

**WOMAN'S BRAVERY REFLECTED IN JOHN GRISHAM'S NOVEL  
*THE PELICAN BRIEF* (1994)  
AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE**



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**FITRI RATNASARI**

**A320140206**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION  
SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA**

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By:

**FITRI RATNASARI**  
A320140206

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Consultant,



**Titis Setyabudi, S.S., M.A.**  
NIDN: 0617047701

ACCEPTANCE

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By:

FITRI RATNASARI

A320140206

Accepted and Approved by the Board Examiners

School of Teacher Training and Education

Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

In July 2018

Team Examiners:

1. Titis Setyabudi, S.S., M.A.  
(Examiner I)
2. Dr. Phil. Dewi Candraningrum  
(Examiner II)
3. Yeny Prastiwi, Ph.D  
(Examiner III)

  
(.....)  
(.....)  
(.....)



Dean,

  
Prof. Dr. Harun Joko Pravitno, M.Hum.

NIP. 19650428199303001

## TESTIMONY

The researcher, signed the statement bellow:

Name : Fitri Ratnasari

NIM : A320140206

Department : Department of English Education

Title : WOMAN' BRAVERY REFLECTED IN JOHN GRISHAM'S *THE PELICAN BRIEF* (1994): AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE

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The Writer,



Fitri Ratnasari  
A320140206

## ***WOMAN'S BRAVERY REFLECTED IN JOHN GRISHAM'S NOVEL THE PELICAN BRIEF (1994) : AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE***

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana keberanian seorang wanita digambarkan didalam novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) karya John Grisham menggunakan eksistensialis perspektif. Novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) dianalisis mengacu pada 3 poin. Pertama adalah analisis bagaimana gambaran keberanian seorang wanita digambarkan didalam novel menggunakan eksistensialis perspektif, kedua adalah analisis jenis-jenis keberanian yang digambarkan didalam novel, dan yang ketiga adalah analisis apa saja yang mempengaruhi penulis mengangkat keberanian seorang wanita sebagai topik utama didalam novel. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan dua sumber data, yang pertama adalah novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) karya John Grisham sebagai sumber utama. Sumber data kedua adalah pencarian dari buku, jurnal, biografi penulis, dan sumber yang berhubungan dengan penelitian. Dua sumber tersebut diperoleh melalui perpustakaan dan internet yang kemudian dianalisa menggunakan analisa deskriptif. Berdasarkan penelitian tersebut, peneliti menyimpulkan beberapa kesimpulan. Pertama, berdasarkan teori eksistensialis keberanian seorang wanita digambarkan didalam novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994). Kedua, ada beberapa jenis keberanian yang digambarkan didalam novel. Ketiga, ada beberapa latar belakang penulis yang mempengaruhinya mengangkat keberanian seorang wanita sebagai topik utama novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994).

**Kata Kunci:** Keberanian, Eksistensialis Perspektif, *The Pelican Brief*

### **Abstract**

This study aims to explain how womans' bravery reflected in the novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) by John Grisham using existentialist perspective. The novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) is analyzed in three aspects. First is based on how womans' bravery reflected in the novel using existentialist perspective, second is based on kinds of bravery which is reflected in the novel, third is based on the reasons why the author raised womans' bravery as the main topic in the novel. This research uses descriptive qualitative approach. This study uses two sources of data, the first is the novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) by John Grisham as the main source. The second source of data is the searching from books, journal, author biographies, and sources related to the analysis. The two types of sources are obtained through library and the internet then analyzed using descriptive analysis. Based on these studies, the researcher draws some conclutions. The first is based on existentialism theory womans' bravery is depicted in the novel. The second is there are some kinds of bravery which is depicted in the novel. The third is there are some backgrounds that affect the author raised womans' bravery as the main topic in the novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994).

**Keywords:** Bravery, Existentialist Perspective, *The Pelican Brief*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Paul Findley (2008), bravery is a character to defend and struggle something which is reputed as the right thing with facing all the form of danger or difficulty. Not only men who has bravery in theirselves but also the women. Nowadays there are still so many woman who don't brave enough to express their opinion and what they think right to do.

