

## **Discourse Analysis in the Short Story "Rumah di Dalam Kepala" by Novand**

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*Received: 04 Januari 2025; Revised: 20 Januari 2025; Accepted: 01 Februari 2025; Published:  
Februari 2025; Available online: Februari 2025*

### **Abstract**

*This research aims to analyze the discourse in the short story "Rumah di Dalam Kepala" by Novand Subyanto Maxsonara using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. The short story portrays the inner journey of the protagonist who carries a house in his head, a symbol of unresolved past trauma. This research examines the discourse structure, social representation, and how social power and ideology are reflected through the language used in the story. The short story addresses issues such as trauma, identity, and psychological healing, as well as depicting the relationship between the individual and society, which is often trapped in social stigma against individuals considered different. The findings of this research show that the symbolism of the house functions as an emotional and psychological space that holds memories and past wounds, while the protagonist's healing process reflects the difficulty of accepting the past and forming a new identity. This analysis also highlights how the short story critiques social norms and emphasizes the importance of providing space for individuals struggling with trauma to heal without stigma.*

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis; Short Story; Psychological Healing*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The short story "Rumah di Dalam Kepala" (House in the Head) by Novand Subyanto Maxsonara offers a profound exploration of human complexity, covering major themes such as trauma, healing, and the search for identity. By combining elements of magical realism, this story not only depicts everyday life but also takes the reader into the inner world of the main character, full of memories, wounds, and a deeper search for meaning (Lutfia & Wahyono, 2025). Through strong symbolism, deep characters, and a poetic narrative, "Rumah di Dalam Kepala" invites readers to question the meaning of home itself, and how this home—both as a physical and mental space—can become a place of healing, holding memories, and self-reflection (Fitriani & Setiyowati, 2024)

This short story tells of a man who is considered "crazy" by society because he carries a small house on his head, an object that initially seems absurd. However, as the story unfolds, the house is revealed not only as a physical object but as an emotional and psychological space that holds memories, trauma, and an identity that the main character has not fully understood (Novarizal & Siregar, 2024). The house

serves as a symbol of the protagonist's inner journey as he struggles to overcome loss, sadness, and doubts about who he is, while also seeking peace within himself.(Murtasia et al., 2023)

As a literary work, this short story carries a deeper meaning than merely a narrative about an individual isolated by trauma. In this context, Maxsonara uses the symbolism of the house to explore the theme of an individual's inability to let go of the past, and how that past shapes their identity and worldview(Sintasari et al., 2025). The house on the protagonist's head becomes a container for memories, sometimes painful memories, but still part of oneself that must be accepted (Imamah, 2025). The healing process experienced by the protagonist in this story illustrates that there is no quick fix for overcoming trauma, and that our identity is not only shaped by events that have occurred but also by how we accept and make meaning of those events. The story also highlights the difficulty of the healing process for the protagonist, who, along his journey, encounters people who try to help him or attempt to mend broken relationships.

There is also a portrayal of the social stigma attached to individuals who

are considered not to conform to societal norms, which complicates and adds challenges to the healing process(Sari, 2022) . Society, in this story, does not understand the protagonist's inner world and only judges him based on his outward appearance—that he wears an "odd hat" or is even considered crazy. However, the house he carries on his head is a place where he battles with himself, trying to recover lost memories and find peace with a past that still burdens him(Harja Susetya et al., 2023).

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, developed by Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk. CDA focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology in society, and how language not only reflects social reality but also shapes it. This approach provides a framework to analyze the short story by examining how the text constructs meaning and reveals ideologies through the language structures used in the narrative.

1. Text Description: The first step is to describe the key elements of the text, including the symbolism of the house, the characters in the story, and important events that occur in the

narrative. The focus is on how the short story is structured through narrative and the language used to convey the major themes of the story.

2. Text Interpretation: The second stage is to interpret the message the author intends to convey through the short story. This includes analyzing how the story depicts trauma, healing, identity, and how society views individuals struggling with past memories.
3. Social Explanation: The final stage is to examine how the short story reflects social ideologies and power structures in society, as well as how it critiques social norms that often overlook the complexities of an individual's inner world.

