

Research Article

Mimetic Analysis of “Black Sun” in the Korean Drama “Taxi Driver 2” With the Burning Sun Case

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between the real-life Burning Sun scandal and its fictionalized portrayal in the Korean drama “Taxi Driver 2”, specifically focusing on the episode titled “Black Sun.” Using the mimetic approach, the research investigates how the drama mirrors real societal issues, including violence, police collusion, celebrity involvement, sexual harassment, and drug use. The Burning Sun scandal, which involved a nightclub in Gangnam, South Korea, became notorious for its links to organized crime, drugs, sexual abuse, and the corruption of law enforcement. The study analyzes key scenes from “Taxi Driver 2”, drawing comparisons between the drama’s depiction of the events and the actual incidents that occurred, such as drug use, police inaction, and violent assaults. By examining the dialogue and plot structure in the drama, the research highlights how “Taxi Driver 2” critiques the dark realities of the entertainment industry, particularly the exploitation and abuse within the nightlife scene. Additionally, the study explores the role of K-pop idols in the scandal, which is reflected in the characters portrayed in the drama. This research contributes to the understanding of how real-life events are translated into visual narratives, offering insights into the power of media in shaping public perception and raising awareness about social issues. The findings indicate that “Taxi Driver 2” successfully employs a mimetic approach to replicate key elements of the Burning Sun case, thereby providing a lens through which viewers can critically engage with the ongoing social problems illustrated by the scandal. This research fills a gap in the existing literature by bridging the connection between media representations and real-life societal phenomena, offering a novel perspective on the role of Korean dramas in reflecting social realities.

Keywords: Mimetic, Burning Sun, K-Pop

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works are creations of humanity that convey specific messages, both directly and indirectly. These messages are intended to influence readers to appreciate and adhere to the values presented by the author (Jayanti et al., 2019). Literature contains imagination that reflect everyday life while expanding the reader’s awareness of social, political, and cultural realities within the framework of morality and aesthetics (Sanjaya et al., 2021)). Thus, literary works function not only as entertainment but also as a means to educate and raise awareness about societal conditions. Literature can be understood as letters, writings, or compositions. Wicaksono (2019) defines literature as a creative art that uses language as a medium to depict humans and life. Meanwhile, Taum describes literature as an imaginative work of art that employs beautiful language. In this context, literature is often associated with fictional works, as it can depict an imaginative world with the beauty of language contained within it.

Literary criticism is a branch of literary studies tasked with analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating literary works. The goal of literary criticism is to provide an objective assessment of the work, determine its quality, and evaluate whether it is worthy of critique (Semi, 2013). Literary criticism is conducted scientifically using various approaches, one of which is the mimetic approach, which views literary works as reflections or replicas of the reality outside the work itself (Winarti, 2016). In this approach, Ginting (2023) explained that literature is seen as an imitation of reality that can offer a deeper understanding of human life.

One commonly used approach in literary criticism is the mimetic approach, which focuses on the relationship between a literary work and the reality of the outside world. According to Winarti (2016), this approach assesses whether the literary work represents the social, political, or cultural conditions present in real-life society. In this sense, Ginting (2024) described that literature is considered a mirror of reality, reflecting events in the real world through the process of imagination and the author’s creativity. Korean drama, or “drakor,” is a form of television entertainment originating from South Korea. These dramas are typically miniseries, consisting of approximately 12-16 episodes, each lasting around 60 minutes (Kurniawati & Pratiwi, 2021). Korean dramas are highly popular worldwide, including in Indonesia, as they often address themes of human life and contain social values relevant to everyday life. Additionally, Korean dramas frequently use the Korean language to portray the culture and traditions of Korean society.

A notable real-life case that captured public attention is the Burning Sun scandal, a nightclub in Gangnam, South Korea. The case gained widespread attention after the revelation of a chat room involving celebrities and idols, which later evolved into a series of major scandals involving drugs, sexual harassment, police corruption, and violence. This case had significant repercussions for South Korean society, as it involved various parties, from celebrities to law enforcement. The incident became a media focus and sparked debates on morality and ethics within the entertainment industry and Korean social life.

