

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

1. Popular Literature

In the temporary society, popular texts play a significant role in shaping how people perceive culture and social reality. Storey (2015) explains that Popular Literature is part of popular culture that is produced, circulated, and widely consumed by society through mass media. Storey explains that popular culture is not just a form of entertainment that is enjoyed by many people but is an important arena in the formation of social meaning, cultural values, and collective identity. In this context, popular texts—including songs, films, and popular literary works—function as a medium that reflects and shapes social reality through narratives, symbols, and representations that are accessible to the wider public.

This further clarifies that popular culture is a space of meaning-making, a place where social meanings are produced, negotiated, and contested. Popular literature does not exist neutrally, but is influenced by the power of the media, the culture industry, and specific ideological interests. Therefore, popular literary works not only reflect mass tastes but also contain social messages related to power relations, identity, and image construction. In this regard, the media plays a significant role in determining

how popular texts are understood, valued, and associated with specific social realities.

Popular literature is also a product of social relations involving mass production and consumption. Popular texts are produced within the cultural industry system, but their meaning is not entirely controlled by producers or media. Audiences, as consumers of culture, play an active role in interpreting and giving meaning to texts according to their social experiences and cultural contexts. This makes popular literature an arena for interaction between media, texts, and the public, where meaning can be reinforced, negotiated, or even contested.

Beyond its cultural function, popular literature also plays a significant role in ideological and political processes. Furthermore, popular culture has a political dimension because it involves ideological and representational struggles. Popular literature can function as a tool of hegemony that reinforces dominant values, but it can also become a space of resistance and counter-narrative against established media constructions. Thus, popular literary works can be used by public figures to respond to, challenge, or reconstruct images and narratives formed by the media.

In the context of this research, the song *Look What You Made Me Do* is positioned as a popular literature text that functions as a response to media constructions, where Taylor Swift utilises popular culture to build a

narrative of resistance, reconstruct identity, and control over her representation in the public sphere.

2. Media

As society becomes increasingly mediated, the media plays a central role in shaping social life and cultural understanding. Hjarvard (2013) explains that media in modern society is no longer merely a tool or channel of communication but has evolved into a force capable of moving and even influencing life. The media has become an inseparable part of everyday life and helps shape how individuals understand reality, construct identities, and interact with their social environment. In this context, the media not only conveys information but also plays an active role in shaping the meanings and values circulating in society.

In his theory, he introduced the concept of mediatization to explain the long-term process by which media become an integral part of several aspects of social and cultural life. Mediatization is not simply about increasing media use, but rather about fundamental changes in social structures resulting from media dominance. Unlike the concept of mediation, which only emphasises the function of media as a communication intermediary, mediatization highlights how media gradually changes social practices, power relations, and the way social institutions function. In a mediated society, various institutions—such as politics, religion, education, culture, and the entertainment industry—must adapt to the way media works to remain relevant and gain public attention.

One element that needs to be considered in this theory is the concept of media logic. Media logic refers to a set of values, norms, and media methods that influence how reality is constructed and presented to the public. Certain factors, such as conflict, visuals, urgency, language, and drama, are typically highlighted by the media (Altheide, 2015). This logic arises because the media operates within an economic and cultural structure that demands audience attention, ratings, clicks, and popularity. Therefore, social reality is often depicted through engaging and easy-to-follow stories, but they do not always reflect the complexity of real life.

In the context of culture and entertainment, mediatization has made culture increasingly dependent on media as a space for the production and distribution of meaning. Cultural products, including popular music, films, and literary works, are judged not only by their artistic merit but also by the extent to which they conform to the logic of the media. This makes popular culture a crucial arena for the formation of identity, social values, and public opinion. The media plays a role as a determinant of discourse that directs how culture is consumed and interpreted by society.

This theory also highlights the process of mediatization of identity, namely how individual identities—especially public figures and celebrities—are shaped through media representation. Identity is no longer purely personal or private, but rather something produced, negotiated, and performed in media spaces. Media create images, reputations, and narratives about public figures, which impact how society perceives and treats them.

Social media in the internet era accelerates this process by allowing audiences to directly participate in opinion formation through posts, comments, and online interactions.