This research holds significant value in the fields of literary studies and critical discourse analysis, as the short story "Rumah di Dalam Kepala" provides profound insights into trauma, healing, and identity in modern society. By using the symbolism of the house as the main metaphor in the story, it illustrates how individuals struggle with feelings of loss and trauma, and how they search for ways to heal and accept themselves. Furthermore, this short story encourages us to better understand the importance

of empathy and compassion for individuals struggling with emotional wounds and urges us to question the narrow social views of individuals who are different.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Use of House Symbolism in the Main Character's Mind**

The house symbolism present in the main character's mind is a central element in the short story "Rumah di Dalam Kepala." This house is not merely a physical object existing in the real world but represents past trauma, unresolved memories, and the psychological tension the main character faces (Khoirunnisa & Nugroho, 2023). The house, in the context of the story, functions as a personal space that holds memories, relationships, and repressed emotions.

Data 1. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Itu benar-benar rumah. Berbentuk joglo kecil, lengkap dengan genteng tanah liat dan pintu kayu jati mini di bagian depan. Ia tumbuh di atas ubun-ubunku sejak aku

bangun dari mimpi buruk tentang ibu yang hilang dan ayah yang lupa pulang."

In this quote, the house is described as a concrete object with physical form and detailed design. This indicates that the house is more than just a symbol; it becomes part of the main character's inner reality (Haryanti et al., 2022). The house "grows" on top of the character's head, much like memories or trauma that cannot be easily detached from their mind.

The use of such detailed symbolism of the house here illustrates how the main character is trapped in the painful past. The house is part of their body and mind, meaning they cannot escape or avoid the memories of a lost mother and a father who never returned. The house represents how past trauma not only affects the character's emotions but has become deeply embedded in their soul (Hasan, 2021). The character cannot escape these feelings because the house serves as a physical reminder of what has been lost.

Data 2. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Di dalamnya ada kamar mungil yang hanya cukup untuk satu pikiran. Ada jendela bundar ke masa lalu, dan rak kecil yang menyimpan kenangan dari usia lima sampai tiga puluh tiga."

This house also holds very personal memories, containing fragments of life that have passed. The tiny room, just big enough for a single thought, symbolizes the limited space the main character has to remember and process burdensome memories. These memories are trapped within it, and only one thought can occupy the small space at any one time. This suggests that the character's healing process is deeply personal and constrained by the narrow space in their mind (Paramartha et al., 2023).

Each room in this house holds different layers of feelings and memories. The house becomes a repository for emotions that cannot be expressed or accepted by the outside world. Through this house symbolism, the writer creates a powerful image of how individuals trapped in trauma feel there is no place to heal except in their minds. The house

becomes a world unto itself, accessible only to the main character, allowing them to rearrange the scattered pieces of their past. However, the fact that the house can only accommodate one thought at a time shows just how limited the space is for the character to confront this trauma (Haryanti et al., 2022).

Data 3. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Kadang aku bisa duduk di dalam rumah itu, meski secara fisik aku sedang berjalan ke warung atau naik KRL."

This quote depicts how the house in the main character's mind allows them to reflect and relive childhood memories, even when they are physically engaged in everyday activities. This suggests that the house is not just a symbol of place, but also a representation of the broader inner world, where the main character can move between the physical world and their mind (Theresia, 2020).

Here, the writer shows that even when the character is physically outside the house, they remain connected to it in their mind. The house becomes a place of retreat and processing of the trauma occurring in the character's thoughts.

The healing process is not linear, and the character must continuously wrestle with feelings that come and go. This reflects how, even when someone tries to move on with their life, unresolved thoughts and memories continue to follow them wherever they go (Sugiarto, 2024).

Data 4. Rumah di Dalam  
Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Masih ada yang belum selesai," katanya suatu malam ketika aku sedang menyusun laporan kerja.

This is a quote from when the house in the main character's mind starts speaking to them, reminding them that something within them remains unfinished. This is a turning point in the story, where the house no longer acts as a passive place but begins to function actively as a medium for healing.

This line highlights the importance of healing and self-acceptance. The house does not just store memories; it also serves as a space to remind the character that there is a part of them that has yet to heal. Healing is not a process that concludes quickly; it is a long journey that requires one to

continually face and attempt to overcome wounds (Sugiarto, 2024). The house reminds the main character that nothing can be considered finished until they are truly ready to accept their past.

