Pena: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra
2026 August, Vol. 16, No. 4, 240-257
https://doi.org/10.22437/pena.v16i4.57654

Research Article

Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity: The Blood Pact as a Semiotic Sign of Dumbledore's Vulnerability in "Fantastic Beasts"

Dekonstruksi Maskulinitas Hegemonik: Perjanjian Darah sebagai Tanda Semiotik Kerentanan Dumbledore dalam "Fantastic Beast"

Anggreini Putri Pramono[1*], & Wuri Syaputri[2]
[1]Unversitas Terbuka, Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

Submission Track
Received: June 24, 2026
Final Revision: July 17, 2026
Accepted: July 22, 2026
Available Online: August 1, 2026

Keywords
Peirce, Derrida; Blood Pact; Albus Dumbledore; Vulnerability

***Corresponding Author:**
anggreiniputrip@gmail.com

Abstract
Albus Dumbledore is consistently portrayed as a rational and wise hero. However, this image is turned on its head in the film "Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore", in which he appears as a vulnerable figure unable to act on his own. This study aims to uncover the latent meaning of the Blood Pact in shaping Dumbledore's vulnerability and to demonstrate the deconstruction of his masculinity. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study integrates Peirce's triadic semiotics (representamen-object-interpretant) and Derrida's deconstruction (phalogocentrism, trace, différance, and aporia) to examine indexical signs and the collapse of heroic authority. The findings indicate that the Blood Pact is not merely an accessory but an artifact that bears traces of the past and serves as both a physical and logical obstacle for Dumbledore. He thus becomes a reluctant hero, shackled both physically and logically. Ultimately, his acceptance of the past and the courage to acknowledge his weaknesses actually reconstruct his authentic heroism amid emotional dilemmas.

Abstrak
Albus Dumbledore secara konsisten digambarkan sebagai pahlawan rasional dan bijaksana. Namun, citra ini dibalik dalam film *Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore*, di mana ia muncul sebagai tokoh rentan yang tidak mampu bertindak sendiri. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap makna laten Perjanjian Darah dalam membentuk kerentanan Dumbledore serta mendemonstrasikan dekonstruksi maskulinitasnya. Dengan metode kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan semiotika triadik Peirce (representamen-objek-interpretan) dan dekonstruksi Derrida (phalogosentrisme, jejak, diferansi, dan aporia) untuk menelaah tanda indeksikal dan keruntuhan otoritas heroik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Perjanjian Darah bukan sekadar aksesori, melainkan artefak yang menyimpan jejak masa lalu dan menjadi hambatan fisik sekaligus logis bagi Dumbledore. Ia pun menjadi pahlawan yang terpaksa, terbelenggu secara fisik dan logika. Pada akhirnya, penerimaan masa lalu serta keberanian mengakui kelemahannya justru merekonstruksi kepahlawanan otentiknya di tengah dilema emosional.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary popular culture, the archetype of the cinematic hero has undergone a significant transformation. Traditionally, fantasy heroes were constructed as paragons of hegemonic masculinity physically invincible, emotionally stoic, and morally unambiguous (Christianto & Winduwati, 2023; Resiana et al., 2025). However, recent productions have begun to subvert this monolithic model, presenting protagonists defined by psychological fractures, emotional trauma, and vulnerability (Trikandi et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2025). This evolution reflects a broader societal re-evaluation of gender roles, moving away from rigid binary oppositions where strength is positioned as superior to weakness toward more nuanced portrayals of human fragility (Kusumastuti, 2023). To systematically examine these shifts, this study employs a semiotic approach, which serves as a paradigmatic lens to deconstruct latent meanings and uncover the 'meaning within meaning' embedded within cinematic discourses (Wibowo, 2019; Wibowo, 2026). Analyzing these contemporary characters requires a departure from structuralist interpretations toward a post-structuralist framework capable of deconstructing the hidden contradictions within heroic narratives.

The subversion of the heroic archetype is starkly exemplified in the 2022 film Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore. Considered one of the most powerful wizards of all time (Alves, 2017), Albus Dumbledore is consistently portrayed in the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 2005, 2007) as the epitome of the wise, calm, and morally authoritative mentor (Sventeková, 2022; Aristo & Sijono, 2018). However, this hegemonic image is radically reimagined in the 2022 film Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore. He appears as a reluctant and paralyzed figure, unable to confront his nemesis, Gellert Grindelwald, due to a magical artifact called the Blood Pact. This physical and logical constraint represented through the dialogue "I can't move against Grindelwald. It has to be you" (Wati, 2020) presents a critical anomaly: why does a small token of a past oath render the most powerful wizard of his age utterly powerless? This paradox serves as the entry point for deconstructing his hegemonic masculinity.

Previous studies have explored character deconstruction and cinematic signs within the Harry Potter and Fantastic Beasts franchises, yet they present critical limitations. Zahid (2026) successfully dismantled Dumbledore's moral ambiguity and manipulative tendencies in the novels using Derrida's aporia, but his analysis remained confined to textual narratives without accounting for the physical constraints that bind the character in the cinematic adaptation. Similarly, Christiyanti et al. (2025) identified Dumbledore's vulnerability through figurative language analysis, yet they failed to explain the underlying mechanism of his restraint. Meanwhile, Marsha (2025) examined the Blood Pact as a cultural symbol using Barthes' semiotics, but her approach could not capture the artifact's causal and existential dimensions (Calle & Celia, 2022). More broadly, recent post-structuralist studies have demonstrated the applicability of Derridean deconstruction across diverse textual contexts, including the dismantling of historical narratives and identity constructions in contemporary literature (Waqiah et al., 2026). Consequently, existing studies treat the Blood Pact either as a narrative plot device or a passive cultural symbol, leaving a substantial gap in explaining how it actively and structurally paralyzes Dumbledore's heroic agency.

