

**REPRESSION AND DISPLACEMENT OF MAIN
CHARACTER IN ELIZABETH GILBERT’S NOVEL
EAT, PRAY, LOVE
(A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS)**

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with Repression and Displacement of Main Character in Elizabeth Gilbert’s Novel Eat, Pray, Love. The objectives of this study were to find out the causing of repression and the displacement in the novel. This study was limited to analyze Liz as the main character. This study applied descriptive qualitative method. The data were taken from Elizabeth Gilbert’s novel Eat, Pray, Love. The findings indicated that Liz got repressions which are triggered by two factors; the crisis of self identity and marriage conflict. And then the displacement that occurred to the main character after getting repressions were losing faith about marriage, disorder eating habit, and converting new orientation of spiritual life.

Keyword : *repression, displacement, character, novel*

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INTRODUCTION

Human faces many conflicts in their daily life, whether external conflict or even internal conflict. Internal conflict is the conflict that comes from the human itself while external conflict is the conflict that comes from out of the human itself. Such phenomenon is universal as the context can happen wherever the place, whenever the time, and to whoever the people. The human conflicts not only appear in daily life, but it is also reflected to the literary work especially in novel. A novel is a piece of literary work provides not only an interesting narrative featuring philosophical value and moral teaching but also a lesson about various aspects of life. Kennedy (1974: 43) says that a novel is a book, length story in prose, whose author tries to create the sense that while we read, we experience actual life. A novel is often used as an object of study, one of the novels is *Eat, Pray, Love*.

In a novel must be character inside. Character is a person used by the author to carry the action, language, ideas, and emotion of the story. Character can be divided into two types; they are main character and minor character. Main character is the central figures in a novel if one the main characters play the rules for more than others do, he is called the focus of the story or the protagonist. The second is minor character. The minor character is the character of less important than those of the main.

Gilbert as the main character in the novel faces many conflicts in her life especially related to her psychology conflict. She had everything, a husband, a house, a successful career. But instead of feeling happy and fulfilled, she was consumed with panic, grief, and confusion. She went through a divorce, a crushing depression, another failed love, and the eradication of everything she ever thought she was supposed to be. This is the *repression*. To recover the problems, Gilbert took a radical step in order to give her the time and space to find out who she really was and what she really wanted. Her aim was to visit three places Rome, India and Indonesia. She became the pupil of an elderly medicine man and also fell in love the best way. And this is the *displacement*.

This research questions of the present study were; what are the reasons for the main character's repressions? And what are the displacements that happened to the main character?

Repression

Repression plays a central role in keeping painful memories and experiences out of the conscious mind. The mechanism of repression involves the most direct approach to avoiding the experience of anxiety. As a result of repression, the person is not aware of his own anxiety-producing impulses or does not remember deeply emotional and traumatic past events.

Freud (1856-1939) states that repression is the mechanism by which the unacceptable id impulses are kept in the unconscious and prevented from emerging as conscious thoughts or wishes. If a wish is repressed into the unconscious, the individual loses all awareness of the wish in her/his conscious mind. Repression is necessary either because the impulses are socially unacceptable, or because they would cause the individual great pain if they were expressed. Repression takes up a great deal of mental energy. It is because repression is often not wholly successful that hysterical symptoms or obsessions and phobias develop. Repression is the most important of the defenses which the ego employs in order to control the id.

Repression is not destruction. The desires do not go away. In the case of a patient harmed or crippled by neurosis these repressed desires exert an indirect but terrible pressure on the conscious mind, pressure which can change personality and stop human from functioning effectively as a member of society.

Displacement

Freud (1856-1939) states that displacement what was socially unacceptable becomes acceptable in a disguised form, and produce symbols that can represent what is usually an object without seeming to do so. A defense mechanism in which a drive or feeling shifted to a substitute object, one that psychologically more available. For example; when someone felt failure in love, she/he tries to go out from that sad feeling by looking for the better someone. So, by looking for the better someone includes 'displacement'.

