

**THE OTHERING GAZE: REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM DIASPORA
IN *BULAN TERBELAH DI LANGIT AMERIKA* (2015) AND *MY NAME IS
KHAN* (2010)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Gaining the Bachelor
Degree in English Department



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2025

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

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Atas perhatian Bapak Dekan, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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MOTTO

“What matters most is how well you walk through the fire”

-Charles Bukowski

“Mungkin kita sampai, mungkin saja tidak. Tugas kita hanyalah berjalan”

-The Jeblogs



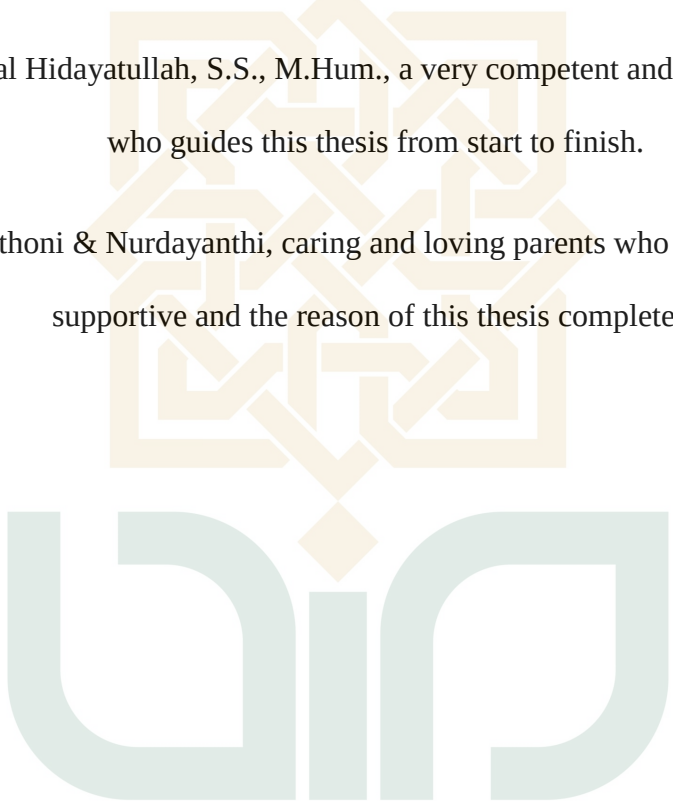
DEDICATION

This graduation thesis is dedicated to:

All lecturers of the English literature department, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.

Mr. Danial Hidayatullah, S.S., M.Hum., a very competent and helpful advisor who guides this thesis from start to finish.

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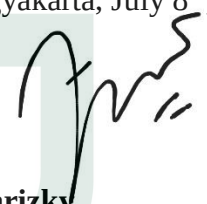
All praise be to Allah SWT, who has blessed me with health, grace, guidance, power, and patience so that I could complete my graduation thesis entitled "The Othering Gaze: Representation of Muslim Diaspora in *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2015) and *My Name Is Khan* (2010)". I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to everyone who helped me complete this graduation thesis. They are:

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**THE OTHERING GAZE: REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM DIASPORA
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By: Elfarizky (21101050028)

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the films *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2015) and *My Name is Khan* (2010), with a focus on addresses a gap in understanding how global cinema, particularly from Indian and Indonesian perspectives, portrays the Muslim diaspora in the United States, also contributing to intercultural discourse. It examines whether these portrayals promote or resist the "othering" gaze—in which Muslims are viewed as inferior or threatening—and how they navigate a "third space" of hybrid identity. *My Name is Khan* depicts Rizwan Khan, an Indian Muslim with Asperger's syndrome, navigating personal tragedy and discrimination to assert his identity, meanwhile *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* follows Hanum, an Indonesian journalist, as she investigates the impact of 9/11 on Muslim Americans through personal narratives. This study analyzes narratives, visual styles, and character development using a descriptive qualitative technique and comparative content analysis, using Stuart Hall's representation theory, Edward Said's postcolonial theory, and Louis Giannetti's film theory. The finding reveals how both films portrays the United States as a dominant power and Muslim as the "other". The finding also reveals the United States as a dual space, offering opportunity while also enforcing oppression, where Muslim protagonists negotiate a "third space" (Homi K. Bhabha) of hybrid identity in the middle of increasing Islamophobia. Important scenes, such as Rizwan's detention and Hanum's discrimination, illustrate systematic prejudice, while acts of resistance, such as Rizwan's aid to Wilhemina and Ibrahim's heroics, challenge the stereotypes. The research concludes that both films criticize the United States' failure to promote equality while honoring Muslim agency, providing to a better understanding of intercultural representation in global cinema. Suggestions for future research include comparative analyses with other post-9/11 films, and also audience reception studies to address limitations in textual focus and contextual depth.

