

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Deconstructive criticism is quite popular as it offers the “radical” way to dismantle ideologies which are ‘hidden’ in a literary work. Through deconstruction, a researcher deconstructs the language as well as the “wordplay” in the literary text. It is assumed that the language is ambiguous, dynamic unstable; it is always a chain of signifiers (Tyson 2015, 244). Someone might identify the word “tree” but how each person interprets the word “tree” can be different. This shows that language does not have an absolute meaning. Aside from the language, for deconstruction, human beings are “fragmented battlefields for competing ideologies whose only “identities” are the ones we invent and choose to believe” (Tyson 2015, 244).

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), the theorist behind deconstructive criticism, argues that the study of deconstruction is the way to read the “text” in which the text itself has never consisted of one meaning (Derrida 1997). Derrida’s argument about the study of deconstruction is the opposite of Saussurean structuralism that always positions meanings in a hierarchal structure. According to Derrida, that is because the structuralists believe in one absolute meaning (*logocentrism*), that is the ideal or essential meaning.

Refusing the concept that sees meaning as singular and absolute, Derrida offers the concept of *trace*. Derrida’s *trace* concept refers to the definition of meanings itself as ‘the absence of a presence’ (Derrida 1997, 47). Therefore, the meaning is not singular (*phonocentrism*), but they are mere traces from the previous

meanings. These meaning's traces are always intertextual. In other words, one text may contain traces from other texts, and it makes the text can be interpreted continuously. In short, the meanings of everything (included the ones in literature) are always *trace*. The language and text have so many semantic varieties.

To discover the *trace*, Derrida also offers the concept of *differance*. The *differance* terminology comes from two words, those are *to defer* and *to differ*. The concept of *differance* mentions that the meanings in a text always defer and differ from any space and time according to its context (Derrida 1997). This concept also wants to acknowledge that language has never been stable, absolute, and definitive. Those meanings always co-exist, pass on, rectify, complete, reduce, or remove each other.

Acknowledging that the text is characterised by having *differance*, it is assumable that the meanings in literary works have never been absolute, signified, and definite. For that reason, the meaning traces are supposed to be let associated in a never-ending contestation. In Derridean's perspective, the traces appear through language in a form of oppositional, inconsistent, and ambivalent meanings. Hence, epistemologically, discovering the traces of meaning or interpreting a literary work means to reveal the oppositions, inconsistency, ambivalence, and *aporia* which present in a literary work.

Finally, the purpose of deconstruction reading is to show the failure of the absolute meaning's exposition in literary work. Deconstructive criticism wants to reveal the 'hidden agenda' that contain many flaws and imbalance behind the texts. Moreover, Culler in Nurgiyantoro (1995), argues that deconstructing a literary

discourse shows how to overthrow the philosophy that underlies it or to be in the opposition hierarchically towards something that lies behind it, by identifying the formation of the rhetoric operations in the text, that produce the primary argument which also functions as the main concept. In other words, deconstruction reading wants to oppose the general, common, or even 'primary' meaning which considered exists in a text.

## **2.2. Review of Related Studies**

As it is previously stated on the background of the study, there have been several studies proposed to analyse Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, being it as an old, classical novel that can be interpreted through many different theories and approaches. Sherwin (1981) in the article *Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe* discusses several issues that can be found in this novel, ranging from the psychology of the Frankenstein and the creation and the case with Mary Shelley, her 'involvement' in making the meanings in this literary work. This article aims to, first, see the life's experience of Victor Frankenstein, from his childhood to his death in which he has given up to life and regrets what he has put into the creation. Second, to see the direction changing of the creature from the innocent one who is curious and adventurous about seeking his identity to the murderous one who has experienced the rejection from humans and even Frankenstein as his creator. The third one—like the addition to this article—is Mary Shelley's experiences, inputs, thoughts, and her ideology is portrayed through this novel.

This research has been done through qualitative approach and while the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley is used as the main source, Sherwin also added a little bit about Shelley's autobiography and other works that strengthen her ideology and experience. This article applies one grand theory and one approach: Psychoanalysis and Expressive approach to examine the historical background of the author.

The results also vary; first, the underlying scheme of Frankenstein's bad experiences in his life, especially when he lost his mother that turns his life to the opposite of being happy and loved, motivated him to make the creation as an escape of his anxiety and the loss of his *objet petit a*, and eventually his creation-making ends up bringing him a psycho-trauma that he finally wants to give up on life. Second, how the creation starts as the 'sleeping beauty' until Frankenstein and people rejection build the monstrosity inside it and thus the creation begins to take revenge (also it is worth to mention that the creation is in the form of Frankenstein's unconscious mind as well). Third, is that this novel somewhat projects Shelley's life when she married Byron and had a baby whom she lost. Shelley as a mourning mother ideally projects Frankenstein's fearful literal creation.

