

ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISM OF ARTHUR DIMMESDALE AS REFLECTED IN *THE SCARLET LETTER* NOVEL BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

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Abstract

This study explained the anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale as the male character in The Scarlet Letter novel written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The main goals of this study were to explain the anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale based on personality theory by Sigmund Freud. This study used descriptive qualitative methods. The data was collected from the novel in the form of monologues, dialogues, and prologues. Reading the novel, identifying the data, classifying the data, and reducing the data were some steps used to collect the necessary data. According to Sigmund Freud personality theory, this study found the anxieties of Arthur Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter novel, which was published in 1850. They were neurotic and moral anxiety. Those anxieties could be seen when Arthur Dimmesdale felt uncomfortable and guilty for hiding the truth about his being an adulterer in front of Puritan society during his life. He also made his partner, Hester Prynne be punished alone and lived far from townspeople for seven years.

Keywords: *Sigmund Freud, The Scarlet Letter, Arthur Dimmesdale*

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a strong correlation between literature and psychology because both of them are related to human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts, and reconciliation (Aras 251). Literature is a discipline where the language is used as a medium of expression to interpret men, culture and existence, personality and individual differences which have always been studied and discussed by writers, psychiatrist, psychologists, philosophers and artists (Aras 251). Psychology is a study of understanding human cognitive processes. It is applied to heal any human's problem related to the human mind. In literature, the studying of humans also can be found in literary works through the character such as novel, movie, play and so on. A character itself defines as anything such as animal, person, creature, being, or thing in a story. Many issues are dealing with Psychology and one of them is anxiety. Anxiety has long been a popular issue of discussion.

People experience anxiety; it is a natural human state and a vital part of human lives. Many factors that can produces anxiety such as feelings, actions or memories, and an awareness of thoughts (Trevithick 392). Anxiety is the signal of danger (Moss 1). Anxiety helps people to identify and respond to danger in "fight or flight" mode. Persistent anxiety causes real emotional distress and can lead people to become unwell and, at worst, develop anxiety disorders such as phobias, panic attacks, and obsessional behaviors. At this level of anxiety can have a truly distressing and debilitating impact on human lives and impact human physical and developmental health. (Swift et al. 3).

According to psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud, if you feel threatened, feel overwhelmed, feel as if it was almost collapsing under the pressure of it all. This is called anxiety (Boeree 7). Based on Sigmund Freud, reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety are known as the three main types of anxiety (GÖKDAG 3). Realistic anxiety is defined as something related to possible danger. Then Neurotic anxiety is defined as an unknown danger. Moral Anxiety results from the conflict between the ego and the superego (Bridges 34).

The Scarlet Letter novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne has the issue of anxiety. The novel itself tells in the seventeenth century about a puritan society in Boston. The two main characters are Hester Prynne as a beautiful woman and Arthur Dimmesdale as a young clergyman. Hester Prynne gets punishment from society because of adultery but no one knows who her partner is. She lives alone in the cottage far from the townspeople with her daughter. Arthur Dimmesdale is the partner of Hester Prynne, but he hides the fact from the people and makes him unnoticed by society. As the punishment, Hester Prynne gets the scarlet letter "A" on her chest. After that Arthur feels anxious in his life, especially in some conditions that relate to Hester Prynne and Puritan Society. Start from that day until seven years of Hester's punishment, Arthur's condition is getting worse. He always feels anxious because he hides the fact if Hester is his partner and he lets Hester be punished alone.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative method. Qualitative research method tends to use an inductive form of the scientific method to develop theory about phenomena in the world (Willott and Larkin 121). According to Mohajan, “The qualitative research methods typically include interviews and observations, but may also include case studies, surveys, historical and document analyses. Qualitative research was an umbrella term used to refer to the theoretical perspectives designs as narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, action research, case study, ethnography, historical research, and content analysis” (MOHAJAN 7). By this research methodology, this study needed to interpret the data in a descriptive way. The data were presented in the form of words, phrases or sentences, prologues, monologues or dialogues, not in the form of numbers.

Data organizing was divided into two parts, data collecting method and data types. Data collecting methods were also divided into four parts, which were reading the novel, identifying the data, classifying the data and reducing the data.

In organizing the data, the first step was reading the novel several times in order to get a deep understanding of the story. The next step was identifying the data. Identification was required to find the parts of the novel that were going to be analyzed. The data could be found in the form of dialogues or monologues. The next step of this research was classifying the data. Grouping the data based on the problem formulation in this study used to collect the data. This study needed to answer two problems formulation. After that, the data was listing all the identified then put them all on the table. The columns of numbers, a form of the data, where the data was found and comments consisted in the table. The table itself was called the Appendix. The last process was reducing the data. Reducing the data defines as the process of taking out a small number of data from a bigger number. In reducing the data, was used to answer the problems formulation.