To address this gap, the present study proposes an integrative analytical framework that combines Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. Peirce's concept of indexicality which prioritizes causal and physical contiguity (signs linked by existence, such as smoke indicating fire) is uniquely suited to decode the Blood Pact as a material agent that inflicts physical pain and somatic restraint. Concurrently, Derrida's concepts of phallogocentrism, trace, aporia, and différance provide the critical tools to dismantle the hierarchical binary between masculine strength and vulnerable passivity. This methodological synthesis offers a novel contribution, as previous

studies have utilized these theories separately but never synergistically to dissect a cinematic artifact that actively subverts gender archetypes through physical means.

Specifically, this study aims to (1) identify and analyze the indexical signs of the Blood Pact using Peirce's triadic model (representamen-object-interpretant) to reveal Dumbledore's vulnerability; (2) demonstrate how these indexical signs serve as instruments for deconstructing his hegemonic masculinity, exposing his physical and logical impotence; and (3) explain the narrative process by which his heroic stereotype resurfaces after the pact is shattered. Furthermore, this research contributes to the broader discourse on gender representation in fantasy cinema by offering a replicable semiotic-deconstructive framework. Theoretically, this model bridges the gap between material visual artifacts and post-structuralist gender critique, while practically, it provides filmmakers and critics with a systematic lens to examine how magical objects can destabilize rigid ideological binaries.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, adopting an interpretive paradigm to examine how cinematic signs construct and deconstruct hegemonic masculinity. The specific design is a single-case study (Yin, 2018), selected because it enables an in-depth, holistic investigation of a contemporary cultural phenomenon character representation in fantasy cinema within its real-life context. The case is the film *Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore* (2022), chosen as a purposively selected exemplar of the recent trend toward vulnerable male protagonists in mainstream fantasy franchises. This design is particularly appropriate for exploring the latent semiotic and deconstructive meanings embedded in a single, richly layered cinematic text (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research setting is the narrative and visual world of the film, accessed via the Catchplay+ streaming platform. The primary data sources are six purposively selected scenes from the film, chosen based on criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2014). The selection criteria were: (1) explicit physical manifestation of the Blood Pact and its immediate effects; (2) scenes depicting Dumbledore's vulnerability or physical restraint; (3) scenes involving the delegation of heroic action to other characters (Newt Scamander); (4) scenes portraying strategic planning and deferred agency; (5) the climactic scene of the Blood Pact's destruction; and (6) the subsequent restoration of Dumbledore's direct heroic agency. These scenes were identified as critical junctures that visually and narratively encode the transition from hegemonic masculinity to vulnerable passivity and back.

A purposive sampling technique (specifically, criterion-based sampling) was employed to select the six scenes. This technique was chosen because it allows the researcher to deliberately select information-rich cases that are most relevant to the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria were established based on the theoretical constructs of the study namely, the appearance of the Blood Pact as an indexical sign (Peirce) and the manifestation of aporia or différance (Derrida). This ensures that the selected data directly correspond to the analytical framework, maximizing the depth and relevance of the findings.

Data collection was conducted in May 2026 through a structured documentary analysis protocol. The procedure involved three stages: (1) Repeated viewings of the film to familiarize the researcher with the narrative and visual flow; (2) Scene extraction, where the six purposively selected scenes were captured as high-resolution screenshots and their dialogues were transcribed *verbatim* into a structured document; and (3) Contextual annotation, where non-verbal elements (lighting, color changes, physical reactions, and camera angles) were recorded alongside the dialogue to capture the full semiotic field of each scene. The researcher served as the primary instrument, guided by a systematic documentation protocol to ensure consistency across all extracted data.

The primary research instrument was the researcher himself, functioning as the

human instrument in qualitative tradition (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach is justified because the interpretation of semiotic signs and deconstructive meanings requires reflexive human judgment rather than mechanical measurement. To support this, a structured data extraction table was developed, containing columns for: timestamp, visual description, dialogue transcription, Peircean triadic coding (representamen-object-interpretant), and preliminary Derridean notes (trace, aporia, différance). This protocol served as a semi-structured instrument to guide systematic data collection across all six scenes.

1. *Data analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative analysis proposed by Miles et al., (2014), comprising three concurrent flows of activity:*
   1. Data Condensation: The six transcribed scenes were coded using Peirce's triadic categories. The procedural application of Peirce's semiotic framework in this study adhered to established guidelines for literary and cinematic text analysis, which systematically maps representamen, object, and interpretant onto visual and verbal data to uncover latent meanings (Lantowa et al., 2017). *Each scene was segmented into smaller units of meaning, which were then labeled as representamen (the physical sign), object (the referent, i.e., the magical agreement), and interpretant (the sense made by the sign, such as restraint or vulnerability).*
2. Data Display: The condensed data were organized into matrices, where each scene's triadic components were presented side-by-side with its visual evidence (screenshots). This matrix format allowed for systematic comparison across scenes and facilitated the identification of patterns in how the Blood Pact's indexicality shifted throughout the narrative.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: The semiotic findings from the matrices were subsequently cross-examined under Derrida's deconstructive lenses (*phallogocentrism*, *trace*, *aporia*, and *différance*). This involved tracing how the indexical signs identified in phase one actively destabilized Dumbledore's phallogocentric authority. The verification process included rechecking the original film footage to confirm that interpretations were grounded in the actual visual and verbal data.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied theoretical triangulation (Denzin, 2017), where the same data were analyzed through two distinct theoretical lenses (Peirce and Derrida) to corroborate or challenge interpretations. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted through informal discussions with colleagues in literary and film studies to review the coding matrices and test the plausibility of the emerging interpretations. An audit trail was maintained, documenting all analytical decisions, coding revisions, and interpretive shifts throughout the research process. This rigorous approach ensures the *credibility*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* of the findings, adhering to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative rigor. The theoretical framework guiding the entire analysis is illustrated in Figure 1.

