

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter contained the foundation of theory which determines the interest of research.

2.1 Sociology literature

Sociology of literature is an interdisciplinary approach that examines the relationship between literature and society. It is based on the assumption that literary works are not created in isolation but are influenced by the social, cultural, historical, and ideological conditions of the society in which they are produced. Through this perspective, literature is understood not only as an artistic expression but also as a social phenomenon that reflects, critiques, and interacts with social reality.

The term *sociology of literature* combines two fields of study: sociology and literature. Sociology is the scientific study of society, social institutions, social relationships, and social processes, while literature refers to imaginative and creative works that express human experiences, emotions, and ideas. The sociology of literature therefore seeks to understand how social factors influence literary production and how literary works represent social life (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). According to Laurenson and Swingewood (1972), sociology of literature is concerned with the interaction between literary texts and the social environment from which they emerge. They argue that literature provides valuable insight into the values, beliefs, conflicts, and experiences of a particular society. As a result, literary works can be analyzed as documents that reveal social realities and historical conditions. However, literature should not be viewed merely as a direct reflection of society; rather, it is a creative reconstruction of social experiences shaped by the author's perspective and artistic imagination.

Wellek and Warren (1956) explain that sociology of literature can be divided into three main areas: the sociology of the author, the sociology of the literary work, and the sociology of the reader. The sociology of the author focuses

on the writer's social background and position within society. The sociology of the literary work examines the social content represented in the text. Meanwhile, the sociology of the reader investigates how literary works are received and interpreted by different audiences. These dimensions demonstrate that literature and society are connected through complex and dynamic relationships.

Furthermore, Ian Watt (1964) emphasizes that literature and society influence one another. He identifies three important aspects of sociology of literature: the social context of the author, literature as a reflection of society, and the social function of literature. Through these aspects, literary works can be examined as representations of social conditions while simultaneously serving as instruments for social criticism, education, and cultural reflection.

Damono (2017) defines sociology of literature as an approach that considers social aspects as an essential element in literary analysis. This approach enables researchers to explore how literary texts portray social phenomena such as power relations, inequality, discrimination, cultural values, and social change. Consequently, sociology of literature helps readers understand not only the aesthetic qualities of literary works but also the broader social meanings embedded within them.

The relationship between literature and society has long been a central concern in the field of sociology of literature. Literature is not created in a social vacuum; rather, it emerges from particular social, cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. At the same time, literary works influence the way people perceive and understand social realities. Consequently, literature and society maintain a dynamic and reciprocal relationship in which each affects and shapes the other. Sociological literary critics argue that literary works can serve as valuable sources for understanding the values, conflicts, beliefs, and structures that characterize a particular society (Wellek & Warren, 1956).

One of the fundamental assumptions of the sociology of literature is that literary works reflect aspects of the society in which they are produced. Authors often draw inspiration from the social conditions surrounding them, including political events, economic circumstances, cultural traditions, and interpersonal

relationships. Through characters, settings, themes, and conflicts, literary works may portray the realities, problems, and aspirations of a particular period or community.

However, literature should not be understood as a simple mirror of reality. According to Laurenson and Swingewood (1972), literature is a creative reconstruction of social life rather than a direct reproduction of it. Authors interpret, select, and reshape social experiences through imagination and artistic expression. Therefore, literary texts provide insight into social realities while also reflecting the perspectives and interpretations of their creators.

Literature can also be understood as a social institution because it functions within broader social structures and cultural systems. Like other institutions, literature is shaped by social norms, values, and expectations. Authors, publishers, critics, and readers all participate in a social process that influences the production, distribution, and reception of literary works. Wellek and Warren (1956) argue that literature is connected to social institutions because it is both created and consumed within society. Literary works often reinforce, challenge, or negotiate dominant social values and ideologies. As a result, literature plays an important role in transmitting cultural knowledge, preserving collective memory, and shaping social consciousness.

Literary works frequently contain social values that reflect the beliefs and principles of a particular society. These values may concern morality, family relationships, education, religion, gender roles, power, justice, or social responsibility. Through narrative structures and character interactions, authors communicate ideas about what is considered acceptable, desirable, or problematic within a social context. The representation of social values in literature enables readers to understand how societies construct norms and expectations. At the same time, literature may question or criticize prevailing values by exposing inequalities, contradictions, and injustices. Consequently, literary works function not only as reflections of social values but also as spaces for social evaluation and critique.

Social realities refer to the conditions, experiences, and relationships that exist within society. Literature often depicts these realities through stories that

explore social issues such as poverty, discrimination, inequality, violence, oppression, and power relations. By presenting human experiences within specific social contexts, literary works provide readers with a deeper understanding of societal structures and their effects on individuals. According to Damono (2017), literature serves as a medium through which social phenomena can be observed and analyzed. Although literary texts are fictional, they frequently reveal truths about human behavior and social interactions. Therefore, literature can be used as a valuable source for examining social realities and understanding the complexities of social life.

