

Deconstruction of The Korawa Character in The Novel Perang By Putu Wijaya

Khusnul Fatonah¹, Gohar Rahman²

Esa Unggul University, Indonesia¹

National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan²

Correspondent: khusnul.fatonah@esaunggul.ac.id¹

Received : February 26, 2024

Accepted : Maret 11, 2024

Published : Maret 30, 2024

Citation: Fatonah, H., & Rahman, G. (2024). The Effect of Job Stress and Cyberloafing on Organizational Commitment on Soe Bank Employees in The City of Surabaya. *Lingua : Journal of Linguistics and Language*, 2(1), 15-31. <https://doi.org/10.61978/legalis.v2i1>

ABSTRACT: This research aims to analyze the deconstruction of the Korawa characters in the novel *Perang* by Putu Wijaya. In the epic Mahabharata, the Korawa are conventionally positioned as antagonistic figures representing evil, while the Pandawa are depicted as symbols of virtue. However, through a deconstructive approach, the novel *Perang* dismantles this binary opposition and presents a new perspective on the Korawa. This type of research is qualitative, utilizing content analysis and supported by Derrida's deconstruction theory. Data is drawn from quotes in the novel that reveal shifts in meaning, the reconstruction of the Korawa character, and criticism of several narratives that have long been considered absolute. The results of the research show that the Korawa in the novel *Perang* is not only portrayed as the evil side but also as a group with complex characters, humanitarian values, and perspectives that can be understood. By deconstructing the dichotomy between good and evil, this novel offers a new discourse that history and the identity of characters are not absolute but rather the result of constructions that can be questioned and reinterpreted.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Korawa, novel *Perang*, binary opposition



This is an open access article under the CC-BY 4.0 license

INTRODUCTION

Classical epics can serve as a source of inspiration for writers to present reinterpretations of old tales (Setyawati, 2020). One example is the novel *Perang* by Putu Wijaya, which takes the story of the Mahabharata and approaches it from a more modern and critical perspective. This novel offers a different viewpoint on the characters that have been conventionally known in the epic, especially the Korawa, who are positioned as antagonists in the classical narrative (Kharisma & Tanureja, 2024; Nuryantiningasih & Hari Yanti, 2021). This different perspective serves as a form of deconstruction of the binary opposition that has been ingrained in the Mahabharata narrative.

Deconstruction in modern and contemporary literature is quite common. Writers can craft a story with interpretations that are very different, even diverging from what the general public has agreed upon (Suyono, 2021). This is explained in the novel *Perang* which presents the Korawa in a more complex dimension with psychological, social, and ideological backgrounds that are diverse.

Through the character of Korawa, Putu Wijaya seeks to dismantle the notion that has been long believed by society—that something considered evil may not always be evil, and vice versa.

The deconstruction approach introduced by Jacques Derrida serves as a relevant analytical tool for examining how the Korawa character in the novel *Perang* undergo a dismantling of meaning from established concepts in the Mahabharata. Derrida also presents the concept of decentering, which refers to a structure without a center and hierarchy (Orsini, 2024; Ratna, 2015). Researchers can understand and analyze elements that have traditionally been deemed less important in a text, such as secondary characters, supporting roles, antagonists, minor themes, footnotes, and even neglected blank spaces. In the context of the novel, deconstructive analysis plays a role in unraveling the hierarchical structures that shape the narrative, including how characters and characterization not only serve as complements but also possess roles that can alter the understanding of the overall plot. Thus, deconstruction allows for a re-reading of the text to reveal hidden meanings behind the narrative constructs that have been conventionally accepted (Nurhamidah et al., 2024).

A rereading of binary structures in texts, such as good-bad or protagonist-antagonist, which are often considered fixed and absolute, opens up the possibility of reevaluating meanings that have previously been accepted uncritically (Emzir & Rohman, 2015; Hamdani, 2024). Deconstruction allows for a shift in perspective regarding characters and events in a story, making the apparent opposition more blurred and complex. In this context, characters previously categorized as antagonists may possess hidden humanistic sides, while protagonists do not always represent absolute goodness. Therefore, this rereading not only alters our understanding of the text but also encourages readers to be more critical in examining how narratives are constructed and meanings are deconstructed within literary works in a more philosophical way (Norris, 2017; Yasmeen et al., 2024).

In the novel *Perang*, deconstruction not only functions as a narrative technique but also as a tool to question fundamental concepts such as truth, justice, and morality that have been inherited from the Mahabharata. Putu Wijaya challenges conventional understandings of who is considered right and who is considered wrong by presenting a more complex perspective on the Korawa and Pandawa. Through this approach, the truth presented in the novel *Perang* is not singular but always depends on perspective, interests, and the social constructs that shape it. Thus, deconstruction in this novel not only dismantles entrenched meanings but also opens opportunities for readers to reinterpret conflicts and values that have long been regarded as absolute.

Another issue that can be discussed in deconstruction is the flattening of grand narratives (Pusterla, 2025). By deconstruction, a neatly organized and structured construct is “broken down,” “damaged,” or “dismantled” to produce a new construction. Through the dismantling of classical narrative structures, Putu Wijaya changes the perspective on the Korawa characters, who have long been depicted as symbols of evil. Deconstruction leads to a new perspective that asserts there is no single truth that can be accepted unconditionally. This novel also emphasizes the relativity in evaluating good and evil, while simultaneously critiquing the human tendency to build narratives based on limited viewpoints.

