British: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Volume. No, July 2025; pp 1-15
E-ISSN

Decontruction Analysis of Transgender In J.K Rowling's Novel "Troubled Blood"

Mardawati Rusman[1], Dahlia Husain[2], Ana Mariana[3]

Affiliation e.g. English Literature, Faculty of Social Science, Univertas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, Indonesia

Correspondence e-mail: anamariana@umgo.ac.id

Abstract

This study focuses on the deconstruction of transgender in the novel Troubled Blood by J.K Rowling. The theory used in this study is Derrida's deconstruction theory. This study uses a qualitative approach to apply the deconstruction theory to transgender in the novel Troubled Blood. The data used in this study were obtained from the novel Troubled Blood. The researcher found that binary inconsistency was carried out through the identification of meanings about gender identity, especially transgender, in the novel. In this study, it is known that the previously fixed meaning considered transgender to be a person who has confirmed their gender resembles the desired gender that is not different at birth. Derrida's deconstruction theory reverses this meaning to gain a new perspective on its contents. After analyzing the text deeply and broadly, a transgender is proven to be a person who still has instincts and attitudes like their original gender.

Keywords: *Transgender; deconstruction; novel*

INTRODUCTION

Transgender is a word used to describe people who act, feel, think, or look different from the way they were born. Transsexuality is not associated with any particular personality or sexual orientation. Transgender people can identify themselves as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual (Bowta & Puluhulawa, 2019)(Yash, 2003: 17). The study explores the concept of transgender identity, which refers to individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from their biological sex. Transgender individuals may face discrimination due to non-conformity with societal gender roles, which are traditionally rigid (e.g., men being masculine and women feminine). Gender dysphoria is introduced as a psychological condition where a person experiences discomfort due to a mismatch between their gender identity and biological sex. Transgender people often change or attempt to change their bodies through hormones, surgery, and other means to conform their bodies to their gender identity. Gender transition is a complex process and can involve changing gender to neither male nor female. Transitions often start by expressing their preferred gender in situations where they feel safe. They usually try to live full-time as their chosen gender, making many changes gradually. This transition process through medical intervention is often referred to as gender reassignment or gender change, but recently, it has also been referred to as gender confirmation (American Psychological Association: 2006).

Other than using media, the transgender also used illustrations found in literary works, such as novels. According to Bonn (2010:112), a novel is a long fictional narrative written in prose that developed from short stories and other early narrative

forms. Novels are usually structured according to a plot or theme, focusing on character development and action. The increased visibility and representation of transgender people in media, literature, and public discourse have contributed to a broader societal awareness. One such literary work is J.K. Rowling's novel Troubled Blood, written under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. The novel features a character, Dennis Creed, a transgender individual portrayed as a serial killer who deceives his victims by cross-dressing. This controversial depiction raises questions about how transgender identities are represented in literature.

Previous research used Derrida's deconstruction theory to describe the reversal of thought forms and binary opposition hierarchies in the main character, Guru Desi. The material of this research is texts taken from the novel Guru Ain, which describe the forms of thought and the reversal of Aini's binary opposition hierarchy. The data collection techniques used were reading, recording, and interpreting. Like the main character in the novel Guru Desi, Guru Aini is a character who is easily angered, intolerant, and apathetic. After the reversal of the binary opposition hierarchy, Desi has a patient nature and has positive traits such as tolerance and optimism. The text also reviews previous research, noting how other scholars have used linguistic and deconstructive methods to analyze literature.

The discussion expands into a philosophical perspective through the lens of Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction. Deconstruction, originally a method of reading texts, seeks to uncover hidden assumptions and contradictions within language and meaning. It dismantles binary oppositions such as male/female or normal/abnormal that have historically privileged one side over the other. Different from previous research, this research focuses on transgender identity. Central to this theory are several key concepts: instability of meaning, binary opposition, undecidability, and a critique of logocentrism. Each of these ideas not only reshapes our understanding of texts but also carries profound ethical implications (Johnson 1981: 15). Several key concepts of deconstruction are explained, including the instability of meaning, binary opposition, undecidability, and the critique of logocentrism. These ideas challenge the traditional belief in fixed meanings and instead promote a view of language and identity as fluid and evolving.

In this context, the study aims to deconstruct the portrayal of transgender identity in *Troubled Blood* and interrogate the assumptions behind it. The researcher focuses on exploring how the author of J.K. Rowling's novel *Troubled Blood* deconstructs the concept of transgender identity through the lens of Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, with the aim of analyzing the representation and underlying meaning of transgender characters as interpreted from the author's perspective. This study specifically examines how transgender identity is portrayed in the novel and seeks to understand the deconstructive elements used by the author, particularly in relation to the character development and narrative structure. Through this analysis, the researcher limits the scope to literary exploration, focusing on the novel *Troubled Blood* and the application of Derrida's deconstruction theory to interpret the complexities and possible contradictions in the portrayal of transgender identity.

