



**STEREOTYPE AS ONE OF THE SUPPORTING ELEMENTS FOR
RACISM ACT DEPICTED IN THE MOVIE “THE HELP” BY TATE
TAYLOR**

A THESIS

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for S-1 Degree Majoring
American Studies in the English Department Faculty of Humanities
Diponegoro University**

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SEMARANG**

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PRONOUNCEMENT

I honestly state that this thesis is written by myself without taking any works from other researchers in any university, in diploma degree, S-1, S-2 and S-3 degree. I also ascertain that I do not take any material from other works except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, 14 October 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rania Khansa Nazifa', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rr. Rania Khansa Nazifa

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Daughter.

Sleeping at Last

This thesis is dedicated to

myself and to the people

who always show me love and be there in my worst and best state

APPROVAL
RACISM ACT SUPPORTED BY STEREOTYPE DEPICTED IN THE
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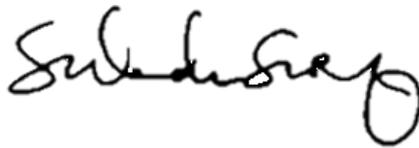
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would be helpful for those who wants to learn and understand more about racism and stereotype or any related field in general.

Semarang, 14 October 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rania Khansa Nazifa'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'R' and a long horizontal stroke.

Rr. Rania Khansa Nazifa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes how the racism acts are committed by the White Americans to Black Americans and how stereotype become one of the supporting elements of racism. *The Help* tells a story about the life of Black maids in Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1960s. Starred by Aibileen, played by Viola Davis, the movie illustrates the life and struggles of Black maids living in a racist society under racist government during that period of time. The application of the theories applied shows several kinds of racial discrimination said and done by White Americans to Black Americans. Library research is used by the writer as an approach to collect data of the racial acts and stereotype to analyze this thesis. This research presents the result of many ways racism acts are performed and supported by stereotype.

Keyword: Racism, Racist Act, Stereotype, The Help, American Culture

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The act of racism towards black people had a long story related to the settlement of French colonizers on the Africa continent during the early 15th century. The colonizers see African people as slaves for economic commodities (Ali-Dinar, 2009:1). According to Equal Justice Initiative (2018), racial prejudice was then grown and strengthened over the next two centuries. This black slavery led to racism, with black people being the object, and they have been treated unfairly both physically and mentally.

As stated by Ineke van der Valk from Bulmer and Solomons (1999: 7), 'race', the base form of the term 'racism', has three principal meanings; first, humanity is divided into various groupings, each with its own set of physical qualities in common. Secondly, people come from different places. And third racial distinctions are culturally and socially significant.

On her journal, Van der Valk (2003: 46) wrote that skin colour differentiation, face and skull shape, eye and hair color have been the core elements of racism. She then continued to state that racism is used to rationalize colonialism from the colonizer to the colonized. From the day black people stepped foot on the land of America, plenty of cases of racial discrimination happened. One famous case that succeeded to gain the world's

attention is the recent death of George Floyd by two police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2020.

Brodwell, Thompson and Smith wrote in their book that “cinema was invented only a little more than a century ago, making film younger medium of art than theatre, dance, literature and painting” (2017: 1). *The Help*, a fiction movie that takes time in the 1960s based on Kathryn Stockett’s novel “The Help”, can assist you to see racial discrimination towards Black people especially Black women through the stories told by the maids.

The Help, directed by Tate Taylor, tells a story about the life of Black maids in Jackson, Mississippi in 1960s. Starring Aibileen Clark, played by Viola Davis, *The Help* illustrates the struggle Black people have to go through. She is asked by Skeeter, played by Emma Stone, to help her on writing her book about the perspectives of Black maids that work for the white people. Skeeter got another helping hand from Aibileen’s best friend Minny Jackson, played by Octavia Spencer. Jackson’s repeated occurrence of racism makes Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter want to tell people what has been happening through the ‘side of the unheard’ soon-published book. They had difficulties gathering the rest of the maids because what they were doing was against the law, and the maids were afraid of getting caught. Skeeter assured that once the maids’ stories are told, the society, the world would have a different, much better, safer environment for them to live a proper, deserved, ordinary life. Due to the fact that racism acts are depicted throughout *The Help* movie, the writer

tries to examine the racism acts by implementing some theories to enhance the comprehensiveness of this discussion.

In analyzing this movie, the writer will focus on breaking down the racism behavior of the characters in *The Help* to their maids mainly using the postcolonial stereotype theory by Homi K. Bhabha. Based on some theories applied for this study, the study is intended to examine and explain the racism acts as the result of stereotype which are contained inside *The Help* movie. Racism act and stereotype issues have to be brought, discussed openly and spread to prevent the act of racism and stereotyping from being performed by future generations.

1.2. Research Problems

Following the study's background, the writer decided on two research problems as follows:

- What are the intrinsic elements of the movie that are used to show the racism acts throughout the movie?
- How is racism towards black people depicted in *The Help* movie?
- How does stereotype lead to the acts of racism conducted by the characters inside the movie?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the research problems of this research, here are the objectives of the study:

- To elaborate the act of racism and how they conduct the act

- To explain how stereotype is a supporting factor of racism act in the movie

1.4.Previous Studies

Some researchers have conducted research related to the topic before this study. Nurindah Khusnul Khotimah (2013) from English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta did research titled “Racial Discrimination Reflected in Tate Taylor’s *The Help* (2011)” using a sociological approach. The output of this research is that Tate Taylor wants to express the difference rule exists between black and white people by stating the racial discrimination done by the white employers toward the black maids.

