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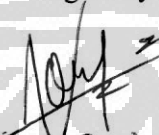
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The Transformation of a Non Fictional Character to a Fictional Character in *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a non fictional character, Abraham Lincoln who becomes a fictional character as a vampire hunter, in the movie Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter. It reveals the metaphor contained in the vampire depiction in relation to the real story of Abraham Lincoln. The intertextuality approach is used as the platform of the research. The analysis focuses on the aspect of setting in mise en scene used to help the disclosure of metaphors in its relation to American history. Therefore, this paper is aimed to make an original contribution to literary criticism and intertextuality in particular. The findings in this research show that Lincoln's transformation into a vampire hunter was related to his leadership as the president at the time in which people were fighting against slavery. Although the slave owners who are white people in this movie still remain, the addition of the vampire character's increasingly emphasized that they were the slave owners. Vampires suck human blood for their own sake; the same as the slave owners who exploit other human beings for the sake of their own benefits. The paper concludes that there is no more appropriate metaphors that can be used to depict slave owners other than vampires. Ultimately, destroying vampires who wanted to take over the United States is similar to abolishing slavery.

Key words: Abraham Lincoln; intertextuality; metaphor; United States; vampire hunter.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas karakter non fiksi, yaitu Abraham Lincoln yang menjadi karakter fiksi sebagai pemburu vampir, dalam film Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter. Hal ini dilakukan dengan mengungkapkan metafora yang terkandung dalam penggambaran vampir terkait dengan kisah nyata dari Abraham Lincoln. Pendekatan intertekstualitas digunakan sebagai platform dalam penelitian ini. Analisis makalah ini terfokus pada aspek setting dalam mise en scene yang digunakan untuk membantu pengungkapan metafora dalam kaitannya dengan sejarah Amerika. Oleh karena itu, makalah ini bertujuan untuk memberikan kontribusi asli untuk kritik sastra, dan intertekstualitas pada khususnya. Temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa transformasi Lincoln menjadi pemburu vampir terkait dengan kepemimpinannya sebagai presiden pada waktu di mana orang-orang berperang melawan perbudakan. Meskipun pemilik budak yang merupakan orang-orang kulit putih dalam film ini tetap ada, penambahan karakter vampir semakin menegaskan bahwa mereka adalah pemilik budak.

Vampir menghisap darah manusia untuk kepentingan mereka sendiri, sama halnya seperti pemilik budak yang mengeksploitasi manusia lain demi keuntungan mereka sendiri. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa tidak ada metafora yang lebih tepat yang dapat digunakan untuk menggambarkan pemilik budak selain vampir. Pada akhirnya, menghancurkan vampir yang ingin mengambil alih Amerika Serikat sama dengan menghapuskan perbudakan.

Kata kunci: Abraham Lincoln; Amerika Serikat; intertekstualitas; metafora; pemburu vampir.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to make an original contribution in the field of literary criticism, and intertextuality in particular. The study of intertextuality has become significant in popular culture. In a broad sense, intertextuality can be defined as the use of reference to a 'text' in the course of another given text. These texts can be films, television programs, novels, poems, top songs, operas, or even cultural texts such as a company board meeting or Bondi Beach (Fiske, 1989a: 17). In the study of arts, clear examples of intertextuality can be found in films directed by Quentin Tarantino (*Kill Bill* and *Pulp Fiction*) and Martin Scorsese (*Casino*), *The Simpsons* as in popular TV series, and Madonna (*Material Girl*, 1985) and Shania Twain (*Man I feel Like a Woman*, 1999) as in popular music and videos. Intertextuality can also be found in the movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012). This film is interesting for its depiction of the non-fictional figure, Abraham Lincoln who is transformed into a fictional figure, a vampire hunter. The use of the vampire character is a metaphor of the real story of Abraham Lincoln in the United States of America. By analyzing a number of cinematic aspects such as *mise en scene*¹, and also the use of a mashup² concept, this paper focuses on how the representation of Abraham Lincoln becomes a clear example of intertextuality production in popular culture. The paper is expected to provide knowledge to its readers and contribute to the research on intertextuality in popular culture and the mashup genre.

Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter is an American mashup movie based on the same novel written by Seth Grahame-Smith, and directed by Timur Bekmambetov and produced by Tim Burton. Both the novel and the movie depict Abraham Lincoln as a man who has a

¹ *Mise-en-scene* allows such figures to express feelings and thought; it can also dynamize them to create various kinetic patterns. (Bordwell, David and Thompson, Kristin (2008). *Film Art, an Introduction*. New York: The McGraw-Hill companies)

² The term "Mashup" was borrowed from the world of computers and music, as Adam Cohen stated in his *New York Times* review about *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: "The idea of combining two data sources into a new product began in the tech world (also think music remixes) and is spreading — including to book publishing." (Cohen, Adam. *Mr. Darcy Woos Elizabeth Bennet While Zombies Attack*. April 13, 2009, The New York Times)

secret identity as a vampire hunter. The story begins with Abraham's (played by Benjamin Walker) simmering resentment when he saw his mother was killed by Jack Barts (played by Martin Csokas), a vampire. For many years, he had tried to kill Barts, but always failed. In the midst of his despair, he met Henry Sturges (played by Dominic Cooper) who taught him how to fight and kill vampires. Then, he moved to Springfield where he got a job as a store clerk. At the same time, Abraham was also trying to improve his lives by studying law and becoming a lawyer. At night, he transformed into a vampire hunter to kill the vampires that Henry directed him to. He met Mary Todd (played by Mary Elizabeth Winstead) and subsequently decided to marry her. Years later, he became the U.S. president and realized that blood-thirsty vampires were planning to take over the United States. Therefore, he managed his own campaign to defeat them.

There are several literary criticisms toward this movie. Andrew O'Hehir on Salon.com wrote that *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* denotes a stronger concept of historical mashup than Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Bastard*. In addition, Thomas Caldwell in his blog, <http://blog.cinemaautopsy.com>, wrote that the metaphor work on *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is an awesome movie on symbols or metaphors in them as well as with Lincoln's struggle against vampires. On the other hand, Ross Langager on <http://rosslangager.com>, his website, wrote that *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is a fictionalized and unintentional metaphor of distortion on historical fact and truth by popular myth impulse of American culture.

Theoretical Framework

The first intertextual approach was inspired by the idea of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher who had a great interest in literature. According to Bakhtin, the intertextual approach emphasizes the notion that a literary text is seen as inserts or grafts in the framework of other literary texts (tradition, literary genres, parody, references or quotes) (Noor, 2007: 4-5). Later, the intertextual approach was further developed by Julia Kristeva. Generally, the term intertextual is understood as the relationship of a text with other texts. According to Kristeva, each text is a mosaic of quotations; every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts (Kristeva, 1980: 66). As an author writes, the author will take components of other texts as the basis for the creation of his/her work. The whole work was drawn and colored by the adjustment, and, if necessary, may be added in order to make a complete work. To further confirm her opinion, Kristeva filed two reasons. First, the author is a reader of texts before

writing the text. In the process of writing, an author's work cannot avoid influence from different types of references, quotations, and influence. Second, the text is available only through the reading process. The possibility of acceptance or opposition lies in the author through the process of reading (Worton, 1990: 1).

There are many researches that have been done in discussing texts using intertextual approach. Lynda Susana Widya Ayu Fatmawaty (2009) in her thesis entitled *Sosok Wanita dalam Puisi Portrait d'une Femme karya Ezra Pound' (Sebuah Kajian Melalui Pendekatan Struktural dan Semiotik)* used a combination of structural-semiotic approach. The structural approach is used to analyze the poem intrinsically. Meanwhile the semiotic approach is used to reveal the meaning of the poem by considering the correlation between the sign and meaning. In terms of intertextuality, this poem can be compared with another poem, namely *Portrait of a Lady* by William Carlos William. This research found that *Portrait d'une Femme* serves as an anchorage for the latter poem because it was created first in 1912, while *Portrait of a Lady* serves as a relay because this poem was created later in 1920. Moreover, Erik Tóth in his bachelor's thesis entitled *Intertextuality in the Cinematic Production of Quentin Tarantino* (2011) offers a thorough examination of the use and purpose of intertextuality in Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction*. He takes the poststructuralist theories of intertextuality, notably those of Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin and Roland Barthes, as its basis. In addition, he searched and examined all significant events in Quentin Tarantino's life that had an influence on the formation of his authorial style, namely intertextuality in his works. For the analysis, he divided it into eight subchapters accumulating intertextual references of a distinct pattern. Each subchapter then analyzed a separate pattern by displaying and examining particular occurrences in the movie. In the conclusion he found that the most important element that makes *Pulp Fiction* as a cult classic is the author-viewer communication, which is the pleasure the pop-cultural audience gets in seeking and finding pop-cultural references.

