

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the author explains the theories used in this research. The focus is on social interaction and *symbolic interactionism*. These theories help to understand Otto's behavior and how he communicates with others in the film. This chapter also supports the analysis of Otto's character based on his social experiences.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Literature and film are deeply connected as forms of art and culture, especially when it comes to drama, where characterization and conflict play a central role. Many films are based on novels, plays, or poetry, and both forms help us explore human feelings and real-life experiences through storytelling. Characterization helps us see how people grow and change after facing life's ups and downs, while conflict whether it comes from within the character or from the outside world pushes the story forward and reveals who the character truly is. Take a character like Otto, for instance. His struggles with identity, social pressure, or emotional pain allow us to

witness his personal growth. As (Chen, 2024) notes, adapting books into films not only brings stories to new audiences, but also helps keep cultural messages alive through visual storytelling.

Literature also mirrors real life. It shows us how people deal with relationships, challenges, and how they come to understand themselves. Stories often highlight how people see themselves and how they are shaped by society. Through characters and their journeys, literature gives us a window into the emotional and social sides of life. It helps us connect with others' struggles, dreams, and emotions. As (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015) explains, reading literature helps us build empathy because it lets us experience what others feel and go through. In this way, both literature and film do not just entertain they help us understand human behavior, reflect on our own lives, and see the world through someone else's eyes.

To understand how an individual's identity is formed within a social context, this study applies the concept of the Looking Glass Self, introduced by *Charles Horton Cooley*. This theory explains that a person's sense of identity is shaped by their perception of how others see and evaluate them. The

process involves three stages. First, the individual imagines how they appear in the eyes of other people. Second, they reflect on how others might judge or interpret that appearance. Third, they experience an emotional response, such as pride or shame, based on that imagined evaluation. This concept suggests that identity does not develop solely through personal introspection, but is formed through continuous interaction with others (Ummah, 2019).

The Looking-Glass Self concept, developed by *Charles Horton Cooley*, explains that identity is formed through social experiences in which individuals imagine how they are perceived and evaluated by others. Identity is not developed through internal reflection alone but is influenced by social feedback and continuous interaction with other people. This idea aligns with the view of (Wallace & Tice, 2003) who describe reflected appraisal as the process through which individuals use others as a mirror to form self-judgments based on how they believe they are seen. In cinematic narratives, this process is clearly illustrated through the relationships between characters, as their behaviors and self-perceptions gradually change in response to how others treat them. Therefore, this

concept provides a strong theoretical foundation for the present study, particularly in analyzing the character of Otto. His transformation from a withdrawn and emotionally distant individual to someone who becomes more open and socially connected demonstrates how identity can evolve through meaningful interaction within a social environment.

## **2.2 Characterization and Conflict**

Characterization allows the audience to understand who a character is, what matters to them, and how they develop over time. Sometimes a character's traits are described directly. In other cases, traits are revealed through speech, actions, and thoughts. Some characters are simple and remain unchanged (flat). Others are more complex and experience personal growth (round). These developments often occur as the character faces various challenges. Conflict is a key element that drives the narrative. It may be internal, such as guilt, fear, or doubt. It may also be external, such as struggles with other individuals or environmental factors. Conflict reveals how a character responds when situations do not go as expected. This often leads to a shift in perspective or a meaningful transformation, in which emotions function as states that

influence behaviour and decision making (Adolphs & Andler, 2018).

To understand how identity develops, *Charles Horton Cooley's theory* called the Looking-Glass Self can be applied. This theory explains that a person's sense of self is shaped by imagining how others see and judge them. People think about how they appear to others and what those others might think of them. These imagined judgments lead to feelings such as pride or shame. Therefore, self-identity changes based on how a person believes others perceive them. This theory helps explain why characters in stories behave in certain ways, as their actions are influenced not only by events but also by how they think others view them. For example, in the screenplay *A Man Called Otto*, the main character's identity changes through his interactions with other people. As Otto connects with others, he begins to see himself differently. This reflects *Cooley's idea* that social feedback influences self-understanding and behavior. The Looking-Glass Self theory is important for analyzing character growth and conflict because it shows that personal change often comes from emotional reactions to perceived social judgments (Stryker & Burke, 2000) .

