

## DECONSTRUCTING BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN THE SHORT STORY *DOKTER* WRITTEN BY PUTU WIJAYA

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### Abstract

According to deconstructionists, a text possibly never has a single meaning because when it comes to the complex interpretations, it can bear several developing meanings. This qualitative study is aimed to deconstruct binary oppositions contained in the short story entitled 'dokter' written by Putu Wijaya using Derrida's framework. The data were collected by reading the entire text of the short story, identifying the binary oppositions, reversing the hierarchy, and finding other meanings concealed in the text. The results of this study show that there are five binary oppositions in this short story; they are doctor – shaman, God-human, modern – traditional, rich – poor, peaceful – conflict. From the analysis of deconstruction theory, the hierarchical position changed from inferior to superior along with the storyline. Furthermore, the doctor as the main character and is initially marginal at the beginning of the story, changed into the center of attention. Nevertheless, every single word needs other words to complete its meaning in the text, despite being never genuinely complete.

**Keywords:** Binary oppositions, short story, *dokter*.

### 1. Introduction

According to Wellek and Warren (2013), literature is a creative activity that produces a work of art. The literature presents and criticizes about life which is mostly of social experience; literature also imitates the nature and subjective world of humans. Literature always involves thoughts in people's experiences, psychology, religion, and morals. Every aspect of social life can be expressed in literature. The word literature is indeed inseparable from the aesthetic elements in which words or writings that contain the word 'beauty' to affect the reader or audience feel comforted. In KBBI, the purpose of literature is to entertain the reader; the work is light and distinguished from serious writing.

One of literary work is a short story. Short stories are imaginations or stories originating from daily life that are packaged in a good way without removing aesthetic elements that captivate the reader. Short stories consist of theme, plot, characterization, conflict, setting, and point of view. According to Poe in Stanton (2007, p. 80), the stories in the short story involve two effects, namely 'horror' and 'intelligence'. These two effects will drain out the emotions and intelligence of the reader.

The short story entitled 'dokter' written by Putu Wijaya published on Sunday, December 16 in Jawa Pos is one example of a literary work that criticizes the social culture in the modern era. This short story has been shown on a monologue of the FTI Award in 2007. The researcher was interested in studying this work because of his criticism on society's beliefs in the rural area. The author tries to deconstruct his work through language. The researchers examined this research using Derrida's framework.

The research that examines similar things has also been done by Lia Fadhilah in 2011 by the title 'Deconstruction Analysis on Major Female Character in Film a Destiny of Her Own'. This research focuses on the deconstructed feminist characteristic of the major female in the film. The result of this study finds that Veronica is decisive women who purpose herself become a courtesan. She is also an independent woman that is not minor as woman mostly other woman are. Moreover, using Derrida's frame, the writer found that the characteristic of Veronica is not constants. She wants to be a mistress to bear her family life. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the characteristics of Veronica do not produce stable meaning concerning depends on the context.

The related research has done by Fitrah Ardini (2017), titled 'Deconstruction of characters in Moana Movie. The result of this study showed that the superior character could not be inferior because each character had equal performance in building the story.

Hereinafter, the writer would focus this research on a whole text that can be deconstructing using Derrida's view. There is a problem that the writer wants to answer in this research. Does the short story 'dokter' deconstruct the text?

## 2. Literature Review

Deconstruction is a theory advocated by a philosopher France named Derrida. There are three Derrida's influential books in 1967; *Of Grammatology*, *Speech and Phenomenon*, and *Writing and Difference*. These books sharply criticize phenomenology (Husserl), linguistics (Saussurean), lacanian psychoanalysis, and structuralism (Levi-Straus). According to Derrida's view, deconstruction is the rejection of the center. Structuralism always prioritizes the center, yet deconstruction rejects the center because we must be able to think in other ways in order to find new concept even if they come from the periphery of which are considered insignificant. Saussurean opines that signifier and signified is a unity; there is no separator between them. On the other hand, Derrida argues that signified and signifier separate continuously but reunite new combination word as far as no ever achieve the meaning properly. Just as reading a text, the meaning of the word is unclear to be defined regarding signifier always show another meaning; meaning has no boundaries to describe the word itself (Sarup, 2008).

Deconstruction is a method or method in reading texts carefully, with the result that the conceptual differentiation of the text becomes inconsistent and paradoxical in the use of overall text concepts. Jacques Derrida as stated in Sim (2002) says that deconstruction is not a system of thought but rather a strategies effort to prove the instability of language that forms the basis of most theories.

Deconstruction work is to reveal the problematic centralized discourses, on the other hand, dismantles metaphysics by changing its boundaries conceptually. In this case, Derrida crosses the word which he considers inaccurate or inadequate in describing reality but still allows the word to be found and read in the reading. This language instability made Derrida initiate '*Sous rature*' which means 'given across' (Sarup, 2008).