The relationship between literature and society is reciprocal because influence operates in both directions. Society influences literature by providing the cultural, historical, and social contexts that shape literary production. Authors are members of society who inevitably absorb and respond to the conditions around them. Consequently, literary works often reflect social experiences and concerns. Conversely, literature influences society by shaping perceptions, values, and attitudes. Literary works can encourage readers to reflect on social issues, question established norms, and develop greater awareness of injustice and inequality. Through its capacity to represent human experiences and social problems, literature contributes to cultural discussions and social change. Watt (1964) emphasizes that literature not only reflects society but also performs important social functions by educating, criticizing, and inspiring its audience.

Literature has long been understood as both a reflection of society and an active force in constructing social reality. Rather than functioning solely as a form of artistic expression, literary works are deeply connected to the historical, cultural, political, and ideological contexts in which they are produced. Through characters, narratives, conflicts, and settings, literature reflects the values, beliefs, and social conditions of a particular society while simultaneously influencing readers' perceptions of those realities. Consequently, literature should not be viewed as a neutral representation of life but as a medium through which social meanings are created, negotiated, and contested.

According to Lucien Goldmann, literature is a human fact that emerges from the collective consciousness of a social group. Literary texts express a particular *world vision* (*vision du monde*) shared by individuals who occupy similar historical and social positions. Therefore, a literary work cannot be separated from the social structures that shape the author's worldview. Through this perspective, literature reflects not only individual experiences but also broader social relations, ideological conflicts, and cultural transformations.

Similarly, Alan Swingewood (1972) argues that literature serves as a social institution because it embodies the norms, values, and contradictions existing within society. Literary works reveal patterns of social interaction, class relations, political authority, and cultural beliefs that characterize a specific historical period. However, literature does not merely imitate reality. Instead, it selectively reconstructs social experiences through imagination and artistic techniques, allowing readers to critically examine the social world from new perspectives.

The relationship between literature and society is therefore dialectical. On the one hand, social conditions influence the production of literary texts by shaping authors' experiences, ideologies, and creative choices. On the other hand, literature contributes to society by reproducing, reinforcing, questioning, or resisting dominant ideologies. Eagleton (2008) emphasizes that literary texts are ideological products that participate in the production of cultural meanings. Through narrative strategies, characterization, symbolism, and language, literature may legitimize existing systems of power or challenge them by exposing forms of inequality and oppression.

This constructive role of literature is particularly significant in the representation of marginalized groups, including children. The portrayal of children in literary texts is not merely descriptive but ideological, as it reflects culturally specific assumptions about childhood, authority, dependency, innocence, and agency. Adult authors frequently construct child characters through adult perspectives, shaping readers' understanding of children's social roles and capacities. Consequently, literature participates in constructing dominant

discourses surrounding childhood rather than simply reflecting children's lived experiences.

Within sociology of literature, representation is understood as a process through which social realities are interpreted rather than objectively reproduced. Characters, events, and narrative perspectives function as symbolic constructions that organize readers' understanding of society. Narrative techniques such as focalization determine whose perceptions are privileged and whose voices are marginalized. As a result, the ideological meanings embedded in literary texts are influenced not only by what is narrated but also by how events are presented.

This perspective is particularly relevant to Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination*. Although the novel is set within a fictional fantasy world, its portrayal of authority, political conflict, and interpersonal relationships reflects broader social issues concerning hierarchy and power. The interactions between adult and child characters reveal unequal power relations that resemble forms of discrimination experienced by children in real societies. Moreover, the novel employs shifting focalization to guide readers' interpretations of these relationships, allowing narrative perspective to become a crucial mechanism in constructing meanings about childhood and authority.

Accordingly, this study regards *Ruination* not merely as a fantasy narrative but as a cultural text that both reflects and constructs social understandings of childhood. By combining the sociology of literature with narratology and the theory of negative childism, this research examines how focalization contributes to the ideological representation of children and how narrative perspective shapes readers' perceptions of unequal adult–child power relations.

The relationship between literature and ideology has been a central concern in literary studies, particularly within the sociology of literature and cultural criticism. Literature is not merely a form of artistic expression or entertainment; it is also a cultural product shaped by ideological values and social beliefs. Every literary work is produced within a particular historical and cultural context, carrying assumptions about power, identity, morality, and social relations. Consequently,

literature both reflects existing ideologies and participates in their production and circulation.

Ideology can be broadly understood as a system of beliefs, values, and ideas through which individuals interpret and organize social reality. According to Louis Althusser (1971), ideology is not simply a collection of political opinions but a system of representations that shapes how people perceive themselves and their relationships with others. Ideology operates through institutions such as education, religion, the family, and culture, including literature. As a cultural product, literature becomes one of the means through which dominant ideologies are reproduced, negotiated, or challenged.

Terry Eagleton (2008) argues that literature is inseparable from ideology because literary texts are produced within specific social conditions and inevitably embody particular perspectives on the world. Rather than existing outside politics or society, literature reflects ideological struggles by presenting certain values as natural while questioning others. Narrative choices, characterization, symbolism, and language all contribute to the construction of ideological meaning. Therefore, literary analysis involves examining not only what a text says but also how it shapes readers' understanding of social reality.

