A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

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JEAN-BAPTISTE GRENOUILLE’S AMBITION IN PATRICK SÜSKIND’S PERFUME: THE STORY OF 
A MURDERER NOVEL (1985):
A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The study is aimed to show the ambition of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, the main character in Patrick Süskind’s Perfume: The Story of a Murderer. The object of the study of this research is to analyze the novel based on its structural elements and the ambition of Grenouille that deals with id, ego and superego using a psychoanalytic approach. This research is qualitative research. Type of data of the study is text taken from two data sources: primary and secondary. The primary data source is taken from the novel Perfume: The Story of a Murderer written by Patrick Suskind in 1985. While the secondary data sources are other materials taken from literary books, criticism, essays, articles, journal and internet related to the study. Both data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The outcome of the study shows the following conclusions. Firstly, based on the structural analysis, it shows that the character and characterization, setting, plot, style and theme of the novel are related into solid unity. Secondly, based on psychoanalytic analysis the novel tells that the major character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille has psychological problems. The psychological problem of the major character encounters causes the conflict of his mental condition. Then, it develops to become an ambition and influences him to murder 26 virgins. His great ambition to be a master perfumer leads him to be a murderer.

Keywords: Ambition, id, ego, superego.

A. Introduction

People in the world have problem in their lives. Most of the problem that is faced by people can be caused by ambition. Ambition is the desire for personal achievement. It provides the motivation and determination necessary to achieve goals in life. Ambitious people seek to be the best at what they choose to do for attainment, power and superiority. Ambition can also be defined as the object of this sleekness. Ambition is a quality valued in leaders. One of the key traits of a leader
is ambition. They give inspiration to the others with their zeal, confidence and energy.

*Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a novel which is made in 1985 by Patrick Süskind. It has 230 pages which consists of 51 chapters inside it. This novel tells about Jean-Baptiste Grenouille who has extraordinary sense of smell become so thirsty with human body odor after he finds a girl with beautiful scent that he has never smelled before. He gets his destiny of life, he wants to create an incredible perfume that will give him the magical essence of identity. He also wants to be the world’s greatest perfumer. It drives him to the murder of sweet innocent virgins.

Patrick Süskind was born in Ambach, near Munich, in 1949. He is one of the most celebrated younger writers in contemporary German literature. His first play, *The Double Bass*, written in 1980, became an international success, performed in Germany, Switzerland, at the Edinburgh Festival, in London, and most recently at the New Theatre in Brooklyn. His first novel, *Perfume* became an internationally acclaimed bestseller. He is also the author of *The Pigeon* and *Mr. Summer’s Story*, and a co-author of television series *Kir Royal*. He lives and writes in Munich. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is an interesting novel.

There are four reasons why the writer is interested to study this novel. The first is because the plot and the problems of the characters which are unusual, particularly the major character Jean-Baptiste Grenouille. The novel tells about a dreadful examination of what happens when one man’s satisfaction in his greatest ambition and passion -his sense of smell- leads him to be a murderer. It can be said that the story of the novel is different from other horror stories. The second reason that makes this novel interesting is that *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a novel of education, which tells the story of Grenouille who is born into a putrid spot of 18th century France. Despite being left of his mother at birth and being rejected from society because he has no bodily odor, but Grenouille can survive and becomes a master perfumer with his extraordinary sense of smell. He can separate every scent into its tiniest components. The third reason is the writer of the novel Süskind's choice of setting is particularly interesting. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* novel is set in the 18th century, a period which is known as *The Age of Enlightenment*. The Enlightenment was a time of rationalization and logic in which theories of divine right and natural law were introduced. These theories suggested that everything on earth was ordered by a reasonable God. From my understanding of the Enlightenment period, for Grenouille to be placed in such an environment, further suggests his segregation from a society which would struggle to embrace such a skill that could not be justified with logical reasoning. The last is the main character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille is depicted as an unusual murderer who kills his victims by hitting their heads and shaving all the victims’ hairs and wrapping their dead bodies in order to take their odor. He
struggles in making his own perfume that is his personal odor, so that he
can be accepted by society. Grenouille's ambition to create the ultimate
perfume drives him to the murder of sweet innocent virgins. Thus, it
seems that Jean-Baptiste Grenouille’s psychological problem is a very
interesting topic to be researched.

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulates
the problem statement of the study is “How is the ambition of Jean-
Baptiste Grenouille as the major character reflected in Patrick Süskind’s
Perfume: The Story of a Murderer novel?”.

Dealing with this problem, the objectives of the study are to
analyze Perfume: The Story of a Murderer novel based on its structural
elements and to analyze Perfume: The Story of a Murderer novel by
using a psychoanalytic approach.

To help the researcher arranges this paper, she uses several
literature review as her references. They are The Defense of Jean-
Baptiste Grenouille on Using His Minority of Sense in Tom Tykwer’s
Perfume: The Story of a Murderer Movie: Psychoanalytic Approach by
Widya Ratna Aprilia, Grenouille’s Behavioral Disorders and Anxiety: A
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Jean-Baptiste Grenouille Characteristic in Patrick Süskind’s Perfume
with Psychological Approach, Hilde Sitohang entitled Id, Ego and
Superego Analysis of Jean Baptiste Grenouille Character in Perfume by
Patrick Suskind.