Keywords: *Representation, Islamophobia, Comparative Literature, Movie, America, Postcolonial*

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis film *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2015) dan *My Name is Khan* (2010), dengan fokus pada mengatasi kekurangan dalam pemahaman tentang bagaimana sinema global, khususnya dari perspektif India dan Indonesia, menggambarkan diaspora Muslim di Amerika Serikat, serta berkontribusi pada wacana antar budaya. Penelitian ini mengkaji apakah penggambaran ini mempromosikan atau menentang pandangan 'othering'—di mana Muslim dipandang sebagai lebih rendah atau mengancam—dan bagaimana mereka menavigasi 'ruang ketiga' dari identitas hibrid. *My Name is Khan* menceritakan Rizwan Khan, seorang Muslim India dengan sindrom Asperger, yang menghadapi tragedi pribadi dan diskriminasi untuk menegaskan identitasnya, sedangkan *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* menceritakan Hanum, seorang jurnalis Indonesia, yang menyelidiki dampak 9/11 terhadap Muslim Amerika melalui narasi pribadi. Studi ini menganalisis narasi, gaya visual, dan perkembangan karakter menggunakan teknik kualitatif deskriptif dan analisis konten komparatif, dengan menggunakan teori representasi Stuart Hall, teori pascakolonial Edward Said, dan teori film Louis Giannetti. Hasil analisis mengungkap bagaimana kedua film menggambarkan Amerika Serikat sebagai kekuatan dominan dan Muslim sebagai "yang lain". Hasil analisis juga menunjukkan Amerika Serikat sebagai ruang ganda, menawarkan peluang sekaligus melakukan penindasan, di mana para protagonis Muslim menegosiasikan "ruang ketiga" (Homi K. Bhabha) dari identitas hibrid di tengah meningkatnya Islamofobia. Adegan penting, seperti penahanan Rizwan dan diskriminasi terhadap Hanum, menggambarkan prasangka sistematis, sementara tindakan perlawanan, seperti bantuan Rizwan ke Wilhemina dan keberanian Ibrahim, menantang stereotip tersebut. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa kedua film mengkritik kegagalan Amerika Serikat dalam mempromosikan kesetaraan sekaligus menghormati ketangguhan Muslim, berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang representasi antarbudaya di bidang film global. Saran untuk penelitian masa depan mencakup analisis komparatif dengan film pasca-9/11 lainnya, serta studi penerimaan audiens untuk mengatasi keterbatasan fokus teks dan kedalaman konteks.

Kata Kunci: *Representasi, Islamofobia, Sastra Banding, Film, Amerika, Pasca Kolonial*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

My Name Is Khan (2010), directed by Karan Johar, is a Bollywood in conjunction with Hollywood studios film about an Indian Muslim man, Rizwan Khan (played by Shah Rukh Khan) with Asperger's Syndrome, living in the San Francisco area and married to an Indian Hindu woman, Mandira Rathod (played by Kajol), who, after 9/11, embarks on a journey across the United States to meet the President and tell him, "My name is Khan, and I'm not a terrorist." This high-budget picture, shot in luxurious settings in India and the US, was a hit in both countries. At the time, it was the highest-grossing Indian film in international markets. (Erndl, 2016)

On August 14, 2009, six months before the film's release, Shahrukh Khan was detained and interrogated by Homeland Security at Newark Airport due to a security alert triggered by his name (Shah Rukh Detained at US Airport for Being a Khan - Hindustan Times, 2009). In Mumbai, India, violent Shiv Sena activists threatened the film's opening on February 12, 2010, accusing Shah Rukh Khan of espionage over statements concerning Pakistani cricket players (Marpakwar & Dubey, 2010). These two cases, which ironically are in line with the film's subject, are closely related to its targeted audiences and messaging.

My Name is Khan, a story of love and the pursuit of justice set in the pre- and post-9/11 United States, is one attempt to challenge misconceptions about Muslims for a Western, especially North American, audience. The message for the

Indian audience emphasizes national unity, unity among religions, and harmony in the aftermath of the Mumbai bombings on November 26, 2008. It also celebrates diverse Muslim and Hindu religious identities.

