

Binary Opposition Found in the Characterization of Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* Novel

Sheila Larasati¹, Riana Permatasari^{2*}

English Literature Study Program

Sultan Agung Islamic University

Sheilalarasati36@std.unissula.ac.id, permatasari@unissula.ac.id *

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the characterization of the characters in Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* novel. The found characterizations were then later categorized and sorted so that it could be contrasted and formed into a binary opposition. Binary opposition is chosen to analyze the novel because of the children's literature's nature of contrasting the characters. The primary data were taken from the novel in the form of dialogues and narrations while the secondary data were taken from the various sources that were deemed to support the study. The data found in the novel were then identified, classified, and reduced. This study was finished with two results. The first result is the characterization found in characters are; greedy, grateful, indifferent, caring, coward, and brave. The second result deals with the binary opposition. The pairs found in the novel are greedy – grateful, indifferent – caring, and coward – brave. After thorough interpretation and analysis, the study shows that there is a power imbalance between the adult and the children characters as they have opposite traits with each other along with their responsibilities as their respected roles. The power imbalance shown in the characters are made more prominent by how the children are portrayed to be the hero by the author while the adults are portrayed to be reckless.

Keywords: *binary opposition, characterization, Lemony Snicket, Ersatz Elevator*

INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida is one tricky theory to analyze. Derrida believed that everyone who even attempted to explain the definition of deconstruction was wrong (Powell, 2008). Deconstruction's principle is during when understanding a text, one should disregard the text and the structure, as well as the inside and outside context (Aprilia & Arianto, 2021) and its derived from the word 'deconstruire' which means to breakdown an improvement. Derrida had always been vocal about his stance on western metaphysics that truth is objective (logocentrism). The concept of logocentrism creates a pair between the privileged and the non-privileged such as speech is given privilege over writing, tall is given privilege over short, white is given privilege over black, etc (Powell, 2008). The previously explained concept creates another concept which is binary opposition where it situates two completely different concepts as a pairing (Smith 1996). In this research, binary opposition acts as a tool to dissect a novel as binary opposition "aims to open the reader's mind to see other meanings and not stick to one thing only" (Aprilia & Arianto, 2021). Plenty of the research that has been previously done talked about the relation between binary oppositions and characterization in a literary work because the main object of the binary opposition is the opposition in between the traits of the characters.

According to Pickering & Hoepfer, character is "any individual in a literary work" and characterization is an act written by the author in the text to give a meaning of how a character is portrayed to be (quoted in Reams, 4). They further divided characterization into two points including telling (direct) and showing (indirect). Telling or direct is used when the author tells the audience through their comments of the characters in the writing, whereas showing of indirect is when the author steps aside and lets the readers analyze the characters based on the hints provided in the narratives, dialogues, or explanations. There are certain ways in analyzing the characterization based on them such as characterization through names, characterization through appearance, characterization by author, characterization through dialogues, and characterization through actions (Pickering & Hoepe, 1981). By looking at those aspects, the readers may conclude the traits of the characters build by the characterization used by the author.

Studies related to binary opposition through characters and characterizations in literary works are not something new. A research from Aritonang (2022) examined binary opposition in Nat Gould's novel *Fast As The Wind*. He focused on one of the characters in the novel, namely Hector Woodridge. The results showed that there are 3 binary oppositions inherent in Hector's character. Another research is from Muqit (2020) who analyzes the Indonesian novel entitled "Orang-orang proyek" by Ahmad Tohari. He observed that the novel not only reflects the real situation of Indonesian community, but can also be an allusion to the social and political conditions that exist in Indonesia. Although some previous studies have discussed binary opposition in novels, it is important to note that most studies focusing on adult literature and children's literature have not been analyzed adequately. Thus, children's literature is chosen as the object of this study as novelty and its tendency to strikingly contrast the characterization of the characters in adult literature.

