

COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDY ON MOCHTAR LUBIS' *HARIMAU HARIMAU* AND HERMAN MELVILLE'S *MOBY DICK*

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Abstract. There are two tendencies in comparative literary study. First, in comparative literary study, both of literatures from two countries are compared for certain points (theme, stylistic, setting, characterization, etc). Second, comparative literary study raises literary critical appreciation from other discipline perspectives (psychology, sociology, philosophy, religion, anthropology, politic). In this article, both tendencies are applied at once. The focus of this paper is about the theme in novels *Harimau Harimau* Muchtar Lubis and *Moby Dick* Herman Melville. It uses existentialism philosophical approach and criticism literature. The finding of the research, if we compare them, the existentialism theme in *Harimau Harimau* and *Moby Dick* has similarities that human being has freedom to determine her/his choice in her/his life for the future. Yet, what choice that she/he takes, it has a risk that she/he must face with responsibility as a human being. The pursuits of the responsibility caused anxiety, frightened, suffering as what the characters face in these novels.

Key words: *comparative literature, existentialism, theme, choice of life, causality law*

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a universal idea, existentialism reflects on great literature of many countries. This writing will show existentialism idea found in two great novels of different nations, namely yaitu Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) from America and Mochtar Lubis' *Harimau-Harimau* (1977) from Indonesia. They have in common of existentialism that both novels express human life mystery through natural background. In this case, Melville takes ocean as the setting of *Moby Dick*, while Lubis haves jungle on *Harimau-harimau*. Nature is the symbol of life, ocean and jungle however from both novels also create anxiety and freight (Andayani, 1997).

Moby Dick is one of great literature in the world, which is firstly printed in London and New York in 1851 (the second printing, 1962). *Moby Dick* tells about the ferocity of ocean and the hard struggling of Pequod's crews in whaling. Whaling is a prestigious job for a man at the current time in America. The story of *Moby Dick* illustrates the high spirit and struggle in whaling especially the white whale, named Moby Dick. Clifton Fadiman (1962) gives his comment to this literature on the acknowledgement of the novel: "Here is a rich, vivid account of life at sea, of ships and sailors, of man against nature, of whaling in the mid-nineteenth century. At every level the Pequod's expedition is an extraordinary

one". The latest printing of this great novel is published by Castle Books (2004).

The novel of *Harimau-Harimau* is printed many times (1975, 1977, 1982). It gets a prize from Buku Utama Foundation and considered as the best reading for teenagers from the Department of Education and Culture. This great literature is also often to become the topic of research and appraised by a number of literary critics. Through this novel, a reader will get a story about seven natural rubber seekers who get terror from a furious tiger in the Sumatran jungle. The latest printing of the novel is published by Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia (2013).

There are two focuses of study in this writing. (1) The comparison between literature from two nations, namely *Moby Dick* as American and *Harimau-Harimau* as Indonesian novel. (2) The comparison of literature on philosophical study, i.e. intending to appreciate the theme of novel from existentialism perspective.

In comparing both novels, the appropriate study used is comparative literary study. Comparative literature is a comparison between a literature of one nation with other nation and comparative literature with other human spheres (Dominguez, Saussy, Villanueva, 2014). The similar concept from distinctive redaction and impression stated by Henry H. Remak (cf. Mukherjee, 2015), in comparative literary study, it applies two or more literary comparison with other fields of study (philosophy, history, sociology, religion, and other arts).

There are five literary objects which are generally discussed in comparative literary study: (1) theme/myth, (2) genre/form, (3) period, (4) the relation of the literature with art and other fields (art, philosophy, history, religion, etc.), and (5) literature as the description of theoretical and critical development (cf. Mukherjee, 2015). Similarly with this statement, Dominguez, Saussy, Villanueva (2014) impresses the comparison on aspects of: (a) epoch, period,

generation, and movement, (b) genre, (c) thematology, and (d) mutual illumination from forms of other arts.

The comparison of these two novels is focused on existentialism philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre version. There are some points of Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism ideas. According to Sartre's existentialism, man is nothing else but what he makes of himself, such is the first principle of existentialism (Sartre, 2000: 15; Onof, 2004). This concept becomes the causality law of nature happened to human being. What happened to human is the result of his action and attitude. A man becomes afraid or excessively anxious is caused by his own action in the past time.