Meanwhile, *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2015) is a novel written by Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra that was later adapted into a movie. The story examines the relationship between American cultural norms and Islamic beliefs, portraying the two cultures' bond. The story is set against the context of Islamophobia in the United States following the 9/11 attacks, focusing on Muslim Americans' struggles and the importance of mutual understanding and respect.

The movie *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* shows Hanum and Rangga, a married couple, as they attempt to find out the truth about the attacks of 9/11 from their perspective. Hanum, a journalist, has been asked by her boss, Gertrude Robinson, to work on an article entitled "Would the World Be Better Without Islam?" for a newspaper. To collect information for the article, Hanum interviews a pair of participants in the United States, one Muslim and one non-Muslim. The participants are Azima Hussein, a Muslim convert who works at the museum, and her child, Sarah Hussein, who lost a family member in the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC) in Washington, D.C. and New York.

The movie *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* explores the issue of Islamophobia by telling a story about the negative stereotypes and prejudices that Muslims experienced in the United States following the 9/11 attacks. The film

depicts a world in which Islamophobia has become a widespread problem, with many Americans having deep concerns and hatred toward Muslims. This is represented by several moments in the film, including the portrayal of prejudice towards Muslims in their daily lives, the negative media representation of Islam, and the broad stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists (Ma'ruf, 2017).

For many years, the American film industry has addressed the problem of Islam and Muslims in the West. According to Jack Shaheen (2003), Hollywood has been involved in the discrimination of Arabs and Muslims since the early of the 20th century. *True Lies* (1994) and *The Siege* (1998) are just a couple examples of Hollywood portraying some Muslims as conspiring to harm America. Following 9/11, the West, particularly the United States, experienced a significant rise in anti-Islamic prejudice due to the criminal actions of a few fanatics. According to Steuter and Wills (2010), there has been a growing trend in the media portraying enemies as animals rather than humans. Following the 9/11 attacks, the Council on American-Islamic Relations reported receiving over 300 reports of discrimination against Muslims in just three days, nearly half the amount of similar claims received in the previous year. Other than verbal and physical insults and abuse, the most notable phrase used towards Muslim families was 'Go back to your country!' (Hate Crime Reports up in Wake of Terrorist Attacks, 2001).

According to Cohen (1997), diaspora is defined as a group or individual's voluntary or forced migration from its original homeland to multiple locations, marked by a collective identity shaped by traumatic events, the persistence of cultural practices, a sense of alienation in their new home, and a dynamic

negotiation between homeland and hostland identities. Cohen identifies key elements such as dispersal as a result of persecution or economic migration, a strong ethnic consciousness, and the ability for economic or cultural contributions to both the homeland and host society, which frequently produces a hybrid identity over time. This concept is particularly significant in the post-9/11 era, as analyzed in this study. The Muslim diaspora in the United States consists of a variety of communities, including South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian Muslims, who migrated for economic opportunity, education, or refuge, and frequently separated due to past conflicts or colonial legacies. The 9/11 attacks became a tragic event that increased their sense of isolation, as evidenced by the films' depictions of Islamophobia.

Othering in the United States is a complex social and cultural process that builds and maintains borders between groups, frequently resulting in a "us versus them" conflict that leads to marginalization and exclusion of people labeled as "others." This idea is deeply investigated in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, literature, and critical theory, focusing on its multidimensional nature and deep roots in historical and power dynamics. Othering is the social construction of particular individuals or groups as fundamentally different and alien, frequently inferior or threatening, in comparison to a dominant or normative group. This system involves dividing people based on social identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, nationality, language, and physical appearance, among others. The "Other" is frequently marginalized, excluded, and undervalued, which maintains societal hierarchies and

discriminations (Ahmed AbdulMegied, 2022). In this context, the Muslim diaspora in both films has become the "other".

For lots of Muslim filmmakers, cinema is a form of resistance. Misrepresentations, distortions, and dehumanizing imagery were the main reasons for them to pick up a camera. They provide a light on an area that previously remained outside the frame. Many people's voices and images were unnoticed or unseen. The majority of them grew up in an environment either directly or indirectly impacted by the 9/11 tragedy, and they were blamed for the actions. With passion in their souls, they were driven to distort the frame and adjust the angle of the light while presenting visual stories. (Shiekh, 2023)

In this research, two movies are compared to understand how both movies portray the identity of Muslim diaspora in the United States. These movies contain identical topics and arguments because they address the fundamental human emotions such as fear, love, and prejudice, and all of the main protagonists are portrayed to have been affected by the 9/11 attacks, becoming victims of post-9/11 islamophobia in the United States. Comparative literature is an interdisciplinary topic that examines literature from many countries, time periods, languages, genres, and even other forms of art such as music, painting, and film. It investigates the connections between literature and many areas of human activity, such as history, politics, philosophy, and science.

