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**DECONSTRUCTING THE SOCIAL ORDER AS A  
REFLECTION OF THE PLAY-AGE PERSONALITY IN THE  
POEM “GOD HAD DIED” BY SUBAGIO  
SASTROWARDOJO**

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>The purpose of this research is to deconstruct the psyche in a playing time that is started from creating a desire to know many new things by studying them and to master them by experimenting with planning, persuasion, expanding mastery and trying to restore to their original form with a sense of responsibility to achieve tasks and goals. The literary psychology approach is used in this research namely psychoanalysis because psychoanalysis is one term used to research human psychology using the psychosocial theory from Erik.H.Erikson. Erikson formulates his concept of the development of the circle of human life through eight (8) stages from infant to elderly. In analyzing the data, researcher uses the poem God Had Died as an analysis material. Data analysis uses literal meanings and figurative meanings. The metaphorical meaning uses the figurative language in the form of personification and metaphor, after the data is analyzed by using psychology. The results of the research, the researcher finds the character does not recognize the being of God, in society there is disharmony or harmony has been dirty, the leader does not have leadership qualities, all betrayed and deceptive, drifts into a pleasure, and finally dirty things are pleasures.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Deconstructing The Social Order, Play-Age Personality, Psycho-social Theory, Qualitative Research, Poetry.</i></p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 20/03/2026</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 21/03/2026</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 25/03/2026</p>

## INTRODUCTION

In society, literary works appear as a result of an author's imagination and their observation of the social conditions around them, so the presence of literary works is a part of people's daily lives. According to Agus (2001; 67), literature is defined as "the development of human experience through understanding feelings by reflecting on the first experience, which is the experience encountered in real life." Based on the quote, literature also shows

good social and cultural aspects, which can be seen by reading literary works and looking at events that happen in human life.

In this research process, the researcher uses a literary psychology approach to identify the psychological structure and the development of human psychological dynamics by applying the theory of Erik H. Erikson. The development of human personality can be discussed through several stages, one of which is the play age, which involves an ego crisis of initiative vs. guilt, with the ego strength being purpose. In the personality stage of play age, an individual has a strong curiosity and the intention to understand everything, often by exploring or dismantling something that already exists in order to discover how it works. According to Erikson, it is stated that:

*The play-age refers to the third psychosocial stage, which is related to the genital-locomotor stage where the main psychosocial crisis is initiative. This period is a time for expanding mastery and responsibility; initiative combines with autonomy to give the child the quality of planning persuasion and determination in accomplishing tasks and goals. The main activity of children at this stage is play, and the goal of their activities comes from playing, exploring, trying, failing, and experimenting with their toys (1995; 212).*

The quotation above illustrates that when a child wants to know something by taking it apart, there will certainly be an initiative to return it to its original condition. When an individual dares to begin performing a positive action, it shows initiative, while others may not yet have thought about it. People who possess broad knowledge, experience, and reliable skills certainly demonstrate initiative. Initiative means courage that involves risk. As explained by Erikson (2010; 105), initiative is defined as “*an action, effort, or ability carried out to prepare oneself by undertaking stages in an attempt to achieve goals.*” Based on this concept, the researcher selected a poem entitled *God Had Died (Dewa Telah Mati)* by Subagio Sastrowardjo as the object of the research. This poem shows a conflict between morality and belief within a society that has lost the direction of its faith. By analyzing the symbols and the way language is conveyed in this poem, the implied moral values and social criticism can be revealed and understood as relevant to everyday human life.

The researcher explains the meaning of the poem “*God Had Died*” by analyzing its symbols, word meanings, and the use of figurative language. In this explanation, there are moral values concerning human psychology containing the ideas and hopes of the author, which are conveyed through his literary work so that the readers can understand the implicit message in the poem, which is closely related to what occurs in real life. During the play age, human personality can be viewed from various perspectives because this period shows the early process of forming the psyche and the impulse to experiment with new things. The researcher focuses on the problem of how to deconstruct the social order as a reflection of the play-age personality in the poem ‘*God Had Died*’ by Subagio Sastrowardjo. This research aims to understand the psychological dynamics of children who want to recognize, control, and change something according to their wishes, but eventually attempt to restore it

to its original form. This poem reflects the natural human impulse to understand the rules of social order and moral values.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Erik H. Erikson's Psychosocial Theory: Initiative vs. Guilt**

In this research, the researcher applies the psychosocial theory proposed by Erik H. Erikson. This theory explains human development through eight stages of life, in which each stage is characterized by a conflict or crisis that individuals must resolve in order to develop in a healthy manner. One of the important stages is the third stage, namely "*Initiative vs. Guilt*", which occurs in early childhood, approximately between the ages of three and six years. At this stage, children begin to show initiative to engage in various new activities, experiment, and take roles within their social environment. When this encouragement is accepted and properly guided, children can develop a sense of confidence and responsibility. However, if a child's initiative is frequently criticized or considered wrong, the child may experience feelings of guilt, which can potentially hinder the development of creativity and courage in the future.