An analysis by Fanny Ariesta and Liliana Muliastuti (2017) from Language Education Master Program of State University of Jakarta titled “Diskriminasi Ras Dalam Film *The Help* Karya Tate Taylor” uses a feminist approach using Layli Philips’ theory of womanism. The analysis was then featured in “Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra” number two on sixteenth volume. The results findings are there are a few efforts of the victims to fight against racial discrimination; resistance and uncovering. The act of racial discrimination is also shown in the discussion section.

Safira Putri (2018) from English Department of Universitas Diponegoro observed the racial discrimination and prejudice using Robert K. Merton’s *Classification of Racial Prejudice and Discrimination* theory for her final project “Racial Prejudice and Discrimination towards African-American Depicted in Tate Taylor’s ‘The Help’”. The result shows that the four types of classifications are present, each in different characters.

Mutia R. Adam (2018) from English Literature Department of Muhammadiyah University Gorontalo wrote an article titled “Racism in *The Help* Movie by Tate Taylor”, using the concept of racism by Paradise and William’s theory. The article is featured in *British, Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*, number two on seventh volume. In using a sociological approach, the researcher concluded that there are four types of racism; internalized, interpersonal, institutional and societal racism presented in the movie. The paper also includes the struggles of the victims that they went through.

Noviyana Rusnanila (2019) from State Islamic University Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi finished the thesis with a research sentence, “Racial Discrimination as Seen in *The Help* Film by Tate Taylor.” Rusnanila uses a sociological approach and theories from Fred L. Pincus (1996) and Rebecca M. Blank (2004). The research found results such as Aibileen’s and her parents’ background, what kinds of racial discrimination she gets and the effects of racial discrimination on her life.

A group of analysts (2020), Damara Komala Padma, Senja Yustitia and Siti Fatonah, from Communication Science Department of UPN “Veteran” Yogyakarta wrote an article with “Analysis of the Action of Racism on *The Help* Movie Directed by Tate Taylor” as the title. Their research is featured in *The Indonesian Journal of Communication Studies*, number one on the 13th volume. They used the content analysis method with the data validity technique. Its result consists of various racist treatments and prejudices dominated by

white to black people. Prejudices, discrimination, and violence, are raising fear and hatred in the victims' psychology.

The writer chooses stereotype for this study. In this study, the writer applies stereotype theory because there has not been any research that uses stereotype with *The Help* as the object. With that in mind, the writer hopes that anyone can use this study as an instrument to dissect racism with stereotype as the supporting element.

1.5.Scope of the Study

The writer will limit the research on the racism acts that happened to the maids in the movie *The Help*. This research will cover the study of intrinsic elements of this movie; character, theme and setting. These intrinsic elements will be used to support the writer's research development on racism acts against the black maids, mainly from the dialogue spoken by the characters. In support of analyzing the racism act, the researcher is using Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory of stereotype. Distance of framing, angle and height are the cinematography aspects that are to be discussed further using the theory by Brodwell, Thompson and Smith in their 11th Edition book "Film Art: An Introduction" (2017).

The writer limits the research on the racism acts experienced by the maids inside *The Help* movie through its intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements cover several aspects namely character, theme, and setting. The analysis of racism acts inside *The Help* movie will be analyzed based on the dialogues spoken by the characters inside the movie.

In order to support the analyzing on the racism acts inside the movie, the writer also applies Homi K Bhabha's postcolonial theory of stereotype as the part of the extrinsic elements of movie. Aside from that, Cinematography theory from Brodwell & Thomson (2017) entitled *Film Art: An Introduction* is also used. The cinematography theory covers several aspects – Distance of framing, angle, and height.

1.6. Writing Organization

This research is organized into five sections, with some chapters having their own subchapter. These are how the writer will arrange the whole study;

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes background of the study, research problems, previous studies, scope of the study and writing organization.

CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter includes theoretical framework, dealing with three aspects; intrinsic elements, cinematography and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements explain the definition of character, setting and theme. For the cinematography aspect, the writer put the general definition and focuses on the camera distance, height, and camera angle. The third and last aspect is extrinsic elements that will talk about race and racism, mainly focusing on racism act and analyzing it with Homi K. Bhaba theory of stereotype. This chapter also consists of how

the writer conducts the research by using qualitative data method, library study, to collect reliable data to support the analysis of this research.

CHAPTER III: DATA ANALYSIS/RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is the main role of this study. This part will display, show and prove the result of the writer's analysis.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This chapter or part will consist of the writer's research summary.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Intrinsic Elements

In analyzing the intrinsic aspects, the writer uses Abrams' objective theory. Abrams states in his book that this procedure is "the 'objective orientation'" which sees an art as the art itself and "analyzes it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its part in their internal relation" (1971: 26). Abrams said that to analyze art with objective approach is to examine it only by its own intrinsic elements. Nurgiyantoro explains in his book that "intrinsic is the elements that build the literary work itself" (1998: 23). When we read a literary work, these elements will be the ones that always appear. The writer will use some intrinsic elements from to be analyzed which are character, setting of time, place setting, social environment setting and theme using the description from Michael Meyer.