Methodology

This research was conducted by employing the descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative in this study was intended to describe the repression and displacement of main character in Elizabeth Gilbert's Novel *Eat, Pray, Love*. According to Denzin and Lincoln (in Snape and Spencer, 2003: 2-3) qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. It is meant that it is not suggested that numerical measures were never used, but that other means of description are emphasized. In this case, an in depth analysis was constructed in order to describe the repression and displacement as reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert's novel *Eat, Pray, Love*.

The data in this study were collected by using documentary technique. The data were collected from Elizabeth Gilbert's novel *Eat, Pray, Love*. Beside, some information from text books and internet which are relevant to the problem also referred in order to support this study. This study was analyzed based on the theory of psychological analysis by Sigmund Freud.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Having analyzed the data and determining the repression and displacement of the main character, the results were presented as follow.

1. The repressions of the main character were triggered by two factors, they are: a) Self identity crisis, and b) Marriage conflict.

a. Self Identity Crisis

Human often faces many conflict in their daily life, whether internal conflict or external conflict. And in this discussion, the main character, Liz faced many internal conflicts in her especially those related to her psychological state. She did not know

what is going on with her, but she knew that there is something wrong with her that made her got crisis of self identity. Self identity crisis is a psychological state or condition of disorientation and role confusion occurring especially in adolescence as result of conflicting internal or external experiences, pressure and uncertainty about one's self and often producing acute anxiety (Erikson, 1970). It is reflected to the following quotation:

*“In daylight hours, I refused that thought, but at night it would consume me. What a catastrophe. How could I be such a criminal jerk as to proceed this deep into a marriage, only to leave it? We’d only just bought this house a year ago. Hadn’t I wanted this nice house? Hadn’t I loved it? **I had actively participated in every moment of the creation of this life-so why did I feel like none of it resembled me?** Why did I feel so overwhelmed with duty, tired of being the primary bread winner and the housekeeper and the social coordinator and the dog walker and the wife and the soon-to-be mother, and somewhere in my stolen moments-a writer...?”(p12)*

The quotation *“I had actively participated in every moment of the creation of this life-so why did I feel like none of it resembled me?”* implied her crisis of identity. Liz lost her determination and certainty after accomplished her role as a housekeeper, wife and to be mother. She was unsure about what she had done and claimed them on. In addition, the statement *“resembled me”* strongly implied her inability to recognize herself.

b. Marriage Conflict

The other cause of repression was marriage conflict. After facing some internal conflict in herself, Liz got many marriage conflict with her husband namely Stephen. Her ambitious to be a famous writer made her did not want to have a baby early. It can be shown as the quotation bellow:

*“This was the exact joy my own face had radiated last spring, the day I discovered that the magazine I worked for was going to send me on assignment to New Zealand, to write an article about the search for giant squid. And I thought. **“Until I can feel as ecstatic about having a baby as I felt about going to***

New Zealand to search for a giant squid, I cannot have a baby.(p11)”

From the quotation above strongly implied that Liz is very ambitious to be a famous writer. The word “*ecstatic*” above implied that by going to the New Zealand can change the feeling of having a baby. Her husband really wants to have a baby, but because Liz hasn’t been ready yet to have a baby making many problems often appeared in their marriage as reflected from the following quotation:

“My husband was sleeping in the other room, in our bed. I equal parts love him and could not stand him. I couldn’t wake him to share in my distress-what would be the point? We both knew there was something wrong with me, and he had been losing patience with it. We’d been fighting and crying, and we were weary in that way that only a couple whose marriage is collapsing can be weary. We had the eyes of refugees.(p12)”

The quotation “*My husband was sleeping on the other room, in our bed*” strongly implied that they are in a conflict that cause they have to sleep separately. In addition, the statement “*We had the eyes of refugees*” shows that they feel like a captive and always followed by weary of their problem. Day by day, their household condition worst and far from harmony.