The object of this study was Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* novel that tells the story of the Baudelaire children under the custody of the wealthy couple, Esme and

Jerome Squalor. Despite living with a wealthy family, the Baudelaire children still had to worry about the long-time nemesis, Count Olaf who would always follow them everywhere in order to obtain their wealth. On top of their recurring problem, their best friend whom they met previously in the Prufrock Preparatory School, the Quagmire triplet, was kidnapped by Count Olaf so it was also the Baudelaire children's mission to save them. In order to analyze the characterization of the characters, the theory by Pickering and Hoepfer in *Concise Companion to Literature* (1981) was used. In short, based on the explanation above, this research has two objectives: (1) finding the traits shown by the characters through characterization and (2) analyzing the binary opposition concepts form by the traits of the characters. By doing this research, it is expected that this study will enrich the findings in the research field related to binary opposition shown in children literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted with a descriptive qualitative study. The focus of attention of this research was Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* novel which was the textual basis of this research. The data collection method was qualitative because it dealt with observations, record, and documents (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The data were classified into two types of data; primary and secondary data. Primary data included all the main sources related to the object of the study such as dialogues and narrations in the novel, Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator*. The secondary data were wide arrays of scholarly studies related to deconstruction, binary opposition, characterization, books, journals, and all other legitimate sources related to the study.

The first step of primary data collection was reading the novel. The researchers had read the novel times and again and fortunately the researchers had also read the preceding series of the novel to better understand the novel even more. After reading the novel, the researchers annotated some parts that were deemed suitable to add to the research. After the raw data were gathered, the researchers further sorted the raw data with the existing theory from the secondary data. Since the study had two research questions, the classification of the data was divided into two parts each to answer its respective research questions. After classifying the data, the data were then reduced by eliminating the weak data for better understanding of the research. After that, the data began to be analyzed using the theory mentioned previously. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the results and discussions that have been carried out.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the findings are discussed to answer the research questions. There are two points as the findings. The first point is related to the finding about characterization found in Lemont Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* novel. The second point is related to binary opposition formed by the traits of the characters in the novel. The following is the details of each findings.

a. Characterization found in Lemony Snicket's Ersatz Elevator

a.1 Greedy

Count Olaf is the arch nemesis of the Baudelaire children. His main intention behind his every scheme is to snatch away the Baudelaire children's

fortune which they currently do not possess until Violet Baudelaire, the eldest, comes of age. Count Olaf has been very persistent in snatching away the Baudelaire children's fortune since the first series of the book when he tried to marry Violet Baudelaire so that he could get their possession as her husband but thankfully it was a failure. In his early appearance on the book, Lemony Snicket describes him as **"He had one long eyebrow, a tattoo of an eye on his ankle, and two filthy hands that he hoped to use to snatch away the Baudelaire fortune that the orphans would inherit as soon as Violet came of age."** (Snicket, 2001: 7). This excerpt not merely explains Olaf's appearance, but also support his evil characterization. According to James Pickering and Jeffrey D. Hoepfer (1981), the author can implicitly explain the traits of the characters through the author's way of describing their appearance. Through the narration, readers can immediately understand that Count Olaf is the villain in the novel as he is described to be someone very vile from his appearance and characterization which are explained directly by the author.

Esme Squalor is also one of Count Olaf's crew who at first fools the Baudelaire children by making them think she is a good guardian and is on their side. The truth is, Esme Squalor is just as evil as Count Olaf. Esme Squalor is described to be the sixth most important financial advisor in the city who is also disgustingly wealthy that people can get lost in her house. Even though she has everything, it does not make Esme Squalor satisfied. The following quote shows that the author narrates Esme Squalor's questionable act that says **"Esme clapped her long nailed hands together with glee. "Me! Every last bit of money that people pay at the auction goes right to me! Isn't that smashing?"** (Snicket, 2001: 45). While in some cases dialogue needs to be scrutinized further and connected to the situation or character's gestures to understand its meaning, sometimes the author creates characters who are open and express whatever is on their mind (Pickering & Hoepfer, 1981: 32). From Esme's words, it is clear that she has an excessive obsession with money and wealth. It seems like despite being wealthy herself, Esme would still do devilish act and help Count Olaf for money. It shows that Esme is a greedy character.

