

DEFENSE MECHANISMS OF HUGH GLASS IN THE NOVEL OF MICHAEL PUNKE'S *THE REVENANT: A NOVEL OF REVENGE*

¹Sofiatul Qomariyah, ²Nur Mufid, ³Muhammad Thoriqussuud, ⁴Amiq, ⁵Abu Fanani

¹MI Nurul Hikmah Pesawahan Tiris Probolinggo
²³⁴⁵UIN Sunan Ampel, Indonesia

¹sofiatulq@gmail.com, ²nurmufidali@gmail.com, ³thoriqussuud@uinsby.ac.id
⁴amiq@uinsby.ac.id, ⁵abufanani@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study analyzes defense mechanism undergone by Hugh Glass in Michael Punke's *the Revenant: a novel of revenge*. Glass conducts defense mechanism because he wants to reduce his anxiety after being left by his friends in the woods and fighting against a mother bear alone. His action of doing defense mechanism is psychologically explainable that is also undergone by people in real life which then becomes the reason the researcher gets interested in analyzing defense mechanism. Using five types of anxiety by Sigmund Freud, the study shows that Glass conducts defense mechanisms: intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, and sublimation. By intellectualization, Glass gets rid of anger, by displacement Glass gets his target for nutrition, by rationalization Glass gets the reality, by reaction formation Glass takes everything for granted, by repression he does anything else more useful, by sublimation Glass does good things instead of taking a revenge. By this study then, the researcher hopes so much that it contributes to the development of the literary study especially in the study of psychology of literature.

Key Words: intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, sublimation

INTRODUCTION

Man and anxiety are inseparable in that anxiety is a feeling linked to man universally. However, not all anxieties are advantageous to man proved by the fact that there are anxiety disorders including panic disorder, agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder/social phobia, specific phobia, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), acute stress disorder, obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD), and separation anxiety disorder (Simpson, et. al, 2010).

Based on the brief explanation of anxiety above, the researcher, then, refers to Schultz (2017) about three kinds of anxiety: reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety that tend to trigger defense mechanisms (Zeidner, et al, 2011). Consequently, societies increase defense mechanism against anxiety (Cervone, et. al, 2019). Defense mechanisms, then, are generally comprehended as movements that are conducted to cope up with stress representing to unconscious processes (Epstein, et. al, 2014)).

Sigmund Freud classifies defense mechanisms into eight: repression, denial, reaction formation, projection, regression, rationalization, displacement, and sublimation (Schultz, 2017). Repression is the most frequently as well as crucially in use of defense mechanism, whose task is to eliminate something hurting and uncomfortable in human's awareness with the example a human's sexual motivation in order that he grows into impotent. Denial is to disagree with a threatening/distressing thing with the example of denying a death of the family member that is painful by not altering the deceased member's chamber by the parents. Reaction formation is to protect oneself from the hazardous impulse by the opposed impulse: hatred vs love, angry vs lovely, unkindly vs friendly, etc. Projection is projecting the hurtful impulse to somebody else so that the intimidating impulse to that somebody develops to be less intimidating. The example of this is to return somebody else's menace, he states that he does not hate him, but on the contrary.

Regression is the mechanism of protecting somebody by regressing back to the life in the days of yore, for example, the childhood, the times he is so protected as well as reliant. Thus, being childlike, he feels well when a hostile impulse approaches him. Rationalization is to explain any hostile impulse by practical explanation in case of the hazardous threat to him/her. For example, if he is fired from his work he could state that he does not deserve the work as it is not worthy of his requirement. Displacement is to leave the upsetting object's anger for blaming the other object as if the other object deserved the anger of the upsetting object even though the other object cannot decrease the replacer's feeling upset. The example of it is the action of a child's kicking his sister when

he is feared of his parents or employee's yelling at an animal when he is feared of his employer. Sublimation is to leave the unpleasant feeling for the pleasant one by altering his action, the example of which is to do a lot of exercises to overcome his sexual drive.

