

THE REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL DISCOURSES OF
H.G.WELLS'S THE WAR OF THE WORLDS:
A NEW HISTORICIST PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis

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ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini mengupas bentuk-bentuk diskursus pada novel karya Herbert George Wells "*The War of the Worlds*". Novel ini menceritakan tentang invasi alien dari planet Mars yang disebut *the Martians* atas planet bumi yang dihuni oleh manusia. Penulis melihat bahwa dalam novel ini terdapat berbagai isu terkait dengan sejarah budaya, politik, sosial dan ekonomi. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menunjukkan bagaimana bentuk wacana/*discourse* tentang invasi dan pertahanan hidup serta teks-teks yang saling terkait satu sama lain membentuk *The War of the Worlds*.

Dalam membahas karya sastra tersebut, penulis menggunakan teori pembacaan paralel atau *discursive formations* yang dikembangkan oleh Michel Foucault melalui pendekatan 'New Historicism'. New Historicism berpendapat bahwa dalam sebuah analisa wacana karya sastra, terdapat formasi wacana yang terintegrasi didalam karya sastra tersebut. Bahwa makna karya sastra merupakan kepaduan makna antara satu wacana dengan wacana lainnya. Dalam menyampaikan hasil penelitiannya, penulis menerapkan metode penjabaran data/deskriptif yang kualitatif dengan temuan yang dianggap mampu mewakili semua aspek dalam karya ini.

Dari hasil analisa disimpulkan bahwa *The War of the Worlds* menampilkan diskursus/wacana perang yang merupakan sindiran tajam Wells terhadap imperialisme Inggris atas negara koloninya yang merupakan ketakutan besar masyarakat pada masa itu atas perang dan invasi antar negara, serta kecemasan masyarakat akan kebenaran teori evolusi Darwin tentang pertahanan hidup yang terangkum dalam 'survival of the fittest'.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

According to Abrams, there are four criticisms which are often used in order to analyze literary works. Those are *pragmatic*, *expressive*, *objective* and *mimetic* criticisms. Abrams argues that *pragmatic* work is constructed in order to achieve certain effects on the audiences, *expressive* work treats a literary work primarily in relation to its author, while *objective* works stands free from what is often called “extrinsic” relations. Meanwhile *mimetic* work is considered as an imitation, reflection, or representation of the world and human life. (Abrams 51) It is the writer’s viewpoint to underline that *pragmatic*, *expressive*, and *objective* criticisms are respectively seeing and criticizing a work from one particular viewpoint while *mimetic* criticism is not.

A literary work which is being classified as *pragmatic*, for instance, the criticism will be done by utilizing Reader-response approach. Or by utilizing Historical-Biographical approach, the interpretation of *expressive* work will be dismantled perceptively. While *objective* works stands free from extrinsic criteria, the application of New Criticism or other formalistic criticism may fit its interpretations’ need. Meanwhile, a considerably *mimetic* work, which is conceived to be a representation of the world and human life, is covering broader contexts of interpretation. New Historicism argues that amongst all representations of the world or human life that is reflected by literary work, the most appropriate mimesis is the representation which is it linkages the history, economy, ideology, moral, and any aspects of life for its (world or human life) complex needs. So that is why the writer has embraced *mimetic* criticism to be used alongside the criticism that the writer’s utilized, New Historicism.

The War of the Worlds, the masterpiece of Herbert George Wells's science fiction, is one of the most important science-fiction classics of all time. The War of the Worlds was originally published in Pierson's magazine in 1897 and was issued as a novel the following year (1898). The War of the Worlds maintains its existence through the time and it is frequently retold in graphic novels and films. The story is reported directly by a survivor of the Martian-human war, the narrator, whose name we (readers) never learns. It tells the story of Martians arriving on earth with a plan to destroy human life and makes the planet Earth their own. This horror of extermination on human existences by Martians becomes a terror that is presented by characters within the story. The War of the Worlds, indeed, is directly involved in history.

