

Research Article

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Repression upon Rachel Chu's in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*

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Abstract

This study is about repression perceived by Rachel Chu, the main character in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*. The goal of this research is to describe repression in the light of the psychoanalytic defense mechanism repression. The researcher uses two data sources, namely the main data, which is Kevin Kwan *Crazy Rich Asians* novel published in 2013, and the supporting data, comprising books, websites, dictionaries, newspapers, and a number of novel-related articles. This research is a qualitative one; that is, the researcher adopts Sigmund Freud's concept of defense mechanism especially repression to evaluate the data. The evaluation presents Rachel Chu's state of *id*, *ego*, and *superego* in response to the situations surrounding her. The defense mechanism repression results in Rachel Chu's persistence against stereotypes she cannot take, and also the impact of the repression on herself, or the people around her.

Keywords: defense mechanism; repressions; education background; social status

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Crazy Rich Asians is a novel written by Kevin Kwan, and it was published on June 11, 2013, in the United States by Double Day Production. This edition that the writer uses for the study of the novel was released by Anchor Books, and it has 527 pages in hard-cover version. The writer believes, that the novel is a good point of exemplifying Repression.

In this study, repression becomes the center of attention. Repression in this novel is smartly presented by the author of the novel. The smart presentation characterization of Rachel Chu in the novel brings about the intentions to carry out the study of the novel,

especially on Rachel Chu's repression. The repression upon Rachel Chu is not commonly narrative. In fact, the writer found that it was narrative so neatly that the writer would not be able to make a guess on what would happen to Rachel Chu at the end of the story. Therefore, the writer chooses to study repression as the topic of this project. The objectives the writer wants to achieve through the study of the Repression upon Rachel Chu comes in two points. The first point is that the writer would describe is what kind of Repression which Rachel Chu undergoes. The second one is how Rachel Chu reacts to the repression. The last one is how repression affects Rachel Chu herself and also people around her

The analysis of repression comes in three stages. First describes the character of Rachel Chu and what problems Rachel Chu faced along with the story. The second describes the repression that Rachel Chu experienced in her reaction. This is done by describing how the defense mechanism works on the character. Third describes explain the impact of Rachel Chu's repression, the impact on Rachel, and also the people around her.

The analysis results in the persistence of Rachel Chu as her reaction to the repression undergoes, Rachel may seem weak but she is actually strong when people surrounding her underestimate her. She refuses to surrender. This brings unexpected outcomes from her persistence.

Reading the novel, the writer strongly believes that this novel is worth reading. It has literary elements a fictional works, it has distinctive literary elements. In addition, it presents an unordinary love story. The love story is not so fantastical because it could happen to anyone. Last but not least it has precious values of life. Based on the illustration, the writer chooses the title: Rachel Chu's Repression As Reflected In Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*.

1.2. Research Problems

Based on the background of the study, the researcher wants to analyze the problem as follows:

1. How were the personality of Rachel Chu?
2. What trigger(s) the Rachel Chu's Repression?
3. What are examples of repression in Rachel Chu's character?
4. What are the impacts of the repression of Rachel Chu?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement, the writer wants to analyze the repression of the main character reflected in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* based on a psychoanalytical approach.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Previous Study

There are two previous studies that the writer found, the first one was written by one of the students of the University of Muhammadiyah Solo, written in 2019 entitled: Social Prejudice Reflected in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013): A Sociological Approach. The subject in the paper underlines the parts of sociology that occur in the novel. The paper talks about social perspectives and prejudices that Kevin Kwan tries to emphasize, namely cognitive prejudice, affective prejudice, and conative prejudice by examining the creator's memoir and foundation.

The second previous study is composed of students from The State University of Semarang, written in 2019 entitled: Social Class Domination Over Proletarian Group In Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*: Redefining Social Class Hierarchy As Familial And Cultural Traditions. The paper looks at how the social class hierarchy over ordinary gathering dependent on the social class progressive system as a familial and social tradition in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*.

In the novel *Crazy Rich Asians*, this research includes the explanation and analysis of the defense mechanism of the main character. To analyze the novel, the writer uses a psychoanalytical approach. Two data sources are used in this research, the main data being Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* novel, and the secondary data, such as literary books, websites, dictionaries, journals, and some novel-related articles. This study is a qualitative study using an analysis of the content.

Data analysis will be performed to find results and conclusions by grouping data. There are three issues that trigger the primary character's repression. The repression triggers are grouped into 1. Rachel Chu's background; 2. Differences in social status between Rachel Chu and Eleanor Young; 3. Rachel Chu's persistence.

2.2. Character and Characterization

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams defines the characters are the persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who is interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say -the dialogue- and what they do -the action [1].