The novelty of this research lies in the deconstructive analysis of the Korawa characters, which has not been studied in the last five years. Previous research focused on the analysis of the Semar

character, portrayed as a protagonist in the novel *Perang* (Munanto & Rahima, 2020). Other research conducted by Widiyanto (2023) focused on the deconstruction of the Barata Yuda myth and the character-building values contained within. Meanwhile, this study specifically analyzes how deconstruction occurs to dismantle the constructed identity of the Korawa in literary texts. By tracing the shifts in meaning within the novel, this research offers a new perspective that the boundaries between good and evil in history or literature are not absolute, but are social constructs that can be questioned and reinterpreted. This research also contributes to contemporary Indonesian literature studies by demonstrating how modern literary works can challenge and reinterpret classical cultural legacies.

METHOD

This research is a type of qualitative study. The issue addressed relates to the reversal of the hierarchy of the opposing texts of the Korawa character. The method used in this research is content analysis supported by Derrida's deconstruction theory. To maintain the validity of the data in this research, triangulation of data sources and theories was conducted (Moleong, 2013).

The data in this research consists of quotes from the novel *Perang* by Putu Wijaya, which explain the binary opposition dichotomy, namely the initial meanings of the Korawa character and the deconstruction of the Korawa character in the novel. Binary opposition refers to a pair of non-physical elements related to things that have opposite meanings (Bowta & Puluhalawa, 2019; Indriana & Wiyatmi, 2022). Meanwhile, the dichotomy analysis is based on three focuses: how the relationship between Korawa and Pandawa is portrayed, how Korawa is viewed by the people of Amarta, and the causes of hostility between Pandawa and Korawa.

The techniques used to collect data in this research consist of observation with note-taking and library techniques. The researcher carefully, purposefully, and thoroughly listens to data sourced from the novel *Perang* by Putu Wijaya. This observation technique is important to assess the quality of qualitative research (Lavee & Itzhakov, 2023). Meanwhile, the library technique is used to complement data and analyses sourced from various references, including journal articles and books.

Data collection is carried out in several stages as follows (Nursafika, 2019).

1. The researcher reads the novel *Perang* by Putu Wijaya in depth to discover the major themes within the text. The major theme identified relates to the conflict between the Pandawa and Korawa, which is philosophically associated with good vs. evil.
2. The researcher creates a table of binary opposition of the Korawa characters in the form of initial meanings and their deconstruction.
3. The researcher marks or notes quotes in the novel that demonstrate shifts in meaning, reconstruction of the Korawa characters, as well as some critiques of the narratives that have long been considered absolute.

The research analysis techniques are carried out in the following steps.

1. Identifying binary opposition

The researcher determines the concepts constructed in the novel, such as Pandawa vs. Korawa.

2. Unpacking the hierarchy of meaning

The researcher analyzes how Putu Wijaya presents the Korawa characters from a different perspective with more complex characteristics through quotes in the novel. This activity is carried out by analyzing quotes in the novel that show shifts in meaning, reconstruction of the Korawa characters, and critiques of several narratives that have long been considered absolute.

3. Looking for inconsistencies and ambiguities

The researcher examines parts of the text that challenge established meanings in the Mahabharata epic for deconstruction. This analysis is based on quotes that indicate shifts in meaning, reconstruction of the Korawa characters, and critiques of several narratives considered absolute.

4. Reinterpreting meaning

The researcher compiles a new understanding of the Korawa characters in the novel based on the results of the deconstructive analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research will explain the results of the deconstruction of the Korawa characters in the novel Perang by Putu Wijaya. The analysis will focus on the dismantling of the Korawa characters, who have previously been narrated as antagonistic figures. This aligns with deconstruction theory, which emphasizes the rejection of final truths, critical methods against structures, renewal of language concepts, rejection of binary oppositions, and the ability to construct new concepts (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rohman, 2014). In other words, deconstructive critique explains that the concepts of protagonist and antagonist in a story are not final. Some aspects are not visible to the readers and need further analysis. For example, the protagonist side of a character viewed by the reader can become antagonistic from a different perspective, and vice versa (Greene, 2023; Wardani & Triyono, 2024; Weking & Pramesti, 2024). To clarify this, a table of the binary opposition dichotomy of the Korawa characters in the novel Perang by Putu Wijaya is presented below.

Table 1. Binary Oppositional Dichotomy of the Korawa Figures

Initial Meaning	Deconstruction
Korawa are the enemies of Pandawa	Korawa are not enemies of Pandawa
The initial cause of hostility originates from the Korawa side	The initial cause of hostility comes from the caregivers of both Korawa and Pandawa during their childhood
Korawa are the sowers of seeds of hatred towards Pandawa	The prejudices held by the Pandawa side are the beginning of the hatred towards the Korawa
Korawa symbolizes evil and the wrath of the gods	Many from the Korawa side are kind-hearted, patient, and desire peace
Korawa acts arbitrarily towards the people of Amarta	Korawa cares for the people of Amarta

Initial Meaning of Pandawa vs Korawa = Goodness vs Evil

In the original story of Mahabharata, the Pandawas are depicted as the protagonists, while the Korawas are portrayed as the antagonists (Nurnani, 2021; Sari, 2021). The Pandawas are characterized as good-natured, patient, and wise, whereas the Korawas are shown as greedy, envious, arrogant, and cruel. Initially, they are brothers; however, the struggle for the throne in the Kingdom of Hastinapura becomes the cause of conflict between them, leading to animosity. The labels of goodness vs evil become more pronounced when the Baratayudha War occurs. In that war, the Pandawas emerge victorious, reinforcing the idea that goodness can always triumph over evil.