a.2 Indifferent

The poor Baudelaire children's series of unfortunate events do not happen without the adults. Unfortunately, the adults around Baudelaire children's life are rather indifferent about it. Mr. Poe is the Baudelaire children's banker who takes care of the guardians of the Baudelaire children and their inheritance until Violet Baudelaire comes of age. Sadly, despite being the adult who consistently in Baudelaire children's life, he is lack of awareness and not really good at his job. If he were truly good at it, the previous close-call misfortunes of Count Olaf harming the Baudelaire children would not even happen in the first place as explained the quote that says **"I am sorry to say that Mr. Poe had not done a very good job so far, and the only thing they could rely on with Mr. Poe was that he always had a cough,"** (Snicket, 2001: 4). This quotation is a dramatic characterization method where a character's trait or personality are revealed through what other characters say or think about them (Jones, 1968: 84). The words of the main character can also be said to be more important than the minor character's

words, although in some cases the minor character's words also provide crucial information for the whole story (Pickering & Hoepe, 1981). Thus, the Baudelaire children's statement about Mr. Poe can be used as a valid testimony about his character. Moreover, Mr. Poe characterization becomes increasingly visible when he sends off the Baudelaire children to their new guardians in Squalor's condominium which located on the highest floor of 667 Dark Avenue. Unbeknown to them, the elevator is 'Out'. The term 'Out' is used when things are no longer relevant and should not be used. The stairs are 'In' which means that stairs is socially acceptable to use at the moment. In other words, the Baudelaire children and Mr. Poe had no other choice but to take hundreds and hundreds of stairs to reach their destination. However, Mr. Poe refused to take the stairs with them. **"You're not going to accompany us?" Klaus asked. "I simply don't have the time to accompany you," Mr. Poe said, "and that is that"** (Snicket, 2001: 15). The lack of interest of Mr. Poe to actually send off the Baudelaire children and personally meet their new guardian screams a lot about his personality. Pickering & Hoepfer (1981: 34-35) stated that action can reveal both unconscious emotional or psychological states and the conscious attitudes or values of a character. So, Mr. Poe's attitude in telling the Baudelaire children to go alone to their new guardians implies that he has no sympathy and indifference towards them. It also supports their previous testimony that Mr. Poe wasn't very good at carrying out his duties.

Other than Mr. Poe, Esme Squalor also possess indifferent traits. It can be seen from the first time the Baudelaire children arrived at Esme Squalor and Jerome Squalor residence.

"Even though I am unbelievably wealthy, you may call my 27 name Esme. I'll learn your names later. I'm very happy you're here, because Orphans are in, and when all my friends hear that I have three real live orphans, they'll be sick with jealousy, won't they Jerome?" (Snicket, 2001: 28).

Despite being their new guardian, the fact that she does not give them any consolation after everything that they went through is sad and indifferent at best. It also suggests that she solely care about her sense of fashion or social status and does not really care about matters that do not align it. It seems like she is more thoughtful towards her social status than the well-being of the Baudelaire children. Additionally, the topics discussed by characters are important for assessing their characterization (Pickering & Hoepfer, 1981). Characters who always talk about themselves or a specific topic in characterization can be considered as either egoist or a bore. Furthermore, prior to coming to the condominium of Esme Squalor and Jerome Squalor, the Baudelaire children was sent to Prufrock Preparatory School where they meet their best friend, the Quagmire triplet. Sadly, the Quagmire triplet was kidnapped by Count Olaf and it makes the Baudelaire children terribly sad. Up until their arrival in the Squalor condominium, the Quagmire triplets have not been found yet. The Baudelaire children are very worried, but Esme Squalor could only think of one thing **"Well, if they find them soon," Esme said, "maybe we'll adopt them, too. Five orphans! I'll be the innest person in town!"** (Snicket, 2001: 31). Once again, Esme's words clearly show that she only cares for herself. Similar to Mr. Poe, she

has no sympathy for the Baudelaire children or Quagmire triplet, and she is more focused on what other people in town think about her. All she cares about is to be the most up-to-date person in town. It is another dramatic characterization where the author shows the characterization of characters through their words or dialogue (Pickering & Hoepe, 1981).