John Grisham as the author of the novel wants to motivate the readers through "*The Pelican Brief*" Novel. The reader, man or woman has to be brave in showing the truth especially if it relates to state division. We can not be just quite if we know something wrong happens in our environment. We can see that nowadays most of people tend to be ignorant on what happens in the society. They prefer to take care of something which is just important for themselves. Whereas, to advance this country we have to participate in every little thing that we can do.

There are two reasons why the researcher is interested to analyze this novel. Firstly, the topic of the novel is interesting. The story is about tracking the murder of two justices who were murdered sadistically, without found evidence at the scene and very professional. The second, this study can be beneficial for the student with the good moral values contained in this research that as the notional especially in our country Indonesia, it has many politic problems if we can solve or we have an idea that may can help to figure out the problems we have to be brave to show it. Especially for the woman who is known as a weak human and has no rights on doing something. But in this emancipation era we have nothing to be scared.

The researcher decides to use the existentialism analysis to analyze this novel, because the approach is suitable with the topic which will be discussed. The novel shows the woman's bravery of the main characters in the novel, Darby Shaw. For that reason, the researcher conducted this research entitled **Woman's Bravery Reflected In John Grisham' *The Pelican Brief* (1994): An Existentialist Perspective.**

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In analyzing the research, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative approach is the research obtained the data through library and the internet then analyzed using descriptive analysis (study.com). Firstly, the researcher reads the whole novel *The Pelican Brief* (1994) then take some notes related to the issue. The second, the researcher is browsing the internet to get several information and articles related to the object of the study then identifying the problem and finding the data. The third, the researcher analyses the data using existentialist approach.

## 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Darby Shaw's effort to overcome the assassination case was a form of her consciousness to reveal the truth and justice. Her willingness to solve the case can be depicted through this perspective. There are some finding on how woman's bravery depicted in the novel. Those are:

### a) Freedom

Freedom is the power or right to act. De Beauvoir effectively changes the existential focus from a concern with one's own freedom into a concern that necessarily incorporates the freedom of others. Freedom becomes both the defining characteristic of human existence and also its ethical ideal. It is also asserted by Yunus (2011) that freedom was "is the essence of human beings; usually humans are always free to create him-self. Humans are free to organize, select and can give meaning to reality"

Everyone has a freedom to do or to be whatever they want to be. And also the main character in the novel named Darby Shaw, she has a freedom to propose what she feel was right. Darby's freedom in showing her thought to point out the truth about the assassination case described in the novel. It reflects in the novel when Darby chooses to learn who the mastermind of the murder case which happened to the two Supreme Court Justices:

- "In a cluttered study carrel on the fifth level of the law library, between the racks of thick, seldom-used law books, Darby

Shaw scanned a printout of the Supreme Court's docket." (page 62)

- "She compiled a neat list of possible suspects, but they would be obvious to everyone." (page 62)

That is the description which taken from the novel when Darby chose to learn about anything related to the victims of the assassination case to find information about that.

b) Choice

Choice is a decision that we have to make a decision on something. Choice can be true or wrong. The option to choose is something that we no longer just value but now *expect*. It means that to make choices we have to be in clear mind. According Sartre (1984:17) "...and it is this choice that controls the way that we interpret the objects that we deal with in everyday life."

A choice which has been selected by Darby is she chooses to be brave to open the case that was happening at that time. The case was the assassination case. She makes a research and looking for the bundle of the Justice Rosenberg and Jensen then she know the case which is still unfinished. Darby Shaw expect that the death case is not caused by the politics but the greed. She make a research about the cause of the death and who are the people who did that. It is reflected in the novel when Darby has made the research about the assassination case:

- *Callahan had more wine, and sank deeper in the sofa. "So, Ms. Shaw, who done it?"* (page 87)  
*"Professionals. Haven't you read the papers?"* (page 87)  
*"Of course. But who's behind the professionals?"* (87)  
*"I don't know. After last night, the unanimous choice seems to be the Underground Army."* (page 87)  
*"But you're not convinced."* (87)  
*"No. There have been no arrest. I'm not convinced"* (87)
- *Callahan suggest Darby to share the brief to FBI*



*“Well, why don’t you call the FBI and share your insights with them? I’m sure they’re sitting by the phone.”*

That is the conversation between Darby and Mr. Callahan, her professor and also her lover. They were discussed about the brief that Darby made. Then Callahan suggested to Darby to give it to the FBI.

c) Responsibilities.

