

Kya's Ego Defense Mechanisms in Delia Owen's *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018)

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ABSTRACT

The ego defense mechanism is one of the fundamental theories in Freudian psychoanalysis. Initially promoted by Sigmund Freud, this theory of ego defense mechanism is enriched by Anna Freud. This study analyzes the ego defense mechanism practiced by the character of Kya in the *Where the Crawdads Sing* novel by Delia Owens. The theory used is the ego defense mechanism theory by Anna Freud. The method used is the descriptive qualitative method, which uses the novel as the primary data and theoretical references taken from various sources as the secondary data. Results of the research show that Kya uses repression and regression as the kinds of ego defense mechanisms used to relieve her anxiety or the internal problems she has faced. Hence, it is concluded that every different person can use any different kind of defense mechanism to protect his or her ego, depending on multiple factors such as personality and external factors.

Keywords: ego defense mechanism, novel, repression, regression.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, many people have been abused in relationships and the victims of abuse begin to defend themselves for the bad treatment from their partner. Self-defense is a form of defense against their selves to get out of the suffering phase. One of the self-defense ways that the victims do is to kill the criminal (Amelia & Daud, 2020). One of the incidents of self-defense by killing the criminal happened to Rachel Bellesen who was the sexual harassment from her ex-husband. She saved herself from her ex-husband

by shooting the criminal to death. However, the society around her did not treat Rachel as a victim, but as a criminal. The doer of self-defense does that because they think that it is an effective way to get free from the criminal (Grinner A, 2021). They also defend themselves without being conscious and do not think twice about the risks that they will face after that. That incident depicts that the people who defend themselves by killing the criminal will get the consequences, which are alienation and insult from society, and also will be considered as committing an immoral action. So the doer of self-defense decided to close themselves from the society and did not show any emotion to avoid the bad thoughts from people around them.

Alienation is social action from a society where everyone avoids or does not want to be near the doer of self-defense, in this case, alienation is because the society feels anxious and they just see the way the doer of self-defense defends themselves (Abushihab et al., 2021). Meanwhile, insult is the inappropriate sentences or words thrown by society to disgrace other people (Baczowska, 2021). One of them to people who have done self-defense, even some people just follow other people.

Alienation which is done by the society happens because of fear from the society itself. They think that people who defend themselves by killing are considered criminals. Most of them just focus on the murder incident, they forget that the doer of self-defense does that to defend themselves from crime. Then, the insult was thrown by society because they felt furious with the actions of people who had done self-defense (Garuba, 2019).

The alienation can happen from the society itself because they feel unsafe when they are around someone who has done self-defense. Most of them worry because they are afraid that they will be the next victim of the murderer, even though the doer of self-defense did that because of the pain and the desire to be free from that pain. So that they cannot think clearly to find another way to defend themselves. At the end of the day, not only get alienation from society, the doer of self-defense also gets the assumption that what they did was an immoral action in society (Mauliah & Sudjatnika, 2020).

Immoral action is the action that does not align with the norms that are believed by the society. The view of immoral action can arise because there is an action that is not by the wishes of society. Meanwhile, the doer of self-defense defends themselves by hurting even killing the criminals, which means that action itself is against the rules that are applied by society (Hidayat & Fathurrochman, 2022).

In society's eyes, killing is an action that is considered a violation of norms that is applied by society, and the action is still considered a vile thing in society. So society will insult the people who do the action although they do that based on the reason to defend themselves to save their own life

(Stanley et al., 2019).

One of the norms applied by society since a long time ago was moral norms of morality, which contain the rules of how humans have to behave, for example to not hurt other people. These rules are applied to minimize the bad intentions of someone who can be dangerous to people around them (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022). Meanwhile, self-defense by killing the criminal is an action inversely related to norms of morality. In the end, the society will be considered immoral. So, to reduce the negative assumption from society, the doer of self-defense tends to not show any emotion.