Another research comes from Asep Supriadi (2006), in his thesis entitled *Transformasi Nilai-Nilai Ajaran Islam dalam Ayat-Ayat Cinta Karya Habiburrahman El-Shirazy: Kajian Interteks*. The thesis tells about moral values of Islamic teaching contained in the novel of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. Islamic values implied in the *Ayat Ayat Cinta* are in line with Islamic teaching concept which is summarized into The Six Belief Foundations of Islam (rukun iman) and The Five Islamic Foundations (rukun Islam). In this case, *Ayat Ayat Cinta* reflects Islamic values whose hipogram (creation background) is from texts of Al-Quran and

Hadits due to the author's reception of author to the text of Al-Quran and Hadits. It is also a transformation of Islamic values existing in the sentences of Al-Quran and Hadits as an active reception of Habiburrahman El-Shirazy in his the deep reading of the already existing text.

Methodology

In this study, the author used the intertextual approach. The intertextual approach is a term coined by Julia Kristeva (Worton, 1990: 1). The term is generally understood as an intertextual relationship of one text with other texts. According to Kristeva (1980: 66), each text is a mosaic of quotations; every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts. The intertextual approach which sees every text as an absorption and transformation of other texts will be used to reveal the dominant metaphors contained in the film *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. In addition, this research uses the theory of cinematic aspects such as *mise en scene* that will help the disclosure of the metaphors. From the *mise en scene* aspects, I only chose setting because this movie is related to American history. Firstly, the analysis focuses on the character of Abraham Lincoln who serves as a vampire hunter. As we know, Abraham Lincoln is actually a prominent non-fictional character in American history; however, in this movie he becomes a fictional character. Secondly, the analysis reveals that the vampire depiction in the movie that is associated with historical values that occurred during the leadership of Abraham Lincoln.

Findings

"History prefers legends to men. It prefers nobility to brutality. Soaring speeches to quiet deeds. History remembers the battle and forgets the blood. Whatever history remembers of me, if it remembers anything at all, it shall only be a fraction of the truth" - **Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter** (Movie)

The movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012) is included in the mashup genre. This movie is based on the novel with the same title, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2010) by Grahame-Smith. In *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Grahame-Smith said while he was promoting a parody novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), he went to a bookstore. There was a shelf of biographies of Abraham Lincoln, and on the other part of the shelf were Meyer's *Twilight* series and Charlaine Harris *Sookie Stackhouse* novels' (later made into a TV series, titled *True Blood*, 2008). Then, he got the idea to combine the two subjects, and finally the novel *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2010) was born. This combination later on was

called a mashup. Camille on her website, camillereads.com, assumes that mashup works are works which combine the classic stories with monsters, zombies, sea monsters, androids, werewolves, and vampires, and the portion of the classic story of the work is between 60-85%. In other words, mashup is a work of fiction that transforms a literary text that already exists into a new story which involves monsters, vampires and the like.

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States serving from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865. According to a survey, *Rating the Presidents* (2010), conducted by James Lindgren, an expert on the presidency, scoring from the fields of presidential history, law, and politics, Lincoln ranked first in the fields of history and politics and ranked second in the field of law. He was the second child of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, and was born on February 12, 1809 in Hardin County. Raised in a poor family, he learned most of what he knew by himself. He even became the state attorney, the leader of the Whig Party, Illinois state legislators during the 1830s, and a one-term member of the United States House of Representatives during the 1840s. During his leadership as the president, Lincoln successfully led his country through the American Civil War, and brought together the United States, even ended slavery and promoted economic and financial modernization.

Lincoln's life was adapted in the movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. As in this film, Lincoln was not only a president but also a vampire hunter. Vampires have already been known in the New World for centuries. Initially, they massacred the indigenous tribes and the early settlers, until the European people came with their black slaves. The vampires took the opportunity to cooperate with European people and built a kingdom in the South. Lincoln's initial enrollment as a vampire hunter was actually to avenge the death of his mother, who was bitten by a vampire named Jack Barts. However, he decided to stop being a vampire hunter because he felt disappointed with his mentor, Henry who turned out to be a vampire too. After this event, he left his old-fashioned ways of combating vampires using things such as the silver-plated ax and switched to using words and ideals to fight vampires through the political world. However, when he entered the political arena and eventually became president, Lincoln had to go back to 'war' with the vampires who wanted to rule the United States. Therefore, Lincoln believed that by killing the vampires and becoming a vampire hunter with the silver-plated ax again would finally free the United States from slavery.

