



THE SCARS OF OLD MEMORIES IMPACT ON HUMAN PSYCHE IN PAULA HAWKINS' THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

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ABSTRAK

Setiap manusia di dunia ini memiliki ketidaksempurnaannya. Seseorang dapat mengubah kepribadiannya sesuai dengan pengalaman. Setiap orang memiliki rasa tidak aman dan kecemasan yang dapat menyebabkan perilaku berubah. Fenomena ini juga terwakili dalam novel karya Paula Hawkins berjudul *The Girl on the Train*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkapkan penyebab hilangnya Megan cintanya satu pengalaman mempengaruhi kepribadiannya saat ini dan untuk mengungkapkan proyeksi dan perpindahan Megan mempengaruhi hubungan dengan suaminya. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori kritik psikoanalitik untuk menganalisis novel *The Girl on the Train*. Datum utama dari penelitian ini adalah novel, yang berfokus pada ekspresi dan penjelasan yang terkait dengan ketakutan bawah sadar dan mekanisme pertahanan oleh karakter. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa perilaku seseorang akan berubah setelah memiliki pengalaman buruk serta kehilangan orang yang dicintai. Selain itu, ketika seseorang menekan mereka banyak untuk melakukan sesuatu yang tidak mereka inginkan. Untuk mengatasi luka seseorang, seseorang akan melepaskan lukanya kepada orang lain.

Kata kunci: mekanisme pertahanan, perpindahan, proyeksi, psikoanalisis

ABSTRACT

Every human being in this world has its imperfection. An individual can change his or her personality according to experience. Every person has insecurities and anxieties that may cause behavior to change. This phenomenon is also represented in Paula Hawkins's novel titled *The Girl on the Train*. The study aims to reveal the cause of Megan's loss of her love one experience affect her current personality and to reveal Megan's projection and displacement affect the relationship with her husband. The research used psychoanalytic criticism theory to analyze the novel *The Girl on the Train*. The primary datum of this study is the novel, which focuses on the expression and explanation related to the unconscious fears and defenses mechanism by the characters. The results showed that someone's behavior would change after having a bad experience as well as losing the loved one. Moreover, when someone pressed them a lot for doing something that they do not want to. In order to overcome someone's wound, a person will be releasing his or her wounds to other people.

Keywords: defense mechanism, displacement, projection, psychoanalysis

INTRODUCTION

Most of the human lives are dealing with experience problems (Pandin et al., 2019). It can be reflected in human values (Pandin, 2020) or human literature work such as the novel, theater, film, or poetry (Christinawati & Pandin, 2019). Due to human psychology, defense mechanism has been an essential concept in the study of the psychoanalysis theory. Behavior is something that always attached to every human in this world and becomes people's

characteristics. One of which factors that influence our behavior development is our surroundings. Someone's behavior can change throughout many factors; for instance, it is after people have traumatic experiences. Trauma relates to the level of growth that a patient will undergo (Tyson, 2015). Anyone in their childhood can encounter trauma because of losing their close people such as family because of sickness, death due to injuries or suicide, and can also result from a trauma that is followed by anxiety, rejection, and even conflict. This traumatic experience provokes a discomfort feeling which called as anxiety. A reaction as guilt or remorse does not serve to modify or ameliorate the anxiety or memory constellation, which resulted from injury to the ego (Juni, 1999).

Every human being has their fear of something that they are not like or afraid of. People unconsciously will do something to protect themselves in confronting or avoiding it, which might create new behavior called a defense mechanism. According to Tyson (2015, 15), a defense mechanism is the processes by which the content of our unconscious is kept in the unconscious, which means that they are processes by which we keep repressed to avoid knowing what we feel we cannot handle knowing it.

