

THE ABERRATION OF TRUTH BY JOURNALIST IN MEDIA IN NOVEL *VERNON GOD LITTLE* BY DBC PIERRE (2003)

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah (1) menganalisa sejauh mana novel ini merefleksikan aberrasi (2) menunjukkan kontribusi elemen fiksi (karakter dan seting) dalam mengungkap aberrasi dalam novel ini. Data penelitian ini adalah teks tertulis yang dikutip dari novel dan yang konteks yang terjadi pada novel ini. Kutipan teks tersebut kemudian diinterpretasi dan dianalisa berdasarkan teori simulacra yang dikemukakan oleh Jean Baudrillard, teori Self Deception oleh Brian McLaughlin dan representasi oleh Ladesma. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa tindakan dari jurnalis dan masyarakat telah menyimpang dari kebenaran yang semata-mata hanya untuk mendapatkan keuntungan secara materi.

Kata kunci: aberration, truth, code ethic, journalism

A. Introduction

Truth is accordance with fact or reality. Truth and media has a relation. They support each other because truth will be exposed by media. It means media is a tool to spread the truth in society. Sometimes, journalists do something wrong when they created the news. The news did not based on fact but it was based on journalist point of view. In media, truth means fact or factual event that it is support the news. Media is an all-encompassing term that refers to a collective of communicatory mediums to store or transmit information. Therefore, media and truth resembles one another. In this case, truth deals with factual event. It becomes a source for media to make the news.

There are two terms which are Aberration and Truth. The first term is aberration. According to Burke (1913), aberration is the act of wandering from the right way; deviation from truth or moral rectitude; deviation from a strait line. So that, criteria of aberration are the act is deviant from the line and make a new line or it is not stand in line, in other word. It is aberrant from the main point and makes it a new perception toward something. The second is truth. According to Slick (2012), truth is that which conforms to reality, fact, or actuality. But this

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basic definition is not complete because its definition is open to interpretation and a wide variety of applications.

One of the examples of truth aberration happened in England which is known as the condition where the ocean is dying. The scientist state that government must take care of ecosystem in the ocean. It needs a serious act because the oceans are in trouble. However, the journalists in their news reported it in contrast. The news states that it is nobody's fault when some fish are dying and the government should not take serious care of this problem. It is just an accident. Russell (2011) reported that both media owner and journalist as well give misleading information. Media becomes the aberrant of the truth.

This analysis is intended to reveal the issue of aberration and investigate to what extend the fictional devices such as character and setting give contribution in disclosing this issue in the script of *Vernon God Little* (2003) written by DBC Pierre. DBC Pierre was born as Peter Warren Finlay in a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia, in 1961. The first seven years he lived mostly in England. Then his family moved to Mexico City where he spent the rest of his childhood and youth. His father, a scientist, fell ill when Peter Warren was 16 years old and died three years later. The devaluation of the Mexican Peso caused major losses to the Finlay family fortune. Peter Warren worked as an artist, a designer and a photographer for clients all over the world.

His first novel is *Vernon God Little* (2003), published under his pen name DBC (dirty but clean) Pierre, which has remained since 2003. He becomes an international bestseller and was awarded the renowned Man Booker Prize. DBC Pierre's second novel, *Ludmila's Broken English* (2006). In 2009, he donated the short story "Suddenly Dr Cox" to Oxfam's Ox-Tales project, four collections of UK stories written by 38 authors. In his most recent book, *Lights Out in Wonderland* (2010). DBC Pierre has received several awards for his works, including the Man Booker Prize, the Whitbread First Novel Award and the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize. The author lives in County Leitrim, Ireland.

The novel *Vernon God Little* by DBC Pierre (2003) reflects the aberration of truth. Aberration is the act of wandering from the right way; deviation from truth or moral rectitude; deviation from a strait line. The act of the aberration of truth in this novel is represented by Lally as the journalist. In general, media refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio, and the newspaper, etc. The way of the aberration of truth by journalist in media are consist in two actions; breaking the code ethic of journalism and exploitation of mass by news.

