

**AMERICAN HEGEMONIC DISCOURSES ON VIETNAM AS REFLECTED IN  
JOHN SHORS' *DRAGON HOUSE***

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**A Thesis**

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## ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini membahas wacana/diskursus yang terdapat dalam novel *Dragon House* karya John Shors. Novel ini menceritakan bagaimana orang Amerika memperbaiki kesalahan mereka dimasa lampau terkait dengan Perang Vietnam dengan melakukan kebaikan untuk orang Vietnam terutama korban Perang Vietnam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana wacana/diskursus membawa dan menghasilkan kekuasaan serta mengungkap kepentingan tersembunyi Amerika dibalik diskursus. Dalam menganalisis novel *Dragon House* ini, penulis menerapkan metode penjabaran deskriptif. Penulis menggunakan pendekatan teori New Historicism yang dikembangkan oleh Michel Foucault. Teori New Historicism mengarah kepada penerjemahan karya sastra sebagai sebuah ekspresi dan reaksi dari 'hegemony' dan 'power relations' terhadap keadaan masyarakat. Teori ini juga mempertanyakan hubungan kekuasaan diluar diskursus dalam karya sastra. Berdasarkan dari hasil analisis dapat disimpulkan bahwa *Dragon House* terbukti menjadi sarana and praktek sebuah kekuasaan. Diskursus dalam novel ini menyelenggarakan praktek kekuasaan melalui produksi dan penyebarannya. Diskursus dalam karya John Shors memperlihatkan 'power relation' Amerika dalam mendominasi dan memperngaruhi masyarakat Vietnam. Selain itu terdapat kepentingan tersembunyi dibalik diskursus. Dengan menghasilkan kekuasaan melalui diskursus, Amerika membangun kesan baru mereka yang baik setelah Perang Vietnam atas Vietnam.

**Kata Kunci:** discourse, power relations, hegemony, United States, Vietnam.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. The Background of the Research**

Literary work is a medium to distribute various discourses and ideology concerned with particular interests. Moreover it also represents and describes the condition of a certain era. Through literary work, the author's thoughts or imaginations which reflect the condition and assumption of the circumstance in certain era as historical work can be exposed. Rivkin and Ryan state that historical work:

....would invariably see the historical as a context for the study of the literary work. Historical background, historical context: the language of a traditional historicism saw the literary work in the foreground and history in the background, with the task of the critic being to connect the two. The literary work might represent or refer to the historical context; the critic would make sense of the literary work by researching the history to which it referred (2004: 505)

Thus, the research on literary work can be conducted by seeing the history as the background and the context since it refers to the particular age. The textuality of history is the way in which history as a collection of discourses. Literary work can be an instrument to the practice of hegemony to dominate politically. One of the things as the basis to spread the discourse is started from the history of war. Discourse is hiddenly used in psychological and ideological warfare as a part of physical warfare.

Vietnam War as the most important issue after World War II is started from 1957 to 1975. This war is also known as the Second Indochina War. Several years before Second Indochine War, France is humiliating defeat in Dien Bien Phu 1954 in

the First Indochine War. Furthermore, Vietnam divided into North and South Vietnam based on Geneva Accords. Essentially Vietnam War was firstly a civil war between North and South Vietnam which is known as part of cold war. The North Vietnam was controlled by communist power; they are Soviet Union and China while South Vietnam was controlled by United States and its allies. In the end of Vietnam War 58 thousand American troops and 3 million Vietnamese are dead. The impacts of Vietnam War take long-term for Vietnamese. (Rosenberg 2011)

The impact of Vietnam War can be seen in the present day. *Dragon House*, a novel written by John Shors, sets in modern-Vietnam. It is a fiction about the Vietnamese street life represents the victim of Vietnam War. This novel tells the story about two Americans, Iris and Noah, come and open a house to educate Vietnamese street children in Saigon. This novel possibly reflects American strategic discourse to penetrate the social ideology of a society particularly Vietnamese as a representation of the Third World. This matter is possibly concerned with reconstructing the image of American.

The writer chooses *Dragon House* as the object of this research because the discourses in this novel related to decency of American are still unrevealed and vague. Therefore, a profound literary research is needed to reveal this problem. There are hints that John Shors spreads the discourses in which he changes or reconstructs the image of United States. John Shors shows the negative image of Vietnamese in order to strengthen the good image of United States. Moreover, this novel also reflects how the relations between Vietnam and United States.

The second reason is through this novel, the writer observes closely the issue behind the kindness of American toward Vietnamese after Vietnam War. This kindness

is pictured as the regret of American people leading to the massive impacts on Vietnamese. There is a possibility that such kindness is contained by American strategic interest in changing the bad image of American. These matters are the hints of hegemonic practices to the Vietnamese as the representation of the Third World. Therefore, this research is aimed at investigating and revealing the possible interests of American in producing discourses in this novel. Beside that questions how power affects the truth which is produced within discourses. Furthermore the benefits of this research are concerned with enriching the world of Literary Criticism in Indonesia. In this case the writer wants to prove that literary work is the vehicle to spread the ideology and discourses. Discourse as a practice of hegemony made the author shares his point of view. Therefore, discourses of the author in his work can manipulate the real condition.

