

Psychoanalysis of Alice Garton Character as a Conservative Mother in Response to Helen and Chris Relationship in “Dear Nobody” by Berlie Doherty

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Abstract

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This study concerns on the character of conservative mother of Alice Garton in response to her daughter's love affair with her boyfriend, Chris in the novel “Dear Nobody” by Berlie Doherty. The researcher intends to discover the reasons why Alice Garton becomes very strict, super disciplined, overprotective, and overcare to Helen, her daughter, which made her reluctant to share her problems and hide her unexpected pregnancy from her. Moreover, this study is a descriptive qualitative research that uses the three personality aspects theory by Sigmund Freud as the psychoanalytic framework. The primary data source used in analyzing Alice Garton character is “Dear Nobody” novel by Berlie Doherty besides various reliable academic journals and books related to psychoanalysis as secondary data source. The data analysis technique employed is content analysis of the story. The result of this study will be presented in the narrative form which reveals that Alice's strict and conservatives personality according to the three personality aspects proposed by Freud is superego for she behaves according to the norms and values that is accepted by society. The three reasons that Alice is a conservative are her standpoint, actions and beliefs.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Superego, Conservative Mother, Dear Nobody

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INTRODUCTION

In general, novel could be defined as a long and complex stories consisting of various intrinsic elements such as theme, characters, characterizations, settings, language styles, point of view, plots, and moral value, as well as extrinsic elements including the author's background, the value of the story, as well as the situation and conditions. In other words, novel is a literary works that can be used as a medium for expressing feelings, thoughts, and personal problems of the author into a good and well written story (Megah, 2018). Hence, it can be said that the novel is a reflection of the real world. The novel's realities which can make the depiction of the human with their divers personalities and their interactions in real life through the strings of words makes it possible to analyze it further by using a psychoanalytic approach.

As it has been mentioned above, one of the important elements of a novel is a character who is likened as human being who lives in a ‘novel realm’ and certainly has a particular personality. Then, one of the things discussed in psychological theory is the personality or people’s distinctive character that makes



them different from others. The three important elements related to personality are the concepts of the id, ego, and superego, which has been proposed by Freud. Accordingly, it can be inferred that the characters' personality in the novel can be specifically examined by using psychological theory.

According to psychoanalytic theory, human behavior is controlled by his or her personality. Sigmund Freud was the father of psychoanalysis, demonstrating how much scientific knowledge includes the concept of an unconscious level of mental activity. He also emphasized the importance of almost all mental activities. This theory is widely accepted as the primary foundation for studying human behavior and psychology. The influence of Freud's school is quite broad, encompassing not only medicine and psychology, but also philosophy, religion, art, literature, anthropology, and politics. According to Syawal and Helaluddin (2018) the goal of psychoanalytic theory is to explain the nature and development of the human personality. Motivation, emotion, and other internal aspects are prioritized in this theory. Freud's understanding of human psychology is founded on experiences with his patients, dream analysis, and extensive reading of scientific and human literature these experiences provided crucial data for the development of his theory. Humans, according to Freud, are deterministic creatures, with irrational forces, subconscious forces, biological drives, and instincts determining human behavior during the first six years of life. Freud's psychoanalysis can be classified as a new science about humans that has been beset by numerous contradictions.

In the story of "*Dear Nobody*" by Berlie Doherty, Alice Garton's personality attracted the author's attention for being a salient character as a conservative mother to be observed using three personality aspects. She is represented as a career woman who has not been too close to her daughter. She is described as a woman with glasses who is a little stiff, rarely in a state of cheerfulness, and certainly very conservative, especially in matters of dealing with her daughter's relationship with her boyfriend. Actually, it is very common if the conservative mothers will be very protective of their children. They will care greatly about how they carried themselves, who they were friends with, or how they spent their time. Conservative moms will claim that they do all these actions are merely to build a good character of her children. However, Alice Garton as a mom looks like forgetting the important things to ask her daughter whether she is feeling comfortable and want to be treated with such manners or not. She also appeared to be unaware that sometimes her excessive actions would result in the mental health disorder for her daughter. Thereafter, what type of the personality that fit to the character of conservative mother according to Freudian theory and what the factors affecting Alice Garton to become a conservative mother. All these questions will be explained in detail accompanied by some strong evidence in this study.

