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Reading Abbas: A Postcolonial Study of One of the Main Characters of *Kelas Internasional*

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology in conducting the research. It contains the research questions, aims of the research, data source and context, research design, data collection and data analysis, data presentation, and summaries of the films.

3.1. Research Questions

This research is intended to answer the following questions:

1. How is the character Abbas represented in *Kelas Internasional*?
2. What do the representations mean?

3.2. Aims of the Research

This research aims to:

1. Analyze how an African is represented in *Kelas Internasional*.
2. Reveal the meanings behind the representations.

3.3. Data Source and Context

The data sources for this research are taken from the character Abbas in the selected episodes of *Kelas Internasional*. The first episode is episode 47 from season 1 entitled “Abbas Homesick” (Meutia, 2015) whose duration is 22 minutes. The second episode is episode 225 from season 2 entitled “Abbas Move On” (Wirachman, 2016)

whose duration is 24 minutes. The third, or the last episode is episode 375 from season 3 entitled “Cangcimen Abbas Hilang, Abbas Harus Cari Uang Lagi” (Wangi & Meutia, 2016) whose duration is 48 minutes.

The reason behind choosing one episode from each season is to show the development of the character. The episodes are selected based on its different themes. The three selected episodes have three different themes: (1) Episode 47 – “Abbas Homesick” (Meutia, 2015) whose theme is around Abbas’ educational condition, (2) Episode 225 – “Abbas Move On” (Wirachman, 2016) whose theme is around Abbas’ attitude and love story, (3) Episode 375 – “Cangcimen Abbas Hilang, Abbas Harus Cari Uang Lagi” (Wangi & Meutia, 2017) whose theme is around Abbas’ economic condition.

This research focuses on the representation of an African named Abbas, as one of the main characters in *Kelas Internasional*. This research analyzes how the character Abbas is presented in the film. The representation of an African in the character is analyzed by using the framework of representation by Stuart Hall (1997) which includes some explanations about stereotype in general, and stereotyping Africa by Emmanuel Fru Doh (2009). Doh (2009) states the total of thirty aspects of stereotyping Africa in the book. However, the present study will only use three aspects, which are: (1) education, (2) economy, and (3) attitude. These aspects are selected based on its relevance to the film. Another framework used to analyze the data is Orientalism by Edward Said (1979) that covers the postcolonial perspectives of being Black. The last framework is film theory by Heintz and Stracey (2008) that includes the elements of *mise en scène* and the soundtrack. According to Heintz and Stracey (2008) there are seven film elements that makes a film become film: (1) the story, (2) the genre, (3) the camera 1: shot, (4) the camera 2: composition and movement, (5) editing and transitions, (6) *mise en scène* , and (7) the soundtrack. However, the elements that will be used in this research are only *mise en scène* and the soundtrack since those two elements are the most relevant tool to reveal the

representation of African in the character Abbas. *Mise en scène* covers (1) set design, (2) Props, and (3) costumes. The soundtrack covers (1) dialogue, (2) music, (3) songs, and (4) sound effects.

3.4. Research Design

In an attempt to answer the research question, the present study uses descriptive qualitative approach to observe the representation of an African in the character Abbas in the selected episodes of *Kelas Internasional* and reveal the meaning behind the representation by using film techniques which are *mise en scène* and the soundtrack. Descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate for this research since it deals with a lot of description in the analysis. According to Wyse (2011), qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential qualitative research.

Moreover, Mack, et al. (2005) state that qualitative method serves to explore phenomena and create the meaning behind them. The difference between qualitative and quantitative research lies in its purposes. As an example, qualitative research aims to find out the representation of women in Disney animated films. On the other hand, quantitative research aims to find out elementary school students' ability in listening by watching Disney animated films.

3.5. Data Collection

The data for this research will be collected from the selected episodes of *Kelas Internasional*, a TV series aired in NET. which is produced by Dyan Sunu Prastowo and directed by Tahleb Wirachman, Annisa Meutia, and Alam Putra Kencana Wangi. The procedure in gathering the data is, first, selecting the episodes that have Abbas as the main character in the story from season 3. The reason behind choosing one episode from each season is to show the development of the character. The episodes

are also chosen since they have three different themes: (1) Episode 47 – “Abbas Home Sick” (2015) whose theme is around Abbas’ educational condition, (2) Episode 225 – “Abbas Move On” (2016) whose theme is around Abbas’ attitude and love story, (3) Episode 375 – “Cangcimen Abbas Hilang, Abbas Harus Cari Uang Lagi” (2016) whose theme is around Abbas’ economic condition.