2.1.1.1. Character

Character plays a significant role in a literary work. A character doesn't have to be a human being; it could be animals, even inanimate objects. Even though the character is not accurate, a good writer can make the character comes to life. Michael Meyer stated that authors have two ways of describing their characters; by showing and telling (2011: 64). When they offer or tell their characters, it is most likely that their actions are motivated, meaning that there's a reason why they do

what they do. In his book *Literature to Go* (2011), Meyer mentioned five subtypes of character, dynamic, static, flat, stock and round character.

Meyer first describes dynamic character, explaining that it “undergoes some kind of change because of the action of the plot” (2011:68). Meyer uses an example of dynamic character from Twain’s famous character Huckleberry Finn by mentioning Finn’s discovery of Jim’s humanity through the times they spent together on the raft. Static character, however, is the opposite of dynamic because the character does not change.

Meyer also adds flat and round character, terms coined by a novelist E. M. Forster. Flat character can be easily described in a short synopsis because they have one or two qualities that can simply be recognized. A few flat characters can also be quickly identified as a stock character as they carry a certain stereotype, calling their author as not imaginative by only summoning them ‘from a warehouse of cliches and social prejudices’ (Meyer, 2011:68). Different from flat and stock, round characters are harder to summarize as in their lives they have rather unpredictable thoughts, principles, and likelihoods.

2.1.1.2. Setting

Meyer wrote, “setting is the context in which the action of a story occurs” (2011: 115). Setting builds the world where the characters live in. There are three major elements of setting which are time, place, and social environment.

The time in setting refers to the period of time when the event happened (e.g past, future, era). It can be identified with the help of the descriptions of many details (e.g famous event, current law). Place setting is the location that exist where

the event of a story occurred (e.g forest, cliff, law court). Social environment can be recognized with the help of time and place setting. If a story was set in the early 21st century, there would be a certain fashion or celebrity to represent the era.

2.1.1.3. Theme

In his book, Michael Meyer (2011: 199) explains that a story's theme is its fundamental concept or meaning. It functions as a connecting point for a story's plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other components. One reason for the difficulty is that the theme is blended into the story's aspects, which must be carefully evaluated in connection to one another and to the work as a whole.

But that is the benefit of determining the theme, because it involves a critical examination of all the parts of a work. A close reading often yields new insights into an ignored character or a seemingly unconnected situation. Taking into account the elements and observing how they fit together leads to a better grasp of the story (Meyer, 2011:199). The theme will not always be easy to uncover, but the clues along the story will lead readers to the true meaning of literature.

2.1.2. Cinematography

Cinematography is essential in filmmaking because it helps filmmaker in reaching “new area of choice and control” (Brodwell, Thompson, Smith, 2017: 159). Decisions about cinematography are being made even when you’re randomly filming videos like how you frame the shot, the shot duration, and camera movements. In this study, the writer will look into framing; distance of framing or

camera distance, angle and height as the main cinematography elements that will be discussed in this thesis using the cinematography theory from Brodwell, Thompson and Smith (2017:159).

2.1.2.1. Distance of Framing

According to Brodwell, Thompson, and Smith (2017: 189), distance of framing or usually called camera distance ‘derived from the scale of human bodies in the shot’. There are types of camera distance; starting from extreme-long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up and extreme close-up. Extreme-long shot frames human in tiny size, used in taking landscapes, bird-eye like views and others. In long shot, the size of human gets bigger but the focus is still on the background. Getting closer and clearer visualization of human, medium long shot shoots the human body from the knees up, medium shot shoots from the waist up, medium close-up takes from chest up to emphasize expression and gestures, close-up shot fixates on small objects and extreme close-up is focusing on the face or locking and zooming in an object.

2.1.2.2. Angle

Filmmakers use angle to keep the audience focused on the subject. The selections are plenty, but straight-on angle, high angle and low angle are roughly

what the framing can present. In their book, Brodwell, Thompson, and Smith (2017: 188) explain an example of each camera angles mentioned in the pictures below.



Picture 2.1



Picture 2.2



Picture 2.3

Picture 2.1 is a still cut from a movie titled “The Were Expendable” released on December 1945. The movie shows an example of how to take a low angle view, placing the object above the camera level. Picture 2.2 shows a still cut from “The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach” (1968), presenting how a straight-on angle should be taken, that is to put the camera on the same level as the object. On picture 2.3, it captures a scene from “Family Plot” (1976) presenting an example

of high angle. When we shoot using high angle, the camera is placed higher than the object. The examples above are provided in *Film Art: An Introduction* (Brodwell, Thompson, Smith, 2017: 188).

2.1.2.3. Height

Height is also an area of choices for filmmakers where we usually don't think as much. Height is related to camera angle because some angles require you to position the camera lower or higher than the subject. Sourcing from Brodwell, Thompson, and Smith (2017: 189), "But if the angle is kept straight in, crouching down to take a snapshot creates a different composition than taking it from the eye level." An example was provided using a work by a Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu in the pictures below. He filmed in low height but he uses a straight on angle making his piece has a 'distinctive visual style'. Picture 2.4 is from a movie "Ohayo" (1959) and Picture 2.5 is from Ozu's another piece "An Autumn Afternoon" (1962), both are examples of his signature style.



Picture 2.4



Picture 2.5

2.1.2.4.Sound

Sound, as one of the cinematic elements of cinematography theory, refers to audible aspects that could be experienced by the audience (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:270). Sound covers some aspects namely speech and dialogue which have the purpose of delivering information related to the story. The writer uses this aspect to dissect selected dialogues from *The Help* movie that contain racism/stereotype issues as the primary data of this study.