Within the sociology of literature, ideology is expressed through the representation of social institutions, relationships, and power structures. Authors may consciously or unconsciously reproduce dominant cultural assumptions regarding class, gender, race, nationality, or age. At the same time, literature can challenge prevailing ideologies by exposing injustice, questioning authority, or presenting alternative perspectives. This dual function makes literature an important site for understanding how cultural meanings are created and contested.

One significant ideological dimension in literature concerns the representation of childhood. Childhood is not merely a biological stage of human development but also a cultural and ideological construct. Adult societies often define children as dependent, immature, irrational, or incapable of making independent decisions. These assumptions influence how child characters are portrayed in literary works and how readers are encouraged to interpret their

experiences. As a result, literary texts frequently reinforce adult-centered ideologies that position children as subordinate to adult authority.

Narrative techniques play a crucial role in communicating ideology. Ideological meanings are conveyed not only through themes and events but also through the organization of the narrative itself. The selection of narrative perspective, the distribution of information, and the choice of focalizer determine whose experiences receive legitimacy and whose voices remain marginalized. By controlling readers' access to characters' thoughts and emotions, narrative structure can reinforce or challenge dominant social beliefs.

In Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination*, ideological issues emerge through representations of political authority, loyalty, hierarchy, and intergenerational relationships. The interactions between adult and child characters reveal assumptions about obedience, dependency, and authority that reflect broader ideological constructions of childhood. Furthermore, the novel's shifting focalization influences how readers perceive these relationships by directing sympathy, credibility, and emotional engagement toward particular characters. Consequently, ideology in *Ruination* is embedded not only in the story's events but also in the narrative strategies through which those events are presented.

Understanding literature as an ideological practice provides an important foundation for this research. It allows the analysis to move beyond identifying instances of discrimination against children toward examining how narrative perspective contributes to the production of ideological meanings. Through the integration of sociology of literature, narratology, and the theory of negative childism, this study investigates how *Ruination* constructs adult-child power relations and how focalization shapes readers' interpretations of those relationships.

The representation of children in literature has become an important area of inquiry within literary studies, childhood studies, and the sociology of literature. Rather than serving merely as fictional characters, children often function as cultural symbols through which societies express beliefs about innocence, dependency, morality, education, and authority. Consequently, literary representations of children reveal not only individual experiences but also the social

and ideological values that shape adult understandings of childhood. As Stephens (1992) argues, children's representation in literature is never neutral; it is embedded within cultural assumptions about what children are, what they should become, and how they should relate to adults.

From the perspective of the sociology of literature, representations of children are socially constructed rather than natural or universal. Childhood itself is understood as a historical and cultural category whose meanings vary across different societies and periods. James and Prout (1997) contend that childhood is a social construction produced through cultural practices, institutions, and dominant discourses rather than merely a biological stage of development. Accordingly, literary texts do not simply depict children as they exist in reality but participate in constructing ideas about childhood through narrative, characterization, and language.

Historically, literary works have often portrayed children through adult-centered perspectives. Child characters are frequently represented as innocent, vulnerable, dependent, or incomplete individuals who require adult guidance and protection. While these representations may emphasize children's vulnerability, they can also reinforce hierarchical relationships in which adults are positioned as naturally superior, more rational, and more authoritative. Such portrayals contribute to the normalization of unequal power relations between adults and children by presenting adult authority as unquestionable and children's agency as limited.

Contemporary childhood studies challenge these traditional assumptions by emphasizing children as active social actors rather than passive recipients of adult influence. According to James, Jenks, and Prout (1998), children possess their own perspectives, experiences, and capacities to interpret the social world. Literary representations that acknowledge children's agency allow readers to recognize children as individuals capable of making decisions, expressing opinions, and participating in social life. Conversely, representations that silence children's voices or reduce them to objects of adult control may reinforce ideological constructions that marginalize childhood.

The ideological nature of children's representation becomes particularly evident through the concept of childism. Bernstein (2011) argues that adult-centered cultural narratives frequently construct children as inferior subjects whose experiences are interpreted primarily through adult perspectives. Similarly, Young-Bruehl (2012) explains that negative childism manifests in practices and representations that justify adult domination, deny children's autonomy, and normalize discrimination against children. Within literary texts, these forms of childism may appear through characterization, dialogue, plot development, or narrative perspective, shaping readers' perceptions of children's social positions.

Narrative technique plays a significant role in determining how child characters are represented. Representation depends not only on what happens to children within the story but also on how readers gain access to their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Focalization, in particular, influences whether readers perceive events from the perspective of child characters or through the interpretations of adults. When children's experiences are consistently filtered through adult focalizers, their voices may be diminished or reinterpreted according to adult values and assumptions. Conversely, focalization centered on child characters can foreground their emotions, perceptions, and agency, encouraging readers to understand the narrative from their point of view.

Fantasy literature offers a particularly rich context for examining children's representation because it frequently explores themes of power, identity, authority, and social hierarchy within imagined worlds. Although fantasy narratives often feature young protagonists, child characters are not always portrayed as empowered individuals. They may instead become subjects of political manipulation, social exclusion, emotional control, or institutional authority. These representations mirror broader ideological assumptions about childhood while simultaneously inviting readers to question established power structures.

In Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination*, the representation of child characters is closely connected to issues of authority, political conflict, and intergenerational power. The novel portrays children within complex social and institutional relationships in which adult decisions significantly influence their lives and

opportunities. Through its shifting focalization, the narrative directs readers' attention toward different perspectives, thereby shaping interpretations of children's experiences and their relationships with adult authority. Consequently, the representation of children in *Ruination* is not merely a narrative element but an ideological construction that reflects broader questions concerning power, agency, and discrimination.

Understanding children's representation as a socially and ideologically constructed process provides an essential foundation for this study. It enables the analysis to examine not only the depiction of child characters in *Ruination* but also the narrative mechanisms through which those depictions are produced. This perspective establishes the connection between the sociology of literature, the theory of negative childism, and Mieke Bal's concept of focalization, which together form the analytical framework for investigating how narrative perspective contributes to the portrayal of unequal adult-child power relations in the novel.

2.2 Negatif Childism

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's Childism theory, developed in her work *Childism: Confronting Prejudice Against Children* (2012), provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding various forms of systemic prejudice against children. Young-Bruehl introduces childism as a form of prejudice comparable to racism or sexism, but with unique characteristics as it targets an age group that is socially dependent on adults, particularly their parents. This theory stems from the observation that society often fails to recognize childism as a structural problem with real life consequences for children. According to Young-Bruehl, childism isn't merely about individual acts of violence, but rather a belief system embedded in culture and social policies where children are viewed as entities that can be controlled, manipulated, or even ignored solely for the benefit of adults.

The concept of *childism* was developed by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl to describe prejudice, discrimination, and systemic injustice directed toward children as a social group. Young-Bruehl argued that children, despite being widely perceived as needing care and protection, are frequently subjected to forms of

marginalization that are comparable to other forms of prejudice such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. Rather than being viewed as individuals with their own rights, perspectives, and agency, children are often treated as subordinate beings whose interests can be overridden by the desires and priorities of adults (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

According to Young-Bruehl (2012), childism is not merely a collection of isolated acts of mistreatment. It is a broader social and psychological phenomenon that legitimizes practices, policies, and beliefs that fail to prioritize the well-being of children. This prejudice enables a wide range of harmful actions, from neglect and emotional manipulation to physical abuse and exploitation. In this sense, childism functions as an ideological framework that rationalizes the unequal treatment of children and normalizes adult dominance over them.

Young-Bruehl's theory emerged from her broader study of prejudice and psychoanalytic theory. She argued that prejudice is often rooted in unconscious fears, anxieties, fantasies, and defensive mechanisms that individuals project onto a particular social group. Just as racism projects fears and stereotypes onto racial groups, childism projects adult anxieties onto children. These projections influence how adults perceive children and shape social institutions that govern childhood. Consequently, childism operates not only at the interpersonal level but also within educational systems, legal structures, family relations, and public policies (Young-Bruehl, 2009; Young-Bruehl, 2012).

One of Young-Bruehl's most significant contributions is her argument that child abuse and neglect should not be understood solely through categories of behavior, such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Instead, these acts should also be examined through the prejudicial attitudes that make them possible. She contends that society often focuses on the type of abuse while overlooking the underlying beliefs that permit adults to harm children. By introducing the concept of childism, Young-Bruehl shifts attention from individual acts of abuse to the broader social attitudes and power structures that sustain them (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Furthermore, childism is closely connected to the unequal power relationship between adults and children. Because children are dependent on adults for survival, education, and socialization, adults possess significant authority over them. While such authority can be exercised responsibly, childism emerges when adult power is used to control, silence, exploit, or disregard children's needs and perspectives. In childist cultures, children are often expected to obey unquestioningly, while their experiences and testimonies are viewed as less credible than those of adults. This dynamic contributes to the social invisibility of many forms of child suffering and injustice (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Young-Bruehl further argues that childism is maintained through cultural beliefs that portray children as incompetent, irrational, immature, or incapable of meaningful participation in social life. Such stereotypes reinforce the notion that adults always know what is best for children and justify excluding children from decisions that affect their lives. As a result, children's voices are frequently marginalized in both private and public spheres. These assumptions can influence parenting practices, educational approaches, legal systems, and social policies, often limiting opportunities for children to exercise autonomy and agency (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

A central aspect of Young-Bruehl's theory is her identification of three major forms of childism: narcissistic childism, hysterical childism, and obsessive childism. These forms reflect different psychological motivations underlying adult prejudice against children. Narcissistic childism treats children as extensions of adult desires and identities; hysterical childism views children as threats or sources of anxiety; and obsessive childism seeks to control children through rigid rules and excessive discipline. Together, these forms illustrate how childism can manifest in diverse but interconnected ways across family, educational, and social contexts (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

One of Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's most significant contributions to the study of prejudice against children is her identification of three distinct forms of childism: narcissistic childism, hysterical childism, and obsessive childism. According to Young-Bruehl (2012), these forms represent different psychological

mechanisms through which adults project their anxieties, desires, and insecurities onto children. Although each form emerges from different motivations, they share a common characteristic: the denial of children's autonomy, individuality, dignity, and developmental needs.

