

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MONSTERS REPRESENTATION IN NEIL GAIMAN'S *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK*
(TRANSFORMASI DARI REPRESENTASI MONSTER DALAM NOVEL KARYA NEIL GAIMAN *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK*)

Anisa, Hat Pujiati S.S., M.A, L.Dyah Purwita Wardani SWW S.S., M.A

English Department, Faculty of Letters, University of Jember (UNEJ)
Jln. Kalimantan 37 Jember 68121
E-Mail: sastro.munie@gmail.com

Abstract

The Graveyard Book, a novel written by Neil Gaiman tells the story about a boy named Bod, who is raised by monsters that exist in the graveyard such as the characters of Vampire, Werewolf, Ghouls and ghosts. The novel does not only explain the Bod's life in the graveyard, but also the different representation of the monsters in the preceding novels. The monsters exist in *The Graveyard Book* create the new representation from the monsters exist in Gothic era. The creation of monsters in Gothic era aims to spread horror and terror while monsters that occur in *The Graveyard Book* represent differently. Monsters in *The Graveyard Book* depict as the savior, harmless and kind creatures. In this qualitative research, the theory of postmodern is used to analyze the transformation of monsters representation in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*.

Keywords: *Monsters, Postmodern, Transformation, Horror, Representation*

Abstrak

The Graveyard Book, buku karangan Neil Gaiman bercerita tentang seorang anak bernama Bod yang dibesarkan oleh makhluk penghuni kuburan seperti tokoh Vampire, Werewolf, Ghouls dan hantu. Didalam novel tidak hanya bercerita tentang kehidupan Bod di dalam kuburan, tetapi juga perbedaan penggambaran dari monster monster yang terdapat pada novel. Monster monster yang ada pada novel merupakan bentuk baru dari monster monster yang ada pada jaman Gothic, seperti vampire, werewolf, and ghouls. Monster pada jaman Gothic dibuat untuk menyebarkan teror sedangkan monster yang terdapat pada novel mempunyai peran sebaliknya. Monster dalam *The Graveyard Book* diperlihatkan sebagai sosok penolong, tidak berbahaya, serta baik hati. Dalam penelitian kualitatif ini, teori postmodern digunakan untuk menganalisis perubahan perwujudan pada representasi monster yang terdapat pada novel Neil Gaiman yang berjudul *The Graveyard Book*.

Kata kunci: *Monster, Postmodern, Transformasi, Horror, Representasi*

Introduction

Horror story is one of literature genres that create the emotion of terror and shock to the readers. In short, horror story aims to emerge the fear of the reader. As Noel Carroll (1990:42) stated that the main point of horror imagery in horror fiction is to create threat and horrify feeling. The object that is used to bring out the emotion does not merely comes from the setting, mood but also in the characters, but not all the characters are people, sometimes it can be in the form of the houses, objects or even creatures. The characters

that are used to create the sense of fear can be in the form of monsters. Horror story began dominant in 18th century with the emergence of Gothic fiction. The notable monsters like vampire, werewolf, and ghoul begin to increase their popularity. The monsters that exist were pictured to be threatening, powerful, alluring, and evil. It is not only on their appearances, but also in their roles. On the other hand, nowadays monsters are portrayed differently as it exists in *The Graveyard Book* written by Neil Gaiman. Instead of scary and threatening, they depict as kind, beautiful,

sophisticated, and look very much normal like any other human being. The monsters transform their representation. That is the reason why this research is conducted by analyzing the transformation of monsters representation in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* by using Linda Hutcheon's postmodern theory. Hutcheon argues "In very real sense, postmodernism reveals a desire to understand present culture as the product of previous representation" (1989:58). Hutcheon tries to emphasize that the essential part of postmodernism is the reworking the past. As she highlighted on the term "the presence of the past" in historiographic metafiction. It means that we cannot go back to the past to represent history. We can only access the past through the text. Historiographic metafiction is the kind of postmodern narratives which keeps on tracing the past that relate to present representation. It is fictionalized actual historical events to the element of the narrative. Postmodern text constantly uses historical documents in such way to stress the discursive representation of the past, one of the way is by threatening the text as parody. According to Linda Hutcheon, parody is the repetition with critical distance which marks difference rather than similarity (1989:6). Parody is one of the major forms of modern self reflexivity. Though it uses irony, parody does not mean to mock or to defect the imitated object of the past but to create new representation. Based on the explanation above, the postmodern theory is suitable to break down the transformation of the monsters representation in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*.