RESEARCH METHOD

According to Dornyei, the definition of qualitative research is a kind of research that its outcome is the result of researchers' subjective interpretation about the data since it is interpretive research. In conducting qualitative research, the researchers are required to study things in their natural settings and attempt to interpret the phenomena in the way the people bring to them Denzin and Lincoln.

In this type of research, the data is collected through many instruments including interviews, group focuses, and observations that bring out the data in the form of words, texts, images, categories, and even behaviours. This study is a descriptive-qualitative research. According to Syauqie and Heryati (2022) quoted in Sugiono Independent variable research is conducted to determine the value of one or more (independent) variables without making comparisons or connecting with other variables. It is due to the fact that the researcher observed the data in the form of narrative text and direct quotation from the novel, which then analyzed the content and context using psychoanalytic theory.

There are two data sources that are used in this study the first is primary data source that is a novel entitled "Dear Nobody" by Berlie Doherty, a British novelist who is well-known for her masterpieces of children books and young-adult novels. It is a realistic young-adult novel that was firstly published in Great Britain in 1991 by Hamish Hamilton Ltd. It is a 200 pages novel, with the title of each chapter by the name of the month. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources are some relevant books and academic literature journals that are officially published by credible authors & researchers.

In collecting the data, the researcher applied the documentation technique or a method used to classify and identify various types of documents (Bulan et al., 2019). In doing so, the researcher were involving two steps. Those two are reading the novel "Dear Nobody" repeatedly and carefully and writing down all important information and data related to the research objectives through the note-taking method.

After the data has been collected, the researcher then analyzes it using the three steps of qualitative analysis, namely data reduction, display data, and verification & drawing conclusion by Huberman et al. In the data reduction step, the data existed will be sorted by focusing on the narrative text or direct quotations related to the Alice Garton character only. Thereupon, after the data has been sorted, it is then explained descriptively in paragraph form so that it is easier to understand. Afterwards, in the third step that is verification and drawing a conclusion, the data that has been collected and displayed is then analyzed by using the theory of three personality aspects for then the conclusion of classification of Alice Garton's character based on psychoanalytic theory and the reasons that led her to become a conservatives mother are formulated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Psychoanalysis

Broadly speaking, the psychoanalysis of literature is actually derived from the psychoanalytical theory that is proposed by Sigmund Freud, which is the one of the prominent psychiatrists around the world. It is used to learn the person's personality development as it is used to cure psychopathology (Afkarina and Wardhani, 2019; Buckley, 2015; Ellmann, 2014). Freud as the founder of this theory has developed it along with his observations on the development of physical science in the 1900s and it still continues to be improved because many psychiatric experts are also interested to investigate it by using the latest physical science. Psychoanalysis divides the dynamics of the human psyche into three interconnected personality

components. These three components, like the psychic structure, influence human behavior in both acting and decision making.

There most notable psychoanalytical theory by Freud is the idea of human physical life part analogy that it is like a an ice berg phenomena, in which the obvious consious and preconscous mind are just like small chunks of the ice berg appeared on the sea that are visible, while the unconsciousness as an invisible things are more influencing in the process of constructing human behavior. Freud asserted that the conscious things is very related to the memory, thought, and perception, while preconsciousness is the things that trigger the emergence of all things included in conscious things. However, apart from those two things, there are another significant things, that is the unconscious mind or things related to emotions, feelings, and instinct related to trauma.

