



## **THE POLITICS OF *OTHERING* IMMIGRANTS IN POEMS *IMMIGRANT IN OUR OWN LAND (1979), YOUNG AND INNOCENT (1965) AND BECAUSE THIS IS A REVOLUTION! (1985)***

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### **Abstract**

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa dari tiga puisi berjudul *Immigrant in Our Own Land*, *Young and Innocent* dan *Because THIS is a Revolution*. Topik yang dibahas adalah bagaimana politik *othering* yang dimainkan oleh pemerintah Amerika terhadap para imigran. Permasalahan dari analisa ini adalah bagaimana batasan-batasan dalam bidang pekerjaan dan pendidikan yang diciptakan oleh Amerika terhadap imigran. Tujuan dari analisa ini adalah untuk mengetahui sejauh mana elemen puisi (ironi dan imajeri) memberikan kontribusi dalam mengungkap politik *othering* terhadap imigran di Amerika. Analisa dilakukan dengan cara menginterpretasi teks dan konteks yang dikaitkan dengan konsep *otherness* dan *orientalism* oleh Homi K. Bhaba dan Edward Said. Hasil dari analisa ini menunjukkan bahwa para imigran akan selalu mengalami diskriminasi. Mereka tidak bisa mendapatkan pekerjaan dan pendidikan yang layak hanya karena status mereka sebagai imigran ilegal. Analisa ini juga membuktikan bahwa hal yang sama juga terjadi di dunia nyata. Amerika cenderung untuk menerapkan bermacam peraturan untuk menyaring imigran yang datang.

**Key words:** Politics, Othering, Immigrants, Speaker, Irony, Imagery

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

There are some reasons why people migrate. Political freedom, religious tolerance, forced immigration and economic opportunities are some of them. There is a widespread agreement that political freedom is fundamental human rights – which everyone is entitled to substantial freedom of choice in deciding what type of government policies they will live under. It has been the preeminent reason for leaving homelands in which religious persecution was endemic. In some cases, religious freedom was one issue among others, as people search for personal freedom but it is not available in their homelands. Forced immigration is a negative form of immigration, often caused by persecution, development, exploitation and natural disaster such as, slave trade immigration and refugees. Among the above reasons, the economic opportunity is the most powerful reason why people migrate. It is opportunities to find

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better employment, to own land, and to trade and build businesses. An economic immigrant is someone who emigrates from one country to another to seek improvement of living standards because the living conditions or job opportunities in the immigrant's own country are not good enough.

Developments in technology and transportation enable people to move from one country to another much more easily. Immigration may change the demographic composition of the recipient country. This mass unstoppable immigration can cause the recipient country to become overpopulated and face many problems.

America is still one of the main destinations for immigrants in the world, which offers better life, jobs, education, and lands for farms. According to Michael Grimm (2008. p.23), America is also known as "Land of Opportunity." The immigrants wanted to experience the freedom of improving their life and be able to take care of their family. The American Dream is a dream of a land in which life should be better richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.

Due to the progressive increase in its population, America, for example, has started to limit the amount of its incoming immigrants. The government applies some rules to create a border against immigrants. They decide that immigrants cannot work unless they have received explicit permission under the terms of their visa or other status, or have separately applied for and received a work permit.

The immigrant children or youth often face many obstacles including language and culture in learning barriers. The government separates them from native children and youth schools simply because of their status as immigrants. They place them in a disadvantaged school, which is lack of facility and quality. They are frequently learning two languages, an incredible asset, but one that many schools have yet to learn to support effectively.

The limitation is also applied in the higher level of education, such as college and university. It would be difficult for the immigrant graduates to join a university that has quality in America due to their status. American government will put the natives in front of immigrants, so that the amount of immigrants in a university will be decrease.

As a result, it would be difficult for immigrants to get a decent job with a diploma from a university that is not well known. The lessons they have learned during the lectures will be wasted in vain because they will eventually get a job with low payment and cannot apply their knowledge.

