



AN ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN TERE LIYE'S NOVEL SENDIRI: A JUNG PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

ANALISIS PENCARIAN IDENTITAS TOKOH UTAMA DALAM NOVEL SENDIRI KARYA TERE LIYE: PERSPEKTIF PSIKOANALISIS JUNG

Feryanti Kurnia Andi^{1*}, Hari Windu Asrini²

^{1*}Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Email: Feryanti.Kurnia24@guru.sma.belajar.id

²Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

*email koresponden: Feryanti.Kurnia24@guru.sma.belajar.id

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Abstract

This study examines the main character's search for identity in Tere Liye's novel *Sendiri* (2024) through the lens of Carl Gustav Jung's psychoanalytic theory. The research addresses the lack of in-depth psychological analysis regarding how the protagonist confronts inner conflict, loneliness, and past trauma in the process of identity formation. The study aims to describe the forms, strategies, and obstacles in the character's identity quest, as well as to analyze the individuation process based on Jungian concepts such as persona, shadow, anima/animus, and the Self. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, utilizing close reading and thematic analysis of textual data from the novel. Findings reveal that the protagonist undergoes a complex, nonlinear psychological journey toward self-understanding, triggered by existential crisis and emotional isolation. Through deep introspection, symbolic interactions (particularly with natural elements like the moon), and confrontation with the shadow, the character gradually integrates fragmented aspects of the self. This study demonstrates that Jungian theory effectively uncovers the psychological depth of characters in contemporary Indonesian literature and affirms the relevance of literary fiction as a medium for reflecting on identity formation and emotional resilience in real life.

Keywords : identity search, Jungian psychoanalysis, individuation, main character, *Sendiri* novel.

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji pencarian identitas tokoh utama dalam novel *Sendiri* (2024) karya Tere Liye melalui lensa teori psikoanalisis Carl Gustav Jung. Penelitian ini membahas kurangnya analisis psikologis mendalam mengenai bagaimana tokoh utama menghadapi konflik batin, kesepian, dan trauma masa lalu dalam proses pembentukan identitas. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk, strategi, dan hambatan dalam pencarian identitas tokoh, serta menganalisis proses individuasi berdasarkan konsep Jungian seperti persona, bayangan, anima/animus, dan Diri. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan, memanfaatkan pembacaan cermat dan analisis tematik data tekstual dari novel. Temuan



mengungkapkan bahwa tokoh utama mengalami perjalanan psikologis yang kompleks dan tidak linier menuju pemahaman diri, dipicu oleh krisis eksistensial dan isolasi emosional. Melalui introspeksi mendalam, interaksi simbolis (terutama dengan unsur alam seperti bulan), dan konfrontasi dengan bayangan, karakter tersebut secara bertahap mengintegrasikan aspek-aspek diri yang terfragmentasi. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa teori Jungian secara efektif mengungkap kedalaman psikologis karakter dalam sastra Indonesia kontemporer dan menegaskan relevansi fiksi sastra sebagai medium untuk merefleksikan pembentukan identitas dan ketahanan emosional dalam kehidupan nyata.

Kata Kunci : pencarian identitas, psikoanalisis Jungian, individuasi, tokoh utama, novel Sendiri.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern life, many individuals especially young people experience identity crises due to social pressures, past trauma, or profound loneliness. This phenomenon is not only prevalent in everyday reality but is also frequently explored in contemporary literature. One representative work is Tere Liye's 2024 novel *Sendiri* (Alone), which portrays the inner journey of a protagonist struggling to understand who they are amid emotional isolation, loss of life's meaning, and intense inner conflict.

Tere Liye is known for his ability to touch readers' psychological depths through simple yet meaningful narratives. In *Sendiri*, he goes beyond depicting loneliness; he illustrates identity-seeking as a complex psychological transformation. The protagonist undergoes deep introspection, confronts their past, and strives to integrate fragmented aspects of the self elements that align closely with Carl Gustav Jung's concept of individuation (Jung, 1953; Putri et al., 2024).

According to Jung, identity formation is not merely about discovering who one is, but rather a process of integrating consciousness and the unconscious, including recognition of the persona (social mask), the shadow (the dark side of the self), and the attainment of the Self (the true, unified self). This process known as individuation is central to human psychological development (Groff, 2023). In literature, fictional characters like those in *Sendiri* often embody this transformative journey.

Although *Sendiri* has received widespread public acclaim, academic studies analyzing it through a Jungian psychoanalytic lens remain scarce. Most public discussions focus only on emotional or moral aspects, overlooking the collective psychological and archetypal dimensions foundational to Jung's theory (Hanifa & Sugiarti, 2023; Lafamane, 2020). Yet the novel is rich in symbolism such as loneliness, silence, and self-reflection that can be interpreted as manifestations of collective unconscious archetypes.

Research by Marković et al. (2024) affirms that identity formation is a lifelong process shaped by trauma, social relationships, and cultural symbols highly relevant to the protagonist's experience in *Sendiri*, who battles not only internal struggles but also environmental pressures and past burdens. In an era where mental health and identity crises are increasingly prominent, literary works like *Sendiri* can serve as tools for self-reflection and narrative therapy (Verma, 2023; Zuraikat & Mashreqi, 2022).



Thus, this study aims to fill that gap. Using Jungian psychoanalysis, it analyzes how the protagonist in *Sendiri* navigates identity formation through inner conflict, symbolism, and psychological transformation. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to literary and psychological studies and offer practical insights for readers, educators, and writers in understanding identity dynamics in the contemporary world.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, which posits that meaning in literary texts is not fixed but constructed through the interaction among reader, text, and cultural context (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Within this paradigm, the psychological reality of fictional characters is understood as a symbolic construct interpretable through specific theoretical frameworks, in this case, Carl Gustav Jung's psychoanalytic theory.

