

UNBALANCED BEHAVIOR OF THE CHARACTER REBECCA IN THE FILM *THE ROOMMATE*

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ABSTRAK

The Roommate adalah film yang disutradarai oleh Christian E.Christiansen.*The Roommate* menceritakan tentang seorang mahasiswi bernama Sara Mathew yang memiliki teman sekamar yang obsesif bernama Rebecca. Kedekatan Rebecca dengan Sara semakin erat yang kemudian berubah menjadi sebuah obsesi dan membuat Rebecca melakukan hal-hal yang buruk , bahkan melakukan kekerasan fisik terhadap orang-orang disekitar Sara. Dalam penelitian ini penulis akan mendeskripsikan unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik dari film *The Roommate*. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah masalah psikologi yang dialami oleh karakter Rebecca dalam film *The Roommate* menggunakan Teori Psikoanalisis: *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego* dari Sigmund Freud. Penulis akan menggunakan pendekatan eksponensial untuk mendeskripsikan unsur intrinsik dan pendekatan psikologi untuk mendeskripsikan unsur ekstrinsik film. Metode yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data ada penelitian pustaka. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa tiga unsur *Id*, *Ego*, dan *Superego* dalam diri Rebecca berkembang secara tidak seimbang. Ketidakseimbangan organisasi dari *Id*, *Ego*, dan *Superego* menghasilkan perilaku yang tidak seimbang yang mengindikasikan bahwa Rebecca memiliki masalah psikologi.

Kata kunci: ego, id, karakter, ketidakseimbangan perilaku, masalah psikologi, obsesi, psikoanalitik, superego

Introduction

Psychological problem cause someone cannot lead a normal life because of their emotional issues. Having psychological problems affect someone's mind and emotion. In addition, someone who experiences psychological problem can also affect other people around them directly or indirectly. A film by Christian E. Christiansen, *The Roommate* (2011), tells the story about a woman named Sara who just starts college and gets an obsessive roommate named Rebecca. They are getting closer day by day. Rebecca's intimacy with Sara tightens into obsession. Rebecca begins to keep Sara away from her friends and dounfavorable things even physical aggression to people around Sara. Moreover, Rebecca also endangers people around Sara and her prevarication makes their friendship worsens. Rebecca's behavior has crossed the line as a roommate even a friend. Rebecca's behaviors regarding Sarah in *The Roommate* indicate a psychological issues and need to studies further.

In this project, the writer uses exponential approach and psychological approach to literature. The exponential approach uses to analyze the intrinsic elements of *The Roommate* film. In the book of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Guerin states, "as such they might be called exponents, in the sense that they are signs or symbols of patterns of meaning. The word exponent, in fact, derives from the Latin exponere, "to put forth," with the extended meaning of explaining (cf. "expound") (2005:143). This approach examines the implicit meanings in literature works, which is depicted through meaningful signs, symbol or vision. By applying exponential approach, the intrinsic elements which are narrative and cinematography aspects will be analyzed in detail. The psychological approach uses to analyze the extrinsic aspects of the study.

In this study will uses two objectives. The first objective is to analyze the narrative aspects, which are plot, character, and conflict shows in the film, and cinematographic aspects. In the cinematography aspects, the writer focuses on the shot. The most used shot in the film are wide shot, full shot, two shot, medium shot,

and close-up shot. The second objective of this project is to analyze the psychological problem experienced by the character Rebecca in *The Roommate* by using Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis. The writer uses library research method to analyze the film with two kinds of data, which are the primary data and the secondary data. In this final project, the writer uses *The Roommate* film directed by Christian E. Christiansen released in 2011 as the primary data. Meanwhile, secondary data are collected from books, journals, scripts, articles, internet and the other sources that help the writer to make this final project.

Theoretical Framework

Plot is a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story. According to Klarer, plot is logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text, which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative (2004:15). An ideal plot line includes four sequential levels: exposition, complication or raising action, climax or turning point and resolution.