The first way is breaking the code ethic of journalism. It means that the owner of media as news writer is no longer abiding by the code ethic of proper journalism. The news should be based on facts and information where truthfulness can be checked but the character gives misleading information. It gets from illegal ways because the journalist does every ways to get the information. Journalism is an important thing for media to convey information to the society, but it is aberrant by several people for their own importance.

The second way is the exploitation of mass by news. The exploitation of mass by news is an act that exploits or victimizes mass by news. The news in media has become public consumption. The impact of it, mass believe that it is a truth or fact. But in fact, it is fake news. Then mass are making matters worse toward character as a victim through commit of perjury. Perjury would become a big problem and the victim will suffer, as in this novel.

The analysis about the novel *Vernon God Little* (2003) that focuses on the aberration of truth by journalist in media has not been found yet. However, there are some studies that can give contribution and inspiration to analyzing this novel. The first study was written by Himansu S. Mohapatra entitled “*The Real within the Hyper-real: Identity and Social Location in Vernon God Little.*” The study about novel *Vernon God Little* by DBC. Pierre. This is study about the conflict in this novel; it has a small time TV reporter. The symptomatically named Eulalio Ledesma. He is representing the other people who have tapped into this collective mindset fixated on the fifteen minutes of fame. Ladesma equipped with his media speak, consisting of cutting and airing reports and painting paradigms. It is responsible for catapulting Vernon from a boy who cannot fit into a serial killer of truly awesome proportions.

The second study was written by Felix Ballermann entitled “*Catcher in the Rye and Vernon God Little: Comparison between classic and contemporary novel of initiation.*” This study is about police who try to make him responsible as an accomplice of Jesus and put him under pressure. But it is not only the police who want to use Vernon as a scapegoat of the whole town of Martirio as well as the media. It is represented by the television-reporter Eulalio Ledesma who tries to make the teenage-protagonist stumble. Ledesma is about to make a huge media event out of the Vernon’s execution.

The analysis of this novel deals with the Simulacra and Simulation’s (2000) concept by Jean Baudrillard. It is seeking to interrogate the relationship among reality, symbols, and society. The simulacra of Baudrillard refer to the significations and symbolism of culture and media to perceived reality. The acquired understanding by which our lives and shared existence is and are rendered legible. White (2008) stated that ethic code of journalism is as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events.

Another action related to aberration of truth by journalist in media is self-deception. Self-deception is the process of misleading the fact in the mind to accept some claims as true or valid when they are false or invalid. Brian McLaughlin (1988) said that, self deception is one of the popular escapement methods that people use to prevent themselves from feeling guilty, while in the same time allowing them to escape from something that they don't want to face.

B. Discussion

Breaking the code ethic of journalism is aberrant from the proper rules of ethic code of journalism. Media owners have done some deviation from the code ethic as a journalist that he should obey. Ladesma as a journalist is deviant and breaks the code ethic when he creates the news. Some of the news that he made is

only for their benefits and the profit of his company. The processes of making news are based on their own point of view, without consider the actual facts and evidence. It can be seen from the following quotation below:

'Hence the web-vote?'

'Exactly. And we're not just talking executions here—were talking the ultimate reality TV, where the public can monitor, via cable or internet, prisoners' whole lives on death row. They can live amongst them, so to speak, and make up their own minds about a convict's worthiness for punishment. Then each week, viewers across the globe can cast a vote to decide which prisoner is executed next. It's humanity in action—the next logical step toward true democracy.' (p. 238)

The text exposes that the media has shifted from the actual function. The journalists have created news that is no longer based on the facts and the journalist thinks of profits and the popularity for only their company. He is no longer following the code ethic of journalism where the rights of the victims must be respected by journalists. It is to keep and respect the privacy of the source. The sentence *and we're not just talking executions here—were talking the ultimate reality TV, where the public can monitor, via cable or internet, prisoners' whole lives on death row* reflects the purpose of the journalist is to gain the popularity for his own. Therefore, he distorted the truth by putting proper opinions rather than facts. In addition, the main purpose of the media is already deviated from its right purpose to simulacra, where the main objective is not to provide the accurate information but it is about the popularity of the development of the media companies themselves. Thus, it is clear that journalist was already distorted the truth or aberrant from the truth. It is just to gain personal interest.