Otto's character development in *A Man Called Otto* can be analyzed through the framework of *symbolic interactionism*, particularly in understanding how identity is influenced by perceived social expectations. This perspective holds that individuals form a sense of self through ongoing interactions and the interpretations they assign to other's behaviors. Otto's initial portrayal as withdrawn and bitter reflects a damaged sense of identity resulting from social disconnection, personal loss, and a belief that he no longer holds value or purpose within his social environment. His transformation begins when he starts to re-engage with others, particularly when his neighbors seek his help, which allows him to reconstruct his identity through meaningful social roles. As (Jenkins, n.d., 2008) argues, identity is not something individuals possess independently but is constantly negotiated and constructed through social processes and relationships.

Over time, Otto gradually formed new relationships with his neighbors, who demonstrated warmth and openness. The attention, acceptance, and genuine care he received from them led him to slowly perceive himself in a different light. He began to experience a renewed sense of usefulness,

importance, and value within his social environment. This shift in self-perception illustrates that Otto's identity evolves through meaningful social interaction. Such a transformation is supported by contemporary identity theories, which emphasize that identity is not fixed, but continuously shaped and reshaped within social contexts. (Crocetti, 2023) explain that identities are “genuinely social, being embedded in social contexts and fed by social contents,” highlighting the dynamic and relational nature of self-development. Therefore, Otto's character change is best understood not merely as a response to life events, but as a reflection of gradual social influences that reconstruct his sense of self and belonging within the community.

### **2.3 Symbolic Interactionism**

*Symbolic Interactionism* is a theoretical approach that explains how individuals create meaning and develop their identity through communication and the exchange of symbols. This perspective states that individuals act based on the meanings they give to people, objects, and situations. These meanings come from social interactions and continue to change through ongoing communication. One important

concept in this research is the Looking-Glass Self which was introduced by *Charles Horton Cooley*. This concept explains that individuals form their self-concept by imagining how others see them. The process involves imagining how one is seen by others, imagining how others judge that image, and feeling an emotional response based on that judgment. *Cooley* showed that a person's identity depends greatly on direct and continuous social interactions. Because of this, identity is dynamic and can change according to the social experiences of individuals. Therefore, *Cooley's* theory is used as the basis to understand how identity is formed through social perception and interpersonal interaction (Morries, 2015).

The theory of *Symbolic Interactionism* can be applied to understand how identity is formed, especially in the analysis of screenplays. This theory helps to explain how characters grow and change through their interactions with other people. The dialogue and actions in a screenplay often show exchanges between characters that provide feedback, which affects how the characters view themselves. Both internal and external conflicts play an important role in causing characters to think about their identity and change their behavior. For example, in

the screenplay *A Man Called Otto*, the main character's identity develops through his interactions with others. Throughout the story, his social experiences cause him to change his understanding of who he is and how he relates to the world. This change shows that identity in the screenplay is influenced not only by the events in the plot but also by the character's interpretation of how others see and respond to him. Therefore, *Symbolic Interactionism* reveals that character development is closely connected to social interaction and emotional reflection (Schuler, 2021).

This demonstrates that the analysis of movie screenplays is not only intended to understand the plot but also to explore how character identities are shaped through the social relationships presented in the story. In this context, a screenplay functions not just as a storytelling medium but also as a social document that reflects the processes of interaction and meaning formation between characters. Through clearly written dialogue and action instructions, the screenplay reveals how characters respond to the behavior, language, and attitudes of others around them. This process is closely related to the concept of the Looking Glass Self, which

explains that individuals form their understanding of themselves through the perceived judgments of others. In a screenplay, this is reflected when a character undergoes a change in thought or behavior after experiencing social interactions that have an emotional and psychological impact. The judgments received, whether directly or indirectly, prompt the character to reconsider who they are, their position within the social environment, and their relationships with those around them. (Igartua, 2010) discusses how identification with characters in fictional films fosters emotional involvement and cognitive engagement, illustrating the role of social interaction in shaping identity.