Three poems entitled *Immigrant in Our Own Land* by Jimmy Santiago Baca (1979), *Young and Innocent* by Matthew Arnold (1965), and *Because THIS is a Revolution!* By Jorge Luis Borges (1985) shows the issue of the politics of *othering* immigrants. America as a developed country has many strategies to control every system within the country, especially for immigrants. American government limits immigrants in order to balance the country itself. In this analysis the politics of *othering* immigrants refers to restrict the life of immigrants in getting job, and education.

In terms of job, the American government limits the immigrants to get it. This issue is reflected through the events experienced by immigrants in the first poem. By using imagery, it can be revealed how government put immigrants in labor, which required physical effort. In addition there are many rules that immigrants should obey in order to work in America. Another way the government does to apply the politics of othering immigrants is by ignoring the condition of immigrant, whether it is physical or mental.

In terms of education, the government separates immigrant children from the regular school. This issue can be seen in the second and third poems. By using irony, it can be revealed how the government distinguishes between natives' children and immigrant's children. The immigrant children are more likely to be placed in disadvantaged schools which lack of facilities and qualities. The youth immigrants are not allowed to continue their education to a higher level such as University.

The analysis with reference to these poems that focused on the politics of *othering* immigrants' issue has not been found yet. However, there are journals that have given contribution in analyzing these three poems.

There is a study entitled *Discrimination against the Black and Chicanos in Hughe's "Children Rhyme" and Mora's "Legal Alien"* by Nuria Choiruz Zuamah (2012). She studies about the mistreatment received by African and Mexican immigrants from natives. She examines two poems on the same theme, they are: *Children Rhyme* by Langston Hughes and *Legal Alien* by Pat Mora. She studies about majority group seeks control of minorities and led to unequal treatment in public life. This analysis deals with the concept of *hegemony* by Antonio Gramsci. She uses poetry elements such as *diction* and *imagery* to help analyze these poems. Racial class happens in the United States shows a pattern of cultural hegemony theory when the dominant group controls over the minorities. The result of this analysis shows that the white domination toward the minority group of Black and Chicanos happen in every aspect of life. This makes Black and Chicanos struggle to get an equal treatment, right as citizen, freedom, liberty and equal justice like other citizens in America.

The second study that gives contribution to this analysis entitled *Racism Reflected in Maya Angelou's Poems* by Ria Reski Hardianti Ilham (2015). She analyzes thirteen of Maya Angelou's poems from "*The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou*" (1994) which discusses to the racial discrimination toward African American, they are: *My Guilt, The Calling of Names, On Working White Liberals, The Thirteens (Black), The Thirteens (White), Harlem Hopscotch, Africa, America, One More Round, Ain't that Bad?, Our Grandmother, Riot:60s and Sepia Fashion Show*. She explained how Maya Angelou's poems against racism, the criticism against types of racism and find out why racism become an important issue in Maya Angelou's poems. This analysis deals with *Sociological* approach by Rene Wellek and she uses poetry elements such as *diction, imagery* and *symbol* to help analyze these poems. The result of this analysis shows that the thirteen of Maya Angelou's poems talks about racism. The types of racism here are: slavery, discrimination, segregation, Hegemony, prejudice and stereotype and class struggle especially in class

conflict. These types of racism reflected in Maya Angelou's poem specifically describe in the personal, sentimental feeling and emotional way to remind the reader about racism.

This analysis is going to reveal how the politics of *othering* immigrants. It has relation with the theory of *otherness* and *orientalism* proposed by Homi K. Bhaba and Edward Said. The idea of *otherness* is central to sociological analyses of how majority and minority identities are constructed. This is because the representation of different groups within any given society is controlled by groups that have greater political power.

Conceptually, the *Self* requires the existence of the *Other*, as the counterpart entity required for defining the *Self*. The condition of *Otherness* is a person's non conformity to and with the social norms of society and to the condition of disenfranchisement (political exclusion), either by the activities of the State or by the activities of the social institutions (e.g. the professions), which are respectively invested with political and social Power. Therefore, in the condition of *Otherness*, the person is alienated from the center of society and is placed at the societal margin for being the *Other*. Furthermore, the *Other* can also be used the verb *othering*. It is a usage that distinguishes and identifies (labels) someone as belonging to a category, defined as "*Other*". In practice, *othering* excludes those persons who do not fit the norm of the social group, which is a version of the self. Similarly, in the field of human geography, the verbal action term to other refers to and identifies the action of placing someone outside the center of the social group, at the margins, where the social norms do not apply to the *Other* person.