According to Porter and Peace (2007), the impact of trauma on memory has attracted an enormous amount of scientific and clinical attention for many years. There are many factors of change behavior, and one of them is losing someone that important in our life, such as family, lover, or friends. The losing itself could be caused by death, or the person just walks out from someone's life wordless. According to Keyes, et al (2014), unexpected death of a loved one is the most frequently reported potentially traumatic experience, making mental health consequences of unexpected death a significant public health concern. Although any death of a loved one can be emotionally devastating, unexpected deaths provoke especially strong responses, as there is less time to prepare for and adapt to the death. Grieving for the loss of a loved one is a time often characterized by extreme stress (Pratt 2017). This issue is demonstrated in the novel, which will be discussed in this study.

This issue represents in the novel entitled *The Girl on the Train*, written by Paula Hawkins. The story of this novel is delivered from three points of view of the characters that are Rachel, Megan, and Anna. The story is about a depression woman after getting divorced from her husband and decided to drink much alcohol so she could forget all of her pain. She travels to the same place with the same Train every day, and she always looks out of the window to a backyard of houses which it passes on that route. She feels like she knows all the people who live in that house. Until one day, something wrong happened, she thought that she knows everything when it turns out that she knows nothing about them. However, in the end, she is part of all those things that happened.

The issue of this novel is that one of the characters, Megan, is not a perfect human being even if people see her that she is the most beautiful woman who lucky to has a husband who can balance her beauty. Megan denies the truth that she has a trauma of having a baby, and she keeps in her mind for years to years behind her husband when he wants to have a baby with her. So, Megan acts that she does not care about it and released her anger and burden to something that is not appropriate.

There is a previous study that discusses the same literary work conducted by Fita Febriani in 2018, a student of Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Febriani found out that Megan experiences Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms since Megan had an unbalanced emotion and insomnia. There is also a previous thesis conducted by Atun Farkhatun, a student of Universitas Sunan Kalijaga of Faculty of Adab and Cultural Studies, in 2017. She found out that the main character named Rachel in the novel titled *The Girl on the Train* has several anxieties that occurred because of many factors that she already

had experienced. She believes that those anxieties' feelings cannot quickly disappear in everyone's life. This study discusses different issues by the one who already studied by Febriani. She studied only about Megan's trauma, while this study analyzed Megan's defense mechanism and core issue. Hopes that this study would fill the gap from the previous studies.

The psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature (Barry 2009, 92). The psychoanalysis approach is the best literary theory to be applied in order to understand the character of the story in any kind of literary works. The psychoanalytic approach helps us to understand the psychological development of a character and the author's personality (Kumari 2016, 34). This study aims to reveal Megan's loss of her love one experience affect her current personality and to reveal Megan's displacement and projection affect the relationship with her husband. This paper will begin by defining several key terms that are necessary for understanding this study: anxiety, trauma, fears, defense mechanism, and core issue. This paper will then introduce the methodology of this study, a qualitative research method, and close reading analysis, followed by the results and discussion sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For some people who experienced a traumatic event or having the most profound fear is hard to deal with it, especially when they are facing those experience again. As Phillips (2018) states that Freud interprets hysteria as an unacceptable impulse or traumatic memory that is repressed into the unconscious and then forces itself into consciousness as a hysterical symptom, the treatment for which is an uncovering of the repressed idea or impulse. It is in line with (Whitmoyer 2019) that the unconscious is the vast reservoir of our experience that has slipped silently into the past; it is the marked surface of our body's palimpsest on which the present writes but which remains haunted by the underlying text, which can never be truly erased, layer after layer.

In the study which conducts by (Viladinia 2018), they found that the main character named Audrey Turner in the novel titled *Finding Audrey* faced internal conflict which a conflict between person and him/herself and external conflict which a conflict between person and person. They believe that people are frequently battle with her/himself from fear and anxiety that occur because of people around them.

While in the study conducted by (Wahyuningtyas 2014) found that the main character named David in Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called 'IT'* novel has a defense mechanism because he experienced a strict life with many rules made by his mother back in his childhood. All he wants is freedom, good food, and a happy family, while his mother was not allowing him to watch television, eat tasty food, even not allowing him to have leisure time. So, he starts to use several kinds of defense mechanisms to protect himself from danger and pain, and he kept everything he wanted for himself, so his mother does not know what he wants. She believes that someone builds their defense mechanism because of their stress and trauma, which have a terrible impact on someone's future.

