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Social Concept In *Tanin No Kao* By Abe Kobo

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Abstract

The novel reflects reality, not by painting a face that is only visible on the surface, but by giving us a more correct, more complete, more vibrant, and more dynamic reflection of reality. Abe Kobo is a contemporary Japanese writer who is regarded as an observer and commentator of contemporary life because his work often speaks of conditions that are always related to contemporary human life, namely loss of identity, alienation, individual isolation, and difficulty communicating between people in urban society. The concept of alienation is also one of the main themes in the flow of existentialist philosophy. The pioneers of the existentialist philosophy include Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Satre, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, and so on. Keterasingan atau alienasi yang merupakan konsep Barat ini merupakan dampak yang timbul dari konflik atas dirinya dan nilai sosial yang masih dianut masyarakat Jepang hingga kini. Salah satu karya Abe Kobo yang tokohnya mengalami alienasi adalah *Tanin no Kao*. Hal inilah yang menjadi pendorong bagi penulis untuk meneliti bagaimana Abe Kobo memadukan konsep alienasi yang berasal dari Barat dengan ciri khas ketimuran dalam novelnya. Alienation or alienation which is a Western concept is an impact that arises from the conflict over him and the social values that are still held by Japanese society until now. One of Abe Kobo's works whose characters experienced alienation is *Tanin no Kao*. This is what drives the writer to examine how Abe Kobo combines the concept of alienation originating from the West with the eastern characteristics of his novel. Abe Kobo through this novel conveys the various urban anxieties that occur in general in the world in post-World War II. A typical Japanese human anxiety in this story is how the figure is aware of the existence of *seken* that govern their social life. The I figure in TNK after his face was damaged, experiencing various anxieties that made him withdraw himself from the society. In order to reconnect with the outside world, he uses a variety of ways, and end up wearing a mask as his medium. In an attempt to re-establish relationships with his social environment known as *seken* in Japanese, the I figure stuck with the concept that exists in the social value of the Japanese society, that is; *soto, uchi, honne, tatemae* and *enryo* because of the inner conflict he has.

Keywords: Alienation, Conflict, Japanese Social Concept

Abstrak

Novel ini mencerminkan kenyataan, bukan dengan melukis wajah yang hanya terlihat di permukaan, tetapi dengan memberi kita refleksi yang lebih benar, lebih

lengkap, lebih bersemangat, dan lebih dinamis dari kenyataan. Abe Kobo adalah seorang penulis Jepang kontemporer yang dianggap sebagai pengamat dan komentator kehidupan kontemporer karena karyanya sering berbicara tentang kondisi yang selalu terkait dengan kehidupan manusia kontemporer, yaitu hilangnya identitas, keterasingan, isolasi individu, dan kesulitan berkomunikasi antara orang-orang di masyarakat urban. Konsep alienasi juga merupakan salah satu tema utama dalam aliran filsafat eksistensial. Para pelopor filosofi eksistensial termasuk Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Satre, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, dan sebagainya. Metasingan atau alienasi yang mengandung konsep Barat ini menghasilkan kaitan yang berujung pada perbedaan dan sosial yang diperlukan di masyarakat. . Salah satu karya Abe Kobo yang tokohnya paling sulit diubah adalah Tanin no Kao. Hal inilah yang menjadi pendorong bagi penulis untuk membahas bagaimana Abe Kobo memadukan konsep alienasi yang diperoleh dari Barat dengan ciri khas ketimuran dalam novelnya. Keterasingan atau keterasingan yang merupakan konsep Barat merupakan dampak yang timbul dari konflik atas dirinya dan nilai-nilai sosial yang masih dipegang oleh masyarakat Jepang hingga sekarang. Salah satu karya Abe Kobo yang karakternya mengalami keterasingan adalah Tanin no Kao. Inilah yang mendorong penulis untuk meneliti bagaimana Abe Kobo menggabungkan konsep alienasi yang berasal dari Barat dengan karakteristik timur novelnya. Abe Kobo melalui novel ini menyampaikan berbagai kecemasan urban yang terjadi secara umum di dunia pasca-Perang Dunia II. Kecemasan khas manusia Jepang dalam kisah ini adalah bagaimana sosok tersebut menyadari keberadaan sekenthat yang mengatur kehidupan sosial mereka. Sosok saya di TNK setelah wajahnya rusak, mengalami berbagai kecemasan yang membuatnya menarik diri dari masyarakat. Untuk berhubungan kembali dengan dunia luar, ia menggunakan berbagai cara, dan akhirnya memakai topeng sebagai medianya. Dalam upaya untuk membangun kembali hubungan dengan lingkungan sosialnya yang dikenal sebagai *seken* dalam bahasa Jepang, sosok saya terjebak dengan konsep yang ada dalam nilai sosial masyarakat Jepang, yaitu; *soto*, *uchi*, *honne*, *tatemae* dan *enryo* karena konflik batin yang dimilikinya.

