

# CULTURAL NARRATIVES

PUBLISHER:  
ERA DIGITAL NUSANTARA



## Exploring the Complex Personality of Mbok Wilis in A. Mustafa's Novel

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and uncover the main character's personality in the novel "Anak Gembala yang Tertidur Panjang di Akhir Zaman" by A. Mustafa. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. Depictions and descriptive qualitative research are in the form of portrayals and certain circumstances with the interactive method. The interactive method helps study the content of documents. The data source in this study is the novel "Anak Gembala Yang Tertidur Panjang di Akhir Zaman" by A. Mustafa. The data collection technique in this research is content analysis. The characterization of the main character of this novel is quite interesting because he is cross-dressing, so a study was conducted using the theory of literary psychology. The main character is Mbok Wilis, a man who acts as a woman daily. The results of this study are that Mbok Wilis has a spirit of enthusiasm, never gives up, cares for others, easily believes, quickly moves, and is complex.

### Article history:

Received 24 August 2023

Accepted 4 January 2024

### Keyword:

personality, main character,  
literary psychology

### Introduction

Literary science investigates literary works scientifically with various literary symptoms and problems (Purba, 2010). One of the branches of literary science is literary psychology. Literary psychology has been coming along, but its existence has not been welcomed enthusiastically. Some consider literary psychology as a plaything and a phenomenon. The state of this science is often assessed in three ways.

Firstly, literary psychology is a dry science. The dry science referred to here is a science that is rarely used. Until now, literary psychology has rarely been touched. So, references to literary psychology are still shuffling around. Unlike the sociology of literature, it appears in almost every book discussion. Secondly, literary psychology seems to bear the grief of a lifetime when people rarely want to laugh at it. Even the world of literary higher education has marginalized literary psychology. Third, literary psychology is still considered foreign in the intellectual world, even though studying literature is studying humans (Endraswara, 2008).

Literary psychology is a discipline of literary research that discusses human problems through psychological aspects. Therefore, the focus of literary psychology research is the psychological aspect. The psyche is broad, but researchers can focus on one or more dominant aspects. So, a good researcher will undoubtedly narrow down the research space. Psychology can play a significant role in literature by helping authors portray characters more effectively and express their emotions, thoughts, and moods. This can make the story more engaging (Dar, 2022). Literary psychology research distinguishes three branches: the analysis of the world of authorship, the analysis of characters and characterization, and research related to archetypal imagery. Archetype criticism is centered on the existence of the collective unconscious. (Endraswara, 2008).

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Psychology plays a crucial role in modern literary creation by influencing the inner world of writers through purification (Dong,2021). Individual life is an unchanging essence of personal identity. Each individual has different innate characteristics or personalities. Traits such as thoughts, behaviors, and feelings are the characteristics of a person, and with these traits, he/she adapts and compromises in life. (Minderop,2010). Concerning literary texts, the interpretation of literary psychology still seeks to explain and actualize the text through interpretation (Endraswara,2008).

The conventional psychological approach in the study of literary texts is the utilization of theories of developmental psychology, personality psychology, and so on to interpret the psychological elements of the characters (Endraswara,2008). Personality psychology is the study of human personality, with the object of research being the factors influencing human behavior. It examines the relationship between memory or observation and development, the relationship between observation and self-adjustment in individuals, and so on. (Minderop, 2010).

Personality theory questions why individuals respond to the exact situations they face differently. For example, some people are shy, some are confident, and some have a calm demeanor. Experts suggest that biological and genetic factors are responsible for this. Other experts also think that our mindset to understand ourselves is the key to understanding our personality. Discussing issues like this will never end; the most important thing is that personality is indeed complex because no theory can comprehensively answer the complexity of human personality.

Literary works, whether novels, dramas, poems, short stories, etc., are created inseparably from the author's personal experiences and subconscious impulses. Literary works are the result of the author's imaginative work that describes the human life in which the work was created. (Dirgantara, 2012). Humans in literature are no longer singular in their psychology, which can apply their beauty in literature.

Some researchers discuss complex personalities in the novels, researches by Kusumawati (2013), Rahma et al. (2021), Sagimin & Damayanti (2019), and Triariningsih et al. (2023). all analyze fictional characters in novels using psychological theories like Freud's personality theory, Behaviourism, and personality trait theory. This article also looks at a fictional character, Mbok Wilis, but utilizes literary psychology theory specifically. While the other articles focus on more typical protagonists, my article examines a uniquely cross-dressing character. The published articles take a broad approach to analyzing various aspects of the characters' personalities. In contrast, my article focuses on Mbok Wilis's specific personality traits, like enthusiasm, perseverance, altruism, gullibility, excitability, and toughness. So, there are apparent gaps between the general personality analyses in the journal articles versus my targeted literary psychology study on the distinctive personality of Mbok Wilis. My article provides a narrower and more in-depth look at one peculiar fictional character's psychology.