Due to the importance of the three parts of the human mind in influencing human actions and characters, Freud developed the concept of three personality manner structures, namely the id, ego, and superego. Firstly, id is an element that worked at an unconscious level as it is an innate biological instinct of human being. Id is related to desire, pleasure, and satisfaction. More specifically, Freud divided Id into two instincts, namely *eros* or survival instinct to fulfil their needs for eating, breathing, and having sex, meanwhile, the other one that is *thanatos* or death instinct which is the opposite of *eros*. *Thanatos* is a destructive, aggressive, and violent instinct that can cause annihilation (Pratiwi et al., 2019). Subsequently, the ego is the second element which is the development of the Id and it is between the consious and unscious minds. It derives humans to be more realistic in complying their desires in a more civilized and accepted ways. Indeed, ego acts like a 'personal tool' which functions to synchronize and regulate the balance of primitive desires with the outside world and the third aspect of personality that is the superego. Superego is something that is related to the human consciousness. This is why the way it works is so inversely proportional to id. Superego is all about values, morals, and ethics. It is concerned about the judgment of what is right, wrong, good, bad, polite, and impolite which become the things that is generally accepted by the community. Because it lies in the realm of concsciouness, the superego can be deliberately developed from an early age. Thus, it has an essential role in the process of children character building by encouraging them to behave in a polite and well manner.

In addition, there are many factors that can affect human behavior and personality in general. The factors are classified into two, namely internal or individual factors that are influenced from within and the external or environmental factors (Kumari, 2016). The internal factors include intelligence, heredity, nervous system, and gender. Meanwhile, the factors which come from the outside or external factors can be school, social, social, cultural, family environment, and language.

Conservative Mother

According to the Oxford Dictionary, conservatives means the opposite of extreme or instant social change. That terms indicates someone who prefers and maintains traditional styles and values. Terminologically, a conservative mother is a woman who chooses to hold tight to the traditional values and rules rather than follows the

modern values in growing their children (Murray and Kerry, 2018). Furthermore, in psychology, a conservative mother or strict mother can be described as a mother who places high standards on social norms and rules for her children. Most of them tend to be unsupportive and unresponsive when taking care of their child (Cox, 1981; Fromm, 2013). They often determine such a authoritative and arbitrary domestic rules. In their interactions, they rarely listen to their children's opinions and position themselves as parents who must be respected and obeyed. Even though they often said that they did it for the sake of their children, yet, the real aims sometimes are just for escaping themselves or saving their own insecurities from social judgement of being incompetent mother rather than their children's feelings and welfare (Qodariyah et al., 2017; Sofe, 2012).

DISCUSSION

According to Freud (1958; 1974; 1997), "woman's psychic representation into the unconscious makes this concept so complex". Freud points out that by maintaining an ambivalent relationship that can last a lifetime, women cannot fully separate themselves from what was their first object of libidinal investment, ie, mother. Thus, psychoanalysis earned a reputation as a conservative cultural force with a tendency towards orthodoxy, insularity, and elitism. In *Dear Nobody*, Helen's mother is a very conservative person. Conservative parents will notes that all these acts are merely to improve their children's positive basic attitudes and personality. Nevertheless, they sometimes fail to ask their children if they feel relaxed, like it, and want to be handled or not with such strategies. They often seem unaware that their excessive acts often actually make their kids more prone to become anti-social, restrained, unloved, and unable to tell their parents even the most trivial details about very personal things.

Alice Garton was seen as a career woman and also Helen's mother in the tale of Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody* book, who has not been too close to her daughter since she grew up. She is described as a woman with glasses who is often locked in her own head, a little stiff, rarely in a state of cheerfulness, and certainly very conservative, especially when it comes to dealing with the relationship between her daughter and her boyfriend. In addition, she doesn't seem to like her daughter, who always talks to her boyfriend for quite a long time. Possibly, because the fear of being scolded, these may be the reasons why Helen Garton, her daughter, did not dare to discuss her relationship and her problems with her mother. There is therefore some evidence in the story that reveals Alice Garton as a conservative mother through her acts, gestures, feelings, words of other characters, and even the author's own portrayal of Alice Garton, in relation to her daughter's relationship with Christopher.