Responsibilities are such an awareness to do something that attached to one’s self. Responsibilities are related to and the implication of a duty. When we are given a freedom to choose something or make a choice then we have to be responsible. “De Beauvoir’s point is that the individual must accept the responsibility that begins with the other’s need” (O’flynn, 2009).

By reading the whole story of the novel the researcher knows that Darby Shaw was very responsible for what has become her decision. She believes that she will get through it and solve the problem well. When she decided to make brief to uncovering the case then she got threat from unknown people she kept survive by herself. And she was still trying to find another evidence to strengthen her brief. Darby remains responsible with what she has decided and dare to take the risk. It reflects in the novel when Darby starts get threat from unknown people but she still fight for the truth and take the risk:

- *“I don’t know. I’m just scared.”*  
*“It’s okay. I swear I’m not recording this and I swear I won’t trace it. Now, What’s on your mind?”*  
*“Well, I think I may know who killed them.”*
- *Grantham was standing. “That’s some pretty valuable knowledge.”*  
*“It could get me killed. Do you think they’re following me?”*  
*“Who? Who would be following you?”*

*“I don’t know.’ The voice trailed off, as if he was looking over his shoulder.*

- *“She rather liked the city at this moment. It had a million hotel rooms, almost as many alleys and lives and bars, and it always had crowds of people strolling along Bourbon, Chartres, Dauphine, and Royal. (page 155)*
- *“She would move from hotel to hotel for a few days, until when? She didn’t know when. She didn’t know why. Moving just seemed intelligent under the circumstances.” (page 155)*

The researcher can find a correlation between the perspective, the theory of bravery, and the reasons why woman’s bravery specifically addressed by the author. John Grisham as the author of the novel was interest with criminal and law. He has graduated from law school in Mississippi University. He also has a history in polical career. He became a lawyer and also selected as Mississippi Representing the Democratic Party. Since he was young he liked to read. And his love of reading is encouraged by his mother, and greatly influenced by John Steinbeck. John Steinbeck is one of the most famous American writers of the 20th century who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962.

John Grisham has made some books and most of them are a law book. His first book entited *A Time To Kill* in 1987. After that the other novel is began wrote by Grisham. And *The Pelican Brief* is the third novel which is written by Grisham in 1994. *The Pelican Brief* tells the story of tracking the murder of two justices who were murdered sadistically, without found evidence at the scene and very professional. The character of Darby in this novel is trying to solve the murder case of both judges Rosenberg and Jensen, she goes to various places and disguises to avoid the killer who wants to kill her.

The main topic in the novel is woman's bravery in showing truth and fight for justice. Her bravery in uncovering the case is depicted clearly in the novel. Related to the issue which is raised by the researcher there are some kind of bravery related to the novel. There are heroic bravery, quiet bravery, personal bravery and the last is frightened bravery.

Woman's bravery depicted in the novel by using an existentialist perspective. According to Beauvoir, "a woman must break the bonds of her patriarchal society and define herself if she wishes to become a significant human being in her own right and defy male classification as the other" (Bressler). Her willingness to solve the case can be depicted through this perspective. There are three concept of existentialist perspective according to Beauvoir which is reflected in the novel, there are freedom, choice, and responsibility. The three concept are depicted clearly in the novel. It is seen through all the attitude of the main character in the novel.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Woman's bravery is depicted clearly in the novel. There are some act which is done by the main character in the novel. Darby Shaw is the main character in the novel. How woman's bravery reflected in the novel starts when Darby decided to learn on anything related to the case which happening in that time. She made a brief to show the truth and fight for the justice. Until she started got some thread from people that still concerned with the perpetrator who do not want his secret uncovered. Facing the thread againsts her, she still keep being calm and fight for the brief. She was keep looking for another evidence to strengthen the brief she has made. Until she found another the evidence that made the brief proved true.

*The Pelican Brief* was an influence in many life. The book made you think about who you can and can't trust, and also showed some skills of being sneaky. John Grisham's goal while writing this novel was to strike suspense, fear, happiness, and enjoyment into the hearts of those who read his novel. The topics in the novel are government conspiracy, without thinking about the topic, the reader wouldn't understand the novel. The message that the novel

wants to convey to the readers is that the readers who is a citizen wherever they are, they should not be a pasif citizen but must always be vigilant and crucial of the peformance of the government in power. This message is built on the condition that they are inseparable from an interest.

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