Not showing the emotion is someone's attitude to decide to cover up the emotion that they feel rather than express it. Meanwhile, emotion itself is the way of self-reaction to the situation that we face. The emotion can influence how one behaves when facing a problem (Houssein et al., 2022). The doer of self-defense tends to not show their emotion from the bad incidents which they have received, so they decided to not show any emotion that could threaten themselves.

The doer of self-defense does not show their emotions to prevent the bad thoughts from society. They hide their emotion due to the pressure from the assumptions that they receive. The pressure came from society who declared that the doer of self-defense was wrong because they took other people's lives just because they want to defend their selves. The assumption that they did a veil thing will make them feel threatened and decide to stay silent about the incident that they have been through (Akter et al., 2022).

The doer of self-defense hides their emotion by shutting their mouth and trying to be calm when facing questions or prejudice from society. They tend to be quiet when they are in a situation that threatens them, so their emotion is invisible to anyone. Even though the prejudices from society will continue before the doer of self-defense gets justice (Akter et al., 2022).

The above situation is, referred to real-life situation, applicable to the situations in fiction, which are focused on the psyche aspects of the characters within. This becomes the basis of this research.

In this research, Freudian Psychoanalysis, which was developed by Anna Freud, is used. The concept of the personality structure that contains the id, ego, and superego by Sigmund Freud and one form of defense mechanism by Sigmund Freud which was redeveloped by Anna Freud, the form is repression, is applied in the analysis. This research is focused on the discussion of self-defense carried out by Kya, the protagonist of the story.

The personality structure of Kya supports the researchers to use this theory because of the incidents she has experienced before. The id, ego, and superego are analyzed to identify the reason why she does self-defense. The researchers also use Anna Freud's theory of repression, where repression

can help see Kya's way when she was accused of murder. The ultimate purpose of this research is to prove that Kya is a victim of a crime and how Kya's form of self-defense in the face of accusations obtained from the community. Thus, readers can find out other views on Kya's form of self-defense.

METHOD

In this research, the qualitative method is used. The qualitative method is a method that focuses on the data that the analysis has already obtained, and this method makes it possible to give a new perspective on the problem that is being analyzed (Taherdoost, 2022, p. 54). The researchers use those new perspectives to help us to prove and break down the problem that we are analyzing.

Qualitative data is data formed as descriptive narratives and cannot be measured by number. The data taken are not based on science but based on the interpretation of problems that occur in society (Bochner, 2018, p. 1). With this qualitative data, it can help us to research the problem that we analyzed.

Qualitative data has 2 (two) different types which are primary data and secondary data. The primary data that we used for our research is *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel by Delia Owens. In secondary data we used theory books of Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud, we also used some articles. Data form in our research is words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Personality Structure

The id, ego, and superego are elements of personality structure for every action taken by humans.

1. Id

The id is the part of the personality structure that operates in humans unconsciously to satisfy their feelings. In this story, Kya is a woman who lives in a rural area she is abandoned by her family and childhood friends and she meets a man named Chase. Then finally Kya feels a sense of love for Chase that she previously only felt with Tate.

When she came back to where he stood, he asked if he could come again the next day, promised he would not even hold her hand, that he just wanted to be near her. She simply nodded. The first hope in her heart since Tate left.

(Owens, 2018, p. 169)

In the quote, Kya has hope for Chase not to leave her like the others, and in the quote, Kya's id moves to get the happiness that has been away

from her. One day, Chase wants to take Kya to a club but he realizes that Kya's life is far from that kind of thing. However, Kya agrees to Chase's invitation to try to follow Chase's lifestyle as a form of love.

Looking at the floor, she said, "Yes, and all that's true. But, well, I have to start fitting in with some of your life. Spread my wings, like you said. I guess I have to get the right clothes, meet some of your friends." She raised her head. "You could teach me to dance."