In short, this research analyses Mbok Wilis' personality in A. Mustafa's novel provides a fascinating character study. An intriguing psychological profile is created by using literary psychology theory to examine a male character who dresses and acts as a woman daily. Mbok Wilis is an unusual protagonist compared to more conventional characters analyzed in other literature research. The analysis of Mbok Wilis' personality traits, including his enthusiasm, perseverance, altruism, gullibility, excitability, and toughness, is compelling. This study offers a refreshing change of pace from typical hero or heroine-focused literary analyses by

centering on an unconventional cross-dressing character. Overall, the narrow focus on Mbok Wilis results in an engaging application of literary psychology theory to an outside-the-box protagonist.

## Method

In this study, researchers want to describe or reveal the facts, circumstances, or symptoms that appear in the object of study so that a qualitative descriptive research method is used. Qualitative descriptive research describes or paints the facts that appear or as they are to what is being studied. The data collection used is library, listening, and note-taking techniques. The data source in this research is the novel "Anak Gembala Yang Tertidur Panjang Di Akhir Zaman" by A. Mustafa. This research uses qualitative data analysis by directly analyzing the characterization in the novel. In this case, the researcher will read the novel, look closely, and record things related to the research objectives.

In the data analysis process, three central components must be understood by a researcher (Vitiana, 2019); the data reduction stage is the first process that must be done. Data from A. Mustafa's novel "Anak Gembala yang Tertidur Panjang Di Akhir Zaman" will be selected and collected per the research objectives. Winner in the 2018 Jakarta Arts Council Novel Competition. The author's real name is Adham T Fuma, born in Jakarta. In this novel, the character of the main character presented is quite interesting; where the main character is a figure who was born as a man, but he chooses to live his daily life by looking like a woman. Although she acts as a woman without realizing it, male instincts sometimes still appear. Therefore, researchers want to know more about the personality of the character, considering that a transvestite gets a negative stigma from society. The data presentation stage is the stage where the data that has been collected is then presented in detail. In this step, the researcher assembles information or data in an orderly and detailed manner to make it easy to understand. The data used is analyzed carefully to find the expected answers.

Drawing or verifying at this stage, the researcher makes conclusions from the data obtained since the beginning of the research. This conclusion is still temporary, so it will continue to be verified (re-examining the report) during the research.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the observation of the novel Anak Gembala yang Tertidur Panjang Di Akhir Zaman by A. Mustafa, it is known how the characteristics of the main character, Rara Wilis (Mbok Wilis), both physical (form) and non-physical (character, personality).

### Depiction of Physical's Mbok Wilis in the Novel

Mbok Wilis is a charming transvestite. She has waist-length hair and a beautiful face with make-up that makes her look like a real woman. This can be proven through the following quote. Here's proof that the protagonist is a charming transvestite. "*Bagaimana tidak? Ia bisa ubah seorang lelaki tambun yang tak pernah dilirik perempuan mana pun, menjadi perempuan elok lagi montok yang tak pernah luput dari perhatian laki-laki mana pun.*" (Mustafa, 2019) Here's proof that the protagonist has long hair and a pretty face. "*Mbok Wilis turut memberi perhatian ekstra pada rambutnya yang panjang sepinggang.*" (Mustafa, 2019) "Mbok Wilis turned her head to the

right and left to look at her make-up from various angles. In her judgement, her face was perfect again. (Mustafa, 2019)"

The protagonist was born a boy but chose to live as a woman. Her desire to become a woman certainly has a triggering factor. After being traced in the novel, it turns out that the triggering factor is the mother. In his eyes, his mother is a beautiful Srikadi who is tough, intelligent. "*Makanya, dulu Rara kecil suka sembunyi-sembunyi memakai baju, daster, selendang, atau rok ibunya.* (Mustafa, 2019)". Young children will imitate what they see, just like little Rara. She behaved like a child in general. This proves that what is obtained in childhood will affect the future, shape, and personality. In addition, all human actions are also driven by feelings, desires, and thoughts or ideas (Endraswara, 2008).