Kata Kunci: Keterasingan, Konflik, Konsep Sosial Jepang

INTRODUCTION

Abe Kōbō (1924-1993), is a novelist and a script writer (stage drama, radio drama, and film) who has an international reputation. He was one of the most prominent contemporary Japanese writers in the mid-20th century. The main themes of Abe's works are conditions that are always related to contemporary human life, namely loss of identity, alienation, individual isolation, and difficulties in communicating between people in urban society. In other words, Abe is an observer and commentator of contemporary life. (Kusahira, 2007).

According to Andrew Horvat, Abe was a controversial writer. This is because Abe tries to discuss the universal dilemmas that humans feel in industrial society. Abe's works were also considered different from other 20th-century Japanese contemporary writers, such as Mishima Yukio, Kawabata Yasunari, Tanizaki Junichiro.

How universal Abe Kobo's work is, I think there must be local social content in it. I examine how the social concepts contained in Abe Kobo's work which are said to be different from other 20th-century Japanese contemporary writers.

One of Abe Kobo's works that raised modern human problems is the *Tanin no Kao* novel. (*Face of Another*). The problem of modern humans in Japan is not only about modernization itself but also about the Japanese social concept that is still firmly attached to the present. I studied how Abe Kobo brought together the problem of typical Western modernization with Japanese social concept that was typical of the East.

One of Abe Kobo's works which talks about the problems of modern humans in conflict with their local social values is *Tanin No Kao* (1964).

RESEARCH METHOD

I used descriptive analysis method with a sociological literature approach. Material object in this research is a novel titled *Tanin no Kao*. The formal object is the social value that appears in that novel.

Synopsis of *Tanin no Kao*

Tanin no Kao / *TNK* (1964) tells of a prominent head of an institute in Japan who experienced an explosion while conducting a chemical experiment in a laboratory. His face was crushed, his skin was not only blistered, some turned into a growing meat tissue that was difficult to heal. Everywhere he goes, his head had to be bandaged, he became horrible, so he thought his wife refused when invited to make love because of that, even relationships with other people became damaged.

He also experienced psychological symptoms which then made him feel alienated from his environment. This situation made him shut himself in the room. As a gateway to connecting with others, he tried hard to create the most natural and perfect mask. The mask he had made must have been used when he had to go out to connect with others. The conflict experienced by the main character in this novel is not only with his relationship with others but also related to conflict with himself.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main character of *TNK*'s novel is a prestigious head of the laboratory department who had an accident in conducting a chemical experiment in his laboratory. An explosion had shattered his face, his skin not only blistered, some turned into a growing meat tissue that was difficult to cure.

Since then, everywhere he goes, his head had to be bandaged, he became horrible, so he thought his wife refused when invited to make love because of that, even relationships with other people became damaged.

I took off my glasses again, removed my mask, and, looking in the mirror, began to undo the bandages. The three layer of cloth were swollen with sweat and felt twice as heavy as when I had put them on in the morning.

As I removed the bandages, a leech-like mass crept out across my face... The keloid scars swollen and distended, red and black intertwining How repulsive! (TNK :13)

The main character who experienced a physical change in his face showed that he himself was disgusted by the appearance of what was described as a group of leeches crawling across his face. To make people not feel disgusted about the condition of his face, he wrapped a bandage across the surface of his face, until only his eyes and mouth were visible.

Other figures in TNK who met with the main character for the first time will surely see his physical form first. With the condition of the main character's face wrapped in bandages makes the people around him feel strange and respond with various attitudes.

Karp and Yoels (1979) stated about the sources of information that underlie a person's interaction with others. Karp and Yoels also stated that if someone just met someone who was unknown, he would try to find information about that person. According to Karp and Yoels, there are several sources of information, including: a) Skin Color; b) Age; c) Gender; d) Physical appearance; e) Body Shape; f) Clothing; g) Discourse.