a.3 Grateful

Baudelaire children was born into a wealthy family despite their endless misfortune which is why they got a massive amount of inheritance. Even though they lost everything in the blink of an eye, Baudelaire children are still very much grounded children who appreciate everything in life gracefully. Upon their arrival in the Esme and Jerome Squalor's condominium, the pinstripe is 'In' so Esme Squalor got them each pinstripe so that they do not embarrass her for not wearing one. It is a sweet gesture from Esme Squalor but she does not think whether the pinstripe she gave to them will fit into their body and the truth is it does not fit them at all as shown in the quote:

“The Baudelaire stood together for another moment and nodded resolutely, a phrase which here means “tried to make themselves stop feeling ungrateful and put on the suits.” But even though they did not want to seem spoiled, even though they knew the situation was not a terrible one at all, and even though they had less than an hour to change into the suits, find Jerome, and walk down all those hundreds and hundreds of stairs, the three children could not seem to move.” (Snicket, 2001: 53).

Characters are commonly represented through their actions. Readers can get clues about a character's personalities or attitudes through their actions. Besides, characters are often aware of their actions or it is done intentionally. Thus, by paying attention to the character's actions and other properties such as setting or events, the action of the character can have significant value in terms of their personological features (Margolin, 1986). So, in this excerpt, the author tells the readers directly the characterization of the Baudelaire children through their action in such situation. The Baudelaire children are very much aware that they could have been in a worse position right now and they are in a much better position than their best friend who is kidnapped by Count Olaf. Consequently, they try their best to be grateful in every aspect.

a.4 Brave

In the novel, some of the actions of the Baudelaire children also show that they are brave. First, after being on the run to avoid Count Olaf, this time around, the Baudelaire children are looking for Count Olaf in order to save their dearest friend from Count Olaf's chokehold. A very brave decision made by them considering how they almost lost their lives to him. **“I cant believe that now we're trying to find him.”. “Me neither,” Violet agreed. “If it weren't for the Quagmires, I wouldn't go down there at all,”** (Snicket, 2001: 134). Then, the Baudelaire children put their suspicion on the ersatz elevator which has 2 doors in front of the condominium but only has 1 door on the first floor. In order to find out, the Baudelaire children need to climb down the dark and empty elevator

shaft with a makeshift torch made of random metals found in the Squalor condominium. **“Hold them very, very, carefully,” she said, giving an ersatz welding torch to each of her siblings. “They’re hot enough to melt metal, so just imagine what they could do if they touched us. But I’m sure we can manage,”** (Snicket, 2001: 157). By making an ersatz rope from ties, the Baudelaire children gather their courage to go down the dark and deep elevator shaft with their ersatz scorching torch. “Hold them very, very, carefully,” she said, giving an ersatz welding torch to each of her siblings. **“They’re hot enough to melt metal, so just imagine what they could do if they touched us. But I’m sure we can manage.”** (Snicket, 2001: 157), and **“We’ll each have to keep one hand free to hold the torch. But I’m sure we can manage.”** (Snicket, 2001: 158). The Baudelaire children put aside the fact that they are scared to climb down into the pitch-black darkness to save their best friends and that is the epitome of bravery. From these quotations, It is clear that the Baudelaire children's words indicate that they are actually afraid, but their actions show otherwise. They act bravely and selflessly determine to help the Quagmires. Action-driven characterization such as characters’ decision, habits, or reactions help authors to add depth and authenticity to a character's development (Jenkins, 2023).

a.5 Caring

Violet Baudelaire is a gifted inventor and her invention has saved the Baudelaire children from many dangerous situations. She uses her inventing ability to make ersatz rope to rescue the Quagmire triplet who turns out to have been hidden in the ersatz elevator by Count Olaf. Violet Baudelaire creates a makeshift torch and ersatz rope to go down into the pitch darkness of the ersatz elevator by themselves. Sadly, in the last minute the effort failed because Count Olaf already moved the Quagmire triplets and that makes the eldest sibling very sad as shown in the dialogue below.