As one of the mental problems experienced by human beings (Livesley, et. al, 2018), defense mechanisms is seeable in literary works to which the researcher refers to Philip Tew about the roles of the novels in connection with human beings: man's history, man's comprehension as well as man's lives (Prokrivcak, 2010). The novel the researcher finds the defense mechanisms is Michael Punke's *the Revenant: a Novel of Revenge*.

The researcher chooses *the Revenant: A Novel of Revenge* because this novel tells about the struggle of the main character to survive and defend himself from the attack of bear's mother. It is hard for Glass when he can do anything after his body is badly wounded. He gets depressed and wants to die because his friend leaves him alone in the middle of the jungle. Accordingly, he demands revenge to his friends, that is, Fitzgerald and Bridger due to whom he undergoes defense mechanism in spite of the fact that defense mechanism can be found in everyday life.

Recently, there has been studies on defense mechanism; the first previous study goes to Amaliyah, et. al, (2022). In their article *Defense Mechanisms in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights: How Catherine Earnshaw Deal with Egocentricity*, they do the analysis of Catherine Earnshaw's personality. By the use of the form of denial, identification, repression, and rationalization, the study shows that Catherine is able to do the balance in her egocentric personality.

The second previous study goes to Setiawan, et al. (2021). In their article *Facing Anxiety through Ego Defense Mechanisms on The Walking Dead: Michonne Movie Game*, they do the analysis of ego defense mechanisms, by the use of the types of defense mechanisms: repression, sublimation, rationalization, and aggression, the study comes to the conclusion that the character is able to manage his resentment or dissatisfaction.

The last previous study goes to Kurniasari, et. al, (2024). In their article, *Defense Mechanism in Charles Williams' Dead Calm*, they analyze Warriner, the main character, conducting defense mechanism due to the fact that he wants to reduce his anxiety after accidental incident of sinking a yacht and the killing of his friends. By the use of the three types of anxiety by Sigmund Freud, the study shows that Warriner conducts defense mechanisms: denial, displacement, and sublimation.

The researcher's study uses intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, and sublimation. Though, there are similarities in the types of defense mechanisms with the previous studies above, however, the difference is the novel to analyze. Thus, using Michael Punke's *the Revenant: a Novel of Revenge* to analyze its defense mechanism, the study meets the requirement of the novelty. Accordingly, how the four types of defense mechanisms above are described is discussed in this study.

METHOD

Research Design

The researcher uses descriptive and dramatic method in analyzing the novel through Freud's five types of defense mechanisms: intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, and sublimation by which the researcher describes and discusses as well as reports the main character's speech and action presented by the researcher. Accordingly, from describing, discussing as well as reporting the character's speech and action, the researcher presents and analyzes the five types of defense mechanism of the main character. Additionally, to get the clear data analysis, the researcher uses Freud's five types of defense mechanism to be a main method for the analysis of defense mechanism in Michael Punke's *the Revenant: a Novel of Revenge*.

Data Sources

The data sources of this study are taken in the form of description, speech, and action of the main character's defense mechanism from the novel of Michael Punke's *the Revenant: a Novel of Revenge*.

Data Collection

Huberman, et. al, (1984) in their book *Innovation Up Close, How School Improvement Works* come up with the idea of data collection: interview, observation, document, and survey the data. Observation, document, and survey the data deserve an application here as this study is a literary one. By observation, the researcher means to firstly read the entire novel and get the issue and then the researcher finds the related theory. By document, the researcher means to do the classification of the data belonging to defense mechanisms: intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, and sublimation. By survey the data, the researcher means to do the analysis of the classified data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis goes back to the research question and the explanation of the research question (Huberman, 1984), namely, how intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, and sublimation are undergone by the main character in Michael Punke's *the Revenant: a Novel of Revenge* are discussed here.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Intellectualization

Intellectualization is an effort in which the person avoids of the uncomfortable emotions by focusing on facts and logic. There is a daylight, Glass can know without moving, however, he could not guess what time it is. He is lying in his place, has been unconscious since the day before. Anger has brought him to the edge of the meadow, but fever stops him there.