Sarup (2008) declares that meaning is never equal because it appears in different contexts; signs never have the same absolute meaning. The meaning will never be the same from one context to another; *signified* will continue to be changed by various types of *the signifier* that ensnare them. In semiological terms, the word could only move the meaning of opposition with other pairs of words, as in the quote below:

"To summarize and discuss it in the terms of semiology (it becomes a brief analysis point that reflects, like a mirror, subject, and method of study), that words change the meaning only from the opposition with other words (usually in pairs of words), and that if this opposition is maintained, then the meaning is not ambiguous." (Barthes, 2012)

In his book, Barthes says the sign actually has inequality with signal, index, icon, symbol, allegory which are the main rival of the sign. Such general terms tend to show the relation between two of them, these features cannot be used to distinguish any term to find variations in meaning and we must use alternative terms namely presence/absence.

Sarup (2008) explains this deconstruction method is related to what Derrida calls 'metaphysics of presence'. According to Derrida "binary metaphysical opposition includes: signifier/signified, which can be sensed/can be reasonable, utterances/writings, conversations (*parole*)/language (*langue*), diachronic/synchronic, space/time, passivity/activity." In this case, Derrida opposed structuralism thinkers who did not put the concept under the cross, they never questioned binary opposition.

Binary opposition is a way of view or simply can be interpreted as a way to find the common thread between the opposition in pairs such as truth and misunderstanding, meaningful and meaningless, day and night, and center and periphery. Derrida tries to destroy the opposition and change the mindset that is commonly used by society in general with a different way of thinking by looking at the marginal as a tool to show the word that is centered, as in that one word in another requires each other to define the word, however, there is no words that can be defined correctly due to the indifference of meaning itself.

"*Phonocentrism - logocentrism* is related to centrism itself — that is, the human desire to put a 'central' at the point of departure and endpoint. Desire at the center, the pressure that gives authority, produces the concept of hierarchy opposition." (Sarup, 2008, p. 54)

In determining binary opposition and destroying hierarchy, it is necessary to know what is called inferior and superior in order to be able to distinguish the reality from that opposition.

### 3. Research Method

This study is using qualitative descriptive analysis as a method to deconstruct binary oppositions contained in the short story entitled 'dokter'. The data were collected by reading the entire text of the short story, identifying the binary oppositions, reversing the hierarchy, and finding other meanings concealed in the text.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In deconstructing a literary work, the first step that must be taken is to find or determine the binary opposition contained in the short story 'dokter'. Then, find the hierarchy from the binary opposition series in the text. The next step is to reverse the existing hierarchy; with the result, that deconstruction shows the text denying its basic logic. The final step is to reject or delay the emergence of new hierarchies.

### 4.1 Opposition in Pairs

The first step is looking for the opposition in pairs. The detected opposition is as follows:

**Table 1.** Detected opposition.

1	Doctor	Shaman
2	God	Human
3	Modern (medics)	Traditional (belief in shaman)
4	Rich	Poor
5	Peaceful	Conflict

### 4.2 Inter-Pair Hierarchy

After completing the first step, look for the inter-pair hierarchy as illustrated in the following quote:

#### 4.2.1 Doctor – Shaman

*“Itu tidak mungkin! Setiap hari lima orang dukun kami bergantian menjaga dia. Tidak mungkin roh jahat itu bisa masuk lagi. Pak Dokter mesti keluarkan ular itu dari perutnya!”*

From the quote above, it is clear how the shaman said to influence the community, so the doctor no longer matters to them. They see the doctor when the shaman can no longer act, often they bring the patient to a lifeless condition, so the doctor has no power to do anything. The role of the shaman in this short story can defeat the role of a doctor.

#### 4.2.2 God – Human

*“Tidak bisa! Kita tidak bisa bawa dia pulang dalam keadaan sudah jadi mayat. Dia harus terus hidup! Dia kita bawa kemari untuk maksud supaya dia bisa sembuh. Masak Dokter mau kirim lagi dia pulang supaya jadi mayat. Kasihan keluarganya, Dokter! Dia itu andalan hidup keluarganya, tahu?! Dia tidak boleh mati!”*

God is the creator of this Universe. Everyone agrees that God is the ruler of all things who has no equal. Everyone also believes that God is superior, yet in this text shows differently, as the quote above reveals in the text that God occupies an inferior position and humans occupy a superior position, which they believe humans can revive other humans who have died. In fact, God could bring the creature to life but humans could not. It shows how the text deconstructs the text itself.

#### 4.2.3 Modern (medics) – Traditional (belief in shaman)

In this modern era, people believe that hospitals are the first place to be visited when they are dying. Even the word 'hospital' is attached to their heads. For example, when an accident suddenly happened, the first thing that people think to help the victim is the nearest

hospital, unlike the people in the 'dokter' story; they prefer healing traditionally than modern.