*Symbolic Interactionism* provides a meaningful framework for analyzing character identity in movie screenplays. This theory explains that identity is not something individuals possess independently, but rather something that develops through social interaction and the interpretation of others' behavior and responses. Screenplays, through dialogue and scene direction, capture these social exchanges in ways that allow the audience to observe how characters begin to define and redefine themselves. Characters often change over

the course of a film not simply because of what happens to them, but because of how they interpret and respond to social feedback from those around them. These responses gradually shape how they understand their roles, relationships, and personal value within the social world depicted in the story. Using *Symbolic Interactionism* to analyze such development helps reveal how identity is a fluid process influenced by ongoing communication, reflection, and interaction with others (Fletcher, 2023).

#### **2.4 The Role of Social Interaction in Identity Formation**

*Symbolic interactionism* is a theory that focuses on how social interactions help shape our identities. (Cooley, 1902) explained this through the "looking-glass self." This idea means that we don't create our sense of who we are by ourselves. Instead, we develop it by imagining how others see us. When we interact with people, we get clues about how they view us, and we form our self-image based on those reactions. If others accept us or show appreciation, our self-esteem tends to improve. But if we sense disapproval or rejection, we might start doubting ourselves. This theory is useful in literature when studying characters like Otto, who has trouble with his identity

and feels emotionally isolated. Otto's struggles are linked to how he thinks others perceive him, showing how social feedback can affect how we see ourselves. *Cooley's* theory helps us understand that characters are shaped by the people around them, not just by their own thoughts.

(Del Casino & Thien, 2019) takes this further by explaining that we define our self-concept based on our experiences with others. Through these interactions, we learn about the norms, values, and behaviors that society expects from us, which helps shape our understanding of who we are. In the story of Otto, his interactions with his neighbors, especially towards the end of the film, play a key role in changing how he views himself. The feedback he gets whether it is positive support or challenges helps reshape his identity, making him a great example of the Looking-Glass Self in action. his change demonstrates that identity is not fixed, but can be reshaped over time through meaningful social relationships. Otto serves as a clear example of how an individual's self-perception can change when they begin to open themselves to their surroundings and accept new meaning from the interactions they experience.

This supports the understanding that identity is not formed individually but is shaped through a continuous social process. In Otto's case, the change in his identity did not happen immediately but developed gradually through meaningful social experiences. The interactions he experienced, whether through emotional support, attention, or personal challenges, provided moments of reflection that allowed him to reconsider who he was and how he wished to be seen by others. Through this reflective process, Otto began to build a new and more positive understanding of himself, which eventually helped him move beyond emotional isolation and reconnect with the people around him. The concept of the Looking Glass Self introduced by *Charles Horton Cooley* not only helps explain how identity is shaped in daily life but also offers a strong foundation for understanding character development within fictional narratives (McIntyre, 1978).

Otto's social experiences with his neighbors not only influenced how he perceived himself but also transformed his attitude and sense of purpose in life. In the beginning, Otto viewed himself as someone without value or a meaningful role, but the relationships he developed helped him regain a sense of

being appreciated and needed. Each interaction contributed to the development of his understanding of himself, demonstrating that identity formation is closely tied to the experience of being accepted and recognized by one's social environment. This perspective highlights that identity develops through continuous interpretation of social feedback and responses from others. Therefore, *symbolic interactionism* provides a relevant framework for analyzing how character identity in fiction can be shaped by social experiences within the storyline (Aksan et al., 2009).

## **2.5 Depression, Loneliness, and Social Interaction**

Depression and loneliness are important factors to consider when looking at how social interactions and identity work. These feelings can have a big impact on how someone sees themselves and how they connect with others. (Peplau, 1985) point out that loneliness and depression are closely linked, and both can get worse when people lack meaningful social interactions. Otto's character in *A Man Called Otto* illustrates this well, as his grief and emotional isolation initially keep him from connecting with others, which only deepens his sadness and loneliness.