Research Methodology

This research uses qualitative research since the data used in *the Graveyard Book* are in the form of sentences and words. The primary data in this research are taken from the quotes, phrases, sentences and statements in the Neil Gaiman's novel entitled *The Graveyard Book* published in 2008 by Harper Collins e-books. The secondary data are taken from the article, website, videos, journals, and previous research with the similar topic research. The book and e-book used for this research are *The Politics of Postmodern* and *The Poetic of Postmodernism* by Linda Hutcheon, *The Were-wolf* by Clemence Housman published in 2004, and *The Pickman's Model* by H.P Lovecraft published in 1927. The data processing is done by analyzing the concept of horror fiction in literature. The analysis continues to analyze the representation of the monsters in *The Graveyard Book* novel by Neil Gaiman and the preceding novels. Then, I analyze about the change of the monsters representation and why they transforms using the postmodern theory by Linda Hutcheon.

Result

This research analyzes the transformation of the monsters in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*. There are several problems found in the novel. The representation of the monsters in *The Graveyard Book* changes from the representation of the Gothic monsters. The monsters that are originally hideous and monstrous have changed into

harmless and caring monsters. Hence, this research wants to elaborate the reason of the monsters transformation.

Discussion

The article intends to present the monsters as the significant element of horror. The second, this article describes about the representation of the monsters in *The Graveyard Book* and the preceding novel. The last, this thesis discuss about the changing representation of the monsters. I choose *The Graveyard Book* novel written by Neil Gaiman which suitably describe those three aspects. *The Graveyard Book* tells the story about a boy named Bod, who is raised by the supernatural beings exist in the graveyard. The monsters that exist depict as the harmless, savior, and kind creatures. The monsters analyzed consist of vampire, werewolf, and ghouls.

The novel represents the monsters as the significant element of horror fiction. The beginning of horror fiction as genre happened in the late 18th century with the raise of Gothic Literature. Gothic originally refers not only for narratives but also arts. According to David Punter in his work *The Gothic*, Gothic derives its name from the word 'Goth' refers to the people of Goth brought by Germanic tribe. Gothic in literature refers to the subgenre of Romantic Movement that focuses on mystery and horror. Gothic fiction contains element of gory, supernatural, doom, gloomy, demonic power and torture. Nowadays, horror fictions are different. Recent horror fictions emphasize on the realm of social and cultural phenomena. The representations of Gothic horror to postmodern become distorted, but still bound with its classical roots. Monsters have been the object of fascination in horror story. The purpose of monsters appearance is to create horrified figure which seeks to destroy the oral order in which they are created to scare the readers. However, in order to be threatening, it is sufficient that the monsters are physically dangerous. The notable monsters such as Dracula, werewolf, and the ghouls are not only hideous, but also psychology, mentally and socially threatening. According to Noel Carroll, in his book *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, assumes that there are two kinds of structure for the composition of horrific being, *fusion* and *fission* (1990:43). In *The Graveyard Book*, vampires and ghouls belong to fusion figure of monsters because they only have one identity while werewolf belongs to the fission figure because it has multiple identities.

Despite of the figure of monsters are not change, the representation of the monsters changes from classical to postmodern. The representation of monsters in *The Graveyard Book* is the imperfect copy of classical monsters. The monsters exist in *The Graveyard Book* is the duplication of the monsters from the Gothic era. The monsters appear indifferently from classical monsters without relieving its significant characteristic. Hutcheon takes on the Historiographic metafiction to bring the combining between the past and the present idea.

