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**SELF-IDENTITY IN A REPORT TO AN ACADEMY BY FRANZ KAFKA  
AND PISTOL PERDAMAIAAN BY KUNTOWIJOYO**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research studied the concept of self-identity of the main character in A Report to an Academy and Pistol Perdamaian. This research also described the social relations between the main character and the otherness. The method used is qualitative and library research is the main technique of the research. The analysis is based on the theory of literary reception and the sociology of literature. The results showed that, in A Report to an Academy, the main character relies on the ratio to solve his problem, whereas, in Pistol Perdamaian, the ratio of the main character is defeated by the metaphysical irrationality associated with the belief system adopted. Thus, these two short stories also illustrated how the environment and the socio-cultural life influence the reaction of both main characters in understanding their existence among other beings.*

*Keywords: self-identity, existentialism, ape, ratio.*

**ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini menganalisis konsep identitas-diri tokoh utama dalam A Report to an Academy dan Pistol Perdamaian. Penelitian ini juga mendeskripsikan hubungan sosial antara tokoh utama dengan sekitarnya. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dan studi pustaka merupakan teknik penelitiannya. Analisis didasarkan pada teori resepsi sastra dan sosiologi sastra. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa dalam cerpen A Report to an Academy, tokoh utamanya mengandalkan rasio untuk mengatasi permasalahan yang dihadapi, sedangkan dalam Pistol Perdamaian, rasio tokoh utama dikalahkan oleh irasional metafisik yang berhubungan dengan sistem kepercayaan yang dianut. Dengan demikian, kedua cerpen juga menggambarkan bagaimana lingkungan dan kehidupan sosial-kultural memengaruhi sikap kedua tokoh utama dalam memahami keberadaannya di tengah keberadaan yang lain.*

*Kata kunci: identitas diri, eksistensialisme, kera, rasio.*

**INTRODUCTION**

A Report to an Academy (*Ein Bericht für eine Akademie*) is a short story written by Austrian writer, (Kafka, 1917) and Pistol Perdamaian by Indonesian writer, (Kuntowijoyo, 1996). These two short stories were created in different dimensions of space and time by the two authors with a very different background, but they have the same concept in describing the struggle of life faced by the main character. It is written in both short stories how the main character is confronted with some difficult life choices, which require them to do everything possible to maintain their existence amid coalition relations.

The reaction of the two main characters confronts the problem in their life as a statement of their existence to life itself shows the self-identity; "be" and "being", which is a part of existentialism discussion. The concept of "self-identity" of the main character in the two short stories becomes the first problem chosen and will be discussed by using the theory of literary reception. Literary reception is an approach that considers the role of the reader in giving meaning to the literary texts (Jauss, 1982). The second problem in this research is to describe the sociological aspect of the story. In this context, the relationship of the main character with objects or other people around him (the otherness). This is interesting to explore considering that the two short stories highlight the element story of a life that has different properties from the other elements of existence.

In *A Report to an Academy*, an ape (an animal) is described as the main character, while in *Pistol Perdamaian* a gun (an object) as a cause of intrigue in the main character's life, who is a husband and holds the position as *RW* leader and also known as a historian in the community. These two elements, ape and pistol, in each story are told to have different characteristics (peculiarities) compared to the other's existence. Is this difference or uniqueness a compliment or even conciliator in the diversity of life or it becomes a problem in the main character's communal relations? The study in this section will use the sociology of literature approach.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several studies found about these two short stories. One of them is "Religious Values in Short Stories Anthology First Lesson for Political Candidate by Kuntowijoyo: Study of Sociology of Literature" (Suharni, et al., 2017). This study described the religious values in *Pistol Perdamaian* from the Javanese cultural point of view, which contained several beliefs. Another study is an essay entitled "Aping the Ape: Kafka's Report to an Academy" (Elmarsafy, 1995), which focused on the analysis of the ape's use of the first-person pronoun which at the same time demonstrating a theatrical autobiography featuring the self in question. It is also explained that the writer also analyzed the writing process as a negotiation between the self and others displayed through Kafka's parable.