The importance of character in literary work is to make the story livelier so that the reader or viewer will be attracted to the story. According to Barsam and Monahan in the book looking at *Movies: an Introduction to Film*, definition of character is "Characters, another essential element of film narrative which play functional roles within plot, either acting or being acted" (2010:133).

Therefore, in literary works, all of characters must have differences. Mario Klarer in *Introduction to Literary Studies* states that,

There are two kinds of characters that are a flat character or typified character and round character or individualization character. While the term round character usually denotes a persona with more complex and differentiated features (2004:17).

In other words, flat character has a particular feature in the story while round character has several features that will change at times in the story. In addition, round character usually grows into the main character or main role in the literary work.

Conflict is part of the plot line. A conflict also represents the peak of the story. Klarer states, “the exposition or presentation of the initial situation is disturbed by a complication or conflict that produces suspense and eventually leads to a climax, crisis, or turning point” (2004:15). The plot changes in the story make the story more interesting. In every story, conflict happens when there are two opposing sides in a certain situation. As Holman mentions, “conflict is the struggle that grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot” (1986:107). There are two kinds of conflict, which are external conflict and internal conflict. Internal conflict appears between a character and his mind while external conflict occurs between a character and another character or the environment.

The most important thing in the film is to make the visualization of the story in accordance with audience's expectation. As Rabinowitz states in the book of *Narrative Theory* that film can replicate the real life visual widely. Visualization of an object will look different, if it is viewed through the ordinary eye, only one side of the object can be seen but through the film by arranging the scale of shot it can be seen from the various sides. (2005:428).

As Brown states “If we think of a language of cinema, these shots are the vocabulary; how we edit them together would be the syntax of this language (2012:17). It means that through the shot the director implicitly extends the essential meaning and messages to the audience. There are various types of shots, which are often used in film. It consists of full shot that indicates that we see the character from head to toe. Two-shot indicates the interactions between two characters in a scene. Medium shot is the wide shot that relative to the subject like expressions, details of how they are dressed, and so on. As Bordwell states that close up shot is a shot showing just the head, hands, feet, or a small object. The extreme close up shows the detailed aspects of an object such as eyes, ear, nose and other small parts of an object (2008:191).

Extrinsic elements also take a part to build a story from the outside. In this paper, the writer will define more about psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud

focusing on the three types of personality *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. Psychoanalytic theory is developed by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalytic theory is a theory about human personality that is classified into three types of personality structure: *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. As Ryckman states in the book *Theories of Personality*,

Freud postulated constructs that allowed him to describe the ways in which these parts of personality originated and interacted with one another dynamically to influence behavior. He proposed three systems of the mind -id, ego, and superego that compete for the limited amount of psychic energy available, energy that has its starting point in the instinctual needs of the individual. (2008:39)

Id allows us to get our basic needs met and based on our pleasure principle. Indeed, the *id* does not care about reality, about the needs of anyone else, only its own satisfaction. It is under the unconscious. *Id* is senseless because of its pleasure principle which sustains people attempt to minimize pain and maximize pleasure. Moreover, it cannot be seen whether it is right from what is wrong. While the *Ego*, based on the reality principle and the *Ego's* job is to meet the needs of the *id*, while taking into consideration the reality of the situation. It is under preconscious phase. The decision that *Ego* makes has to be compatible with the reality. *Ego* needs to satisfy any of the *id's* need and it makes the *Ego* always change by the time in order to retain the *Id*. The *Superego* is the moral part of us that develops due to the moral and ethical controls placed on us by our caregivers. It dictates our belief of right and wrong. It is under two subsof system, the conscience and the ego ideal. The function of the *Superego* is to tell about what people should do and what people should not do. It will become a behavior to the person. The behavior of that person will be judged by the society whether it is good or bad.