Through this significant social and psychological challenges that impact an individual's interactions with others and overall well-being. Depression generally comes from ongoing emotional pain and feelings of isolation, while loneliness results from a lack of meaningful social interactions (Peplau, 1985). Both conditions can influence how an individual views themselves and their relationships, often resulting in social disengagement and communication difficulties (Perlman, D., & Peplau, 1981). According to (Cacioppo, 2014), social engagement is important for reducing these problems since relationships with others can help change how one views oneself and maintain emotional stability. In *A Man Called Otto*, Otto experiences deep sadness after the death of his wife and his retirement, which leads him to withdraw from others. He becomes cold, impatient, and tends to isolate himself from others. However, as he starts interacting with his neighbors, his behavior begins to change. He becomes more open, shows care toward others, and responds more positively in social situations. These changes in behavior show how social interaction can influence a person's way of acting and connecting with others.

However, research by (Peplau, 1985) shows that social engagement is crucial for reducing these feelings. When people interact with others, they have chances to receive positive feedback and change how they see themselves. In the screenplay, Otto's increasing involvement with his neighbors challenges his old self-image and provides him with a way to heal emotionally and find a new purpose in life. This supports the idea that social interaction is key to overcoming depression and loneliness, helping people develop healthier self-concepts through meaningful relationships with others.

Otto's emotional recovery through interactions with his neighbors also illustrates how the Looking Glass Self operates on a psychological level. As Otto began receiving positive responses such as warm greetings, small acts of kindness, and genuine attention, he started to imagine that others considered him to be someone of value. His former view of himself as a useless individual gradually gave way to a renewed sense of self, shaped by the affirming social feedback he experienced. In this context, social interaction functions as a mirror that reflects positive evaluation, which helps Otto rebuild his confidence and rediscover a sense of purpose in life. This

process reflects how individuals use feedback from others to develop a clearer understanding of who they are (Bollich, 2011).

The process of identity formation is strongly influenced by the quality and consistency of social interactions. In *A Man Called Otto*, the main character's development demonstrates how repeated and sincere exchanges, even in simple forms, provide individuals with opportunities to reflect on and gradually adjust how they perceive themselves. During periods of emotional distress and isolation, meaningful relationships can interrupt negative patterns of thought and support personal renewal. Otto does not simply find temporary relief through the presence of others; rather, he undergoes a deeper change in how he understands his worth and place within the social world. This observation is supported by contemporary research showing that strong social connections and a sense of belonging contribute meaningfully to identity reconstruction and emotional well-being through continuous supportive interaction (Mehrpour, 2024).

## 2.6 Previous Research

Several studies have looked at how character development and identity are represented in films. For example, (Almuslina, 2024) explored the moral values found in *A Man Called Otto*, showing that Otto's actions reflect themes such as empathy, sincerity, and compassion. (Azizah & Hawasi, 2023) focused on Otto's personality using Florence Littauer's Personality Plus theory. They identified Otto as predominantly choleric, which influences his behavior, emotions, and interactions. In addition, (Farhat, M. F., 2025) analyzed the character development of Otto using Edgar V. Roberts' Characterization Theory, highlighting how Otto's transformation is influenced by his experiences and responses from those around him.

However, these studies primarily discuss moral values, personality traits, or general character change. While they provide valuable perspectives on Otto's transformation, they do not address how identity develops through continuous interaction with others. Research that explores identity formation through social relationships in recent films such as *A Man Called Otto* is still limited. This study addresses that gap by applying the theory of *Symbolic Interactionism* and

using the concept of the Looking-Glass Self by *Charles Horton Cooley* to describe how Otto's identity changes through the perceptions and responses of those around him. Through an analysis of the screenplay, this research highlights how social interaction contributes to the construction and transformation of personal identity