In another study conducted by (Fuad 2014), he analyzed the main character named Jilly in another novel titled *The Singing Stones*. He found out that Jilly has several anxieties. The first is neurotic anxiety, which occurs because she had bad experiences and cannot tell the truth to someone. So, she uses repression and regression as her defense mechanism to revoke her neurotic anxiety. The second is moral anxiety, which occurs because of her mother's obsession. So, she uses denial and projection to overcome her moral anxiety.

Furthermore, the last is realistic anxiety, which occurs because she lost her father. Besides, to overcome the realistic anxiety she uses intellectualization defense mechanisms. Fuad states that the ego does the defense to avoid the pain, so the person will not feel the anxiety if they are making a defense mechanism to what they are afraid of.

METHODOLOGY

In analyzing the novel *The Girl on the Train*, the writer applied the psychoanalytical approach. The psychoanalytic approach helps us to understand the psychological development of characters and the author's personality (Kumari 2016). This study using a descriptive method of analysis by describing and analyzing the data and then giving the interpretation and explanation. Also, this study employs a qualitative method, which is described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences (Creswell, 1994).

The Girl on the Train novel is the primary source in this study. The narration, dialogues, and the interaction between Megan and other characters would become the primary data for this study. The writer also uses the secondary source, namely printed books, journals, and articles; those are necessary to support analysis for this study. This study will be discussing the defense mechanism of one character named Megan. The writer concentrates on the textual analysis of the novel. The study also focuses on the intrinsic elements of the novel, such as character, plot, and conflict. The plot analysis will also be conducted to comprehend Megan's life concerning the defense mechanism discussion.

In order to collect the data, the authors used a close reading of the novel *The Girl on the Train*. The process of data analysis in this study by observing the story of Megan's life from the beginning to the end and then finds out Megan's defense mechanisms. The writer will focus on the character and plot elements of the story. Then, the authors will be able to reveal the cause of Megan's loss of her love one experience affect her current personality and to reveal Megan's denial and displacement affects the relationship to her husband.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Scars from the Past

We all have thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories that can be difficult to handle. In certain situations, people deal with such emotions by using what is known as defense mechanisms. These defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological reactions that protect people from feelings of anxiety, threats to self-esteem, and things they do not want to think about or deal with (Cherry 2020).

As a woman who has a painful experience that she been through. Megan Hipwell often feels confused and lost. She repressed her sorrow into behavior in order to avoid the trauma that she had, which is a defense mechanism. According to Tyson (2015, 15), a defense mechanism is the processes by which the content of our unconscious is kept in the unconscious, which means that they are processes by which we keep repressed to avoid knowing what we feel we cannot handle knowing it. According to Khoso and Shah (2016), defenses are the systematic processes, which help to hold back the repressed feelings in order to avoid knowingly, which otherwise cannot be handled consciously.

Therefore, on her marriage, Megan is always seeking comfort in her husband named Scott but finding him too protective. She has much pain, which she carried from her past, but

she could not tell about her past to her husband. So, Scott suggests her to go to a psychiatrist named Kamal Abdic in order to relieve her burden. As the meeting goes well, slowly but surely, Megan also recovered. After all her session meetings, Megan found out that she could not be feeling better since she still kept wound and thought that the story is too painful to be remembered and retold. Finally, Megan tried to expel her story to her psychiatrist, and finally, she fully relieved.

Megan surprisingly had an affair with Rachel's ex-husband, which current husband of Anna Watson named Tom Watson. Megan mysteriously disappeared on a Saturday night in July 2013, and she is found dead days later. Much of the trauma in Megan comes from her brother Ben's death and the later death of her daughter, Libby, whom she had while living with her ex-boyfriend named Mac.