Furthermore, mediatization is also closely related to the formation of public opinion. The media plays a crucial role in determining what issues are considered important, how they are framed, and what values are attached to them. In a highly mediated society, public opinion is often shaped through repeated media exposure and discussions on social media. This process causes the distinction between fact, opinion, and entertainment to become increasingly blurred, particularly in news coverage of celebrities and public figures. However, despite the media's significant power in shaping social reality, the concept of mediatization is a dialectical process, where individuals and social groups still have room to respond to, negotiate, and even resist media constructions. These responses can emerge through various cultural media, including popular art and literature, which serve as alternative spaces for voicing meanings and identities that differ from the media's dominant narrative.

In relation to this research, *the Mediatization of Culture and Society theory* provides a strong conceptual framework for understanding how mass media and social media construct Taylor Swift's reputation as a public figure through media logic that emphasises conflict, controversy, and dramatization. These media representations then shape public opinion that influences how society views Taylor Swift's identity and reputation. The

song *Look What You Made Me Do* can be understood as a response to this mediatization process, in which Taylor Swift uses popular literature as a medium to renegotiate her identity and resist negative media constructions. Thus, this theory is very relevant in this research because it helps explain the relationship between mass media and social media constructions, the formation of public opinion, and the emergence of symbolic resistance through popular cultural works.

B. Relevant Research Studies

The popularity of the song *Look What You Made Me Do* continues to attract international scholarly attention, making it a relevant object of study. Previous research has demonstrated that media construction can be examined from both social and literary perspectives, particularly in relation to how media shapes meaning, identity, and public perception. Several studies have explored media construction within literary works and popular narratives. Felycia et al. (2018) In their study, *The Media Construction of the Heroine Figure in Suzanne Collins's Mockingjay*, reveal that media—especially television—functions as a tool of social construction within the narrative of the novel. The study shows how two dominant forces, the Capitol and District 13, utilise television as propaganda to shape public perception of Katniss Everdeen. Furthermore, the research highlights the influence of American television culture, particularly reality television, on the novel's narrative structure. The Hunger Games broadcasts are interpreted as symbolic representations of reality shows such as Big Brother

and Survivor, which present engineered realities consumed by the public. As a result, audiences are positioned in a space where distinctions between authenticity and fabrication become increasingly blurred.

Media construction has also been examined through cinematic works as extensions of popular literature. (Octavia et al., 2022) in their study of the film *Jendela* by Randy Pratama, analyse how music functions as a narrative response to minimal dialogue and visual storytelling. The composer's use of leitmotifs, traditional Javanese musical idioms, and modern orchestration strengthens emotional meaning and narrative coherence. This study demonstrates how popular film, much like popular literature, employs symbolic and aesthetic elements to convey complex meanings while remaining accessible to a broad audience.

A similar study was conducted by Auliya et al., (2025) on *Garin Nugroho's film Badrun & Loundri*. which delivers strong social criticism addressing structural inequalities in Indonesian society. Through symbolic representations, such as Hajj attire and police uniforms, the film critiques the relations between privilege and power. Although presented in cinematic form, the film functions narratively like a social realist novel, aiming not merely for aesthetic achievement but also to raise collective social awareness. This reinforces the idea that popular cultural texts serve as vehicles for media construction and ideological critique.

Other studies focus on media construction of social identities and marginalised groups. Sari (2016) examines how the media shapes public

perceptions of LGBT individuals, particularly transgender communities. The study reveals that the media often applies negative labels, portraying transgender identities as deviations from social and religious norms. Reality television programs, such as *Be a Man*, are highlighted as examples of how the media reinforces binary gender ideologies and heteronormative values. These constructions are internalised by society, contributing to discrimination, exclusion, and the marginalisation of transgender individuals. This research underscores the media's power to construct dominant meanings that shape social attitudes and behaviours.

Similar research on media construction is found in research conducted by Permatasari (2019). This study discusses how mass media construct social reality through infotainment shows - *Entertainment News* (NET) and *Halo Selebriti* (SCTV) - by taking the case of popular celebrity weddings as the focus. This article highlights how both infotainment media discuss celebrity weddings from different perspectives. NET tends to emphasise facts and prioritise accuracy in news. While SCTV tends to put headlines that discuss the splendour and sensation that attract the interest of the audience. This research demonstrates that the media does not function as a neutral transmitter of information but as an active agent that shapes public perceptions of celebrity life and social status.