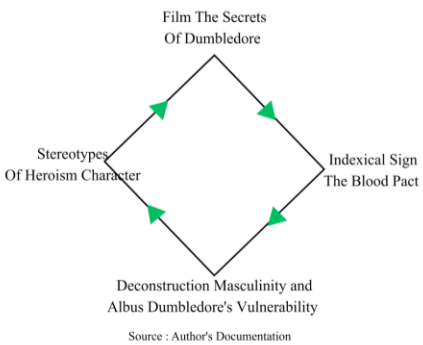


Figure 1. The Theoretical Framework

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the Blood Pact functions as an active indexical sign that systematically dismantles Albus Dumbledore's phallogocentric authority. Through Peircean semiotics, the artifact is identified as a causal agent that physically restrains the hero, while Derridean deconstruction exposes how this somatic subjugation produces a state of aporia and defers heroic action (différance). Critically, the destruction of the pact does not merely liberate Dumbledore physically but reconfigures heroism itself as a process of integrating vulnerability. These findings challenge traditional readings that either idealize Dumbledore as a flawless mentor (Sventeková, 2022) or condemn him as a manipulative schemer (Zahid, 2026), offering instead a structural explanation for his paralysis and eventual reclamation of agency.

1. The Blood Pact as an Indexical Sign of Physical Restraint

The semiotic analysis of the Blood Pact confirms that it is not a passive cultural symbol but a dynamic indexical sign that operates through physical contiguity and causal reaction. The artifact's representamen a silver necklace with a blood drop pendant points to its object: the magical oath sworn by Dumbledore and Grindelwald in their youth, created by combining drops of their blood. Its interpretant manifests as a binding force that restricts both individuals, making it impossible for either to physically harm the other. This triadic structure (Peirce, 1931) establishes the Blood Pact as a persistent material reminder of a past ideological alliance.

Data 1 (00 : 02 : 23) A View of a Physical Sign of Blood Pact Spell

Source: Author's Documentation

Representamen (Sign Vehicle)	The silver necklace is made of silver metal and features a unique pendant shaped like a drop of blood. The center of the pendant glows white and the long metal chain is wrapped around Dumbledore's hand.
Object (The Referent)	The magical result of a spell created by Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald as an agreement when they were in Godric's Hollow. It was created by combining their biological material such as drops of their blood that fused and stored inside the pendant.
Interpretant (The Sense Made)	*Indexical Blood Pact* is not an ordinary necklace, but a symbol of magical pact that restrains both individuals with an eternal bond that cannot be broken by either of them.

During a conversation at a restaurant between Grindelwald and Dumbledore, they discussed their youth and their shared vision. Grindelwald asked about the blood pact they had created together and explained how, over the years, he had also been tormented by it (*Grindelwald: "Sometimes I imagine I still feel it around my neck. I carried it for so many years. How does it feel around yours?"*). Their ambitions from their youth no longer aligned.

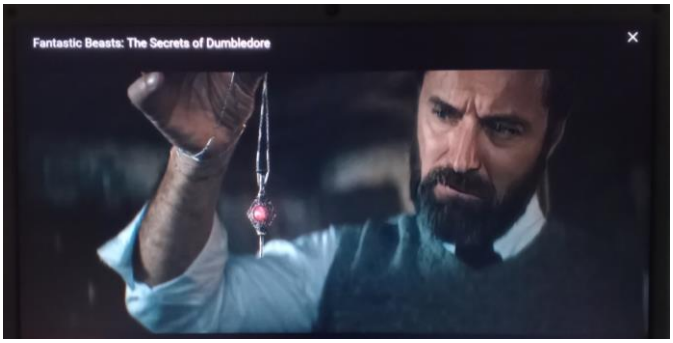
They held differing views on the greater good. Grindelwald believed that the world would be better off with Muggles physically subjugated and controlled. Dumbledore, on the other hand, believed that the Muggle and wizarding worlds were distinct and should not interfere with each other's social orders. They could even work together to achieve a balanced world order. It caused them to become enemies, both trying to attack the other and defending their own respective visions.

Other scene at Hog's Head, a conversation between Dumbledore, Newt and Theasus. Dumbledore showed Theasus the Blood Pact. Then Theasus ask (*Theasus: "and whose blood is contained within?"*), Dumbledore replied (*Dumbledore: "Mine and Grindelwald"*). Theasus speculates why Dumbledore couldn't confront Grindelwald directly in the previous series (*Theasus: "I'm assuming that's why you can't move against him"*). Dumbledore adds to his explanation (*Dumbledore: "Nor he against me"*) (00 : 16 : 15).

Based on the findings of Peirce's semiotics described above, the Blood Pact is identified as a magical artifact resulted by blood oath. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, Blood Oath is an oath taken by two or more people in which they ceremonially use or exchange each other's blood. It has appearance with silver necklace with a long chain that made by metal and featuring a unique pendant shape like water drop, with a compartment in the center designed to hold a biological element (drops of bloods by Dumbledore and Grindelwald) to preserve their commitment and loyalty. These findings also revealed that the magical artifact was not merely ceremonial jewelry, but serves as a unifying, restraining, and shielding force against the desire to harm one another when their visions no more align.

The artifact's indexicality becomes most apparent when Dumbledore contemplates betrayal. As he whispers thoughts of opposing Grindelwald, the pendant glows a blazing red, and the blood in the pendant becomes evidence of their physical contiguity.