2.1.3. Extrinsic Elements

Extrinsic elements on the other hand are the supporting elements of a literary work. They are not included in the main elements. Instead, they are “the elements that influence on how the story of a literary work builds” (Nurgiyantoro, 1998:23). The writer’s subjectivity, like their beliefs and their perception of life, is the factor that will influence how the literary works would turn out. The writer will analyze two extrinsic elements, racism and stereotype.

2.1.3.1. Race and Racism

2.1.3.1.1. Race

To begin with, Ali Rattansi (2007: 7-8) defines that the concept of 'race' includes both biological and cultural characteristics, such as skin color, religion, and behavior. Second, depending on the group and the historical time in question, the biological and cultural appear to combine in varying amounts in any definition of a racial group. Durkheim, Hook and Riggs categorized race as “typically an

individualised understanding of racism as the product of individual belief or cognitions.”

2.1.3.1.2. Racism

Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown (2003: 58) wrote in their book titled *Racism* second edition that the belief that race determines particular individual features and skills' dates back to the 1930s, when it first appeared in the English language. In the late 1920s, the word racism (commonly acknowledge as 'race-hatred' then) was popular when Friedrich Hertz issued a wide-ranging critique (1928: 1-9). Ali Rattansi described it as initially a response to make Germany free from the Jews, which the Nazis believe that they're different from them. Nazi had this thing in mind that the Jews were posing a threat to Germany's authentic race. Later on, racism has been an inevitable subject of political conflict and social forces.

Durkheim, Hook and Riggs in *Race and Racism* (2009: 2) stated that racism is primarily seen as the result of certain historical interactions between individuals in which some people have wrongfully made claims to supremacy over others. These data concluded that racism is a belief or an act that aim to maintain race hierarchy. In proving the real effects of racism, they asked critical psychology to examine the matter, and that racism forms the lives of the oppressors and the victims.

Ramon Grosfuguel (2011: 10) declares racism is known globally as a centuries-old hierarchy of superiority and inferiority based on religion or culture, race, ethnicity, and language. Colour racism by white colonizers happened to black people in their early years of black slavery. Not only blacks, Latinas and Asians are

also the targets of their racist act. This white ethnocentrism brings out the idea that other ethnicities, religions, cultures besides them are inferior.

According to Ineke van der Valk (2003: 45), the concept of "racism" is still relatively newer than the concept of "race." Racism, she explained, is defined as an illogical prejudice in which other groups are believed to be inferior based on biological-racial characteristics. Van der Valk also adds that racism is not just a mere idea; it includes discrimination acts and the effects on social structures like institutions. She admits racism to be the new shape of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, taking islamophobia as an example.

Bowser puts James Jones' three levels of racism in his journal; cultural, institutional and individual level. Here are the premises listed:

1. "Cultural racism (the presumption of White supremacy and Black inferiority) precedes and preconditions institutional expressions of racism. Without racist cultural scripts, institutional expressions of racism would not occur.
2. Cultural racism provides the blueprint and architecture for the organization of institutional racism, its objectives (White dominance), and criteria for success (White privilege). Cultural racism is passed on intergenerationally and is part of the content of White racial identity.
3. Institutional racism is essential for both the perpetuation of White privilege and of White dominance. Institutional racism keeps racism going within and across generations. It in turn reinforces cultural racism.
4. Institutional racism precedes and preconditions individual expressions of racism. Cultural racism is also a necessary precondition to individual racism, but its influence is mediated through institutional racism.
5. Cultural racism regulates the intensity and frequency of individual acts of racism by the extent to which institutional racism has been deployed. Hypothetically, if institutional racism is increasingly deployed, acts of individual racism will increase. If institutional racism is poorly deployed, individual acts will have little reinforcement." (Bowser, 2017, 581).

2.1.3.2. Stereotype

Defined as ‘irrational prejudice’ by Ineke van der Valk (2003: 49) and ‘an act that aim to maintain race hierarchy’ by Durkheim, Hooks and Riggs (2009: 2), racism lured racists to make false accusations against their target. For example, a person is labeling one or some groups based on a one-time interaction with them. The bad first impression that unintendedly associated to a group in whole leads to stereotyping.

Homi K. Bhabha (1994: 107) explains stereotype as the major point of subjectification in colonial discourse for both colonizer and colonized, is indeed the setting for a roughly similar fantasy and defense - the need for originality, which is once again threatened by distinctions in race, color, and culture. Stereotypes serve to allow colonial control by offering justification for the colonizer's superiority over the colonized. The authority accepts stereotypes as its basis, resulting in prejudiced and discriminatory structure governance, and colonial control is inspired by supposedly civilizing goals.

The stereotype acts could be seen from the French colonization era during their voyages to Africa continent back then during their early contacts in the early 15th century. As the time went by, the French interests toward the commodities of Africa continent rose. It could be seen from the decision created by the French colonizers – Atlantic trade in slaves. The act began during the early 18th century in which the African slaves were destined for emerging New World plantation economies such as America (Ali-Dinar, 2009:1). The slavery act conducted by the

French colonizers created the conceptual thinking in which African people were seen as one of economic commodities for European countries.

A stereotype, according to Bhabha, has the problem of fixing individuals or groups in one spot, rejecting their own sense of identity, and assuming to understand them on the basis of the existing knowledge, which is typically inaccurate at best. Bhabha argues that stereotype is not an act of simplifying because it's a biased depiction of reality. It is simplified because it is a closed, hooked on a form of depiction that forms a matter for depicting the subject meanings of psychological and social intercourse.