(Owens, 2018, p. 194-195)

It is explained that Kya is willing to change her life to fit Chase's life. Kya's id plays a big role in the quote because of the desire to satisfy her desire to always be with Chase.

In another part, Kya goes to town with Chase for a walk, but she finds a newspaper and, in her eagerness, to read it she discovers a new fact that surprises her.

Kya turned the page to continue the story, and there loomed a large picture of Chase and a girl above an engagement announcement: Andrews-Stone. Bunches of words jumped out, then sobs, and finally ragged heaves.

(Owens, 2018, p. 208)

It is explained that Kya's id moves to satisfy her curiosity to open the newspaper which brings up the news of the engagement between Chase and another woman which makes her disappointed.

The other part shows that Chase tries to get close to Kya again in various ways, but over time Chase's love turns into obsession and becomes a threat to Kya.

She was screamin', 'Leave me alone, you bastard! You bother me again, I'll kill ya!'

(Owens, 2018, p. 269)

This quote shows Kya's id walking away from Chase to protect herself even if it means killing the person she once loved. To protect herself, Kya's id unconsciously threatens Chase that she will kill the man if he disturbs Kya again.

2. Ego

The ego aims to be the reality principle in humans. In this section, before Kya discovers the shocking facts about Chase, she has been warned by her former lover, Tate.

But as she stared deep into the dark waters, Tate's words about Chase—"drive away after a party with a blonde in his pickup"—wouldn't leave her

mind.

(Owens, 2018, p. 201)

This passage shows that Kya's ego does not play a balanced role with other personality structures so she feels uneasy when she accepts this fact. Another part says that Chase thought that Kya knew his friends, he kept making sure that Kya recognized his friends.

Of course, she didn't remember them; she'd never been introduced to them. Only knew them as Tallskinnyblonde and the rest. She felt like seaweed dragged on a line but managed to smile and say hello.

(Owens, 2018, p. 207)

In that quote, there is a contradiction between Chase and Kya, where in reality Kya doesn't know Chase's friend, but the ego of Kya chooses to keep smiling and greeting them. Then, the next part explains that Kya limits herself to others because of the circumstances she has gone through.

... Kya being more vulnerable than ever, was reason to trust others even less. Standing in the most fragile place of her life, she turned to the only net she knew—herself.

(Owens, 2018, p. 285)

This shows that Kya's ego does not believe in anyone anymore even though he can do it, he prefers to be realistic in his current situation. Realistic means just accepting what will happen to him.

3. Superego

The superego is the ultimate morality that assists humans in acting. In this section, Kya does not impose her will on Chase to wear the necklace she gave him.

Reaching into her jeans pocket, she said, "I made a necklace with the shell you found. You don't have to wear it if you don't want to." She'd strung the shell on the rawhide the night before, thinking to herself she would wear it, but knowing all along she hoped to see Chase again and would give it to him if she had the chance.

(Owens, 2018, p. 165)

In this scene, Kya's superego plays a big role because it adds moral values to her behavior, where she does not force Chase to use the necklace, although she could have forced Chase after she knew how Chase felt about her.

In the next part, Chase seems to bring Kya to a human pleasure that makes her reluctant to reject Chase's actions.

She cried out against a sharp tearing, thinking something was wrong.
(Owens, 2018, p. 194)

In this quote, Kya realizes something that she is doing is wrong and her superego goes to work to make her think that their actions are against morality. Moreover, there is a poem that describes Kya's feelings after seeing the news of Chase's engagement to another woman.

"I must let go now.
Let you go.
Love is too often
The answer for staying.
Too seldom the reason
For going.
I drop the line
And watch you drift away.
"All along
You thought
The fiery current
Of your lover's breast
Pulled you to the deep.
But it was my heart-tide
Releasing you
To float adrift
With seaweed."

(Owens, 2018, p. 213)

In the poem, Kya's super ego operates by giving the moral value that she should leave because she knows that Chase has another woman.