“Glass looked again at the gap in the woods where Fitzgerald and Bridger had fled. His jaw set as he thought about what they had done, he felt again the visceral desire to strike out in pursuit. This time though, he also felt the weakness of his body. For the first time since the bear attack, his mind was clear, with clarity came an alarming assessment of his situation.” (Punke, 2016).

From the quotation above, when Glass wants to pursue them and take revenge, in reality he could logically do nothing because he is sick with dying caused by a bear attack, Glass also thinks that if he keeps on chasing he wants to be able to do it because he does not have any weapons and with high probability he will also be lost. Glass feels a deep desire to pursue them, but this time, he also feels his body weakened. Since the first bear's attack, his mind has been clear; with the clarity he is able to judge the situation carefully. Glass removes the desire to pursue those who have betrayed him. Intellectualization is reflected in this novel because when Glass wants to revenge, chasing them is impossible, his condition still weak and even though he tries to chase then get avenge, he will be lost.

Rationalization

Rationalization is a strategy when someone uses to provide a rational explanation for the behavior. That means someone uses a logical and rational reason to oppose the real reason. Glass becomes suddenly aware of a profound and gnawing hunger. He has no idea how long it has been since he ate, but his hands are trembled from the lack of subsistence. When he lifts his head, the clearing spun a slow circle around him.

“He moved to six feet, stopping to pick up a walnut size rock. With his left hand, he rolled the rock, which skipped toward the snake, bumping its

body. The snake didn't move. Glass picked up a fist-size rock and crawled within reach. Too late, the snake made a sluggish move toward cover. Glass smashed the rock on its head, beating the serpent repeatedly until he was certain it was dead." (Punke, 2016).

Because he has not eaten for a long time and is unconscious, at that time Glass feels hungry when he wakes up from his dream. The snake does not move a bit beside him, Glass crawls slowly and takes a piece of walnut-size, he throws it at the snake, and the snake too still does not move, then Glass takes a rather large stone almost late, and Glass hits the snake's head to death. This is the way how Hugh Glass gets eaten. His body is not fit after he fights with Grizzly. After Glass skinned and cut the neck to the stomach of the snake, then Glass cuts snake meat into several parts. "he bit into the snake, ripping into the raw flesh as if were an ear of corn." (Punke, 2016). From the quotation above, Glass chewed snake meat like he was chewing on a piece of corncob. The meat is cut off. Glass the chewy meat. Glass is not aware of anything except hunger that overwhelms him every waking from sleep; anyway he does to get food. This is Glass's way of satisfying his hunger when there is nothing to eat except the snake. He cuts small pieces of snake meat left eating.

Reaction Formation

Reaction formation occurs when a person feels the urge to do or say something and then he or she does or says something that is effectively the opposite of what they want. Glass carefully avoids discussion of his motivation back from the platform. However, Glass finally asks about Fitzgerald to Major Constable.

"There's a man walking this way—up over the ridgeline."

"You mean an Indian?"

"Sume so, Lieutenant. Didn't get close enough to find out." (Punke, 2016)

Glass asks Major Constable while Glass's eyes looked at Fitzgerald who had changed. Glass is disgusted when he takes a look at it. Moreover, now Glass is close to his game, seemingly unreal he struggles against Fitzgerald's attacking desire and strangles the man's neck until he loses his life.

Repression

Repression involves placing uncomfortable thoughts in area that are relatively inaccessible from the subconscious mind. When something happens that cannot be overcome now then he/she push it way. The bear has deeply injured him in the chest and upper arm. Bridger's pine gum has closed the wound. All look healthy and Glass continues to stare at the snake and thinking. "God, what I'd give for my knife. But, not now." (Punke, 2016). Glass thinks about the knife carried by

Bridger. Glass throws away the memory of the knife now. It is impossible for him to take it in his condition, injury and cannot walk. If the knife had been there, he would not have bothered to find a way to skin the swings he has managed to kill the snake to eat. Glass vows to get the dagger back but not now, because the conditions are not possible to walk. Now Glass crawls along the road beside the Grand River. He throws away to want to reconcile him because the time is not right. Maybe someday he will try hard to find those who have betrayed and avenged him.

