cinematography, particularly the setting technique, after a thorough examination of the film; starting with OmniCorp machines performing routine operations in Tehran and shooting minors for carrying weapons, OmniCorp constructed a man in a machine with feelings; Alex Murphy, who is severely injured by a car explosion, is chosen to become a cyborg; and the researcher concludes that *Robocop* (2014) still contains Western representations of Middle Eastern people, like what Edward Said says about Orientalism. The Middle Eastern country and its people are depicted in this film as simple-minded people who do not have power against the Western authority, or, on the other hand, the Western people are depicted as well-educated people with big authority in both their own country and in the Middle Eastern country.

Keywords: *Robocop* (2014), orientalism, domination, restructuring, authority.

# THE WESTERN REPRESENTATION OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN IN *ROBOCOP* (2014)

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## ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis *Robocop* (2014) yang diyakini peneliti memuat isu Barat-Timur Tengah. Penelitian ini berfokus pada dominasi dan otoritas Barat terhadap Timur Tengah. Penelitian ini memanfaatkan Teori Orientalisme Edward Said yang menyatakan bahwa Orientalisme mengarah pada dominasi Barat atas Timur. “Orientalisme dapat didiskusikan dan dianalisa sebagai lembaga korporat yang berurusan dengan Timur – menghadapinya dengan membuat pernyataan tentangnya, membenarkan pandangan-pandangannya, mendeskripsikannya.....: singkatnya, Orientalisme adalah gaya Barat untuk mendominasi, restrukturisasi, dan memiliki otoritas atas Timur” (Said, 2003:32). Teori film diterapkan untuk membantu peneliti dalam menganalisis pengambilan gambar dan segala sesuatu yang berhubungan dengan sinematografi, khususnya teknik setting, setelah melakukan pemeriksaan menyeluruh terhadap film; dimulai dengan mesin OmniCorp yang melakukan operasi rutin di Teheran dan menembak anak di bawah umur karena membawa senjata, OmniCorp menciptakan seorang pria di dalam mesin yang memiliki perasaan; Alex Murphy, yang terluka parah akibat ledakan mobil, dipilih menjadi cyborg; dan peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa *Robocop* (2014) masih memuat representasi Barat terhadap masyarakat Timur Tengah, seperti yang dikatakan Edward Said tentang Orientalisme. Negara Timur Tengah dan masyarakatnya digambarkan dalam film ini sebagai orang-orang berpikiran sederhana yang tidak memiliki kekuasaan melawan otoritas Barat, atau sebaliknya, orang-orang Barat digambarkan sebagai orang-orang terpelajar yang memiliki otoritas besar baik dalam negaranya sendiri maupun di negara Timur Tengah.

Keyword: *Robocop* (2014), orientalisme, dominasi, restrukturisasi, otoritas.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of Study

Orientalism is a European culture that gains strength and shapes Eastern stereotypes by developing a Western identity (Edward Said, 1979:3). According to Said, America has dominated the Orient (the East) since World War II and approaches it as France and Britain once did from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II (Edward Said, 1979:4). There are massive distinctions between the West and the East that place the East as inferior to the West. Europe, or the West, defines itself as a superior civilization compared to the Orient or the East. Said found that the West constructs these representations to create a discourse that is traditionally purposed to disseminate two hegemonic purposes: to make imperialism in government legal and to make false conviction that the West is able to help and bring a 'better' civilization to the Orientals (Bartens, 2008). Orientalism by Edward Said is convenient for analyzing the film's distinctions between the West and the Middle East. The researcher chooses *RoboCop* (2014) as the object of study to see the representation of the Western of the Middle Eastern is conveyed by the director.

*RoboCop* (2014) is a remake of the *RoboCop* (1987). *RoboCop* (2014) is a science action fiction film produced by American film producers Marc Abraham and Eric Newman and directed by Brazilian film director Jose

Padilha. *RoboCop* (2014) tells about the multinational conglomerate OmniCorp that revolutionized warfare by introducing robotic peacekeepers capable of maintaining law and order in hot places such as Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran. However, in their home country, the United States, Senator Dreyfuss's law prohibits the use of robots because the robots they create have no feelings. Therefore, the CEO of OmniCorp, Sellars, asks Dr. Dennett Norton to make an alternative robot that can be used in the United States, and the result is a Detroit Police detective, Alex Murphy, who is seriously injured by a car bomb explosion and is turned into a cyborg.