There were two types of data in this study. Primary data was the main data which was taken from *The Scarlet Letter* novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The novel consisted of 193 pages and first published in 1850. Secondary data was the supporting data which were cited from e-books, e-journals and sites correlated to the study.

The final step in this study was analyzing the data, consisting of analyzing and reporting the data from the novel. The analysis was taken from data in the study and stated why the data supported the determination of problems. The complete analysis as the result of this study was stated in the next chapter.

3. RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

A. Anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*

No one can escape from anxiety because everyone in this world experiences anxiety. There are many reasons that can trigger feelings of anxiety for example, from many factors which relate to our daily life such as society, environment, family and social status. As depicted in the main male character named Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter Novel*. Arthur Dimmesdale character experiences the feeling of anxiety related to his

position as a clergyman of Puritan society. Portrayed in the novel that the anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale because he hides the fact from society if he is a sinner during his life and also the partner of Hester Prynne who gets scarlet letter A in her chest as a punishment from puritan society because of adultery. The more explanation about Arthur Dimmesdale's anxiety will be discussed below:

A.1. The Neurotic Anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale

Neurotic anxiety is defined as an unknown danger. Actually the feeling itself exists in the ego, but it originates from id impulses (Bridges 34). This kind of neurotic anxiety is an unconscious fear of being punished because of expressing impulsively id-dominated behavior. The fear is not coming from the instincts, but of what may happen as a result of gratifying the instincts. The conflict becomes one between the id and the ego, and its origin has some basis in reality (Fujii 60).

This kind of anxiety is an anxiety that the object is unknown. It is unknown because we do not know what makes us anxious whether or not it will happen. This type of anxiety is driven by a fear of punishment which results from expressing the id impulses.

There are some quotations which prove the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Arthur Dimmesdale starts his neurotic anxiety when Hester gets humiliated by puritan society and he comes to the scaffold on that day. He as a clergyman gives Hester Prynne an advice to tell who her partner is. Moreover, Hester partner is himself but he hides that fact from society and he becomes anxious what if Hester tells the truth. As stated in the novel below:

He was a person of very striking aspect, with a white, lofty, and impending brow, large, brown, melancholy eyes, and a mouth which, unless when he forcibly compressed it, was apt to be tremulous, expressing both nervous sensibility and a vast power of self-restraint. (Hawthorne 49)

Based on the quotation above captures the day when Hester Prynne and her baby Pearl get humiliated in the scaffold by Puritan Society and at the same time the first time Arthur Dimmesdale meets Hester again. This monologue describes the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale because neurotic anxiety is defined as an unknown danger. Actually the feeling itself exists in the ego, but it originates from id impulses (Bridges 34). Through the sentence 'a vast power of self-restraint' refers to the invisible or unknown danger because Arthur is feeling nervous and uncomfortable in that place and he meets Hester again and he is afraid if Hester will tell the truth in front of Puritan society that actually Arthur is her partner and the father of her baby, but Arthur anxiety is not happen.

The quotation which also portrays the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale is quoted as follows:

In these lengthened vigils, his brain often reeled and visions seemed to flit before him; perhaps seen doubtfully, and by a faint light of their own, in the remote dimness of the chamber, or more vividly and close beside him, within the looking-glass. Now it was a herd of diabolic shapes, that grinned and mocked at the pale minister, and beckoned him away with them; now

a group of shining angels, who flew upward heavily, as sorrow-laden, but grew more ethereal as they rose. Now came the dead friends of his youth, and his white-bearded father, with a saint-like frown, and his mother, turning her face away as she passed by. Ghost of a mother – thinnest fantasy of a mother – methinks she might yet have thrown a pitying glance towards her son! And now, through the chamber which these spectral thoughts had made so ghastly, glided Hester Prynne, leading along with little Pearl, in her scarlet grab, and pointing her forefinger, first at the scarlet letter on her bosom, and then at the clergyman's own breast. None of these visions ever quite deluded him. (Hawthorne 108)

It can be seen from the monologue above is when Arthur Dimmesdale wakes up at midnight and see visions in front of him. These visions seem the people in his life such as his parents, the dead friends of his youth, Hester Prynne and Pearl. They are pointing to the scarlet letter in his chest. This monologue reflects the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. The word 'visions' is the effect of neurotic anxiety on Arthur Dimmesdale because he is afraid to the respond of the people in his life when they find out if he is a sinner and he keeps his secret in many years. This kind of neurotic anxiety is an unconscious fear of being punished because of expressing impulsively id-dominated behavior. The fear is not coming from the instincts, but of what may happen as a result of gratifying the instincts. The conflict becomes one between the id and the ego, and its origin has some basis in reality (Fuji 60).