Standing upon different perspectives, this research compares both short stories to study the western and eastern points of view and the best tools to examine both texts are by using the theory of literary reception and sociology of literature. According to Wolfgang Iser, reception theory has concerns about the impact of literature on its readers and the responses it elicits (Iser, 2000). Correspondingly, Yumi Kinoshita wrote that Robert C. Holub in his book *Reception Theory* (1984) characterized Reception Theory as a general shift from the author and the work as the main concern, to the text and the reader. It is also explained that this new horizon of literary criticism emphasizes the function of the reader in a process of literary experience (Kinoshita, 2004).

Jauss argued that literary reception (*Rezeptionsästhetik*) is an approach that considers

the role of the reader to be important in giving meaning to literary texts (Jauss, 1982). Raman Selden also declared that the meaning of the text (*Textsinn*) has never been formulated by itself; the reader must act on his textual material to create meaning. This opinion is based on the theory by Wolfgang Iser, that literary texts are the result of intentional acts of the author, and contain empty spaces "gaps" or elements of uncertainty "indeterminate elements" (Abrams, 1981). The "empty space" (*Leerstellen*) in literary texts is an area of uncertainty that can only be filled by the reader through interpretation (Selden, 1985).

According to Setyawan and friends, the sociological approach is one of the branches of literary theories that discusses its relationship with society (Setyawan, et al., 2017). Robert Escarpit in 1970 also described the reader as a cultural consumer in literary work (Jadhav, 2014). In that connection, this theory used to describe the main character's social relationship with another object or people around him that determines his existence.

On the other hand, existentialism emphasizes human existence, freedom and responsibility (Shrader and Malhotra, 1996). The freedom of choice is the main theme, which talks about how every human being creates his nature because each individual is free to choose his path/life. In existentialism, the issue that stands out is the one that concerns the questioning of one's existence; identity; individual identity.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is a qualitative research which according to Ritchie and Lewis is directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives, and histories. Moreover, they explained the main qualitative methods include: observation, in-depth individual interviews, focus groups, biographical methods such as life histories and narratives, and analysis of documents and texts (Ritchie, et al., 2003). The research technique is library research by collecting data. Primary data is both short stories and secondary is data relate to the research topic. The next steps are based on the theory of literary reception which by doing the act of reading to fill the "empty space". In this process, the reader interacts with literary texts to understand the structure of a literary text, which used the term *repertoire*. The repertoire is a set of social, historical, and cultural norms expressed in the text, which originate from philosophical and social ideas that prevailed in society at the time the work was created (Endraswara, 2003).

In the literary reception, the success or failure of the reader's communication or interaction with the text during the reading process will be determined by two things, namely (i) the reader's knowledge of the text he/she reads, and (2) the reader's ability to complete what is incomplete, or choose to mean the potential ones and ignore those that are not (Selden, 1985). In the final stage, the reader can formulate the results of understanding the story text, according to the purpose of reading which might be unique to each reader caused by the expectation horizon (*Erwartungshorizont*) of each reader. In the axis of

communication, the reader factor is distinguished according to function. One of those is the real reader (Sangidu, 2002). The real reader is a reader in the physical sense, that is, the person carrying out the act of reading. Specifically in this study, the researcher played the role of a research reader, who combined text acceptance—as a reader, with work interpretation of the text—as a researcher.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Self-Identity of the Main Character**

Explicitly the concept of self-identity of the main character in *A Report to an Academy* and *Pistol Perdamaian* can be explained by describing the situation faced by each character in the events observed.

In *A Report to an Academy*, the identity of the main character is clearly illustrated as an ape. At the beginning of the plot, the uniqueness of the story shown in the first paragraph when the main character made a speech, reporting his past life as an ape to an academy. He came from the Gold Coast but he was arrested in a hunting expedition by the Hagenbeck Firm. During the hunt he was shot twice, one on the cheek leaving a large hairless red scar made him named Red Peter, a name taken from a trained circus ape, Peter. The second bullet lodged just below his hip, made him slightly crippled. During the captivity, he was locked up in a cage.