“They’re gone!” Violet said “They’re gone, and it’s all my fault!” She threw her welding torch into the corner of the tiny room, where it sizzled against the floor. She turned to her siblings, and they could see, by their white glow of their tongs, that their older sister was beginning to cry. **“My invention was supposed to save them,” she said mournfully, “and now Gunther has snatched them away. I’m a terrible inventor and terrible friend.”** (Snicket, 2001: 135)

Violet actions and words demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility and protection. The way she takes the initiative to solve problems and blame herself when it did not go according to plan shows her caring and nurturing qualities. In the next scene, Baudelaire children think that the Quagmire triplets are sent into the auction and hidden in one of the things being auctioned. After begging Jerome Squalor to buy the item being auctioned, turns out they are wrong. Quagmire triplet is once again kidnapped by Count Olaf and elopes successfully along with Esme Squalor. Amidst their sadness, Jerome Squalor offers them to live with him which is a nice gesture that they deny.

“We’re not going to track down Olaf,” Jerome said, shuddering at the thought. **“We’ll be lucky if he doesn’t track us down. As your guardian, I**

cannot allow you to try to find such a dangerous man. **Wouldn't you rather live safely with me?"** 31 **"Yes," Violent admitted. but our friends are in grave danger. We must go and rescue them.**" (Snicket, 2001: 257).

In this scene, despite facing their own challenges, the Baudelaires still insist on saving the Quagmire. They could have lived happily and comfortably with Jerome Squalor but they decide not to because they cannot live comfortably while their best friend is still in the chokehold of Count Olaf. This mutual care and support also highlight the themes of solidarity and compassion among the characters in the series.

a.6 Coward

In contrast with the Baudelaire children, Jerome Squalor is a coward. Jerome Squalor is indeed a one kind man. Yet, what is kind without the existence of bravery in him. After offering the Baudelaire children to live comfortably under wings, an offer with they reject, he continues to admit that he is in fact a coward. Jerome sighed, and kissed each Baudelaire on the forehead. **"You children are very dear to me," he said, "but I don't have your courage. Your mother always said I wasn't brave enough."** (Snicket, 2001: 257). His noble intention to take the custody of the Baudelaire children is hindered by his cowardice and that makes the Baudelaire children once again, by themselves. His unwilling behavior to confront Count Olaf or challenge any dangerous situations the Baudelaire children might encounter suggest a certain timidity in his character. Even prior to that, Jerome Squalor has shown a non-confrontative quality. For example, when Esme sends him and the Baudelaire children to eat at Cafe Salmonella, and the Baudelaire children talk about how they are worried about Count Olaf disguising as Gunther the auctioneer but Jerome dismisses their concern simply because he does not want to confront Esme about it. **"I can't think of a single argument that would be useful or necessary," Jerome said. "For instance, Esme made reservations for us here at Cafe Salmonella, and I can't stand the taste of Salmon. I could have argued with her about that, of course, but why would it be useful or necessary?"** (Snicket, 2001: 36). Another example would be when he is told by Esme to get yellow paper clips, to which he replies that he needs to send the Baudelaire children to the auction hall, which is then again dismissed by Esme. Jerome then replied with **"Well, I don't want to argue," Jerome said shrugging and giving the children small smile**" (Snicket, 2001: 121). It signifies that Jerome's actions are often drive by a desire to avoid conflict or danger. In addition, Jerome's fear of confrontation and his tendency to avoid conflict are consistent traits throughout the series. While he means well and is sympathetic to the Baudelaires' difficulty, his inability to confront danger directly showcase a vulnerability that contrasts with other characters.

b. Binary Opposition found in the Characterization

This section discusses the binary opposition regarding the binary opposition in Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* novel. After identifying the traits shown by the characters through characterization, it is revealed that there is a binary

opposition of difference between child characters, the Baudelaire children, and the adult characters in the novel.