Orientalism as a Western discourse about the Orient is guilty of legitimizing civilizing mission, essentialism, expansionism and imperialism and on the other hand, convincing natives of their own inferiority. Said in his book (*Orientalism*, 1978: p. 11) demonstrates how the Western literary and cultural canon has otherized its other and how they have misrepresented the Orient. The book begins with a quotation by Karl Marx: 'they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented'. As a result, it is a Western career to represent them..

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The analysis of these three poems entitled Immigrant in our own land, Young and Innocent, and Because THIS is a Revolution! is done through text-based and context-based interpretation. It means these poems are analyzed from the texts with the blend of the poetic elements, irony, imagery and context based interpretation poscolonialism theory of otherness by Homi K. Bhaba and orientalism by Edward said. These devices cannot be separated in exploring the meaning of the text since they supported each other. Irony is used to reveal the exact condition of American immigrant in opposite way. Then, imagery gives contribution in evoking meaning through the atmosphere and situation which create conflict. These devices are connected to context-based interpretation by analyzing to what happen in real world related to the condition of these poems.



## C. DISCUSSION

This section analyses the poetic elements such as tone, speaker, imagery and irony to reveal the politics used by America in *othering* immigrants. In addition, those poetic elements were applied in analyzing three poems entitled *Immigrant in Our Own Land* (later will be mention as IIOOL), *Young and Innocent* (YI), and *Because THIS is a Revolution!* (BTIR). They decide to apply some rules for immigrants to live in America. It is done through limiting job and education.

### 1. Limitation in Job

This politic is mainly discussed in the first poem, IIOOL. In this poem, the politics can be seen from speaker's perception. In addition, imagery is used to reveal the politics of othering immigrants. The politics, which is intended in this poem, is used by American to limit immigrants to get a proper job. The speaker of this poem is the representative of the African, Chicanos, and Indian immigrants who come to America to get a better job. They have very high expectations in achieving success in America.

The poem IIOOL describes about immigrants who want to try their luck to improve their lives by coming to America. They have very high expectations regarding this matter. Nevertheless, since their status as immigrants, it makes them difficult to reach their goals. Here, it is clear that immigrants would be marginalized in their lives by America, in this poem it is related to their job. Yet they still have hopes that they will get this American Dream. It is shown in the following quotation:

“Our expectations are high: in the old world,  
they talked about rehabilitation,  
about being able to finish school,  
and learning an extra good trade.  
(IIOOL. Stanza 5)

The stanza above reflects the expectations of immigrants about living in America. For years ago, America has been regarded as a dream country for immigrants. America is land of hope where immigrants can search a better life. By using visual imagery, the words “Our expectations are high” from the first line shows that they have a massive hope that they can change their life by working in America. They associate the American dream with opportunity, a good job and education. Most of them are kind of people that do not have enough skill and knowledge to work in America. They are eager to come to America since they think this nation upholds equality; everybody gets the same opportunity and freedom. This might be misunderstood; they assume that they can get it without having any skills. The word rehabilitation in the second line related to the following lines. It shows that America promised immigrants would get a proper education and skills. The third line, being able to finish school, means that everybody has access to a complete and effective education. They will be educated in such a way, and hopefully later they get a good job. Moreover, the words learning extra good trade means that they will teach to have some competences that help them to work in America, such as the ability to trade or sell goods and service.

The politics of *othering* immigrants played very strong in the next lines. In fact, America forced immigrants to work as labor. This job is classified as a cheap labor. It appears in the following quotation:

“But right away we are sent to work as dishwashers,  
to work in fields for three cents an hour.”

