

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses general description of the study. It elaborates the background of the study, the research questions, the aims of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the research methods, the clarification of related terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

In the nineteenth century, Europeans described non-Europeans as indolent, thoughtless, sexually immoral, unreliable and demented (Bressler, 2007). This stereotyping is called by Said (2003, p.202) as Orientalism, which refers to “Occident’s imperatives, perspectives and ideological biases that misleadingly describe and explain the Orient in the form of regularized writing, visions and studies”. The terms “the Occident” is used by Said (1994) in reference to western or former colonizers which includes most of Europe and U.S.A. The Orient, in contrast, refers to eastern or former colonized people from Africa, Asia and South America (Said, 1994). Therefore, Orientalism can be described as the Occident’s perception or opinion toward the Orient which somehow leads to misrepresentation.

One of the forms of writing that can be used as a medium in presenting the Occident’s perception toward the Orient is a movie script. Balraj (2011) asserts that the misrepresentation of certain group, specifically the Orient in some narrative stories, medias or movie scripts has led most of the Occident think that the group are bad or dangerous. Further, Aguayo (2009) states that the static depiction of Muslim as terrorist in movie scripts that set in Middle-East has led most of the Occident to think and to have the assumption that the Muslim people in Middle-East are really terrorist. Therefore, the narrative story written in movie scripts can be considered as the Occident’s misrepresentation that could possibly

mislead the audiences in viewing the Orient and in deciding about what should and should not be in reality (Akita, 2006; Aguayo, 2009).

“300” movie script, an adaptation of Frank Miller’s graphic novel is a literary work that has Orientalism issue. Written by Zack Snyder in 2006, the movie script tells about the battle of Thermopylae where 300 Spartans army could stand against the invasion of thousands Persians army for seven days in three stages of the war. The story of ‘300’ in the movie script had been criticized because it inaccurately presents the history of the battle of Thermopylae and racially insult Iranians who are the descendant of Persian (Tait, 2007).

Furthermore, Tait (2007) reports that Iran officials government and Iranian bloggers describe the story in the movie script as an American’s attempt to demonise Iran at a time U.S. Government intensify their pressure over the Iran’s nuclear programme. Furthermore, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s cultural advisor, Shamaqdari (Joneidi, 2007) states that the negative portrayal of King Xerxes and his Persians army can be assumed as an American’s attempt for ‘psychological warfare’ against Iran.

Based on the issue, this presents study attempts to analyze the representation of Persian as villains in “300” and its relation with the current socio-political issue between the U.S. and Iran. The study employs character and characterization from Davis, Mules and Thwaites (1994) in categorizing the data and Orientalism as proposed by Edward Said (1978) to analyze the categorized data.

1.2. Research Questions

In order to shape this study, these following questions are provided to find the answers that are related to the issue:

1. How are the Persians as the villains represented in a movie entitled '300'?
2. How does the representation of Persians as villains in '300' relate to the socio-political issue between the U.S. government and Iran?

1.3. Aims of the Study

Based on the research questions mentioned above, the aims of the study are:

1. To investigate the representation of Persians as villains in a movie entitled '300'.
2. To analyze the relation of the representation of Persians as villains in '300' with the socio-political issue between the U.S. government and Iran.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study is limited to examine the representation of Persians as the villains from an Orientalist perspective and its relation toward socio-political issue between U.S. and Iran as reflected in the movie script of "300".

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to uncover how the Persian characters are represented as the villains based on an Orientalist perspective and its relation toward socio-political issue between U.S. and Iran as reflected in the movie script of "300".

1.6. Research Methods

This research used a qualitative descriptive research because it aimed to understand the processes, events, and relationships in the contexts of the social and political situation depicted in a movie script '300'. As suggested by Ospina (2004) that in a qualitative approach, the researcher aims for a holistic picture from a historical unique situations. Furthermore, she asserts that by using the qualitative approach, the researcher is allowed to analyze a phenomenon deeply through the situations that given by texts.

The data were collected from a movie script of "300" which was written by Zack Snyder. The data taken from the movie script are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, dialogue, and narration.

After all data were collected, they were analyzed by using a textual analysis approach which employed Davis, Mules, and Thwaites' (1994) character and characterization in categorizing the data and Orientalism as proposed by Said (1978) to analyze the data. In addition, there is also Brian's (2004) *Film and Politics in America* to analyze the '300' and its relation to socio-political issue between the U.S. and Iran. Interpretation was then made and ended by conclusions and suggestions for further research.

1.7. Clarification of Related Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding and misconception, there are some significant terms which need to be clarified as follows:

- (1) Orientalism: Said (1994) states that the emergence of Orientalism is to challenge cultural studies. Orientalism refers to Occident's imperatives, perspectives and ideological biases that misleadingly describe and explain the orient in the form of regularized writing, visions and studies (Said, 2003, p.202). Orientalism as he (1994) said in "An Introduction to Edward Said's Orientalism" divides the world into two part, which are the Orient or the

east and the Occident or the west. Orientalism is also used as a comparison between the Orient and Occident.

- (2) The Orient: Non-Westerner which mostly include African, Asian and people in other former colonized countries (Edward Said's Orientalism, 2003). In this study, the Orient refers to Persian.
- (3) The Occident: Westerners or European who stands a belief that they are more civilized and educated than the Orient (Edward Said's Orientalism, 2003). In this study the Occident refers to Spartan and acardian army.
- (4) 300: a movie produced by Warner Brothers in 2007 that tells about the battle of Thermopylae between Spartan and Persian.

1.8 Organization of the paper

This research consists of five chapters:

Chapter I INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents brief descriptions of the research contents which includes the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research methods, clarification of related terms and organization of the paper.

Chapter II THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter presents theoretical framework related to the issue and provides several related previous studies to support the analysis of the movie script.

Chapter III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the explanation of research methodology of the study, which includes research design, data collection, data analysis and data presentation.

Chapter IV FINDINGS and DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings and discussions from data analysis using Orientalism framework proposed by Said (1978).

Chapter V CONCLUSION and SUGGESTION

This chapter contains the conclusion of the research and the suggestion for further research.