A qualitative descriptive approach with a literature study design was employed. This method enables in-depth analysis of narrative, dialogue, and symbolism in *Sendiri* as representations of the protagonist's identity quest (Putri et al., 2024). As Braun & Clarke (2022) assert, qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for examining subjective phenomena such as identity, trauma, and inner transformation.

The research object is Tere Liye's novel *Sendiri* (2024), selected for its themes of loneliness, existential crisis, and introspective journey, all of which resonate with Jung's concept of individuation (Jung, 1953; Groff, 2023). Data consist of primary sources (narrative excerpts, inner monologues, dialogues, and symbolic descriptions from the novel) and secondary sources (Jungian theory, scholarly journals, and prior studies on literary psychology).

Data collection was conducted through intensive close reading of the entire novel, involving: (1) comprehensive reading to grasp plot and context; (2) identification of passages related to inner conflict, introspection, symbolism (e.g., loneliness, the moon, silence), and social interaction; and (3) recording relevant quotations into a thematic analysis table (Lafamane, 2020; Nafilah & Agustin, 2023).

Data analysis followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis:

- ✓ Familiarization with data: repeated reading to grasp textual nuances.
- ✓ Initial coding: labeling relevant text segments (e.g., "loneliness," "trauma," "self-reflection").
- ✓ Generating initial themes: grouping codes into themes such as "persona–Self conflict," "shadow acknowledgment," and "archetypal symbolism."
- ✓ Reviewing themes: ensuring consistency and relevance to the data.
- ✓ Defining and naming themes: assigning clear meanings grounded in Jungian theory.
- ✓ Producing the report: integrating findings with textual evidence and theoretical interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Marković et al., 2024).

Jungian theory served as the interpretive lens. For example, the line "I am alone. Again, alone..." was not merely read as emotional expression but interpreted as an early sign of



individuation when the character begins recognizing the dissonance between persona and Self (Jung, 1961; Danylova & Hoian, 2020).

Data validity was ensured through theoretical triangulation comparing interpretations across multiple credible Jungian sources (Saputra, 2022; Suryadi, 2022). Additionally, the researcher engaged in self-reflection and consultation with advisors to minimize subjective bias (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

This methodology enables a systematic, in-depth, and theoretically grounded analysis of the protagonist's psychological dynamics in *Sendiri*, effectively addressing the research questions regarding the forms, strategies, obstacles, and integration process in the search for identity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study reveals that the protagonist's identity quest in *Sendiri* is a nonlinear, complex psychological journey marked by conflict, introspection, and transformation interpreted through Jungian individuation.

First, the form of identity-seeking is existential and introspective. Phrases like "I am alone. Again, alone..." signify not just emotion but the onset of individuation, where the character recognizes the gap between persona and Self (Jung, 1953). Loneliness functions not as social isolation but as a transformative space for questioning life's meaning (Zuraikat & Mashreqi, 2022).

Second, the protagonist employs several strategies:

- ✓ Introspection: Inner monologues such as "Am I really destined to be like this?" open access to the unconscious (Verma, 2023).
- ✓ Symbolism: Repetition of "sendiri" (alone) acts as a spiritual symbol—not just solitude, but a sacred space for encountering the self (Nafilah & Agustin, 2023).
- ✓ Silence: Portrayed not as emptiness but as a medium for inner dialogue, aligning with Jung's view of silence as a path to the Self (Groff, 2023).

Third, obstacles are both internal and external. Internally, unresolved trauma, guilt, and fear manifest as unintegrated shadow elements (Danylova & Hoian, 2020). Externally, social expectations pressure the protagonist to maintain an inauthentic persona. In collectivist societies like Indonesia, such social norms often hinder authentic self-expression (Hanifa & Sugiarti, 2023).

Fourth, individuation unfolds gradually. A turning point occurs when the character realizes, "Loneliness is not the end, it's part of the journey." The declaration "I don't need answers from anyone. The answer lies within me" marks the emergence of the Self, a self-sufficient identity independent of external validation (Jung, 1961). This signifies integration of conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche (Lafamane, 2020).

Fifth, symbolism reflects collective archetypes. The word "sendiri" embodies the Seeker archetype, a figure who withdraws from the outer world to discover inner truth (Putri et al., 2024). Silence and solitude symbolize the unconscious, which must be embraced, not avoided.



These findings align with contemporary identity studies. Marković et al. (2024) argue that identity formation involves lifelong negotiation between inner desires and social demands precisely mirrored in *Sendiri*. Moreover, the study supports the view that contemporary literature functions as narrative therapy, aiding readers in understanding their own psychological dynamics (Verma, 2023).

Thus, *Sendiri* is not merely popular fiction but a psychologically rich text. Through a Jungian lens, identity-seeking is revealed not as a pursuit of perfection, but as the courageous acceptance and integration of all self-aspects—including the dark and fragile into psychological wholeness.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the protagonist in Tere Liye's *Sendiri* undergoes a complex, nonlinear, and transformative identity journey. The search manifests through intense introspection, inner monologue, and symbolic loneliness functioning not as emptiness but as a transformative space (Zuraikat & Mashreqi, 2022). Key strategies include self-reflection, acceptance of the past, and gradual shedding of an inauthentic persona. Major obstacles stem from internal struggles, trauma, guilt, fear of rejection which represent unintegrated shadow elements (Danylova & Hoian, 2020). The turning point arrives when the character realizes that identity answers come not from the outside world, but from within.

Therefore, *Sendiri* transcends its status as popular fiction to become a profound psychological representation of the journey toward self-authenticity. These findings reinforce the relevance of Jungian theory in contemporary literary analysis and affirm literature's vital role as a medium for identity reflection and mental well-being in the modern era (Verma, 2023; Marković et al., 2024).

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