The study of comparative literature aims to connect cultural gaps, discover broader viewpoints, and gain a greater knowledge of literary works. Comparative

literature examines literary works from many cultures, languages, and times to see how they reflect reality (Auerbach, 2003). By comparing these representations, the research provides insight on how the United States is perceived and constructed in worldwide film, reflecting a variety of societal, cultural, and political perspectives.

This comparative analysis is particularly interesting since it emphasizes the impact of historical events, such as 9/11, on the portrayal of Muslim communities and their experiences in America. It also investigates how filmmakers from various cultural settings perceive and critique American society, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural representation and the power dynamics at work in global media. This study not only expands our understanding of film studies and cultural representation, but it also increases a greater appreciation for many different aspects involved in depicting national identities in a globalized society.

Since the films originate from different cultural background—*My Name is Khan* from India with Bollywood-Hollywood influences and *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* from Indonesia, comparing these two movies allows to examine how distinct non-Western cinematic traditions represent the Muslim diaspora, offering a broader understanding of global perceptions of the United States post-9/11. Comparing the films helps to address cultural divides and bring new insights into Muslim diaspora representation. This comparison challenges Western media stereotypes and provides counter-narratives, broadening the global cinematic perspective of identity in the post-9/11 era.

Representation theories were used in this research. Stuart Hall (1997) defines representation theory as the study of how the media portrays reality, which includes social groupings, events, places, and history. According to Hall's concept, there is often no actual representation of these aspects in media texts, but rather a constructed meaning based on the social power and privilege of those who create and produce the media. This construction of meaning could be viewed as a form of encoding, in which media producers encode messages into their content, which the audience later decodes. Hall's theory also emphasizes the significance of understanding how these representations actively impact our perceptions of reality, rather than just reflecting it.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher found a problem: How do the films *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* and *My Name is Khan* portray the identity of Muslim diaspora in United States?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the background of the study and the research question, this research aims to explore the depiction of Muslim diaspora in the United States from both movies, focusing on the themes, narratives, and cultural contexts presented in each film.

1.4 Research Significance

This research provides useful insights into how different cultural narratives portray Muslim diaspora in the United States' identity. By analyzing these movies,

the researcher aims to improve the perception of intercultural viewpoints, focusing on how filmmakers from various backgrounds interpret and represent Muslim diaspora in the United States.

1.5 Literature Review

Similar studies have been conducted by other researchers. One of them is an article entitled *Religious and National Identity in My Name is Khan* conducted by Kathleen M. Erndl in 2016. This article examines how Muslim images, practices, and beliefs, including the recitation of Bismillah, daily public prayer, hijab for women, almsgiving, the story of Abraham and Ishmael, and the Sufiana musical score, are highlighted, reinterpreted, and re-contextualized alongside Hindu and American (particularly African-American) motifs. *My Name Is Khan* promotes an identity that is both Muslim and Indian, while also embracing global humanism, despite challenging cultural preconceptions and portrayals.

Another similar study was conducted by Kasiyarno in 2022 entitled *A Mutualism between American and Islamic Values in Rais and Almahendra's Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika*. This study investigates the mutualism between Muslims and the American land over a long period of time, beginning with early American history. In the aftermath of 9/11, the bond is examined from a new viewpoint through discourses in the novel *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2016), authored by two Indonesian Muslims, Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra. It describes how American ideals and Islamic teachings interact in a mutualistic manner. The novel's moral lesson is clear: Islam continues to make

significant contributions to the world and has had an advantageous relationship with the United States throughout history.

The last similar study is an article entitled *Constructions of US National Identity in Oliver Stone's World Trade Center (2006): Back to the Same Old Story?* conducted by Esther Pérez-Villalba in 2008. This study examines Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006), a well-known 9/11 film that follows a new pattern. This analysis examines US production, marketed for both domestic and international consumption, as a patriotic and ideological attempt to reaffirm US national identity after 9/11. This thesis claims that the film portrays 'Americanness' as multiethnic, Christian, and centered on communal agency and the family unit. This paper examines how conceptions of national identity in the *World Trade Center* diverge from typical discourses on US identity.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1. Representation Theory

This research uses Representation Theory by Stuart Hall as the main theory. Stuart Hall's representation theory focuses on the relationship of identity, difference, and stereotypes in media. He criticizes stereotypes for simplifying and essentializing identities, and argues for a more complex view of cultural representation, especially in respect to underprivileged and diasporic communities. Hall's concept of stereotypes has significant implications for film studies, including character analysis, criticism of negative portrayals of marginalized groups, a new perspective on film history, and highlighting the social function of stereotypes in specific cases (Prysthon, 2016).