The *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego* have correlation and connectivity. With so many competing forces, it shows conflicts that might arise between *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. *Id* rises in the unconscious phase that the *Ego* will satisfy the *Id* and the *Superego* watches closely over the *Ego*, judging its actions and intentions. In addition, the

development of three divisions is different in every individual. The divisions grow equally and some people are not, as Freud mentions in the book of *The Theory of personality: sixth edition*,” In the healthy individual, the *Id* and *Superego* are integrated into a smooth functioning *Ego* and operate in harmony and with a minimum of conflict.” (2006:31)

Content

In this paper, plot is used to know the flutter events which will be used plot line: exposition, complication or raising action, climax or turning point and resolution to explain the plot in detail.

Exposition happens when Sara and Tracy go to the nightclub but then Tracy abandons Sara that makes Sara lonely. After that, Sara calls Rebecca for the companion. Rebecca and Sara are having conversation. Here, Rebecca and Sara meet at the Cafe. At first, they are quite awkward but after that, they talk in ease. After that day their friendship is growing. Complication or raising action, Irene offers a bunch of clothes and offers Sara to live with her in her apartment. Then Sara talks to Rebecca that she is going to move to Irene’s apartment with Cuddle because she needs more space and she thinks Cuddle will be safe there. Moreover she needs more space for her clothes. They are arguing over this problem because Rebecca refuses it and it makes Sara feel so uncomfortable. Sara is getting suspicious with Rebecca because Rebecca is over protective of her. Climax or turning point, Rebecca’s behavior is getting worse. She makes many conflicts with people around Sara. A awful thing she does to Sara is Rebecca making a tattoo with Sara’s sister name. Resolution happens when Rebecca threatens Sara with a pistol because Sara wants to help Irene and Sara stabs a knife on the Rebecca’s back because Rebecca strangles Sara’s neck. It happens because Rebecca takes revenge and forces Sara to conciliate with her. Rebecca also intimidates Irene by tying her body on the bed. Rebecca and Sara also fight in the room. Finally, Sara decides to move to another dormitory and never meet Rebecca anymore.

Character

Rebecca studies at the University of Los Angeles majoring in Art. She is Sara's roommate and Rebecca seems to have interest in Sara. It shows when Rebecca and Sara go to an art exhibition. Rebecca buys two tickets so that Sara cancels her date with Steven. It shows that Rebecca is getting intense to Sara. Second, Rebecca makes a tattoo with Sara's little sister name, Emily. She wants to have an intense relationship with Sara. This situation irritates Sara. Third, Rebecca draws Sara's face in every piece of her book. Then Steven finds this sketchbook when Sara moves to his room. That kind of behavior indicates an obsessive action.

Rebecca gets anxious about her friendship with Sara in which many obstacles come to Rebecca. People try to get close with Sara and to steal Sara's interest. Even more, she tries to kick out all of those obstacles. First, Rebecca is crying and creating a line story about the accident of Cuddle. In order to prevent Sara to move to Irene's house, she creates a fake story about Cuddle. She kills Cuddle by putting him into a washing machine and burns him. Second, In order to catch Sara's attention, creating another fake story that she is attacked by a gangster. It is indicating manipulative action. According to her family background, she is used to get what she wants since she is the only child in the family. It shows that Rebecca is so neat and tidy person. She orders her clothes by their colour and it is quite perfect. Second, Rebecca is hurting herself to make it real so that Sara will believe it. She cuts her stomach with a knife and hits her face using her hand. Even more, she can handle the pain in order to make the scars more tangible. Third, Rebecca is dying her hair into a dark color, using Sara's perfume, and wearing heat as Sara does. Then it makes Sara's ex-boyfriend believe that woman who is coming to him is Sara. They meet in Rebecca's room with the lamp off. In the dark, they sleep on Sara's bed and Rebecca pretends to be Sara then she kills him. From the behaviors above, it can be seen that she will do anything as perfect as she can. It indicates perfectionism.