Data 6. Rumah di Dalam  
Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Rumah itu mulai bergetar hebat. Seperti ada gempa kecil. 'Ada yang ingin masuk,' katanya. 'Dia membawa kunci.'"

The climax of the house's development in the main character's mind occurs when the house begins to shake, signaling that something important and new is about to happen—perhaps a reunion with the past or an opportunity to fix something long lost.

The small earthquake in the house symbolizes that healing involves not just reflection but also confronting greater forces that come to unlock the space that has been closed off. The presence of the "key" in the house is a symbol of the opportunity that finally comes to open the previously locked space—perhaps this is when the main character must open themselves to face reality and

confront the unresolved past(Ristio Cahyo & Andriana, 2024)

### **Social Representation and Stigma towards Trauma**

In this short story, social representation and the stigma surrounding individuals who struggle with trauma or psychological difficulties are highly prominent. Society often fails to understand or judge others based on what is visible on the outside, without attempting to comprehend the inner process they are going through. The main character is considered "crazy" for carrying a house in their head, even though the house is a symbol of emotions that cannot be let go.

Data 7. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Itu cuma topi aneh!"  
kata petugas kelurahan.  
"Kau tidak bisa  
mendaftar KTP dengan  
memakai benda seperti  
itu."

This statement illustrates how the village officer perceives the house in the main character's head as something abnormal, even refusing to process important documents because of the "strange hat." This highlights how society

tends to judge individuals based on prevailing norms without giving space for deeper interpretations of a person's condition(Nababan et al., 2024).

The village officer's statement shows the powerful influence of social norms on how we understand others. The "strange hat" symbolizes how society views differences as something that must be aligned with what is considered "normal." Meanwhile, the main character carries the house in their head as a way to cope with and remember memories that cannot be forgotten.

Data 8. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Kau tahu enggak sih,  
orangtuamu sudah  
dianggap hilang oleh  
negara. Sudah 20 tahun."  
(Mirna)

Mirna's statement to the main character reveals how the state and society often treat personal issues as matters that do not need to be further understood. This reflects a social indifference towards emotional or psychological struggles faced by individuals(Masroni et al., 2023)



This statement exposes the mismatch between the main character's personal reality and how society or the state treats them. To society, their parents have been considered missing and no longer relevant, but to the main character, they still live on in their memories and the house in their head. It reveals the significant difference in perspective between an individual grappling with the past and a society that is more focused on norms and visible realities.

Data 9. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Kau tahu enggak sih, orangtuamu sudah dianggap hilang oleh negara. Sudah 20 tahun."  
(Mirna)

This statement portrays the alienation experienced by the main character—they are considered to have no parents by the state, but the house in their head speaks of the presence of their parents, who have not disappeared. This statement demonstrates how society often decides what should be accepted and recognized as reality (Lestari et al., 2021).

However, in the healing process, individuals must deal with uncertainty and internal conflicts that cannot be understood by others (Sinthya et al., 2023).

### **Spiritual Journey and Healing Process**

The healing process in the short story "Rumah di Dalam Kepala" is a central theme conveyed by the author. The main character not only struggles to accept the reality that their parents are gone, but also attempts to forgive themselves for the unresolved feelings they have carried for years. The house in the main character's head serves as a symbol of those unfinished feelings and memories, as well as a space in which they can reflect and face the truth. This healing process is not immediate but involves a long journey of feeling and processing emotions that come and go.

Data 10. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Rumah itu mulai bicara sekitar bulan ketiga. Awalnya hanya bunyi ketukan dari dalam—tok, tok, tok—seperti ada yang memasak di dapur atau mengatur



ulang perabot. Lama-lama suara itu menjadi kata-kata. 'Masih ada yang belum selesai,' katanya suatu malam ketika aku sedang menyusun laporan kerja."

This quote illustrates how the house in the main character's head begins to speak, telling them that something remains unresolved within them. The house becomes a means for the character to begin confronting the truth they have been avoiding for so long (Saifuddin, 2024). The knocks and sounds from within the house symbolize feelings that are beginning to resurface and express themselves. Healing starts the moment the character listens to the house in their head—listening to the emotions that have been hidden all this time.

The healing process does not directly lead to a quick and easy recovery. The first knocks heard from within this house symbolize the reality that the character must face the long-buried feelings. The house in their head is not just a space that stores memories, but also a space where forgotten feelings begin to emerge. This demonstrates that

healing is a gradual process where individuals must feel and express emotions that have been repressed.