The second step of the procedure is watching each episode several times, taking the screenshots and notes regarding Abbas’ appearance in the screen. The taken notes are dialogue, song, music, sound effect, costumes, properties, and set designs. After taking the screenshots and notes, the third step is categorizing the data into two sections which are negative representation and positive representation. The negative representation section has three main tables which are: (1) educational condition, (2) economic condition, and (3) attitude. These three aspects are based on Foh’s (2009) theory of stereotyping Africa. From the total of thirty aspects of stereotyping Africa (see 2.1.2), the study only uses three aspects, which are: (1) education, (2) economy, and (3) attitude since these three aspects are the most relevant to the film.

The fourth step is describing the data using Heintz and Stracey’s (2008) framework of film theory (*Mise en scène* and soundtrack) and analyzing the data by using the framework of representation by Hall (1997), stereotyping Africa by Doh (2009), and orientalism by Said (1979). The fifth step is using the descriptions and analyses to find out how the film represents the character Abbas. The sixth or the last step is discovering the meaning behind the representation of Abbas by analyzing the overall data.


3.6. Data Analysis

The data is analyzed by using the theory of representation by Stuart Hall (2009) to find out how the character Abbas is represented in the film. The data is also analyzed by using the theory of stereotyping Africa by Emmanuel Fru Doh (2009) to reveal the stereotypes perpetuated by the film. Finally, the data is analyzed by using the theory

of orientalism by Edward Said (1979) to find out how power play its role through the film.

3.7. Data Presentation

The categorization of the data will be put in the following tables. Each table consists of the screenshots of the selected scenes of the selected episodes. The table is divided into three columns which are the film elements, description, and analysis.

Scene 9 – Episode 225, Season 2 (<i>Abbas Move On</i>) When Abbas, Lee, and Putri are hanging out together		
		
Film Elements	Description	Analysis
Dialogue (Synchronized)	<p>Abbas and Lee enter the car and leave Putri who is in a call outside the car. They forget that Putri should get into the car too.</p> <p>They realize that they left Putri behind so they move the car back. Abbas gets off the car and then sits at the back row and Putri sits at the front row.</p> <p>Lee : I'm so sorry Putri. Are you ready Abbas?</p> <p>Abbas: I'm ready (laughs)</p> <p>Lee : Let's listen to Korean song! (prepares the music player)</p> <p>Putri : (Claps her hands) Yeay, Korea!</p> <p>Song plays: Hitz - Yes Yes Yes</p> <p>Lee and Putri dance to the music.</p> <p>Abbas does not seem to like the song.</p>	<p>By moving to the back row, it indicates that Abbas is being polite to Putri.</p> <p>This dialogue shows that they are excited to hang out together. This also shows that Putri and Lee are into Korean song. Lee and Putri are dancing to the song which indicates that they enjoy Korean music. However, Abbas does not seem to like the song since he looks confused and does not dance to the music like Lee and Putri.</p> <p>Abbas is not being polite by changing the song in the middle of another song</p> <p>Lee's and Putri's reactions towards Abbas' songs choice are</p>