Data 2 (00 : 17 : 17) A View of Biological Residue (Blood Drops)



Source: Author's Documentation

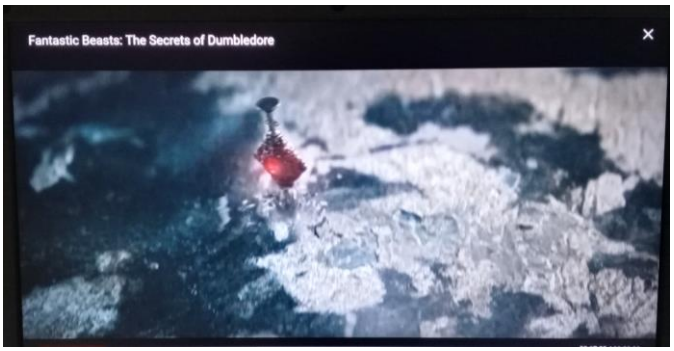
Icon Analysis	The pendant changes color to a blazing red, as its interpretation (resemblance) as a combination of drops of Dumbledore's and Grindelwald's blood is reflected.
Index Analysis	The blood in the pendant is evidence of their physical contiguity.
Symbol Analysis	The blood within the pendant was bound by a magical spell. It is created by Dumbledore dan Grindelwald when they were young. It was a sacred and unbreakable spell as an evidence to their love and commitment to not betray each other, and as physical manifestation to realize their young vision and ambitions for the wizarding world they have dreamed about.

Based on the Data 2 above, as the blood in the pendant is evidence of their physical contiguity, Dumbledore tried to convince Theasus and Newt that he was bound by his own

oath. He started whispering thoughts of betrayal and planned to against Grindelwald in his heart. This caused the blood pact to react as a warning sign (a bright red glow) so that its owner would reverse his plan before the blood pact reacted more aggressively.

The chain tightens around his hand and neck, and he audibly groans in pain. This sequence demonstrates the causal chain that Peirce identified as characteristic of indexical signs: the intention to betray produces an immediate physical reaction.

Data 3 (00 : 17 : 39) Blood Pact as a Reminder of the Intent to Betray



Source: Author's Documentation

Icon Analysis	A red light was emitted by the pendant of Blood Pact as a visual warning sign.
Index Analysis	It is represented by the glowing red light and the pendant's uncontrollable movement as effected of an immediate reaction to the intention to resist Grindelwald even if it was only a fleeting thought.
Symbol Analysis	The warning delivered by the pendant to Dumbledore serves as a reminder against betraying their oath, even if by thought.

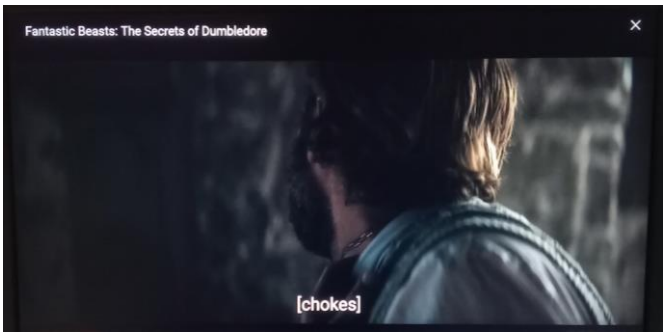
At the first, when Dumbledore tried to prove that the Blood Pact was his restraint, he had a fleeting thought of betraying Grindelwald. but the Blood Pact sensed Dumbledore's remaining intention in his mind, causing the Blood Pact's reaction to become uncontrollable.

The somatic torture he endures is not a punishment for current wrongdoing but a perpetual inscription of past ideological contradiction.

Data 4 (00 : 17 : 29) A View of Interpretation of Physical Torment and Restraint Through an Indexical Signs (Blood Pact)

Source: Author's Documentation

Data 5 (00 : 17 : 41



Source: Author's Documentation

Index Analysis Data 4	His hand was restrained due to an inability to control the Blood Pact's reaction while the necklace's chain was tightened and forcefully wrapped around his hand and neck, causing a groan of pain. In this Figure, Dumbledore realized his brief intention to betray his blood oath partner, Grindelwald, has been detected by the Blood Pact.
Index Analysis Data 5	The necklace chain continued to tighten until it choked him.

The analysis showed that the blood pact bound him both physically and emotionally, trapping him as if in a prison of his own. The blood pact bound him through pain, physical torture, and emotional distress. Ultimately, these limitations prevent Dumbledore from acting as a hero; he cannot save everyone who depends on him, placing him in an emotional dilemma and creating a logical impasse and a deconstruction of the hero's character.

In Derridean terms, the tightening chain functions as a trace of Dumbledore's repressed past—his youthful hubris, his romantic entanglement with Grindelwald, and his complicity in a vision of wizarding supremacy that he now publicly rejects. The artifact materializes this trace, making it impossible for Dumbledore to escape his history. Consequently, his heroic authority collapses into a state of passivity. This finding contrasts sharply with Christiyanti et al., (2025), who identified Dumbledore's vulnerability through figurative language but could not explain its physical mechanism. Similarly, while Marsha (2025) read the Blood Pact as a Barthesian cultural symbol, her approach failed to capture the artifact's causal and existential dimensions a gap that Peirce's indexicality successfully fills.

Findings from semiotic analysis serve as the primary instrument in examining the deviations in the deconstruction of the binary system. These deviations which are generally considered absolute truths constitute a trail created as both a reminder and an obstacle to Dumbledore's actions, as well as the solutions to the actions Dumbledore decides upon to save the world while he remains constrained. This will be further explored using Derrida's theory of deconstruction. The author employs several concepts from Derrida's theory, including: the binary opposition of the phallogocentric hero's deviant attitude creating aporia, hidden traces, and différance (the deferral of action).

