

The Aberration of Truth by Journalist in Media  
in Novel *Vernon God Little* By DBC.Pierre (2003)

Paper

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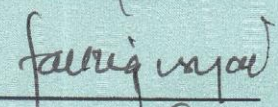
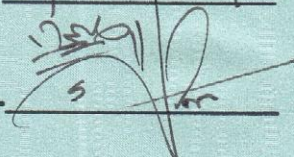
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### THE ABERRATION OF TRUTH BY JOURNALIST IN MEDIA IN NOVEL *VERNON GOD LITTLE* BY DBC PIERRE (2003)

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## ABSTRAK

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Paper ini merupakan analisis novel *Vernon God Little* (2003) yang ditulis oleh DBC Pierre. Topik yang dibahas ialah penyimpangan kebenaran oleh jurnalis di media. Permasalahannya ialah jurnalis sudah tidak menyampaikan kebenaran berdasarkan fakta. Tujuan penganalisaan ini adalah sebagai berikut. *Pertama*, mendapatkan jawaban sejauh mana novel ini mengungkapkan kebenaran yang sudah dibelokkan dari semestinya. *Kedua*, menunjukkan kontribusi karakter dan setting dalam menyingkap aberasi atau penyimpangan ini. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa tindakan dari jurnalis dan masyarakat telah menyimpang dari kebenaran yang semata-mata hanya untuk mendapatkan keuntungan secara materi. Perlakuan aberasi dapat terlihat dalam dua cara. *Pertama*, penyimpangan dari kode etik jurnanisme yang dilakukan oleh jurnalis yang juga sebagai pemilik media. Jurnalis sudah tidak mematuhi kode etik mereka dalam membuat berita atau menyampaikan informasi. Mereka sudah mengabaikan hak-hak pribadi dari tersangka dalam kasus tuduhan pembunuhan. *Kedua*, masyarakat mengeksploitasi keadaan melalui berita yang bersumber dari media. Masyarakat hanya memberikan opini berdasarkan kemauan dan keinginan mereka. Opini yang mereka sampaikan kepada media tidak berlandaskan fakta atau kejadian yang sebenarnya. Mereka semua sudah di suap dengan berita palsu yang dibuat seolah-oleh fakta oleh jurnalis.

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Last but not least, I hope that this paper can be useful for the readers. I am waiting for the suggestion and critics for making this paper better and better. Thank you.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of Study**

Truth is accordance with fact or reality. Philosophically, there are two concepts of truth; first is an absolute truth and second is relative truth. An absolute truth means an unalterable and permanent fact. It is truth from the God. All other truth is relative truth. It is limited and conditioned by all sorts of things which are including physicality, relativity, time and even culture. The concept of truth is discussed and debated in several contexts, including philosophy and religion context. The classical Greek philosopher Socrates (2005) classified the theory of truth. They are correspondence theory of truth, coherence theory constructivist theory, consensus theory, pragmatic theory, deflationary theories, performative theory of truth, redundancy and related theories, and pluralist theories. The truth can also be found in many aspects such as in media and in government.

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. Besides, fact is something that has really occurred or is actually the case. So, in media, truth must be based on fact to create the news. It means that media and truth has a relation.

Media is an all-encompassing term that refers to a collective of communicatory mediums to store or transmit information. Media is usually

intended to inform or influence a wide range of audiences. The term can also be used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies. Media also refers to interactions among people in which they create share, exchange and comment contents among themselves in virtual communities and networks. In general, media is communication channels through news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

The word "media" is being used firstly in the 1920s. The notion of mass media was generally restricted to print media up until the post-Second World War, when radio, television and video were introduced. The audio-visual facilities became very popular, because they provided both information and entertainment. In other words the audio-visual facilities which provided the color and sounds have already engaged. The viewers or listeners easier and enjoy to watch TV or listen the radio rather than read. In recent times, the internet becomes the latest and most popular mass medium. Thus, information has become readily available through websites, and easily accessible through search engines.

In 1997, Finnegan and Viswanath identified three main effects or functions of mass media. The first is the knowledge gap. It means that the mass media influences knowledge gaps due to factors including the extent to which the content is appealing, the degree to which information channels are accessible and desirable, and the amount of social conflict and diversity in a community. The



second is agenda setting. It means that people are being influenced in how they think about issues due to the selective nature of what media choose for public consumption. The last is cultivation of perceptions. It means that the extent to which media exposure shapes audience perceptions over time.

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. Unfortunately, some of journalists exposed the truth based on their opinion. They do something wrong when they give information through news and manipulate popular opinion. They transmit information in order to benefit more for the continued enterprise of the journalists and founders of the station than the viewer. Consequently, the truth that they provide is being manipulated. Thus, the facts are ignored.

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.

The characteristic of aberration is that it is not in line but deviate from the line and aberrant from the main point. In addition, it also makes different meaning step by step and therefore it becomes a big worse. If it is in media, deviant from

the fact but it looks like its truth. So the characteristic of aberration in media is when the news does not based on the fact or factual event.

