

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In the era of digitalisation and technology prioritisation, media construction is one of the vital aspects worth studying, especially in popular works such as films, novels, or songs. Media stands on two feet, either elevated or degraded into popularity. It is due to framing words in the media that relates to the shaping perception of network citizen (netizen). The media constructs reality by emphasising certain aspects of an event while ignoring others. Through this process, audiences tend to interpret and judge social reality based on the framework presented by the media (Carter, 2013). The understanding, the perception, the framing, and the shaping formed by media build a construction (Juditha, 2015). Media construction is created through the ways media institutions and their internal norms influence content production, so that media do not merely convey information but also shape social meanings, identities, and public perceptions. This process operates not only through mass media such as television, news portals, and entertainment programs, but also through social media, where narratives are reproduced, amplified, and contested by netizens. As a result, media construction has a strong influence on popularity. Popularity, then, shapes the truth based on what media construction signalled to netizens, taking for granted purity or fakery. In other words, media construction refers to the process by which media actively construct reality through visual and written

narratives. The researcher delves into this dispute through popular literature, especially a video clip, to examine how the media is capable to construct social opinion upon it.

Among contemporary figures, Taylor Alison Swift has emerged as one of the victims of netizen opinion. She often becomes the target of public criticism, character assassination, and online harassment. The 2017's *Look What You Made Me Do* song is the expression to tell all burdens (Risher, 2023). It is evidence that celebrities—especially female artists—are often the target of public criticism, character assassination, and online harassment. The song was a major turning point in Swift's career, both thematically and stylistically. Unlike her previous works, which featured themes of innocent girls, heartbreak stories, and vulnerability, such as songs and many others (Risher, 2023). The song *Look What You Made Me Do* conveys a tone of resistance, self-transformation, and empowerment. This transformation underscores how public figures challenge negative portrayals and seek to take control of the representations that often involve them. Swift plays her songs as a space for self-expression, resistance, and the creation of counter-narratives (Hermawan et al., 2023). Regarding this phenomenon, it is necessary to know how a popular public figure manages public opinion constructed by the media into his works. Therefore, the researcher assumes that Swift speaks up about the pressure that has been constructed around her in *Look What You Made Me Do*.

The following is the debut of Swift, to show her popularity. Swift is one of the most influential Hollywood divas (Hermawan et al., 2023). Swift has been active in the entertainment world since 2006 with her first album entitled *Connect Set*. Every song she creates always manages to top the charts. Each of her albums can convey stories from a different perspective and is always a voice for young people who are looking for an identity. This is also what makes the media is interested in everything Swift does and makes Swift even more famous. Olson (2026) in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* notes on the cosmopolitan website that Swift has many popular songs that have won 14 Grammy Awards from 58 nominations. Trust (2022) in Billboard stated that Reputation became the first album to shoot straight to No. 1 on both the Billboard and iTunes charts in a short time.

Hermawan et al. (2023) continue that this his song was released on August 24, 2017, as one of the lead singles on the album *Reputation*. The lyrics and video clip of this song describe how Swift's reputation during her career in the entertainment world is likened to that of a *criminal*. Swift has succeeded in making her fans curious about her lyrics and video clips, which are considered controversial, full of meaning, but also entertaining. This makes the song *Look What You Made Me Do* the most-watched video recording within 24 hours, with a total of 43.2 million viewers on the YouTube channel. This popularity was a consideration for the researchers to choose this song as the object of research. However, the massive public attention demonstrates Swift's ability to combine controversy with a useful

reputation to solidify her position as one of the most influential artists in popular culture. The song tells more than the video clip shows and it is the researcher's intention to prove the assumption that *Look What You Made Me Do* is the turning point of popularity. It engages with netizen opinion construction by the media

The researcher moves from the facts above to an academic paper discussing media construction. It will ensure the urgency of conducting this study on media construction and the product of popular culture. The following are examples of research related to media construction. Media not only function as a news provider but also helps construct social reality based on how information is presented. Media actively constructs celebrities' personal events into social realities consumed by the public through processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. The broadcast does not simply show the proposal procession but is packaged in such a way as to shape the public's perception that the celebrity's proposal is an event worthy of national broadcast, while also having high entertainment and commercial value (Gogali et al., 2022). Sometimes, the media shows the audience different focuses: one emphasises the informative and elegant side, while the other emphasises the luxurious and sensational side (Permatasari et al., 2019). This demonstrates that the media plays a role in shaping public perception. They show that the media is not neutral and that the version of reality consumed by the public is shaped by ideological constructs that influence opinions and behaviour on certain issues.

There are clear differences between previous research and the current study. Previous studies, such as those on infotainment programs, focused on mass media products—particularly television and infotainment—by analysing how media institutions frame celebrity events through news structures, visual presentations, and ideological interests. These studies emphasised media construction as a top-down process in which the media actively shape public perceptions of celebrities for commercial and ideological purposes. In contrast, the current study focuses on the construction of media narratives in a popular literature product, namely Swift's video clip *Look What You Made Me Do* rather than examining media framing in news or infotainment programs, this study analyses how public opinion, controversy, and symbolic pressures constructed by the media around public figures are internalised and rearticulated through artwork. This study combines popular literature analysis with media construction theory to explore how Swift responds to media narratives by transforming them into counternarratives of resistance, self-empowerment, and identity reconstruction. Therefore, this study fills a research gap by shifting the focus from media-produced texts to artistic texts as a response to media construction, thus making it distinct and significant in the study of media, popularity, and popular culture.