According to Erikson (2010; 185) stated that "the child must learn to imagine, to broaden his skills through active play of all sorts, including fantasy, to cooperate with others, and to lead as well as to follow". This quotation explains that at this stage children learn to develop imagination, social skills, and leadership abilities through various forms of play activities. In addition, Papalia (2009; 194) explains that "*the stage of initiative vs guilt is a period when children begin to internalize moral values and learn to distinguish between right and wrong*". Supporting from parents and the surrounding environment plays an important role in fostering a healthy sense of initiative. Thus, the initiative vs guilt stage reflects a balance between the drive to act and moral awareness. Successfully passing through this stage results in individuals who are creative, courageous in making decisions, and possess a strong sense of social responsibility.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative research method to analyze the poem "God Had Died" by Subagio Sastrowardoyo. Qualitative research is selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of literary texts, particularly in uncovering meanings related to the deconstructing the social order as the reflection on play-age personality. According to Hadi (2004, p. 42) stated that "a qualitative method is intended to understand phenomena holistically by describing them in the form of words and language within a natural context". Therefore, this method is considered appropriate for examining symbolic meanings, metaphors, and social critiques embedded in the poem. In this research, the data consist of words, phrases, and lines taken from the poem reflecting elements of social disorder and psychological development. In addition, the researcher applies a literary psychology approach, particularly Erik H. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, focusing on the play-age stage.

As stated by Berteens (1997, p. 15), “methodology refers to a systematic way of conducting research in order to obtain valid and accountable knowledge”. This indicates that the research process must be structured, consistent, and theoretically grounded. The analytical process includes identifying themes, symbols, and narrative structures revealing the conflict between the individual and social order.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In analyzing the data to obtain the meaning of the poem ‘God Had Died’ (*Dewa Telah Mati*), the researcher focuses on aspects that form one part of the poetic elements. The data analysis is based on the meaning of the words found in the poem and its figurative language. In terms of figurative language, there are three types observed by the researcher to clearly conduct the analysis, namely simile, metaphor, and personification. However, the researcher focuses particularly on two types of figurative language related to the poem, namely personification and metaphor.

### *1. There is no God in the swamp (line 1; stanza 1)*

Literally, this line suggests that God exists; however, its figurative meaning refers to a ruler or an authority who is able to regulate a region properly. If nothing is governed within a territory, it implies that there is no authority in power, which may lead to confusion and disorder within that region. The word ‘God’ is interpreted metaphorically as a protector or a ruler who possesses authority over a certain territory. In real life, such authority figures may be represented by leaders such as presidents, judges, governors, and other officials. The ‘swamp’ is metaphorically interpreted as a wet and soft area of land or a region filled with wrongdoing or moral decay. Meanwhile, the word ‘there is’ refers to existence. God is often considered invisible, and in society many people believe that if God does not exist, then humanity itself loses its foundation. In a region where a ruler fails to govern properly, disturbances may arise. Likewise, if a territory has no authority at all, it may lead to a “law of the jungle,” where power and chaos dominate. A ruler should be able to create hope and encourage creativity so that individuals can develop independently without excessive reliance on others. However, if a ruler lacks the strength to realize aspirations or to encourage the pursuit of new knowledge and ideas, progress may be hindered.

In a region, if a ruler fails to exercise authority effectively or cannot maintain security from the actions of irresponsible individuals, disorder may occur. This situation can disturb people’s desire to live peacefully, enjoy their lives, and express creativity. As a result, both local residents and foreign visitors may feel uncomfortable and constantly worried. For example, some young people may become dissatisfied with government policies and regulations imposed by authorities. Although such regulations are intended to be accepted by society, in reality they may not suit the needs of the community. This can lead to anger and a loss of trust in the government. These regulations may also make it difficult for people to

earn a living and meet their daily needs. Because of their dissatisfaction, some individuals may resort to violence by damaging public facilities they encounter on the streets through acts of anarchy. Therefore, the researcher interprets as this line attempts to create a new reflection or perspective in which the character contemplates a world where the existence of God is denied.