*Robocop* (2014) carries a futuristic genre, where technology is depicted as very advanced and is set 14 years ahead of when this film is released, to be precise in 2028. In this film, America is the main setting of place, which is depicted as very advanced. The OmniCorp company, which is an American company, has succeeded in creating a fighting machine that can help the American military. The products that OmniCorp makes are very sophisticated. They carry out tasks according to orders from a system that has been regulated according to military needs. They are able to arrest criminals by shooting targets on target. Apart from that, OmniCorp has also succeeded in creating human robots, namely humans who have been modified with machine components. Murphy becomes a test case for cyborg development and is successful. Cyborg is superior to machines because he has a human side. The American military claims that the robots produced by OmniCorp are able to help in world peace and freedom. One of the countries depicted in the

film as a conflict country that is involved in American military operations is Tehran, the capital of Iran. Iran is the East, specifically the Middle East.

In contrast to America, which is depicted as being so advanced, Tehran is depicted as being inversely proportional to America. Tehran is described as having a civilization that is far behind, like the shape of buildings that do not match its era; all the buildings look old, and many are rusty. The vehicles used by Tehran residents also appear to be old versions. Apart from that, everything that carries out the daily operations of the city of Tehran is the American military assisted by OmniCorp production machines. There is no visible military presence from Tehran participating in daily operations.

Moreover, in the film, there is a scene where several Tehran residents, Arash, and his colleagues attack OmniCorp machines when the Novak Element team is conducting a live broadcast of daily American military operations in Tehran. They deliberately commit suicide to be included in Novak Element's live broadcast. In the scene, they shout *Allahuakbar* [Allah is the Greatest] when committing suicide.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that this film differently represents the Middle East and the West places. Two places are described differently. First is the United States of America as the West; it is superior and knowledgeable and second is Tehran, Iran, as the Middle East; it is inferior and backward.

In real life, the U.S. and Iran had a conflict (cold war). The U.S. and Iran had a good relationship before. Iran and the U.S. relationship deteriorated after the



Iranian Revolution in 1979. Iranian Revolution forced the U.S.-backed Shah Reza Pahlavi to flee and made Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini become Iran's supreme leader after he returned from exile. Under the leadership of Ayatollah, a group of Iranian college students occupies the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and takes fifty-two Americans hostage. It made the U.S. sever ties with Tehran, sanction Iranian oil imports, and freeze Iranian assets. The sanctions put Iran into an economic crisis (<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-relations-iran-1953-2021>). It shows that the Western (U.S.) has the power to control the Middle Eastern (Iran). Then, the Iran and U.S. conflict continued until now.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher believes there is a relationship between the history and the present circumstances that influence the director to form a Western representation of the Middle East. *Robocop* (2014) was created by the Western to form Western representation. *RoboCop* (2014) that America produces informs about America's power as shown by their technology wanting to help and bring a 'better' civilization to Tehran, the capital of Iran in the Middle East. Therefore, this research focuses on the Western domination over the Middle East shown by Orientalism.

As a result, the researcher is interested in analyzing the Western representation of the Middle East in the film—America as Western that controlled Iran as Middle Eastern with their robotic peacekeepers.



## 1.2. Research Question

According to the background, the researcher formulates a question: how is the representation of the Western to the Middle Eastern in *RoboCop* (2014)?

## 1.3. Objective of Study

Based on the problem statement above, this research aims to explain the Western representation of the Middle Eastern in *Robocop* (2014)

## 1.4. Significance of Study

This research has significance practically and theoretically. Practically, this research helps the readers understand the representation of the Western to the Middle Eastern appears in the movie. Theoretically, this research intended to add literary analysis to Orientalism theory.

## 1.5. Literature Review

The researcher found one research by using the film *Robocop 2014*. The research is *Human vs Robot (An Analysis the Internal Conflict of Alex Murphy on Robocop Movie)* by Ardiansyah Bagaya from State University Gorontalo. This research analyzes the internal conflict in the Robocop Movie between the human and the Robot in character. The researcher used a structural approach in this research. The result showed that there were 19 data that showed conflict that appeared in the movie. The data was divided into three categories of conflict; they are avoidance- avoidance conflict, approach-avoidance conflict, and approach– approach conflict.