First, the action of Alice Garton secretly chasing Chris to make him leave her house immediately when his presence was deemed to annoy her daughter showed that she was very firm on her principles of managing her relationship with her daughter. We can clearly see this at the moment when Helen was told off for forgetting her letter to the Royal Northern College of Music because she enjoyed her time with Chris so much, so Alice Garton asks Chris to leave their house immediately. Alice said, "'I think you had,' said her mother, arms folded, looking from one to the other of us" (1991:9). After trying to make him feel guilty for taking

so much of Helen's time, which had been spent enough for school work, she also did the same to Chris and made her very tired after going out with him. "Her mother always said, 'She's working, Chris,' as if she was trying to make me feel guilty for disturbing her.". Nancy Chodorow's opinion that the definition of a daughter is actually taken consciously or unconsciously but directly from her mother. It can be inferred that Alice action is the reflection on how she wants Helen to be seen and she has a strong standpoint on how she view the relationship between Helen and Christopher. In relation to Freud's ego theory which elaborates that has no concept of right or wrong; something is good simply if it achieves its end of satisfying without causing harm to itself or the id. Alice's action proves that her ego is what drives her to separate Alice and Chris from meeting with each other.

Second, through her acts of always interrupting Helen and not allowing her to speak freely to Chris on the phone, she reduced the time Helen and Chris spoke to each other on the phone. We may conclude that by making this so-called calling regulations, she seemed to discourage them from making such long conversations for a long time and regular on the phone. When Helen talks to Chris, she has a habit of always asking for the phone, and he always remembered this. "'Helen. I need the phone.' That was her mother. She does it every time.". According to Shilpa, "each life stage for both mother and daughter represents new challenges and opportunities for new relational integrations". I may assume from Alice's behaviour that she is always asking for the phone to disrupt Helen and Chris's comments about the effect of Alice's involvement with Helen that she always had her own ways of making Helen and Chris not have much time to be able to communicate deeply by phone. This action integrates stages of how Alice and Helen tumultuous relationship continues to grow.

Finally, we can understand from the conversation between Alice and Helen that she was really angry and frustrated with Helen when she finally found out about her daughter's pregnancy. She said:

"Mum gasped out again like a small child and came groping forward with her hands stretched out towards me, and I went up to her not knowing anything now, and she pressed me to her as if I was six years old."

She also ordered her daughter to have an abortion because she might ruin the baby's and her own future. In the quote below:

"'You want to get it all over with quickly, don't you?' she said. I had to push the back of my hand into my mouth and bite it. The hurting in my throat had reached my eyes."

"'Think of your future. It's your future. You mustn't throw it away,' and I shook my head, my eyes too full to see anything. My future is a deep, black well. Whatever I see in it frightens me. Mum touched my hair."

She felt very disappointed at once because she was found unworthy of her personality and herself well, aside from being ashamed because of her inability to teach her daughter. In addition, her dark past had comes back to consume her and she does now want Helen to be have the same experience as her. "'If you must know, Helen, I'm the one who was illegitimate, not you.'". "The bluebottle had gone still. Even Robbie had stopped his maniac singing. 'I was born out of wedlock, as they say. Born in sin. And I'll never forgive my mother for that.'". This result in an psyche confusion for Helen as she sees her mom as someone who is strong,

independent and conservative. Formation of identity is important at the early stages of a child's development and at the early stage of a child's development As Lacan puts it, the Mirror Stage is life. In this step, the mother becomes the individual The baby daughter's reflection and she sees herself mirrored in the mother and Her mental depiction of "I" or the Self is created. This image that reflects back becomes ideal for the child which she aspires and strives for all her life. Thus, it can be reinstate that after Helen learned the truth she understand why her mother war very disapproving of her relationship with Chris.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the character of Alice Garton as a traditional, rigid mother, and raising her child with strict rules can be shown by items such as her behaviour that subtly drove Chris out of the house, restricted Helen and Chris' contact on the phone, considered their love to be a trivial matter, and instantly scolded Helen because she was pregnant and told her to do surgery without doing any kind of counselling or discussion as mother and daughter to solve the problem. Alice Garton felt as a mother that she was doing all these things for the goodness of Helen, and after she told Helen the truth their relation began to blossom. As in the study by Lacan of the mirror stage is life which is an image that reflects back becomes ideal for the child which she aspires and strives for all her life. A mother is very important in a daughter's life however, a mother must not be very controlling of her daughter's action as it could result in the feeling of restrained and hard to open up about certain things that are considered to be personal or even dangerous such as in the case of Helen's pregnancy.

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