*"Saya disumpah untuk menjalankan praktik sesuai dengan etik kedokteran. Tetapi, di dalam hutan, itu tidak berlaku...."*

According to the text, the rural community believes in the power of a shaman who can heal humans. They prefer traditional treatment by coming to the shaman compared to medical treatment at the local clinic. Even though they came to the local clinic but they did not on it as mention in the following quote:

*"Kata dukun, ular itu sudah masuk ke dalam tulang-sumsumnya, bersatu dengan darah. Dibawa ke China pun dia akan tetap mati, apalagi hanya ke puskesmas yang fasilitasnya berengsek ini. Dokter tidak bertanggung jawab!"*

It was clear that they were still holding the words of a shaman even though they were at the clinic. Other quotes that express the same thing:

*"Dia mati karena kurang gizi dan salah menenggak ramu-ramuan dukun. Tetapi meskipun sudah melihat kenyataan dengan mata kepalanya sendiri, keluarganya tidak percaya. Mereka malah menuduh saya yang sudah terlambat bertindak."*

The quote above is a sentence spoken by the doctor after experiencing a long journey in overcoming local residents who always blame him who make the mistake when their family is going to die. The text shows a reversal of the hierarchy towards the views of the people in that area.

#### 4.2.4 Rich – Poor

*"Kami memang miskin, tidak bisa bayar, tapi ini kewajiban Dokter mesti tolong kita punya kepala keluarga! Jangan bikin kami tambah susah, Dokter! Mentang-mentang kami orang kecil! Cepat bertindak!"*

According to the text above, it is clear that poor people are more powerful than rich people. They continue to threaten the doctor (as a rich person) if the patient is not healed or revived. In the theory of capitalism Jones (2010) the rich (bourgeois) are positioned on which they invest, while the poor (proletariat) only receive a low salary. From the text above, there is an opposition where the poor are more powerful than the rich. Another text that shows the same opinion:

*"Barang-barang saya jual satu per satu sampai saya kehilangan segala-galanya. Termasuk cincin pemberian ibu saya. Sementara itu, kondisi kesehatan di daerah terpencil tambah rawan. Frekuensi orang mati terus saja bertambah dan semuanya dibawa ke puskesmas, minta agar saya mengobatinya."*

The doctor must be willing to share his wealth with the community until he has nothing (bankrupt). It describes how the bourgeoisie has a lower degree than the proletariat.

#### 4.2.5 Peaceful – Conflict

*“Saya tidak mampu menjawab. Anak kepala suku itu sangat kecewa. Mukanya langsung keruh. Semua pengikutnya marah lalu berteriak-teriak histeris. Mereka melolong seperti binatang liar. Saya ketakutan. Para prajurit itu mengangkat senjata seperti hendak mencincang apa saja yang ada di puskesmas. Semua pegawai meloncat lari menyelamatkan diri.”*

In this story, conflicts often occur as shown in the text. The doctor should obey all of their commands because the rural society would kill him any time if he refuses. It could happen regarding their social factors; high self-esteem affects their emotional as in the following quote:

*“Kehormatan buat kami paling penting. Kami boleh kelaparan karena tidak dapat binatang perburuan, boleh mati karena wabah penyakit, boleh kocar-kacir karena kebakaran, gempa, banjir, longsor atau letusan gunung berapi, tapi jangan sampai kalah dan menanggung malu....”*

Self-respect is the most significant thing for society. Thus, no one could underestimate them along with disputed their argument.

#### 4.3 Reversal and Confusion

The third step of this analysis is the reversal and confusion step framed by binary opposition. At the beginning of the story, the local community trusted the name of the shaman; they trusted the shaman more than the medical team. They brought sick people to the local clinic after the shaman could not handle it or when the sick person was dying, the result they mostly died in the clinic.

One night, the doctor was picked up by residents to treat someone who sent poisonous snakes (according to shaman opinion) in his stomach. When he arrived at the clinic, he saw the patient's body was stiff. However, they urged doctors to heal the head of the family, even though the patients who were taken had already died before arriving at the clinic. After they knew the patient had died, they forced the doctor to turn him back. They asked the doctor to remove the snake in the patient's body.

The doctor felt bad because it was not in accordance with medical science. The doctor sat limply in the room beside the corpse and turned his brain to find the right words to give them an understanding that their family was lifeless; they can be furious if they speak wrongly. All night they kept guarding the health center. When the morning comes, the door was pounded; they could not wait to find out the results. The body of the corpse had a bad smell. The doctor told them to come in and see the conditions by themselves, but they refused it because the stench had spread everywhere. The doctor reached into his pocket and took the whole of his salary. He said that the corpse gave a message to them to give him permission because he was too tired to be the head of the family and deposit money with his wife and child. They were stupefied and took the money. It happen all the time; the doctor had to sell his items one by one, as a result, the doctor went bankrupt. He did not have any choice because in this condition he was like being trapped. He can die immediately if he cannot solve rural society problems.

From the story above, the doctor that stands as a marginal in the first story become superior; the society believes on the doctor opinion after his explanation about the corpse instruction which is given him permission to rest and deposit money to his family. The doctor was successful in laying the rural society. It portrays the unstable meaning of the text which word and another are related with the result that no word develops into superior.

## 5. Conclusions

There are five binary oppositions showed in 'dokter' short story; they are doctor – shaman, God-human, modern – traditional, rich – poor, peaceful – conflict. According to the story, the hierarchical position changed from inferior to superior along with the storyline. Furthermore, the doctor as the main character and is initially marginal at the beginning of the story, changed into the center of attention. Nevertheless, every single word needs other words to complete its meaning in the text, despite being never genuinely complete concerning always finding a different meaning.

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