The writer decides to analyze The War of the Worlds because it loads some issues related to the discourse and the most interesting reason is that to see the context of the story and its relation to the reality. The fear that seems fictive in this fiction is actually loaded the real fear of society, because evidently the British Imperialism at the time chiefly in 19th century becomes the real fear in the real society. Thus, in order to achieve and reveal the truth, the writer scrutinizes this science-fiction by using New Historicists' perspective, since New Historicism sees literature as discourse where power-relations influences the presence of the literature. And as the prominent New Historicist critic Stephen Greenblatt posits that: "the work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class or creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society." (Greenblatt in Bertens 176), then the writer assumes that New Historicism provides the solution in order to achieve his findings. By this background, then, the writer utilizes New Historicism as his tools on reading The War of the Worlds and entitles his research: "The Representation of Cultural Discourses of H.G.Wells's The War of the Worlds: A New Historicist Perspective".

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

The writer sees there are multiple aspects presented in Herbert George Wells' The War of the Worlds that could be interpreted. The War of the Worlds, indeed, presents a much wider historical, yet cultural, political, social and economical dispensation. Those dispensations lies within the story; history of war, cultural values on civilization, political needs on sovereignty, social fear on human genocide, and economical necessity of living. Each dispensation is closely related to the war. Therefore the writer will provide critical questions to explore what lies behind that literary work by utilizing New Historicism.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

Taking into account the importance of popular culture on governing public opinion toward literary texts, then the writer will conduct a research, on which he specifies on The War of the Worlds, in order to explore the role of this work toward its relation within the world. The discussion of this research, then, is to cover the following statements:

1. The significant-discourses presented within The War of the Worlds.
2. How The War of the Worlds, which seems to be 'unreal', presents a 'real' fear of human and society at the time.

1.4 The Objective of the Research

Each literary works, indeed, has its own significance of interpretation. It requires readers' special attention and further analysis to discover what function or position behind the work. Not all of literary works convey a vivid comment or message about war. That is why, on this research, the objective of the writer is basically trying to explore and explain the political function of how the significant discourse and fear constructs The War of the Worlds through New Historicism. Based on the objective, a research is needed to elucidate the intention of the novel toward its significant reality.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

History is an interaction of texts to be interpreted, and any text is conceived as a discourse in which consists of what we called *representations*. From this brief statement, the writer shows the readers that within a text there are discourses which interact with several other texts to be interpreted. The writer evidently has shown this relevance in his analysis on The War of the Worlds. The War of the Worlds brings discourses of war that this is proved by the writer's findings, those discourses are found by applying New Historicism related to its way of seeing literary works in parallel ways. In analyzing the work the writer has found several discourses he called discursive formations, those discursive formations that are presented in previous chapter is the writer's findings and co-texts which are constructing the discourse.

Nevertheless, the final point here is that all of those discourses should not be seen as one master discourse, what New Historicists' believe is that any single discourse should be bounded into what Foucault said as *discursive formations* and kept questioning the power-relations beyond those discourses. Thus, by the analysis endorsements, The War of the Worlds bears the real fear of the society at the time upon British Imperialism toward the world and also the anxiety upon Darwin's theory of evolution called 'survival of the fittest'. All of these discourses are found within Wells's The War of the Worlds by utilizing New Historicism. This conclusion is supported by the writer's co-texts of discursive formations that are shown in the analysis.

The reciprocal concern of text and history shall be seen by critics and students in order to get the essence of work's interpretation. Statistically, there are two historical contexts, the historical discursive formations, which the writer has put forward within this chapter, these are: British Imperialism and Darwinism. And there are seven formations of

textual discursive, those are: The 14th Amendment of the United States of America, Alfred Nobel invented dynamite, the carpet sweeper was a popular new invention, Pierre and Marie Curie discovered radium, German Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin built his famous airship, Harry S. Truman was the president of the United States, and Joe Louis defended his heavyweight boxing title for the 23rd time.

At last, it is worthy to realize that literary texts are often considered as merely amusement of art for some people, while in fact literary works are bearing discourses of power relation. It is scholars' and critics' duties to reveal its authenticity through interpretation academically and scientifically. Therefore The War of the Worlds, which is essentially a work of art, is created from various aspects of human life that it is not only bring about its presentation of lives but also its representation of cultural discourses within human life. What to get about New Historicist Literary Criticism is that its ultimate aim is never to read anything into the work but to find everything it valuably can in the work.



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