Besides the news did not base on the fact and do care about privacy time of prisoner. The journalist also breaks the code ethic journalism such as they should be professional in their activities. In fact, the journalist had abused their profession by receiving a bribe. This condition is also supported by the quotation below:

Nah, my slime's so thick, it ain't worth coming clean at all. Take good note; Fate actually makes it harder to admit slime, the farther in you get. What kind of system is that? If I was president of the Slime Committee, I'd make it easier to come clean about shit. If coming clean is what you're supposed to do, then it should be made more fucken accessible, I say. I guess the shiver that really comes over me is that I just handed everybody the final nail for my cross. All they needed, on top of everything, was a credible lie. You can just see my ole lady on TV when they break the news, don't tell me you can't. 'Well but I even stayed up to pack his sandwiches. ...' (p.122)

The text exposes that the journalist makes news like fact but it is just telling a lie. Journalist has covered the truth with their news. In this case, character must tell a lie because the journalist force the character to makes another story. The owner of the media as a journalist was abusing his profession; it is breaking code ethic of

journalism. In the journalist's code ethic that made the news it must be based on real facts and a journalist should not be abusing their profession and receive bribe. But the quotation above shows the truth of the visible fact was already distorted by the owner of media and creator of the news itself or journalist. This sentence *all they needed, on top of everything, was a credible lie* indicates that the character has deviated from the facts. Furthermore, this quote suggests that media owners force the character to submit false information or misleading information, this action aims to draw the attention of the public to keep listening to the news they made. This case called simulacra, it is that the media already have other functions; the media is not only a tool of communication but also it is as a non-profit corporation. The media has strayed from reality. In addition, the characters in this novel are also self-deception because he pleaded guilty despite being forced by the media owners themselves. The characters have lied to protect him. The character's trigger of self-deception is ambition to win the trial and therefore he does not realize that he had been exploited by journalist. So, it is clearly appears from this quotation that the truth has been aberrant by the creator of news. The journalist is breaking the code ethic of journalism in creating news. In addition, misleading information from character and convey false news, it also therefore distort the truth even though he was forced by the media owners themselves. But in fact the owner of media as also journalist is not professional in operate their duties.

The journalist also traps the character in another event. The journalist do everything that their want to do without the right rules. The journalist makes collusion with someone to trap the character. The impact of it, it is become conflict for character. The act of journalist is not brought to heel. So that the journalist is breaking the code ethic of journalism like makes a conspiracy. He act is not law abiding anymore. This condition is also supported by the quotation below:

He picks my card off the desktop and turns it gently in his fingers, pausing at the side that says 'VG Little'. He chews his lip. I get a sudden inkling that Mexico might have different Fate than home. What I think I see in his black eyes is a shine that admits we're ole dogs together in a lumpy game. A shine of conspiracy. Then, in a jackrabbit flash, he palms the twenty out of my wallet into his desk drawer.
(p.166)

The text exposes that it appears journalists are no longer runs the code ethic as a journalist. He has trapped the character to make the character seem more innocent. It makes the society and people will be more likes the media. The phrase *a shine of conspiracy* clearly appears that the journalist do everything to make the company more advanced media. The action is wherever the character goes and escapes, the media is following him. This condition shows that there is no privacy time for characters. He always gets trouble because the media follows him every time. The quotation above describe that reinforce the message that has been created by the media had defected from the truth and it is not accurate anymore.