The same can be seen in the initial depiction in the novel *Perang*. The novel explains that the Korawas are the enemies of the Pandawas and the people of Amarta. The portrayal of the Korawas as antagonists is evident in the conversations among the Pandawas, as well as the attitudes and behaviors of the Korawas, which they perceive as being constantly hostile toward the Pandawas and the people of Amarta. The prophecy from the gods stating that the Pandawas will win in the Baratayudha War strengthens the position of the Korawas as a symbol of wrath. The following is evidence illustrating the wrongdoing of the Korawas in the eyes of the Punakawan, the five Pandawas, and the people of Amarta.

Sebetulnya lawan kita ini siapa?" tanya Petruk tengah malam kepada Gareng. Gareng terkejut. Ia memandangi Petruk dengan pandangan mata aneh. Setelah menelan perasaannya, ia baru melentingkan jawabannya.

*"Ya **Korawa** dong. Kenapa, sih?" (Perang, blm. 16)*

"Actually, **who is our enemy?**" asked Petruk in the middle of the night to Gareng. Gareng was startled. He looked at Petruk with a strange expression. After swallowing his emotions, he finally answered.

"Of course, it's the **Korawa**. Why do you ask?" (Perang, p. 16)

This conversation is between Petruk and Gareng about who their true enemy is. Gareng's answer confirms that their enemy is indeed the Korawa. He emphasizes it twice to make Petruk believe that their enemy is the Korawa.

Gareng mundur teratur kembali ke tempat tidur. Lalu ia mendekatkan lagi mulutnya ke telinga Petruk dan berbisik.

*"**Korawa** dong. **Musuh kita Korawa**, siapa lagi!" (Perang, blm. 17).*

Gareng retreated steadily back to bed. Then he brought his mouth closer to Petruk's ear and whispered.

"**Korawa**, please. **Our enemy is the Korawa**, who else!" (Perang, p. 17).

There were doubts in Petruk's heart regarding this enemy. Then, Petruk tried again to ask his other brother, Bagong.

"Apa yang kauketahui tentang Korawa, Bagong? "

Bagong bingung.

....

"Tidak ada yang pantas diketahui tentang Korawa lagi. Semuanya sudah jelas. Termasuk pengaruhnya yang kuat untuk membuat orang menjadi penghianat!" (Perang, blm. 52).

"What do you know about Korawa, Bagong? "

Bagong was confused.

....

"There is nothing worth knowing about Korawa anymore. Everything is clear. **Including its strong influence in turning people into traitors!**" (Perang, p. 52).

This quote explains that the Korawa were their enemies. Korawa power is described as a threatening power. This is also confirmed by the predictions of the gods that Korawa will lose in the Baratayudha. The Korawa's defeat later proved that evil will indeed be defeated by good. Siding with the Pandawa means siding with goodness, and vice versa.

Apart from the Punakawan, there was also a representative from the Pandawa, Bima, who also strongly agreed that their enemies were the Korawa. At the royal court, Bima repeatedly convinced those present at the court to destroy the Korawa before the Baratayudha War began so that the peace of the Amarta people would not be disturbed by them. The following quote proves this.

*"... Itu **Korawa sudah makin berani** sekarang, **hutan kita ditebangnya**, semua **ikan di telaga dicuri**, **binatang dibunuh**, **rakyat kita kelaparan**, masak mau dibiarkan terus. Lebih baik kita tonjok sekarang sebelum dia duluan main sergap. Kita perang saja sekarang mumpung Begawan Dorna sakit. (Perang, blm. 22)*

"... The **Korawa are getting bolder now**, they have **cut down** our **forests**, **stolen** all the **fish** in the lake, **killed the animals**, our **people are starving**, they want to let them cook. It's better if we punch him now before he plays ambush first. Let's just fight now while Begawan Dorna is sick. (Perang, p. 22).

Bima's statement made at the royal court proved that the Korawa were a cruel and greedy enemy that had to be dealt with immediately. Bima repeatedly emphasized that the Korawa had been hostile to the Pandawa all this time. The Korawa always disturbed the peace of the Pandawa and the people of Amarta. The following quote proves this.

*"**Musuh kita Korawa, jelas!**" teriak Bima dari kursi belakang. Kalau tidak kita akan terus-menerus diganggunya. Meskipun mereka itu saudara kita sendiri menurut garis keturunan. Tetapi di dalam kenyataannya, tingkah lakunya sudah jelas memusubi kepentingan kita. ... (Perang, blm. 23).*

"Our enemy is Korawa, clearly!" shouted Bima from the back seat. Otherwise we will continue to be disturbed. Even though they are our brothers according to bloodline. But in reality, his behavior is hostile to our interests. ... (Perang, p. 23).

The very disturbing attitudes and actions of the Korawa were also felt by the people of Amarta, who in this case were represented by the people of Karang Tumaritis.

*"Dulu ketika raksasa-raksasa dari daerah **Korawa merampok** dusun kita, kita juga sudah diam, karena tidak mau membuat sengketa. Dulu ketika **padi-padi kita rusak dimakan tikus yang dilepaskan oleh orang-orang Korawa**, kita juga tidak membalas. Bahkan waktu mata uang kita kacau karena banyaknya **beredar mata uang palsu yang dicetak di Korawa** kita juga hanya melempem ..." (Perang, hlm. 73).*

"In the past, when giants from the **Korawa area robbed** our village, we were also silent, because we didn't want to create a dispute. In the past, when **our rice was damaged by rats released by the Korawa people**, we did not retaliate. When our currency was in chaos due to the large number of **counterfeit currency printed in Korawa circulating**, our currency was only sluggish ..." (Perang, p. 73).

This quote proves that the Korawa's actions were far from good values, such as robbing residents' villages, destroying crops, circulating fake currency, leaking school exam questions, playing bribes, and so on. Meanwhile, the Pandava people always gave in to the behavior of the Korawa people.