2. Displacement of the Main Character

After facing some repression, the main character did some displacement to go out from her problems. Displacement, what was socially unacceptable becomes acceptable in a disguised form, and produce symbols that can represent what is usually an object without seeming to do so (Freud, 1856-1939). A defense mechanism in which a drive or feeling shifted to a substitute object, one that psychologically more available. For example, when someone is getting failure in love, she/he will feel frustration to go out from the frustration, she/he will do displacement like eating is order habit or doing another pleasure to make him/her be safer and happier, even thought the society around think of awkward.

No matter the society think that the displacement the main character did was unacceptable, the important thing is the main character felt happier and safer than

before and she thought she can go out from the trauma events. So, there are some displacement that the main character did after outing from repressions she faced, they are disorder eating habit, over in spiritual or even converting to another religion and losing faith about marriage.

a. Disorder Eating Habit

The displacement that happened to Liz is disorder eating habits which are conditions defined by abnormal eating habits that may involve excessive food intake to the detriment of an individual's physical and mental health, it may be some biological or influences factors combined with an experience that may provoke the disorder, plus the factors that encourage the condition to continue. After deciding to divorce her husband, Stephen, Liz got rid of her belonging, quit her job and undertook a yearlong journey around the world, all alone. In Italy, she studied the art of pleasure; especially eat many kinds of food in Italy. She enjoyed the food without noticing the content of the food is good or not for the body healthy. The important thing, she can forget her problem by enjoying many foods she likes. It is reflected from the following quotation:

“The first meal I ate in Rome was nothing much. Just some home-made pasta (spaghetti carbonara) with a side order of sautéed spinach and garlic. Young women of rank actually eat- you will never guess what GARLIC! After the spaghetti, I tried the veal. Oh, and also I drank a bottle of house red, just for me. And ate some warm bread, with olive oil and salt. Tiramisu for dessert.(p37)

The quotation above strongly implied that Liz keeps eating. She ate much kind of foods and drink liquors those contain of carbohydrate, fat and alcohol those are unhealthy to body. Not feeling satisfy yet, Liz also tried to find another kind of foods there as reflected to the following quotation:

“But I have been walking endlessly and aimlessly, and I did finally find a tiny little place that a friendly bus driver informed me sells The Best Gelato in Rome. It's called “Il Gelato di San Cripino.” I'm not sure, but I think this might translate as “the ice cream of the crispy saint.” I tried the combination of the honey and the hazelnut. I came back later that same night, I walked all the way back over there one last time, just to sample a cup of the cinnamon ginger.(p38)”

The quotation “*the ice cream of the crispy saint, the combination of the honey and the hazelnut*” strongly implied that the foods really contain excessively carbohydrate and fat that can cause imbalance diet. In addition, the statement “*I came back later that same night*” implied that Liz enjoyed those foods at nighttime but as it is recognized that the food is usually better consumed in daytime. And the delicacy of the food made Liz is addicted to them.

b. Converting New Orientation of Spiritual Life

After the divorcing with his husband, Liz felt that there was something wrong with her. She got depression and then she tried to look for her God. She did some ways to praise her Lord in many ways, even the way is out of her religion doctrine meanwhile the society around her felt it was very awkward. It is reflected from the following quotation:

“Culturally, though not theologically, I’m a Christian. I was born a protestant of the white Anglo-Saxon persuasion. And while I do love that great teacher of peace who was called Jesus, and while I do reserve the right to ask myself in certain trying situation what indeed He would do, I can’t swallow that one fixed rule of Christianity insisting that Christ is the only path to God....Traditionally, I have responded to the transcendent mystics of all religion. I have always responded with breathless excitement anyone who has ever said that God does not live in a dogmatic scripture or in a distant throne in the sky, but instead abides very close to us indeed-much closer that we can imagine, breathing right through our own hearths.(p14)”

The quotation “*I’m a Christian*” strongly provides the fact that Liz is a Christian since she was born but she is not entirely believing and undergoing her religion. In addition, the statement “*I have responded to the transcendent mystics of all religion*” strongly implied that Liz cannot only believe in one religion she admits but she wants to undergo the other religion doctrine. Another converting new orientation of spiritual life that occurred to Liz is reflected to the following quotation:

