



Cosmopolitanism Represented in *33 Postcards* Film

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Abstract. People nowadays are currently living in a globalization era that is indicated by a condition in which a person moves easily from one place to another. It obscures the meaning of one's identity and citizenship. Then this study raises the current issue with a cultural studies approach, especially cosmopolitanism. The research object is *33 Postcards* film which contains similar issues. This object is analysed using Stuart Hall's representation concept and Schein's imaginative cosmopolitanism. This study aims to find the cosmopolitanism issue represented in *33 Postcards* film and the kind of cosmopolitanism experienced by the main character. Then by applying descriptive qualitative method, this study found that the representation of cosmopolitanism in *33 Postcards* film is shown by the dialogue and scene layer. Besides, the cosmopolitanism shown by *Mei Mei* as the main character is imaginative cosmopolitanism because the use of postcards as the global communication media. The researchers conclude that cosmopolitanism issue represented in *33 Postcards* film pointing towards imaginative cosmopolitanism.

Keywords: representation · cosmopolitanism · imaginative cosmopolitanism

1 Introduction

It is now accepted that one of the most significant developments recently is the momentum of globalization. Global issues have become more visible and take variety of forms [1]. It has brought about an extraordinary transformation of social relations and it is no longer possible to think of nation-states, capitalism, the environment, citizenship, borders, consumption and communication in the same way. Virtually, the whole human experience is in one way or the other influenced by globalization, by which the overwhelming interconnectivity of the world. Yet the huge significance of globalization has some limits when it comes to social and cultural theory. There were major works written on globalization as a societal condition. However, theories of globalization do not provide an interpretation of the social world that extends the methodological horizon of social analysis beyond a critique of some assumptions in modern social science, especially cultural studies.

Cosmopolitanism offers a way to link the analysis of globalization to developments in social and cultural theory. It is also a good way to continue the cultural thought in social science, for the cultural dimensions of globalization resonate with new conceptions of

cultural cosmopolitanism. As an approach to current times, cosmopolitanism offers both a critical-normative standpoint and an empirical-analytical account of social life.

Literary works have been known as works that refer to a text. Along with the development of technology, this text also experienced developments in its form. In this case the author raised a work in the form of a film entitled *33 Postcards* with Pauline Chan as the director. The writer assumes that several things will be found in this film related to the issue of cosmopolitanism, especially imaginative cosmopolitanism. Why is *33 Postcards* the object of this study? Because this film is the result of cooperation between two countries, namely China and New South Wales, which have different cultures. Therefore, in this film, there is a reflection of the differences brought by each character. With this difference, the issue of cosmopolitanism began to emerge.

This study analyzes these following problems. First, the way of cosmopolitanism represented in *33 Postcards* film. Second, the kind of cosmopolitanism experienced by Mei Mei as the main character in *33 Postcards* film. This study could benefit people theoretically and pragmatically. The former, this study could be a reference for the researchers who investigate similar topics. Also, this study could understand how cosmopolitanism builds in the film. The latter could also be a benefit for understanding the type of cosmopolitanism.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies has several definitions as stated by Barker [2] among others, namely as a study that has attention to several things, including: 1) the relationship between culture and power; 2) all practices, institutions and classification systems embedded in particular values, beliefs, competencies, habits life, and the usual forms of behavior of a population; 3) various relationship between forms of power gender, race, class, colonialism and so on by developing ways of thinking about culture and the power that agents can use in pursuing change; and 4) various links of discourse outside the academic world with social movements and politics, workers in cultural institutions, and management culture.

Cultural Studies is distinguished from the study of culture. Cultural Studies is a new discipline that has its own methodology, while the study of culture is the study of generally accepted and carried out by various academic disciplines that have existed for a long time, for example sociology, anthropology, Indonesian literature, Javanese literature, etc. Cultural Studies gives understanding of culture as “texts and practices of everyday life” [3].