Providing a few examples of stereotypes, Erin Beeghly (2015: 676) agrees that it is a broad generalization about a certain social group. She wrote that in speech, stereotypes tend to take the form of what linguist term *generics*. Characteristic generics claim certain group members, and they are often associated with a group's purpose.

The presence of stereotypes makes us unconsciously yield a prejudice towards a particular community. Beeghly (2015: 678) also adds that even when we are not consciously intending to judge individuals, associative networks, like schemas, are designed to allow us to create expectations about people.

The thought of oversimplifying a particular person or group leads to the definition of stereotype, even though we will fixate only on the wrong, well-set, comes-to-mind kind of stereotype. William T. L. Cox and his partners gathered up some relevant characteristics of stereotypes to markdown:

- “Stereotypes can be socially shared (i.e., consensual, collective) or exist in the mind of only one person (i.e., nonconsensual, individual; see Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979; Stangor & Schaller, 1996).
- Stereotypes can be based on a prominent group membership (e.g., a woman stereotyping herself as nurturant because of her gender), based on a mundane characteristic (e.g., someone stereotyping a man as Irish because he has red hair), or be unrelated to social group (e.g., a wife stereotyping her husband as lazy).
- Stereotypes can link people to characteristics that are negative (e.g., criminal), neutral (e.g., enjoys basketball), or positive (e.g., good at math). Even positive stereotypes can have undesirable negative sequelae, because they set up unfair expectations (see shifting standards; Biernat and Vescio, 2002; McCabe & Brannon, 2004).” (Cox, 2012)

2.2. Research Method

2.2.1. Type of Research

This research is categorized in the American study field concerning racism, or white Americans’ racial discrimination happened to black people. The study is included in descriptive qualitative research, describing the racial discrimination because of the black stereotype. The research analyzed the acts and utterances of race discrimination by the characters in *The Help*. In order to analyze the data in this study, literature reviews from books, online journals, and articles are used as references.

2.2.2. Method of Collecting Data

In collecting the data of *The Help* movie, *the* researcher applies library study as the method of data collection of this discussion. Nazir (1988) states that “library study is data collecting method taking sources from books, literatures, files and reports related to the problem that is to be solved “ (Mirzaqon T & Purwoko, 2017:4). The references of this study are taken in form of books and previous

studies which are retrieved from reliable sources such as JSTOR and Google Scholar. In addition to that, the writer applies cinematography and speech sound theories by Brodwell Thompson, and Smith (2017:270) to dissect scenes and dialogues for the analysis.

2.2.3. Method of Analyzing Data

In analyzing *The Help* movie, as the object of this study, the writer applies several theories. Race and racism theory by Ineke van der Valk is applied in order to get the understanding of racism acts occurred inside *The Help* movie. In correlation with the racism theory, the writer also applies Homi K Bhabha's postcolonial stereotype theory to elaborate the acts of racism and stereotype within *The Help* movie. Brodwell & Thomson's theory of Cinematography (2017) is also applied since this discussion focuses on both scenes and dialogues throughout the movie.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION

3.1. Intrinsic Elements

3.1.1. Character

3.1.1.1. Aibileen Clark

Aibileen is an important character in the movie plot. She is a composed woman, having a lot more patience and thoughtfulness. She always takes orders from Elizabeth and accepts everything Elizabeth gives, like the outdoor bathroom without complaining. Using medium long shot and medium height with a straight on angle, Leefolt asks Aibileen if she liked her outdoor bathroom.



Picture 3.1 (00:34:23)

She always thinks everything through before doing and saying something, careful not to put herself and other people in danger. Her thoughtfulness is seen when she helps Skeeter to arrange their meeting so people will not spot her going

to a maid's house. The picture below using a medium long shot captured a scene where Skeeter gets to Aibileen's house.



Picture 3. (00:41:04)

Skeeter: I parked way up on State Street and caught a cab here, like you asked.

Aibileen : Got dropped two streets over?

Skeeter: Mm-hm.

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 00:41:04 – 00:41:10)

Aibileen is also a religious person. She often prays and regularly attends church, along with Skeeter's former maid Constantine. She writes her prayers and thoughts in a little journal since she is unable to speak it out loud. She writes her prayers at night time, taking one or sometimes two hours. In the beginning of the movie where she is being interviewed, the camera displays a portrait of Jesus Christ in a gold-colored frame hanging above his son's graduation photo.



Picture 3. (00:44:20)

Aibileen : I don't say my prayers out loud. I can get my point across a lot better writing them down. I write an hour, sometimes two, every night. And after my prayers last night. I got some stories down, too.
(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 00:44:16 – 00:44:32)

At the end of the movie, Aibileen finally confronts Hilly before leaving Elizabeth's house and bidding farewell to Mae Mobley. Her courage is a sign of dynamic character. Hilly's false accusation of stealing towards Aibileen is her last straw, even Hilly does not expect Aibileen will be brave enough to threaten her. Aibileen's sudden boldness makes her a round character, supporting the theory of Michael Meyer (2011: 68). The picture below shows how Aibileen's confrontation towards Hilly with a close-up shot and medium angle. It focuses on Aibileen's facial expression, emphasizing her suppressed anger.



Picture 3. (02:15:03)

Aibileen : I know something about you. Don't you forget that. From what Yule Mae says, there's a lot of time to write letters in jail. Plenty of time to write the truth about you. And the paper is free.

Hilly : Nobody will believe what you wrote

Aibileen : I don't know! I been told I'm a pretty good writer. Already sold a lot of books.