The Korean drama "Taxi Driver 2" presents various stories inspired by real events, including an episode titled "Black Sun." This episode specifically portrays an incident similar to the Burning Sun scandal, showcasing certain aspects of the scandal, albeit dramatized. The inclusion of the "Black Sun" episode in this drama illustrates how real events can be adapted into visual literary works while maintaining connections to the reality occurring in society. This study aims to examine whether there is a correlation between the reality depicted in the "Black Sun" episode of "Taxi Driver 2" and the Burning Sun case in South Korea. The research seeks to answer the question of whether the Korean drama successfully reflects the social reality of the Burning Sun case by applying a mimetic approach to assess the relationship between the literary work (the drama) and the reality (the real-life case). Thus, this study will identify whether there are similarities in themes, characters, and events represented in both contexts. The gap in research that this study seeks to address is the lack of studies discussing the connection between real-life social phenomena, such as the Burning Sun case, and their media representations in the form of visual literary works, such as Korean dramas. This research will fill this gap by investigating how social phenomena can be translated and adapted into visual literary works, as well as how such works can influence public perception and understanding of the realities they portray. The novelty of this study lies in using Korean drama as the object of study to analyze the relationship between literary works and actual social events, as well as the application of the mimetic approach within this context.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at gaining a deep understanding of specific social phenomena or events through detailed observation and description (Sugiyono, 2016). This approach relies on narratives or words to explain the meanings embedded in various social phenomena occurring in society, as articulated by (Charismana et al., 2022). By using this approach, the researcher seeks to obtain a more comprehensive insight into the issue being studied by gathering data holistically and thoroughly, thus providing a clear and accurate depiction of the events under investigation. The research design used is a literature review, which focuses on the collection and analysis of information from various relevant written sources. A Linguist, Zaim (2014)The literature review encompasses a range of literature types, including books, academic journals, theses, and regulations, all of which contribute to a deeper understanding of the research topic (Ummah, 2019)). In this study, the literature utilized pertains to the drama "Taxi Driver 2" and the Burning Sun case, which are analyzed to uncover the relationship between the narrative in the drama and the real-life events that occurred in South Korea, specifically those related to the Burning Sun nightclub. Data collection in this study is conducted through document review, employing techniques of reading, listening, and note-taking. The researcher begins by watching "Taxi Driver 2" periodically to identify relevant information pertaining to the research topic (Sugiyono, 2016)). Subsequently, the researcher listens to dialogues that align with predefined categories and reads news articles related to the Burning Sun case. The collected data is then noted and analyzed to establish connections between the content of the drama and the actual events. In the data analysis, the researcher applies techniques of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing by Sugiyono to filter relevant information and present the findings systematically, thereby offering a clear understanding of the relationship between the drama and real-world events.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mimetic approach presented in the Korean drama "Taxi Driver 2", particularly in the episode "Burning Sun," is directed towards events that occurred in the Burning Sun case in South Korea. The drama attempts to replicate the real-life events surrounding the Burning Sun scandal. The mimetic approach serves as the foundation for presenting occurrences that align with the reality of the case. The following are the findings of the study:

Table 1. The Findings of the Research

No	Category	Dialog Quotation	Mimetic Evidence
1	Club Location	"Black Sun. A famous club in Gangnam". This text is located in episode 11 at 26:56.	CNN Indonesia, 2024: <i>Summary of the Burning Sun case, which went viral again due to the documentary.</i> Detikcom, 2024: <i>BBC exposes the scandal at Burning Sun; Nightlife in Gangnam continues.</i> Wikipedia: <i>Burning Sun scandal in South Korea.</i> Liputan 6, 2024: <i>The current appearance of the Burning Sun club, where the Seungri case scandal and other Korean celebrities were involved.</i> BBC News Indonesia YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Burning Sun, revealing secret conversations about the K-pop star sex scandal.</i> Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: <i>Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed.</i>