Deconstruction of the Korawa against the Pandawa and the People of Amarta

In the epic Mahabharata, the Korawa are conventionally positioned as the antagonists in opposition to the Pandawa, while the people of Amarta are depicted as supporters of virtue and truth. However, in the novel Perang by Putu Wijaya, this image undergoes deconstruction through a narrative that highlights the Korawa perspective more complexly. Putu Wijaya presents a viewpoint that challenges the absolute truth traditionally attached to the Pandawa. This analysis will focus on how deconstruction is performed on the relationship between the Korawa and Pandawa as well as the people of Amarta and Astina. The Korawa, who are narrated as symbols of evil by the Pandawa, are then deconstructed through the intermediaries of the characters Semar and Petruk. They are among the Punakawan who serve as loyal servants and advisors to the Pandavas (Irma, 2017). In Javanese wayang stories, these Punakawan characters are depicted as a group that is honest, simple, sincere, knowledgeable, wise, cunning, and possessing sharp insight. The existence of these Punakawan characters aligns with Junus's (Endraswara, 2013), which explains that the interpretation of literary works can begin from any aspect, including aspects that are very small and not often noticed by people.

a. The Korawas are Not the True Enemies

When the Pandawa and their people were convinced that their enemy was the Korawa, Semar and Petruk expressed a different opinion. Both believed that the Korawa were not their main enemy. Semar even stated his opinion clearly in a court session as follows.

*"Saya kira **musuh kita ini adalah diri sendiri**. Buat saya pribadi **musuh saya adalah diri saya sendiri**. Ya segala kejelekan-kejelekan saya, segala kebodohan saya, segala kemalasan, korupsi yang saya lakukan, termasuk keinginan dan pendapat-pendapat serta keyakinan maupun kesimpulan-kesimpulan saya yang akhirnya menjebak dan menghancurkan saya sendiri karena saya tak pernah dapat mengendalikannya, yang membuat saya jadi angkara, ingin mengalahkan orang lain... **Saya tak punya musuh lain**. (Perang, hlm. 33-34).*

"I believe **our enemy is ourselves**. For me, **my enemy is myself**. Yes, all of my wrongdoings, all my ignorance, all my laziness, the corruption I commit, including my desires, opinions, beliefs, and conclusions that ultimately trap and destroy me because I can never control them, which makes me angry, wanting to defeat others... **I have no other enemies**." (Perang, p. 33-34).

In this excerpt, Putu Wijaya deconstructs the concept of the enemy in the narrative of war. Conventionally, warfare always presents the enemy as an external entity that must be defeated, as seen in the Mahabharata, where the Pandawa and the Korawa face each other as two opposing factions. However, in the novel Perang, this idea is questioned and reversed by asserting that the true enemy is not the other party, but oneself. Evil is no longer placed on specific individuals or groups; instead, it originates from within the human psyche, such as greed, dissatisfaction, and excessive ambition. This deconstruction dismantles the clear boundaries between "good" and "evil," as well as challenges the notion that war always involves external parties as foes to be destroyed (Childers & Barnett, 2024).

The novel also illustrates that true war is more complex and personal, not merely about defeating an opponent, but also about controlling oneself to avoid being trapped in a cycle of hatred and destruction. This approach reflects the essence of deconstruction, which is to unpack meanings that are considered stable and offer a new, more critical, and reflective perspective on the reality of war and human conflict.

Semar also assures his people that the earthquake disaster affecting Amarta is not necessarily due to the actions of the Korawa. Semar emphasizes that the people of Amarta should not jump to conclusions about the Kauravas.

*"Rasa pada dasarnya sering digerakkan oleh prasangka. Dan **prasangka selalu menempatkan orang lain salah**, sementara diri kita sendiri betul. Meskipun **kita duga keras benih dari segala bencana ini adalah Korawa, belum ada bukti nyata, bahwa mereka yang melakukannya**. Dan setiap tindakan yang tanpa disertai oleh bukti akan menyebabkan kita yang semula benar akan langsung tergeser menjadi orang yang salah.."* (Perang, hlm. 74).

" Feelings are often driven by prejudice. And **prejudice always places others in the wrong**, while we are right. Even if **we strongly suspect that the seeds of all this disaster lie with the Korawa, there is not yet any real evidence that they are the perpetrators**.

And any action taken without accompanying proof will cause us, who were initially right, to immediately become wrong." (Perang, p. 74).

The quotation demonstrates that the people of Karang Tumaritis, as part of the Kingdom of Amarta, have been dominated by a desire known as prejudice. Alport and Myers explain that prejudice is a form of dislike or negative judgment based on inaccurate and rigid generalizations about a certain group (Nashori, 2017). Prejudice fosters a negative attitude toward certain groups, not based on facts, and directly generalizes to all members of the group.

Prejudice is also a representation created by a group of people from a certain identity about their own identity (self) and the identity of others (other) to maintain the hierarchy of identities in society, whether consciously or unconsciously. This prejudice can arise from the condition of human ignorance, leading to the categorization of certain individuals, and can stem from social-economic injustices among individuals (Adnan et al., 2024; Ulaan et al., 2016). On a larger scale, prejudice can lead to conflict and division (Bobba et al., 2024). This is what is attempted to be depicted in the novel.

Furthermore, this quote highlights how injustice can occur when a group is immediately branded as guilty without any substantial evidence. The concept of justice in this novel is no longer absolute; rather, it depends on the prevailing perspective during an event. Thus, Putu Wijaya reverses the conventional understanding of truth and demonstrates that actions taken based on prejudice can lead those who feel correct to become the wrong party. This approach reflects the main principle of deconstruction, which is to dismantle established beliefs and reveal that every truth considered absolute can be questioned and reinterpreted (Childers & Barnett, 2024).

