

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Colonialization has brought various impacts on both the colonizer and the colonized. In terms of impacts, the consequences of the colonialization resulted in disadvantaged impacts to the colonized like the inferiority due to the domination of the colonizer (Goss 1996). Studies concerned with the experiences of people with history of colonialization are termed Postcolonial studies. Homi K. Bhabha states that the colonialization cultural impacts appear as the experience of ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity upon the colonized (Bhabha 1995). Colonialization also resulted in the idea of the subaltern in which the colonized could not speak for themselves (Spivak 2010). The massive development of Postcolonial theories by the aforementioned proponents is based on ideas of controlling power in colonized societies like Orientalism coined by Edward Said.

Edward Said refers to Orientalism as the western's way of dominating, resurrecting, and having the authority of the Orient. It focuses on how the Orient has been visualized through the Occident's point of view. Said also argues that Orientalism is "a manner of regularized vision, writing, and study that is dominated by ideological biases suited to the Orient" (Said 1978, 202). In Orientalism, there are

three main tenets that interweave from one to another namely; binary opposition, othering and stereotyping.

Binary opposition can be defined as a combination of two opposing things and it is commonly used to distinguish meaning; “good vs. bad”, “strong vs. weak”, and “honest vs. deceitful” (Ashcroft et al. 2007). Later, in postcolonial criticism, the binary opposition was also one of its tenets which examines signs of dominating a culture (Spivak 2010). Accordingly, in the postcolonial theory, the binary opposition can be found in the relation between the “colonizer” and the “colonized” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Triffin 2007). The next tenet, othering, is a form of action or thought that excludes a particular group due to a distinctive set of characteristics (Pickering 2001). As for stereotype, it is the action of believing that a particular characteristic of an individual represents all members of his or her group or ethnicity (Ramasubramanian et al. 2020).

Although Said’s Orientalism was proposed back in the 1970s, it is still relevant and widely used until these days. Hence, the traces of Orientalism can still indeed be found in recent conflicts in society. One example is Trump’s regulation of the Muslim travel ban in 2017. Donald Trump advocated for a “total and complete ban of Muslims entering the United States” during this campaign. The regulation targeted middle-east countries like Iran, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Suriah (Huang 2020). The travel ban gains massive protest from the citizens. This regulation clearly

represents Said's idea that the west views the east as a notion filled with the value of violence (Ramasubramanian et al. 2020).

The expression on the issue of Orientalism can be traced in media like movies. Plenty of Hollywood films specifically those about Asian countries were mainly created to depict the opposition of the West against the East. Scurry (2010) argues that in Hollywood movies, the idea behind those movies is mostly imagined, resulting in the domination of the western perspective over the Orient. An example can be seen in the movie *300* (2006) despite the fact that the setting was based on the Spartan Era, where we can clearly see the thousands of Persian armies were no match for merely three hundred Spartans. As the result, it implicitly states that the West as Spartan was stronger and tougher than the Persians representing the East and in 2007 as published by BBC. There was a protest by the Iranian community in the US and Canada regarding this action of stereotyping (Joneidi 2007). Therefore, even though some aspects of the movie were fictional, the continuation of stereotyping could leave a negative impression on the affected countries and the protest of the Iranian community regarding *300* (2006) is a proper example of their dissatisfaction.

Some other examples are *The Mummy* (1999) and *Indiana Jones* (1981). The similarities between these movies are the representation of Asians as villains that have to be defeated by protagonist Westerners as well as stereotyping against the Asians. Another film is *My Name Is Khan film* (2010) which received ten

nominations at the 56th Filmfare Awards. The movie depicts an autistic Muslim child who grew up with his brother and mother in a middle-income family in Mumbai, India. Set after the 9/11 attack, the family experienced judgment against Muslims. Although the movie was not mainly showcasing Orientalism through cultures like *The Mummy* and *Indiana Jones*, it still gives us a context about what do the westerners view about Asian countries, particularly on the regular citizens who have nothing to do with the 9/11 attack which led to western prejudice on Asian Muslim countries.

Another movie that is also embedded with the idea of West versus East is a 2020 Netflix action thriller movie namely *Extraction*, the object of this study. The movie is based on the 2014 graphic novel *Ciudad* by Andre Park and starred by Chris Hemsworth. The movie tells the story of an Australian mercenary whose objective is to escort a kidnapped Indian drug lord's son. He is planned to extract the drug lord's son with minimal confrontation to avoid raising alerts among Bangladeshis. The problem emerges when the Bangladeshi drug lord found that the two individuals are going to escape the country, where he then locked the city and ordered a manhunt. Throughout the movie, massive narrative and non-narrative aspects implicitly indicate the traces of Orientalism. Thus, this study aims to explore the traces of Orientalism practices within *Extraction*.