Aibileen : Call the police, Elizabeth.

Aibileen : All you do is scare and lie to try to get what you want.

Elizabeth : Aibileen, stop!

Aibileen : You a Godless woman. Ain't you tired, Miss Hilly? Ain't you tired?

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 02:14:37 – 02:15.16)

3.1.1.2. Hilly Holbrook

Hilly Holbrook is one of the main characters in the movie portrayed as an influential person, she likes to use her power to persuade people to agree to her ideas. She shares her ideas through the Jackson female community, often on group gatherings. The director captures her character by taking straight-on angle and medium shot, showing her explaining about the “Home Health Sanitation Initiative” to her female friends.



Picture 3.2 (00:15:46)

Her persuasive character is accompanied by her pushy character. She wants and needs everything around her goes her way. Hilly's pushy trait begins to show in the movie when she asks Skeeter to put her initiative on the local newspaper. Skeeter keeps abandoning her request so Hilly makes sure to remind Skeeter at every chance she gets.



Picture 3. (01:13:33)

Another trait that Hilly shows is her controlling side. She likes to control everything and everyone. One of her controlling behaviors is presented when she spreads false rumor about Celia Foote to seclude her from the Jackson society. Hilly

made a presumption about Celia cheating with Hilly's former boyfriend. The rumor takes a toll on Celia, ruining her reputation in Jackson community. Shot with a medium close-up from the chest above, Celia realizes the reason behind her seclusion.



Picture 3. (01:34:14)

Minnie : 'Cause they know about you getting knocked up by Mr. Johnny. Mad you married one of their mens. Especially since Miss Hilly and Mr. Johnny had just broke up too.

Celia : So Hilly probably thinks that I was fooling around with Johnny when they were still going steady.

Minnie : Mm-hm. And Missus Walters always said Miss Hilly still sweet on Mr. Johnny too.

Celia : No wonder! They don't hate me. They hate what they think I did!

Minnie : They hate you 'cause they think you white trash.

Celia : I'm just going to have to tell Hilly I ain't no boyfriend stealer. Infact, I'll tell her Friday night at the benefit.

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 01:33:44 – 01:34:27)

Hilly Holbrook's character stays constant throughout the movie. That indicates that she is a static character. Her stereotyped character of white racist in general that is hateful towards black people supports the theory of flat and stock character.

3.1.1.3. Minny Jackson

Minny Jackson is one of the bravest maids in the movie. She is also Aibileen's best friend and her fellow church attendee. She is able to stand up for herself by taking her revenge at Hilly for firing her and also spreading rumor about her so Minny will not be hired by anybody in Jackson. Another brave thing that she does in the movie is leaving her husband, Leroy, after the domestic abuse she receives from him. The cut from a particular scene below shows when Minny finally has her revenge after Hilly Holbrook ate not one but two slices of Minny's "special pie". The picture is taken in a straight-on angle with a close up shot. The shot helps the audience to feel the anger within Minny's emotion.



Picture 3. (01:38:26)

Minny : Eat my shit.

Hilly : What'd you say?

Minny : I said, "Eat... my... shit."

Hilly : Have you lost your mind?

Minny : No, Ma'am. But you're about to, 'cause you just did.

Hilly : Did what?

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 01:38:15 – 01:38:50)

Minnie is also a tenacious person. She knows the consequence she will have to face after going to Hilly's guest bathroom secretly and it costs her losing her job. Hilly told everyone that Minny is a stealer when the truth is she is not one, making nobody wants to hire Minny. However, Minny does not give up and continue to meet Celia Foote whom she believes is not going to be convinced by Hilly's made-up rumor. Her tenacity is described by Aibileen's monologue below. Minny works for Celia without her husband's, Johnny Foote, knowledge. Minny is afraid that if Johnny finds her working in his house, things will get worse for her.



Picture 3. (00:49:18)

Aibileen : Leeroy had made Sugar quit school to help him with the bills. And every day Minny went without a job, might have been a day Leeroy took her from our world. But I knew, I knew the only white lady Miss Hilly hadn't gotten to with her lies.
(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 00:48:51 – 00:49:25)

But the bravest thing Minny has done for the maids is telling Aibileen and Skeeter about her revenge to Hilly Holbrook. Skeeter was hesitant, writing that story down would jeopardize them. However, Minny convinced Skeeter to put the

story in the book for assurance because Hilly will do anything to protect her image from getting revealed. With a straight-on angle, medium height and medium close-up shot that captures from the chest up above, Minny is ready to tell her story.



Picture 3.3 (01:36:50)

Aibileen : You tryna get yourself killed?

Minny : No! I wasn't planning on telling, Aibileen. I just wanted to see her take a bite. Then I was gonna leave. Be done with her forever. Before I knew it, I had done told that woman what was in that pie! I done ask God to forgive me. But more for what happened to poor Miss Walters. Miss Hilly threw her in that nursing home... just for laughing.

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help*, 01:39:30 – 01:40:05)

The changing of Minny's character from a docile housemaid to a bold person fits the category of dynamic character. Minny's character changes as the plot goes, making it hard to expect what she might do. When Minny tells Aibileen and Skeeter what she has done to Hilly, both of them are surprised to hear what exactly happened. Thus, how unpredicted her mind works makes her a round character.