2. Collapse of Phallogocentrism and the Emergence of Aporia

The indexical restraint described in Theme 1 directly precipitates the collapse of Dumbledore's phallogocentric authority. Phallogocentrism, as Derrida (1976) argues, positions the masculine, rational subject as the center of truth and power. Grandi (2024) further elaborates that phallogocentrism weaves an intricate relationship between masculinity and language, making 'man the archetype on which society is founded, placing

his supremacy in the natural order, defining power relations and nailing pre-established categories' (Grandi, 2024). This philosophical framework exposes how hegemonic masculinity is not a natural given but a discursively produced and performatively reiterated social construct a process that Derrida defines as différance (Grandi, 2024). Dumbledore, traditionally the embodiment of this archetype wise, powerful, and morally decisive is systematically stripped of these attributes in the film. His confession to Grindelwald immediately destabilizes his image as a purely rational actor.

Data 6 (00 : 03 : 12) Statement of Albus to Gellert when in the Restaurant.

Source: Author's Documentation

This scene is a turning point that explains why Dumbledore was determined to go through the blood oath ritual (As Shown in Data 6) and they was discussed about their commitment of the oath. Those explained by some conversations below: (*Dumbledor: "I went along because I was in love with you"*) (*Grindelwald: "It was you who said we will reshape the world. That's it was our brightright"*), in this scene at Restaurant. Dumbledore realized that his past being dark and deviant, he tried to convince Grindelwald was wrong (*Dumbledore: "What you're doing is madness"*).

The aporia emerges most starkly when Dumbledore requests to be freed from the Blood Pact. This dialogue encapsulates a logical impasse. As the world's most powerful wizard, Dumbledore is expected to act decisively against Grindelwald's threat. Yet he cannot. He is simultaneously endowed with supreme magical capability and utterly paralyzed by a small vial of fused blood. This mutual exclusivity power and paralysis coexisting constitutes the Derridean aporia: a condition of undeniable internal contradiction where two mutually incompatible premises are both valid (Zahid, 2026).

Data 7 (00 : 02 : 35) Requesting to Be Freed From The Blood Pact (Created Aporia).

Source: Author's Documentation

At this moment, his hero's masculinity crumbles immediately. He is powerless to confront Grindelwald bravely who is tied to his past and to the constraints of their Blood Pact. The feelings of despair and logical helplessness experienced by Dumbledore become even more pronounced when he requests to be freed from binding oath is made by them.

It was expressed through his dialogue (*Dumbledore: "We can free each other of it"*). Concurrently, the responsibility to protect both the Muggle and wizarding worlds from Grindelwald's threat must be managed.

Dumbledore's admission to Theasus and Newt when he explained why he could not fight Grindelwald in the previous film *The Crimes of Grindelwald*. The obstacle was the Blood Pact (Evidence in the Semiotic Analysis Data 3). (*Theasus: "Can I ask, what would possess you to make such a thing?"*). Dumbledore replied by bowing his head and smiling slightly (*Dumbledore: "Love, Arrogance, Naivete. Pick your poison"*).

It could be concluded that the Blood Pact served as an obstacle preventing Dumbledore from acting as a masculine, superpowered (phallogocentric) hero, deconstructing binary opposition; a hero who is neither masculine nor capable of taking decisive action against his enemies and revealed his vulnerability in front of his enemies and those who relied on him to confront Grindelwald. The admission of his past secret is a first step toward self acceptance though the moment of Aporia also presents itself as a form emotional dilemma.

This aporia is not a narrative flaw but a structural necessity. It exposes the illusion of the absolute hero—a figure that Derrida suggests is always destabilized by the traces of its repressed opposite. In Dumbledore's case, the repressed past (his youthful ambition, his forbidden love) returns through the Blood Pact and subverts his moral authority in the present. This finding complicates both Senteková's (2022) idealized portrait of Dumbledore as a kind and understanding headmaster and Zahid's (2026) deconstruction of him as a purely manipulative schemer. The present study argues that Dumbledore's paralysis is not a matter of morality or volition; it is structurally enforced by an indexical artifact that materializes his past contradictions. He is neither saint nor villain, but a hero trapped within the trace of his own history.

Based on Data 4 and 5, the indexicality described the presence of the oath is indeed real, following in the trace of the previous signs. An unbreakable oath followed by a trace. The world required him but the presence of Grindelwald's trace still remained through the biological torment inflicted by the Blood Pact necklace they had created. Feeling restrained, Dumbledore turned into a vulnerable hero. It can not be denied that his past haunts and obstacles his ability to save the world.

3. *Différance* (Deferred Heroism) and the Restoration of Agency

The aporia produced by the Blood Pact is resolved not through direct confrontation but through the mechanism of différance Derrida's concept of meaning and action being perpetually deferred through difference and temporal delay. Since Dumbledore cannot act directly, his heroic agency is displaced onto Newt Scamander. The train scene exemplifies this deferral: Dumbledore strategically plans the "countersight" mission, but Newt serves as his messenger, distributing magical items and instructions to the team. Dumbledore's heroism exists only as a *différance* it is simultaneously *different* from traditional direct confrontation and *deferred* to a later time after the pact is broken.