Rebecca in a black jacket is attacking Irene in the bathroom. It happens because Irene tells Sara that Rebecca comes to her room in the early morning and looks like a psychopath. Then Rebecca is on Sara's ex-boyfriend's body holding a knife on her back. Here, Rebecca kills Sara's ex-boyfriend because he never stops calling Sara and it annoys Rebecca. Moreover, Rebecca tries to kill Sara. She feels that Sara betrays their friendship because Sara chooses to move from the dorm after Sara knows that Rebecca has a psychological problem. From the explanation above, it can be seen that Rebecca cannot control her emotions. It indicates vengefulness. In conclusion, the character Rebecca in *The Roommate* film has characteristics such as obsessive action, manipulative, perfectionism, and vengefulness. From the complex behavior and characteristics of Rebecca in this film, it can be said that Rebecca has a round character. It shows how she is always changing character in every storyline.

Conflict

In this film, there are two types of conflicts, which are internal conflict and external conflict. The internal conflict of Rebecca is slightly seen when Rebecca fights with Sara. Rebecca experiences an inner turmoil during a fight with Sara. It is slightly seen from the extreme alteration of Rebecca's expression while fighting with Sara. She bursts out her anger then suddenly she turns into a gentle person after Sara apologizes to her. Rebecca is struggling with herself, she really likes Sara but she also feels betrayed. It reveals when she accidentally hits Sara then she apologizes first because of feeling guilty. Rebecca expresses her anger by shouting and hitting Sara but suddenly she lowers her voice and rubs Sara's head in gentle because she likes Sara. The sense of liking and betrayal rages within her. In which it emerges two opposing forces in a plot within her/his own nature (man against himself).

Besides internal conflict, Rebecca also experiences external conflicts. The external conflict happens between Rebecca with the people who try to close to Sara and people who disturb Sara. The first person who is involved in external conflict with

Rebecca is Sara. The second person is Tracy in which Rebecca attacks Tracy after their argument on the day before. The third person is Sara's professor in which Rebecca intimidates Sara's professor. Here, the professor gets intimidation from Rebecca because he kisses Sara and it disturbs Rebecca as well. The fourth person is Steven who is Sara's boyfriend. Rebecca argues with Steven because Sara moves to Steven's room. Rebecca rudely asks Steven about the reason of Sara moves from the dorm.

Unbalanced Behavior of the Character Rebecca in *The Roommate* Film

According to Freud, the concept of psychoanalysis in psychoanalytic theory is *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. Three of them have connectivity and relation in the human psychology. In some people, these three divisions rise in balance but in certain condition, it does not. Moreover, the balance of the three divisions of *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego* reflects on someone's behavior and it can indicate a psychological problem within a person. The unbalanced behavior of Rebecca by using Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis reflected in *The Roommate* film is discussed below.

It starts when Rebecca meets Sara and they share a room in the dormitory. They love to share each other's stuff even their own stories but then Rebecca is getting obsessive and overprotective to Sara. *Id* does not satisfy pleasure due to its invisibility. It makes the *Ego* rising in order to satisfy the *Id*. According to Feist in *Theories of Persona*, it states that "the *Id* has no contact with reality, yet it strives constantly to reduce tension by satisfying basic desires. Because its sole function is to seek pleasure, we say that the *Id* serves the pleasure principle" (2006:27). Here, Rebecca's *Id* is that she needs someone who can always be beside her and someone who will be her friend. In addition, she needs someone who can share anything with her, care about her and has an interest in her. She will do everything to protect her. After she meets Sara, she feels that Sara is the one who cares deeply about her and she would protect whatever happens. Rebecca's *Id* desire makes her become an obsessive

person and try to protect Sara from other people. No one can get closer to Sara and no one can disturb her. She thinks that all she needs is Sara.