As in general, we know that the nature possessed by apes just like the other animal is an only animal instinct, but in this story, the ape is very unique. More than just animal instincts, his consciousness encouraged him to find a way out. Being a Hagenbeck's prisoner for the first time in his life he felt deadlocked. Interestingly told in this short story, the main character considered that the way out was not by running away. He knew it was not a smart move because he might soon be arrested again and the consequences could instead be locked up in a worse place or even picking up other bad luck. He thought that life as an ape was unfortunate because it would end up like the other's Hagenbeck captive apes: always squeezed in a crate. The absurdity of the story culminates when a thinking process emerged and the main character decided to stop being an ape!

The main character made several decisions to save his life, to be able to enter the human world, even intrinsically—to become human. From this explanation, the self-identity described in this short story relates to relying on oneself to find a way out for his life, by learning from the background of his origins to progress and to develop. During captivity, he was also trained to behave like a human. At the end of his speech, the main character confirmed that he had succeeded in achieving what he had planned, as the conclusion of his report to the academy.

Another story presented in *Pistol Perdamaian*, the identity of the main character is a man and a husband. His reaction is described as a unique process when he had to respond to

the presence of a gun, an object known as a killing machine. Meanwhile, the identity of the main character during society is also a historian and RW leader. As a historian, the main character translated the existence of this weapon not as a tool for killing but as a historical legacy with some aesthetic values. For this reason, he intended to place the gun on the wall of the house, but his wife rejected that idea because of her fear of the gun. She was afraid that the gun would be used unconsciously by her husband to kill someone, including her. The gun was practically perceived as a tool for killing by his wife. That is why her suggestion was to place the pistol "far away" and hidden, although still inside the house, the process of concealment of that sacred object then raised a strange thing in terms of modern perspective (rationality).

According to the wife, there was noise in the library at night. She said, it must have been the work of kris and spear that fought with the gun, but the man had another speculation that it was caused by rats in the library. The noise then repeated, almost every night, said the wife. *"It's so concrete, there's no way it's just an illusion." I indeed often accuse her of thinking with her feelings, not with reason. But subjective or not, if the stakes are for the peace of the household, I will yield.*" (line 98).

In the short story, it is mentioned that krisses and spears are artefacts from agrarian culture, whereas pistols are from industrial culture. Based on these reasons, his wife suggested that an election be held to separate the two cultures. In short, there must be one of them removed. Logically, the character depicted tends to be rationalist, choosing to throw away the gun because there are still many pistols that are made, while spear and kris are rare. The pistol was finally thrown away. But what happened next is, it came back to his hand again. The husband threw the pistol in the trash but two trash men found it. The pistol was handed over to him to be processed according to applicable procedures. The husband showed the pistol to his wife. The problem was perhaps he threw it not too far away. After really trying, he can only say it is fate. So he was told to throw it away again, this time even farther. For a few days they were spared from the gun, but only for a few days!

#### B. Ratio- and Irrationality

Based on the literary reception theory, it is concluded that both in A Report to an Academy and Pistol Perdamaian, the characteristic of one's existence in terms of one's identity is determined by how a person responds to his environment, both to object and others, which shown by how they react to the problems they are facing. The problem presented in both short stories is an existential difficulty—when being yourself. The existence of the self cannot be presented fully due to the existence of other-self—the otherness.

In A Report to an Academy, the human expectation for the main character to provide a report to the academy created an inner conflict in the character's self-articulation and securitization of identity. In general, people will rely on something, whether it involves cultural or religious values, both relate to an emotional relationship between people, people

with objects, and/or with religion—God. But this is not what manifested in this short story. The main character, the ape showed his existence by holding on or relying on himself. No statement in the short story refers to the mention of God, lover, or even traditional beliefs. He was dependent on himself, his intellect. The main character realized that change will not happen without a lot of effort. The effort does not only rely on strength or physical perfection as possessed by humans, but the most essential is the superiority of the "ratio", based on this short story.

The memories of the free past as an ape were realized only nostalgic, at this point what is real is what he faces today and tomorrow, whether will remain in captivity, ending up like the other apes if he just accepts or surrenders to his circumstances or does something to get out. Absurdity happens when the ape begins to use his "mind". He began to show changes with thinking patterns like humans. He pointed out that superiority lies not in the strength of the muscles and teeth possessed by an ape, but futuristic intelligence like humans, the ability to see what is more significant for his life in the long term, to find ways that can lead him to "the way out".