### Depiction of Non-Physical's Mbok Wilis in the Novel

#### *Passion and Never Give Up*

Mbok Wilis has a high spirit in her life. Even though people underestimate her profession and appearance, she always tries her best to be a professional transvestite and not disappoint customers. This can be explained through the following quote.

" *Hujan lebat turun malam itu tapi tak jadi halangan bagi Mbok Wilis. Ia keluar dari kontrakannya di Jalan Mataram dengan payung yang menaungi kepala. Ia sambangi dulu kawasan Simpang Lima untuk menemui kucing-kucing peliharaannya; laki-laki muda menggemaskan yang agak kemayu dan gemulai, biasa disewakan untuk laki-laki meski terkadang ada pula pelanggan perempuan yang memakai jasa mereka.*" (Mustafa, 2019).

In addition, she is a person who never gives up. Her hard life makes her resilient and will fight any threat that comes her way. Being a transvestite is not an easy thing, she received a lot of scorn and even had to be separated from her family and was often chased by Satpol PP. The following quote is proof. "*Mbok Wilis tak sudi mati di tangan mereka. Ia menyikut kuat-kuat perut samping si pemuda sehingga lepaslah ia dari cengkeraman. .... Bismillah! Tak ada pilihan, Mbok Wilis lompat ke jurang di depannya. Lebih baik mati karena berusaha untuk hidup, ketimbang mati karena tidak mampu bertahan hidup.*" (Mustafa, 2019)

#### *Caring for Others*

Mbok Wilis is the head of a transvestite association called PAWATRI. She is still a man who is basically born to be a leader. Although he physically resembles a woman, he is born with a leader's attitude. The leader must be firm and able to nurture his members. In organizations, members must also help each other. As Mbok Wilis did as the head of the organization, this can be seen in the following quote. "*...., dan Mbok Wilis yakin hanya ia yang mampu menanganinya. Mengumpulkan orang-orang dalam satu payung begitu bukan semata untuk keuntungan materi belaka, justru lebih dari itu, mereka perlu bersatu supaya punya daya dan kekuatan.*" (Mustafa, 2019).

The quote shows Mbok Wilis' certainty that she alone can handle bringing people together, convinced it is a role only she is suited for. Her gathering of people under "one umbrella" is not just for material gain, but more so they can unite and gain collective power. This demonstrates Mbok Wilis' inherent leadership abilities despite her feminine appearance. She takes the initiative by assertively uniting members for a common purpose, recognizing that strength comes from cooperation. Though physically a woman, Mbok Wilis has an



authoritative, mobilizing nature. As a leader, she is firm in her vision and nurtures members. Her understanding of unification reflects leadership wisdom in empowering people through collaboration. This organizational skill comes instinctively to Mbok Wilis and is indicative of an ingrained aptitude to guide others. She spearheads community-building not for selfish motives but to uplift her members. Mbok Wilis leverages her confident leadership to assemble collective strength. Though cross-dressing, Mbok Wilis has an innate capacity to direct and coalesce members through decisive authority and compassion.

### *Easy to Trust*

Mbok Wilis easily trusts the people she cares about. She also quickly fell in love with men who were gentle and caring. Such men were difficult for her to resist until she was left behind and hurt many times. A sense of security and trust in the environment are needed (Jahja, 2011). This can be proven through the following quote. "*Aku janji Ro,*" jawab Haris, *mengecup kening kekasihnya itu. "Aku akan selalu ada di hidupmu." Mbok Wilis bahagia sekali mendengarnya.*" (Mustafa, 2019). Haris's sweet treatment made her believe in that promise again. When Haris comes again, Mbok Wilis still accepts and trusts the man again. It is all because of the love that Mbok Wilis has for Haris. Feelings of loyalty and affection follow love, love is selfless, if it is not like that, it is not true love. (Minderop, 2010).

### *Easily moved*

The simple gestures we get can sometimes bring tears to our eyes, especially from loved ones. The sweet behavior of her customers quickly moves Mbok Wilis. Especially if the one who behaves sweetly is her mother, who has not been with her for a long time. A mother is still one who will always care for her child regardless of the child's behavior and form. This can be proven through the following quote, "*Makanlah, biar tidak sakit,*" suruh Bu Sri, *sambil membuka payung hitamnya. Ia bersiap untuk pergi. Mbok Wilis mengangguk.*"Dan, *segeralah pulang, Le ..*" (Mustafa, 2019).