Ego Defense Mechanism

A defense mechanism is a form of human defense carried out by the ego to reduce human stress.

1. Regression

Regression is the act of a person to protect himself in a way that he rarely does in his daily life. In this novel, when Kya receives inappropriate treatment from Chase, she fights back by kicking Chase in the thigh.

... Then, taking aim, she kicked him in his groin, square and solid.
(Owens, 2018, p. 265)

This section proves that Kya takes actions that she rarely does when she feels threatened, Kya chooses to defend herself by regression to protect herself.

In the next part, when Kya is in the prison cell, Kya is seen scratching her own hand and pulling out her hair as if it were a feather.

Self scratched red webbing streaked her arms. For untracked minutes, sitting on her bed, she studied strands of her hair, plucking them like feathers. As the gulls do.

(Owens, 2018, p. 276)

In this part, Kya has never done this before, but because she feels pressured to be in prison, she finally does it to relieve her anxiety. In the next part, there is a poem that implies that Kya has done something to Chase and she is keeping that fact neatly under wraps.

“The Firefly
Luring him was as easy
As flashing valentines.
But like a lady firefly
They hid a secret call to die.

A final touch,
Unfinished;
The last step, a trap.
Down, down he falls,
His eyes still holding mine
Until they see another world.

I saw them change.
First a question,
Then an answer,
Finally an end.
And love itself passing” (Owens, 2018, p. 367)

This poem explains that Kya does regression because in reality she really did kill Chase and she explains how Chase fell to his death when she killed him that night.

2. Repression

Repression is a way for someone to avoid something by not showing anything or staying silent when facing a situation that makes them feel threatened. In this section, when Tom Milton, her lawyer, introduces himself, she does not reply at all.

She had not looked up at him. Tom had introduced himself, saying he would represent her, but she didn’t speak or raise her eyes.

(Owens, 2018, p. 256)

In this section, it is that when Kya feels uncomfortable after she is arrested for Chase's murder, she prefers to remain silent when dealing with new people. In the next part, when Kya is asked to explain her statement on Chase's death, she chooses not to give a statement.

As on the first meeting, he tried to explain the evidence against her and to ask about her whereabouts on the night Chase died, but she pulled back into her shell at any mention of details.

(Owens, 2018, p. 257)

This quote shows that Kya avoids herself from the issue of Chase's murder; she chooses not to explain when asked for details about the case. Furthermore, in the quote below Kya chooses to limit herself to the people in the city area close to where she lives.

Kya never went to Barkley Cove again in her life, and for the most part, she and Tate spent their time in the marsh alone. The villagers saw her only as a distant shape gliding through fog, and over the years the mysteries of her story became legend, told over and over with buttermilk pancakes and hot pork sausages at the diner. The theories and gossip over how Chase Andrews died never stopped.

(Owens, 2018, p. 360)

In this part, Kya chooses to close herself off from society, so that the problems she previously faced do not get bigger. However, in reality, the case she previously faced became a story that was passed on by word of mouth among the people in the city.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis that we have used, which are the three personality structures from Sigmund Freud's theory and two defense mechanisms from Anna Freud. With this, it can be concluded that the character Kya in the novel *Where The Crawdads Sing* has protected herself to have a better life. Kya's self-protection is driven by the id, ego, and superego that move within her. Kya's character also protects herself using regression and repression. Research on the novel *Where The Crawdads Sing* means that we have to look at both sides when dealing with a problem, and not blame just one person. Because there will be every reason behind the actions.

In research, there is evidence that personality structure encourages a person to do something. In this novel, the three personality structures that exist in the main character sometimes seem unbalanced, which causes anxiety in him. After anxiety arises from the problem at hand, the main character finally protects himself with the word repression, namely by limiting himself from any interactions. Meanwhile, when she faced a

problem with Chase, Kya fought back through regression, which she did to avoid the bad treatment that Chase gave her.

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