

Mort Rainey's Split Personality in *Secret Window*

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Abstract

Psychological issue is the main issue discussed in David Koepp's *Secret Window* through its main character, Mort Rainey. Rainey's psychological struggle will be the main theme in this research. This thesis examines Rainey's split personality. Furthermore, in this study, we want to analyze the process of how Mort Rainey's personality splits into two different personalities. To meet the answer of this study, we will use the theory of Dissociative Identity Disorder with a support from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory about the three psyche agents. In this study, we discover that the process of Mort Rainey's split personality begins with a traumatic experience, then continues with the repression and compartmentalization to create John Shooter. Finally, the split personality that Mort Rainey experiences is useful as a great defense for Mort Rainey to cope with his trauma.

Keywords: Psychology, Movie, Split Personality, Traumatic Experience

Psychological thriller was a famous movie sub-genre, especially in early 1960s because of the appearance of a well-known movie, *Psycho*, one of Alfred Hitchcock's greatest directed movies. *Psycho* was a turning point, it gives a deeper focus on human and the psychological issue of the characters compared to usual horror movies at that time. The etymology of psychological thriller itself first appeared in 1925 (MrRyanSIS, 2009).

One of the greatest yet heavy psychological thriller movies is *Secret Window* that is directed by David Koepp, who is famous with his epic productions like *Jurassic Park* and *Spider-Man*. This movie is based on a Stephen King's novella *Secret Window*, *Secret Garden* (Kish, n.d.). Stephen King is a famous author with a lot of literary reputations and achievements. The world knows Stephen King as "The King of Horror" because his fields are in horror, suspense, science fiction and fiction. Little do people know that the stories and literary works King produces apparently have connections with King's life and personality. Stephen King admits that he is a very introvert person. King is also pessimistic and melancholic and is depressed. No wonder, in King's pieces, most of the main characters have dark motives and are introvert ("Stephen King"). It is also found that King often puts himself as the main character in his works. The main character in *Secret Window*, Mort Rainey, is clearly the analogue of King himself and what Rainey experiences in the movie is adopted from a real experience of King himself (Williams, 2009).

Briefly, this movie talks about a best-selling author, Mort Rainey, who just experiences a divorce because his wife cheats on. Witnessing Amy and Ted being together in a motel, Rainey cannot accept it and scream at them. However, he can do nothing but leave because Amy chooses to be with Ted instead of him. After the incident, Rainey feels depressed and withdraws himself from the neighborhood he uses to live. Six months after the traumatic experience, Rainey is visited by a man called John Shooter, who accuses Rainey for stealing Shooter's story. The terror from John Shooter then dominates this movie for one purpose which is fixing the ending of the story that has been argued by Rainey and Shooter. It is then discovered at the end that Shooter does not exist in real life but only in Rainey's mind and Shooter is created to help Rainey overcome his traumatic experience (Ebert, 2004).

In other words, the main issue that dominates the whole story here is the psychological issue. Therefore, we choose to analyze the issue of split personality of the main character, Mort Rainey. Split Personality, which is also known as Multiple Personality Disorder or Dissociative Identity Disorder, is a chronic emotional illness in which the person has two or more distinct personalities that each personality has its own style ("Multiple Personality Disorder"). In this article, we are curious to know why Mort Rainey experiences split personality and how Mort Rainey's personality splits into different personalities.

Alloy, Jacobson, and Acocella (1999) defines split personality or dissociative identity disorder (DID) as "the personality that breaks up into two or more distinct identities, and each is integrated and well developed, in which then takes turn in controlling the person's behavior" (p. 182).

The distinct personalities here is generally divided into two which are the host and the alter. The host is the main and original personality, while the alter is the personality that is created by the host unconsciously or is the developed personality. In 2008, Nevid, Rathus, and Greene write that the distinction causes distinct patterns in each personality, such as in the way of "identity, memory, or consciousness" (p. 211). It means the switch between the condition in which the person is conscious and unconscious happens in a second and so there is no unity in the consciousness of person with DID. The switch usually happens when the alter needs to be there to handle reality. It happens instantly without the host realizing it. In most cases, when the switch happens, the alter knows everything about the host, including his personal matter and internal conflicts while the host knows nothing about the alter. The alter is fully aware of the host's thoughts and action and the alter usually continuously makes its presence felt.