On the other hand, there are other analyses with the same theory. The first analysis is a graduation paper from State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, *Western Stereotype to The Eastern in Muslim Countries as Depicted in Zero Dark (2012)* by Eliyawati. The paper focuses on the powerful, advanced, and civilized of the West over the East. The research analyzes how Western culture forms the Eastern identity through the portrayal and stereotypes of the East. The research applies the theory of Orientalism by Edward Said and film Theory by Amy Villarejo. The result of this research shows that the West has its own stereotypes as a superior and civilized nation.

The third is a graduation paper from State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, *Western Stereotype Through Eastern Representation as Seen in the Film Eat Pray Love: Postcolonial Study* by Alfi Ramadhani. The paper analyzes the *Eat Pray Love* movie that contains an issue related to the West and East; the paper focuses on the domination and authority of the West over the East and uses the theory of Orientalism and film to see a Western way of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient. The paper analyzes how Liz (the main character) finds what she wants in life, Liz's conflicts, and the methods she takes to recover herself by traveling to Italy, India, and Bali. The research shows that *Eat Pray Love* still contains Western stereotypes about Eastern people, like what Edward Said says about Orientalism.

## 1.6. Theoretical Approach

This research discusses power and domination between the West and the Middle East. This research uses Orientalism by Edward Said because the setting in the first scene of *Robocop* (2014) contains Western stereotypical views and conceptions of the Middle East. Besides, the research also uses film theory as the supporting theory to analyze the Western representation of the Middle East in *Robocop* (2014) as the topic of this research.

### 1.6.1. Orientalism Theory

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it by teaching it, settling it, and ruling over it. In simple words, 'Orientalism' is the term used to show the Western approach and attitude toward Middle, North African, and Asia people, Society, and culture. Orientalism is a way of understanding the Eastern world based on its place, which specializes in the human experience of Western Europe (Edward Said, 1979:2). According to Said, Orientalism is a style of thinking that is made between "East" as (the Orient) and almost always "West" as (the Occident). In short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, 1979:3).

Orient and Occident are artificial. In Said's *Orientalism*, Vico states that men make their own history. They make geographical sectors such as Orient and Occident (Said, 1979: 6). The term 'occident' means the Western countries, their ideology, their customs, and their philosophy of life (West means the countries of

Europe, America, and France). Occident societies are considered dynamic and innovative. Then, the term 'orient' means Eastern countries, especially East Asia. Orient societies are considered by the Occident as being static; it is never changing.

The relationship between the Orient and the Occident is a relationship of power and domination (Said, 1979: 6). The qualities and images of The East are constructed by the West to show its superiority. The Orient is seen as standing on the opposite of the Occident. The Orient "were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined" (Said, 1979: 207). There is also a collective thought identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans (Said, 1979: 7). "Us" identify the domination of the West while "those" identify the East that is dominated by the West. In short, Orientalism is a term related to the representation of the West over the East. Its purpose is primarily to colonize the Orient by controlling, constructing, and representing them in binary opposition.

#### **1.6.2. Film Theory**

The researcher applies film theory as the supporting theory for this research. The theory is used because some of the data are from the film's scene. According to Villarejo, the film theories are *mise-en-scene* and cinematography. *Mise-en-scene* comes from French that "put into the scene" (Villarejo, 2006:28). The researcher uses *mise-en-scene* that has six elements to make a film like a reality, such as setting, lighting, costume, hair, make-up, and characteristic of the figure to

see representation of the West and the Middle East. The researcher also uses a setting, which can create a sense of place.

Cinematography is the technique used to analyze everything related to the camera, which is moving. "Cinematography refers to what to do with the camera when it shoots an object. It is the camera distance, camera angle, camera's movement..." (Villarejo, 2007:36). According to Villarejo, there are seven framing techniques in cinematography, they are:

1. The extreme long shot (ELS), which distinguishes the human figure;
2. The long shot (LS), in which the human is distinguishable but remains by the background;
3. The medium long shot (MLS), in which the human is framed from the knees to the upper body;
4. The medium shot (MS), which moves in slightly closer, sees the human from chest to head;
5. The close-up (CU), which isolates a portion of the human face;
6. The extreme close-up (ECU) sees the face portion more (Villarejo, 2007:38).

The researcher also uses the height of the camera to examine the film shot. There are two types of camera height:

1. High angle: The camera shoots from a high angle up to view the subject (Roy Thompson, 2009:41).
2. Low angle: the camera shoots from a low angle up to view the subject (Roy Thompson, 2009:42).