Here are some interactions between the main character and other figures that show the existence of psychological problems in the main character.

As I waited for a taxi, I had the impression of being stared at from all sides, as if I were some interloper. (TNK:23)

The cars to the suburbs were rather crowded, but those that were headed downtown were still comparatively empty. Even so, after several months of not exposing myself to strangers, it was torture. (TNK:70)

Although the people walking along the streets were strangers to each other, they formed a tight chain, like some organic composition, and I could not squeeze in. Could sharing ordinary, normal faces forge such a strong bond among them? (TNK:79)

The cause of anxiety is certainly triggered by damage to his face which made him experience some psychological symptoms such as not being confident, unable to socialize, afraid of reality and unable to follow existing social norms.

For Japanese people who are accustomed to homogeneity, being someone who is different from their environment is an extraordinary torture. Conditions like this make the main character feel they don't have a place in *seken* (世間).

Seken is interaction in society by using unwritten traditional rules. Until now the Japanese people still use this system in interacting in the community. The Japanese will place themselves first before speaking with their interlocutors adjusted to the position in *seken*.

Japanese society has a concept of *soto* and *uchi* or outside and inside. According to Shakaigakujiten (2002:152), the definitions of *uchi* and *soto* are as follows:

A term in Japanese culture that contains a comparison of attitudes, both attitudes such as between the inside of a person and the outside, as well as a comparison of attitudes between inner groups such as families or groups in which a person is affiliated with outside groups.

How Japanese society behaves towards outsiders or parties in a concept called *Honne* and *Tatema*. *Honne* means true feelings and *tatema* are things that might be said to hide our faces.

According to Doi (2001: 37), *honne* is interpreted as the application of *ura* or inner layer, while *tatema* is something that applies the *omote* or the outer layer. Therefore, the relationship between inside and outside is the same as the relationship between *honne* and *tatema*.

Because of facial damage, the main character has problems when interacting with other characters;

1. Apartemen Manager

The friendliness of the manager according to the main character is a "fake" hospitality which is a common attitude that is practiced by Japanese people in interacting with outsiders / *soto*.

But it turned out that the *tatema* was not one hundred percent appreciated by the main character, because it was considered a form of falsehood, even though on the other hand, he was relieved that the apartment manager did not put too much curiosity on his face.

2. Co-worker

The main character is angry at the treatment of a young assistant who does not consider his feelings by showing a picture similar to him. Even though the girl did it no more because the main character had often discussed his face. The main character who has the idea to talk about the face in the institution is a *tatema* attitude which is then considered as *honne* by a young assistant.

3. Wife

The main character intends to test his wife through another man, namely he himself using a mask. The hope is that his wife treats the Mask as an outsider / *soto*, so he will be *enryo* / reluctant towards the Mask. It turned out that what was expected by the main character was not in accordance with reality.

The main character is very confused by the attitude of his wife who is without hesitation / without being *enryo*, just accepting the presence of a stranger in his life.

The main character was disappointed to find his wife who did not reject the presence of the mask. His wife even accepted the mask's invitation. At that time, his wife, who was an *uchi* for him, now felt strange to him. And he felt that the assumption about his wife's reason for refusing to make love at that time because of his broken face was true.

Even though his wife's reason for not being *enryo* about the masked man was because his wife knew who the masked man really was. So that the wife considers the man as *uchi* / inside and does not feel the need to be restrained / *enryo*.

The main character's wife continues to follow the mask's wishes and solicitation because for the wife, the mask is the *uchi* party and his wife is also happy to see the main character, her husband becomes confident with the mask.

What the wife is doing is a *honne* attitude, a real feeling to serve her husband. Her husband's act of wearing a mask was interpreted as a medium to make her husband confident. The wife was without question, trying to follow the game her husband had designed. But apparently this is considered as an affair by the main character, because the main character believes that the mask is someone else who should not be served by his wife.

CONCLUSION

Alienation that occurs to the main character is triggered by his damaged face. Along with the damage/loss of the main character's face, he felt something was missing too. The physical difference that suddenly happened to him so that it looks different from the people around him, is very torturous and makes him feel alienated. This is the impact of the homogeneous culture that the Japanese has and last until now. Communication failure that appears after his face is damaged is a psychological impact which is mixed with his socio-cultural concept.

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