The phenomenon of the aberration of truth also occurs in real life. Some books, novels and also film portrayed it as the mirror of reality. It can also be found in the literary works. *Vernon God Little* (2003), a novel by DBC Pierre exposes this issue. It is an interesting issue to be analyzed. This novel points the breaking the code ethic of journalism and exploitation of masses by news.

### **1.1.1 Aberration of Truth by Journalist in Media**

There are two terms that needs to be clarified in this analysis. There 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 basic definition is not complete because its definition is open to interpretation and a wide variety of applications.

In this analysis, the terms deal with aberration of truth that reflected by journalist in this novel. It means a state or condition markedly different from reality, fact, or actually. The journalist is aberrant of truth in their practices. Furthermore, the aberration of truth is divided in two forms, breaking the ethic code of journalism and exploitation of masses by news.

### 1.1.2 A Brief of 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. He dedicated his talent to risky projects, including a film about Montezuma's treasure. He spent all of his money on drugs. Eventually he owed several hundred thousand Dollars.

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. The first-person narrator in this extremely dynamic debut tells the story of Vernon Little from a small town in Texas, where everybody and in particular the media, believe that he has run amok in his school. In fact, his friend Jesus was the maniac. Angry as a song by Eminem and funny as a film by Tarantino (Bavarian Radio Station) the critical satire is a reference to literary models like J. D. Salinger and William S. Burroughs.

DBC Pierre's second novel, *Ludmila's Broken English* (2006), another satire, is about East and West, and the encounter of the Siamese twins Bunny and Blair from England, who are only separated at the age of 33. A beauty in the civil war-stricken Caucasus plays a role, too. In 2007 his award-winning first novel,

*Vernon God Little*, was adapted by Tanya Ronder for the London stage. It was directed by Rufus Norris at the Young Vic from 27 April – 9 June. To date the work has been translated in more than 40 countries worldwide and produced as a play by at least four theatre companies. The book has also been optioned for film, but no production has yet taken place.

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. Pierre's story was published in the *Air* collection. He is also a contributor to the 2009 rock biography on The Triffids *Vagabond Holes: David McComb and the Triffids*, edited by Australian academics Niall Lucy and Chris Coughran.

In his most recent book, *Lights Out in Wonderland* (2010), DBC Pierre seeks out the decadence of capitalist consumerism. The first-person narrator Gabriel, an opponent of globalization, wants to make a statement in the context of an apocalyptic banquet event. He acts according to the motto: Profit won the game but, like an infection, killed the host.

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.

Moreover, DBC.Pierre has ever said in an interview done by Benjamin Eastham on a bar's flat roof in North London (2013). He says:

I started thinking in the kid's voice. When I started writing *Vernon* he was guilty, he was that kid. He was in jail already, going 'what the fuck kind of life is this' and it unfolded from there. It only took about five weeks to write.

In this point, it can be seen how DBC Pierre trying to make the novel more interesting and customize that character trait evident that the novel was not like he was a mere engineering. He is a total and serious writer. He finishes his novel with the title *Vernon God Little*. In addition, DBC Pierre is always improving his literary works; it can be seen through the interview with Benjamin in London:

All of these novels are patchworks at one remove from reality. They're not naturalistic, they're overheard or invented. The structure for *Vernon God Little* I took off a TV movie, an American TV movie. So every chapter the hero is facing a new obstacle and getting beaten down, and losing, and I built a pressure under that. And in the end I just had an out-of-the-blue, completely improbable triumph. And I haven't had anyone come back to me and say that the form of the thing also reflected the subject. It was the only way. In the first draft I killed him. The obvious thing is he's going to die, so I killed him. But a TV movie wouldn't do that. He has to live and he has to live improbably. Not only that, he has to end on top of the world.

From the quotation above, it can be seen how DBC Pierre always improve his literary works. He never gives up on writing and revising them. His works does not only telling a story, but also explores many things by transmitting the idea of the novel with different meaning to the people.

### **1.1.3 Vernon God Little**

The novel *Vernon God Little* by DBC Pierre (2003) reflects the aberration of truth by journalist in media. Aberration is the act of wandering from the right way; deviation from truth or moral rectitude; deviation from a strait line. In other words, aberration is an act to deviate from proper function. In addition, truth is a

fact that has been verified or conformity to reality or actuality. Truth corresponds to the facts. 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. Such as; misleading information, the information does not obtain illegal and ethical ways and they allow personal interest to influence the object.

The second ways 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 main character will be put to death sentence for giving false statements or commit perjury in court. So



that, all of commit perjury from mass become news for public and gives the advantages for media.

## **1.2 Problem of Study**

Truth aberration by journalist in media emerges as the main issue in this novel. To explore this issue, the research questions are needed. Those research questions are:

1. How far does *Vernon God Little* disclose the issue of truth aberration by journalist in media?
2. To what extent do fictional devices; characters and setting give contribution to disclose aberrant truth by journalist in media?

## **1.3 Purpose of Study**

This study is going to prove that the novel *Vernon God Little* (2003) by DBC Pierre exposes the issue of truth aberration by journalist in media. Besides, this study is done in order to explore to what extent fictional devices, which are characters and setting, give contribution in disclosing the aberration of truth.