In this research, the researcher also examines the type of camera angle. There are three angles that are mentioned below:

1. Objective camera is when it films from a sideline viewpoint.
2. Subjective camera is when it films from a personal viewpoint.
3. Point of View camera angle, which records the scene from a particular player's viewpoint.

### **1.7. Method Of Research**

In this section, it explains the type of research, data source, data collection technique, and data analysis technique.

#### **1.7.1. Type of Research**

In this research, the researcher uses the descriptive qualitative method that is able to analyze the subject. The data of qualitative research are not numbers (Blaxter, 2006:64). There are several advantages of the descriptive qualitative method, such as emphasizing understanding phenomena in their own right, opening exploratory questions, unlimited description option, exceptional strategy for enhancing the credibility of design and analyses, and discovering something new. This type of research is used to explore data. In addition, the research uses many sources from libraries and the internet.

#### **1.7.2. Data Source**

The researcher uses two data sources. They are the main data and the secondary data. The main data from this research is the film *Robocop* (2014). The main data consist of the scene or the smallest unit of film (Metz, 1991:67), and



dialogues in the film. The secondary data are books, journals, articles and internet related to the film analysis, orientalism, and representation to support the primary data.

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

The researcher has some steps to collect the data. First, the researcher watches the film to understand the film and identify the intrinsic elements such as theme, plot, setting, character, and characterization. Then, the researcher collects the data based on Orientalism theory; the scene must represent three aspects namely (domination, restructuring, and authority). Third, the researcher also collects the data through shots and scripts by intensively screen shooting scene by scene in the film that contains representation of the Western to the Middle East.

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

In this research, the researcher has several steps. The first step is classifying the data into pictures, acts, and dialogues on the West and Middle East sides. The next step is interpreting them based on the Orientalism theory by Edward Said and film theory to find the structure and organization for the data. In the last step, the researcher writes the conclusion of this research.

## **1.8. Paper Organization**

This research contains four chapters. The first is an introduction that includes the background of study, research question, the objectives of study, the significance of study, the literature review, the theoretical approach, the method of



research, and the paper organization. The second is the intrinsic elements of *Robocop* (2014). The third is the *Robocop* (2014) analysis through Orientalism theory and Film theory. The last chapter is the conclusion and suggestion of the research.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

#### 4.1. Conclusion

This research aims to demonstrate that the *Robocop* (2014) contains Middle Eastern representations from the Western. This film depicts the Middle East and the West in distinct ways. Both locations are described in distinct ways. As the Western power, the United States of America is first and foremost knowledgeable and superior. In contrast, Tehran, Iran, is considered to be in the Middle Eastern region and is considered to be archaic and inferior. This analysis consists of two sections. In brief, the first analysis explains the dominance of the West through the East. In the film, the United States represents the Western region, while Tehran, Iran, represents the Eastern region. The second analysis explains the authority of the West over the East.

This film is analyzed using the theory of Orientalism and uncovered a great deal of information. In this film, the Middle Eastern people are represented as simple-minded and powerless against Western authority, whereas the Western characters are well educated and have a great deal of authority in both their own country and the Middle Eastern country. It can be proven by the existence of inequality between the Middle East and the West, which, as a representation of the West over the Middle East, demonstrates that the West is dominant.

The second prove is the authority that the West has acquired due to their dominance. The Western has the authority to depict and illustrate the Middle East as they presuppose in this film. Their supposition creates an extremely disparate depiction of the Middle East in comparison to reality. The preconceived notion that has become ingrained in their consciousness is due to a long-standing representation.

The researcher concludes, based on the preceding explanation, that the director, as a Western, plays a significant role in molding the negative Western representation of the Middle East and developing the Western image as a civilized and superior nation. The West appears more dominant than the Middle East everywhere.

#### **4.2. Suggestion**

The researcher realized that this research is far from perfect. *RoboCop* (2014) tells about the multinational conglomerate OmniCorp that revolutionized warfare by introducing robotic peacekeepers capable of maintaining law and order in hot place, Iran. Thus, the researcher focuses on the Western representation of the Middle Eastern through the characters and setting of place by using Orientalism theory. Besides Orientalism theory, Binary Opposition theory is also interesting to be applied to analyze contrasting aspects in this film.

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