The type of personalities that the sufferer of DID makes consist of the "self-indulgence and the restrained, or as the Freudians would put it between id and superego" (Alloy, Jacobson and Acocella, 1999, p. 183). In other words, the personalities that are formed are usually opposing each other. The personalities formed to face different matter could be complete identities, which means it has its own behavior, tone of voice and physical gestures.

Most cases of DID is caused by child traumatic experience or child abuse. However, DID is also a representation of a psychological defense against trauma. Dissociative Identity Disorder can be a form of escapism from events that cause unbearable trauma. The formation of alter is one of the forms of escapism.

According to Barlow and Durrand (2008), "You can escape into a fantasy world; you can be somebody else. If the escape blunts the physical and emotional pain just for a minute or makes the next hour bearable, chances are you'll escape again. Your mind learns there is no limit to the identities that can be created as needed" (p. 198). In other words, escapism helps people reduce the tense of trauma caused by traumatic experience. Escapism is the easiest way and forming an alter means a person can be what he or she wants to be. He or she can do what he or she wants to do, without having a guilty feeling afterwards. The guilty feeling can be caused by the action that his or her desires are limited by the social reinforcement. Briefly said, split personality is a great defense mechanism to fight against trauma and "grant wishes that the person could not otherwise satisfy" (Alloy, Jacobson, and Acocella, 1999, p. 189).

The process of dissociation in DID sufferers is through repression and then continues with compartmentalization. Because of a traumatic experience, someone could repress the unwanted memory because he or she could not bear to handle it. This is a supporting aspect in the escapism because when someone escapes from the reality as someone else he or she wishes, he or she will repress the bitter and painful memory in order to create someone else that is wished to be. In the case of DID, the repression results in the compartmentalization. There is a formation of personalities created by the sufferer to get something he or she wants to achieve or the form of anticipation for the things he or she does not expect to happen. Indeed, each personality that is formed has different functions and intention. After the formation of personalities, the switch among the personalities usually happens when certain alter needs to be there to help the host in handling the reality.

Furthermore, the symptoms of dissociative identity disorder could vary in each sufferer. However, there are some basic symptoms that can be identified in someone who suffers from this disorder such as depression, suicidal behavior, insomnia, amnesia, panic attack. There are times when the sufferer might hear voices which are no other than the voices of the alters telling him or her what to do. The aim is to fulfill the wishes and purposes of each alter, which are actually the wishes that the host represses.

The theory of Split Personality or Dissociative Identity Disorder is going to be used to analyze the psychological condition that is suffered by the main character Mort Rainey. The theory Split Personality will help to explain in detail the steps and process of how Mort Rainey's personality splits.

The theory of psyche agents, id, ego, superego comes from Sigmund Freud who says that human psyche consists of three agents. These systems balance each other to fulfill human's basic needs in a suitable way. Hall (1999) writes that id's role is to fulfill human's desire immediately. Id's job is to fulfill the initial pleasure of life, which is pleasure principle. It means id seeks pleasure and avoids pain (p. 22).

While id is trying to accomplish its mission, id also needs the external reality. It is because an impulsive behavior can result in pain, which according to pleasure principle, it is unwanted. Therefore, id needs ego whose role is to create harmony and adjustment by controlling the id and superego and by conforming to the external world. Ego uses the reality principle. It functions in postponing the discharge of tension until the suitable object that will satisfy the need has been discovered. In other words, reality principle temporarily suspends the urge id creates in the interest of reality but will still lead humans to pleasure eventually (p. 28).