Hugh Glass also uses repression when he gets the remaining buffalo's meat from the wolf whose he fights. He thinks back to the knife that should make it easier to slice the meat.

“Glass removed the hide with the dull razor. A task that should have taken minutes took hours, an interval during which he thought bitterly about the two men who stole his knife.”(Punke, 2016).

The time lags that makes Glass remember the knife, but he delays his desire to get the knife. Glass feels that at this time he has no time for it. Glass throws away the feeling of wanting to make things and revenge. Sometime that is certain he will take revenge. Glass does not have the time or equipment to process to work the fur properly, but he manages to make rough parfleche before the skin is dried into stiff rawhide. he needs the bag to carry the meat.

Sublimation

After Glass return and met with his friends, all of the people are shocked, especially Bridger. Silence fills the room while the stunned men try to struggle to understand the scene before him. Bridger has seen a scene like this in his mind.

“Glass scanned the stunned faces before him. Disappointment flashed briefly as he failed to locate Fitzgerald among the men but he did find Bridger. Their eyes would have met, expect Bridger turned way. Just like before. He noticed the familiar knife that Bridger now wore at his waist. Glass lifted his rifle and cocked it.”(Punke, 2016)

Glass takes a look at one face from them and feels a little disappointed because Fitzgerald is not there, but it is okay there is Bridger then he approaches Bridger and asks his knife while lifting the gun and holding it up with his anger like want to kill Bridger.

“The desire to shoot Bridger down nearly overwhelmed him. Having crawled toward this moment for a hundred days, the prospect of vengeance was no immediate, the power to consummate requiring no more than the gentle squeeze of a trigger.”(Punke, 2016)

Glass is eager to kill Bridger at that time, just by pressing the trigger he could die, but he feels that with him dead it is not quite satisfied with what he has done for several months when he left Glass alone. Glass pauses to enjoy the last moment before satisfying the rifle and resting the gun on the wall.

“where’s my knife Bridger?”
“Stand up,” (Punke, 2016)

He slowly approaches Bridger. Glass’s blow hits his face, then punches his bottom of his chin, hit his stomach repeatedly and kicks him, too. Glass has imagined this moment for a long time. Now comes the moment of revenge which is even more colorful than the one imagines, Glass twirls the knife and feels its weight, is prepared to stab.

The expected resistance does not come. Glass continues to grip his knife while staring at the boy. Bridger looks back, Glass does not see hatred but fearless. Glass’s breathing begins to slow down and its slips stopped pulsing and he looks around the man who surround him. For a long time he looks at the knife in his hand and then looks around at his belt as he turns away from Bridger, Glass realizes he is cold.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussions above, the researcher comes to the conclusion that Hugh Glass experiences defense mechanism; firstly, he experiences intellectualization by avoiding his anger feeling to an object, then Hugh Glass experiences displacement to get his target, because he needs more nutritions from meat, but he can get it than he replaces with cattail roots. Hugh Glass also experiences rationalization by achieving the reality that he cannot do anything with his body and then moves from place to place where he crawls and thinks rational that he can fly. He also experiences reaction formation when he can do or say the reality, he wants get revenge, but the law resolves it and he just takes it for granted. He experiences repression when he remembers about his friends leaving him then he tries not to think of them by doing anything more useful. The last he experiences his sublimation when he comes back from the forest and wants revenge them but he thinks again and remembers some of the good things done and not for revenge.

The researcher also hopes that there are other researchers conducting study on defense mechanism in other novels or in the same novels with different issue in order that literary study develops. Finally, through this study, there is a lesson for the reader of this study that defense mechanism can be applied in people’s daily life to prevent deep anxiety.

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