2. *Only the crow chattered in the night*

*And in the day it flies to go around the dead body (line 2 and 3; stanza 1)*

From a literal perspective, a crow is an animal that feeds on carrion. Figuratively, it refers to a criminal who destroys others or consumes what is forbidden. Metaphorically, 'the crow' represents a human being who commits crimes by damaging, consuming what is rotten, or harming others even when those individuals are already powerless. The 'crow' is interpreted as a wicked person, while its 'chattered' signifies harmful or immoral actions. The 'night' symbolizes darkness, a time often associated with the activities of evildoers. Thus, darkness indicates a condition in which people can no longer distinguish between good and bad, leading to widespread wrongdoing. The phrase 'flies to go around the dead body' carries a figurative meaning of being surrounded by forbidden gains, or more broadly, wealth obtained through unlawful means. Such a figure seeks to destroy or undermine the aspirations of wise and kind-hearted individuals. To obtain everything he desires, such a person uses any means necessary, even if it results in others' death. These actions may include seizing, robbing, or engaging in corruption to accumulate wealth illegally, without considering the suffering of those who have been victimized.

3. *A hermit who killed near the temple (line 4; stanza 1)*

Literally, 'a hermit' is a holy person or religious figure. Figuratively, it refers to someone who seeks closeness to God and devotes themselves to religious life. A hermit symbolizes an individual who has detached from worldly matters in order to pursue spiritual devotion. 'The temple' is a building used for worship, such as a church, mosque, or other place of worship. Therefore, if God is absent, and the hermit dies near the temple, it suggests that without spiritual guidance in society, there will be a decline in human morality and personality. For example, religious leaders are often regarded as knowledgeable figures who understand matters related to both the worldly life and the afterlife. As a result, they are respected and admired wherever they deliver sermons whether in mosques, churches, or other religious settings, including ceremonies or public events, thus gaining recognition within society.

A religious leader should embody humility, simplicity, wisdom, and freedom from envy or other negative traits. However, if such a leader lacks proper religious understanding or fails to convey teachings correctly, religion may be misused or deviate from its true doctrine. Manipulation can occur when individuals or groups influence others' behaviour, attitudes, and opinions without their awareness. When

a religious leader becomes self-manipulative and begins to see themselves as divine, their behavior and attitude shift away from their original purpose of guiding others. This ultimately leads to a loss of trust, causing followers to distance themselves. In this sense, the religious leader is metaphorically ‘killed’ by their own behaviour and attitude, having elevated themselves to the position of God within society.

4. *God had died to these sides*

*Only snake crackles near the well*

*Then drinking from the mouth (line 5, 6, and 7; stanza 2)*

In the literal meaning, the ‘snake’ is a crawling and venomous animal. Figuratively, it refers to a person who deceives and betrays others in order to gain wealth. Metaphorically, the snake represents someone who lacks inner peace due to anger, hypocrisy, and an unstable attitude neither truly good nor entirely bad or someone who pretends to be a friend but is in fact an enemy. When it is analyzed, the snake is comparable to the crow. The ‘well; is likened to a source or accumulation of wealth, while the phrase ‘drinking from the mouth’ suggests a corrupt individual who gains wealth from immoral sources such as prostitution. This type of person has a character that disturbs the peace of others and creates anxiety within society. In other words, such a person deceives or betrays others for wealth and deprives others of their happiness. As is widely understood, acts of deception and betrayal can harm others by disrupting peace and security. Betrayal can destroy relationships among friends, families, or even broader contexts such as relations between nations, potentially leading to the breakdown of diplomatic ties that have been built over many years. This may occur when an individual seeks personal gain by damaging a country, company, or other people.

Many of people may encounter such individuals in everyday life. For example, in a company, an employee who feels neglected by their superior may decide to betray the organization by leaking confidential information to another company for personal profit, causing harm to others. This illustrates how betrayal can affect not only small social environments but also extend to larger scales, even threatening the stability of a nation. Therefore, society must remain cautious of such individuals and hold them accountable for actions that harm others. Based on the detailed data obtained, it can be explained that these situations arise from acts of betrayal and deception carried out by such characters.