(IIOOL, Stanza 6)

The lines above proved what was feared by immigrants. Through *visual imagery*, it can be seen how America determines the type of work for immigrants. The first line shows that immigrants are forced to work as a service dishwasher, a very low job. By working as dishwasher, it shows that without having any skills, it will be impossible to get a proper job with high payment. The worst shown by the second line, the words “*three cents*” is used to emphasize that their living standard is lower than they expected. Their payment is lower than the standard and it shows that they are nothing but a slave for America. This is very inhumane, that they were forced to work and should receive a fee which is not comparable to their jobs.

In summary, from the quotations above, it can be seen how the America marginalized immigrants in the land of America. Related to the theory of *otherness*, from this poem it shows that the immigrants are really *other* in the eye of American. They tell immigrants what to do, what to think, and what to feel. It also indicates that the immigrants are minorities in America, thus they will be marginalized since their status as immigrants. Politics of *othering* in this poem is very strong. It can be seen from the way America determine their job with low payment. It is below of the standard living in America. They work for eight to ten hours per day to earn nothing and got nothing. America always watches what they do, what they say. America make immigrants suffer with this policy. Overall, tone of the poem is disappointment. This means that the expectations of immigrants are not achieved and tends to lead them to disappointment. They regret their decision to come to America. They would rather stay at their homeland if they know that in America everything is getting worse. This is caused by *othering* rules created by America itself.

## 2. Limitation in Education

The politic intended in this topic is revealed in the second and the third poem, which are YI and BTIR. The first one is discussed in the second poem. In this poem, the politics can be seen from speaker’s perception. Furthermore, *imagery* and *irony* are used to reveal this issue. The politic used by America in this poem is by restricting immigrants in getting a proper education. This is how America develops their *othering* politics.

The poem YI describes a different immigrant. The speaker of this poem is the representative of young immigrant generation from Latin America, an undocumented who came to America to get a proper education. The title of poem *Young and Innocent* defines about a young Latinos who just heard about America is a great country and decided to come to America to seek a better life than the homelands. It is shown in the following quotation:

“I was young and innocent;

my family told me that everything was better in the U.S.A.  
Everything was upright.”  
(YI. Stanza 1)

This quotation reflects the expectations of the speaker about living in America. For young people, especially student, America is the great place to improve their education and knowledge. Through *visual imagery*, it can be seen that as a young person, he has a big ambition, and expectation about getting success in America. He thinks that everything is possible and worth to try. This is supported by his family. At the last two lines, the family said that America is the greatest country to develop the quality of life, whether it is from job or education. He believed it. He thinks that good things will come without having any struggle or survive in this life. This is might be misunderstood by immigrants who came to America. They just heard that America is a better place for them, regardless of any problems they will face. It is show that America promised something for immigrants, that is American Dream.

Settling in a new country poses many challenges and there are some experiences for immigrants. In fact, he often faces many barriers in his life. America did not allow him to join the society. It can be proved in the following quotation:

“Senior year of high school,  
all the anticipation of college and becoming adults,  
But then it came to me.  
I couldn't attend to college,  
I couldn't join the military,  
I couldn't get financial aid.  
I had no results.” (YI. Stanza 2)

The stanza above shows that the speaker realizes the reality he faced by living in America as undocumented immigrant. By using *visual imagery* and *situational irony*, it can be seen that America restricts him to get education and contributing to society. The words *college*, *military* and *financial aid* has a similar point. It reflects the issue that America restricts their aspect of life. They applied some rules that need to be followed. This regulation is unlikely to be filled by illegal immigrant. This stressing that America is the one who decide every single thing for him, no matter what it is. This is the action of *othering* immigrants. Since he is *other* for America he cannot attend to college. He will struggle to secure a good job in the near future. His identity as undocumented immigrant complicates him to get what he wants.

The politics of *othering* immigrants in term of education also appeared in the third poem, BTIR. In this poem, the politics can be seen from speaker's perception as well. Moreover, *imagery* and *irony* are used to disclose this topic. Similar with the second poem, the politics used in this poem is by restricting immigrants in getting appropriate education.