Successively, man is nothing else but his plan; he exist only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life (Sartre, 2003, 2005). Man has to be responsible to what he has done in his life. What someone has conducted is his own plan which becomes his choice in life. In doing his responsibility, he can not ask for help from other people. "... the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a lawmaker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, cannot help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility" (Sartre, 2000).

In creating the man that we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be" (Sartre, 2003: 17). Human reality is free, basically and completely free (Sartre, 2003: 479; cf. Onof, 2004). I still believe that individual freedom is total ontologically speaking out on the other hand I am more and more convinced that this freedom is conditioned and limited by circumstances (Sartre, 2000, 2005).

METHOD

This study applies philosophical approach (cf. Dominguez, Saussy, Villanueva, 2014), especially Sartre existentialism. The applied method is comparative literary method (Mukherjee, 2015), toward 2 novels namely Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (2004) and Mochtar Lubis's *Harimau Harimau* (2013).

The data of research is compiled with the technique of documentation. The source of this research are novels of *Moby Dick* and *Harimau Harimau*. Next, the data of dialogues, events, and acts in both novels will be interpreted and compared from Sartre existentialism perspective.

DISCUSSION

Synopsis of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (2004)

Ishmael has a desire to sail with a whaling ship. After preparing all his stuffs, he then makes a journey to New Bedford. In New Bedford he lodges and continues the next day to Nantucket. In this town Ishmael meets his new fellow named Queequeq, who finally becomes his best friend. Queequeq is a rather primitive, but very kind person.

On the Christmas day the whaling ship departs, Ishmael and Queequeq choose *Pequod*, the name of the ship. Ahab is the captain with his three crews of ship: Starbuck, Flask and Stubb. The ship is magnificent and glorious. More than that there are many men on the duty as spear shooter, all of them are skilled shooters.

Captain Ahab is a desperate man. He is cripple with one leg, because one of his legs is bitten by his foe, Moby Dick, a white whale. Ahab is a rather strange person, he is very rarely to talk, however in his calm there is a vigorous passion to kill Moby Dick. He wants to take revenge on the white whale.

On Captain Ahab's hunting they find many obstacles and dangerous matters. Although everything has been prepared perfectly, the main and other poles have been tightened strongly with sails, talented

Captain Ahab in predicting the sea condition through map, and also the other experienced men. However all of them are not sufficient to handle many obstacles and danger such as storm, hurricane and sharks. They also meet another ship, while Stubb and Flask succeed in killing a whale which is finally eaten together on the ship.

At last after passing many islands and countries included Asia, they meet Moby Dick. The white whale is huge like a snowy mountain. They must struggle to defeat Moby Dick. During three days they chase Moby Dick, many lances and sharp bamboos have been shot by the crews of the ship and the shooters when they are on boats. However all of them are useless, Moby Dick keeps on surviving and the *Pequod* is sunk, nobody is safe except Ishmael.

Synopsis of Mochtar Lubis' *Harimau-Harimau* (2013)

Seven natural rubber seekers go to jungle, they consist of Pak Haji Rakhmad, Wak Katok, Sutan, Talib, Sanip, Buyung and Pak Balam. They are members of society in kampung Air Jernih, located on the river bank of Air Putih which empties to the lake Bantau. The journey to jungle spends one week, at night they sleep near water holes of river so they can catch fish to eat, while during collecting natural rubber in the jungle they spend the night in Wak Hitam's house.

One night an old man of fortune teller visits to stay in Wak Hitam's house. The destiny of Buyung is predicted and he is advised to be patient and though to face sufferings, for not trusting too much to people although to his own friend, and in order to be careful toward himself, because a big danger will visit him soon. On the palm of Wak Katok, the fortune teller sees many red colors. While to Talib and Sanip, the fortune teller tell them to be alert since the danger will always threat. The seven natural rubber seekers have worked for two weeks in the jungle and two days again they will be

back to kampong, but Wak Hitam has a serious illness.

In the way to home, Wak Katok asks to hunt a deer, but it does not succeed, then they spend the night by making campfire. In the second day, on the way to home they succeeds in hunting deer, but they hear the horrible sound of a tiger. After sharing the meat of deer, they continue the journey, but they do not realize that the water of raw meat and fresh blood drop on the way in that jungle. When Pak Balam wants to defecate, he is attacked by a tiger, he is wounded and is cured by Wak Katok. Pak Balam has fever, and before he dies he admits his sins and finally uncovering the badnees of Wak Katok. Pak Balam advises in order Wak Katok and the others to admit their sins so they can be safe from tiger threat. On the third day, Talib is attacked when he urinates on the way side, he is helped by his friends however his body been full of blood and at last he dies.