No	Category	Dialog Quotation	Mimetic Evidence
			Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun</i> . Image on the officialkvibes Instagram account, May 23, 2024. Tempo.co, 2024: <i>Key points from the Burning Sun documentary film involving Seungri</i>
2	Violence/ Assault	"Rape or assault. People can do anything here (in the club)". This quote is located in episode 12 at 4:20. "I told you to hit him here (in the club) for a reason".	BBC News Indonesia YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Burning Sun, revealing secret conversations about the K-pop star sex scandal</i> . Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: <i>Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed</i> . Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun</i> . CNN Indonesia, 2024: <i>Summary of the Burning Sun case, which went viral again due to the documentary</i> . IDN Times, 2024: <i>Distinguishing Burning Sun vs. Black Sun cases brought up in "Taxi Driver 2"</i> . Detik.com, 2024: <i>Seungri's wrongdoings in the Burning Sun scandal</i> . Tempo.co, 2024: <i>Key points from the Burning Sun documentary film involving Seungri</i> . Liputan 6, 2024: <i>The current appearance of the Burning Sun club, where the Seungri case scandal and other Korean celebrities were involved</i> .
3	Police Involvement/ Collaboration	"They (the police) arrived here a long time ago, but they refuse to act." "Why are the police silent when they see all of this (the beating)?" This quote is located in episode 11 at 55-57:02. "When the authorities (the police), who should be apprehending criminals, cooperate with them (Black Sun)." This quote is located in episode 13 at 49:35.	BBC News Indonesia YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Burning Sun, revealing secret conversations about the K-pop star sex scandal</i> . Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: <i>Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed</i> . Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun</i> . Jawa Pos.com, 2024: <i>New allegations against Seungri for knowing minors entered Burning Sun</i> . WowKeren.com, 2019: <i>Seungri allegedly knew about minors entering Burning Sun and bribing police</i> . Antara News.com, 2024: <i>The Burning Sun scandal revisited, the stories, and the celebrities involved</i> . Detik.com, 2024: <i>Seungri's wrongdoings in the Burning Sun scandal</i> . Tempo.co, 2024: <i>Key points from the Burning Sun documentary film involving Seungri</i> .
4	Idol Involvement	"Victor, a singer, the leader of the idol group GET". This quote is located in episode 11 at 48:44. "To celebrate the release of my new album". This quote is located in episode 12 at 13:26.	BBC News Indonesia YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Burning Sun, revealing secret conversations about the K-pop star sex scandal</i> . Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: <i>Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed</i> . Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: <i>Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun</i> . CNN Indonesia, 2024: <i>Summary of the Burning Sun case, which went viral again due to the documentary</i> . JawaPos.com, 2024: <i>New allegations against Seungri for knowing minors entered Burning Sun</i> . WowKeren.com, 2019: <i>Seungri allegedly knew about minors entering Burning Sun and bribing police</i> . Antara News.com, 2024: <i>The Burning Sun scandal revisited, the stories, and the celebrities involved</i> . Detik.com, 2024: <i>Seungri's wrongdoings in the Burning Sun scandal</i> . Tempo.co, 2024: <i>Key points from the Burning Sun documentary film involving Seungri</i> .