The exploitation of masses by news is an act that exploits or victimizes mass by news. It means that the journalist makes society to expose the news based

on their opinion. The journalist makes belief about the truth though their news that they the journalist exposed it every day in every media. The society can catch the information from the news. Therefore the journalist makes news neither based on their factual event nor based on the fact. The news is based on journalist's point of view. So the impact of it that the character gets many troubles because mass or society commits perjury in the court. Beside that the society has exploited by the news. This condition is also supported by the quotation below:

I don't think long. You have to quiver on TV; it's a fucken law of nature. You have to quiver and be fucken devastated all the time. I know it for sure, and you'd know it too if you saw Mom watching Court TV. 'See how impassive he is, he chopped up ten people and ate their bowels but he doesn't show a care in the world.' I personally don't see the logic in having to quiver if you're innocent. If you ask me, people who don't eat your bowels are more likely to be impassive. But no, one learning I made is that juries watch the same shows as my ole lady. If you don't quiver, you're fucken guilty. (p.32)

The text reveals that the truth has been distorted because of the truth that was created by the journalists is based on what the society wanted. The news was made for the wishes of society. The journalist forced the character to makes a condition looks like fact. The character should be guilty in TV. It becomes news for society consume. The sentence *you have to quiver on TV; it's a fucken law of nature* reflects that character do something wrong to make society believe that he is fault. But the character does not realize that he is exploited by the journalist. The action of character in media is set by the journalist. Then media exposes the fake news to society. Fake news that the journalist made become mass consumption because the society consume the information from the media. The sentence *if you don't quiver, you're fucken guilty* reflects the characters are forced to make engineering and fake news. It aims to make the judges and audiences were impressed. Therefore, the coercive attitude has violated ethical journalist that a journalist should take a professional ways of creating or broadcasting a story. The journalist just focuses for popularity of company. In addition, the sentence *you have to quiver and be fucken devastated all the time* indicates that journalists tried to use the exploit character to cover the truth. It is kind of misleading information. The existence of an element is the use of the news by the time lapses truth in media. News delivered no longer accurate but based on public opinion. Additionally, from the quotation above the character shows self-deception. Character knew he was to lie and give false statements but he's still living it. Character do it for one reason, it is for win in court. He wants to get a freedom but he does not realize that he is exploited by the journalist. So the characters are self-deception. It is because the character has set by the condition and situation that he gets from the journalist.

In addition, the news is just for profit their company. The journalist make news do not for spread the fact but to grow up their company. It is just for commercial. The journalist use the media to out drawn the society. The journalist persuades the mass or society to makes news based on his opinion through the

news that he created. The journalist makes their TV program more popular for persuades the society. This condition is also supported by the quotation below:

'Absolutely, and we can't tamper with that. But the new fast-track appeals process means prisoners' last recourses at law are spent much sooner, after which I say the public should have a hand in the roster of final events.' Lally lets fly a hooshy laugh at the reporter, and spreads his hands wide. 'In the tradition of momentous progress, it's blindingly simple, Bob: criminals cost money. Popular TV makes money. Criminals are popular on TV. Put them together and, presto—problem solved.' (p.224)

The above quotation influences public opinion which is outstanding truth. It is done through media such as the internet and TV. As the phrase *pop TV* shows that public opinion popular and the TV will make it popular through TV programs. The sentence *put them together and, presto—problem solved* reflects the journalist as well as media owners have created a system for the news they have aberrant from the proper function. So that some people have had the power to create the truth based on their opinion regardless of the facts. In fact, the media and the public have made the wrong message.