b.1 Grateful – Greedy

As previously mentioned, though having a poor fate and going through a series of unfortunate events, it is clear that the origin of the Baudelaire children was comfortable. They used to live in a massive mansion and inherit large sums of wealth, so much that their safety is always in constant danger. The Baudelaires were also blessed with amazing parents who taught them well when they were alive thus making the Baudelaire children grow up to be compassionate and resilient people. After the fire incident that took their parent's life, Baudelaire children had to start from zero. In the technical sense, they do not possess any money because none of them are adults yet. Hence, the existence of Mr. Poe is needed to take care of that affair even though it would be hard to say that he has done a good job. Baudelaire children are now orphans living one guardian from another. Despite the sudden massive change in their life, they are still collected and calm amidst the chaotic adults. After experiencing several guardianships, Baudelaire children are placed under the custody of Esme Squalor and Jerome Squalor, a wealthy couple living in 667 Dark Avenue. Esme Squalor loves following in what is considered to be In and considered to be Out. During the arrival of the Baudelaire children, pinstripe is currently 'In' hence she gives them pinstripe suits for Baudelaire children to wear. She is nice enough to give them pinstripe suits, but does not care enough about their sizes. When opening the shopping bag, they find out that the pinstripe suits are way too big for them.

“The Baudelaire stood together for another moment and nodded resolutely, a phrase which here means “tried to make themselves stop feeling ungrateful and put on the suits.” But even though they did not want to seem spoiled, even though they knew the situation was not a terrible one at all, and even though they had less than an hour to change into the suits, find Jerome, and walk down all those hundreds and hundreds of stairs, the three children could not seem to move.
(Snicket, 2001: 53)

The role of parents is crucial in shaping children's personality as they are the main figures in the family environment and play a firsthand role in teaching their children. They have the responsibility to teach moral values, practical skills, and emotional intelligence through direct interaction within the family unit as well as becoming role models which are eventually useful for their children's social life. Parents also have influence in shaping children's worldview and their behavior or attitudes in society (Safitri et al., 2023). As times go by, good habits would be engraved in children's hearts and mind (Wangi et al., 2023). As a result, the attitudes of the Baudelaire children who always think positively and grateful in every situation remain the same even though they have lost their parents. The realization that Count Olaf has once again reached their new life is also makes them uneasy and stressed. The thoughts of what Count Olaf will do to them this time make them giddy, but despite all that they are still managed to be calm.

On the other hand, Esme Squalor who is one obviously wealthy woman experiencing zero unfortunate events in her life. Yet, she has the most willpower

to be greedy. Despite having everything, she just wants more and more money even though the way for her to gain money is not morally correct as shown in the quote **“Esme clapped her long nailed hands together with glee. “Me! Every last bit of money that people pay at the auction goes right to me! Isn’t that smashing?”** (Snicket, 2001: 45). The auction that she held is just a decoy for them to transport the Quagmire triplet and fool the Baudelaire children. In the end, Esme Squalor elopes with Count Olaf bringing the poor Quagmire triplet with them. In psychology, Esme's obsession with getting richer and richer are considered a form of addiction or usually called greed addicts. It does not focus on the amount of wealth they have, but the process of pursuing financial opportunities to earn more money stimulates the dopamine which is the molecule of pleasure (Seltzer, 2012). Apart from that, Esme's attitude is also possibly motivated by her desire to be admired by the town people. Unfortunately, greed addicts tend to justify any means to achieve their goals, even becoming manipulative, committing illegal acts, and growing insensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Not to mention, being in a high economic status also oftentimes makes someone have higher levels of narcissism, entitlement, and even self-centered behavior (Piff, 2014). It explains a lot about Esme's character in this novel.