This study seeks to examine how Swift fights the media narrative by launching a popular, controversial song, so that the audience immediately understands the hidden meaning when they hear the lyrics and video clip in

Look What You Made Me Do. It will pay attention to the construction of her personal reputation among the controversies. Besides, it will also pay attention to the reconstruction of the building within. Figuring out the response against the media construction exposure is the following analysis by providing symbolic images in her video clip. These two are directed to her resistance to public opinion construction.

In this study, the researcher uses Storey's (2015) popular literature theory in *Cultural Theory and Popular Literature*, which views popular culture not merely as entertainment but as an arena for the production and negotiation of meaning, ideology, and power, where popular texts are polysemic and become a space for struggle between domination and resistance. The song *Look What You Made Me Do* is analysed as a popular literature text that represents Swift's symbolic resistance to the media's construction of negative images. In addition, this study also draws on the mediatization theory presented by Hjarvard (2013) in *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*, which explains that the media play has a media logic an active role in shaping social reality and public opinion through the logic of media. The relevance of these two theories lies in their ability to explain how the media constructs the reputation of public figures, as well as how this construction is then negotiated and resisted through popular literary works as a form of identity reconstruction and resistance.

B. Research Focus

This research focuses on how media construction influences Swift's existence and inspiration to create a universe in the popular song titled *Look What You Made Me Do*, and how Swift's portrayal represents her social suffering and awakening, which will be studied using popular literature theory and mediatization theory.

C. Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

1. How does Taylor Swift negotiate the media construction reflected in the video clip *Look What You Made Me Do*?
2. How does media logic shape social reality reflected in the video clip *Look What You Made Me Do*?

D. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are:

1. Analysing how Taylor Swift negotiates the media construction reflected in the video clip *Look What You Made Me Do*.
2. Analysing how media logic shapes social reality reflected in the video clip *Look What You Made Me Do*.

E. Research Benefits

Theoretically, this research is useful for enriching insight into how media construction influences the formation of meaning in popular culture and how artists' responses to such reconstruction can be a source of inspiration in the creation of popular works. In this case, the media plays a

role as a means of framing public perception, resistance and the formation of a new identity for Taylor Swift. In this case, the concept of popular literature as a space for negotiating meaning, media theory as a means for the formation of public narratives and symbol theory to show the formation of self that occurs through social interaction and symbols.

Practically, this study is useful for literature classes, English courses and students' perspectives to see how popular culture is constructed creatively. In addition, mastery of English is also an opportunity to understand global interactions and the construction of meaning in popular culture, so that students can think critically and creatively.

F. Definition of Operational Key Terms

1. Media Construction

Media construction is a process in which media not only function as a means of conveying information but also actively shape and represent social reality through visual and written narratives. This process is influenced by media institutions, internal norms, ideological interests, and how the media frames an event or figure. In this context, media construction encompasses mass media and social media as an interconnected whole. Mass media such as television, newspapers, magazines, and bold news portals, as well as social media such as Instagram, X (Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok, play a crucial role in shaping and disseminating meaning. Through this construction, media shape social meaning, identity, and public perception, and determine how truth is understood and accepted by society.

Consequently, the reality consumed by the public is not neutral, but rather the result of a media construction process that can influence the popularity, public opinion, and reputation of a figure in popular culture.

2. Media Narratives

Media narratives are a series of stories, symbols, and meanings constructed by the media through text, visuals, and audio to represent an event, figure, or social phenomenon. In the context of this proposal, media narratives function not only as a means of conveying information but also as a tool to shape the reputation, identity, and public understanding of popular figures. Media narratives are produced from a particular perspective influenced by the interests of media institutions, internal norms, and underlying ideologies. Therefore, the narratives presented by the media play an active role in shaping public opinion and determining how a figure is perceived by society.

3. Media Logic

Media logic is the distinctive way media operate, encompassing rules, formats, presentation styles, news values, and media production practices that influence how social reality is presented and understood by the public. Media not only function as a channel for conveying information but also actively frame and shape the meaning of events according to their interests and internal mechanisms. As a result, various social institutions such as politics, culture, religion, and entertainment often adapt to media logic to gain public acceptance and attention.

4. Popular Literature

Popular literature is a form of literary work that arises from and circulates within popular culture, produced for widespread consumption by the public and reflecting evolving social realities, values, conflicts, and collective experiences. In this context, popular literature functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for expression, negotiation of meaning, and resistance to social and media constructs that shape public opinion.

5. Negotiation

The concept of negotiation refers to the dynamic process of meaning formation that occurs through interactions between cultural texts, producers, and audiences. Storey (2015) emphasises that meaning in popular culture is not fixed or singular, but rather always open to re-informing based on social context, ideology, and individual experience. In this process, the audience is not positioned as a passive party, but is active in accepting, rejecting, or modifying the meaning offered by the media. Therefore, negotiation becomes a meeting space between the dominant meaning produced by the media and the possibility of resistance from the audience, thus producing new meanings that are negotiable.