In addition to Semar, there is also Petruk, who has proven that the Korawa are not enemies that need to be defeated. After Petruk secretly traveled to Astina, he saw that the people of Astina were friendly, smiling, polite, and humane. There were no signs of hostility from them towards the people of Amarta.

"Orang-orang Astina ternyata tidak semuanya jahat. Banyak sekali yang baik. Aku sering sekali mendapat senyuman dan tegur sapa yang sopan, bahkan lebih dari apa yang pernah aku terima di Amarta. Aku sering ditawari rokok atau disinggahkan untuk minum, karena dianggap orang dari pedalaman. Mereka ramah dan manusiawi," bisik Petruk sambil terpesona (Perang, hlm. 44).

"The people of Astina turned out not to be all bad. Many of them are good. I often receive smiles and polite greetings, even more than I have ever received in Amarta. I am often offered cigarettes or invited for a drink, as I am seen as someone from the countryside. They are friendly and humane," whispered Petruk in awe (Perang, p. 44).

In this excerpt, Putu Wijaya deconstructs the traditional image of the Korawa as antagonists in the Mahabharata. Conventionally, Astina—the kingdom of the Korawa—is portrayed as a symbol of evil, while Amarta, the dwelling place of the Pandawa, is always associated with virtue

and justice. However, through Petruk's acknowledgment, the novel *Perang* overturns this assumption by showing that not everyone from Astina is evil; in fact, they may be friendlier compared to the people of Amarta. This deconstruction dismantles the binary opposition between good and evil that has long been attached to these two groups and demonstrates that moral characterization in the classic epic is not always absolute (Alderman, 2023).

In addition to dismantling the myths of morality constructed in the Mahabharata, this excerpt also highlights the relativity of truth within the narrative of war. Petruk's perspective as an outsider who interacts with the people of Astina provides a new perspective that humane attitudes are not solely possessed by the side deemed "good." The novel *Perang* uses deconstruction to analyze that history and myth can be retold from different viewpoints, revealing that the truth long considered absolute is fluid and contextual (Perillan, 2021).

Evidence that the Korawa have no malicious intent towards the Pandawa and the people of Amarta is also explained in the following excerpt.

... keseratus orang Korawa satu persatu muncul. Mereka bertegur sapa dengan para punggawa. Banyak juga yang guyonan dan membicarakan soal-soal sepele, seperti harga minyak, film video yang baru atau mobil Jepang yang sedang laris di pasaran. Masalah pembatasan senjata, dan perang nuklir juga disinggung-singgung. Tidak ada yang menyangkut Amarta, apalagi menjelek-jelekannya. (Perang, blm. 44)

... The hundred Korawa appeared one by one. **They greeted the officials.** Many were joking and **discussing trivial matters**, such as oil prices, newly released videos, or the Japanese cars that were selling well in the market. The issue of weapon restrictions and nuclear war was also mentioned. **There was nothing to do with Amarta, let alone slandering it.** (Perang, p. 44).

This quote shows how Putu Wijaya deconstructs the image of the Korawa, who in the classic Mahabharata are often portrayed as a power-hungry group full of intrigue aimed at undermining the Pandawa. In the novel, the Korawa are depicted as ordinary humans leading everyday lives with light-hearted conversations and jokes. They discuss topics such as oil prices, movies, and car trends—issues that are very mundane and far from the impression of cunning and manipulative figures as often depicted in the classic version. In this way, Putu Wijaya dismantles the myth of the Korawa as the absolute enemy and reveals that they also have a complex social life, not solely oriented towards war and power.

Furthermore, this quote challenges the readers' expectations that the Korawa should always be obsessed with Amarta and the Pandawa. However, in this novel, the Korawa are portrayed as a party that is not overly concerned and does not harbor any particular hatred towards Amarta. By eliminating negative discussions about Amarta, this text flips the assumption that the conflict between the Korawa and Pandawa is something that dominates their lives.

What Petruk observed in Astina contradicts what he had heard in Amarta. The people of Amarta always assumed that the Korawa people were evil. Astina had always been labeled negatively by Amarta, so any good deed, no matter how small, performed by Astina would still be judged poorly by Amarta, as indicated in the following quotation.

... . Korawa memang sudah kena cap pihak kiri yang selalu salah dan akan kalah dalam Perang Baratayudha, semua yang berbau Korawa jadi jelek. Tak ada yang pernah memberitabukan hal-hal yang baik dari Korawa. Jangankan Dorna, kayu bakar yang berasal dari Korawa pun jadi jelek dan ditolak di Amarta (Perang, blm, 47).

... The Korawa **have indeed been branded as the left side**, always wrong, and destined to lose in the War of Baratayudha; **everything associated with the Korawa is deemed bad**. No one has ever mentioned the good things about the Korawa. Let alone Dorna, even firewood from Korawa is seen as bad and rejected in Amarta (Perang, p. 47).

This quote illustrates how the Korawa have been stigmatized as the party that is always wrong and destined to lose in the Baratayudha War. The deconstruction carried out by Putu Wijaya in the novel Perang dismantles this narrative construction by questioning whether the Korawa wrongdoing is inherent or merely a result of the dominant narrative that has been passed down. The statement that "everything associated with the Kauravas is bad" highlights how history is written by the victors, obscuring any goodness that the Korawa may possess with already established views. Even things that are not directly related to morality, such as firewood from the Korawa, are also considered bad, demonstrating the strength of the social construct that shapes negative perceptions of them.