Data 11. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Masih ada yang belum selesai," katanya suatu malam ketika aku sedang menyusun laporan kerja.

This is a reminder that healing cannot occur without paying attention to the wounds that remain open. The main character may feel that they have tried to move on, but the house in their head signals that there is a part of them that has not healed, and they must face that truth (Purba et al., 2023). The house in their head speaks to express that only by accepting and confronting past wounds can one achieve deeper healing. This quote illustrates the importance of self-awareness in the healing process. Healing is not just about trying to forget the past, but more about understanding and accepting the feelings that arise from those memories. This is the first step toward recovery—the process of accepting that something is still "unfinished." The main character must confront the truth that a part of them is

still trapped in memories that remain unresolved, and through the house in their head, they are given the space to face it.

Data 12. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Rumah itu bergetar hebat. Seperti ada gempa kecil. 'Ada yang ingin masuk,' katanya. 'Dia membawa kunci.'"

When the house in the main character's head begins to shake and "welcomes someone who brings a key," it signals that there is finally an opportunity for the character to reopen the spaces that were previously locked. The house, which has served as a place to hold memories and feelings, now invites someone in, signaling that it is time for the character to confront the parts of themselves that have been hidden. The small earthquake occurring in this house symbolizes the emotional upheaval the character experiences. When the house starts shaking, it signals that the healing process is not calm; instead, it involves emotional turbulence that must be confronted (Suri et al., 2023). The presence of the key brought by someone

is a metaphor for a new opportunity or chance to unlock the spaces that have been locked in the character's mind and feelings. The healing process often requires disruption or a "quake" that makes the individual ready to open hidden parts of themselves.

Data 13. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Aku masuk ke dalam rumah itu. Bukan secara fisik—aku masih duduk di kantor, di hadapan lelaki yang mungkin ayahku. Tapi pikiranku melayang masuk ke dalam ruang sempit yang selama ini menampung bagian-bagian hidupku."

This statement describes how the main character begins to access the emotional and psychological space in their mind that has been locked for so long. The house becomes a space for the character to confront the difficult truth and start accepting the long-ignored past (Wuryandari, 2022).

Analysis: Although physically the main character is still in the outside

world, they begin to enter their inner world, re-experiencing memories and feelings that were hidden in the house. The healing process often occurs in a psychological dimension that cannot be seen by others, but it remains very real to the individual experiencing it. The house in the character's head provides them with the space to interact with the past and begin the process of acceptance.

Data 14. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku sudah  
menunggumu lama,"  
kata ibu. "Aku nyasar,"  
jawabku.

This dialogue shows the main character's feeling of being alienated and separated from their mother, even though within the house in their head, their mother remains present. The mother here symbolizes unresolved memories, and in the healing process, the main character tries to overcome the feeling of "getting lost" and find their way back to a lost past. The mother's statement about waiting shows that, even though time has passed, there is still a part of the main character that remains connected to the past (Pratomo et al., 2024). The mother, even though she may be dead or missing,

still plays an important role in this healing process. The main character expresses that they feel "lost," which reflects the uncertainty and difficulty in accepting the reality. However, this spiritual journey is part of the healing process that requires time, understanding, and patience (Dewi & Dahniar, 2023).

### **The Relationship between Trauma and Self-Identity**

The main character's self-identity is deeply influenced by past trauma, which is clearly reflected in the symbolism of the house in their head and how it stores memories and emotions that are inseparable from who they are. Their identity has been shaped by childhood experiences and loss, as well as their inability to fully overcome the trauma. The house in their head serves as a space where they can recall the past, but also a place where they attempt to accept this reality and begin the process of reconciliation with themselves.

Data 15. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku nyasar," jawabku.

This is a strong statement from the main character, expressing the feeling of being

lost and disconnected from themselves. This state of being "lost" illustrates how past trauma has affected the way they perceive the world and themselves. They feel trapped in memories and do not know how to move forward into the future (Sulastri et al., 2020). feeling of being "lost" reflects how deeply trauma impacts one's identity. The main character feels that they have lost direction in their life, and the house in their head is the only place that still reminds them of who they truly are. The house is not just about childhood memories or their parents, but about an identity formed by difficult emotional experiences.