Cultural Studies is defined as “a social science that studies the production, distribution, exchange, and acceptance of textual meaning” [4]. Cultural Studies can be approached from two perspectives, namely from products of popular culture driven by industrial forces as well as from products culture that emerges from below [5]. Barker [6] explain important concepts in Cultural Studies, including: culture, practice of meaning, representation, cultural politics, positionality, materialism cultural, non-reductionism, social formation, articulation, power, popular culture, ideology, hegemony, text, active audience/reader, subjectivity, identity, discourse, and discourse formation.

Meanwhile, in representation, cultural studies deals with questions about how the world is socially constructed and presented. Barker added, to find out theoretically how the relationship between component images in a social formation, cultural studies uses the concept of articulation where power becomes a tool that determines the level of a social relationship. Texts and readers in cultural studies are not only interpreted as texts written, although this is also part of cultural studies but in all practice meanings called cultural texts such as images, sounds, objects, activities, and so on because they are considered to also contain systems the same as the language mechanism.

2.2 Representation

Representation is a concept used in the social process of meaning through available marking systems, namely through dialogue, writing, video, film, and photography. According to Stuart Hall [7], representation is an important practice that produces culture in terms of experience. Representation is usually understood as an accurate picture of something or a distorted reality. Representation is not only about “to present”, “to image”, or “to depict”. Representation is a way to interpret what is given to the object depicted. With regard to reality, Manurung said that representation is a process of constructing the world around and the process of interpreting it. Furthermore, Fiske, representation refers to a communication process in which signs are conveyed in accordance with reality through words, sounds, images, or a combination thereof. Representation is the process of depicting reality in the form of signs through implied messages, either in the form of dialogue or pictures. Representation is used in this study to find out the cosmopolitanism shown by Mei Mei as the main character in *33 Postcards* film.

2.3 Cosmopolitanism: Openness and a Global World

In general, cosmopolitanism can be seen as an anti-nationalist ideology. This understanding encourages people to think about their citizenship identity which does not only belong to one city or one country, but to become citizens of the world. This is reinforced in the quote:

“The majority of debates about cosmopolitanism are made through four different discourses: anti-national, a type of citizenship, a form of consumption and a form of subjectivity.” [1].

So to become a humanist and cosmopolitan, the first thing we have to do is change our perspective. We must be able to feel and live the discrimination and harassment of human values that often afflicts minorities, women and cultures outside our society. Without it, at any time we will never become a true cosmopolitan because the world is not only one side, the world cannot only be seen from one direction, but can be seen from the West, East, South and North sides. In addition, a Greek philosopher, Diogenes Laertius, stated *“I am a citizen of the world”* [8]. Our identity is a community with fundamental moral obligations such as justice. We must see all human beings as friends of our citizens and neighbors, who also have the same rights.

2.4 Imaginative Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism has various forms, namely moral cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism, and cultural cosmopolitanism [9]. Moral cosmopolitanism is dominated by universal ethical cosmopolitanism. Like Marta Nussbaum's essay which has been widely discussed, it is a contemporary example of cosmopolitanism as moral universalism. Cultural cosmopolitanism offers a less dualistic view of the relationship between the thing and the universal, while political cosmopolitanism suggests an alternative to individualism that underlies the conception of moral cosmopolitanism.

Thus, instead of limiting the focus to an elite global-oriented world, we need to explore and investigate how cosmopolitanism can be formed and reformed in certain everyday places. In Lamont and Aksartova [10], the term simple cosmopolitanism, which they interpret as a strategy used by ordinary people to bridge boundaries with people who are different from them. Thus, Lamont and Aksartova [10] refute the idea that cosmopolitanism can only be attributed to the elite of world tourist groups:

Their [ordinary cosmopolites'] absence from this literature implies that cosmopolitanism is less likely to be encountered in their midst as compared to the elite strata of society where 'cosmopolitan travellers' are generally implicitly thought of as dwelling . . . However, this should not be taken to mean that they are bereft of cosmopolitan imagination – they engage with difference perhaps just as often as the paradigmatic cosmopolitans, albeit on a local, as opposed to a global, scale. [1]