The third system, the superego, represents the ideality. It is the moral branch of personality and concerns about the perfection more than the reality and principle. Superego is made of ego-ideal and conscience. Ego-ideal focuses on rewards for morally good behavior and conscience focuses on punishments for morally bad behavior. The reward and punishment can be in physical ways like getting sweets or spankings; or in psychological ways, like the feeling of pride or guilty. This theory is going to help me in explaining about self-control that Rainey does, which is a result of his ego and superego's work to balance his id.

MORT RAINEY'S TRAUMA

The Split Personality that Mort Rainey experiences is started by a traumatic experience. It is unacceptable for Rainey to see his wife, Amy, cheats on him and chooses to be with another man, Ted. Motel Manager : [Puts on bathrobe, sees missing key] Hey. [Mort gets into car] Hey! [Mort drives further, stops abruptly, gets out of car. Unlocks and goes into a room] [Amy and Ted cower in their bed]. Mort : Ahhhh! [Grabs head and walks away] (Secret Window, 2004, p. 1). The scene above is an incident when Mort Rainey catches Amy having an affair with Ted in a motel. When Rainey sees Amy and Ted together in their bed, Rainey screams, grabs his head and walks away. This response indicates that Rainey cannot accept the fact that his wife is cheating on him and he prefers to walk away.

Another proof of how witnessing his wife cheating on him is unbearable for Mort Rainey is from Rainey's lifestyle after the incident. Throughout the movie, it is known that even after six month, Rainey's lifestyle is unorganized and miserable. He smokes, never sleeps on his bed, wears Amy's old tunic, and he does not have an organized diet because he keeps eating chips and drinking canned drinks. He also withdraws himself from the neighbors he uses to live in and moves to a smaller town, lives in a cabin near a lake in Tashmore Lake. Lastly, Rainey writes about a man who is being cheated by his wife, which indicates that he is still being haunted by the time when he discovers Amy is together with Ted in a motel.

MORT RAINEY'S REPRESSION

The incident does not just leave Rainey with a hurt feeling inside, but it also triggers Rainey to do something about the incident. the incident makes Rainey feel jealous and very angry so that in one scene Rainey experiences a flashback and he recalls himself wanting to kill Amy and Ted right after he

witnesses the incident. Mort : [He puts his head in his hands] I didn't kill anybody.. [Flashback to Mort yelling at Amy and Ted] [Flashback to Mort entering the room, holding a gun] (Secret Window, 2004, p. 26). It is obviously pictured from the scene that the incident triggers him to pull out his gun to kill the couple. He is overwhelmed by anger and jealousy that he points a gun to the couple who are still on their bed. It means there is a tendency, or at least a thought of killing Amy and Ted because of his anger and jealousy. Feeling betrayed by his wife, he really wants to kill Amy right on the moment he sees Amy and Ted being together. However, Rainey decides not to do it, at least for that moment.

The action of not killing Amy right after he sees Amy with Ted together while he is filled with anger and jealousy is a form of self-control that Mort Rainey does. The self-control appears to balance one of Rainey's psyche agents that is responsible for his desire, which is his id. His id affects Rainey in the way that it demands the fulfillment of his natural instinct. For Rainey, his natural instinct at that very moment is to hurt or kill someone who hurts him. Since id's characteristic is it wants its desire to be fulfilled immediately, that is why Rainey points his gun right after he witnesses his wife cheating. However, his id is balanced by Rainey's ego and superego. So the moment when Rainey pulls his gun out and points it to Amy, but he does not pull the trigger, is the work of ego and superego. For the work of ego, it is based on the concept of reality. So, Rainey is aware of the law in the society that does not support the act of murdering. Therefore, he is afraid of the punishments from killing Amy. The action of not killing Amy at that moment could also come from himself. It is the work of superego that touches his conscience so that he decides not to kill Amy at that moment. Rainey is afraid of the consequence that comes from himself which is guilty feeling. The work of ego and superego prevents Rainey to do what he desires to do to satisfy himself. However, the desire is still there and Rainey needs to find another way to satisfy it.