Based on the explanation above, the writer wants to analyze this novel by applying New Historicism approach which titled her research “American Hegemonic Discourses on Vietnam as Reflected in John Shors’ *Dragon House*”.

## **1.2. The Identification of the Problem**

The descent discourses about American people concerned with the good deed they do in Vietnamese society are suspected to reconstruct a good image about the United States. However, this is still vague, hence it becomes the main problem to investigate through this research. Shors reflects the situation of Vietnam through the characters in his work. Shors pictures Vietnam as the representation the Third World as undeveloped country which is difficult to be free from the retardation in aspects of life. Discourses seem to be used by the American power in ideological warfare in

accordance with its strategic interests to dominate Vietnam politically. In this novel, Vietnam is the example of the Third World that becomes the target of discourse process.

Through discourses, Shors depicts American people are the rescuer for Vietnamese life. Shors in *Dragon House* places American people in good point of view. This matter is suspected in accordance with the strategic attempts to change the image of American people. Shors shows American people come to Vietnam in regret because of the Vietnam War. In this case, Americans fix their mistake in the past by giving the goodness for Vietnamese. American's giving must be investigated further in order to discover their hidden intention. Therefore, the literary research is needed to analyze the novel in order to reveal the intention of the author when making a literary work about the Third World particularly Vietnam.

### **1.3. The Scope of the Research**

Discourse is a hidden weapon in particular warfare which is grounded on the ideology and strategic interests. It diverts and distorts the facts that occur in certain age. John Shors' ideology in *Dragon House* seems like strengthen the power and the kindness of American people to change their image. Nevertheless, it needs to reveal the meaning and the truth behind his work. Since many problems can be found in *Dragon House*, to go further the writer focuses her research based on the following question below:

1. What are the American strategic discourses and hidden interests concerned with the images of the Vietnamese after the Vietnam War in *Dragon House*?
2. How are American strategies to subdue Vietnamese as reflected in *Dragon House*?

#### **1.4. The Objective of the Research**

The objective of this research is to investigate the hidden interest behind the American hegemonic discourses which possibly construct the bad images of Vietnamese and the good images of Americans. It helps the writer to reveal the American interests which is done by generating power through discourses. In other side, the writer tries to find how the author exposes the kindness of American people in Vietnam as the power in dominating and influencing the Vietnamese which is reflected on Shors' work.

Therefore to support this research, the writer tries to find the extrinsic elements of the novel as long as it is possible and applicable in doing the analysis. It helps the writer to reveal the meaning behind discourses in the novel which reflects the American domination in Vietnam. Moreover, it proves that the novel seems the vehicle and the practice of hegemony by manipulating the certain social condition nowadays.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The story in the *Dragon House* brings discourses about the Vietnam War, Vietnamese and the United States. All of those discourses should not be seen as one master discourse. As suggested by Michel Foucault's theory about New Historicism, this thesis aims at interpreting *Dragon House* as an expression or reaction to the power relations of the society, essentially the power of the United States over Vietnam.

After analyzing the *Dragon House* the writer has found several discourses which are relevant to the power relations. There are many hegemonic discourses concern with particular interests of American people on Vietnamese. John Shors' ideas and ideology through discourses in his work strengthen the power and the kindness of American people to change their image after the Vietnam War. In the story of *Dragon House* the intervention of American on Vietnamese bring a good hope for the Vietnamese is such kind of American interest which is done by generating power through discourses. Therefore, *Dragon House* which is a work created from various aspects of life bring about the representation of discourses within human life.

The discourses in John Shors' work expose the power relation in dominating and influencing the Vietnamese in Vietnam. This novel becomes the vehicle and the practice of hegemony of American people which sometimes manipulating certain social condition. By using New Historicism theory it can be seen how discourses in *Dragon House* enforces the hegemony practices through its production and dissemination. Although the Vietnam War bring the impact for Vietnamese but the government of Vietnam has provided funds from public social assistance for the reduction of the victims and problems which is caused by the Vietnam War. However, in the story of



*Dragon House* Shors portrays that there are absolute anguishes on the Vietnamese who live in the street after the Vietnam War. Essentially, Shors shows Vietnamese cannot liberate from miserable life because there is the mental problem of Vietnamese which is caused by the Vietnam War. Therefore, Shors shows the intervention of American on Vietnamese to change their lives.

From the brief statement, it can be seen that within a text there are discourses which need to be interpreted because literary work bear power relations and particular interest through discourses. Through the literary work, it shows that the power becomes a means by which the marginal are controlled. It happens between United States and Vietnam in which both of these countries have a history in the Vietnam War. Therefore, the history is not viewed as the source of the work but the relationship between history and the work.

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