So cosmopolitanism can be formed in everything that is done in the local area, simple things at any time in the world and in the space of contemporary society. For example, simple cosmopolitanism for Szerszynski and Urry [1] is produced through exposure to different cultures through television, and thus can mainly occur in the space of the home every day. Therefore, imaginative journeys are made through media and other forms of communication technology. Another example of how cosmopolitanism is produced differently through everyday spaces comes from Louisa Schein [1] in her paper on cosmopolitanism and the consumption of post-socialist Chinese practices. She argues that the rise of consumer capitalism means that consumer media, as well as the worldwide consumption of print, electronic, and communications satellites, have come to imagine themselves as cosmopolitan participants in a global commodity culture (author's translation). Schein's paper examines the relationship between class, mobility and desire, coining the term 'imaginative cosmopolitanism' to denote an attempt to transgress regional and national boundaries through interaction with global promotional media, not just through the acquisition of foreign products. So the term imaginative cosmopolitanism is closely related to the use of media as a global communication tool.

3 Research Method

This research uses descriptive analysis method. According to Ratna [11] descriptive analysis is a research method carried out by describing the facts which are then followed by analysis. This descriptive analysis method aims to solve the problems being faced and

collect data information which is then used for compilation and analysis. The researcher uses descriptive analysis as the research method because the material object is one of the result of a culture. The object is considered as it is because it forms as a film.

This research is included into cultural studies because it uses cosmopolitanism as the issue to be analyzed. Besides, this issue is seen in one of a cultural product namely a film. The research was conducted using a cosmopolitanism point of view to analyze, interpret, and evaluate the issues of cosmopolitanism in the film. Film is one of fiction which is included in one of the genres of literary works that are visualized through various vehicles and media, therefore the researcher classifies this research into cultural studies because the author uses film as the main object in this research.

Then representation study is used to see the issue within this film. Representation is a concept used in the social process of meaning through available marking systems, namely through dialogue, writing, video, film, and photography. According to Stuart Hall [7], representation is an important practice that produces culture in terms of experience. The data was obtained from the film *33 Postcards* directed by Pauline Chan. This is the first co-production between China and New South Wales. Published in 2011, and the duration of the film is 1 h 37 min.

The researcher collects the data, as follows. First, watching and re-watching the movie. Second, classifying data sets related to the purpose of writing. Third, evaluate data that reflecting cosmopolitanism. Fourth, present the results of the research and conclude the results of the discussion.

Sugiyono [12] stated that data analysis can be defined as a way to discover and assemble data taken from some sources, like field notes, by coordinating data into classification or categories, and investigating into parts, putting them together, reducing into the important part, and conclude them. According to Sugiyono [12], data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation by organizing data into categories, breaking down into units, synthesizing, compiling into patterns, choose which ones are important will be studied, and make conclusions so that they are easily understood by themselves and others. In analyzing data, the researcher will do some steps. First, after collecting the data, the researcher compiles it into one. Second, with the categories within, the researcher classifies the evidences of cosmopolitanism into a variety of types. Third, analyze and examine the evidences into the discussion, and close it with a conclusion towards the main character based on the findings and discussion.

4 Finding and Discussion

4.1 Cosmopolitanism Represented in *33 Postcards* Film

Mei Mei is a child who was abandoned by her parents in an orphanage. But she was lucky to have a sponsor from Australia named Dean Randall. With the money sent by Dean, Mei Mei can enjoy education at school while learning English. With such a long distance, communication between Mei Mei and Dean was established through postcards and letters. This started when Mei Mei was able to read. Referring to Schein's statement about imaginative cosmopolitanism [1], Mei Mei is experiencing it since she

went to school, learned English, and communicated through postcards. Meanwhile, cosmopolitanism in a general sense is experienced when Mei Mei is in Australia.

