

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents with the background, statement of problem, research objective, research significance and definition of key terms.

1.1. Background

In the case of the Eastern world's exploitation, the colonizer starts with the idea of orientalism. Western scholars develop the project of science about the Eastern world, called Orientalism. By producing various aspects of the study on the Eastern people, then they could know the strengths and the weaknesses of the Eastern people so that they were able easily to be authorized. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2007, p. 63) they explained: "Those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not, therefore the link between knowledge and power is particularly important in the relationships between colonizer and colonized". More importantly as the colonizer, they had prepared certain hidden intentions to the Eastern world the one of which them is to exploit the natural resources in the land.

This postcolonial issue still exists in various literary works. We can also see the orientalism issues in literary works, such as poetry, novel, drama, and film. In the film produced by the West such as Hollywood, the issue of Orientalism can be seen more clearly from the visualization of the relation between the West and the East. Darwanto (2007, p. 46) found that recent Hollywood action and science fiction movie are helping shape a new image of the East. It could be seen through many film aspects for instance characters, music, place, and setting that describes the East by the West point of view. But on the other hand, we can also see the issue of orientalism such as the exploitation of the Eastern world is represented in the movie script. In 2009 there was one movie production titled Avatar which has a strong depiction of Orientalism. Avatar was written and directed by James Cameron.

This is an adventure science fiction movie which has presented, the clear depiction of orientalism idea which became the main reason chosen Avatar as the subject of this study. The plot of this movie tells about the exploitation done by humans, specifically a mining company towards the largest blue moon which Earth-like world called Pandora. The native of Pandora called Na'vi has a different physical appearance from a normal human. The Na'vi is a blue-skinned, 3m-talled species who live in harmony with nature. And also Pandora has very different geographical features with the earth that draws human scientist's attention to explore Pandora. Only on this planet, the valuable mineral can be obtained. In that place, human has to overcome the struggle of the native's opposition about land exploitation.

To achieve this intention, human scientist created humanoid¹ called Avatar. This humanoid is controlled by a human scientist using computer technology known as VR (virtual reality). This invention of the avatar program allows human to drive their avatar body, and therefore human can freely observe and persuade the native to surrender their land.

In order to ease their intentions, they choose several people to participate in controlling the Avatar. One of them is Jake Sully who is one of the main characters in this film. Jake Sully is a former paraplegic US marine. By using the Avatar program, he can walk normally, but not in real life. With his social intelligence, Jake tries to interact with the Na'vi people. At first, he only interacted with Neytiri, the clan leader's daughter. After going through a long process of interaction, Jake finally accepted as part of the Na'vi.

As time goes by, Jake could interact with the Na'vi people and fell in love with Neytiri. In the end, Jake's ambivalence towards the mining company and the Na'vi appear which forced him to choose one of both sides. His choices would determine the fate of the Na'vi and in Pandora. The end of this story is Jake's decision to constantly being an Avatar and live together with the Na'vi people.

¹ Humanoid is most commonly used to refer to a machine or a creature that looks and behaves like a human

Here, the idea of orientalism was clearly depicted in the way human represents the native as primitive and uncivilized and how human tries to educate and build the native in human way. As Said (1979, p. 86) claims that the European considered the East as barbarians “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’ ”. So that his statement leads to the projects of Orientalism which he explained that is “... to instruct (for its own benefit) the Orient in the ways of the modern West” (Said, 1979, p. 86). Thus, Thus, a valuable mineral called unobtainium which only exists in Pandora is the main motive why human tries to conquer the place. Pandora, which has a different geographical condition from the earth, becomes the object of learning and discovery by a human. Therefore, Na’vi people represent the Orient and human represents the Occident.

From the previous explanation about the issue which has been analyzed, this study focused on analyzing how do the Western people learn the Na’vi people through Avatar program in the movie script which build the idea of Orientalism. Orientalism by Edward Said have believed to be the most appropriate theory approach of the study

To support this research, the writer has decided to show four previous researches. The first previous research was by Souad Belkhyr. Her journal which is titled *Defining the 'self' and the 'other' in Disney song lyrics*. In her journal, Belkhyr explained that Disney’s involvement in defining the culture of Western and also attempting to define the non-Western or “Other”. This journal was used the concept of orientalism which describing “Self and Other” by Edward Wa’ di Said. Next, the second previous research was by Aliza Cipta Kusuma. Her thesis which is titled *Orientalism in Million Dollar Arm Film (2004): Binary Opposition of the US and India*. The result of this thesis is the US represented as the West while the East represented by India. Then India is depicted as weak, helpless, and ignorance while the US is depicted as the helper, strong, and important.

Then, the third previous study was the journal by Yana Malyana which is titled *Edward Said's Orientalism and the Representation of the East in Gardens of Water by Alan Drew*. The results of the analysis show that the representation of non-western people and cultures confirms orientalist point of view that puts the East and the West in a binary opposition and represents the East as inferior to the West. Malyana represented the East that leads to the justification of the West imperialism and colonization toward the East. In regard to the previous researches above, they have the similarity with the writer's research which uses the concept of Orientalism by Edward W. Said.

The last previous research was a thesis written by Ridho Hanif Yoghi Artanto entitled "*Orientalism As Portrayed In The Great Wall Movie*". This thesis shows clearly the portrayal of Orientalism in "The Great Wall" movie. This movie has the representation of the East and West. This movie made from West industry but take a set in the East. It makes the movie as though East as superior but in a fact, West has the domination in this movie. The domination of the West is to conduct the Orientalism issue. Orientalism is thought that the West has the authority to provide stereotypes and constructs the East. The purpose of this research is revealing the domination of the superiority of the West to the East. As a result, this research finds the contrast between the portrayal of East and West. This previous research relates to the study that have analyzed by the researcher.

For those reasons above, the researcher needs to conduct the study to analyze the problem with the title: "THE WESTERN DOMINATION OF THE EAST AS REPRESENTED IN JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR".

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Based on the background above, the problem of research is about the way Orientalism discourse linked to European colonialism as represented in the *Avatar* movie script. To limit said problem the researcher formulated two research questions below:

1. How do the Sky people learn the Na'vi people through the Avatar program ?
2. What are the impacts of the Avatar Program into Na'vi people?

1.3. Research Objective

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this research are :

1. To find out the way Sky people learn the Na'vi people through the Avatar program.
2. To find out the impacts of the Avatar Program into Na'vi people.

1.4. Research Significance

The researcher hopes this research can be useful for the readers as a reference for understanding Orientalism discourse comprehensively. The result of this research are also expected to provide the description about the Orientalism issue in the Avatar movie script. It is to push ahead the readers to make the better research in the future.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

1. Eastern world: is not refers to the geographical things, but that is refers to political and ideological things. Here, Eastern world means all the Western colonies.
2. Orientalism: is a style of thought based on distinctions between Orient (East) and Occident (West).
3. Colonialism: is a term where a country conquers and control over other region to dominate it, extending p olitical, economic, and even religion.
4. Postcolonial: is the period after colonization.