Data 8 (00 : 30 : 57) Newt as Albus's Messenger

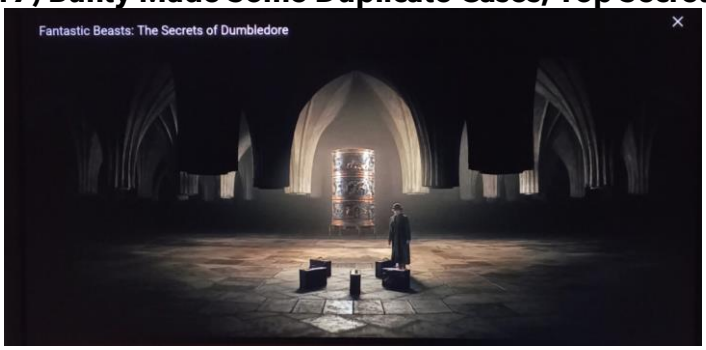
Source: Author's Documentation

In the scene on the train, Newt and his friends are given missions by Dumbledore to save both the wizarding world and Muggle world. This scene proves that the delayed action of the heroes is represented by Newt and his friends. Dumbledore acted only as the missions planner, devised strategies to fight Grindelwald from a distance and provided various magical items to some of Newt's friends. It shown in Data 9. Newt acted as the messenger, delivering Dumbledore's instructions to his friends. Here is an excerpt from the dialogue between Newt and his friends. *Newt: "Well, I imagine that you're wondering why you find yourselves here. And in anticipation of that, Dumbledore asked that I convey a message. So, Grindelwald has the ability to see snatches of the future. So, if we hope to defeat him and to save our world, and your world Jacob. And our best hope is to confuse him."*

Here is examples of Dumbledore's heroism as embodied by Newt. Following Dumbledore's instructions, Newt stated informations about Grindelwald's abilities and how to defeat him; Newt distributed some magical items such as a red magical tie with gold symbols which had an ability to teleport for Theasus, a fake wand for Jacob (Muggle); it functions to blended in the wizarding society, and a secret note directly from Dumbledore to Newt's assistant, Bunty. In this scene they devised plans to disguised Grindelwald's vision of the future by creating a countersight, so their mission can proceed successfully. Each person has their own plan to confuse Grindelwald's vision with the goal of ensuring Bunty's mission remains hidden from Grindelwald's foresight.

This delegation is further illustrated through the Qilin narrative. The mythical creature, which bows only to a pure soul, represents an alternative form of judgment that bypasses Grindelwald's rigged election. Bunty duplicates Newt's suitcase to protect the Qilin, a task entrusted to her by Dumbledore. In this configuration, heroism is no longer the singular feat of a masculine superpower; it is a distributed network of actions performed by multiple agents.

Data 9 (01 : 34 : 17) Bunty Made Some Duplicate Cases, Top Secret Duty from Albus



Source: Author's Documentation

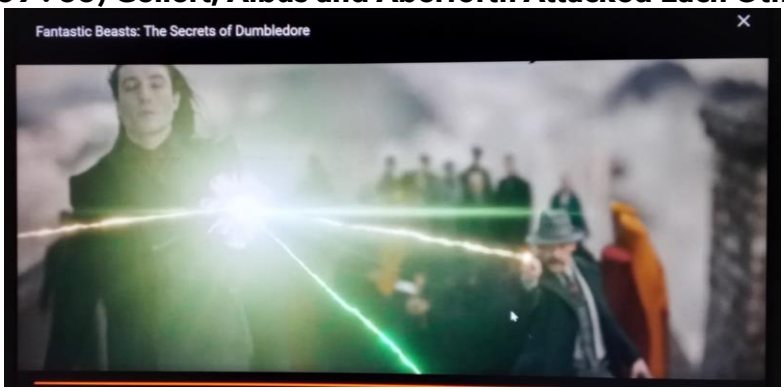
Representamen (Sign Vehicle)	Secret room at Hogwart School called Room of Requirement. Bunty placed five suitcases for Newt and his friends. She successfully completed her mission to duplicate Newt's suitcase into four suitcases that were exactly the same as the original.
Object (The Referent)	The original Newt's suitcase contains a mythical creature called a Qillin. A rare mythical creature used in the tradition of selecting a leader.
Interpretant (The Sense Made)	Keeping the creature was used as a strategy to defeat Grindelwald's rigged and fraudulent election.

Qillin is an ancient and rare mythical creature. It commonly used in the tradition of selecting leaders in the wizarding world. Its ability involves seeing a person with a pure soul

who is deemed appropriate to be a leader. The selection process involves allowing the creature to choose the leader from among several candidates. It will bow as a sign that the selected wizard deserves to be a leader. It is known that the first Qillin had stolen and killed by Grindelwald and cursed it to obey him as a voting tool during World Wizard Election. However, unknown to Grindelwald a second Qillin had been born. It will be seen by Grindelwald in a vision of the future and everything in his power will be done to steal it back again from Newt. It was also realized by Dumbledore that the world could only be saved by the Qillin. A secret plan was devised and entrusted to Bunty. She duplicated Newt's suitcase. A fake suitcase was carried by each of them to deceive Grindelwald and his loyal followers. The main mission was to ensure the Qillin's safety until election ceremony (*Theasus: " So the Qillin Gets to the Ceremony Safety"*).

The restoration of Dumbledore's agency occurs only when the aporia is voluntarily resolved through an act of selfless protection. In the climactic battle, Dumbledore and Aberforth cast defensive spells to block Grindelwald's killing curse aimed at Credence. The clash of spells causes the Blood Pact to crack.