The text discusses the complex and multifaceted identity of transgender individuals, exploring how their gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. It highlights

that being transgender is not tied to any specific sexual orientation and can encompass a wide spectrum of identities and expressions. Transgender people may undergo physical transitions using hormones or surgery to align their bodies with their gender identity, though this process varies greatly between individuals. There are three essential stages in developing gender identity: acquiring appropriate gender labels, gender stereotypes, and gender persistence (Brannon, 2005: 139). The challenges transgender people face are deeply rooted in societal norms and stigmas. Social recognition and acceptance are influenced by how gender roles are culturally enforced, particularly in childhood. Transgender individuals often experience significant personal moments that lead to their decision to transition and publicly embrace their identity, despite potential social backlash.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore how transgender identity is deconstructed in J.K. Rowling's novel *Troubled Blood*. Qualitative research allows for a deep understanding of the meanings individuals or groups assign to social and human issues, without making broad generalizations Creswell (2009: 4). The study applies Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction to analyze how the transgender character in the novel challenges traditional concepts of gender identity. Derrida's philosophy questions fixed meanings, binary structures, and assumptions of presence and representation, which makes it a suitable lens for this analysis. Derrida questions established concepts of presence, representation, and fixed meaning in his writings by examining the differences between speech and writing and their reciprocal relationships (Hendricks, 2016).

The primary data source is the novel itself, while secondary data includes books and articles related to deconstruction, gender identity, and previous studies on both *Troubled Blood* and other relevant literature. Data collection involved a series of steps: reading and familiarizing with the text, coding relevant passages, identifying oppositions and hierarchies within the text, and deconstructing them based on Derrida's key concepts—instability of meaning, binary opposition, undecidability, and critique of logocentrism. The final step was organizing the findings for analysis.

In the data analysis process, the researcher first identified and categorized data from the novel relevant to transgender representation. Then, through classification and deeper examination, each section was analyzed to reveal how the novel constructs and challenges traditional gender narratives. The study concludes by presenting interpretations based on the deconstruction framework, offering insights into how transgender identity is portrayed and problematized in the novel.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The approach uses deconstruction concepts based on Derrida Jaquels' theory.

Table 1. Deconstruction Concepts

Deconstruction Consepts	Data	Description
Instability of Meaning	Data 1 *Janice (Dennis Creed) goes to meet one of her friends in her neat little white van, wearing a pink coat, wearing a wig, and looking very feminine.....(Page 115)* Data 2 *"Which brings us to the third, and, I'd have to say, most promising suspect —always excepting Dennis Creed. This," said Strike, moving Satchwell's statement from the top of a now greatly diminished pile of paper, "is Steve Douthwaite."* Data 3 *Janice is a meticulous planner, a misguided genius who drives around in her neat little white van, wears a pink coat she stole from Vi Cooper, and sometimes wears a wig that, from a distance, —to the drunk victim, makes her fuzzy body look feminine, long enough to cover her large hands, and this is how she exploits her transgender identity.* Data 4 *"Controversial. Psychiatrists disagreed about whether or not he was sane at his trial. Very high IQ. In the end the jury decided he was capable of knowing what he was doing was wrong, hence prison, not hospital. But he must've developed symptoms since that to justify medical treatment.*	In this data, an ambiguous text is wearing a pink coat where it is known that the color pink is always identical to women. Pink is a color that is identical to Pujiyanti women (Habib and Yusanto, 2022), and also wearing a wig to indicate that she is a woman. Still, it is used when she wants to kill her victim; in other words, in this text, it can be seen that an identical word does not always have the same meaning. The phrase feminine will always refer to something weak, but it is very opposite in this context.
Binary Opposition	Data 5 *"He was a skinny man who had turned into a woman, plain, dressed like a woman," (Page 72)* Data 6 *"Do you think he wanted to believe that the patient was a man who dressed as a woman because—" "Because Janice (Dennis Creed) is transgender and likes to dress as a woman? Yes," Gupta said. (Page*	Based on this data, there is a text of women, namely the victims of Janice (a transgender), where this word refers to something ambiguous because the victims are women. At the same time, this is always identified with the perpetrator being a man. Still, the perpetrator is a transgender who changes his form from a