The striking contrast between the characters is their attitude towards the comfort of this world, the Baudelaire children are grateful for what they have despite the conditions, while Esme is never enough of it. This kind of contrast shows a binary opposition concept between grateful and greedy in which one key term is the opposite of another in a way that “If the question is being, then one can establish "being" against "non-being" (Leung, 2005).

b.2 Indifferent – Caring

Indifferent trait in this novel comes from Mr. Poe. Despite being the adult whose job is to ensure the Baudelaire children's safety, his indifferent nature has led so many unfortunate events to happen to the Baudelaire children. Mr. Poe indifferent trait could be seen in few quotes such as; **“I am sorry to say that Mr. Poe had not done a very good job so far, and the only thing they could rely on with Mr. Poe was that he always had a cough. “** (Snicket, 2001, 4) and **“You’re not going to accompany us?” Klaus asked. “I simply don’t have the time to accompany you,” Mr. Poe said, “and that is that”** (Snicket, 2001: 15). Mr. Poe does not want to take extra steps to make sure that the Baudelaire children safely arrive at the front door of the Squalor condominium because of its stairs. He simply does not care and wants to go about his day leaving Baudelaire children alone in their new home. In fact, an indifferent attitude can be an indication of an apathetic person. It includes a lack of caring and concern which is usually related to the bystander effect, which is a phenomenon where people do nothing when they see other people who need help or assistance (Purse, 2022). Nonetheless, Mr. Poe is not necessarily intentional and it comes from his inability to fully understand the dreadful situations the Baudelaire children face. So, Mr. Poe's indifferent character becomes a satirical representation of bureaucracy and incompetence.

Conversely, caring trait comes from the Baudelaire children who are willing to do everything they can to save their friend from the chokehold of a person who is also after them. They tried their best to save the Quagmire, but their attempts is not fruitful and the Baudelaire children get really sad over it.

“They’re gone!” Violet said “They’re gone, and it’s all my fault!” She threw her welding torch into the corner of the tiny room, where it sizzled against the floor. She turned to her siblings, and they could see, by their white glow of their tongs, that their older sister was beginning to cry. **“My invention was supposed to save them,” she said mournfully, “and now Gunther has snatched them away. I’m a terrible inventor and terrible friend.”** (Snicket, 2001: 164)

Violet is willing to risk her safety to help the Quagmire triplets from being held captive by Count Olaf at the bottom of the Ersatz elevator. When all her effort and her inventions fail, she blames herself too badly for not being able to save their friends. In reality, oldest children often exhibit a caring nature that is shaped by their role as an older sibling and the responsibilities that come with it. Subsequently, in this context, the term eldest daughter syndrome appears which refers to characteristics that develop as an outcome of being the first-born. The eldest daughter generally has characteristics such as displaying leadership qualities, taking on a caregiving role as a sense of responsibility, and has a strong nurturing effect (Laderer, 2023). Unfortunately, this sense of responsibility can have a bad impact because it puts a lot of pressure on someone. It can cause emotional symptoms such as self-blame, anxiety, burnout, and even depression (Butler, 2023).

The binary opposition shown in this novel is such an irony because it is between adults and children. Between the two oppositions, there is always the center. It is the center that is given a privilege i.e man/woman, tall/short, big/little, black/white, and etc. (Bertens, 2012). In this example, the adults are supposed to be the responsible ones. The adult (Mr. Poe) simply does not take extra steps to make sure that Baudelaire children are safe, or listen to them. Baudelaire children on the other hand, even though they are just children, are caring for others and willing to take extra steps even if it harms them to save their friends.

b.3 Brave – Coward

Bravery is something that is always associated with the Baudelaire children throughout their book for their never-ending battle and struggles with Count Olaf and how they escape from it. When Baudelaire children realize that Count Olaf has once again entered their life. This time, they want to find his hiding place because they want them to find the Quagmire triplets whom he successfully kidnapped. Baudelaire children do the unusual by actively looking for him instead of hiding like it always was. “I can't believe that now we're trying to find him. **“Me neither,” Violet agreed. “If it weren't for the Quagmires, I wouldn't go down there at all.”** (Snicket, 2001: 134). This part shows that people often find the strength to be brave when it comes to those they care about. Bravery is an attitude of knowingly putting oneself in danger, both mentally or physically, for the sake of others (Dorner, 2013). Love and concern for others, whether family

or friends, can be a powerful motivator to overcome fears and difficulties. This sense of responsibility and connectedness often fuels acts of bravery, as individuals are driven to protect, support, or care for the well-being of those they love dearly. It is clearly illustrated by the attitude and actions of the Baudelaires who try their best to save the Quagmires.