Displacement: When Husband Not Around

Displacement is a defense mechanism employed by many other defenses and has a different role from all the other defenses. Locating conflicts in a new situation, displacement attempts to find new solutions (Neubauer 1994). According to (Cherry 2020), displacement involves taking out our frustration, feelings, and impulses on people or objects that are less threatening.

In this novel, Megan impingement on the feeling of her wound or stress to Kamal Abdic and Tom Watson. She relieved her wound by doing something that was not appropriate, such as having an affair with someone else besides her husband. She is doing it because she wanted to get attention and being wanted by people because Scott often busy with his work. Sometimes she just admired, and then her mind changed into wild thoughts while she had a therapy meeting with her therapist, Kamal Abdic.

"I think it is the voice. Soft and low. Slight accented, which I was expecting, because his name is Dr. Kamal Abdic. I guess he must be mid-thirties, although he looks very young with his incredible dark honey skin. He has hands I could imagine on me, long and delicate fingers, I can almost feel them on my body." (Hawkins 2016, 43)

On the other time, Megan desperately begged Kamal to have an affair that she wanted. Nevertheless, Kamal explained to her that it was not appropriate, especially in his office. He had to be professional as a therapist. If he was not, he could lose his job.

"Don't, Megan. You can't... we can't...." He turned away. "This.... Here. It's not appropriate. It's normal, believe me, but..." I told him I wanted to be with him." (Hawkins 2016, 181)

Even she asked Tara, her friend to lied to Scott if he called Tara to ask about Megan's condition.

"After my pilates class last night, I asked Tara if she wanted to go to the cinema with me one night next week, then if she'd cover for me. 'If he calls, can you just say I'm with you, that I'm in the loo and I'll ring him straight

back? Then you call me, and I call him, and it's that cool." (Hawkins 2016, 72)

The conversation above showed that Megan was craving attention and love since her husband, Scott, always busy with his work. She needed someone to be leaned on to in order to forget about her wound.

Megan also had an affair with Tom Watson. Sometimes, on one occasion, when they are sneaking around to meet each other in other places that Scott will not know about her affair. No one knows and realizes about their affair. Until one day, when Megan found out that she was pregnant, she decided to tell him because she thought that there is a possibility that he might be the father of the baby. However, he denied it and forcing her to do an abortion.

"Another deep breath. 'Tom, I'm telling you this because..... well, because there's a possibility that the child could be yours.'" (Hawkins 2016, 386)

"'Have an abortion,' he says. 'I mean, if it's your husband's, do what you want. But if it's mine, get rid of it. Seriously, let's not be stupid about this. I don't want another kid.' He runs his finger down the side of my face. 'And I'm sorry, but I don't think you're really motherhood material, are you Megs?'" (Hawkins 2016, 386)

According to (Cherry 2020), displacement can cause an unintended chain reaction. Displaced aggression, for example, can become a cycle. This phenomenon is also showed in *The Girl on the Train* novel when Megan was not able to release her sad because of her wound, and she expresses her emotion to her therapist, Kamal, and Tom because her husband, Scott, often busy with his work even sometimes he has to go far away from her. This habit could lead to an unhappy ending, which in this case, Megan has been told to do an abortion by Tom because she was pregnant.

Projection: Losing My Baby Girl

As Rosenthal (2010) states, "Freud first defined projection as "the ego thrusting forth onto the external world whatever gives rise to pain internally." He also believes that projection is said to happen when a person rated himself low on a characteristic that others rate him higher, and rates others higher on that characteristic than they rate themselves. According to McWilliams (2020), projection, the mental process by which people attribute to others what is in their minds. For example, individuals who are in a self-critical state, consciously or unconsciously, may think that other people are critical of them.