3.1.2. Setting

3.1.2.1. Time

The time setting of this movie takes in the 1960s specifically during President John F. Kennedy's presidential term. The movie emphasizes time setting by showing the state funeral of John F. Kennedy after his assassination is being broadcasted on the television. Tate Taylor captured the scene of the Phelan family, along with the helpers and Stuart, gathered to watch the burial ceremony in the living room using medium height and straight-on angle.



Picture 3.4 (01:35:54)

3.1.2.2. Place

The place setting of *The Help* movie takes in Jackson, Mississippi, United States. Jackson was mentioned several times in the dialogue between characters. In the picture below, Minny is convincing Aibileen and Skeeter that the story she told would become their safety guarantee because it includes Hilly's shameful secret. Knowing her story is written in the book, Hilly will try as hard as she can to convince people that the place setting of the book is not in Jackson.



Picture 3.5 (01:40:22)

Minny : We ain't got no choice. Hilly Holbrook can't let nobody know that pie story about her.

Aibileen : Exactly. If people find out the terrible awful was you and Miss Hilly, we in trouble there ain't words for.

Minny : Right! But don't you see? She gonna go to her grave convincing folks this book ain't about Jackson. And that keeps us safe. Insured.

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 01:40:09 – 01:40:28)

The shoots mostly take inside the house of the characters' residential. The movie starts in Aibileen's kitchen, the house where she's answering Skeeter's question. On Skeeter's arrival, Aibileen admits nervously to Skeeter that she never had any white person in her house before.

Besides the residents' houses, the church appears a few times during the film. The church is the place where Aibileen received *The Help* book signed by the preacher and the people of the church. Shot from a straight-on angle and medium shot, she gets the standing applause and appreciation for what she has done to the black community.



Picture 3.5 (02.10.41)

3.1.2.3. Social Environment

Social environment setting related to both time and place setting. Placed in Jackson in the 1960s, *The Help* provides a presentation of how life was fifty to sixty years ago. In the beginning of the movie, Aibileen explains that there is a social construct among the society especially the ladies. Women are likely to be married and have children in their early twenties and preferred to stay at home to take care of their family. Office work is not favored and expected to be the last destination for them before marriage stage.

In terms of fashion, the movie mentions one of the ladies' trendsetters. The wife of the late president John F. Kennedy, Jackie Kennedy, is featured in the conversation between the housewives at Elizabeth Leefolt's house. Capturing from medium-close up and medium height, Skeeter mentioned Jackie's appearance in the cover of Life magazine in attempt to change the topic of the talk. The scene implies Jackie's impact and popularity in beauty and elegance fashion.



Picture 3.6 (00:15.30)

3.1.3. Theme

The Help brings several themes to discuss but the one that stands out the most is racism. The movie depicts how racism dominates individuals and institutions, socially and politically. Having set at Jackson in the 1960s, discrimination against black people especially from the white employer to the black maids is the highlighted phenomena.

The spreading of racism was through meetings and gatherings from one person to another. *The Help* assists to bring the idea of racism by Ramon Grosfugel (2011:11) that is tricking the brain to believe that white Americans are more superior than the black Americans. They would not let themselves be treated as equal since the Black considered as different and dirty by the white Americans. Most of white employers treat their black maids unequally and resist to get same level of treatments as the black Americans. Their racist acts could be derived from many sources but Hilly's case comes intergenerationally supporting Bowser's

premises about racism (2017:581). In a particular scene, a conversation between Hilly, her mother and Minny, describes how Hilly gets her racist mentality from her father. This talk occurs where a storm happens and Minny has to go to the toilet. Hilly is not allowing her to use the guest bathroom causing Hilly's mother to disapprove Hilly's behavior for making a fuss over the littlest thing. Capturing from a medium close-up from the chest up and medium height, with a disappointed tone Hilly's mother resents his late husband's negative trait inherited to her daughter.



Picture 3.7 (00:31:54)

Aside from the influence of social groups, the government plays a big role in supporting the act of racism as well by restricting black Americans' freedom in almost every life aspect. In Aibileen's narration, she restates several regulations approved by the government such as prohibiting colored students to use books first used by white students and continue to be inherited academic materials from the first race using them.

3.2. Extrinsic Elements

3.2.1. Race and Racism

Race is connected to both biological and cultural characteristics mostly referring to skin color, facial features, behavior, and tradition. With the differences and varying amounts of those characteristics, the chances of misunderstanding happening between people are never zero. Some people could even claim their supremacy over others, leading to raise hatred to other race and thus causes racism.

Racism is induced by ethnocentrism of a race believing that others are more inferior based on mostly biological-racial characteristics. The idea of racism includes discrimination acts and affects social structures such as institutions. The discrimination acts that happen in *The Help* are supported by the government by restricting the freedom of black Americans in Mississippi. The government controls the lives of black Americans in almost every aspect of their lives from academic and health facilities to freedom of speech. Right after Aibileen and Skeeter's conversation ended when Aibileen is on her way home, the movie continues by Aibileen's narration quoting a few regulations approved by the government. This is a still cut from the movie, taken with high angle and height and extreme long shot that shoots human in tiny size providing a bird-eye like view.



Picture 3.8 (00:37:21)

Aibileen : No person shall require any white female to nurse in wards or rooms in which Negro men are placed. Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools but shall continue to be used by the race first using them. No colored barber shall serve as a barber to white women or girls. Any person printin', publishin', or circulating written matter urgin' for public acceptance of social equality between whites and negroes is subject to imprisonment.