No	Category	Dialog Quotation	Mimetic Evidence
5	Rape/ Sexual Abuse	<p>"Rape or assault. People can do anything here (in the club)."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 12 at 4:20.</p> <p>"... just to be harassed."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 12 at 41:12.</p> <p>"You choose a girl to harass and treat it like a game."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 13 at 30:01.</p> <p>"How can they promote rape like that with a tour?"</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 13 at 43:13.</p>	<p>BBC News Indonesia YouTube Channel, 2024: Burning Sun, revealing secret conversations about the K-pop star sex scandal.</p> <p>Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed.</p> <p>Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun.</p> <p>Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: The sun keeps burning.</p> <p>CNN Indonesia, 2024: Summary of the Burning Sun case, which went viral again due to the documentary.</p> <p>Detik.com, 2024: BBC exposes the scandal at Burning Sun; Nightlife in Gangnam continues.</p> <p>Antara News.com, 2024: The Burning Sun scandal revisited, the stories, and the celebrities involved.</p> <p>Tempo.co, 2024: Key points from the Burning Sun documentary film involving Seungri.</p> <p>Liputan6.com, 2024: The current appearance of the Burning Sun club, where the Seungri case scandal and other Korean celebrities were involved.</p> <p>Detik.com, 2024: Seungri's wrongdoings in the Burning Sun scandal.</p>
6	Narcotics Presence	<p>"The results of his blood test are positive for narcotics."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 12 at 41:28.</p> <p>"Let's do 100g (of narcotics)."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 13 at 31:27.</p> <p>"They seized the narcotics!"</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 13 at 45:29.</p>	<p>Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed.</p> <p>Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: The sun keeps burning.</p> <p>Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun.</p> <p>Detik.com, 2023: Insinuating Burning Sun, new episode of "Taxi Driver 2" sets a record rating.</p> <p>IDN Times, 2024: Key differences between Burning Sun and Black Sun as brought up in "Taxi Driver 2".</p> <p>Antara News.com, 2024: The Burning Sun scandal revisited, the stories, and the celebrities involved.</p> <p>Liputan6.com, 2024: The current appearance of the Burning Sun club, where the Seungri case scandal and other Korean celebrities were involved.</p>
7	Type of Narcotics Used	<p>"The narcotics circulating in the club are GHB (Gamma-Hydroxybutyric Acid)."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 14 at 23:56.</p> <p>"He is selling an illegal narcotic called GHB."</p> <p>This quote is located in episode 14 at 55:28.</p>	<p>Korea Reomit YouTube Channel, 2019: Burning Sun... The truth will be revealed.</p> <p>BBC News Indonesia YouTube Channel, 2024: Burning Sun, revealing secret conversations about the K-pop star sex scandal.</p> <p>Nessie Judge YouTube Channel, 2024: Summary of South Korea's biggest scandal: Burning Sun.</p> <p>Detik.com, 2024: BBC exposes the scandal at Burning Sun; Nightlife in Gangnam continues.</p> <p>Serambinews.com, 2019: Understanding GHB, the type of drug used in the Burning Sun scandal involving Seungri.</p> <p>Antara News.com, 2019: The dangers of GHB in the Burning Sun case, leading to agitation and even death.</p>

Based on the data in the table above, the researcher provides the following analytical description:

a. Club Location

In episode 11, at 26:56, a dialogue states, "Black Sun. A famous club in Gangnam." This location refers to an area that became infamous as the site of the Burning Sun scandal in real life, centered in Gangnam, Seoul, South Korea. Media outlets such as CNN Indonesia and Detikcom (2024) highlight the Burning Sun club in Gangnam as the epicenter of a major scandal. This reflects how "Taxi Driver 2" employs a mimetic approach to re-create a real-world location within a fictional context, allowing viewers to strongly associate the events in the drama with actual occurrences.

b. Violence/Assault

In episode 12, at 4:20, the quote "Rape or assault. People can do anything here (in the club)" reflects the violent situations that took place at Burning Sun. In reality, the Burning Sun scandal involved physical violence and assault, as reported by

media outlets such as BBC and Nessie Judge (2024). "Taxi Driver 2" uses this dialogue to depict the violence that occurred in the club, raising awareness among viewers about the dark reality of the Korean entertainment industry.

c. Police Involvement/Collusion

In episode 11, at 55-57:02, the dialogue "They (the police) have been here for a long time, but won't take action" portrays the collusion between the police and individuals involved in the criminal activities at the club. This is consistent with the facts revealed in the Burning Sun scandal, where police were implicated in covering up evidence and even protecting the perpetrators of the crimes. Media such as Detik.com and Tempo.co (2024) reported on the police's involvement in concealing the crimes at the club. This dialogue in the drama critiques the failures of law enforcement in real life.

d. Idol Involvement

In episode 11, at 48:44, the quote "Victor, singer, leader of the idol group GET" refers to a character involved in the Korean entertainment world, reflecting the involvement of K-pop idols in the Burning Sun case. Reports from media sources such as CNN Indonesia and JawaPos.com (2024) reveal that several K-pop celebrities were involved in the scandal. The drama attempts to convey the significant influence of the entertainment industry on the events, depicting idols' involvement in illegal activities at the club.