The quote depicts Bu Sri offering food to Mbok Wilis, kindly advising her to eat so as not to fall ill. Mbok Wilis nods in response, opening her black umbrella, ready to leave. This small act of concern and care from Bu Sri deeply moves Mbok Wilis, demonstrating her sensitivity to kind gestures. Despite Bu Sri having beaten her severely as a child, Mbok Wilis is touched by this simple expression of worry for her well-being. The passage reveals Mbok Wilis' sensitive nature and susceptibility to the thoughtfulness and goodwill of others, no matter how small. Despite enduring cruelty from her mother in her upbringing, Mbok Wilis does not hold onto bitterness. Instead, she is emotionally impacted by Bu Sri's current gentle behavior. This interaction demonstrates how easily Mbok Wilis' feelings and disposition can be influenced by even the slightest display of kindness, overridden by sentimentality. Her innate soft-heartedness outweighs past grievances. Mbok Wilis' easy emotional pliability is apparent in how she is moved by her customers' goodwill actions, however modest.

### *Hard*

Since Mbok Wilis was a child, she was treated harshly by her mother and father, so she grew up to be a harsh and violent person. What is received from childhood will affect the growth and development of the child. This can be proven through the following quote.

*" Mendengar anaknya bikin ulah, Bu Sri marah betul. Ia pukuli Rara Kecil dengan keras, berkali-kali, pakai rotan. Walhasil, Rara Kecil jadi tidak mau sekolah sampai setahun penuh, ... . Melawan orang dewasa juga Rara Kecil berani. Ia pernah melempari teman bapaknya, seorang aparat berpangkat bintang, ... "* (Mustafa, 2019)

The quote depicts Mbok Wilis' harsh childhood. As a child named Rara Kecil, she was severely punished by her mother, Bu Sri, who beat her repeatedly with a rattan stick just for misbehaving. This physical abuse caused Rara Kecil to be so traumatized that she refused to go to school for a whole year. The violence she suffered made Rara Kecil unafraid to confront adults, as seen when she brazenly threw stones at her father's police officer friend. Having been subject to physical punishments and seeing her parents' aggression affected Rara Kecil. As evidenced by her later persona, Mbok Wilis, the cruelty imposed on her in childhood shaped her into a harsh and violent adult. This shows how the environment and treatment someone faces when young can significantly impact their growth and development. Rara Kecil's violent upbringing at the hands of abusive parents was formative, turning her into the aggressive Mbok Wilis. What children receive from their earliest years inevitably affects who they become.

### *Causes of the Main Character's Personality Change*

The changes that occur in each individual certainly have factors that encourage these changes. As in the theory described above, the psychology of a person's personality is related to observation; what is seen can affect an individual's personality. The change in the main character, Mbok Wilis, results from what she learned from her childhood observations. When she was young, she often observed her mother. This can be proven through the following quote. *"Di matanya, sang ibu adalah Srikandi yang cantik lagi tangguh dan cerdas. Makanya, dulu Rara Kecil suka sembunyi-sembunyi memakai baju, daster, selendang, atau rok ibunya."* (Mustafa, 2019).

The quote shows how Rara Kecil viewed her mother as a beautiful, strong, intelligent heroine. As a child, Rara Kecil would secretly dress up in her mother's clothes, scarves, and skirts, idolizing her. This reveals how a parent can greatly influence their child's development. According to personality psychology theories, an individual's environment and observations shape their personality. What a child sees, and experience affects whom they become. Rara Kecil's mother was a model of femininity and strength, leading her to emulate and admire her mother through dress-up play. Her mother's impact encouraged Rara Kecil's later cross-dressing tendencies as Mbok Wilis. This demonstrates how childhood experiences and role models can profoundly influence an individual's personality and identity. Mbok Wilis' feminine persona was informed by observing and idealizing her mother's qualities. The changes people undergo are often motivated by formative factors like influential parents and early observations. Rara Kecil's childhood observations of her strong mother ultimately facilitated her mature identity as Mbok Wilis.

## Conclusion

Literary psychology is a literary theory used to study a work of literature where the study focuses on psychological aspects. In this study, the main character, Mbok Wilis, is a man who chooses to act as a woman daily. She has waist-length hair and a beautiful face with polished make-up that makes her look like a real woman. She is spirited, never gives up, cares about others, is easy-going, trusting, quickly moved, and hard. All actions, both attitudes and feelings, that Mbok Wilis does are inseparable from the environment from childhood to adulthood. The overall personality changes experienced by the main character results from the observations received by the character – both physical and non-physical changes.

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