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 00:37:17 – 00:37:59)

This phenomenon of White supremacy and Black inferiority would not be existed if the institution had not continued their support of racism and justify equal rights. The unsupportive government of Mississippi to Black equal rights leads to the passing down of racism to another generation. A character named Hilly is an example of how racism is passed down intergenerationally. Hilly is not allowing Minny to use the guest bathroom since she was black and a maid, while her mother is not bothered by the thought of it because the inconvenient storm. Shot with a medium-close up from chest up above and a straight-on angle, Hilly's mother resents her daughter's racist behavior that she got from Hilly's father's influence.



Picture 3.9 (00:31:54)

The products of racist government are not only the intergenerational racism, it is also the encouragement that they give to individuals to perform racist acts. The hatred towards Black in *The Help* comes in many forms, but one brutal move is when a shooting of black people happened during Aibileen's way home. She got stopped at an intersection and informed by a police officer that there had been a shooting of a black man. She then rushes to Minny's house that causes her to tripped. It turns out it was the Ku Klux Klan or KKK, a group of white supremacists, that shot the man and makes the whole Black community more alert and cautious. Picture 3.8 is taken with a long shot showing the whole body while Picture 3.9 is shot in medium shot from the waist up.



Picture 3.10 (02:21:19)



Picture 3.11 (01:22:46)

Minnie : KKK shot him. An hour ago. Right in front of his children, Aibileen.

Aibileen : We're gonna pray for the Evers. We're gonna pray for Myrlie

(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 01:22:46 – 01:22:56)

This event concerns the lives of Aibileen, Minny, and the rest of the Black community. Minny is worried if someday the hatred towards black people finally comes to her, it will cause a big trauma for her children and harm their future. For the safety of her children, Minny even thinks to reconsider her decision about helping Skeeter in writing her book. However, Aibileen ensures that they are not doing anything against the law therefore Minny agrees to not change her decision.

3.2.2. Stereotype

As what has been mentioned before, the writer argues that stereotype exists in *The Help* as a supporting element towards racism act. Stereotype is defined as illogical prejudice from one race towards another in order to preserve race hierarchy. False accusations lured by racism are made by racist against their target, labeling someone or a group of people based on a one-time interaction with them is one of the examples. Homi K. Bhabha explains that stereotype strives originality that is threatened by distinctions in race, color and culture, allowing colonial control to

justify colonizer's superiority over the colonized. [For further explanation on stereotype and colonial discourse, see Bhabha, 1994.]

Prejudiced and discriminatory governance is a result of accepting stereotype at its basis by the authority. In the ending of the movie, Aibileen arrived at the Leefolt's house and welcomed by Hilly and Elizabeth only to be suddenly accused of stealing Hilly's silver. It turns out the accusation arises from her rage of knowing the story behind 'The Help' so she seeks for revenge. She cannot reveal who is who in the book or she would expose herself. Instead, Hilly frames Aibileen as a thief of her 'missing' silvers to put Aibileen in behind bars. Hilly knows the court will favors her since she is White. That is one the examples of how the movie portraits stereotype's great effect to the government.



Picture 3.12 (02:14:31)

Hilly : Maybe I can't send you to jail for what you wrote, but I can send you for being a thief.
(Taylor, 2011, *The Help* 02:14:31 – 02:14:36)

One problem that Bhabha states about stereotype is that it has a problem of assuming individuals or groups base on the existing knowledge which totally inaccurate. Hilly Holbrook supports Bhabha's theory aforementioned. In a gathering with Jackson's female community, Hilly initiates 'Home Health Sanitation Initiative' to encourage people to build a separate bathroom for their Black maids. The reason behind that initiative is that because she believes that Black people carry different disease than them. This means Hilly indirectly refers to Black people as dirty and claims herself and White people as clean.



Picture 3.12 (00:15:42)

The still cut above taken with a medium shot also proves Bhabha's statements of stereotype that it is a biased depiction of reality. Hilly chooses to be ignorant about how developed and modern the world has become that people now are more aware about hygiene. Her racist trait is also a factor that connects to stereotyping of how she sees Black people as dirty and think of herself as clean. She even uses her influence to spread this false claim through her friend group.

Hilly Holbrook is the main antagonist whom proves the theory of William T. L. Cox about the stereotypes' characters. Her way of spreading inaccurate facts about Black with her friends is a proof that stereotypes are shared through social interactions such as collective group. Furthermore, by indirectly calling Black people dirty is showing the audience that stereotypes are possibly an unrelated trait of a social group and associate people to negative characteristics.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

As the main object of this study, *The Help* movie successfully portrays the racism acts as the result of stereotype throughout its movie. The results of this study are obtained after the writer implements race and racism and stereotype theory. Hilly, as the main antagonist, proposes Home Health Sanitation Initiative, a program that encourages the White employer to prevent the Black maids from using the guest bathroom and instead have their own separate ones. With that in mind, Aibileen, as the main protagonist, already knew since she was little that someday she would be a maid because racism still runs in the society and she didn't have much choice. Comparing how both Hilly and Aibileen act, the writer sees Hilly as the manifestation of colonizer spreading stereotype as a supporting element towards racism act, while Aibileen is a manifestation of colonized that is powerless towards the dominating colonizer.

In conclusion, the racism acts happened to Black people in *The Help* are based on the hatred and stereotype that has been passed down intergenerationally, shared socially, resulting a discriminating government and society. The intriguing issue and the plot of the movie are two of many factors why it is a popular subject to be analyzed. The message that this movie tries to deliver is that we, everyone regardless of our race, deserve the equal treatment and rights and should not look down on anybody.

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