"But in historiographic metafiction the very process of turning events into facts through the interpretation of archival evidence is

shown to be a process of turning the trace of the past (our only access to those events today) into historical representation.” (1989:57)

The quote means that historiographic metafiction is the kind of postmodern narrative which keeps on tracing the past that relates to present representation. It is fictionalized actual historical events to the element of the narrative. Moreover, the representation of the monsters in *The Graveyard Book* still bound with the monsters from classical novels. I use the character of Dracula as the preceding representation of vampire from classic era and Silas from *The Graveyard Book*. The transformation of the monsters is on the violent evaporation of the vampire. Dracula is depicted as violent, cruel and evil creature while Silas is represent as harmless and kind vampire. Silas also represents the new form of vampire, which calls as sympathetic vampire. It means that the vampire tend to have morally acts. Other characters occur is the werewolf. The classical werewolf is represented by the White Fell while werewolf in *The Graveyard Book* is portrayed by Ms Lupescu. The transformation of the werewolf is on the werewolf type of living. White Fell lives in the pack while Ms. Lupescu lives alone. Ms. Lupescu represents the modern people way of living where the people are living privately. Other monsters appear is the ghouls. The classical ghouls taken from the H.P Lovecraft's *The Pickman's Model* represent the ugly and physical deformities creature while ghouls in *The Graveyard Book* represent ape-like human in the body of famous people such as Victor Hugo, Harry S. Truman, and The Duke of Westminster.

The transformation of the monsters is purposely to create the new representation of the monsters by using its parody. As stated by Hutcheon that “with parody-as with any form of reproduction-the notion of the original as rare, single, and valuable (in aesthetic or commercial term) is called into question. This does not mean that art has lost its meaning and purpose, but it will inevitably have a new and different significance”. (1989:93)

It means that the parody does not appear to destroy the past, but to preserve the past and to question it. Parody does not mean to mock or to defect the imitated object of the past but to create new representation. The parody in *The Graveyard Book* is well described by the appearance of the ghouls. The ghouls in the story represent in the form of famous, wealthy and powerful men such us The Duke of Westminster, Harry S. Truman and Victor Hugo. Originally the ghouls are taken the bottom level of the monsters if they put in the chart. They are ugliest, unintelligence, and do not have specific stereotype among other monsters. By recreating new look of the ghouls, it does not mean to mock the original representation of the ghoul. On the other hand, the new look of the ghouls appreciates the historical character in history, as it is said by Hutcheon that “while these are the words of a historian writing about historical representation, they also describe well the postmodern lesson about fictionalized historical representation.” (1989:57).

Since *The Graveyard Book* is one of the products of postmodern works, it is supposedly reflected from the postmodern society. As Zygmun Bauman cited in Dennis Smith in *Zygmun Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity*, that the postmodern begins with the self constitution of individual (1999:150). The self constitutional means that the living individual free to have self regulation in their life. The focus of the self constitution is in the sensation and display. Postmodern society also believes in the moral space. The monsters in *The Graveyard Book* are morally created. They depict to live or to fit in human society. To fit in human society they have to live like human.

Conclusion

Monsters as part of horror fiction are changing on their appearance and their role. The classical monsters were portrayed as scary, powerful, with hideous appearances while postmodern monsters appear to be good looking and kind manner. The emergence of monsters is the significant element in horror fiction. Monsters gain its existence during the Gothic era where the people were against society. Therefore, the monsters that exist to represent the minority people which rejected from the mainstream society because their dreadful appearance. Moreover, the grotesque appearances of the monsters were made to do so. They were created as horrified as possible to show up the sense of horror and terror in the story. But, present day monsters are different. They were portrayed more human like rather than frightening. People in Gothic era accept the frightening aspect of the monsters. It is because the Gothic aesthetic is on the terror itself. They enjoy their madness, alienation and discrimination. They are enjoying when the victims are being catch and extremely scared because the death become the object of terror. But, present day society does not work like that. They seen to those point as the outdate fashion. To catch the prey they should fit to the society. By looking and act like human they are become part human society. It makes them as sympathetic monsters. In *The Graveyard Book*, the monsters are pictured as sympathetic monsters. As the product of postmodern fiction, *The Graveyard Book* is combining the present event and the past event. Therefore, the monsters exist still have several traits from their predecessor. The monsters still rely on the forebear traits but made to be difference in which they become parody. The parody which makes them different but still counts on the past circumstance. The historiographic metafiction appears as the one of the characteristic of the postmodern fiction.

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