“Then I started meditating every morning on the ancient Sanskrit mantra the Guru gives to all her students (the regal Om

Namah Shivaya, meaning, “I honor the divinity that reside within me”). Then I listened to the Guru speak in person for the first time, and her words gave me chill bumps over my whole body, even across the skin of my face. And when I heard she had an Ashram in India, I knew I must take myself there as quickly as possible (p26). “Here’s what’s strange, though. I haven’t seemed to be able to do any Yoga since getting to Rome. For years I’ve had a steady and serious practice, and even brought my Yoga mat with me, along with my best intentions.(p58)”

The quotation above shows that Liz cannot commit in her Christianity. She did routinely some other religion, Hindu doctrine like yoga, meditation that is not found in Christian doctrine. In addition, the word “Guru” pictured someone that thought the students saying the Sanskrit mantra of Hindus. And Liz made the Guru as figure of God that makes her can feel the divinity reside within her. Not only following the Hindu’s doctrine.

c. Losing Faith about Marriage

Another displacement that occurred to Liz is having sex without marriage as reflected to the quotation bellow:

“I moved right in with David after I left my husband. He is a gorgeous young man. But, oh, we had such a great time together during those early months when he was still my romantic hero and I was still his living dream. It was excitement and compatibility like I’d never imagined. We invented our own language. We went on day trips and roads trips. We hiked to the top of things, swam to the bottom of other things, planned the journeys across the world we would take together. We had more fun waiting in line together at the department of Motor Vehicles than most couples have on their honeymoons” (p.19).

The quotation “I moved right in with David after I left my husband” implied that Liz made a new relationship with another man after the divorcement with her husband. Liz felt in love anymore with David. She was having sex with David even though David is not her husband. Not only with David, but Liz also did sex without marriage with man else namely Felipe when she had journey to Bali as it is reflected to the quotation bellow:

“Yes, I do still meditate every day of the week, slithering out of Felipe’s bed and over to the couch, where I can sit

*in silence and offer up some gratitude for all of this....."I'm sick!" I said. She took one look at me and said, "You sick from making too much sex, Liz." I groaned, buried my face in my hands, embarrassed.(p. 310)I don't want any more husband, Wayan. And I don't think Felipe wants any more wives. **But I like being with him**" (p.318)*

The quotation "*slithering out of Felipe's bed*" strongly implied that Liz was in Felipe's bed and doing sex with Felipe. In addition, the statement "*You sick from making too much sex, Liz*" implied that Liz got infection with her vagina because of doing sex too much with Felipe and means that Liz did free sex without marriage status. Liz did sex without marriage because she got trauma with her previous marriage, and she had no prospects for marrying and doesn't want any more husbands.

CONCLUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Having analyzed the repression and displacement of the main character in Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert, this novel clearly reflected the causes of repression and the displacement that occurred to Liz as the main character in the novel. The points can be concluded as follows:

1. The reasons for Liz's repression cover two important factors. They were self identity crisis (Liz's disability to recognize herself, Liz's disorientation to recognize God and cause her to convert, and Liz's lasted over in anxiety). And the second factor is marriage conflict (Liz's unavailability for having a baby and Liz's disability to love and understand her husband).
2. The displacements which are appeared to Liz after facing repressions were triggered into three forms. They were disorder eating habit, converting new

orientation of spiritual life and losing faith about marriage or having sex without marriage.

From the answers of the two problems above, it can be concluded that Liz valued that life is a choice; Liz could not be able to fulfill her responsibility as a wife for having a baby as a risk of a married woman and Liz could not be able to determine and decide which the more priority to do as a wife or married woman.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusion above, there were some suggestions needed to be considered. They are:

1. It is suggested to other students to make more comprehensive and deeper analysis about character.
2. It is suggested to other students who are interested in psychological analysis especially in the repression and displacement.

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