The great curiosity about sponsor father makes Mei Mei have a strong desire to learn and understand her father's life. Of course, starting from a very simple thing, it is the father's language in each postcard he sends. Of course, developing English, which is not the national language, is the main requirement in order to know more about the figure of the father. Moreover, their communication is only through postcards, and Mei Mei always replies with letters. The written language they use must be understood by each other.

In this case, it is not her father who is learning Chinese, but Mei Mei who is studying English. This process of learning English is one of the issues of cultural cosmopolitanism applied by Mei Mei, a girl from China with Chinese culture and language, but consciously and confidently studying English which is one part of Dean's cultural roots. In the excerpt from the scene of Mei Mei's first meeting with her father, there is also a dialogue that explains that Mei Mei learns English because she wants to be able to read postcards from Dean, moreover to read Dean's life.

The following is an excerpt of the dialogue in the scene.

*Mei Mei: "I'm studying English. I can read.
Read your life.
Your picture cards."
Dean: "Yeah, it's a postcard."*

This quote from the letter written by Mei Mei at the age of six directly explains Mei Mei's strong desire to be able to master things related to Dean.

*Mei Mei: "I learned ABC because I wanted to read your letter and
see your face."*

At the same time as learning English, Mei Mei also learned everything related to Australia, especially what Dean had described in his postcard. Dean sent a postcard with pictures of the atmosphere and life in Australia. What can be found in Australia is in the picture on each postcard.

Mei Mei joined the Choir of Dong Ying Orphanage since childhood. When she was sixteen years old, the opportunity came to do a choir tour to Australia. So he immediately thought that this was the only chance for him to meet Dean. It turned out to be true, when she arrived at the hotel, Mei Mei immediately asked for permission from her nanny to meet Dean, but the nanny didn't give her permission because she had repeatedly received letters from the Dong Ying Orphanage without a reply from Dean. But the ban on the nanny could not stop Mei Mei from meeting Dean. In the end, she left without her nanny knowing. This is where Mei Mei's journey begins with a hands-on experience and blending in with Australian culture with all the variations it contains. The first lesson learned was that when she wanted to get on the bus, Mei Mei has to queue, a simple thing, but this habit had never been owned by Mei Mei before, so she got a protest from an Australian citizen who felt violated by Mei Mei.



Fig. 1. Mei Mei before make over.



Fig. 2. Mei Mei after make over.

Ruby did a make over for Mei Mei with adjustments to Ruby's dress and makeup style. This difference in appearance can be seen in Figs. 1 and 2.

In addition to makeup, Mei Mei's dress style and hairstyle also changed, following Ruby's directions, including wearing high heels. The cosmopolitanism seen in this case is Mei Mei's assimilation with her Chinese identity with everything new in Australia related to its customs and culture. Without thinking about origins or nationalism, Mei Mei was immersed in it.

4.2 The Main Character Experienced Imaginative Cosmopolitanism

Departing from the term imaginative cosmopolitanism popularized by Schein [1], the researchers tries to present a concrete example of the application of imaginative cosmopolitanism contained in Pauline Chan's film 33 Postcards. Starting from the title, it can be read that the media used in this film is in the form of postcards. The main characters who have a role in this media are Mei Mei, a Chinese girl, and her sponsor father, Dean Randall who is an Australian citizen. Dean always sends out postcards, and Mei Mei responds with a letter.

As discussed earlier, the communication between Mei Mei and Dean is happened through postcards and letters. Dean always sends postcards with pictures that reflect the state of nature and his life in Australia. There are many scene quotes that contain the inner language of Mei – Mei and Dean when reading each postcard and letter. The researchers will take only a few quotes. The researchers present the first quote as an affirmation that the communication exists between Mei Mei and Dean is through letters and postcards.

This dialogue was spoken in Mei Mei to Dean's legal counsel:

Mei Mei : "It's been a long time, we talked by letter. And picture cards."

With English she knows, Mei Mei was able to understand and reply to all postcards from Dean. Mei Mei tells everything she doesn't tell anyone in every letter she writes to Dean. We can see several postcards from Dean in different scenes explaining his life in Australia. It is from communication via postcards and letters that the imaginative cosmopolitanism consistent with Schein's view has emerged. Mei Mei always tries to read and understand the contents of the postcards she receives. Starting from the picture to the contents of the description from Dean.