e. Rape/Sexual Harassment

Several quotes in the drama, such as "Only to be harassed" (episode 12, 41:12) and "You choose a girl to harass and treat it like a game" (episode 13, 30:01), reflect issues of rape and sexual harassment that occurred during the Burning Sun scandal. According to reports from media outlets such as Liputan 6 and Tempo.co (2024), sexual harassment was one of the major issues highlighted in the scandal. "Taxi Driver 2" uses the mimetic approach to criticize social norms that condone sexual violence and to illustrate the impact of the injustice that occurred.

f. Narcotics Use

In episode 12, at 41:28, the quote "His blood test came back positive for narcotics" refers to the use of narcotics by individuals at Burning Sun. The drama uses this dialogue to depict drug abuse at the club. Reports from sources such as Korea Reomit YouTube Channel and Detik.com (2024) confirm that drug use, especially GHB, was widespread in the club. The drama places narcotics as a part of social reality that is often overlooked, aiming to highlight the issue of substance abuse among celebrities and society.

g. Type of Narcotics Used

In episode 14, at 23:56, the quote "The narcotic circulating in the club is GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyric Acid)" refers to the type of narcotics used in the Burning Sun case. GHB was the primary drug circulating in the club, as documented in media such as Serambinews and Antara News (2019). The drama depicts the use of GHB in a very clear context, illustrating the grim reality involving drugs in South Korea's nightlife scene. This study integrates the mimetic approach to analyze the connection between the real-life Burning Sun case and its portrayal in "Taxi Driver 2". The mimetic approach suggests that works of fiction, such as drama, reflect real social realities, allowing viewers to perceive the similarities between the events depicted in the narrative and those occurring in everyday life. In this study, phenomena such as violence, police collusion, sexual harassment, and narcotics abuse within the Burning Sun scandal are exemplified through dialogues and scenes in the Black Sun episode of "Taxi Driver 2". The drama functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for social critique, raising awareness among viewers about highly relevant social issues, as explained in various media and investigative reports.

A concrete example of this mimetic approach is the use of Gangnam as the setting in the drama, directly referencing the location of the Burning Sun scandal. Gangnam, known as the nightlife hub of Seoul, serves as the backdrop for the controversial events in the drama, consistent with the reality where the Burning Sun club became a focal point of public attention. Similarly, dialogues such as "Rape or assault. People can do anything here" reflect the violent situations in the club, criticizing sexual violence and legal violations in the Korean entertainment industry. This is further emphasized by quotes in the drama depicting collusion between law enforcement and the Burning Sun club, which was also revealed in media investigations reporting the involvement of authorities in protecting the criminals. Moreover, the drama also depicts the involvement of K-pop idols and the use of narcotics as part of the unjust nightlife scene. In the Black Sun episode, the character Victor, a K-pop idol group leader, is mentioned as being involved in illegal activities at the club, reminding viewers of the real-life involvement of several K-pop celebrities in the Burning Sun scandal. The drama not only highlights the role of the entertainment industry in concealing crime but also exposes how narcotics, particularly GHB, were widely used in influential nightclubs. This study demonstrates how "Taxi Driver 2" successfully delivers social criticism by utilizing the mimetic approach to depict the grim reality behind the glamorous world that has long been hidden from public view.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study reveals that the Korean drama "Taxi Driver 2", particularly the episode "Black Sun," effectively employs a mimetic approach to represent real-life events associated with the Burning Sun case. The drama establishes a strong correlation between social reality and fictional narrative by replicating key elements of the scandal, such as the location, violence, police involvement, and the role of celebrities in the entertainment industry. In this episode, dialogues and scenes depicting violence, rape, drug abuse, and collusion with law enforcement reflect a profound social critique of the phenomena occurring in South Korean society. The drama serves not only as entertainment but also as a platform for highlighting sensitive issues relevant to social life, providing the audience with a deeper understanding of the dark realities

behind the entertainment world. This study also identifies how “Taxi Driver 2” adapts elements of the Burning Sun scandal into a fictional narrative to critique social injustice. The use of real locations, such as Gangnam, and the depiction of violence and drug abuse in the characters’ dialogues illustrate how fiction can mirror social realities. The mimetic approach in this drama successfully raises audience awareness of issues related to morality, ethics, and social injustice within both the entertainment industry and society at large. Thus, “Taxi Driver 2” plays a crucial role not only as a source of entertainment but also as a tool for relevant and profound social reflection.

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