Young-Bruehl's classification is grounded in psychoanalytic theory, particularly the idea that prejudice is not merely a social phenomenon but also a psychological one. She argues that adults often unconsciously transfer unresolved emotional conflicts, fears, and desires onto children, resulting in attitudes and behaviors that limit children's ability to develop as independent individuals. Consequently, childism should not be understood solely as overt abuse or neglect but also as a system of beliefs and practices that shape how adults perceive and interact with children (Young-Bruehl, 2009; Young-Bruehl, 2012).

This theoretical framework shifts attention away from visible acts of mistreatment and toward the underlying psychological motivations that make such acts possible. Instead of asking only how children are harmed, Young-Bruehl encourages scholars to examine why adults engage in behaviors that undermine children's rights and well-being. By focusing on the roots of prejudice, her theory provides a deeper understanding of the power dynamics that characterize adult-child relationships.

The three forms of childism differ in terms of the psychological needs and anxieties that motivate adult behavior. Narcissistic childism occurs when adults perceive children as extensions of themselves and expect them to fulfill adult desires, ambitions, or emotional needs. In this form, children are valued primarily for their ability to reflect positively on adults rather than for their own individuality. Hysterical childism, on the other hand, is characterized by excessive fear and suspicion toward children. Adults perceive children as potential threats, sources of danger, or causes of social disorder, leading to restrictive and overprotective practices. Finally, obsessive childism emerges from an overwhelming desire for control, order, and discipline. Adults attempt to regulate children's behavior through rigid rules and strict supervision, often limiting opportunities for independence and self-expression (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Although these forms appear different, they are interconnected because they all stem from adult-centered perspectives that prioritize adult needs, fears, and expectations over children's interests. In narcissistic childism, children become instruments of adult self-fulfillment. In hysterical childism, they become objects of fear and suspicion. In obsessive childism, they become targets of excessive regulation and control. In each case, children's voices, experiences, and agency are marginalized, reinforcing unequal power relations between adults and children.

Furthermore, Young-Bruehl's theory highlights the structural nature of childism. These forms of prejudice are not limited to individual relationships within families but can also be found in schools, legal institutions, media representations, and public policies. Educational systems that prioritize obedience over creativity, parenting practices that suppress children's autonomy, and social narratives that portray children as either helpless victims or dangerous troublemakers can all reflect childist attitudes. Thus, childism operates at both personal and institutional levels, shaping the social construction of childhood itself (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

The significance of this framework lies in its ability to reveal how prejudice against children is normalized within everyday life. Because adult authority over children is often considered natural and necessary, many childist practices remain unquestioned. Young-Bruehl's classification helps expose the psychological and cultural assumptions that justify such practices, enabling a more critical examination of adult-child relationships. Through this perspective, childism becomes a valuable analytical tool for understanding how systems of power, prejudice, and social control influence children's experiences and opportunities for development.

2.3.1 Narcissistic Childism

Narcissistic childism is a form of prejudice against children in which adults perceive children as extensions of themselves rather than as autonomous individuals with their own identities, needs, and aspirations. According to Young-Bruehl (2012), this form of childism originates from narcissistic tendencies that encourage adults to use children as instruments for satisfying their own emotional, psychological, and social needs. Consequently, children are often denied the

opportunity to develop independent identities because adult desires and expectations take precedence over children's developmental needs.

Young-Bruehl (2012) argues that the defining characteristic of narcissistic childism is the suppression or erasure of children's individuality. Adults who exhibit narcissistic attitudes frequently expect children to embody their values, ambitions, achievements, and self-image. Rather than acknowledging children as unique individuals with distinct personalities and aspirations, they treat them as reflections of themselves. As a result, children are pressured to conform to standards established by adults, even when those standards conflict with their own interests, talents, or personal goals.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, narcissistic childism can be understood as a projection of adult desires onto children. Adults unconsciously seek self-validation through their children and use children's accomplishments as evidence of their own success and worth. In this context, children become symbolic representations of adult identity rather than independent subjects with their own agency. This dynamic transforms the parent-child relationship into a mechanism through which adults pursue personal fulfillment, recognition, and emotional satisfaction (Young-Bruehl, 2009).

Within family settings, narcissistic childism often manifests through excessive expectations regarding academic achievement, behavior, appearance, or future career choices. Parents may insist that children pursue particular educational pathways or occupations that align with parental aspirations rather than children's interests. Likewise, children's accomplishments may be celebrated primarily because they enhance parental prestige and social status. Under such circumstances, children are valued not for who they are but for how effectively they fulfill adult expectations.

Young-Bruehl (2012) further suggests that narcissistic childism may stem from unresolved emotional conflicts experienced by adults during their own childhoods. Adults who experienced neglect, rejection, or failure may unconsciously attempt to compensate for these experiences through their children. By encouraging children to achieve what they themselves could not accomplish,

adults seek to repair damaged self-esteem or fulfill unmet emotional needs. However, this process often places an unfair psychological burden on children, who become responsible for satisfying expectations that are not their own.