	114) Data 7 *Apparently the man in charge of the investigation into my mother's disappearance, a detective inspector called Bill Talbot, always thought Creed took her. Talbot will be dead by now; he was coming up for retirement anyway. "* Data 8 *Janice is hiding somewhere in her van, waiting for a woman—any woman—to walk by in the rain, who will be the victim. This is where I can see the incident.* Data 9 *"Why're there people like me at all, Cormoran? Why's evolution let it happen? Because humans are so highly developed, we can only thin ourselves out with intraspecies predators. Pick off the weak, the morally depraved. It's a good thing that degenerate, —drunk women don't breed. That's just a fact, it's a fact," said Dennis Creed*	man to a woman. In the text, there is another meaning that the author wants to convey, where, in essence, the natural traits of men will always be in a man, even after he changes his form.
Undecidability	Data 10 *"From the very small amount of reading," Strike continued, "I can see why the lead investigator thought Margot Bamborough might have been one of Creed's victims. Supposedly, there was a small van seen speeding in the area, around the time she was supposed to be walking to Three Kings. Creed used vans," Strike explained, responding to Robin's questioning look, "in several other known abductions."* Data 11 *"He took the baby out of my arms as soon as I'd had it and said he was going to kill it. Drown it in the outside toilet. I begged him not to. I pleaded with him to let the baby live. I hadn't known till then whether I wanted it to live or die, but once you've seen them, held them… and he was strong, Dennis, he wanted to live, you could tell."* Data 12 *"They say he's very clever, is he?" I told her that he was,*	From this data, there is text that has another meaning, where the word van does not refer to a vehicle but rather a place to execute his victims. And one word can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is spoken. Strike says speeding refers to a vehicle, but at the same time, Robi says the van was the place where the victim was killed; it can be concluded that a van does not always refer to a vehicle; it all depends on the context in which it is spoken. The phrase "he's very clever" in this passage indicates a fixed quality associated with the character. The text's exploration of intelligence and identity parallels a broader discussion of transgender representation in this text. By framing Creed's intelligence alongside his violent actions, the author perpetuates a narrative that equates

	undoubtedly, very clever. —It was the one point on which all his psychiatrists agreed. Warders told me he read extensively, especially books of psychology.	nonconformity (in this case, cross-dressing) with danger. This reinforces negative stereotypes of transgender individuals as deceivers or predators, echoing societal anxieties that have historically marginalized these identities.

Any change in the meaning properties of a linguistic system (a human speaker, for example) would lead to many changes or possibly a complete change in the entire system.(Fodor and Lepore 1992, 1996, 1999). Derrida argues that meanings are not fixed; they are fluid and context-dependent. This principle is crucial in understanding gender, which cannot be reduced to binary male and female categories. Instead, gender exists on a spectrum, allowing for diverse identities beyond traditional definitions. This aligns with the notion that terms like "woman" or "man" can be redefined or even rendered obsolete in specific contexts, highlighting the potential for multiple interpretations of gender identity. The ambiguity of Meaning in Undecidability refers to the notion that certain concepts or identities cannot be definitively categorized or resolved. This reflects the complexities of gender identity, where individuals may not fit neatly into binary categories of male or female. The diversity of Interpretation in Undecidability allows multiple interpretations and meanings to coexist simultaneously. This aligns with the experiences of transgender individuals, who may navigate various societal perceptions and personal understandings of their identities. Implications for transgender identity, the phrase encapsulates societal struggles with understanding transgender identities within rigid frameworks. By deconstructing this language, we can reveal the complexities and contradictions inherent in how society perceives gender transformation. It challenges us to think critically about how language shapes our understanding of identity and the lived experiences of transgender individuals.

Since the patriarchal society was formed, “Man” and “woman” have been opposed as binary oppositional terms. The crucial principle governing the functioning of binary opposition is “mediation between its extreme elements” (Rudnev, 1999, p. 38). Deconstruction challenges binary oppositions, such as male/female or cisgender/transgender, revealing how these categories often privilege one over the other. In discussions about transgender identities, this principle encourages us to question the hierarchies embedded within these binaries. For example, the traditional view that positions cisgender identities as normative marginalizes transgender experiences. By subverting these oppositions, we can recognize that both cisgender and transgender identities are valid and interconnected.