Data 16. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku sudah  
menunggumu lama,"  
kata ibu.

This statement from the mother reveals that, despite the main character feeling "lost," a part of them is still waiting to find their lost self. The mother, in this case, functions as a reminder of the lost identity and the process of reclaiming a self that has long been neglected (Kamiliyana et al., 2024). The mother's

statement highlights how memories of the past shape the way we see ourselves. The mother becomes a symbol of the part of the main character that has not yet fully accepted or healed from emotional wounds. This memory reminds the main character that they must seek their way back to their true self, to an identity that may have been forgotten along the way.

Data 16. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku nyasar," jawabku.  
"Ketika aku keluar dari  
rumah itu, dunia  
tampak berbeda. Masih  
sama, tapi lebih jelas."

The main character's sense of confusion begins to shift when they are able to step out of the house in their head and see the world with clearer perspective. This indicates that their identity is not only shaped by trauma, but also by how they choose to reinterpret their experiences (Muslifar & Irawan, 2022). The change in the main character's perception suggests that self-identity is not something static or fixed. Their identity can evolve through the process of healing and acceptance of the past. As the character begins to step out of the house in their

head, they are able to see the world more clearly, signaling that their true self is someone who continues to grow.

Data 17. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku tidak minta kau  
percaya hari ini,"  
katanya. "Tapi bolehkah  
aku menunggu?"

This is the statement from the man who claims to be the main character's father, who eventually comes to try to reconnect the severed relationship. Despite doubts and disbelief, the main character opens their heart to attempt to accept the relationship. This statement from the father shows that the main character's identity is also shaped by relationships with others. Although there is skepticism, the opportunity to heal the broken relationship provides space for the main character to reconsider who they are, not just in relation to past trauma, but also in the relationships that shape their identity (Yulianti et al., 2021)

Data 18. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku mengangguk. Ia  
tersenyum pelan—

senyum seseorang yang  
tidak berani berharap,  
tapi tetap memilih  
tinggal."

This moment shows that the main character begins to accept the reality of the past and how they must move forward in life. Despite the doubts, they start to open up to a better future (Ginting et al., 2024). This is a pivotal moment where the main character begins to accept their past and choose to allow themselves to grow further. Despite fears and uncertainties, they begin to open up to change and acceptance, which is part of the search for a new and healthier identity.

### **Healing Through Acceptance and Relationship with Father**

The relationship with the father is a crucial element in the main character's healing process. The presence of the man who claims to be their father, despite the long history filled with doubt, becomes a significant step in the search for identity and acceptance of the past (Zaiba & Nambiar, 2024). The meeting between the main character and this man is a pivotal moment in the story. It offers the character an opportunity to open the door to reconciliation, to understand that despite the many wounds, there is also

the possibility of rebuilding a broken relationship.

Data 19. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Aku tidak minta kau percaya hari ini," katanya. "Tapi bolehkah aku menunggu?"

This statement, made by the man who claims to be the main character's father, reflects readiness and humility to accept that their relationship cannot be healed instantly. This acceptance is different from what the main character might have hoped for, but it is the first step toward reconciliation. It also demonstrates that healing does not require force, but rather patience and time. This quote reveals the uncertainty and doubt within the main character towards the man who claims to be their father. However, by expressing that he does not expect immediate belief, the man shows an understanding of the healing process that requires time. Healing, in this context, is not something that can be rushed or completed quickly. It is a journey filled with uncertainty, and more importantly, it is a space for the individual to make their own decisions

without feeling pressured by the expectations of others.

Acceptance in the father-child relationship is not only linked to the main character's personal feelings but also shows how trauma can affect intergenerational relationships (Anselmo, 2024). Despite the doubts and pain left behind, this reconciliation shows that in the healing process, sometimes we need to create space to accept people who have long been lost.

Data 21. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Aku mengangguk. Ia tersenyum pelan—senyum seseorang yang tidak berani berharap, tapi tetap memilih tinggal."

This is the main character's reaction after hearing the reconciliation offer from the man who claims to be their father. This response reflects careful acceptance, with the awareness that feelings and relationships that have been severed for so long cannot be repaired in an instant. However, there is hope, even if it is very small, that can still be nurtured. The main character's nod indicates that,

despite many doubts, they are starting to open themselves to new possibilities. Although they cannot fully accept the reality at that moment, this small step to accept the meeting symbolizes a larger acceptance of themselves and the people who may still play a role in their life.