The poem BTIR describes about undocumented Mexican immigrants who came to America as a second generation. The speaker was brought by his parents to migrate to America when he was a child. Parents sometimes make the difficult decision to immigrate so their children can benefit from things like superior

education, and plentiful job opportunities. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“My mother brought me here when she was 27  
My sister was 3, and I was 8.  
She figured an American education for her children  
would fit well with her job  
cleaning offices afterhours and my father’s machismo.” (BTIR. Stanza 2)

The stanza above explains that the speaker was very young when he immigrates to America. Through *imagery*, it can be seen that he know nothing about America and his mother was the one who decided to immigrate. The speaker’s mother thinks that since America is a great country and land of opportunity, it is better to give her children an American education. Many immigrants are determined to make the most of any opportunity that arises from the sacrifices they made by immigrating. Most immigrant children – and their parents – hold an ambition to succeed that in most cases matches, and in some cases surpasses, the aspirations of families in their home country. It can be seen that both of the speaker’s parents are working in a labor job. Thus the mother thinks that if their children attend school in America, there is a chance for them to get a better education and job than their parents. The speaker talks this issue with full of expectation.

Their expectation does not meet the reality. In fact immigrants’ children are separated from the regular school. They are placed in a disadvantaged school which lack of facilities and qualities. It can be seen in the next lines:

“Learning English through Goosebumps books in 3rd grade in Tejas,  
I sat with other classmates whose skin was darker but accents were just as thick.

You could smell the residue of the rancho still on their worn shoes.  
And the excitement of being somewhere where wearing Nikes wasn’t a big deal.

Pokemon trading cards and McDonald’s taught me lessons on capitalism and globalization.”(BTIR. Stanza 3)

This stanza shows that America splits them from public school. Through *visual imagery* and *situational irony*, it can be seen that disadvantage and illegal immigrant status are closely linked. Once immigrants arrived in America, they often settle in communities where there are other immigrants who share their culture, their language and often their socio-economic status. Their children often attend the same schools – and those schools frequently have large proportions of immigrant students. America wants to distinguish between children of immigrants and natives. Since they are *other*, they cannot join the public school. Due to the lack of facilities, the immigrant children do not have enough sources of knowledge that will support their learning process. The “*Goosebumps book*” from the first line indicates that they do not have official source book. It means that they have to learn through an unofficial book such as book of short stories. *The pokemon trading cards* and *McDonald* are another example of unofficial sources that they have to learn from it. Due to lack of facilities and quality, the immigrant children are forced to learn from untrusted sources.



From all quotations above it can be concluded that how America run the politic of *othering* immigrants through forbidding them to attend college. The undocumented immigrants face many obstacles in achieving their goals in America. They, who initially guaranteed everyone an opportunity, did not keep their promises. In fact, they actually restrict the rights of immigrants in obtaining a better life in education aspect. America says that each person will be given the same opportunity, but everyone must follow the rules that have been created. This regulation was the actual immigrants burdensome to fulfill. Their status as illegal immigrants make their lives go awry. Ironically, the rules do not apply to any legal citizens or natives. This is what makes immigrants protesting the policy.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The analysis found out that in term of job, America limits the immigrants to get it. It can be seen how America marginalized them in the land of America. This poem shows that the immigrants are totally *other* in the eye of American. America also points out that the immigrants are minorities in America, thus they will be marginalized since their status as immigrants. In term of education, the politics of *othering* is revealed through how America prohibits immigrants to get a proper education and separates immigrant children from the regular school. America promised a better life in terms of education. However it turned out to the implement a variety of complex rules and must be obeyed by all immigrants. This regulation is unlikely to be filled by illegal immigrant. This emphasizes that America is the one who decides every single thing for them, no matter what it is. As *self*, America thinks that they are entitled to regulate the life of the *other*, which are immigrants. America put the immigrant children in a disadvantaged school, which is lack of qualities and facilities. This political *othering* can be found in the reality of today's life. America tends to apply this method to filter out immigrants who came to the country. For those who do not have sufficient education or skill, they would have ended up with a low job, usually indicates with labor job with low payment. Meanwhile, for those who have a great potential, they will be recruited to develop the country itself.

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