The consequences of narcissistic childism can be significant for children's psychological and emotional development. Because their personal preferences and identities are frequently ignored, children may struggle to establish a stable sense of self. They may become overly dependent on external validation, develop difficulties making independent decisions, or suppress their genuine thoughts and emotions in order to maintain adult approval. Over time, these experiences may contribute to identity confusion, low self-esteem, anxiety, emotional insecurity, and difficulties in forming healthy interpersonal relationships.

Beyond the family environment, narcissistic childism can also be observed within educational and cultural institutions. Societies that define children's value primarily through achievement and performance may reinforce childist attitudes by encouraging adults to view children as reflections of family success. In such contexts, children's development is evaluated according to externally imposed standards rather than their personal growth, well-being, and autonomy. Consequently, the social and cultural environment may perpetuate patterns of prejudice that prioritize adult expectations over children's rights and developmental needs.

Conceptually, narcissistic childism reflects an unequal power relationship in which adults possess the authority to define children's identities and life trajectories. Children are denied full recognition as autonomous individuals and are instead positioned as extensions of adult desires. Therefore, narcissistic childism represents a form of prejudice that undermines children's autonomy, agency, and dignity by subordinating their individuality to adult-centered interests and expectations (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Indicators of Narcissistic Childism

1. Viewing children as extensions of adult identity.
2. Imposing adult ambitions, goals, and expectations on children.
3. Ignoring children's interests, opinions, and aspirations.

4. Seeking emotional satisfaction or social prestige through children's achievements.
5. Limiting children's autonomy and independent decision-making.
6. Prioritizing adult needs over children's developmental needs.
7. Evaluating children's worth primarily through their ability to fulfill adult expectations.

2.3.2 Hysterical Childism

Hysterical childism refers to a form of prejudice against children that is rooted in adult fear, anxiety, and suspicion toward childhood. According to Young-Bruehl (2012), this form of childism emerges when adults perceive children as potential threats, sources of danger, or causes of social disorder. Rather than recognizing children as developing individuals who require guidance and support, adults influenced by hysterical childism tend to view children through a lens of fear and mistrust. Consequently, children become objects of excessive surveillance, restriction, and control.

Young-Bruehl argues that hysterical childism originates from psychological anxieties that adults project onto children. Similar to other forms of prejudice, these anxieties are often disconnected from children's actual behavior and instead reflect deeper social and psychological concerns. Adults may unconsciously associate children with instability, unpredictability, or moral decline, leading them to interpret ordinary childhood behavior as potentially dangerous or problematic. As a result, children are frequently subjected to restrictions that exceed what is necessary for their safety or development.

A central characteristic of hysterical childism is the tendency to exaggerate perceived risks associated with children. Adults influenced by this perspective often assume that children are likely to engage in harmful behavior, become victims of danger, or contribute to social problems. Such assumptions generate an atmosphere of fear in which children's actions are constantly monitored and regulated. Rather than fostering trust and mutual understanding, adult-child relationships become dominated by suspicion and protective interventions.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, hysterical childism can be understood as a projection of collective fears onto children. Young-Bruehl (2012) suggests that periods of social uncertainty frequently intensify anxieties surrounding childhood. During such periods, children may become symbolic representations of broader societal concerns, including fears about morality, crime, sexuality, technology, or cultural change. Consequently, children are often blamed for social problems that originate from structural or institutional factors beyond their control.

In family settings, hysterical childism may manifest through excessive parental protection and supervision. Parents may restrict children's independence due to fears that they will encounter danger, make poor decisions, or become involved in undesirable activities. Although such actions are often motivated by concern for children's well-being, excessive protection can limit opportunities for exploration, risk-taking, and personal growth. Children may therefore struggle to develop confidence, resilience, and decision-making skills.

Within educational institutions, hysterical childism may appear through policies and practices that prioritize surveillance and control over learning and development. Schools may implement strict monitoring systems, extensive disciplinary measures, or restrictive behavioral regulations based on assumptions that children are inherently disruptive or irresponsible. Such approaches can contribute to an environment in which children are viewed as problems to be managed rather than individuals capable of meaningful participation and growth.

The consequences of hysterical childism can be significant for children's social, emotional, and psychological development. When children are repeatedly treated as potential threats or sources of concern, they may internalize negative perceptions of themselves. Feelings of insecurity, anxiety, shame, and social alienation may emerge as children become aware of adults' distrust. Furthermore, excessive restrictions may hinder the development of autonomy, creativity, and self-confidence by limiting opportunities for independent exploration and decision-making.

At a broader social level, hysterical childism contributes to the marginalization of children's voices and experiences. Because adults perceive

children through a framework of fear and suspicion, children's perspectives are often dismissed or regarded as unreliable. This dynamic reinforces unequal power relations between adults and children and limits children's ability to participate meaningfully in matters that affect their lives.