Research on media construction within reading practices and cultural identity is presented by Mushlihah (2020), which discusses how the process of reading Javanese literary works by urban youth in Surabaya not

only produces meaning in the text but also shapes their social and cultural identities. In this case, the media serves as both a barrier and a mediator in reading practices. Shifting from traditional literature to faster, more accessible, and lighter content, such as films, light novels, and digital content, popular media has captured the attention of the younger generation. However, the phenomenon of young people returning to Javanese literature demonstrates a resistance to popular culture and instead uses media as a site of symbolic resistance. In his study, the author employs a cultural studies approach, drawing on Stuart Hall's Cultural Circuit theory, to demonstrate that reading is a multifaceted cultural practice encompassing consumption, production, regulation, representation, and identity construction.

Research on media construction in literary works can also be found in research conducted by Arifin (2018) in *Sastra dalam Media Massa, Budaya dalam Komodifikasi*. This research discusses how literature changes when it enters the mass media and becomes part of popular culture is the subject of this research. It is explained that when literary works shift from printed texts to popular media such as films, television dramas, or music, a process of commodification occurs, which means that the value of literature changes from its function as an aesthetic and humanistic product to a profitable mass consumption product. The author believes that this process is closely related to the theory of the political economy of media, especially the neo-Marxist perspective, which emphasises how the media as a cultural industry exploit works of art for financial gain.

Media construction refers to how a medium not only displays reality but also shapes it through techniques, narratives, and symbolic meanings. Media construction can be found in literary works such as novels, songs, or films. Both function as tools of representation that not only convey stories but also shape the perception, meaning, and experience of the reader or viewer towards the real world. Tsabita et al.,(2025) in his research on the film *KKN Di Desa Penari*, she discusses how the film is constructed differently through three media, namely a Twitter thread, a novel, and a film. In this study, a descriptive-comparative approach is used to examine the differences in plot, characters, and setting caused by the unique characteristics of each medium. This shows that media are not merely passive channels; they play an active role in shaping the audience's meaning, perspective, and experience of the narrative. In this context, the media functions as an agent of cultural construction that differently shapes the public's understanding of the story.

Based on previous research, media construction has been widely studied across contexts, including novels, films, infotainment, reading practices, and social and identity issues. Previous research has shown that the media plays an active role in shaping meaning, identity, and public perception through narratives, symbols, and specific ideological interests. However, most of this research has focused on institutional media products—such as television, films, and infotainment—and positioned the

media as the dominant actor in constructing social reality from a top-down perspective.

A weakness of previous research lies in the limited number of studies that position popular music as a space for response and resistance to media construction, particularly from the perspective of the constructed subject. Therefore, this study positions the song *Look What You Made Me Do* as a popular text that not only reflects the media's construction of public figures but also serves as a form of reconstruction of meaning and a counter-narrative to public opinion constructed by the media and netizens. By integrating the theory of the social construction of reality and the study of popular literature, this study sharpens the focus of media construction studies by positioning music as a symbolic medium in the processes of resistance, identity formation, and negotiation of meaning in popular culture.

C. Conceptual Framework

This research is grounded in the perspective that popular literature and popular culture play a significant role in shaping social meaning and reality. According to Storey (2015), popular literature is part of popular culture that is produced, circulated, and widely consumed through mass media, functioning not merely as entertainment but as an important arena for the production, negotiation, and contestation of meaning. Popular texts, including songs and video clip, are polysemic in nature, meaning that they are open to multiple interpretations and are closely related to ideological,

cultural, and social processes. As such, popular literature can simultaneously reproduce dominant values and serve as a medium of resistance against prevailing representations.

From this perspective, popular culture is closely connected to the role of mass media and social media in constructing social reality. Media do not operate as neutral channels of information, but actively select, emphasise, and frame events and individuals in particular ways. This process is known as media construction, in which the reality perceived by society is shaped through media representation rather than reflecting an objective reality. In the context of public figures, media construction plays a crucial role in shaping public image and identity.

To further explain this process, Hjarvard's (2013) theory of mediatization is employed. Hjarvard argues that in modern society, the media has developed into a dominant social institution that influences various aspects of life, including politics, war, religion, culture, and entertainment. Media no longer function solely as a means of communication but have become a force that shapes how people think, understand reality, and evaluate events or public figures. Mediatization refers to a long-term process in which social and cultural practices increasingly depend on media and adapt to media logic.