In the forth day, Wak Katok, Sanip and Buyung hunt tiger while Sutan and Pak Haji take care of Pak Balam in the house. Then on that day, there is a shout of asking help which is actually the voice of Sutan who is attacked since he runs from the house. On the fifth day, Pak Balam is dead then Buyung expresses his idea to hunt the tiger as long as they can. Led by Wak Katok they hunt, however they are lost, after that Buyung takes the charge. Wak Katok drives away Pak Haji, Sanip and Buyung to leave the house. Pak Haji, Sanip and Buyung attack Wak Katok, but Pak Haji is killed by Wak Katok then Wak Katok and Buyung fight, finally Sanip hits the head of Wak Katok with wood until he is fainted.

On the sixth day, Wak Katok's hand is tighted and those three persons hunt tiger. Wak Katok's leg is tighted then lied and tighted on a tree on an open place in order to become the bait of tiger. When the tiger comes to Wak Katok, Buyung shoots it carefully and exactly hit the middle of tiger

eye, finally the tiger is dead and Wak Katok is fainted for his fear.

Existensialism in *Harimau-Harimau* and *Moby Dick*

Jean Paul Sartre (2000) confirms that man is nothing else but how he creates himself, that it is the first concept of existentialism. That expression reflects the causality law of nature happened to human being, namely the law of cause and effect. What happened to human being is the result of his action or deeds. A man becomes afraid or excessively anxious is caused by his own action in the previous time. In creating human on what is intended, there is nothing of the actions which do not create directly about the reflection of human being as what he should be.

In Mochtar Lubis' *Harimau-Harimau* (2013) actually the cause and effect are seen from what happens to the natural rubber seekers, however it is clearly expressed on the character of Wak Katok who is really depressed after his secrets of badness are opened by Pak Balam. Moreover as a leader, he feels insulted since his weaknesses are uncovered. Wak Katok is indeed a coward, since young he learns supernatural power to control his fear.

Pada masa pemberontakan melawan Belanda tahun 1926, pasukan pak Balam—Wak Katok terdesak pasukan musuh, kemudian pada waktu berusaha menyelamatkan diri Wak Katok telah membunuh kawan sepasukannya bernama Sarip, kemudian memasukkan mayatnya ke dalam sumur. (Lubis, 2013: 147)

Wak Katok menunggu dengan hati penuh amarah. Dia marah kepada harimau. Dia marah kepada Pak Balam. Pak Balamlah yang memulai kesusahan ini. (Lubis, 2013: 150)

Ya, selamanya dia (Wak Katok) merasa takut. Orang mengatakan dia tukang silat yang ulung, pemburu yang mahir, dukun yang tinggi ilmunya, akan tetapi dalam hatinya selalu merasa takut, sejak dahulu, sejak waktu mudanya. (Lubis, 2013: 151)

Sejak harimau pertama kali menyerang, dan sejak Pak Balam membongkar rahasia kejahatan-kejahatannya di waktu dulu, Wak Katok telah berada di bawah tekanan jiwa yang semakin hari semakin besar. (Lubis, 2013: 153)

From those four quotations of Mochtar Lubis' *Harimau-Harimau*, Wak Katok who is popular of his his supernatural power becomes very afraid after his badness is seen. From the point of view of existentialism, Wak Katok as a man has suffered of anger, fear and depression whih are caused by his actions previously. Wak katok can not blame Pak Balam who is considered as the source of his problems. The problems however will absolutely come in his life, although the arrival is without the media of Pak Balam. The law of cause and effect is happened to the character of Wak Katok, although Wak Katok has covered his badness by becoming the master in martial art, and he can not also avoid himself from the feeling of fear although he always tries to control it since his younghood. The sins of his previous deeds has punished him and he has to be responsible for all of them.

In the novel of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (2004), the causality law on existentialism principle is found on the character of Captain Ahab. Notify the following quotation.

"Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Aye, aye," he shouted with a terrific, loud, animal sob, like that of a heart-stricken moose; "aye, aye! It was that accursed white

whale that razed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me for ever and a day!" (Melville, 2004: 171)

On this quotation, it is told that the white whale, Moby Dick, has made Captain Ahab to be handicapped, so he must erect with wood as the holder to replace his one leg. Captain Ahab repents in the sorrow, like a deer which is attacked. He feels that the cursed white whale has destroyed all of his life, made him to become a converse man.