Abraham Lincoln as a Vampire Hunter

At the age of 9, Lincoln lost his mother to a vampire bite, and he even witnessed the incident. The vampire was the employer of Lincoln's father, Jack Barts. He was also a landlord who owned many slaves. His mother's death made Lincoln hold a grudge for 9 years until his father died because his father told him not to do anything stupid. After the death of his father, he decided to pursue his revenge which was to kill Jack Barts but he failed. However, he met Henry Sturges who then became his mentor to defeat vampires.

After that, Lincoln moved to Springfield where he became a shopkeeper and a vampire hunter. While keeping the store, he always studied law books which brought him to the political world. In addition, as a vampire hunter, Lincoln had to kill vampires that were set by Henry, until he finally got a command to kill Jack Barts. However, Lincoln found out that Henry was also a vampire. He was disappointed and decided to stop being a vampire hunter, yet his identity as a vampire hunter was already known by Adam, the oldest vampire. The story went on when Adam abducted Lincoln's best friend, Will, as a way to force Lincoln to come to New Orleans. Lincoln managed to save Will from Adam, and after that he became aware that there would be a huge war between the North and South because Adam had a plan to take over the entire United States. As a result, he decided to stop being a vampire hunter with his silver-plated ax, his tool to kill vampires, and changed into a new vampire hunter by going into politics to destroy them.

In this situation, it can be seen that Lincoln was destined to be a vampire hunter. Although he was not very successful in fighting vampires by using his silver-plated ax, he still wanted to fight vampires by going into politics. Henry also said, "It falls to us Abraham, the hunters to keep the balance. To ensure that this remains a nation of men, and not monsters." (00:19:50) In addition, at the beginning of the movie, there was also a quote from the letter of Genesis 17:5, which says "Your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations..." This shows that inevitably Abraham Lincoln will be the hero who will fight vampires and unify the entire United States at all costs. In addition, when Lincoln left his silver-plated ax and went into political world to fight the vampires, he said, "As the Bible says, the time had come for me to put aside childish things. I would fight not with an ax, but with words and ideals. For a time, they proved a stronger weapon" (01:02:13)

In the movie, Lincoln began to enter the political world with a debate against Stephen Douglas on slavery. Stephen wanted to keep slavery while Lincoln wanted slavery to

be abolished since slavery was tearing America apart. Previously, a form of slavery in the United States was included in the legal institutions since the beginning of the colonial period. In 1804, however, all the north states of the Mason-Dixon line—the demarcation line among four U.S. states, forming part of the borders of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia (then part of Virginia)— immediately abolished slavery or passed laws to gradually abolish slavery. Though in the North, slavery was declining to a point of abolishment; slavery gained new life in the South with the development of the cotton industry after 1800 and expanded into the Southwest. The Nation was polarized into slave and free states along the Mason-Dixon Line, the divided Pennsylvania and Maryland. In the 1850s, the South was very excited to defend slavery and its expansion into the territories.

After the Lincoln-Douglas debate scene, the scene instantly moved to when Lincoln was elected as the president of the United States and delivering a speech in front of the people about slavery which is the source of this famous quotation "The question of slavery is better settled with a pen than a sword." So, Lincoln believed that the best way to abolish slavery was not by fighting, but by negotiation. However, Lincoln got the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in 1861, which eventually led to the American Civil War. Since then, Lincoln concentrated on military and political dimensions of the war. The goal was now to reunite the nation, yet still there had to be a price to pay. Thousands of people died in the war.

On the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, still part of the Civil War, many soldiers died because the South was supported by vampires that cannot be defeated with guns and bombs. As an attempt to overcome this situation, on the last day, Lincoln deceived the vampires in order to pursue him in the train in which there was no silver at all. The silver that gathered to fight the vampires had been sent to Gettysburg through another railway. The battle between Lincoln and vampires on the train was won by Lincoln, and so was the Battle of Gettysburg. The army won the victory against the vampires because they were armed with silver. For the victory, Lincoln gave a speech that was known as the Gettysburg Address. The speech was dedicated to the Union soldiers, who died in defending the people of the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg.

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure... It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here

dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”(01:33:45)

Vampire Metaphor

Vampires in the movie are the elements that have been added to the true story of Abraham Lincoln’s life. They dominated the South, and they worked with the owners of slaves as a way to master all of America. The role of vampires in this movie seems to emphasize what was happening in the United States at that time because the slave owners still appeared in the story, they were not eliminated. Thus, the depiction of vampires in this movie can be associated as slave owners.