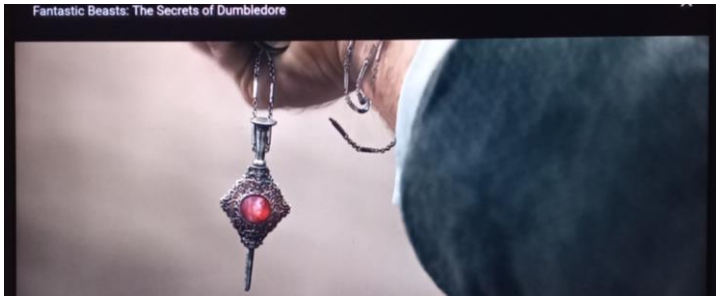
Data 10 (01 : 59 : 56) Gellert, Albus and Aberforth Attacked Each Other with Spells



Source: Author's Documentation

Representamen (Sign Vehicle)	Three spell between Albus Dumbledore, Aberforth Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald clashed and collided from different directions.
Object (The Referent)	A magic spell intended for Credence from Grindelwald. Green light spell is from Grindelwald and it was a killing curse, but in the same time the two defensive spells were blocked by the two siblings.
Interpretant (The Sense Made)	When Dumbledore's spell and Grindelwald's spell clashed, they produced a devastating effect and the main cause of the Blood Pact's shattered.

Data 11 (02: 00 : 05) Blood Pact Emitted A Powerful Red Light

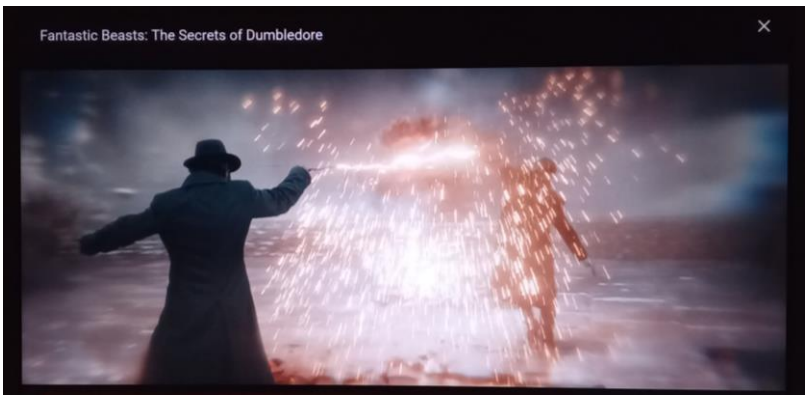


Source: Author's Documentation

Index Analysis	When Dumbledoreand Grindelwald's spells clashed, it triggered and caused a sign of betrayal (a red light) was appeared. Though Dumbledore intended to protect his nephew from Grindelwald's attack, he did not mean hurm Grindelwald. This was the moment an unexpected turn of something occured. The constraints of the Blood Pact began to crack. The Blood Pact no longer bound its owners.

Critically, Dumbledore's intention was not to harm Grindelwald but to protect his nephew. This act of protective love—despite the risk of physical torment—triggers the pact's destruction. Once the artifact shatters, the physical restraint dissolves, and Dumbledore regains his capacity to fight. The heroic stereotype of masculine strength and direct confrontation paradoxically returns only after the hero has fully accepted and integrated his vulnerability.

Data 12 (02 : 00 : 41) The Battle Behind The Mist (Mirror World)



Source: Author's Documentation

Index Analysis	After the Blood Pact slipped from his hands. Dumbledore was no bound by restraints or pain. There was no obstacle preventing him to fight Grindelwald. His heroic action could not be delayed. The stereotypes and heroic masculinity returned to him.

This narrative arc suggests that vulnerability and emotional honesty are not antithetical to heroism; they are prerequisites for its authentic reclamation.

This study offers a comprehensive critical dialogue by contrasting its findings with previous literature on character representation and deconstructive analyses. This research is situated within the broader tradition of semiotic inquiry, which examines how signs and meanings are constructed, received, and interpreted within cultural and communicative contexts (Rorong, 2024). Prior research, such as Cristianto and Winduwati (2023), analyzed heroism in the Harry Potter universe using Peirce's semiotics, demonstrating how signs can uncover hidden nobility in a character traditionally perceived as villainous, like Severus Snape. Similarly, Soegiarto dkk., (2025) applied Peirce's semiotic framework to Ernest Hemingway's short story 'Cat in the Rain,' demonstrating how the concept of the icon enhances the understanding of symbolic storytelling techniques in literary texts.

Extending this line of inquiry, Khairunnisa, Sihombing, Mawarni, and Sinaga (2025) employed Peirce's semiotic theory to classify visual sign systems in commercial spaces, identifying categories such as Rhematic Indexical Legisign, Dicent Sinsign, Qualisign, and Iconic Legisign within the Ramayana Teladan Medan shopping center demonstrating the applicability of Peircean semiotics beyond literary and cinematic texts to everyday visual environments. Similarly, Hanifah and Murifqi (2026) applied Peirce's semiotic framework to

analyze the visual signs embedded in the movie poster of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2009), demonstrating how the interplay of representamen, object, and interpretant within the poster's visual elements conveys layered meanings related to power, identity, and secrecy—themes that resonate with the broader Harry Potter franchise, including the Fantastic Beasts series. Extending Peircean semiotic analysis to contemporary cinema, Astari and Alamsyah (2024) examined the Barbie (2023) film, identifying four types of signs icons, qualisigns, symbols, and indexes through the semiosis process involving representamen, object, and interpretant (Astari & Alamsyah, 2024). Their findings revealed that the film conveys meanings related to women's position in society, gender equality, the rejection of gender stereotypes, and the importance of self-discovery themes that resonate with the deconstructive project of challenging hegemonic gender norms (Astari & Alamsyah, 2024).