There are two key concepts in this theory, namely cultural representation and semiotics. Cultural representation describes how media texts develop and communicate cultural identities and norms. Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model is important in this context since it investigates the methods by which media producers encode messages with certain meanings and how audiences decode these messages using their own cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. This relationship between encoding and decoding highlights the dynamic aspect of media consumption, in which the creator's intended message can be perceived in many kinds of ways by different audiences. This topic is used in the films *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* and *My Name is Khan* to examine how cultural identities, particularly those of Muslim communities, are portrayed and understood within the context of American culture and media.

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and their use or interpretation. Semiotics, according to Stuart Hall, is an important tool for understanding how language and media function as representational systems. He argues that meaning is not inherent in objects or conceptions, but rather created via cultural and social processes. Hall emphasizes that signals (words, images, and sounds) do not have fixed meanings; rather, meanings are formed through the interaction of the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept represented). By applying semiotic analysis to *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* and *My Name Is Khan*, the study can identify the deeper symbolic meanings and cultural beliefs that shape the United States' depiction and engagement with Muslim populations.

These concepts are integrated to create a solid theoretical foundation to analyze the representation of the United States in the selected films, which provides a deeper understanding of how media constructs and influences society's conceptions of cultural and political identities. This comparative study will highlight the similarities and differences in representations of American society and its impact on Muslim communities, providing perspectives on the complex interactions of cross-cultural representation in international cinema.

1.6.2. Postcolonial Theory & Third Space

This research also uses postcolonial theory and third space concepts as a supporting theory. The researcher employs this theory to analyze the character's identity in both movies. Postcolonial theory, as defined in Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1979), is a critical framework that explores the cultural, political, and intellectual legacies of colonialism and imperialism, particularly how the West constructs and dominates representations of the "Orient" or non-Western societies. Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'", arguing that this distinction is a constructed discourse that serves to justify Western hegemony rather than a neutral observation.

Said claims that Orientalism is a system of knowledge and power in which the West portrays the East—namely the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa—as exotic, backward, and inferior, therefore validating colonial dominance and remaining stereotypes. He highlights that this depiction is not a reflection of reality, but rather a construct of Western imagination formed by literature, art, and

education, positioning the Orient as the "Other" to the logical, civilized West. Postcolonial theory, as it has evolved from this foundation, tries to expose and challenge power inequalities, investigate the ongoing impacts of colonial history, and investigate colonized peoples' agency in resisting or redefining their identities.

Bhabha (1994) defines the "third space" as an interstitial, in-between space created by the negotiation of cultural differences, in which identities are hybridized, generating new meanings and possibilities rather than being fixed or binary. He states: "The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People". In summary, the "third space" is a site of cultural translation and interaction—neither fully one nor fully the other—where the collision of differences (for example, colonizer/colonized, Western/Islamic) creates a liminal zone that interrupts traditional power dynamics and allows for the emergence of new, hybrid identities. Bhabha underlines that this space is both productive and ambivalent, allowing marginalized groups to assert their agency and oppose fixed cultural narratives.

1.6.3. Film Theory

Since the object of this research is film, film theory is required to analyze it. The researcher uses Louis Giannetti's *Understanding Movies* as the main source for the film theory. Giannetti (2001) identifies the formal components of film, such as mise-en-scene, cinematography, and lighting, as the essential elements that filmmakers use to express meaning and create emotional responses. Mise-en-scène

is the arrangement of all visual components within a film frame that contribute to its overall meaning and aesthetic value. According to Giannetti, this includes actor staging, the use of clothes and makeup, prop and set placement, shot composition, and the use of lighting and color. He underlines that *mise-en-scène* is a director's tool for creating a specific mood, conveying character attributes, and moving the narrative along, acting as a "visual language" that audiences interpret subconsciously.