Media logic is characterized by tendencies toward conflict, drama, language, urgency, and the use of strong visuals, particularly in celebrity-

related content. As a result, public figures are often represented in simplified, extreme, or exaggerated ways to attract audience attention. In this context, celebrity identity is no longer personal but becomes a public identity that is continuously produced and reproduced by mass media and social media. Taylor Swift, as a global pop icon, experiences this process intensively, as conflicts, criticisms, and controversies involving her are constructed into dominant media narratives that shape public opinion and often position her as guilty, manipulative, or problematic.

However, mediatization is not a one-way process. It means that individuals and social groups still have the capacity to respond to and negotiate media constructions. These responses can take the form of cultural practices, including popular literary works. On the other hand, popular texts can function as spaces of resistance and counter-narratives that challenge dominant media representations.

Based on this theoretical integration, the song *Look What You Made Me Do* is positioned as a popular literary text that operates as a counter-narrative to mass media and social media constructions. Through its lyrics and visual symbolism in the video clip, Taylor Swift articulates experiences of suffering caused by negative media portrayals while simultaneously representing a process of awakening, self-awareness, resistance, and identity reconstruction. By combining mediatization theory and popular literature theory, this study examines how the media constructs the reputation of Taylor Swift's suffering and awakening, and how these

constructions are represented, negotiated, and resisted within popular literature.

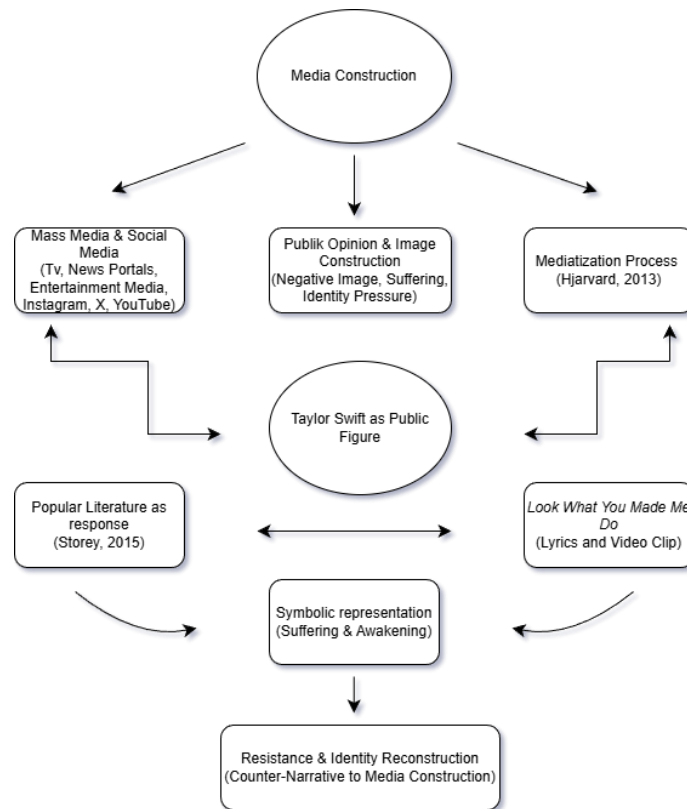


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework of Media Construction in Look What You Made Me Do

This conceptual framework positions media construction as a central concept in explaining how social reality and the identities of public figures are shaped through the media. Media construction operates through mass media and social media—such as television, news portals, entertainment media, and digital platforms like Instagram, X (Twitter), and YouTube—which operate based on specific media logic. Through the process of

mediatization, the media not only conveys information but also frames public figures by emphasising drama, urgency and conflict, resulting in the construction of public opinion and a particular image.

In the context of this research, the process of media construction shapes public opinion and a negative reputation of Taylor Swift as a public figure, characterised by identity pressure, stigma, and narratives of suffering. Taylor Swift's identity does not form naturally but rather is the result of media narratives that are continuously reproduced and consumed by the public. This situation indicates that the reality understood by the public is not an objective reality, but rather a reality constructed by the media through media framing and logic.

In response to this pressure, Taylor Swift uses popular literature as a medium for symbolic resistance. According to Storey (2015), popular works provide a space for negotiation and resistance to meaning. The song and video clip for *Look What You Made Me Do* serve as symbolic representations depicting both suffering and awakening. Through symbols, lyrics, and visuals, Taylor Swift constructs a counter-narrative against media construction, culminating in a process of resistance and identity reconstruction, in which she reclaims control over her identity and reputation in popular culture.