This marks a change in the healing process, where acceptance does not always come with full belief but begins with small steps and a willingness to open the heart.

Data 22. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Aku tidak menangis saat mendengarnya. Tapi malamnya, rumah di kepalaku berubah bentuk. Atapnya melebar, dan sebuah ruang baru terbuka: dapur."

The change in the house's form after the main character listens to their father's story is a symbol of change within themselves. The newly opened kitchen is a place filled with memories and more human emotional interactions. Kitchens are often places where people gather, share, and nurture, indicating that the

main character is beginning to open up to accepting others and the reality that family relationships can still be healed (Chi, 2020).

The transformation of the house in their head shows that the main character's healing is taking place on a deeper level. The house, which once served as a storage space for memories and feelings, now begins to accommodate new spaces, such as the kitchen, which is warmer and filled with more positive memories.

This demonstrates that the healing process does not simply mean erasing bad memories, but also allowing the creation of new spaces for positive experiences that can bring peace and tranquility. Over time, this process leads to the understanding that there is room for growth and that relationships with others can be healed if there is a willingness to change.

Data 23. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Di dalamnya, aroma tumis kangkung dan sambal bawang menyeruak. Dan di sudutnya, sosok perempuan berambut



sanggul tersenyum ke  
arahku, samar seperti  
embun di kaca."

The woman who appears in the kitchen space is the mother, although not explicitly mentioned. Her presence suggests that even though the mother is no longer alive, memories of her remain alive and play a role in the main character's life. The cooking, although symbolic, brings a feeling of warmth and comfort, indicating that the house has evolved into a more inclusive and loving space. The appearance of the woman with the bun in the kitchen is an important symbol of the recovery of family relationships.

In the healing process, there is room to bring back the good memories that once existed. This is not to physically bring the past back to life, but to honor what was once there and make room for those memories in the recovery process. The main character starts learning to integrate past memories with the present reality, allowing those memories to fill spaces in their heart without being trapped in the past.

Data 24. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Aku sering tinggal di  
rumah ayah. Rumah  
kecil dengan halaman  
sempit dan lampu  
gantungan yang sudah  
miring. Kami menanam  
pohon jeruk. Kami  
memelihara dua kucing  
jalanan. Kami  
memperbaiki genteng  
yang bocor dengan cara  
yang kikuk, tapi cukup  
untuk membuat kami  
tertawa."

This quote depicts the new relationship between the main character and their father. Although there are many imperfections in how they live together, there is companionship and warmth that begin to grow. These moments illustrate that, despite past wounds, there is an opportunity to build a new relationship in a simpler and more humane way. The warmth created in small moments, like fixing the leaking roof or caring for street cats, is a symbol of the restoration of a relationship that is imperfect but full of understanding and acceptance.

This process shows that reconciliation does not have to be perfect, but it can grow through joint effort and sincerity in overcoming a difficult past.

## Facing the Future and Feelings About New Love

Ultimately, the main character's spiritual journey leads to self-acceptance and the recognition that the healing process is not only about forgetting the past, but also about opening the door to new possibilities in the future (B. Calope, 2025). After a long journey filled with trauma and broken relationships, the main character can begin to consider making space for new love. This is seen in their meeting with Rara, which opens the opportunity for the main character to rediscover happiness.

Data 25. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Kalau kau sudah  
membawa rumahmu  
sendiri, aku tak  
keberatan jadi tamu  
pertama."

Rara says this line as a form of understanding and acceptance of the main character's inner journey. Rara does not want the main character to leave behind their past, but she is willing to be part of their new life. This quote is significant because it shows that love does not always mean abandoning the

past, but it can be a part of a greater journey toward healing (Leder, 2022). Rara, as a figure who enters the main character's life, accepts that the main character's past is part of who they are, but she also opens the possibility of building a new, healthier, and deeper relationship. This illustrates that healing is not just about letting go of the past, but also about allowing new love to enter the life of someone who has healed.