The pictures on the postcards from Dean are varied, such as about Australian wildlife, this reflects a natural atmosphere related to wild animals in Australia. Automatically when she sees the picture of the animal that says Australian wildlife, Mei Mei will think that this is how it is in real life in Australia, not just a picture on a postcard. Especially with the additional description from Dean regarding his daily life and activities as in the following quote.

Dean : "I am a forest ranger. Protecting wild life, animals and birds. My wife, Jenny, looks after the children, Aiden and Maggie. And we live in Sydney. "

This quote is accompanied by a scene of Mei Mei day-dreaming, imagining what her sponsor's father's life was like in Australia. Then it becomes clear why an imaginative cosmopolitanism appears in Mei Mei. Starting with a high curiosity, supported by postcard media that has a reflection of life in Australia, Mei Mei plunges into the Australian culture that she gets from the media, complemented by the lessons learned at school.

Here is another quote about Dean's life in the postcard description.

Dean: "Mei Mei, we went to a Christmas concert last week, but since it's summer here, it's very hot, but it was really fun.

... Our house is near the beach, very beautiful. On weekends we swim, or go for walks, or just at home playing with the children in the park. "

When this description is told by Dean in scenes from the film, it is described that Mei Mei is imagining the atmosphere of Dean's life with his family. Dean's habits in Australia while spending time with family, including the custom of celebrating Christmas. Dean also mentions the seasons there, so Mei Mei can find out about the seasons that Australia has. Mei Mei feels like living with Dean even though it's only an imagination in Mei Mei's imaginary world which departs from the postcard sent by Dean.

In addition to the quote from Dean's description above, the following is an excerpt from Mei Mei's statement that can support the researchers' analysis.

Mei Mei : "It's winter in China, the sky is always dark. I like looking at the blue sky. White bird, like on your card."

This quote was said by Mei Mei in her heart when she was on the bus that would take her to Dean. This inner statement is visualized with the scene of Mei Mei sitting on the bus while looking at Dean's postcard which has a blue background with a white bird. A snippet from Mei Mei's heart "...just like on your card." it is clear enough to reveal the issue of imaginative cosmopolitanism experienced by Mei Mei. Once again, it was through this postcard that Mei Mei got to know Australia and understand it.

With the postcard from Dean, Mei Mei was able to get to know more about Australia, in this case complementing her knowledge of Australian wildlife. Imaginative cosmopolitanism was only discovered in Mei Mei with the process of studying through postcards because the reply letter from Mei Mei addressed to Dean did not trigger Dean's desire to study Chinese culture either. From the communication that has been established, Mei Mei has a great desire to meet and live with Dean in the future. Until finally the opportunity came for Mei Mei to go to Australia.

At the end of the story, Dean, who is dying, gives Mei Mei a name, May.

Dean : "May is spring in China. And autumn in here. So you can be May in two places."

With pleasure and full of emotion, Mei Mei accepted the name given by Dean. Nonetheless, the story concludes with Mei Mei's return to China as Mei Mei realizes where her real home is and who needs it more. Henceforth, the communication between Mei Mei and Dean will take place through the media as before their meeting.

5 Conclusion

The finding and discussion bring us to the following conclusion. First, *33 Postcards* film represents cosmopolitanism through the dialogue and action between Mei Mei, Dean, and their surroundings. Besides, the media used in this film is shown by the title "postcards" which becomes a media to show the imaginative cosmopolitanism. Second, Mei Mei experienced cosmopolitanism while she studying English in China and when she tries to blend with Australian cultures. Finally, Mei Mei experienced imaginative cosmopolitanism while she learns Australian cultures through the postcards she got from

Dean. This study can give a clear elaboration of the representation of cosmopolitanism in a literary work, especially imaginative cosmopolitanism in a film.

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