The proof of neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale also portrays through the monologue below:

Good heavens! Had Mr Dimmesdale actually spoken? For one instant, he believed that these words had passed his lips. But they were uttered only within his imagination. The venerable Father Wilson continued to step slowly onward, looking carefully at the muddy pathway before his feet, and never once turning his head towards the guilty platform. When the light of the glimmering lantern had faded quite away, the minister discovered, by the faintness which came over him, that the last few moments had been a crisis of terrible anxiety, although his mind had made an involuntary effort to relieve itself by a kind of lurid playfulness. (Hawthorne 112)

The monologue above tells when one midnight Arthur Dimmesdale is standing in scaffold alone and he acts like he wants to confess his secret in that place and he believes that he is already told those words but what happens is different. This monologue reflects the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. Through the word 'imagination' is shows the effect of neurotic anxiety of Arthur because his unconscious fear about hiding his sin makes his mind creates the imagination that he already told the truth in front of Puritan Society, which is the opposite of reality because in reality, he can not do that.

Another quotation which depicts the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale is quoted below:

‘Worthy sir,’ answered the physician, who had now advanced to the foot of the platform – ‘pious Master Dimmesdale! Can this be you? Well, well, indeed! We men of study, whose heads are in our books, have need to be straitly looked after! We dream in our waking moments and walk in our sleep. Come, good sir, and my dear friend, I pray you let me lead you home!’

‘How knewest thou that I was here?’ asked the minister, fearfully. (Hawthorne 117)

Through the dialogue above shows when one night Arthur Dimmesdale comes to scaffold and coincidentally meets Hester and Pearl then they are talking to each other but after Hester and Pearl leave that place, Roger Chillingworth finds Arthur Dimmesdale in that place and he asks Roger how he knows that Arthur is here. This dialogue reflects the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. Because the word ‘fearfully’ describes the neurotic anxiety of Arthur, it can be seen in the dialogue that he is shocked and afraid of how Roger can find him in that place? How long has he been there? and has he heard everything that Arthur and Hester are talking about? Arthur is anxious and worried if Roger heard the conversation between himself and Hester in the scaffold. It means he knows that Arthur is the partner of Hester and also the father of Pearl.

The quotation about the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale portrays in the dialogue below:

And I! – how can I to live longer, breathing the same air with this deadly enemy? Exclaimed Arthur Dimmesdale, shrinking within him himself, and pressing his hand nervously against his heart – a gesture that had grown involuntarily with him.’ Think for me, Hester! Thou art strong. Resolve for me!’ (Hawthorne 147)

Based on the quotation above depicts the conversation between Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne in the dim wood. They are talking about their condition and Hester confesses that Arthur has an enemy who lives near him and she says that actually Roger is her husband from England. Arthur was surprised and shocked when he heard about it. The neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale reflects through this dialogue. It can be seen in the word ‘deadly enemy’ refers to Roger Chillingworth because after Arthur knows that Roger is the husband of Hester from England, he regards him as his enemy and how can they live together at the same place and Arthur claims that Roger is a dangerous person.

The last quotation which depicts the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale is stated in the monologue below:

He absolutely trembled and turned pale as ashes, lest his tongue should wag itself in utterance of these horrible matters, and plead his own consent for so doing, without his having fairly given it. And, even with this terror in his heart, he could hardly avoid laughing. (Hawthorne 164)

From the quotation above shows when Arthur is on his way from the wood. He thinks about his plan with Hester to leave Boston and on the way home, he meets some

clergymen of Puritan Society and suddenly he feels anxious about himself. It can be seen in the sentence ‘this terror in his heart, he could hardly avoid laughing’ is the neurotic anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. It shows that he feels terror in his heart because he imagines what will happen when people find out the truth about him.

A.2 The Moral Anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale

Moral anxiety is the other type of anxiety based on Sigmund Freud. Moral anxiety concerns uncertainty about the correctness of a moral decision that you are contemplating, while social and punishment anxiety concern, respectively, uncertainty about how others will view your social worthiness and uncertainty about whether you will be punished for a wrong you have done (Kurth 11). Moral anxiety stems from the conflict between the ego and the superego (Bridges 34). This kind of anxiety is the fear of moral reproach, criticism, and punishment from society.

The moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale is portrayed in the novel by the quotation below:

And thus, while standing on the scaffold, in this vain show of expiation, Mr Dimmesdale was overcome with a great horror of mind, as if the universe were gazing at a scarlet token on his naked breast, right over his heart. On that spot, in very truth, there was, and there had long been, the gnawing and poisonous tooth of bodily pain. (Hawthorne 111).