In the context of deconstruction, this quote reveals that the categories of good and evil in the Mahabharata are not absolute but rather the result of a binary opposition system created to support the narrative of the Pandawa as the righteous side (Alderman, 2023). By employing irony in the metaphor of firewood, Putu Wijaya criticizes how prejudice can become so ingrained as to reject everything that originates from the party deemed evil. The deconstruction in this novel opens up space for readers to reconsider whether the Korawa wrongdoing is a reality or merely a product of the narrative constructed by those in power.

Furthermore, Petruk was increasingly astonished when he listened to the speech of Suyudana, the King of Astina, who did not incite war against the Pandawa at all. There was no war strategy, greed, or arrogance displayed by him. This contrasted sharply with what the Amarta Kingdom did, which always discussed evil, misconduct, greed, and war strategies to confront the Korawa.

".... Banyak sudah orang memberikan komentar kepada kita, mencoba menempatkan di mana letak kita, memberikan kita cap menurut selera mereka masing-masing. Tetapi hanya mereka yang benar-benar mau meninggalkan segala prasangkanya dan datang sendiri ke mari akan melihat Astina yang sebenarnya." (Perang, blm. 48).

".... Many have commented on us, trying to place us, labeling us according to their preferences. But **only those who truly want to leave all their prejudices and come here will see Astina as it is.**" (Perang, p. 48).

The quote explains that the negative labels attached to the Korawa—evil, bad, deceitful, and so on—originated from prejudice, which ultimately led to conflict, misunderstandings, and resentment. As a result, no matter how small a good deed the Korawa did, it was still viewed negatively by the Pandawa and the people of Amarta. This quote also reveals how the construction of truth is often not based on facts but rather on interpretations that have been inherited and accepted without verification. The deconstruction conducted by Putu Wijaya shows that truth is not fixed but depends on who is observing and how they frame that reality (Alderman, 2023).

b. Korawa Are Not the Sowers of Hostility Against Pandawa

The Mahabharata story explains that the root of the conflict between the Pandawa and the Korawa is the struggle for the throne of the Hastinapura kingdom. Meanwhile, in the novel Perang, Putu Wijaya deconstructs this by suggesting that the cause of the rivalry stems from trivial matters that occurred among their caretakers when the Pandawa and Korawa were still children. This issue was then left unresolved and turned into a grudge that carried on into adulthood. Additionally, the media (newspapers) also played a role in provoking the people of Amarta and Astina to go to war.

*Yudhistira masih ingat betul, setahun setelah kejadian soal jeruk itu, salah seorang pengasunya meninggal. Setelah diinsut, ternyata ia mati terbunuh. Yang membunuh cepat tertangkap. Masih saudaranya sendiri yang bekerja sebagai pengasuh Korawa. **Setelah diperiksa apa sebab perkelahian itu, ternyata masih terpaut soal jeruk yang dipertengkarkan dulu** (Perang, blm. 200)*

"Yudhistira still remembers well that one year after the incident concerning the orange, one of his caretakers died. After being investigated, it turned out he was murdered. The culprit was quickly caught; it was a relative of his who worked as a caretaker for Korawa. **When questioned about the cause of the fight, it turned out it was still related to the orange that they had previously fought over**" (Perang, p. 200).

In this excerpt, Putu Wijaya dissects the concept of conflict and demonstrates that enmity can arise from very trivial matters—in this case, just about oranges. By presenting a minor event as the trigger for a prolonged grudge, the novel highlights the fragility of conflict's foundations and how a dispute can develop not because of significant moral reasons, but rather due to prejudices and misunderstandings that are allowed to grow. This deconstruction undermines the notion that the Bharatayudha War is solely a struggle between virtue and evil, but rather also a result of the accumulation of unresolved minor conflicts. Thus, the novel questions the sanctity of war and shows that history is often constructed to justify violence, even though the root of the problem may be much simpler than depicted (Perillan, 2021).

Selanjutnya pertentangan yang sejak kecil itu makin tajam. Setiap kali diasah dan diingatkan. Tak terasa lagi kemudian, setelah besar Pandawa selalu merasa Korawa itu musuh dan lambang keburukan. Sebaliknya Korawa sendiri tak bisa melihat ke arah lain. Mereka hanya melihat kepada Pandawa sebagai musuh dan lambang yang menghalang-halangi cita-cita mereka” (Perang, blm. 201).

“Subsequently, the conflicts that had originated from their childhood grew sharper. Each time these memories were sharpened and recalled. It didn’t take long for Pandawa, upon growing up, to always see Korawa as the enemy and a symbol of evil. Conversely, Korawa could not see in any other direction; they only viewed Pandawa as enemies and as symbols obstructing their ambitions” (Perang, p. 201).

Another problem is related to the provocation by an irresponsible newspaper reporter who encourages Pandawa and the people of Amarta to go to war against Korawa and the people of Astina. The media spreads rumors that all the disasters occurring in Amarta are caused by Korawa and the people of Astina.

“Dan sekarang,” tulis para wartawan, “.... Hai rakyat Amarta, rakyat yang selalu diam, rakyat yang selalu berpihak kepada kebenaran, bangun, bangun, jangan ayal lagi, kamu diserang, negerimu terancam, masa depanmu dilumpuhkan, jiwa patriotikmu ditantang sekarang!” (Perang, blm. 119).

"And now," wrote the journalists, ".... Hey people of Amarta, a people that always remain silent, a people that always stands by the truth, wake up, wake up, don't hesitate any longer, you are being attacked, your country is threatened, your future is being crippled, **your patriotic spirit is being challenged now!**" (Perang, p. 119).