	<p>Abbas changes the song to Rhoma Irama's song Begadang and dance to it.</p> <p>Lee and Putri do not seem to enjoy the song.</p>	<p>the same: they think the song is not good so they do not enjoy the song. They also seem annoyed by Abbas' impolite action.</p>
Music	17:03 : Cheerful music instrument	The music used in this scene is to emphasize the cheerful feelings of the characters, including Abbas. Abbas and Lee are so happy to go out with Putri.
Song	<p>17:24 : Hitz – <i>Yes Yes Yes</i></p> <p>17:44 : Rhoma Irama - <i>Begadang</i></p>	<p>The selected song by Lee is <i>Yes Yes Yes</i> by Hitz. This is an Indonesian modern pop song that combines Indonesian and English words in the lyrics.</p> <p>The selected song by Abbas is <i>Begadang</i> by Rhoma Irama. It is an Indonesian old <i>dangdut</i> song sung by the King of Dangdut: Rhoma Irama.</p>
Sound Effect	<p>17:06 : (Laughing SE) When Lee and Abbas leaves Putri behind.</p> <p>17:38 : (Laughing SE) When Abbas looks confused at Lee and Putri dancing to Korean music.</p> <p>17:44 : (Laughing SE) When Abbas changes the music to Rhoma Irama's Begadang.</p>	<p>The laughing sound effect in 17:06 appears because of Lee and Abbas' carelessness of leaving Putri behind.</p> <p>The laughing sound effect in 17:38 appears because of Abbas' expressions towards Lee and Putri's song. He does not think that <i>Yes Yes Yes</i> is a fun song, so he is confused at why Lee and Putri enjoy it so much.</p> <p>The laughing sound effect in 17:44 appears because of Abbas' excitement towards <i>Begadang</i> song. It also appears because of Lee and Putri's expression when Abbas changes the song so suddenly.</p>
Set Designs	This scene takes place inside a car where	The setting of this scene shows

	<p>Abbas sits at the back row. Abbas was first sat beside Lee but he moved and let Putri sits beside Lee.</p>	<p>that the time period in which the film is set is present. It took place in the road, inside a moving car which shows that they are going to go somewhere together.</p> <p>Even though one will be likely regarded as a high-class person by using personal car as a transportation, Abbas is not the one who owns the car, but Lee. It shows that, in this scene, Abbas is not portrayed as a high-class person.</p>
Props	<p>Abbas brings no props.</p>	<p>Abbas usually brings a backpack with him. However, he does not bring his backpack in this scene. This indicate that he will not attend a class and he does not need to bring anything.</p> <p>There are no other properties in the car that is related to Abbas presence. This also indicates that Abbas does not own the car.</p>
Costumes	<p>Abbas wears a blue formal shirt, dark blue jeans, and black sneakers.</p>	<p>Abbas wears normal costumes which indicate that he is not portrayed as poor or rich in the scene.</p> <p>Through the costumes wore by Abbas, it could also be seen that his social status is as a student.</p>

Table 3.1 The analysis of Abbas' traits

The character Abbas, as shown in table 3.1, is presented as someone who is not really polite since he disrupts Lee and Putri's joy when they listen to *Yes Yes Yes* song by Hitz. Abbas' impoliteness could be seen from Lee and Putri's reaction towards his

action. Lee and Putri are annoyed because Abbas suddenly changes the song to *Begadang* by Rhoma Irama and dance to it.

Begadang and *Yes Yes Yes* are very different from one another. *Begadang* is an old dangdut pop song that brings vintage atmosphere to the listeners, while *Yes Yes Yes* is a modern pop song which lyrics are targeted to young listeners. Through the song choice, it could be seen that Abbas is a little outdated since his choice of song is not designed for young people today. Moreover, the laughing sound effects in the scene appear when Abbas is confused with Lee and Putri's song choice and when Abbas changes the music so suddenly to *Begadang*. The function of laughing sound effect is to tell the audience that the scene is trying to deliver jokes. This means that the filmmaker tells the audience that Abbas' actions in the scene is funny. In other words, the filmmakers try to say that being outdated is to be laughed at. The soundtrack elements in this scene also indicate that Abbas is different from Lee and Putri. His song choice is outdated while Lee and Putri's song choice is modern. By creating an African character that is not modern, this scene supports Doh (2009) statement that African is stereotyped as less-advanced than the Occident.

On the other hand, it could be seen that Abbas is not portrayed as a wealthy man nor a poor man through the set designs and the property that is displayed in the scene. He is shown as middle-class person who does not own a car. Moreover, through the costumes that he wears, Abbas is depicted as a neat student who wears formal outfit since he has just finished his class at school. According to Doh (2009), African are often considered as the people who are struggling against poverty. Even though this scene does not follow the stereotype that African are poor, this scene does not portray Abbas as a wealthy man either. Even though Abbas is not poor, Lee is richer than Abbas by being able to afford a car. This shows that Abbas, as an African, is poorer than Lee the Korean man.