Conceptually, hysterical childism demonstrates how adult anxieties can shape perceptions of childhood and justify restrictive practices toward children. By constructing children as potential threats or sources of danger, adults legitimize forms of surveillance and control that undermine children's autonomy and developmental needs. Therefore, hysterical childism represents a form of prejudice that is driven not by children's actual behavior but by the fears and insecurities projected onto them by adults (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Indicators of Hysterical Childism

1. Viewing children as potential threats or sources of danger.
2. Excessive fear regarding children's behavior and activities.
3. Overprotective parenting and restrictive supervision.
4. Constant suspicion toward children's motives and actions.
5. Exaggerating risks associated with childhood behavior.
6. Limiting children's independence due to fear-based concerns.
7. Associating children with social disorder, deviance, or moral decline.

2.3.3 Obsessional Childism

Obsessional childism, sometimes referred to as *obsessive childism*, is a form of prejudice against children characterized by an excessive desire for order, control, discipline, and regulation. According to Young-Bruehl (2012), this form of childism emerges when adults perceive children as inherently disorderly, irresponsible, or incapable of self-regulation. As a result, adults feel compelled to exercise continuous control over children's behavior, thoughts, and actions in order to maintain stability and conformity.

Unlike narcissistic childism, which seeks self-fulfillment through children, and hysterical childism, which is driven by fear of children, obsessional childism is primarily motivated by the need for control. Adults influenced by this form of childism believe that children must be carefully managed and disciplined to prevent

mistakes, disobedience, or moral failure. Consequently, children's autonomy is often restricted in favor of strict supervision and behavioral regulation.

Young-Bruehl (2012) explains that obsessional childism is rooted in psychological concerns related to uncertainty and unpredictability. Children naturally exhibit curiosity, spontaneity, creativity, and experimentation, qualities that may be perceived as disruptive by adults who value order and control. To reduce feelings of anxiety associated with unpredictability, adults establish rigid rules and expectations designed to regulate every aspect of children's lives. Through this process, children's behavior becomes the target of continuous monitoring and correction.

Within family settings, obsessional childism may manifest through highly authoritarian parenting practices. Parents may impose strict routines, excessive rules, and detailed expectations regarding children's behavior, academic performance, social interactions, and daily activities. Obedience is often prioritized above personal expression, and deviations from established rules may result in punishment or criticism. In such environments, children are expected to conform rather than develop independent judgment and decision-making abilities.

Similarly, obsessional childism can be observed within educational institutions that emphasize discipline and conformity above creativity and critical thinking. Students may be expected to follow instructions without question, while independent opinions or unconventional approaches are discouraged. Educational success becomes associated primarily with compliance and obedience rather than intellectual growth and personal development.

A key feature of obsessional childism is the belief that strict control is necessary for children's well-being. Adults often justify excessive regulation as a means of preparing children for adulthood or protecting them from potential harm. However, Young-Bruehl argues that excessive control may have the opposite effect by limiting opportunities for children to develop autonomy, responsibility, and self-confidence. Children who are rarely allowed to make decisions or learn from their mistakes may struggle to become independent and resilient individuals.

The consequences of obsessional childism can be significant for children's psychological development. Constant supervision and rigid expectations may lead to anxiety, fear of failure, perfectionism, and low self-confidence. Children may become overly dependent on authority figures for guidance and approval, making it difficult for them to trust their own judgment. Furthermore, excessive control can suppress creativity, curiosity, and self-expression, which are essential aspects of healthy childhood development.

At a broader social level, obsessional childism reflects cultural values that prioritize order, discipline, and conformity over children's rights and agency. Societies that place excessive emphasis on obedience may unintentionally reinforce childist attitudes by portraying children as individuals who require constant management. Consequently, children's voices and perspectives become secondary to adult expectations and institutional regulations.

Conceptually, obsessional childism demonstrates how the desire for control can function as a form of prejudice against children. By viewing children primarily as subjects who must be regulated and disciplined, adults may overlook children's capacity for growth, learning, and self-determination. Therefore, obsessional childism represents a system of beliefs and practices that restrict children's autonomy and hinder their ability to develop as independent individuals (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Indicators of Obsessional Childism

1. Excessive emphasis on discipline and obedience.
2. Strict regulation of children's behavior and daily activities.
3. Continuous monitoring and supervision.
4. Limited opportunities for independent decision-making.
5. Intolerance toward mistakes, experimentation, or nonconformity.
6. Prioritizing order and control over children's autonomy.
7. Viewing children as individuals who require constant management and correction.

2.3 Narratology Mieke Bal's Theory

Literary work serves as a form of communication between the author and the reader, acting as a bridge that connects one reader with another. Fiction, as a form of verbal interaction, is described by Culler (via Hellwig, 2003: 13) as an imitation of a historical utterance that is understood by using real-world utterances as a model for the relationships between fictional utterances and the fictional world.

Mieke Bal introduced the term as a more precise and useful concept than the commonly used terms "point of view" or "perspective." While "point of view" often encompasses both the narrator and the viewpoint, making it somewhat ambiguous, Bal's term "focalization" specifically denotes the agent responsible for the act of perception in the narrative, allowing for a clearer analysis of narrative structure (Bal, 1985). Bal (1985, p. 101) emphasized that focalization is the connection between the vision and that which is seen, and she prefers this term over perspective because it allows for easier modifications and extensions within the narrative.