Deconstruct the phrase “He was a skinny man who had turned into a woman, plain, dressed like a woman” using Jacques Derrida's theory, we can analyze the underlying structures, assumptions, and implications inherent in the language. Man vs. Woman: The phrase establishes a binary opposition between "man" and "woman." Derrida's deconstruction seeks to challenge the stability of these categories by revealing their fluidity. The statement implies a transformation, suggesting that gender identity is not fixed but rather subject to change and interpretation. Male/Female: The novel

presents traditional gender binaries, often framing characters within these opposing categories. This can serve to highlight societal expectations around masculinity and femininity, which are challenged by the existence of transgender individuals and the complexities of identity. Victim/Perpetrator: The narrative intertwines themes of victimization and agency. Characters may initially appear to fit neatly into these roles, but as the plot unfolds, the boundaries blur. This reflects the instability of meaning inherent in gender identities, where individuals may occupy multiple roles simultaneously. Normative/Deviant: The book examines societal norms surrounding gender and how those who deviate from these norms, including transgender individuals, are often marginalized. This tension illustrates how rigid binaries fail to encompass the lived realities of diverse identities.

CONCLUSION DAN SUGGESTIONS

J.K. Rowling's *Troubled Blood* reinforces a traditional gender hierarchy by portraying femininity, especially when adopted by men, as deceptive and dangerous. Dennis Creed—a male serial killer who cross-dresses to commit his crimes—is depicted not as a transgender character, but as someone weaponizing feminine traits, reinforcing the idea that "true" femininity belongs only to biological women. This depiction rests on a rigid, logocentric understanding of gender, where it is fixed by biology, and gender variance is seen as inauthentic or pathological. At the same time, the novel offers moments of complexity: characters like Robin engage in feminine expression without the moral judgment applied to Creed, suggesting moments of subversion and a more nuanced view of gender performance. By framing Creed's cross-dressing as an outcome of trauma or fetish rather than identity, the story opens a dialogue about societal expectations around masculinity and femininity. Nevertheless, Rowling's framing inadvertently sustains harmful stereotypes by associating feminine performance with deceit and danger, contributing to cultural misunderstanding of transgender identities. The research also points to further scholarly opportunities, particularly in examining the novel's use of accents and the role of language and culture in portraying gender and identity.

REFERENCES

Agrawal, Surbhi. "Transgender Community - They Are Neither A Sin, Nor A Choice: An Analysis." *Indian Social Science Journal,* vol. 5, no. 1, 2016, pp. 47-60

Al-fayyadl, Muhammad. 2006. Derrida. Yogyakarta: LKiS

American Psychological Association. (2006). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author

Bilodeau, Brent, and Kristen A. Renn. *"Analysis of LGBT Identity Development Models and Implications for Practice."* New Directions for Student Services, 2005

Brannon, L. (2005). *Gender: Psychological Perspectives* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon

Bowta, F., & Puluhulawa, Y. (2019). Deconstructive Analysis of Main Character in Frankenstein Novel By Mery Shelley. *British (Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Inggris)*, *7*(1), 60.https://doi.org/10.31314/british.7.1.60-71.2018

Cornell, D., Carlson, M., & Benjamin, D. G. (Eds.). (1992). *Deconstruction and the possibility of justice* (including "Force of the Law"). New York, NY: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge,* 1972. [Marges de la philosophie. Paris: Minuit, 1972].Aker, Hacer.

Derrida, Jaquesm, 1998. *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Prees, New York: Fordham University Press

Derrida, J., 1976, Of grammatology, transl. G.C. Spivak, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.

Derrida, J., 1977, 'Signature event context', transl. S. Weber & J. Mehlman, Glyph 1, 172–197.

Derrida, J., 1978, Structure, sign and play in the discourse of humanities. Writing and difference, transl. A. Bass, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Derrida, J., 1981, Positions, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Femilia Bowta, Yulan Puluhulawa "Deconstructive Analysis Of Main Character In Frankenstein Novel By Mery Shelley." *British, Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris,* Volume 8. No 2. Juni 2018

Hendricks, G. P. (2016). *Deconstruction the end of writing: "Everything is a text, there is nothing outside context"*. Verbum et Ecclesia, 37(1), Article a1509. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v37i1.1509

Kurniawati, N. (2020). *The deconstruction of the main character in Guru Aini novel by Andrea Hirata: Derrida perspective* [Peer-reviewed article]. *Hortatori: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, 4*(1), 24–30. https://doi.org/10.30998/jh.v4i1.314

Norris, C. (2006). *On truth and meaning: Language, logic and the grounds of belief*. London, UK: A & C Black.

Nur Hanif, M., & Faruk, H. T. (2019). *Dekonstruksi struktur novel Olenka karya Budi Darma* [Magister's thesis, Universitas Gadjah Mada]. UGM Institutional Repository.

Wuriyani, P. E., & Andini, A. (2021). Participant's understanding of the short story "Angels Also Know" by Dee Lestari: A deconstruction approach. *Proceeding ISLALE 2021 The 3 Th International Seminar on of Language, Art, and Literature Education*, *October*, 37–43.