3.8. About Kelas Internasional

Directed by Thaleb Wirachman, Meutia, and Wangi, *Kelas Internasional* is an Indonesian situational comedy aired in NET since 2015 until 2017. This TV series takes place in an international school with Tarra Budiman as Pak Budi (Indonesian) as the lead character. He teaches Indonesian to foreigners: Abbas as Abbas (Nigeria), Wiwik Michiko as Lingling (China), Suzuki as Kotaro (Japan), Lee Jeong Hoon as Lee Chon Yu (Korean), Langston Hues as DK (American), Simone Julia as Nicole (Brazil), Irina Stroganova as Irina (Russia) and John Pecker as Christof (Hongaria). There are also some other Indonesian characters in the film. The actors are representing their own races in the characters.

This study will be focusing on the character of Abbas. Abbas is a Nigerian student that is characterized as not so smart that he often ranked the last in class, he is also a hopeless romantic. He is penniless and often sell something for a living.

3.8.1. Episode 47 – “Abbas Homesick”

The students in *Kelas Internasional* are busy communicating with their family through video call or voice call, but Abbas looks blue. He does not dare to call his family since he ranked in the seventh position in class, which is the second last student. He does not want to disappoint his family, especially his father. Abbas is so lazy to study. He often falls asleep in class and he has been warned by Bu Rika and Pak Budi because of his bad score. Knowing that Abbas misses his family so much, his classmates and Pak Budi arranged a surprise for Abbas. They want Abbas to do the video call with his family to cure his homesickness. Abbas is so touched when he

can finally communicate with his family in Nigeria and he promises to everyone that he will be more responsible for his study.

3.8.2. Episode 255 – “Abbas Move On”

Abbas is so envy with his friends that are in relationships. He, too, wants to have a girlfriend. He is tired for being single all the time after his last relationship. He asks Lee to help him find a girlfriend so that he will not be alone. When Abbas and Lee help Lingling to give a package to somebody called Putri in Lingling's café, Abbas falls in love with Putri immediately. He wants to get closer to Putri so he asks her number. In the next day, Abbas is so excited to meet Putri in his school. Putri says that she will visit him at school. Abbas is so eager to be Putri's boyfriend that he even practices on how to be a good boyfriend. Abbas, Lee, and Putri are getting closer. They get along well and often hang out together. Until one day, Putri tells Abbas that she is in love with somebody but she is ashamed to tell the person how she feels. Abbas thinks that the man must be him and he told her to tell the person directly. Putri says she will tell who the person is in Lingling's café. Abbas asks Lee to accompany him to the café. He wants to show Lee that Putri will be his girlfriend soon. Putri arrives at the café and told Abbas and Lee that she is in love with Lee. Abbas and Lee are both shocked. They thought Putri will confess her feeling to Abbas. At the end of the story, Lee rejects Putri's confession since he does not want to destroy his friendship with Abbas.

3.8.3. Episode 375 – “Cangcimen Hilang, Abbas Harus Cari Uang Lagi”

Abbas has to sell *cangcimen* (snacks and drink) in the road to get money. One day when he is busy selling his *cangcimen*, people are running away from the police since they are all illegal sellers. Abbas lost his *cangcimen* when he ran from the police. He

is sad to lost his only bread and butter. Fortunately, he still has some money left to buy *cangcimen* and sell it again. However, Bu Ice and Neneng come and ask Abbas to pay his debt. Abbas eventually runs out of money. He needs to find a way to survive. He tries everything to get money but the fortune is not in his side. Until the next day he helps a barber and gets money. He finds an idea to open an illegal barbershop in the road side. He does not have the ability to shave people's hair, but he believes that he will be able to do it. He then borrows Kotaro's shaving kit and opens the barbershop. Many problems happen in his barbershop. Many people complain about Abbas' ability to shave their hair. Until some hours later, police come to his place and he needs to run away again. Fortunately, Abbas get enough money to start his business in *cangcimen* again. He will start to sell *cangcimen* soon and survive.

3.9. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explained the methodology used in this research. It covers the research questions, aims of the research, data source and context, research procedure, data collection and analysis, data presentation, and the summary of the selected episodes. Further analysis and elaboration of data presentation are provided in the next chapter in order to answer the research questions. The analysis in the next chapter is done according to the procedure written in this chapter.