B. Research Method

From the object of the study, the researcher takes Patrick Süskind’s
Perfume: The Story of a Murderer as the object of the study. She tries to
analyze the major character’s personality. The type of the study is library
research. The data used on the research have been collected with the
library research. It purposes to analyze the novel using psychoanalytic
approach. Then, the type of the data and the data source are divided into
two. Firstly, Primary data source that is called as the main data obtained
from all the words, phrases and sentences in the novel itself, Patrick
Süskind’s Perfume: The Story of a Murderer novel. Secondly, secondary
Data Source, it is the supporting data taken from literary books, criticism,
theses, articles, and journal and also taken from the internet or the other
sources related to the novel. And the technique of collecting data in this
research are as follows: 1) reading the novel repeatedly and
understanding the content 2) reading some other resources related to the
novel 3) giving marks to particular parts in the novel, which are
considered important for the analysis 4) taking notes for important parts
both in primary and secondary data sources 5) classifying the data into
categories and developing them into a good unity. The last is technique
of the data analysis is descriptive analysis technique. The researcher will
describe the structural elements of the novel using psychoanalysis theory
by Sigmund Freud. The collected data will be interpreted and analyzed in
detail through psychoanalysis theory of literature in this case by showing
the influence of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille’s ambition in Perfume: The
Story of a Murderer novel: a psychoanalytic approach. Then drawing
conclusion based on the analysis.

C. Findings and discussion

**Perfume: The Story of a Murderer** is a novel written by Patrick
Suskind. The novel tells us about Jean-Baptiste Grenouille who is one of
the most gifted personages in that era. But his name has been forgotten
today, it is certainly not because Grenouille fall short of those more
famous blackguards when it comes to arrogance, misanthropy,
immortality, or more succinctly, to wickedness, but because his gifts and
his sole ambition are restricted to a domain that leaves no traces in
history: to the fleeting realm of scent.

From the character in his novel, Suskind concerns with the major
character ‘Grenouille’ who is told as an unusual person without bodily
odor but has extraordinary nose in smelling the scents of everything
around him. He is a hard worker and tough. He has to survive his life
since he is at the age of eight; he becomes an apprentice of a tanner,
Grimal. He treats like an animal but he can survive his life until he meets
with a master perfumer, Giuseppe Baldini. After being an apprentice in
Baldini perfume shop, he learns everything about the odors. He shows
that he has good ability in remembering each ingredient name of perfume
and separating it into small parts. But since he finds an extraordinary
scent of a teenage girl, then he gets the destiny of his life. He wants to be
a master perfumer. He also wants to make an incredible perfume from
the scents of young girl body that will give him the magical essence of
identity. His ambition drives him to be a murderer. He thinks that the
only way to capture a living being’s scent is by killing that being.
Grenouille kills 26 beautiful young girls for their scent. He cuts their hair
and takes their clothes with him.

Although the novel is written in 1985 but the novel tells a story that
happens in Eighteenth century. Eighteenth century is also known as The
Age of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a time of rationalization
and logic in which theories of divine right and natural law were
introduced. These theories suggested that everything on earth was
ordered by a reasonable God. From my understanding of the
Enlightenment period, for Grenouille to be placed in such an
environment, further suggests his segregation from a society which
would struggle to embrace such a skill that could not be justified with
logical reasoning. The is used as the setting of time. Every actions and
events happen in that time. While, France is used as the setting of place.
Every actions and events also happen in around Paris, France. The setting
of time and place is told starting from Grenouille’s birth until he died. It happens at that time and place.

Organizing the story of this novel, Suskind uses traditional or conventional plot. Traditional plot is divided into three parts, from the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. Suskind composed the plot into beautiful and nice way. He makes the movement of the story from beginning to the end actions become increasingly systematically, respectively and moment-by-moment, which makes the story of the novel understandable for the readers.

The point of view is told from the author's point of view that is as an omniscient outside voice, observing the actions of all the characters and witnessing their inner thoughts. Using this point of view, it allows Suskind to quickly demonstrate the characters’ motivations, and to describe events that are not directly witnessed by the main characters.

Suskind also supports his main idea in the novel using his own style in telling the story. He tells the story in a simple figurative language in order to make the reader easy to understand the story of the novel. We can find some words which are seldom used of another writer but it makes the sentences of the story more beautiful. All parts of the novel are arranged systematically well. Each parts of the novel support the main idea or theme, human passion or ambition problems. It happens because the writer ideas are constructed well and all of part of the novel supports each other. Based on the structural analysis, all of the elements can be related one another becoming solid unity.

The setting of the novel is in 18th century French. The writer of the novel, Patrick Suskind wants to show that perfume is firstly created in France. Although in the first part of the novel, Grenouille is born in putrid spot in French. But French also has a city that is called as a center of modern fashion in that era, named Paris. According to the description of Suskind on the novel, Paris is the place where perfume is born. The writer also wants to show that women as a beautiful creature, has a different thing that is unform such as smells, act, and feminism side. The novel Perfume: The Story of Murderer focuses on the beautiful smell of women through the essence of the woman’s body.