The uniqueness of the ape with his critical thinking has made his existence recognized by the academicians, which drew their interest to make this animal as research material. His ability to attract the attention of many people to keep abreast of his development until finally, he can manage to reach the way out according to what he had planned; the way of human life. The knowledge that changes the identity of the main character from an ape to behave like humans.

A different perspective is shown in *Pistol Perdamaian*. Science is not a determinant or "winner" in the story. Even science is defeated by the irrationality displayed uniquely by the author. The pistol that created chaos inside the house turned out it could not be thrown out even after many times trying, it still came back again. This is where the "triumph" of irrationality that marks the identity of the character. Although the main character is known as a historian and a respected figure, he could not ignore the customs and myths, which cannot always be explained truthfully but their presence is part of the reality of life. Equally found in both short stories is how science and belief systems adopted by a person will also determine their identity.

### C. Social Relationship of the Main Character

Identity can only be identified when the person relates to another self. The plot explains how the series of sequences of story motion determines the social patterns and existentialists depicted in the short story. The social pattern in both fictions becomes interesting because the relation between one person and the other, an object, or even the environment is managed by the two authors by highlighting the conflict side and how each character is involved and handles the problem.

#### 1. A Report to an Academy: Knowledge is a Way Out!

More than just applying Darwinism and its powerful contribution to understanding cultural and social entities and change, the theory of natural selection and evolution (Gough, et al., 2008), Kafka in *A Report to an Academy* questioning the existentialist thing; a fundamental question what is the meaning of predicate (to be) human, judging from the perspective of someone who is not human. For the main character, being apart from a human is not a perfect existence let alone final. That thought was concluded after the ill-treatment he received from humans in his previous existence as an ape, because being an ape it turned out causing problems, being a trapped creature as mentioned: "there is no way out". The phrase is very suing the existence of oneself as "persona". For the main character, the answer was to find a way out, to become a human being is a "path" that leads to the main goal. Not the other way: dead-end.

Therefore, Immanuel Kant's phrase "who am I?" (Olson, 2008) is a truly existential question for every man to confirm the task and process of being and what role should be performed in this life. It is humans who have the right to determine/legitimize one existence or the function of the natural surroundings to be made "as to what". For this reason, being human to the main character is a liberating decision.

*A Report to an Academy* reaches its climax when the character finds a way out of his problem through the learning process. Learning to become a human in a substantive sense by imitating human behaviour by saying "Hello!" as his first word. This is a *mirroring* process in response to the surrounding environment and as a sign of development obtained from his association with the crew. Thus this expression has made people around him to have a social relationship with him. He is then trained to behave like them, humans. This is what Bhaktin refers to as an exotopi process (Faruk, 1994), moving from oneself to reach a new self.

Science can transform the existence of beings, even from apes to humans as portrayed in the short story. Therefore, what Kafka has presented in this short story is nothing but a symbol of existentialism, which highlights "how a creature becomes a persona, a conscious self". At this point, this is the blank space that can be filled in the short story. The main character has made a transcultural relation based on the choices he made. Strictly speaking, the core of someone's existence is based on "the results of his thinking", as the formulation of the existentialist philosopher, Rene Descartes "Cogito Ergo Sum" (I think, therefore I am).

## 2. Pistol Perdamaian: Status as a Social Predicate

In the short story *Pistol Perdamaian* status becomes important in the relationship between people. As a historian (academician), he gets special treatment from society simply because he has expertise. Pistol as the object that determines the storyline, which for others it's dangerous and not allowed to keep, but for the historian it is trusted to keep it in his house, to take care of it.

In this short story, other people played a decisive role. Even sociologically the identity of the main character and the pattern of social relations depend on others. This is

evidenced by the behaviour of the character who always follows what his wife wants, for the sake of his family. Although he wanted the gun to be put on display, because his wife forbade it, he relented. He only tried to keep it in the library until his wife complained about the commotion in the library which she accused as the result of the pistol "fighting" with the kris and the spear—a conflict between industrial culture and agriculture. That is why the main character relented again when his wife suggested that the gun be thrown away. Although on the other hand, his wife said, she will only accept the existence of the gun if it turns out to be fate. Destiny at the end is the existential determinant for the circumstance.