The quotation explains the role of media and the narrative of patriotism that is often used to shape public opinion in conflict situations. Conventionally, calls like this sound like a heroic appeal for the people to defend their homeland, but in war, such appeals are presented with a critical nuance. The use of phrases like “the people who always remain silent” and “the people who always side with the truth” illustrates how the media creates an identity construction that distinguishes the people of Amarta as the rightful side and the Korawa as a threat.

The deconstruction in this quotation lies in how Putu Wijaya dismantles the manipulation of language used to evoke emotional sentiment without questioning the complexities of the actual conflict. The media, which should present objective truth, instead plays a role in sharpening divisions and solidifying the binary opposition between the "good" and the "evil." Thus, this novel invites readers to be more critical of how information is constructed and how truth is often not something absolute, but rather shaped by the interests of certain parties.

c. The Peace Between The Pandawa and The Korawa

In the story of the Mahabharata, the culmination of the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is the Baratayudha War. However, in this novel *Perang*, Putu Wijaya deconstructs the narrative by reconciling the Pandawa and the Korawa, placing both sides on equal footing. In other words, the Pandawa and Korawa overcome their respective egos to avoid war, forgive each other, and forget the enmity between them. This also emphasizes that the Baratayudha War, which had been orchestrated by the gods and Krishna, ultimately fails to take place.

The initial idea for this peace comes from Shuyodhana and the Korawa, as explained in the following excerpt.

*"...Kalau itu memang hanya sekedar salah paham, ya **kita tenangkan perasaan**, jangan kita mengikuti emosi. ... **kita selesaikan dengan maaf-maafan**. Kita bikin pesta bersama misalnya, tanda persahabatan dan persaudaraan Pandawa-Korawa, Astina-Amarta, sehingga hubungan kekeluargaan kita kembali "* (*Perang*, blm. 170).

"...If it is just a misunderstanding, **let's calm our feelings**, we shouldn't follow our emotions. ... we **should resolve it with forgiveness**. Let's have a joint celebration, for example, as a sign of friendship and brotherhood between Pandawa-Korawa, Astina-Amarta, so that our family ties can be restored ... " (*Perang*, p. 170).

The quotation explains that the Korawa desires peace and acceptance from the Amarta side. In this passage, Putu Wijaya deconstructs the notion of the grand conflict between the Pandawa and Korawa by presenting a simple possibility of reconciliation, namely mutual forgiveness and celebrating brotherhood.

Traditionally, the Bharatayudha War in the Mahabharata is considered the only way for good to combat evil, even at the cost of bloodshed. However, in the novel *Perang*, this narrative is dismantled by proposing the idea that conflicts can be resolved without war, as long as both parties are willing to set aside their egos and prejudices. Through a deconstructive approach, the novel highlights that conflicts in history are often constructed as something inevitable, while there exist more humane and reconciliatory alternatives for resolution (Hicks, 2021).

CONCLUSION

From the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the novel *Perang* by Putu Wijaya deconstructs the conventional construction of the Korawa characters, who have long been depicted as symbols of evil in the epic Mahabharata. Through a deconstructive approach, this novel shows that the antagonism of the Korawa towards the Pandawa is not an absolute truth but rather a result of narratives that are continuously maintained by certain perspectives. In this novel, the Korawa are portrayed as having moral complexity, interests, and emotions that are more human. The deconstruction performed by Putu Wijaya blurs the lines between what is called "good" and "evil," inviting readers to view the conflict from a broader and more critical perspective.

Furthermore, the novel *Perang* also highlights how identities and the opposition between the Pandawa and Korawa are shaped by prejudices passed down from generation to generation. The conflict between these two sides is not solely due to differences in principles or inherent traits but is sustained by social, political, and media constructs that create and reinforce the boundaries of identity. Thus, this research demonstrates that a deconstructive approach to the novel *Perang* opens up possibilities for a more dynamic interpretation of the classical epic, where truth is no longer seen as something absolute but rather as something that is continuously negotiated. Through this novel, Putu Wijaya offers a new perspective that challenges traditional understandings and encourages readers to reflect more critically on how history and its characters are constructed by dominant narratives.

REFERENCE

- Adnan, F., Widyanarti, T., & Wibisono, W. (2024). Prasangka sebagai Hambatan Komunikasi Antarbudaya. *INTERACTION: Communication Studies Journal*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.47134/interaction.v1i3>
- Alderman, B. (2023). *Eternal Youth and the Myth of Deconstruction: An Archetypal Reading of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bobba, B., Thijs, J., & Crocetti, E. (2024). A war on prejudice: The role of media salience in reducing ethnic prejudice. *Journal of Adolescence*, 96(3), 457–468. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12234>
- Bowta, F., & Puluhalawa, 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>
- Childers, A., & Barnett, T. (2024). *The Deconstruction of Christianity: What It Is, Why It's Destructive, and How to Respond*. Tyndale House Publishers.
- Emzir, & Rohman, S. (2015). *Teori dan Pengajaran Sastra*. PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Endraswara, S. (2013). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra: Epistemologi, Model, Teori, dan Aplikasi*. CAPS (Center for Academic Publishing Service).
- Greene, E. (2023). *(De)Constructed Binaries: Dialogue and Monologue in Contemporary Popular Fantasy* [The University of Edinburgh]. <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/41455>
- Hamdani, M. U. (2024). *Deconstruction Analysis in The Novel Alchemist by Paulo Coelho* [Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University]. <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/62175/>
- Hasibuan, N. H., Eva, D., & Anwar, K. (2025). Fenomenologi: Karl Popper (Falsifikasi) dan Dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida. *Jurnal Sains Student Research*, 3(1). <https://ejurnal.kampusakademik.co.id/index.php/jssr/article/view/3433>
- Hicks, D. (2021). *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*. Yale University Press.
- Indriana, A. Z., & Wiyatmi. (2022). Deconstruction of the Other Side of Midun's Protagonist in Novel *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* by Tulis Sutan Sati: Jaques Derrida's Deconstruction Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt>