Perfume: The Story of a Murderer novel describes how ambition and passion of the major character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille to make the incredible perfume drives him to be a murderer. It is the fact that ambition and passion can make a problem with someone personality, especially Grenouille which is told in the story. It means that Grenouille has psychological problems. There are three structure of personality reflected in Perfume: The Story of a Murderer novel. They are id, ego and superego. The three words id, ego and superego and many conflicts in his life is caused by his ambition.

The id of Grenouille is the identity as a human being that people need love, people want to be happy, people also feel sad, fear, curiosity and surprise. Grenouille also feels the feeling mentioned above, such as:
when he catches a distant scent. Grenouille follows the scent; the scent comes from a teenage girl of about thirteen or fourteen years old. He feels very curiosity with her smell. Then Grenouille feels fear or anxiety. It appears almost unconsciously, he wants to prevent her from screaming or crying out, he covers the girl's mouth and strangles her. Grenouille realizes that he has killed the plum girl; he feels scare. Another Grenouille’s intense fear is when he shuts himself in the cave to keep the distance from human scents that he considers as a disgusting scent that is he supposed to avoid them. This is a place where he builds his own world. The fear appears when he goes out to find some food. He feels as if he is haunted by the existence of human scent, so all the daily business must be done in a hurry. The next id appears in a form of happiness. After, he finds the glorious smell of a plum girl. He goes home and feels that he is now truly happy. He also feels happy when he has found a natural tunnel leading back into the mountain, the air he breathed was moist, salty, and cool. Grenouille can smell at once that no living creature had ever entered the place. As he takes possession of it, he is overcome by a sense of something like sacred awe. He feels blessedly wonderful. He feels so happy. The last id appears is when Grenouille feels sad. It happens when Grenouille perceives that all smell is not enough because he cannot love himself. He cannot know who he truly is. With this lack of self-knowledge, the world and himself have no meaning. Then it appears when Grenouille feels no desire to go back to his solitary cave. He feels that he can no longer live either with human beings or without them. The world suffocates him. He plans to go to Paris to die.

The ego of Grenouille always appears when he finds a new scent from a young girl that he meets. He murders anytime and anywhere he finds wonderful scent of a girl. Nobody can stop him, from his passion on perfume. Grenouille has one purpose; he wants to create the last fragrance perfume from the young and beautiful woman. He will do anything to get a new scent, even by killing the entire woman. In

Grenouille’s superego appears when Grenouille agrees to be the son of Antoine Richis after Grenouille has killed his daughter, Laure Richis. Although Grenouille doesn’t want to be Richis’ son but after sees Richis’ face, finally he agreed. It means that Grenouille has a good side. He doesn’t want to make Antoine Richis disappointed by refusing his offer after killing his daughter. It has proved that Grenouille still has a good side related with love.

D. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the analysis, the writer would like to draw the following conclusion: *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* novel is a novel written by Patrick Süskind in 1985. He is one of the most celebrated younger writers in German literature. The novel sets in Eighteenth century of Paris, French. From the characters, Patrick Suskind concerns with Jean-
Baptiste Grenouille. The plot of the novel tells about the journey of Grenouille in a form of exposition story. Based on psychoanalytic approach, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* novel represents Jean-Baptiste Grenouille’s psychological problems who killed 26 young girl to fulfill his ambition in making incredible perfume. Grenouille’s personality is divided into three, namely *id*, *ego* and *superego*. The *id* appears in the form of sadness, depression, fear, curiosity, anxiety. The *ego* of Grenouille appears when he finds a new scent from a young girl that he meets. He murders anytime and anywhere he finds wonderful scent of a girl. Nobody can stop him, from his passion on perfume. Then, Grenouille’s *superego* appears when Grenouille agrees to be the son of Antoine Richis after Grenouille has killed his daughter, Laure Richis. Although Grenouille doesn’t want to be Richis’ son but after sees Richis’ face, finally he agreed. It means that Grenouille has a good side. He doesn’t want to make Antoine Richis disappointed by refusing his offer after killing his daughter. It proves that Grenouille still has a good side related with love.

*Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a great novel to be read. The character and the theme are very attracted. The structural element of the novel is also presented in a good relation of work in building the story. But, this research is far from the perfect because of the researcher’s limited knowledge and understanding on the literature. But the researcher tries to make it great with the believe sources. The whole analysis represents the researcher understanding of the novel based on a psychoanalytic approach. It’s suggested to the other researchers who use this novel they may use right and different approaches such as Maslow humanism theory and Adler individual psychological theory. The both theories explain about the personal needs, want and strive. With humanism theory, the other researcher can analyze the five elements personality such as: physiological needs, safety and security needs, belongingness and love needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. While using individual psychological, they can analyze the striving of the major character Grenouille based on the sixes element, striving for superiority, inferiority feeling, fictional finalism, creative self, social interest and style of life. The personality of Grenouille in the novel, never far from the humanism and individual psychology, so it will give difference result which hope to be better then the study analyzed by the researcher.
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