Until one day Tracy asks Sara and Rebecca to go out and gets some drinks but Rebecca rejects it. Unexpectedly in the middle of the party, Tracy meets a person then suddenly disappears and leaves Sara alone. Therefore, Sara feels abandoned then she tells Rebecca about this problem. After this incident, Rebecca and Sara's friendship begin to grow. On the next day, Tracy apologizes to Sara about the day she leaves her alone and both of them are conciliating. Yet, silently Rebecca seems to dislike this situation. The *Ego* needs to satisfy any of the *Id*'s desire so that the *Ego* always changing by the time in order to retain the *Id*. Here, the *Ego* appears in order to satisfy Rebecca's *Id*. It has to be done in order to keep Sara with her and to expel Tracy from Sara. Rebecca threatens Tracy by standing in front of Tracy's room all night. On the next day, Tracy tells the incident to Sara and asks her if something happens to Rebecca. Rebecca feels miserable because of Tracy. Tracy's existence is considered as a threat to her friendship with Sara. The only part of mind that has ability to approach the reality is *Ego*. As Feist mentions "Ego becomes a person's sole source of communication with the external world. It is governed by the reality principle, which it tries to substitute for the pleasure principle of the *Id*." (2006:28). Here, Rebecca's *Ego* appears to please her *Id*. The *Id* is to have Sara by herself while Tracy is considered as a threat. Indeed, the *Ego* appears to realize the *Id*'s desire by keeping Sara away from Tracy. Since the *Ego* is regulated by the reality principle.

Her obsession toward Sara slightly increases rapidly. According to Ryckman in *Theorist of Personality* states, "the *Id* is amoral and unconcerned with the niceties and conventions of society. It operates according to the pleasure principle: the aim of these impulses is always immediate and complete discharge and satisfaction." (2008:40). Then, Rebecca is trying to kill Cuddle by putting him into washing machine because Sara says that she wants to move to Irene's apartment and one of the reasons is Cuddle. Once again, the *Ego* of Rebecca comes up to fulfill her *Id*'s desire to keep Sara with her. In order to make Sara stays in the dorm, she kills

Cuddle. In order to satisfy her desire, she throws the entire obstacles that prevent her friendship with Sara even to an innocent little cat. Rebecca not only protect Sara from people that close to her but she also kicks people who disturbs and irritates Sara. Rebecca's *Id* is to be with Sara and to have Sara. If someone disturbs Sara then Rebecca also feels it. Rebecca assumes if she can make Sara happy, Sara would be grateful to Rebecca and it would make their friendship stronger. Moreover, Sara will stay by her side forever. Once again, her *Ego* acts to please her *Id*. Furthermore, Rebecca tries to protect Sara from the pervert professor so she harasses the professor as she does to Tracy. Finally, the professor leaves the university because of Rebecca intimidation. Next, Rebecca is killing Sara's ex-boyfriend because he always disturbs Sara and it annoys her so much. She kills Sara's ex-boyfriend so that he will not disturb Sara anymore. The concept of *Id* is to maximize the pleasure and to minimize the pain. In addition Irene is tied up on a mattress like a prisoner. Rebecca tries to kill Irene because after Sara leaves the dorm she always goes out with Irene. It makes Rebecca mad. Her *Id* is getting stronger than *Superego*. She thinks the last obstacle of their friendship is Irene so she has to kill her. Here the *Superego* is drowned by the *Id*. Rebecca has no conscience and morality to control her desire anymore which makes her easily kills someone to fulfill her desire.

Conclusion

The assessment of Christian E. Christiansen's *The Roommate* using Psychoanalysis approach reveals several unstable behaviors reflecting psychological problems of Rebecca in the film. It proves that Rebecca have disproportion of three divisions of *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. This study discovers that Rebecca's *Ego* is fully controlled by her *Id* so that *Superego* is barely visible. It happens because the *Id* expansively take controls of Rebecca. The *Superego* frequently does not appear in every situation. The *Id*'s desire of Rebecca to be together with Sara turns into an obsession that gives bad impact to people around Sara. In addition, it results in Rebecca's three divisions of *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego* grows disproportionately. It happens because the *Id*

dominates Rebecca's psychology because it covers the *Ego* and *Superego* unconsciously. In another words, the pleasure desired covers the moral and the ethical control. The dispropotion organization of *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego* resulting in unbalanced behavior strongly indicate that Rebecca has psychological problems.

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