It also happens that to reduce the urge of fulfilling his basic instinct, Rainey has to do a repression towards his traumatic memory. The repression is done to keep his bitter memory out of his conscious awareness.

Amy : [On phone] Hello Mort. *Mort groans* [In person] Are you alright?

Mort : Yeah, I'm alright. Why wouldn't I be alright?

Amy : [On phone] I don't know. [In person] You're up there all alone. Anything can happen and nobody would know.

Mort : [On phone] I'd know.

Amy : [On phone] Right. *sighs* Hey, hey. How's my little baby puppy? Did Chico ever get those cataracts removed?

Mort : *Scowls* Why did you call, Amy? What do you want?

Amy : I had one of those feelings I get. [Grabs wine and glasses] I know you think they're stupid, and you don't believe them but I believe them and um, [On phone] [Mort scowls and strangles the phone] I was making a sandwich and I had this sensation that you might not be okay. [Mort turns on the couch] I held off as long as possible, [Sets down the wine and glasses into a bag] um but then I couldn't anymore so here I am.

Mort : Well, I don't know what to tell you except I'm fine. (Secret Window, 2004, p.5)

In this conversation, Amy tries to see if Mort is alright. Amy's question "Are you alright?" is clearly defined by Rainey as if he is alright with his condition now; not just a simple how he is, but more to if he is okay after the incident and the fact that Amy is with Ted now. At that time, Mort is actually still influenced by the fact that Amy cheats on him and wants a divorce, proven by his miserable lifestyle and his writing about a wife cheating on his husband. However, Mort answers her with "Yeah, I'm alright". Mort wants to show Amy that nothing that happened before affects him and makes him not alright. It is even emphasized with "Why wouldn't I be alright?". The question that Rainey asks back to Amy functions to strengthen the point that of course he is alright, what happens back then is nothing to him. When Amy then continues the conversation to their dog, Chico, Rainey answers "Why did you call, Amy? What do you want?" with scowling which indicates that he does not actually want to talk to Amy in any reason. For Rainey, when Amy asks him if he is alright, and he answers it already, then that should be it. However, Amy asks something else as if they can talk casually, while in fact, Rainey

still cannot talk casually to Amy because he still feels hurt by Amy. At the end, after a long explanation by Amy on how she feels like Rainey is not fine, Rainey insists by saying “Well, I don't know what to tell you except I'm fine.” For Rainey, it is a final saying for Amy that he is fine and he really does not need Amy. Rainey does not want to show how not fine he is in front of Amy. He represses his memory and does not want to talk about it and how it affects him emotionally, especially to Amy. Rainey represses his traumatic experience by his avoidance to talk to Amy. He tries not to talk to Amy through the phone and in person. Rainey avoids to talk to Amy because for Rainey, his conversation with Amy will only bring back all the bitter memories, especially the memory of witnessing Amy and Ted laying together on a bed.

However, no matter how Rainey represses his traumatic memory about his wife cheating and controls himself not to take revenge to Amy and Ted, the bitterness and desire to take revenge are still there. In Mort Rainey's case, his id or desire to fulfill his instinct is very strong, and so it dominates Mort Rainey and triggers Rainey to satisfy his desire and do his intention, which is taking revenge to Amy. However, Mort Rainey unconsciously gets through another way to please his id and abandon his ego and superego.

MORT RAINEY'S COMPARTMENTALIZATION

The jealousy and anger overwhelms Mort Rainey that the repression does not help him not to satisfy his id. The defense mechanism does not satisfy him and so he needs to find another way to in any way satisfy it but also avoid any pain and consequences from ego and superego that might happen.

For that reason, Rainey experiences split personality and applies the defense mechanism compartmentalization to help him accomplish id's intention. As the result, John Shooter exists as Rainey's alter without Rainey realizing it. Shooter is the one who will achieve what he represses and help him deal with his emotional condition.