- Irma, C. N. (2017). Pendekatan Sosiologi Sastra dan Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan dalam Novel Punakawan Menggugat Karya Adrian Kresna. *Jurnal Bindo Sastra*, 1(1), 1–9. <https://jurnal.um-palembang.ac.id/bisastra/article/view/660>
- Kharisma, Y. B. R., & Tanureja, I. (2024). DThe Influence of External Elements on The Human Decision-Making Process: A Comparative Analysis of The Story of The Fall of Man in The Book of Genesis and The Game of Dice in Raden Tanojo's Sadjarah Pandawa Korawa. *Journal of Religion of Society*, 11(2). <http://www.societasdei.rcrs.org/index.php/SD/article/view/480>
- Lavee, E., & Itzchakov, G. (2023). Good listening: A key element in establishing quality in qualitative research. *Sage Journals*, 23(3), 614–631. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211039402>
- Moleong, L. J. (2013). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Munanto, S., & Rahima, A. (2020). Watak Tokoh Protagonis dalam Novel Perang Karya I Gusti Ngurah Putu Wijaya. *Aksara: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*, 4(1). <http://Aksara.unbari.ac.id/index.php/aksara>
- Nashori, F. (2017). *Psikologi Prasangka dan Agresi*. Universitas Islam Indonesia.
- Norris, C. (2017). *Membongkar Teori Dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida* (I. Muhsin, Ed.; I. R. Muzir, Trans.; II). Ar-Ruz Media.
- Nurhamidah, Doyin, Mukh., & Setyaningsih, N. H. (2024). Deconstructing the Binary Opposition of Characters in the Novel Putri by Putu Wijaya. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 11(5). <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v11i5.5825>
- Nurnani, D. (2021). Unsur-Unsur Intrinsik Cerita Mahabharata dalam The Mahabharata Karya R.K. Narayan. *Lakon: Jurnal Pengkajian Dan Penciptaan Wayang*, 18(2), 118–126. <https://jurnal.isi-ska.ac.id/index.php/lakon/article/view/4112/0>
- Nursafika. (2019). *Penangguban Kebenaran Absolut dalam Teks Novel Kerumunan Terakhir Karya Okey Madasari Kajian Dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida*. Universitas Negeri Makassar. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/211120357.pdf>
- Nuryantiningsih, F., & Hari Yanti, S. N. (2021). Heroic Figures' Characters in Wayang Wong Dance Drama: A Character Education For The Elementary School Students? *Jurnal Lingua Idea*, 12(1), 69. <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jli.2021.12.1.3432>
- Orsini, A. (2024). *Theory of Postmodernity*. In: *Sociological Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-52539-1_14
- Perillan, J. G. (2021). *Science Between Myth and History: The Quest for Common Ground and Its Importance for Scientific Practice*.
- Pusterla, E. R. G. (2025). Deconstruction at the Time of Post-Truth Politics. *Subjectivity*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41286-024-00204-y>
- Ratna, N. K. (2015). *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Rohman, S. (2014). *Dekonstruksi: Desain Penafsiran dan Analisis*. Penerbit Ombak.
- Sari, A. P. (2021). Filosofi Karakter Tokoh Kesatria dalam Lakon Wayang Purwa Mahabarata. *Piwulang: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Jawa*, 9(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.15294/piwulang.v9i1.41231>
- Setyawati, I. (2020). Dekonstruksi Tokoh dalam Novel Sitayana Karya Cok Sawitri (Kajian Dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida). *Bapala*, 1(1), 1. <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/bapala/article/view/33423>

- Suyono, S. J. (2021). Perbandingan Sosok Rahwana Prambanan dengan Kakawin Ramayana dan Novel Anand Neelakantan. *Dharmasmrti*, 21(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.32795/ds.v21i1.1661>.
- Ulaan, K., Herani, I., & Rahmawati, I. (2016). Prasangka Mahasiswa Papua pada Etnis Jawa Di Kota Malang. *Jurnal Mediapsi*, 2(1), 11–18. <https://mediapsi.ub.ac.id/index.php/mediapsi/article/view/9>
- Wardani, V. K., & Triyono, S. (2024). Deconstructing Rahwana's Alternate Character in Neelakantan's Rahwana: Kisah Rahasia through Derrida's Perspective. *Poetika*, 12(2), 86. <https://doi.org/10.22146/poetika.v12i2.92112>
- Weking, M. S. P., & Pramesti, T. (2024). Exploring Character of Dichotomy in Anna Todd's After Good Versus Bad. *Proceeding of Undergraduate Conference of Literature, Linguistic, and Cultural Studies*, 3(1). <https://conference.untag-sby.ac.id/index.php/uncolles/article/view/4675>
- Widijanto, T. (2023). Dekonstruksi Mitos Wayang Ramayana dan Barata Yuda dan Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter dalam Novel Kitab Omong Kosong Karya Seno Gumira Ajidarma dan Perang Karya Putu Wijaya. *Paramasastra*, 10(1). <https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/paramasastra/article/view/22765>
- Yasmeen, S., Siddiq Sadia, & Hussnain, S. A. (2024). *A Deconstructive Analysis of The Short Story "The City Dwellers."* 5(3). <http://ojs.mrj.com.pk/index.php/MRJ/article/view/267>