The monologue above shows when Arthur Dimmesdale comes to the scaffold at midnight and he is standing in the scaffold looking at the audience in front of him which actually only an empty place and he acts like he wants to confess his secret to the Puritan society. This monologue portrays the moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. As based on Freud, moral anxiety concerns uncertainty about whether you will be punished for the wrong you have done (Kurth 11). The word ‘universe’ refers to Puritan Society and he is afraid of what kind of response from the society that he will get as a punishment. The moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale is also portrayed in the monologue below:

‘Oh, Hester!’ cried Arthur Dimmesdale, in whose eyes a fitful light, kindled by her enthusiasm, flashed up and died away, ‘thou tellest of running a race to a man whose knees are tottering beneath him! I must die here! There is not the strength or courage left me to venture into the wide, strange, difficult world alone!’ (Hawthorne 148-149).

A conversation between Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne depicts through the quotation above. Hester suggests Arthur to move from Boston and start a new life in Europe because it is good to increase his health. From this dialogue portrays the moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. According to Freud, moral anxiety stems from the conflict between the ego and the superego (Bridges 34). The word ‘difficult world’ describes the moral anxiety of Arthur because that is the result from the conflict between his ego which he wants to start a new life in a new place but his superego against that because he is afraid to face the society in a new place. He is afraid of what society will respond to him when they find out if he is a sinner. That is why he says that the new place is a difficult world.

Another quotation about the moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale is also depicted in the dialogue below:

‘Dost thou know, Hester,’ said Arthur Dimmesdale, with an unquiet smile, ‘that this dear child, tripping about always at thy side, hath caused me many an alarm? Methought – oh, Hester, what a thought is that, and how terrible to dread it! – that my own features were partly repeated in her face, and so strikingly that the world might see them! But she is mostly thine!’ (Hawthorne 155)

The dialogue above shows when Arthur Dimmesdale coincidentally meets Hester Prynne and Pearl in the dim wood. They are talking about their condition and Arthur says to Hester about something that makes him anxious, what if society realizes that some parts of his features repeat in Pearl's faces. This dialogue portrays the moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale. From the sentence ‘that the world might see them’ refers to his moral anxiety because that is the result of his ego which is Pearl is his biological child but the superego is he exactly knows that having children without marriage is not right, all the more his status as a clergyman. Moreover, some parts of his features repeat in Pearl's faces and he is afraid that people will realize if Pearl has simillarity with him and notice that Pearl is his daughter.

Another moral anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale also depicted in the monologues below:

He absolutely trembled and turned pale as ashes, lest his tongue should wag itself in utterance of these horrible matters, and plead his own consent for so doing, without his having fairly given it.

....

To imagine how the sanctified old patriarchal deacon would have been petrified by his minister's impiety. (Hawthorne 164)

The two monologues above show that when Arthur is on his way from the wood. He thinks about his plan with Hester to leave Boston and on the way home, he meets some clergyman of Puritan Society and after that suddenly he feels anxious about himself. According to Sigmund Freud, Moral anxiety arises from a fear of violating our own moral or societal codes. Freud suggested, moral anxiety manifests itself as guilt or shame (Swift et al. 11). From the sentence ‘He absolutely trembled and turned pale as ashes, lest his tongue should wag itself in utterance of these horrible matters, and plead his own consent for so doing, without his having fairly given it’ is describes moral anxiety because it can be seen from the reaction of Arthur Dimmesdale after meets some clergyman and in his opinion, they are honourable people. Meanwhile, he is only a sinner and what is the response from them if they find out the truth about him? Another moral anxiety has done by Arthur Dimmesdale also can be seen in this monologue through the sentence ‘the sanctified old patriarchal deacon’. That sentence refers to the clergymen that he meets on the road. Moral anxiety of Arthur makes him afraid to imagine how society reacts to his sin, he will be punished by society and he will lose society respect related to his status as

a clergyman. His superego knows that what he does has broken the moral code and that is the reason why he feels anxious during his life.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the problems in this study is based on the result of the analysis in the previous chapter. This study analyzes the anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale character in the novel *The Scarlet Letter* according to Sigmund Freud's personality theory. It portrays the anxiety of Arthur Dimmesdale as the male character. As based on Sigmund Freud, there are three types of anxiety. They are realistic, neurotic and moral anxiety. Based on the analysis, this study finds out two types of anxiety experienced by Arthur Dimmesdale. The two types of anxiety experienced by Arthur Dimmesdale are neurotic and moral anxiety. These anxieties of Arthur Dimmesdale are shown by the feeling guilty of Arthur Dimmesdale because of his decision to hide the fact from the Puritan society that Hester Prynne is his partner on adultery but he lets Hester to be punished alone.

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