The mass exploit the news is also shows from the character said in the court. Some people do something the same act one to another because they think that character is mistake. This situation makes problem of character bigger than before. This environment adds some problems for him. This condition is also supported by the quotation below:

What I learn as I'm driven into Houston under low, still clouds, and choppers, for the first day of my trial, is that life works the same way. Most of the time you feel the potential for synchrony, but only once in a while do things actually synch up. Things can synch good, or synch bad. Take me, for example. I stand accused of just about every murder in Texas between the time I left home and when they hauled my ass back. With my face all over the media, folks started seeing me everywhere, I guess. Recall, they call it. Watch out for that sucker. And I'm still accused of the tragedy. Everybody just forgot about Jesus. Everybody excepts me. (p. 186)

Text above explains that the period has a great influence in the news. Some of the people required to be a witness. However some of them are not honest. They share the misleading information in the court; the information is based on what they get from the media. They do not care about the fact because they believe that the media is right way to catch the information. So the news that has been exploited time giving trouble on the characters in solves the problem. The sentences' *most of the time you feel the potential for synchrony, but only once in a while do things actually synch up. Things can synch good, or synch bad* reflects that it is time to share the truth or factual event. In fact, journalist does not it. He exposes the fake news through the media. It means that journalist exploits the news and some society also does it. Future looks have power to exploitation news through the media. This suggests that journalists have mastered public. So it is therefore mass

able exploitation so that time and media owners are distorting the truth. So the news made by the journalist was able to influence the future. The difficulty of the characters not only come from journalists but also adds to the character issue. So people also chimed in distorting the truth.

The news can spread too fast because the media can be everywhere. The purpose of the media is growing up their company. Even though the news did not based on fact but journalist keep continue to expose the news. It is aberrant the truth. This condition is also supported by the quotation below:

'What I propose to show you during the course of this trial, ladies and gentlemen, is the breadth of human suggestibility. Media arrive at the scene of every murder, with a picture of one suspect alone: the defendant. And not just any media. Media under the direct employ of the man who most stands to gain from these proceedings. A man who has built an industry—no, a virtual empire —on the relentless persecution of this single, hapless youngster. A man who, before the tragic events of May twentieth, was nobody. A man you will meet, and judge for yourselves, during this trial.' (p.190)

The quotation above depicts that journalists demonstrated its power over the media company. It is in the control of the case with the character. Apart from that, it is also seen that people have created and controlled by the news. That period is also resulted in the news that will exploit incriminating character. In addition, from the phrase *media arrive at the scene of every murder, with a picture of one suspect alone: the defendant* indicates his judgment through the media and also the news that was already apparent. They make the news which does not fit the facts or the rules of the code of ethics of journalists. On the other hand, he creates the news and disseminates news based on their opinions. In short, the media is now getting people who make the truth based on their own opinions and views. Journalists are distorting the truth and the time through the use of their attitudes toward the news. In brief, the journalist does everything to grow up their company. They do not care the ethic code of journalism. They persuade the mass to exploit the news. Thus, character gets much difficulty because of it.

C. Conclusion

Novel *Vernon God Little* (2003) written by DBC Pierre uncovers the aberration of truth by journalist in media. This aberration is motivated through two ways. They are breaking the code ethic of journalism and exploitation of mass by news. These ways are aberrant from the truth.

The first way is breaking the code ethic of journalism. The journalist is aberrant from the truth. In journalism, truth must to base on the fact. In this case the information that the journalist has given to society is misleading information. It is not factual event. The journalist is not provisional in his work because he forces the character to tell the lie. The journalist purpose is just for profit their company. In addition, the journalist do a collusion to make their information looks like accurate. Then, the journalist does not care for the privacy time of the character. The condition and situation that the character has gotten by set up of the journalist.

The second way is the exploitation of mass by news. The exploitation of society by news is an act that exploits or victimizes mass by news. Society is also makes character get difficulties because society give a false statements. Many of society give the commit perjury based on their opinion. They make a statement according the journalist as owner of media that they create in news. Society believes the truth in news. The news that they has believed is fake news. In fact, the society is telling a lie and gives misleading information.

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