In *Pistol Perdamaian*, the character always accepts the deterministic nature of the people surrounding him. Besides, even stronger determinism is the value system, customs, and beliefs adopted by society. Absurdity in this short story is the mysticism believed to be owned by the grandfather's inheritance. When there is no longer inner resistance from the wife, when they have reached an agreement that the return of the pistol is accepted as destiny, the mysterious things that metaphysically believed caused by these items in the end no longer occur. The phrase destiny signifies a belief system adopted by the main character, not based on rationality or the power of self, but it is believed that there is another power that exists greater than the self.

In this short story, it is illustrated that although the main character does not believe in the traditional values, he still accepts the prevailing traditions, even with a note, it is not because it makes sense, but as a custom and to uphold togetherness. This is the key relationship of the main character in the short story. He is willing to succumb, whether to his wife, to *Lurah* or the community, and also to the customs for the sake of togetherness—social harmony.

### 3. Reflections on Thoughts and Emotions

Thoughts and emotions exist together in humans, only sociologically and personally, a person can decide which is more important. In explaining these two ideas there is a myth-based on tradition, that the westerners tend to be more rational and the easterners rely more on feelings (emotional; irrationality). Although we cannot always generalize this saying, these two short stories highly represent this idea. *A Report to an Academy* represents the superiority of the mind in the well-known Cartesian formula "cogito ergo sum", and *Pistol Perdamaian* upholds the truth of feelings or rather an irrationality; sometimes it doesn't make sense but it does exist, which known as metaphysical facts. The pistol was thrown away many times but always returned showing that the ratio does not always support the reality. There is another reality which cannot be understood enough if it only relies on the ratio, based on the short story.

However, both stories also portrayed the role of the mind and feelings. As in *A Report to an Academy*, the ape's feelings are expressed from the suffering he has experienced since the captivity and confined in a cage until he eventually reached the level of human way of life. The feelings element gives an intense nuance in the short story. Also in *Pistol*

Perdamaian, it does not merely depend on feelings or irrationality. In several parts, the main character has shown the process of reasoning and thinking: analyzing and considering the actions and reactions of others to him, and conversely.

Destiny is also another crucial element that differs from these two short stories. If in *A Report to an Academy* destiny can be changed by knowing and through learning effort, but in *Pistol Perdamaian* science or by reasoning cannot change the situation, but by succumbing to the determination of customs and beliefs.

## CONCLUSION

The struggle of beings is marked by the searching process of identity, to establish “who am I”. The main character in *A Report to an Academy* relies on ratio, which is through knowledge to achieve his goals. Whereas in *Pistol Perdamaian*, the ratio of the main character is defeated by the metaphysical irrationality associated with the belief system adopted. *A Report to an Academy* supports the physical fact, ratio “I think therefore I am”, in a special sense: knowledgeable and apply it! While *Pistol Perdamaian* supports the fact that something is also real behind a physical fact: metaphysics! So the description is: apes or humans are beings, what distinguishes them from one another is the mind, body, and soul, how they react in their relation to other beings must be seen as a process “to become”. Thus, these two short stories also illustrate how the environment, socio-cultural life influenced the reaction of the main character in understanding their existence among others. One thing that is found the same from these two short stories is how science and belief systems adopted by a man will also determine his identity. So, it can be interpreted that the reception of literary works allows us to understand our identity; the personal and cultural identity of the situation described in the short stories, through the formulation of the work viewed from the point of existentialism, which the affirmation examined here are primarily seen in terms of choice, responsibility, and freedom, as well as other elements, such as authenticity.

*A Report to an Academy* and *Pistol Perdamaian* are proved to be the representation of the existential process to become something or someone that matters to the surroundings in social relation. Both in the sense of humanity as oneself and in a broader sense, namely one's existential life when interacting with another existence, because in any existence: apes, humans, in fictional life, are all able to be presented, concreted and given meaning.

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