## **1.4 Previous Study**

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 studies above give contribution and inspiration to the topic, truth aberration by journalist in media in *Vernon God Little* by DBC Pierre. They also enrich the knowledge about the topic. Unlike the studies above, this analysis

focuses on how far the novel reflects the truth aberration by journalist in media through characters and setting.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

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.

Baudrillard (2000) states that the lack of distinctions between reality and simulacra originates in several phenomena. They are contemporary media including television, film, print, and the internet, which are responsible for blurring the line between products that are needed and products for which a need is created by commercial images. Exchange value, in which the value of goods is based on money rather than usefulness. Moreover usefulness comes to be a quantified and defined in monetary terms in order to assist exchange. In addition, language and ideology are increasingly become without caught up in the production of power relations between social groups, especially when powerful groups institute themselves at least partly in monetary terms.

Aberration of truth happens in media as user is journalist of it. According Baudrillard in *The Implosion of Meaning in The Media* (2000) says that information devours its own content. It devours communication and the social. It has two reasons. The first is rather than creating communication, it exhausts itself

in the act of staging communication. Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning. A gigantic process of simulation that is very familiar. Immense energies are deployed to hold this simulacrum at bay, to avoid the brutal dissimulations that would confront it in the face of the obvious reality of a radical loss of meaning. The second is behind this exacerbated *mise-en-scène* of communication, the mass media; the pressure of information pursues an irresistible restructuration of the social. Thus information dissolves meaning and dissolves the social, in a sort of nebulous state dedicated not to a surplus of innovation, but on the contrary to total entropy. Thus the media are producers not of socialization, but of exactly the opposite of the implosion of the social in the masses. A serious problem for all counters information, pirate radios and antimedia.

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. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist. Second is in pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism. Third is the journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. Fourth is the journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents. Fifth is the journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate. Sixth is the journalist shall observe

professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence. Seventh is the journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins. Eighth is the journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following: plagiarism; malicious misrepresentation; calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations; and acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression. The last is journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognize in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.

In addition, philosophers have waded in the muck of defining absolute truth for millennia. For example, Plato believed that absolute truth existed, but that truth on earth was merely a shadow of great forms of absolute truth existing in the universe. Alternatively, many believe in relative truths, where facts may vary depending on the circumstances. Besides, philosophy was insight into the whole of truth for him. The study of reality in all its aspects; he was unaware of any barriers between this or that field of inquiry. Common sense ran into physics, physics into mathematics, mathematics into metaphysics; metaphysics, in its turn, led into ethics, politics, and religion.

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. It implies that some people go beyond self deception and believe in lies that erode their self confidence. They create lies about their own skills then find false clues to prove them; this is another form of self deception.

For some people, the tendency of self-deception seems to be an inborn personality trait. The others may develop a habit of self-deception as a way of coping with problems and challenges. However, people do not deceive themselves on intention but its their subconscious minds that come up with such tricks in order to protect their psychological well being. In short, self-deception is a way of people to justify false beliefs about themselves to themselves.

The combination of these theories are related each other to reveal the issue of aberration of truth by journalist in media in novel *Vernon God Little* (2003). It is reflected by the main character of this novel. The act of the aberration of truth in this novel is represented by Ladesma as the journalist. In general, "media" refers to various means of communication. The actions of the aberration of truth are breaking the code ethic of journalism and exploitation of masses by news.



The form of this analysis is text-based interpretation. Madden (2002) stated that text-based interpretation focuses on analyzing literary works in isolation from its reader, its context and its author. It means that literary work is seen as autonomous body. Thus, the process of analysis is happened within the text only without regarding the other aspects outer the text. The process of analyzing in order to get the meaning is done by analyzing the sign system that constructs a literary work.

The process of this novel analysis is done by examining its fictional devices. It focuses on characters and setting. Characters are the crucial elements in the novel that needs to be examined to reveal the meaning. It is supported by Bennet and Royle (1999). They stated that characters are life of the literature: they are objects of our curiosity and fascination, affection and dislike, admiration and condemnation. Examining the character is not only through their behaviors but also through thoughts. The characters were aberration truth through media when he explored the news in this novel.

Another important element that can help in the process of analyzing this novel is setting. Setting does not only mean place and time in the novel but also the atmosphere of the story. Madden (2002) stated that

Setting in fiction is the location and atmosphere of the story. It has a direct and indirect impact on character and conflict; it supports and emphasizes the story meaning.

From the sentence above, it can be seen that setting can give big effect on characters. Setting and characters cannot be separated. In short, setting helps in the process of characterization.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The analysis of this novel is done through text-based interpretation, which regards text as the autonomous one. Furthermore, it is also done by analyzing fictional devices. The fictional devices are characters and setting. Both characters and setting are inseparable because they are interrelated to one another. Characters are used to disclose the aberrant truth by analyzing through character's behaviors and thoughts. While setting, deals with atmosphere, gives contribution in the process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. Moreover, these elements are analyzed based on the concept of aberrant truth by journalist in media, simulacra and simulation by Jean Baudrillard and self deception by Brian McLaughlin.