From the above words, Captain Ahab seems revealing his anger and deep sorrow. He becomes very angry to Moby Dick, who has attacked him so he looses his one leg. That incident causes a deep wounded on Captain Ahab's soul. In this case, Herman Melville does not tell bad actions as reflected in Mochtar Lubis' *Harimau-Harimau* on Wak Katok. However by the description of painful feeling of Captain Ahab who is attacked by Moby Dick at the past time, Melville wants to explain the causality with a symbol that an effect derives from a cause. In this case effect happened to Captain Ahab namely the suffering in the whole of life for the bite of the white whale. On the contrary there is also explanation about the character of white whale for not to attack others if he is not disturbed or in a bad mood. Therefore it can be analyzed that the attack of Moby Dick toward Captain Ahab in the past time is also occurred from a cause, that clearly Captain Ahab has made him angry before.

Moby Dick was now again steadily swimming forward; and had almost passed the ship,-- which thus far had been sailing in the contrary direction to him, though for the present her headway had been stopped. He seemed swimming with his utmost velocity, and now only intent upon pursuing his own straight path in the sea.

“Oh! Ahab,” cried Starbuck, “not too late is it, even now, the third day to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!” (Melville, 2004: 601)

Moby Dick becomes calm then swims forward and almost passing the ship (*Pequod*), which therefore both of them have opposite direction. Moby Dick seems to swim fast, and purposing to direct to the ocean.

The quotation shows that the white whale will not disturb *Pequod* and the crews except if he feels attacked. From Starbuck's words, one of Captain Ahab's crews, it is absolutely clear that Ahab has caused the problem. Melville shows Moby Dick, the white whale, as the foe of Captain Ahab, to become a symbol. The white whale is the symbol of goodness, and Captain Ahab has an aim to defeat the goodness, this case is impossible. Captain Ahab becomes suffered as the effect of his bad will.

Successively, man is nothing else but his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life (Sartre, 2000; 2005). Human reality is free, basically and completely free. In this case the principle of existentialism of Sartre purposes that man has to be responsible to what he has done in his life. What someone has conducted is his own plan which becomes his choice in life. In doing his responsibility, he can not ask for help from other people.

In *Harimau-Harimau*, the responsibility which must be acted by the character of the story is reflected after Pak Balam is attacked by the tiger.

“Aku merasa ringan kini,aku sudah menceritakan pada kalian di depan Wak Katok beban dosa yang selama ini menghimpit hatiku dan kepaku...(Lubis, 2013: 104)

Dan Aduh, banyaklah dosa dan kesalahan yang mereka lihat. Mata mereka silau melihat kejahatan-kejahatan dan dosa-dosa mereka sendiri. (Lubis, 2013: 106)

Akan tetapi tak seorang juga dapat tidur nyenyak dan lama malam itu. Bukan saja kejadian yang dahsyat masih menegangkan urat syaraf dan perasaan mereka, dan erang Pak Balam yang menderita sakit menusuk perasaan, akan tetapi hati nuranipun secara tak mereka sadari tinggal resah dan gelisah. (Lubis, 2013: 116)

Pak Balam feels relieved after admitting his sins. He seems calm although his painfulness has not disappeared yet. Pak Balam tries to fulfill himself that almost comes to death, in this case by being responsible to his actions in life. Then finally all of the natural rubber seekers feel their sins which they have made. The depression of feeling is felt by other natural rubber seekers, the one who most feels afraid and worried is the one who has the biggest sin. In this case they can not be calm and they are haunted by their feeling which is afraid of their past sins. They can not conduct their responsibility by asking help from others, Pak Balam pays his sin without asking favor from Wak Katok i.e. by admitting sins. When Pak Balam has admitted his sin, it means he has fulfilled himself, therefore after that he can feel peaceful in accepting his death. The same condition is happened also to the other natural rubber seekers, they have to fulfill by being responsible to what they have done.

For the matter of *Moby Dick*, about the responsibility which must be fulfilled by every human being according to what has been done revealed from the saying of Captain Ahab as the following:

What I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad- Starbuck does; but I'am

demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself! The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and-Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer. Now, then, be the prophet and the fulfiller one. (Melville, 2004: 177)

Ahab is brave since he has the will, then with that will he conducts it. The others say Ahab is mad, but actually he feels depressed, Ahab is mad with his madness. His wild madness is the only one which can control Ahab's madness. Captain Ahab has chosen to revenge on Moby Dick since his painfulness. He realizes that no one can understand his will except himself. All of the crews can not prevent his desire, and Ahab just can feel peaceful when he succeeds in paying his pain, that is with a desire to kill his foe, Moby Dick.