It is known then that John Shooter is a character resulted from a role play that Rainey once does in a flea market. John Shooter becomes a form of escapism done by Mort Rainey to help him cope with his problem. The result of role-playing as John Shooter back then possesses Mort Rainey and makes it a solid alter that he believes will help him to accomplish his intention. It is strengthened by unconsciousness that split personality disorder can bring to the host especially when the host, Mort Rainey, experiences the switch.

The formation of John Shooter is a great form of psychological defense while Rainey is trying to accomplish his desire. The desire fulfillment and self-defense work together so that Rainey could get what he wishes to happen safely. Therefore, there are some reasons from the formation of John Shooter as a psychological defense. The reasons are to reduce the tension from the urge of killing Amy, to force Rainey to face the reality and cope with it, to help Rainey do what he cannot do as Mort Rainey, and to cheat on Rainey's conscience.

John Shooter reduces the urge of killing Amy by ‘distracting’ Mort Rainey to another problem, which in an accusation.

Shooter : You stole my story. [Mort looks at a loss for words] Well? (Secret Window, 2004, p.2)

Shooter comes up one day in front of Rainey's house and accuses Rainey for stealing his story. As a best-selling author, of course the accusation matters a lot for him. This accusation then drags Rainey to his wife, Amy, while they are in the middle of divorce process. Rainey has to find a proof to show Shooter that he never steals Shooter's story. The proof here is a magazine, where Mort Rainey publishes his writing, titled ‘Secret Window’. The magazine is in Amy's house and so whether or not Rainey wants to talk to Amy, he has to meet Amy for the magazine. When the accusation comes, Mort Rainey does not think bluntly about taking a revenge to Amy anymore. His mind is occupied more with the accusation that could endanger his career and with the presence of John Shooter that threatens him.

The accusation is also used as an excuse to terror Amy, which is a satisfaction for Mort Rainey.

Mort : [Grabs some Doritos and eats them] What happened, what?
Amy : [On phone] Someone burned down our house, that's what happened, okay?
Mort : [Stops chewing] What?
Amy : [On phone] Someone burned down our house! (Secret Window, 2004, p. 13)

The house which is burnt here is a house that is owned by both Mort and Amy Rainey when they are still together. Before the house is burnt, Mort Rainey once visits that house to meet Amy. However, he finds Amy and Ted showing some romance in the terrace. Rainey then hears a voice inside his head saying "This is not my beautiful house.. This is not my beautiful wife anymore". This shows that Rainey is feeling jealous and he realizes that what he has before, has been taken away and he does not own it anymore. The jealousy leads to a thought to destruct what has been taken away from him, which are the house and Amy. However, the idea of creating a terror to Amy is a satisfaction for Mort Rainey is far under Rainey's conscious mind. Shooter is used as an excuse to protect himself while he is throwing terror to Amy. By suspecting Shooter, Rainey does not feel like he is the one who burns the house and so he is not guilty for anything.

Other than reducing the tension that it brings and bringing pleasure by giving terrors to Amy, the existence of John Shooter functions to help Rainey deal with his trauma. Mort Rainey has been doing a repression towards the trauma. He never wants to talk about it, nor finish it. John Shooter comes to make Rainey face what he should face, the reality.

Shooter : ... You can't get away with it. [Shooter walks away] I know what you did and I ain't quittin'. Until right gets put right. [Mort catches his breath on the ground and leans backwards against a tree] (p.13)