Furthermore, they were handsome, sophisticated, and well dressed that makes the vampires an appropriate metaphor to be used in the movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. Grahame-Smith uses vampires in this movie as a metaphor for the evil practice of slavery that was sucking the life out of the United States. They lived on the blood of others, while slave owners live from the sweat, blood, and tears of others.

Moreover, vampires are always linked to and illustrated with white people. In fact, in the movie none of the vampires are black. As cited in “Are the Fangs Real? Vampires as Racial Metaphor in the Anita Blake and Twilight Novels” by Mikhail Lyubansky referring to Elizabeth Miller, a vampire literature expert, stated that the vampire always embodies the contemporary threat. Although *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Anita Blake*, and *Twilight* novels can be read as entertainment, fiction, and fantasy; intended or not, the vampires within represent a number of marginalized groups that are considered a threat by mainstream society, particularly immigrants and racial minorities. Lyubansky also added that in *The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization* by Stephen Arata (1990, p. 629-630) describes vampirism as "a colonization of the body" and "the biological and political annihilation of the weaker race by the stronger." At a time when the British global influence was fading, unrest in the colonies, and concerns about the morality of imperialism was increasing; Dracula, according to Arata, represented "deep rooted anxieties and fears of" reverse colonization, of civilized Britain "overcome by the forces of barbarism" in the form of immigration from Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, referring to Carol A. Senf (1988) in his book *The Vampire in 19th Century English Literature*, using vampires as a metaphor for social in the 19th century is not only done by novel authors, but also by economists. Karl Marx used the vampire to describe the way industrialists exploit their workers (p. 138). One of the most famous instances is this passage from *Capital*: “Capital is dead labor, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks. Capital is dead labor, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks.” (p. 138)

The industrialists who exploit their workers are tantamount to slave owners. According to history.com, slavery in America began when the first African slaves were brought to the North American colonies Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, to assist in the production of profitable crops such as tobacco. Of course, the practice of slavery helped to build the economic foundation of the new nation. Moreover, with the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 solidified the central importance of slavery to the Southern economy. In addition, the Utah Education Network (uen.org) said that in the United States, slaves did not have rights. They could be bought and sold like cattle or horses. Slaves did not say where they live or who they are working for. In fact, they have no representation in government. They also can not own property and were not allowed to learn or be taught how to read and write. This is what makes the industrialist associated with vampires.

Besides, vampires are not only a metaphor for the slave owners, but they also describe pure human evil. Not only physically are they like humans but also their lust and greed. The vampires are not only focused on sucking human blood to survive, but they also have a larger goal to dominate the entire Union for their kind. In other words, there is no other image that is more appropriate to be used as a metaphor of slavery and greed than vampires. Therefore, the figure of Abraham Lincoln, who is actually a non-fictional character, was transformed into a fictional character as a vampire hunter because he opposed the practice of slavery in the United States that is represented by the depiction of the vampire as a slave owner.

Conclusion

This paper sets out to examine the transformation of a real life person into a fictional character in the movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012). Abraham Lincoln is the 16th president of the United States, but in the movie, he was transformed into a vampire

hunter. Therefore, this paper has tried to explain the metaphorical meaning behind the use of the vampire character in relation to the real story of Abraham Lincoln. This paper's aim is to make an original contribution in the field of literary criticism, and intertextuality in particular.

This study found that Abraham Lincoln, which is a non-fictional character, was transformed into a vampire hunter as it was related to his leadership as the president during the time. He was against slavery and slave owners who in this movie are portrayed as vampires. Indeed, the slave owners in this film are white people and they did exist, but the addition of the vampire character is used as a confirmation that they were the white people. In this movie, all vampires were white. There is no more appropriate metaphor than vampires that can be used to depict the slave owners. Vampires suck human blood for their own sake; same as the slave owners who exploit another human beings for the sake of their own life. Therefore, Lincoln was transformed into a vampire hunter in the movie. Destroying vampires who wanted to take over the United States is similar to abolishing slavery, which indeed is the greatest achievement of Lincoln as the U.S. president at the time.

Further research could be done regarding slavery issues that occurred in the United States at that time in other movies of this genre. Besides that, additional characters like Henry and Will could be analyzed to show the importance of characterization in building the story in this movie.

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