Cinematography features camera angles, framing, and movement, which influence how viewers perceive the narrative. Editing, defined as the "coordination of one shot with the next," determines the film's rhythm and continuity, whereas sound—dialogue, music, and effects—add emotional depth. Giannetti also emphasizes ideological analysis, looking at how films reflect, reinforce, or question social values and cultural norms, which could reveal underlying power systems. He writes, "Ideology in movies is often conveyed through the manipulation of formal elements, which shape the audience's emotional and intellectual responses to the narrative", enhancing a critical interpretation of how films connect with social issues such as race, religion, or nationalism. (Giannetti, 2001)

1.7 Method

1.7.1 Type of Research

This study uses descriptive qualitative research design, specifically a comparative content analysis, to analyze the representation of the United States in the films *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2015) and *My Name Is Khan* (2010). Creswell and Poth (2018) define qualitative research as "an approach for exploring

and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups refer to a social or human problem". They underline that it includes obtaining data through non-numerical methods such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, allowing researchers to gain insight into the diversity of participants' opinions in their natural contexts.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The primary data for this study will be two films: *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* and *My Name is Khan*. Additional secondary data will include film reviews, critical analyses, and research articles that will add context and support to the analysis.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

To conduct an in-depth analysis, this study uses a systematic approach, beginning with film viewing and note-taking. The first stage is to watch both *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2015) and *My Name Is Khan* (2010) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their narratives, thematic concepts, and cinematic techniques. During these viewings, detailed notes are recorded, focusing on important elements that contribute to each film's portrayal of Muslim diaspora in the United States. This includes documenting significant scenes, critical dialogues, character interactions, and visual motifs—such as framing, lighting, and symbolic imagery—that shape how Muslim in United States is depicted.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

Three key approaches are used to examine the portrayal of Muslim diaspora in United States in the films *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* and *My Name is Khan*. First, narrative analysis examines the plots, characters, and themes in both films to see how Muslim in the United States is portrayed. By identifying similarities and differences in narrative forms, this approach examines their implications for cultural representation. Second, visual analysis examines cinematography, mise-en-scène, and symbolic imagery to see how visual aspects shape American cultural, social, and political systems. This approach focuses on how framing, lighting, and composition contribute to broader social messages. Finally, discourse analysis examines the language and dialogues in the films, showing how cultural and political themes are expressed through conversations. Discourse analysis, which closely examines how characters argue and respond to the United States and its cultural norms, provides insights into the films' connection with identity, power, and social views.

1.8 Presentation

This research study has four chapters. The first section introduces the study's background, research questions, objectives, significance, literature review, theoretical framework, and research method. The second chapter examines the research object's intrinsic elements, such as themes, characters, and settings. The third chapter conduct the analysis of Muslim diaspora in United States' representation in both objects of research. The last chapter will conclude the study's findings and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Both films present a complex portrayal of the United States as a dual space—both a land of opportunity and a site of oppression—shaped by the pre- and post-9/11 settings, with significant implications for Muslim identity and cultural negotiation. The United States is first portrayed as a modern, multicultural place where characters like Rizwan, Hanum, and Hussein's family pursue the American Dream through professional success, interfaith marriages, and cultural integration. However, the 9/11 attacks act as a turning point, shifting this narrative into one of structural oppression. Scenes of prejudice and discrimination strongly highlight the rise of Islamophobia. These moments demonstrate the United States' failure to sustain its values of equality, as social prejudice and institutional suspicion undermine the initial hope.

Despite this oppression, both films highlight Muslim characters' resilience and agency as they navigate their identities inside a "third space" as defined by Homi K. Bhabha. Hanum's journalism and apparent hijab wearing, as well as Rizwan's acts of service in Wilhemina and his declaration to the president, challenge prejudices and promote cross-cultural understanding. Ibrahim's 9/11 heroism and Azima's conflicted but enduring faith help to humanize Muslim experiences, challenging the dominant Western narrative of the "dangerous Other" as critiqued by Edward Said and Stuart Hall. This hybrid identity, which is neither fully American nor exclusively Islamic, emerges as a site of resistance and

negotiation, providing an element of hope for coexistence in the middle of adversity.

4.2 Suggestion

To expand the scope and identify recurring connections or distinctions in narrative methods, future research might include comparative analyses with other post-9/11 films portraying Muslim characters. Additionally, using qualitative interviews or surveys, researchers could gain a better understanding of how these representations resonate with different viewers, particularly Muslim communities. The limitation of this research is that it focuses on textual and visual interpretation without access to the filmmakers' purpose or production context, which could provide further insight on the intentional use of settings and symbolism. Furthermore, the research is limited by the availability of specific scenes, the potential for missing specific details from unexamined sequences, and the focus on a limited chronological frame (pre- and post-9/11), which may overlook longer-term changes in Muslim representation in film. Addressing these limitations could improve the research's relevance to current discourse about cultural identity and Islamophobia.

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