In the novel *The Girl on the Train*, the phenomenon of projection experienced by Megan is when she hates a baby when she likes them. Nevertheless, since Megan had a lousy memory with her previous daughter, which she lost her baby girl because of her mistake. So, Megan assuming if babies also hate her. According to one citation in Rogers (Rogers et al., 2008). The death of a child is one of the most painful events that an adult can experience and is linked to complicated or traumatic grief reactions.

Her projection began when she accidentally got pregnant in her teenage age when she runs away because her brother died. She lived with Mac, someone that she just met in a new place. Unwittingly Megan got pregnant, yet she and Mac did not want and ready for her

pregnancy. Even Megan wanted to get rid of her baby. Nevertheless, once the baby has arrived, all of a sudden, Megan loves her daughter so much. She cherishes her daughter with all her heart. She named Elizabeth, but Megan prefers it called her Libby.

“‘She was lovely. She had dark eyes and blonde hair. She didn’t cry a lot, she slept well, right from the very beginning. She was good. She was a good girl.’ I have to stop there for a moment. ‘I expected everything to be so hard, but it wasn’t.’” (Hawkins 2016, 224).

Until one cold day, when Megan had a fight with Mac, and he left Megan and Libby alone in their house. Since the weather is freezing, Megan decided to warm herself with Libby in a hot bath. Megan put Libby in her chest, and she relaxed without realizing that she was fell asleep later. When she awakes and realized, she could not find Libby in her chest. Libby has died at that moment.

“‘I fell asleep,’ I say, and then I can’t say any more, because I can feel her again, no longer on my chest, her body wedged between my arm and the edge of the tub, her face in the water. We were both so cold.” (Hawkins 2016, 225).

Since then, every time Megan’s husband, Scott, talking about having a child with her in her current marriage, Megan always eluding herself from that conversation. She felt uncomfortable getting into that kind of conversation with that topic, which is about children. Because when Scott has that topic, that means he wants a child with Megan while she still has a trauma of having a child.

*“‘They always go for you, the lonely ones, don’t they? They make a beeline straight for you.’
‘Do they?’
‘She doesn’t have kids then?’ he asks, and I don’t know if I’m imagining it, but the second the subject of children comes up, I can hear an edge in his voice and I can feel the argument coming, and I just don’t want it, can’t deal with it, so I get to my feet and I tell him to bring the wine glasses, because we’re going to the bedroom.”* (Hawkins 2016, 74).

From the conversations above, it is shown that she does not want to avoid getting into the conversation that will initiate a fight between them. After losing her daughter in the past, in her current marriage life, her husband encouraged her to become a nanny. At first, Megan agreed to volunteer then she overwhelmed over the baby.

“‘Scott encouraged me – he was over the moon when I suggested it. He thinks spending time around babies will make me broody. In fact, it’s doing exactly the opposite, when I leave their house I run home, can’t wait to strip my clothes off and get into the shower and wash the baby smell off me.” (Hawkins 2016, 38).

From the citation above, it is showing that she does that because she wants to think that the babies also hate her because she has a trauma of having a baby. According to Rogers (Rogers et al., 2008), the death of a child is a traumatic event that can have long-term effects on the lives of parents. As a citation in Rogers that parents might also experience guilt about

having been unable to protect the child. Megan projected herself that she hates baby, and she makes believe that the baby would hate her as well in order to protect herself from experience.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the loss of loved ones will affect someone who experienced it. The defense mechanism, which built unconsciously by Megan in the novel *The Girl on the Train* was intends to protect her unpleasant feelings from her trauma. Megan's displacement covers her feeling when she needs someone to release her pain since her husband often busy with his work. Besides, her projection covers her feeling of being afraid of having a baby since she lost her daughter back when she was at a young age.

However, this study defines the cause of Megan's defense mechanism behavior aside from her initial trauma, which is losing someone she loved. As a result of conducting this study, defense mechanisms will occur when someone has a bad experience, and they have to deal with their fears by putting up a new behavior to keep their traumatic feeling. The trauma occurs from many other forms, and one of which is losing someone we love cause of death or just being left by them.

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