Abrams also stated that based on the importance, the character can be divided into two categories. They are major characters and minor characters. A major character usually appears throughout the whole of the story. He becomes the focus of the story. The events that appear in the story always involve him directly or indirectly. On the other hand, a minor character is often said as the supporting character. The roles are less important than the main characters because they are not fully developed characters and their roles in a story are just to support the development of the major character [1].

W.B. Saunders states that the characters display a variety of traits that are accurate and distinct qualities shown by the individuals [2]. Meanwhile according to Kamisa, character means the way someone thinks, feels and behaves in someone's personality [3].

Character is the nature or personality that distinguishes an individual from other individuals or can be said also as the actual state of being in an individual, which distinguishes himself from other individuals.

2.3. Conflict

Conflict is a struggle or a dispute between individuals with conflicting desires, ideas, values, beliefs, or objectives. The conflict, defined in the strictest sense, represents the incompatibility of the positions of the subject [4].

Conflict means a struggle between individuals that may be physical, or between ideas that contravention. Conflicts can either be within one person or involve multiple individuals or groups. In his book *An Introduction to Fiction*, Robert Stanton explains how the narrative is driven by conflict as it determines the basis on which the plot is based, the foundation of the story structure [5].

2.4 Defense Mechanism

The defense mechanism is a defense strategy played by the ego of an individual to fight id impulses and oppose superego pressure on external reality [6].

Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts or feelings. Mechanisms that intercede the individual's reaction to emotional conflicts and external stressors [7].

2.5. Id, Ego, Superego

According to Freud's model of the psyche, the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, id is the core of personality that comes from the unconscious mind of the human. The super-ego functions as a moral consciousness, it can oppose the pleasure-seeking nature that comes from the id, and it can also block the ego's desire to achieve pleasure, and the ego is the realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego [8].

Id, ego, and super-ego are three different but interactive agents in the psychic apparatus defined in the structural model of the psyche of Sigmund Freud. The three parts are theoretical constructs of how activity and interaction in our mental life are described [8].

2.6 Sigmund Freud's Concept of Repression

Repression is a theory developed by Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis. Repression is a form of psychological defense when a person experiences a very traumatic event that triggers anxiety. Repression can be defined as the psychological strategy of repressing the unacceptable impulses to be unconscious. It helps people to avoid experiencing the anxiety by distorting the source, aim and/or object of the impulses, avoiding the retaliation of the superego, and allowing the impulse to sneak past the censor [9].

Hall (1954), in *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*, explains that repression is used by many people because it is considered necessary for normal personality development, but there are people who really depend upon it. These people are said to be repressed. These people give the impression of being withdrawn, tense, rigid, guarded, and their contacts with the world are limited as well [9].

Repression is shown in the form of burying feelings of anxiety, threatening, unwanted desires, and disturbing desires into the subconscious. The fluctuation is removed so that it does not arise into the conscious mind. Repression can occur throughout life.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Approach

This study is written to analyze the psychological problem of Rachel Chu based on Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* with a psychological theory defense mechanism by Sigmund Freud. To analyze the psychological phenomenon, the writer uses a literary psychology approach. Psychology, broadly defined, is the scientific study of behavior, both external observable action and internal thought [10].

3.2 Method of Data Collection

To describe the objective the writer carries out library research. According to Zeid (2004) Library research is research that used library sources to get the data. The researcher also draws and integrates her ideas to conclude synthesize. In this research, the researcher uses some sources and books as references. It also was limited on the library research because the data does not come from the field and the data of research are collected from various references. According to George, library research is a form of structured inquiry with specific tools, rules, and techniques [11]. The writer reads the novel and other supporting text for studies of the novel, such as books and articles about psychoanalysis, for the studies the writer applies a textual analysis, in which the writer trying to relate what happens to Rachel Chu, to psychoanalytic repression. The writer adopts Sigmund Freud's concept of defense mechanism according to his psychoanalysis theory.

In terms of the type of data, this research approach is qualitative research. Qualitative research means research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what the research subject is experiencing in a holistic manner, which in the context of this research the subject is the main character *Crazy Rich Asians*, and using descriptions in the form of words and language [12].

A study that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials is frequently referred to as qualitative research. The major element is the researcher, the data are inductive, the result focuses not on generalization but on meaning [13]. The object of this research is Rachel Chu's repression in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*.

There are three aims to analyze this novel. The aims of this study are to find out Rachel Chu's character; explain Rachel Chu's repression, and describe the impacts of her repression.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 *Character of Rachel Chu*

In the novel *Crazy Rich Asians*, Rachel Chu is the main protagonist. "She was born in China, but she was raised in the USA. Rachel is well-educated, measured, and lovely as a person. She has natural beauty", as Nicholas Young says [13] (29).

