

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a general description of the paper. It consists of six components such as research background, research question, research objective, research significance, and definition of key term.

1.1 Research Background

Many aspects have been impacted by postcolonialism in numerous ways, such as politics, economics, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, cultural hybridity, and literature. Postcolonialism challenges the dominance of Western culture and perspectives, recognizing the importance of diverse cultural perspectives in shaping our understanding of the world. This has led to a greater emphasis on the importance of promoting diverse voices and perspectives in all areas of society, including in academic, education, healthcare, employment, arts and movie industrial.

One of the biggest movie industries in the world is Hollywood. The name of Hollywood itself is named after a district Los Angeles, Hollywood, United States of America. Since the 1908, thousands of movies have been produced by the Hollywood with various genre such as Horror, Crime, Comedy, Romance-comedy, action, thriller, and more.

A film has the capacity to influence society in a variety of ways, including race and class, much like how postcolonialism has impacted the industrial movie. (Benshoff and Griffin, 2009, p. 1). Movies as literature products have an impact and influence on society such as on how we perceive the world and our collective consciousness. Not only that movies can give impact on society, the society could also influence in the process making of a story. Postcolonial has given impact on the literary work, here in movies it influences the story plot, the typical characteristics of the character, and in many more aspects. Postcolonial movies often bring up racial issues by serving certain race of people and put it in certain typical prejudice stereotype regarding their race. As

one of the popular and influential sectors in the film industry, race and representation in American cinema have been the main topic discussion for many years due to its lack of presentation nor characteristic depiction. African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans have all frequently been portrayed through the eyes of the West which creates certain stereotypes and prejudices. For instance, Native Americans were ascribed to noble savages or violent savages while African Americans were frequently represented as servants, criminals, or comedic sidekicks. (Benshoff and Griffin, 2009, p. 1).

Andrea Smith associated the logic of white supremacy into 3 pillars namely orientalism, slavery/capitalism, and genocide. Orientalism is a process of the West defining themselves as a superior civilization than the other races. Orientalism as according to Edward Said is an idea of superiority and imperialism of the Western for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (1978, p. 5). Slavery as the second pillar is the idea where the black people are seen as nothing more than a property that is owned by the white people and genocide as the last pillar is a logic which believes that the indigenous or native people must disappear (Smith, 2007, p. 68).

The relationship between the West and the East is commonly about the control of power and domination. Said believes that neither the Occident nor Orient exist by nature, rather than an idea of a result of the history, tradition, imagery which are written by the West or it can be said that Occident and Orient are man-made (Said, 1978, p. 5).

Karakatal stated that a film is a tool of propaganda due to its credibility and deception of its deceptiveness and effectiveness (Karakatal, 2021, p.115). Darwanto also stated something similar with Karakatal where he found that Hollywood movie help the audience in shaping the image of the East through the characters, music, place, and setting through the West point of view (2017, p. 49). Film can reflect and shape cultural trends, values, and attitude which helps to promote cultural exchange and

understanding by showcasing different cultures, languages, and perspectives. However, this reflection showed in the film can also be misleading or biased, and it is important for people to be aware of this when viewing them. As a result of the movie where the East is portrayed through their perspective might influence and give the audience the false understanding and insight of who they truly are.

The issue of white supremacy can be seen in American classic films such as *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which both depict the Orient as a land of exotic danger and adventure, while portraying Western heroes as brave and superior. Even in the modern movie, they are still portraying the white character (Occident) and the non-white (Orient) character with certain stereotypes such as *La La Land* (2016), *Avatar* (2009), and *The Sleeping Dictionary* (2003) which also portrays the white character as hero in society with the Orient who needs the white people in saving their culture and to create advance social life by following the education style of the Occident. Those are only the few examples on how the Hollywood put bias on white characters in the movie through the portrayal of their privilege.

Those movies where white people are depicted as the heroes or the most desirable romantic partners, the casting of white actors in roles that were originally intended for people of color, or the use of racial stereotypes and caricatures, someone with power and domination, greater culture are considered as white supremacy. There are other ways of how white supremacy is shown in movies such as through the stereotype of the Occident and Orient, white saviorism where white people character would be the one to survive and save the other character meanwhile the people of color character would die as the movie is progressing, and the portrayal of people of color or Orient as an object of desire. These portrayal of white supremacy in the movies can certainly affect society's perception of white supremacy.

The belief of white supremacy has been perpetuated and reinforced through media and cultural norms for centuries that when these depictions are repeated over time, they

can contribute to a normalization of white supremacy, making it seem like a natural or acceptable way of thinking. Given to the ability of how movie has the impact to influence society through the researcher is interested to see how white privilege helps to construct white supremacy in a film.

Another Hollywood movie that depicted about white supremacy is *American History X* that is directed by Tony Kaye. *American History X* is a film directed by Tony Kaye. The story tells about Derek Vinyard (Edward Norton) as a former neo-Nazi who tried to prevent his younger brother from following the same path as him.