Data 26. Rumah di  
Dalam Kepala (Kompas,  
2025)

"Namanya Rara. 'Aku  
tahu ini mendadak,'  
kataku sambil gugup.  
'Tapi... maukah kau  
berjalan bersamaku? Ke  
masa depan yang masih  
kosong?'"

This is the main character's line when expressing their feelings to Rara. It shows their deep doubt about the future, but also that they are starting to open themselves to new opportunities. This question symbolizes an acceptance of a future full of possibilities. The main character, who once felt trapped in past memories, is now learning to open their heart to something new (Nithya, 2023). Rara becomes a symbol of hope, and

their journey together into the future is a symbol of the healing process that involves readiness to love and accept oneself after a long journey with wounds.

Data 27. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Aku tidak menangis saat mendengarnya. Tapi malamnya, rumah di kepalaku berubah bentuk. Atapnya melebar, dan sebuah ruang baru terbuka: dapur."

The transformation of the house after the main character listens to their father's story is a symbol of change within them (Rahmadani & Muktafi, 2025). The newly opened kitchen is a place full of memories and more human emotional interactions. The kitchen often serves as a gathering place, a place to share and nurture, indicating that the main character is beginning to open up to accepting others and acknowledging that family relationships can still be healed. The change in the house in their head shows that the main character's healing is happening on a deeper level. The house, which once served as a space to

store memories and feelings, now begins to accommodate new spaces, such as the kitchen, which is warmer and filled with positive memories.

This demonstrates that the healing process is not just about erasing bad memories, but also about allowing the creation of new spaces for positive experiences that can bring peace and tranquility. Over time, this process leads to the understanding that there is room for growth, and that relationships with others can be healed if there is a willingness to change (Gea, 2023).

Data 28. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Di dalamnya, aroma tumis kangkung dan sambal bawang menyeruak. Dan di sudutnya, sosok perempuan berambut sanggul tersenyum ke arahku, samar seperti embun di kaca."

The woman who appears in the kitchen is the mother, although not explicitly mentioned. Her presence suggests that even though the mother is no longer alive, memories of her remain alive and

play a role in the main character's life (Anggraeni et al., 2024). The cooking, although symbolic, brings a sense of warmth and comfort, indicating that the house has evolved into a more inclusive and loving space. The appearance of the woman with the bun in the kitchen is an important symbol of the recovery of family relationships.

In the healing process, there is room to bring back good memories that once existed. This is not to physically bring the past back to life, but to honor what was once there and make room for those memories in the recovery process. The main character starts learning to integrate past memories with the present reality, allowing those memories to fill spaces in their heart without being trapped in the past.

Data 29. Rumah di Dalam Kepala (Kompas, 2025)

"Aku sering tinggal di rumah ayah. Rumah kecil dengan halaman sempit dan lampu gantung yang sudah miring. Kami menanam pohon jeruk. Kami memelihara dua kucing jalanan. Kami

memperbaiki genteng yang bocor dengan cara yang kikuk, tapi cukup untuk membuat kami tertawa."

This quote depicts the new relationship between the main character and their father. Despite many imperfections in how they live together, companionship and warmth begin to grow. These moments represent that, despite past wounds, there is an opportunity to build a new relationship in a simpler and more humane way. The warmth created in small moments, such as fixing the leaking roof or caring for street cats, is a symbol of the restoration of a relationship that is imperfect but full of understanding and acceptance.

This process shows that reconciliation does not have to be perfect, but it can grow through joint effort and sincerity in overcoming a difficult past (Kouvelis & Kangas, 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

The short story *Rumah di Dalam Kepala* by Novand Subyanto Maxsonara portrays the main character's inner journey in confronting trauma, healing, and rediscovering self-identity. Through the symbolism of the house in the

character's head, it explores how past trauma shapes emotions and identity. The house serves as a space for both storing and processing memories, representing the struggle to release a painful past.

This study shows that Maxsonara's use of symbolism effectively depicts the emotional and psychological impacts of trauma, emphasizing that healing is a lengthy process involving self-understanding and acceptance. The story also critiques societal views on individuals perceived as "crazy," highlighting the need for compassion and space for healing without judgment. It reflects the tension between personal struggles and societal judgment, offering insights into social stigma and mental health issues. Ultimately, the story emphasizes the importance of understanding, self-acceptance, and patience in healing, serving as both a literary work and a medium for reflecting on mental health.

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