Rachel is so well educated and down to earth. Although many of the other female traits in the novel are materialistic and are only concerned with the social ladder, Rachel is not impressed and often distracted by wealth: Rachel thinks that people around Nicholas Young only think about money.

Rachel Chu said that "All these people whose lives revolve around making money, hiding money, controlling others with money, and ruining their lives over money." [13] (Kwan, 2013:481).

Rachel is an independent person. Even her mother in America had to work hard to care for Rachel, since childhood she never knew who her father was. That's why Rachel Chu grows up to be a strong and independent person.

Rachel is a humble person, preferring to give in when faced with a life-like problem or conflict and though she does have a brave mentality. She survives many of Nicholas Young's family trials. The only thing that made Rachel Chu the bravest woman, but when she dares to question Nicholas's mother and prove that she deserves Nicholas Young. Even though they came with Rachel from different social classes.

4.2 *Id, Ego, Superego of Rachel Chu*

4.2.1. Id

Rachel Chu's real feeling for Nicholas Young is shown at the time when Nick's mother, Eleanor Young disapproves of her relationship with her son. She can't lie about her id because she does not think about her ego and her surroundings.

"I just love Nick so much ..." [13] (Kwan, 2013:159)

Rachel falling in love with Nicholas, she loves him so much, until she made sacrifices and gave in to leave Nicholas Young, so that the mother-son relationship will not be cut off, but one day when he marries a lucky girl who is enough for Eleanor, she only wants Eleanor to know that she is playing with her grandchildren that is because of Rachel.

"... So I just wanted you to know that one day, when he marries another lucky girl who is enough for you, and you're playing with your grandkids while the Tan Hua's are blooming and the birds are chirping.. that it was because of me. A poor, raised by a single mother, low class, immigrant nobody." As Rachel Chu Said. [13] (Kwan, 2013:159)

4.2.2 Ego

Rachel Chu ego appear when she does not want to be Nicholas's wife because Nicholas's family does not accept her into his family:

Rachel Chu said that “I Can’t marry into a clan that thinks it's too good to have me” [13] (Kwan, 2013:148)

4.2.3 Superego

Superego Rachel Chu is seen when she plays Mahjong against Eleanor to prove that she is not a fool, through Mahjong she could prove life skills such as Negotiation, Strategy, and Cooperation as teaches by Rachel Chu’s mother.

Rachel’s mother teaches her how to play. As Rachel tells Eleanor “My mom taught me how to play,” “She told me mahjong would teach me important life skills—negotiation, strategy, cooperation.” [13] (Kwan, 2013:189)

4.3 Conflict

The problems experiences were caused by Rachel Chu's sincere loves for Nicholas is thwarted by Eleanor Young. The main conflict is seen when Rachel Chu is introduces to Nicholas’s mother, Eleanor Young. Eleanor is a very selective person, she will explore the background and look for all the negative things that exist, regardless of the positive side or the sincerity of love that Rachel Chu has. Rachel Chu being born from an immigrant family, who had a low-class economy. This causes rejection from Nicholas Young's family, especially his mother. Eleanor looks down on Rachel and is not sure about Rachel. Eleanor also investigates the real background of who Rachel is. Apart from coming from a low-economic immigrant family, it is also found that Rachel's father, who is died, is actually in prison in China. The accumulation of problems with Rachel's background makes Eleanor disagree if her son proposes to Rachel as a wife. Eleanor gets rid of Rachel Chu slowly and starts spreading bad stories about Rachel to Nicholas's Grandmother, Tan Hua, and also other family members.

“Within thirty seconds of learning their name and where they lived, she would implement her social algorithm and calculate precisely where they stood in her constellation based on who their family was, who else they were related to, what their approximate net worth might be, how the fortune was derived, and what family scandals might have occurred within the past fifty years” [13] (Kwan, 2013:50).

She thought that Rachel is unfit for the young family as she saw her as a lower-class immigrant and she was also an American, living in a very different Asian culture. This negative stereotype for Nick's mother is attached to Rachel, which makes her dislikes.

Eleanor tells Rachel "You're a foreigner. American. And all Americans think about is their own happiness." [13] (Kwan, 2013: 334)

4.4 Rachel Chu's Repression

4.4.1 Rachel Chu’s First Repression

The element of repression in Rachel Chu is seen when Nicholas Young invites Rachel Chu to go to Singapore to attend Nicholas’s brother’s engagement and also meeting in person with Nicholas Young's family. Rachel feels scared and worried if Nicholas Young's

family does not accept Rachel. Rachel also chose to reduce her desire to go with Nicholas Young by avoiding that she does not want to disturb Nicholas Young's busy life with her friends.