In this research, the writer uses several related studies to support this research. The first study is from Aliza Cipta Kusuma with the title *Orientalism in Million Dollar Arm Film (2014): Binary Opposition of the US and India*. This study analyzed the orientalism issues in the movie of Million Dollar Arm through the characterization, images of place, and how the US and India are depicted. The study used orientalism discourse of Edward Said. The difference with this research is the subject that is being used. The findings in this research are the US is portrayed positively such as independent, developed, modern, glamour, smart, and powered country. The other way, India is depicted in Meanwhile, India is depicted in a very contrast way, in this film India is depicted as a traditional, poor, vile, undeveloped, and weak country. Another differences showed between the US and India are laid on the appearances, attitude, social status where the USA is portrayed as superior.

The second study is entitled *An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination in American History X (1998) Film* written by Muhammad Aji Akasyah. This thesis studied the issue of prejudice and discrimination of characters in the movie *American History X* using the characterization theory of Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie. However, regardless the similarity of the subject, the object that is being analysed are different. The findings of this research object of prejudice aspects are 3 which are cultural transmission, personal trait, group identity. The first is cultural transmission

which is influenced by the cultural environment, second is personality trait showed by the main character Derek, and the last is group identity which are showed by the main character along with other supporting character such as Danny and Seth.

The third study is *Orientalism Stereotypes As Reflected In The Disney's Movie Aladdin* by Riesma Devi Ofianti. This research looks at how Orientalism stereotypes are portrayed in the Disney film Aladdin. In contrast to the traditional depictions of Orientalism, Aladdin is presented as exemplifying virtues of mercy and bravery, presenting an alternate portrayal. This study's findings highlight four frequent Orientalism prejudices within Aladdin. Characters are portrayed as magical, imposing, cunning, harsh, or barbarous in these stereotypes. One example of these prejudices is seen in the film's song opening. This study helps to a better understanding of how Orientalism tropes are portrayed in popular culture, particularly in the Disney film Aladdin.

The choice of *American History X* as the subject of this study originates from its comprehensive examination of white supremacy, which remains a major concern in modern culture. The researcher is interested in analyzing the film *American History X* due to the story relevancy in today's society and the interesting plot of story which highlight white supremacy and the white privilege of the white characters in the film. Within the sphere of Hollywood movies that face this sensitive matter, this film offers as a profound and compelling representation.

It is critical to recognize the film's importance as an influential effort in confronting white supremacy in popular culture. *American History X* stands out as a study object due to its thought-provoking and emotive portrayal of the subject matter. This research seeks to add to the current state of knowledge by conducting a comprehensive analysis that corresponds to the film's exploration of the three pillars white supremacy.

Due to the main theme of the film American History X, the researcher is interested to analyze the portrayal of white supremacy that are being portrayed in the film using

the main theory three pillars of white supremacy by Andrea Smith with supported theory Orientalism of Edward Said.

1.2. Statement of Problem

The problem of the research statement divides are limited into two questions:

1. How does the film *American History X* portrayed the pillars of white supremacy?
2. How does the white supremacy impact Derek Vinyard in film *American History X*?

1.3. Research Objective

The objectives of this research are related to the problems that have been stated above and aim to answer the questions below:

1. To find the white supremacy pillars that are portrayed in the film *American History X*.
2. To find how white supremacy impact Derek Vinyard in the film *American History X*.

1.4. Research Significances

Based on research objective, this research has two significances such as:

1.4.1 Theoretically

This research is expected to contribute a new study of postcolonialism in the form pillar of white supremacy by Andrea Smith. This research is also expected to help new researcher who will use theory of Andrea Smith.

4.1.2. Practically

- a. Academic Readers

This research is expected to give knowledge about how the West portrays the White and non-White characters in Hollywood movies.

b. Public Readers

More knowledge is also expected to provide understanding about the stereotype portrayal of certain races in the Hollywood movies.

c. Movie Industry

This research is also aim for the movie maker to no longer perpetuate stereotypes of races in their movie to which it will impact the perspective of their movie audience in seeing other people according to the background of an individual.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

The key terms below are listed with its definition in order to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation that are applied in this research.

1. Film

A film is a moving graphic in certain period of times which tells a story line which sometimes use sounds or music to be in a line with films. Klarer (2004, p. 56), “Film is idiosyncratic modes of presentation such as camera angle, editing, Montage, slow and fast motion often parallel features of literary texts or can be explained within a textual framework.”

2. Orientalism

Orientalism is the process of constructing and presenting ideas, images, and narratives about the East in Western culture. Said argues that these representations are not objective or neutral, but are shaped by the cultural and historical contexts in which they are produced.

3. Orient

Orient is a term refers to the Eastern countries and cultures such as Asia, Africa, Arabian-peninsula and indigenous people. The orient is portrayed as exotic, barbaric, inferior, and less of a human.

4. Occident

The term "Occident" refers to the cultures and societies of Europe, North America, and other regions that share similar cultural and historical roots influenced by Greek and Roman civilizations. The Occident is seen as superior and therefore has the right to dominate and control the Orient.

5. White Supremacy

White supremacy is a belief or idea that white people are superior than people of color and it is a belief that white people has the right to control and dominate other people of color. This belief has been used to justify slavery, colonialism, segregation, and other forms of racial oppression.

6. White Privilege

White privilege is a natural advantage perceived by the white people without having to work to earn it, nevertheless it is earned simply for having white skin.