What is implied by John Shooter in his line "You can't get away with it" is Mort Rainey cannot keep avoiding the reality. In this scene, Shooter knows that Rainey has visited Amy's house to take back the magazine he promises to give Shooter as an evidence that Rainey never steals Shooter's story. However Rainey does not have the courage to get down from his car and talk to Amy because of his repression and fear that he will experience a flashback and hurting feeling again. "You can't get away with it" implies that Rainey should not keep running from the fact that Amy is no longer with him and that he should not hide from Amy just because he is afraid of the trauma. Shooter wants Mort Rainey to finish what is happening, or in Shooter's language is 'fix the ending'. It means, Shooter wants Rainey to do what he truly wants to do towards Amy. While the line "I ain't quittin'. Until right gets put right" means Mort Rainey should do what is right. From Shooter's point of view, because Shooter represents the basic instinct of human, Amy deserves a punishment for cheating on Mort Rainey and leaving him for Ted. Therefore, what is right for John Shooter is for Rainey to take a revenge and give the appropriate punishment to Amy. Killing Amy is the right thing to do and it is the right for Mort Rainey to do so. So from the line "I ain't quittin'. Until right gets put right", John Shooter wants to emphasize that he will not disappear from Rainey's life, not until Mort Rainey has the courage to face the reality and do what he truly desires.

Another function of the formation of John Shooter is to help Mort Rainey in doing what he cannot do as Mort Rainey. As we write before that what holds Mort Rainey back is his conscience and the society that does not support the act of murdering. In order to keep fulfilling his wishes, he should cheat the society so that he still can do what he wishes to do without receiving any punishments from the society.

Shooter : [Comes down the stairs] Gave me my name, told me everything you wanted me to do. [Flashback of Mort lighting the champagne bottle, tossing it in the study, walking off wearing the hat, and the whole house going up in flames] [Mort thinks] I did them things.. so you wouldn't have to. [Flashback to Mort riding in Tom Greenleaf's truck with Ken] (Secret Window, 2004, p. 27)

Everything that Shooter does for Rainey, such as burning Amy's house, killing Amy's dog, killing any witnesses and those who endanger the existence of John Shooter, makes Rainey think that Shooter is the one who is guilty for everything and there is no evidence that Rainey is guilty. So, there is no consequences for Mort Rainey physically and psychologically.

The formation of John Shooter also helps Mort Rainey cheat his conscience. Since Rainey is afraid of feeling guilty and bad from all his intention towards Amy, he needs to cheat the work of his conscience. If Rainey terrrors Amy and kills Amy right when he catches Amy with Ted being together on their bed, he will be 'punished' by his conscience with a guilty feeling. However, he cheats on his conscience by creating someone else to do all the activities that goes with his intention so that he does not need to feel guilty. When he switches to John Shooter, Rainey does things unconsciously because split personality's characteristic is that is unconscious. When the 'blackouts' happen, the host cannot remember anything and the alter takes control in doing what the alter must do.

In the last conversation between Rainey and Shooter, Shooter finally reveals all the facts about his existence and what he does for Mort Rainey to clear up all the coincidences and make sure Rainey knows what to do towards his trauma.

Shooter : Are we done yet? We got things all cleaned up around here? [Shooter comes over] (Secret Window, 2004, p.27)

"We got things all cleaned up around here?" as a final saying to show that everything is clear now. Rainey knows what he actually wants to do and why he needs John Shooter to do what he desires. But at that time, the thought of John Shooter has possessed Mort Rainey. Rainey knows what he must do, and since Shooter's influence is very strong, he chooses to do what Shooter wants him to do. However, above all that, Rainey's conscience has lost by his desire so there is no guilty feeling anymore.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is proven that Mort Rainey experiences split personality as a defense to traumatic experience and John Shooter is an alter as a result of Mort Rainey's split personality. Shooter helps Rainey to deal with his trauma. Moreover, the existence of John Shooter helps Rainey to accomplish his intention. In other words, this form of escapism and formation of a new personality is a great defense to help humans in coping from their problem and release the tension that id creates. The significance of the issue here shows that a repression of behavior and thoughts as a response towards a traumatic experience could result in a formation of another personality and the issue can be dangerous if it is not diagnosed. It is very important to acknowledge and understand more deeply about issue because most of the time the patient does not realize that he has the issue because split personality works unconsciously. Through the analysis, we also discover that it is important for humans to learn to cope with any problems they face in life every day. Every individual has his or her own traumatic experience and it does not matter how traumatic it is, as long as the person has the skill to cope and overcome it, that person will live emotionally, mentally and physically healthy.

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