In comparing between Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* and the story characters (Buyung, Wak Katok, Pak Haji, etc.) in *Harimau-Harimau*, they themselves are the collections of their deeds. A human fills his life with his own choice and takes all of the risks which follow it.

Sartre (2003) states that "... the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a lawmaker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, cannot help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility". I still believe that individual freedom is total ontologically speaking out on the other hand I am more and more convinced that this freedom is conditioned and limited by circumstances (Sartre, 2005).

The statement above expresses that man is conditioned by his environment, although what he chooses is not suitable with his will. His decision to choose however has created in himself, and because he is a member of society, therefore he becomes the

law maker for himself and others. It can be explained from the quotation in the novel of *Harimau-Harimau* like the following,

Mulai pula timbul, di samping rasa takut mereka, rasa tak senang terhadap diri Pak Balam ... karena Pak Balam menyuruh mereka membongkar kopor-kopor rahasia dalam hati dan jiwa mereka. (Lubis, 2013: 106)

Since Pak Balam is attacked by a tiger, he has no choice but trying to get the peace in coming to his death. Eventually his best choice is admitting his sins, so the other six natural rubber seekers are orderd by Pak Balam to do the same things. In this case the choice of Pak Balam to admit his sins has impact on other seekers of natural rubber. The admittance of sins from Pak Balam emerges terror to Wak Katok and other natural rubber seekers, so they get repression of feeling. Every human being determines the other human life, so he becomes the law maker for himself and other people.

Meanwhile from the novel of *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab has strong desire to kill Moby Dick and no one can change it.

"Aye, aye!"shouted the harpooners and seamen, running closer to the excited old man: "a sharp eye for the White Whale; a sharp lance for Moby Dick!"

"... if it fairly comes in the way of the business we follow; but I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance". (Melville, 2004: 172)

The lance shooters and the crews of ship come close to the adored old man (Ahab): "a sharp eye for the white whale; a sharp lance for Moby Dick!" if it fairly comes in the way of the business we follow, but I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance.

“Oh! Ahab,” cried Starbuck, “not too late is it, even now, the third day to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!” (Melville, 2004: 601)

Starbuck warns Ahab to stop the hunting on the white whale since it has a big risk. He has tried to prevent by saying that is not late to stop in third day. Starbuck convinces that Moby Dick does not hunt Ahab, but Ahab who hunts crazily.

The dialogue really supports the concept of Sartre existentialism that Captain Ahab as a leader of the ship influences strongly to all of the crews. There is no crews who dare to him, all of them obey to Captain Ahab. That is only one crew who dares to protest Captain Ahab, namely Starbuck. Starbuck realizes the will of Captain Ahab which is full with revenge on Moby Dick. Finally on the third day of their chase toward Moby Dick, hurricane and storm have attacked the ship since they must hunt the white whale very far beyond many countries and to Pacific Ocean.

Starbuck warns Captain Ahab once more to stop the hunting, for he sees how big Moby Dick that is impossible to be defeated, and there is still opportunity to give up because Moby Dick does not attack them. However that is the choice of Ahab, he always wants to challenge nature and he does not realize the limitation of man. His vengeance to Moby Dick has to be paid, that life has been embedded on him so eventually Ahab himself does not realize and can not control it. Captain Ahab try to survive his life, he wants to get happiness like other human being. Yet in this case, he has no choice to reach the joy except by paying his pain to Moby Dick.

CONCLUSION

The comparison between the existentialism theme in *Moby Dick* and *Harimau-Harimau* that they have in common,

man has freedom to choose the future in his life, however whatever he decides it always has risk which has to be faced with total responsibility individually. The demand of responsibility causes anxiety, fear, and suffering.

This writing has some weaknesses. For the next study the comparison of these two novels should be expanded to other existentialism besides Sartre, example Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Berdyaev, Jaspers, Camus, etc. Besides, this writing has limited scope on the theme of novel. In the successive study, hopefully it will compare with other aspects, example figurative language, characterization, setting, atmosphere, subject matter, etc. which are found in both great novels, *Moby Dick* (2004) and *Harimau-Harimau* (2013).

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