In its first four weeks, it was reported that *Extraction* has reached over 90 million streams, becoming Netflix's biggest movie premiere (Cinemablend 2020). The movie had been nominated several times and won an award as well. The film was nominated as the best action movie on three different awards and became the winner of Favorite Action Movie Star in the 2020 People's Choice Awards (IMDb 2021). However, this movie also received bad critics for its illustration of Bangladesh. For example, is one of the top critics that can be found at Rotten Tomatoes sounded as; "*Headshot, body shot, Hemsworth sad, brown people bad, head shot, body shot. That's the rhythm of Extraction*" (Hadadi 2020). Some other critics also show that for many Bangladeshi this film overlooks the dynamic of Bangladesh culture and the complexities of its people narrow-mindedly (Ahmed 2020).

In order to analyze the traces of Orientalism within the object, Orientalism by Edward Said is applied as the main framing tool. According to Said, Orientalism is the way of the western to dominate, reenact, and possess authority over the Orient (Said 1979). He used the term 'Occident' to refer to the White people or the Western, and 'Orient' to refer to the Eastern and the Black people. Said (1979) further stated that the White people include the western world like Europeans, Americans, and Australians. While on the other hand, the Orient refers to Asian and African countries as it goes against the Occident. In accordance with this study, the term 'Orient'

represents Bangladesh and its people portrayed in the movie while the term ‘Occident’ refers to the Australian main character.

The writer had chosen several related studies that also discuss the issue of Orientalism. The first related study is an article by Ramelan and Budiastuti entitled *The Representation of Iranian People in Ben Affleck’s Argo 2012* (2014). The study focuses on the depiction of Iranian people that are visualized with several negative impressions such as cruel, dishonest, exotic, and ruled with emotion. In doing the analysis, the object is a comedy work and the Orientals in the movie are Iranian people. On the contrary, the writer’s object is solely an action-filled genre and the Orientals that are presented are Bangladeshis which makes it different.

The second study is conducted by Haryono and Muslim titled *Stereotypical Portrayal of Indian and French in Richard C. Morais’ The Hundred-Foot Journey (2010): An Orientalism Study* (2019). The study discusses the portrayal of Indian and French people in the book. It uses the theory of Said’s Orientalism to dig the issue, and then supported by Graham Little’s characterization theory in order to make a comparison between the Indian and the French. From this study, the writer is able to acquire deeper comprehension concerning the representation of Asians, more specifically Eastern Asian people’s image in the eyes of Westerns. In this case, both countries in each study are former Western colonies, more specifically British colonies. Apart from the aforementioned related studies, there are also some related

studies that will be reviewed in further chapters following Balraj's "*My Name is Khan and I am not a Terrorist*": *Representation of Muslims in 'My Name in Khan'* (2011), Wahdi's *Post-Oriental Otherness: Hollywood's Moral Geography Of Arab Americans* (2016), and Assayag's *East and West: Orientalism, War and the Colonial Present* (2007)

Based on the related studies above, the writer identified an apparent evidence gap concerning:

- 1) The visual representation of the Orient's countries and their citizen is different from the object of this research
- 2) The related studies have not addressed findings of the savior characteristics of the white characters.

Thus, this study may function as the fulfillment of the gap left by the related studies by paying attention to Bangladesh and adress the values of white savior of the movie. Accordingly, synthesizing with the stated notion, the current writer's study delivers deeper insight into traces of Orientalism in this particular action movie, *Extraction* (2019).

1.2. Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the statement of the problem is formulated as follow:

- How are the traces of Orientalism portrayed in *Extraction* (2020)?

1.3. Objective of the Study

In order to answer the statements of the problems, this study intends to:

- To excavate the traces of Orientalism in *Extraction* (2020).

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give benefits to the researchers and the readers. This study looks forward to shed a light on the Orientalism issue that is still appearing in the media, especially in movies. Through analyzing the movie, it is expected to give a deeper insight in understanding Orientalism in the South Asian region. The correlation between the representation of Bangladesh and Orientalism is also expected to be a useful resource for future cultural studies researchers, especially the undergraduates of Universitas Airlangga.

This movie is also important to be discussed because the genre of this movie is an action thriller, signifying that issues such as Orientalism tend to be overlooked due to the intense action that happened during the movie. Some audiences may not realize that this movie contains an issue that could lead to stereotyping. Thus, after this study, the researcher hopes that there will be more tolerances among humans, and there will be no more films that look down upon other races.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

Binary Opposition : A pair of related terms or concepts with opposing meanings (Spivak 2010) .

- Orientalism** : Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and “the Occident” (Said 1978).
- Othering** : Othering is a process through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship (Crang 1998).
- Stereotyping** : Psychological representations of characteristics of people belonging to particular groups (McGart et al. 2002).