According to Bal (1985), focalization is "the relation between the vision and that which is seen" (p. 101). This definition emphasizes that narrative events are always presented from a particular perceptual position rather than from a completely objective viewpoint. The focalizer determines which aspects of the fictional world become visible to readers, how events are interpreted, and what information is revealed or withheld throughout the narrative. Consequently, focalization plays a significant role in shaping readers' understanding of characters, events, and conflicts.

Bal (1997) further develops this concept by distinguishing between the focalizer, the subject who perceives, and the focalized object, the person, event, or object being perceived. This distinction highlights that the narrator and the focalizer are not necessarily the same. A narrator may recount the story while the events are filtered through the consciousness of a particular character. Therefore, narrative perspective should be understood as the result of the relationship between perception and narration rather than as a simple matter of who tells the story.

The significance of focalization extends beyond narrative technique because it directly influences readers' interpretation of fictional events. Rimmon-Kenan (2002) argues that focalization regulates the distribution of narrative information by determining what readers are allowed to know and from whose perspective that knowledge is obtained. Since readers experience events through the perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and judgments of the focalizing character, focalization inevitably shapes the way readers evaluate other characters and interpret narrative conflicts. Thus, characterization is constructed not only through actions and dialogue but also through the perspective from which those actions are observed.

Furthermore, focalization contributes to the creation of narrative reliability, emotional engagement, and thematic emphasis. By limiting or expanding readers' access to a character's consciousness, authors can generate sympathy, suspense, uncertainty, or dramatic irony. Internal access to a character's thoughts often creates psychological intimacy, whereas restricting readers to observable actions encourages them to infer motives independently. Consequently, focalization functions as an essential narrative strategy that organizes both information and interpretation within literary texts.

In narratological studies, focalization is generally classified into two primary categories: internal focalization and external focalization. Internal focalization occurs when events are filtered through the consciousness of a character, granting readers access to the character's thoughts, feelings, memories, perceptions, and subjective interpretations. External focalization, in contrast, limits narration to observable actions and external details without revealing the character's internal mental state. These two forms of focalization provide different degrees of narrative access and significantly influence how readers understand fictional characters and their experiences.

Because this study examines how narrative perspective contributes to the portrayal of negative childism in Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination*, Bal's theory of focalization provides the primary analytical framework. By identifying whether narrative events are presented through internal or external focalization, this study investigates how readers' perceptions of Viego are shaped through the perspectives

of adult characters, particularly Kalista. Combined with Rimmon-Kenan's discussion of the interpretative function of focalization, this framework enables a deeper analysis of how narrative perspective contributes to the construction of unequal adult–child relationships represented in the novel.

2.4 Anthony Reynold's Ruination

Ruination is a fantasy novel written by Anthony Reynolds and published in 2022 as part of the *League of Legends* universe. The novel explores the origins of one of the most significant historical catastrophes in the world of Runeterra, known as the Ruination. Set centuries before the events of the game, the story focuses on the rise and fall of the Blessed Isles and the tragic decisions that ultimately transform them into the cursed Shadow Isles.

The narrative primarily follows the story of King Viego, the ruler of Camavor, whose overwhelming love for his wife, Queen Isolde, becomes the driving force behind the central conflict of the novel. After Isolde is fatally poisoned, Viego becomes consumed by grief and refuses to accept her death. His obsession with bringing her back to life leads him to seek forbidden forms of magic, regardless of the consequences for his kingdom and the people around him.

Alongside Viego's story, the novel presents the perspectives of several important characters, including Kalista, Viego's loyal niece and military commander; Ledros, a devoted soldier; Hecarim, a ruthless knight; and various inhabitants of the Blessed Isles. Through these characters, the novel portrays themes of loyalty, ambition, sacrifice, corruption, and the abuse of power. As Viego's desperation intensifies, the moral and political stability of both Camavor and the Blessed Isles begins to deteriorate.

The climax of the story occurs when Viego brings Isolde's body to the Blessed Isles in an attempt to use the sacred Waters of Life to resurrect her. However, the ritual ends in disaster. Instead of restoring life, it unleashes a catastrophic magical event known as the Ruination. The Blessed Isles are transformed into the Shadow Isles, and countless individuals are corrupted, trapped between life and death. This event fundamentally alters the history of Runeterra and

gives rise to many of the supernatural entities that later appear throughout the *League of Legends* universe.

Beyond its fantasy setting, *Ruination* explores complex human emotions such as grief, obsession, fear, and the desire for control. The novel also examines relationships shaped by unequal power dynamics, making it a valuable text for analyzing social and psychological theories. Through its portrayal of authority, dependency, manipulation, and emotional domination, the novel provides opportunities to examine forms of prejudice and control, including the manifestations of childism identified by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl.

Therefore, *Ruination* serves not only as a fantasy narrative but also as a literary work that reflects broader issues concerning power, identity, and interpersonal relationships. These themes make the novel relevant for scholarly analysis using Young-Bruehl's framework of narcissistic, hysterical, and obsessional childism.