When going to a bachelor party event, Nicholas Young asks Rachel Chu, "You sure about this?" Rachel Chu said "No, that's not it. I know you're going to be busy with all your best-man duties, and I wouldn't want to distract you," [13] (Kwan, 2013: 15)

4.4.1.1 The Impact of Rachel Chu's First Repression

The impact of the repression is that Nicholas Young finds it hard to leave Rachel Chu alone, he is uncertain about his decision. Nicholas Young worries that Rachel will not be able to blend and match with his family. Nicholas Young encourages Rachel if she does not have to feel inferior to Nicholas's rich family and friends.

Nicholas Young encourages Rachel by saying "Just because some people work for their money doesn't mean they are beneath you". [13] (Kwan, 2013:42)

4.4.2 Rachel Chu's Second Repression

The second repression in Rachel is seen when Rachel challenges Eleanor to play mahjong because Rachel knows that Eleanor Young is a person who is good at playing Mahjong. The purpose of Rachel challenges Eleanor is to eliminate all frustration and inner conflict, Rachel also wants to show that she is smarter than her.

Rachel's mother, Kerry, teaches her daughter how to play mahjong. "My mom taught me how to play," Chu tells Young. "She told me mahjong would teach me important life skills—negotiation, strategy, cooperation." [13] (Kwan, 2013:189)

4.4.2.1 The Impact of Rachel Chu's Second Repression

Rachel Chu relieves because she can prove that she was not what Eleanor thought, a low-class immigrant who only wants the wealth of Nicholas Young's family. Impact on Eleanor Young, she realizes that Rachel Chu was not what she thought, Rachel was a smart, loyal person, and loves Nicholas Young sincerely. Eleanor Young is unsure of Rachel Chu because she believes that most guys who fall in love or find the right people are nonsense.

"Eleanor had a long-held theory about men. She truly believed that for most men, all that talk of "being in love" or "finding the right one" was absolute nonsense. Marriage was purely a matter of timing, and whenever a man was finally done sowing his wild oats and ready to settle down, whichever girl happened to be there at the time would be the right one" [13] (Kwan, 2013:79).

In the end, Eleanor decides to permit her son to get back in touch with Rachel. This is seen by Eleanor giving her ring to Rachel, the ring she gets when Nicholas's father proposes to Eleanor.

4.4.3 Rachel Chu's Third Repression

The last repression shows when Rachel falls in love with Nicholas, she loves him very much, but Nicholas Young's mother does not agree that her son has any relationship with Rachel, who was a low-class immigrant. Rachel Chu relents and says that one day when Nicholas married a lucky girl, which was enough for Eleanor, Eleanor know that when she was playing with her grandchild was because of Rachel. Afterward, Rachel chooses to leave Nicholas Young.

Rachel said to Eleanor "I'm not leaving because I'm scared, or because I think I'm not enough. Because maybe for the first time in my life, I know I am." [13] (Kwan, 2013:159)

4.4.3.1 The Impact of Rachel Chu's Second Repression

The impact of this repression is that Rachel feels hurt because she and her family are demeaned by Eleanor, and realizes that she does not deserve to have a relationship with Nicholas Young. She decides to leave the leave Nicholas Young and leave the sparkling luxury of Nicholas Young's family life.

Before Rachel left Nicholas and his family, she said "That's what I want for my kids. I want them to love their family, but to feel a deeper sense of pride in who they are as individuals, Nick, not in how much money they have, what their last name is, or how many generations they go back to whatever dynasty. I'm sorry, but I've had enough. I've had enough of being around all these crazy rich Asians.", as Rachel Chu says [13] (Kwan, 2013:481).

In the end, Rachel chose to evacuate to her friend's house in Singapore, Lin Goh, to stay for a while and calm down.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the writer will conclude the analysis. After the analysis of this research, which focuses on the defense mechanism repression by Sigmund Freud. It can be concluded that Rachel Chu in *Crazy Rich Asians* novel by Kevin Kwan has six patterns of rejection, those are rejection from Eleanor Young; rejection from Nicholas Young's Grandmother; and rejection of Nicholas Young's friends.

After analyzing Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* using repression theory, it can be revealed that Rachel Chu, the main character, is an example of an independent, self-sacrificing, and mentally strong character. The writer has found that through the twists and turns of life, there are many values that Rachel Chu has learned and how her defense mechanisms repressions fight for her self-esteem and also dampens her thoughts from those who belittle her because she is not born into a wealthy family. Also refusal from Nicholas Young's mother who does not approve of his son's relationship with Rachel Chu. There are several times the repression of Rachel Chu's character. The repression also has an impact on Rachel Chu herself and those around her.

In analyzing *Crazy Rich Asians*, it can be concluded that Rachel Chu has unwittingly suppressed her anxiety by forgetting the causes for her worry. This makes Rachel not under pressure from other characters in the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* and made her a stronger person.

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