5. *Prostitute smiling with her shadow (line 8; stanza 2)*

Literally, ‘a prostitute’ is someone who offers sexual services in exchange for money. Figuratively, it refers to a person who sells their honor and dignity. A prostitute is represented as someone who sacrifices their self-worth to gain wealth, pleasure, status, or power. Psychologically, the expression ‘smiling’ reflects a facial expression indicating pleasure, while ‘shadow’ refers to a shaded or dark area created by the absence of light. Thus, it suggests that individuals pursue wealth

and happiness by degrading themselves, an act considered morally reprehensible. In this context, prostitution does not only refer to a woman selling her body for money, but also to various forms of self-degradation that individuals may not even realize they are engaging in. For example, a person may “prostitute” themselves by flattering superiors, authorities, or wealthy individuals to gain personal advantages. They act in ways that compromise their dignity for personal benefit, regardless of whether such actions are permitted or forbidden. Sometimes, they do not even show humility; instead, they continue to smile, masking their true intentions to gain wealth, even though their actions are harmful to others.

In society, the researcher finds many individuals who “prostitute” themselves in pursuit of wealth or status, such as through corruption or misconduct in politics and education, including bribery, flattery, and abuse of power. Through such actions, they may achieve pleasure and material wealth, yet they remain indifferent to the suffering they cause others. This behavior ultimately damages the social order within society. Based on the reflection above, such acts of “prostitution” are, disturbingly, perceived as something pleasurable.

6. *This earth is prostitute*

*Which is interested to men and hermit*

*To the dirty swamp*

*And murdered him in the morning (line 9, 10, 11, and 12; stanza 2)*

Literally, the term ‘earth’ refers to the place where human life exists. Figuratively, it denotes a space in which individuals entrust their fate and hopes. The earth is symbolically represented as the world and its life, which commodifies beauty and pleasure by offering worldly enjoyment to all people. The term ‘interested’ signifies a desire or curiosity to learn and understand something, while ‘men’ refers to a male individual characterized by strength, courage, and similar attributes. The word ‘prostitute’ implies impurity, cruelty, or injustice. Furthermore, ‘murdered’ denotes an act of deliberate or cruel killing, and ‘in the morning’ refers to the time from early morning approaching midday.

In addition, the earth can also be interpreted as an untouchable domain that exerts a powerful attraction over individuals who seek merely to satisfy their worldly desires. In this sense, it is analogous to a state or domain that functions as a source of pleasure, offering various forms of enjoyment capable of arousing human passions, such as sexual desire, the pursuit of wealth, and other forms of worldly gratification.

Based on the collected data and its subsequent analysis, the researcher identifies the following interpretations in each line of the poem:

1. ‘*There is no God in the swamp*’ indicates that the character constructs a new world in which the existence of God is denied.

2. 'Only the crow chattered in the night and in the day it flies to go around the dead body' reflects a social condition in which harmony has been disrupted or morally corrupted.
3. 'A hermit who killed near the temple' suggests that in the absence of religious authority, leadership may lack moral integrity and proper guidance.
4. 'God had died to these sides, Only snake crackles near the well, Then drinking from the mouth' symbolizes acts of betrayal and deception within society.
5. 'A prostitute smiling with her shadow' represents prostitution as a normalized or even pleasurable activity.
6. 'This earth is prostitute, which is interested to men and hermit, To the dirty swamp, and murdered him in the morning' illustrates the destructive nature of worldly temptations, which ultimately lead individuals toward moral degradation and ruin.

Based on this analysis, the researcher interprets that the poem portrays adulthood as a continuation or reflection of the play stage. In this context, adults assume roles similar to children, where their actions reveal their true personalities. The play stage is understood as a developmental phase in which children actively explore their environment through initiative, often by dismantling or experimenting with objects in order to acquire knowledge, experience, skills, and mastery. Initiative-driven cooperation contributes to the development of quality performance in accomplishing tasks and generating creative ideas. Moreover, play is considered a voluntary activity chosen by individuals rather than an imposed obligation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and discussion of this research, it can be concluded that the application of psychoanalytic theory, particularly in examining human psychology, plays a significant role in enriching academic discourse within society. One relevant framework is the personality theory proposed by Erik H. Erikson, which emphasizes the stages of psychological development in children. The play stage is a crucial phase that must be experienced by children, as it enables them to expand their competencies and develop a sense of responsibility. During this stage, children create various new forms of play by exploring and manipulating objects in order to understand and master them. Furthermore, adulthood can be seen as a reflection of the play stage, where individual actions and behaviors serve as representations of their authentic personality, shaped and expressed within the framework of social norms and expectations in society.

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