On the contrary, opposite attitude shown by Jerome Squalor. He is indeed a sweetheart. One of the best Baudelaire guardians but he is terribly lacking in bravery. He never confronts anything. He never says no. He just wants to make both parties happy. Even after being left alone when his wife elopes with Count Olaf, he still chooses to live in his comfort zone. He refuses to help Baudelaire children to help them catch Count Olaf. It shows in the following quotes **“Jerome sighed, and kissed each Baudelaire on the forehead. **“You children are very dear to me,” he said, “but I don't have your courage. Your mother always said I wasn't brave enough.”**** (Snicket, 2001: 257). Naturally, humans tend to seek safety and stability. In this sense, the comfort zone offers familiarity, predictability, and a sense of security which leads to lower levels of stress and anxiety (Lacovich, 2023). Thus, individuals are likely avoiding situations outside their comfort zone due to fear of the unknown, uncertainty, or potential danger. In other words, comfort zone can be said to be a self-protective mechanism for personal survival. It is a common thing especially when individuals are still children because they are not yet mature, do not have the ability to assess the situation well, and have not developed skills to overcome their fears. Still, it can turn into a trap that is difficult to escape from if it continues into adulthood, and can even make someone become dependent on it (Seltzer, 2022). In the novel, Jerome seems confined in his comfort zone and prefer to avoid any situations outside his comfort zone rather than fight his fears.

Between the two oppositions, there is always the center. It is the center that is given a privilege i.e man/woman, tall/short, big/little, black/white, and etc (Bertens, 2012). In this case, adult are deemed to be more powerful often times prove they are not like what they should behave towards children. Jerome, as an adult, should act like one and protect the Baudelaire children especially since he is also their new guardians, and not let them face dangerous situations alone. Hence, the binary opposition of bravery from the Baudelaire children serves to emphasize the stark contrast between the children characters and the adult character as well as highlights the challenges the children character face as they encounter adult character with opposing attitudes.

In conclusion, the binary oppositions shown in the characterization of the characters formed a pattern. Each of the binary opposition pairings is between the adult characters (Count Olaf, Esme Squalor, Mr. Poe, and Jerome Squalor) and the Baudelaire children which are children. The pairings mentioned show that the adults are being neglectful of the children who are clearly in need of help. The adults, who are supposed to look after them and take care of their safety, are in fact the ones who caused the Baudelaire children's misery all along. These binary oppositions emphasize the theme of children being underestimated or misunderstood by the adult figures around them. It adds a sense of irony and commentary on the nature of authority, responsibility, and the complexities of adult-child dynamics. The researcher admits that the pattern of the children

characters being the hero in the story is not unheard of, but binary opposition was used to do a deeper reading activity to know that despite the pattern, binary opposition still can be used.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the binary oppositions found in the characterization of the characters in the novel Lemony Snicket's *Ersatz Elevator* novel. The researcher used Derrida's concept of Binary Opposition which was first brought up in his book entitled 'Of Grammatology'. There are two points concluded from the findings. The first point is related to the characterization found in the characters. The characters are; the Baudelaire children whose characterization is caring, brave, and grateful, Count Olaf whose characterization is greedy, Esme Squalor whose characterization is greedy and indifferent, Jerome Squalor whose characterization is coward, and Mr. Poe whose characterization is indifferent. The second point is related to binary oppositions found in the novel; Greed - Grateful, Indifference - Caring, and Brave - Coward. All the pairings are between the adult characters and the Baudelaire children which further proves that even though adults are deemed to be more logically developed and are the protector of children, they do not always good at keeping children safe. On the other hand, children who are deemed to be weak, in this novel are proved to be the ones having the most common sense and dozens of times could save themselves from danger. It is most expected for the cliché pattern of the children are portrayed to be the hero of the story, but in any way, it could give a depth to the analysis that at the end of the day after thorough analysis the true nature of binary opposition still persists.

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