The second study is conducted by Gigante (2000) in the article entitled *Facing the Ugly: The Case of "Frankenstein"*. The study talks about how the monster (or in this article mentioned as creature) is created by Victor Frankenstein. This article aims to find the 'ugly' within the creature that, on the surface, is what makes Victor Frankenstein decided to abandon his supposedly perfect creature. This journal does not only define what ugly and beauty in brief, but it applies to

how the creature is somehow in the middle of the beauty and ugly itself, hence causing the aporia. This qualitative journal relies on multiple texts as the comparison media as well as close reading and quotations on the Frankenstein story itself. This journal applies two theories such as Burkean Aesthetics and Kantian Aporia, but in addition to the writer, Mary Shelley, the researcher also applies Derrida's Deconstruction. The result is an ambivalence for what it is called as 'ugly' in Frankenstein's monster. The monster embraces what is considered ugly but it also holds the beauty such as the innocence, the superhuman physical power, as well as an overall better understanding and learning towards its surrounding.

The third study is conducted by Marsh (2015) in an article entitled *Romantic Medicine, the British Constitution, and "Frankenstein"*. The act of revival that is implied in Shelley's novel is a part of materialistic science, in which, Marsh argues that it is perceived as a threat to British constitution because it discredits the constitutional among individuals. And the Creature is the example of this threat. Science materialism is also seen as the pejorative by creationism and intelligent design, both emphasise the existence of God regarding life's origins.

Finally, the fourth study is conducted by Setyaningrum (2017), through her thesis entitled *The Real Monster in Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein*. Setyaningrum examined and deconstructed the monster's image as it is portrayed in Shelley's novel. Her thesis proposes to show a different perception of the monster's individuality related to Victor Frankenstein as its creator. Through a descriptive approach, this qualitative research depends on close reading to the novel itself to analyse the text that shows the characters' aspects that is going to be

deconstructed. This thesis used Deconstruction Theory that has been introduced by Jacques Derrida and to collect the data, the researcher used Jungian's theory of persona and shadow and apply them to Victor Frankenstein's characterisation. Finally, the result of this thesis shows that Victor Frankenstein is the real monster in this novel, and his 'insanity' is what brings the chaos in the novel.

In conclusion, these four studies still focus on partial reading in characterisation, psychoanalysis, historicism through an autobiography, biology, and socio-study. Even though Gigante (2000) has used deconstruction in the analysis, Gigante only focuses on the creature's quality as a binary opposition between the perfection and ugliness that the creature has. Meanwhile, the other three studies focus on Victor Frankenstein, his experiment, and the scientific background in the novel. Sherwin (1981) even stated Mary Shelley's circumstances, and how she possibly ended up coming with the idea of this novel, his study explores both Victor Frankenstein and Mary Shelley through the psychological approach. Marsh (2015) and Setyaningrum (2017) share similar views regarding science's involvement in the novel. Both scholars show disagreement towards the making of creation by Victor Frankenstein and consider it to be something immoral and blasphemous.

Moreover, these studies still revolve around the character Victor Frankenstein and the extravagant experiment that he has done, then relate it as the scientific rebellion against the religion. This is also illustrated in real-life events, precisely in the 18<sup>th</sup> century where The Age of Reason took place. At this time, religion acted as an institution, its ideologies were also involved in politics, but for

some other people, religion was considered as a faith. When people rely on reasons and logic, it is evident that people would begin to question the purpose of religion. The church is nearly empty during the workdays. Some people from a higher social class may visit the Church, but such an occasion usually happens on important holidays. Another issue related to religion as faith is the conflict with the Pagans who demand the rise of natural religion where nature is the centre of people's devotion as the creator. As a result, some people decide to repel from their religion completely, those people were called as atheists and/or agnostics.

Even so, this novel is not just a rejection of religious perspectives and the beginning of science domination. On the contrary, this novel can also be categorised as a pious novel; God's involvement and the faith towards religion are still apparent, and these previous studies ignore this aspect. Therefore, this thesis wants to accomplish this forgotten issue, without turning away from the existing paradigm about the scientific revolution. This novel is a projection not only one aspect but two, as a chain of binary opposition; science and religion, which perform together in a meaning contestation. Finally, to examine these meanings, deconstruction is selected as the way to show how the messages are shown, contested, and formed tangled traces in it.