In the realm of modern deconstructive studies, Rahmawati et al. (2025) successfully dismantled rigid societal beauty standards through Derrida's theory, shifting the definition of beauty from physical appearance to inner sincerity. Similarly, Nurhaliza, Choironi, and Munandar (2025) applied Derridean deconstruction to Ali Akhbar Navis's short story 'Robohnya Surau Kami,' demonstrating how the framework can effectively dismantle established moral and social value systems within Indonesian literary narratives. Extending this line of deconstructive inquiry to contemporary Indonesian fiction, Diana (2025) employed Derrida's deconstructive approach to unpack layered meanings in Ziggy Zezsyazeoviennazabrizkie's novel Mari Pergi Lebih Jauh, revealing how the narrative challenges singular truths and subverts normative social constructions through its unique child protagonists. While these studies underscore the power of semiotics and post-structuralism to destabilize established binaries, they remain separate in their application. By bridging these two frameworks, this study utilizes the indexicality of Peirce to anchor and operationalize the Derridean deconstruction of a physicalized magical artifact, offering a more integrative methodology to examine character complexity.

The necessity of this integrative approach becomes evident when evaluating existing Dumbledore scholarship. In Senteková's (2022) character analysis of the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 2005, 2007), Albus Dumbledore is presented through a traditional, highly idealized lens emphasizing his calm demeanor, kindness, humor, and unbiased wisdom as a headmaster. Conversely, Zahid (2026) offers a starkly opposing view, deconstructing Dumbledore as a manipulative figure who harbors latent ambitions of domination and willingly sacrifices others for his grand scenarios. This research, however, offers a crucial alternative to this binary debate. This research, however, offers a crucial alternative to this binary debate. The findings suggest that Dumbledore's apparent withdrawal and strategic manipulations in The Secrets of Dumbledore (2022) are neither a product of flawless saintliness (as suggested by Senteková) nor pure malicious intent (as argued by Zahid). Instead, his delayed actions and delegation of heroic tasks to Newt Scamander are structurally enforced by the indexical restraint of the Blood Pact. The artifact acts as a physicalized emotional trace, rendering the world's most powerful wizard powerless under a state of somatic and logical impasse (aporia).

The ultimate breakthrough of this study lies in how the destruction of this sign reshapes the paradigm of modern heroism. By confronting the material trace of his forbidden past and acting to protect his family despite the threat of physical torment, Dumbledore triggers the collapse of the Blood Pact's structural restraint. Once this physicalized compromise is shattered, his heroic agency is restored. This transition addresses the identified literature gap by demonstrating that a hero's journey in contemporary cinema is not defined by absolute, unyielding hegemonic strength. Instead, heroism is reconstructed through the painful integration of vulnerability, the acceptance of emotional limitations, and the ultimate resolution of past internal conflicts.

The findings of this study make significant theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of media semiotics, post-structuralist literary criticism, and gender studies. This study is situated within the broader tradition of deconstructive inquiry, which seeks to dismantle fixed meanings, hierarchical binaries, and the illusion of stable identities within texts (Norris, 2002). Theoretically, this study bridges a conceptual gap by demonstrating how Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of semiotics can be systematically integrated with Jacques Derrida's framework of deconstruction such as trace, différance, and aporia to analyze the imbalance of the hero's character. This research offers a new methodological model for dissecting physical cinematic artifacts not merely as passive plot devices, but as active semiotic signs capable of deconstructing established character archetypes. Practically and socially, these insights contribute to the evolving discourse on contemporary masculinity in popular culture. By exposing the collapse of Albus Dumbledore's hegemonic authority into "vulnerable masculinity" through the mechanism of the Blood Pact, this study challenges traditional monolithic conventions regarding Hollywood heroes. Consequently, this study opens new avenues for filmmakers and literary critics to reevaluate how complex emotional trauma and non-normative relationships can be progressively represented in mainstream fantasy cinema.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully addresses its three research objectives. Through Peircean triadic semiotics, the Blood Pact is identified as an indexical sign whose physical constraint (representamen) anchors a binding magical oath (object) and generates an interpretant of somatic and emotional subjugation. Through Derridean deconstruction, this indexicality produces a critical aporia—where supreme magical power coexists with utter helplessness—and defers heroic action via différance. The destruction of the pact, triggered by an act of selfless protection, paradoxically restores Dumbledore's agency, proving that vulnerability is not antithetical to heroism but its prerequisite. Synthesizing these findings, the Blood Pact operates as a Derridean pharmakon: simultaneously a binding remedy and a lethal poison that systematically dismantles phallogocentric authority.

Methodologically, this study offers a novel integrative framework combining Peirce's triadic semiotics with Derrida's post-structuralism, providing a replicable model for analyzing cinematic artifacts beyond passive plot devices. Theoretically, it enriches gender and media studies by reinterpreting Dumbledore as an emblem of vulnerable masculinity, moving beyond traditional readings of him as either a flawless mentor or a manipulative schemer. Practically, these findings challenge conventional Hollywood tropes by demonstrating that contemporary fantasy cinema can replace monolithic hegemonic masculinity with nuanced, emotionally vulnerable protagonists—offering filmmakers and critics a systematic lens to examine how magical objects actively destabilize fixed ideological binaries.

Despite these contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged. The analysis is confined to a single film and a single character, limiting generalizability. The reliance on textual and visual analysis, without audience reception data, restricts the interpretive scope. Additionally, the six purposively selected scenes may not fully represent the artifact's semiotic function across the entire narrative. Future research should expand this integrated framework through comparative analyses of fantasy heroes (e.g., Frodo or Marvel protagonists) to test its applicability across franchises. Investigating the political semiotics of the Qilin as a signifier of institutional legitimacy, and adopting narratological approaches to examine how deferred heroism structures narrative tension, also represent promising avenues for deepening the discourse on fluid gender representation in popular culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank various parties who have provided input, academic and technical support in the research and writing the article.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Anggreini Putri Pramono as the first author is designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Wuri Syaputri as supervised the research process, provided critical guidance on methodology, and reviewed as well as edited the final manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Gemini AI solely to assist with word choice and phrasing for the research title. The authors reviewed and edited the suggested titles and take full responsibility for the overall content of the publication.

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