**THE REPRESENTATION OF SELF DEFENSE MECHANISM IN RUSSELL’S *MY DARK VANESSA* NOVEL**

Nuria Fafi Rohmatin

English Language Education Department, Billfath University

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| **ARTICLE INFO** |  |
| Diterima :  10 Juli 2024  Disetujui :  10 Agustus 2024  Dipublikasikan :  20 September 2024 | **Abstrak:**  *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis gambaran seorang gadis yang tercermin melalui tokoh utama yaitu Vanessa Wye dalam novel berjudul My Dark Vanessa karya Kate Elizabeth Russel. Penelitian ini berfokus pada mengelaborasi jenis mekanisme pertahanan yang digunakan oleh karakter dalam mempertahankan hidupnya di masa depan. Dalam menguraikan kasus ini, peneliti menerapkan teori Psikoanalitik Sigmund Freud yang berfokus pada mekanisme pertahanan melalui pendekatan berorientasi konteks. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berupaya mencari bukti dalam menganalisis permasalahan melalui kalimat, narasi, deskripsi dan segala sesuatu yang tergambar dalam novel untuk memenuhi data yang memadai dalam penelitian ini juga. Lebih lanjut, temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada 10 jenis mekanisme pertahanan diri yang digunakan oleh tokoh utama bernama Vanessa yang tercermin dalam novel, yaitu; penolakan, sublimasi, pembentukan reaksi, perpindahan, intelektualisasi, regresi, represi, rasionalisasi, proyeksi, dan kompartementalisasi. Persoalan mekanisme pertahanan dalam novel ini bermula dari representasi hubungan Vanessa dan Strane yang memiliki hubungan cinta yang tidak wajar dan pelecehan, yang menyebabkan gadis muda tersebut mengalami trauma mendalam akibat pelecehan tersebut, namun hubungan cinta ini berujung pada hubungan seksual. pelecehan, disinyalir banyak korban lain setelah Vanessa yang mengalami kasus yang sama dengan Strane. Vanessa trauma dengan kejadian tersebut dan berusaha bangkit dengan kekuatan yang ada dalam dirinya.*  **Abstract:**  *This research aims to analyze the image of a girl as reflected through the main character, namely Vanessa Wye, in the novel entitled My Dark Vanessa by Kate Elizabeth Russel. This research focuses on elaborating the kind of defense mechanisms that is used by the character in defense her life in future. In elaborating this case, the researcher applies Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory that focuses on defense mechanism through context-oriented approach. Therefore, this research attempts to seek the evidence in analyzing the issue by the sentence, narration, description and everything that are depicted in the novel to fulfill the adequate data in this research as well. Furthermore, the findings in this research points out that there are 10 kind of self-defense mechanism that is used by the main character named Vanessa as reflected in the novel, namely; denial, sublimation, reaction formation, displacement, intellectualization, regression, repression, rationalization, projection, and compartmentalization. The issue of defense mechanism in this novel begins from the representation of the relationship between Vanessa and Strane that had an unnatural love affair and abuse, which caused the young girl to have deep trauma due to the abuse, however, this love affair led to sexual harassment, it is suspected that many other victims after Vanessa experienced the same case as Strane. Vanessa was traumatized by this incident and tried to get up with the strength that was within her.* |
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| **Alamat Korespondensi**  Nama : Nuria Fafi Rohmatin  Instansi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Billfath  Surel : nafanuriafafi@gmail.com | |

Sexual Harrasment and Violence against children is coercing, threatening, or deceiving a child into sexual activity. Penetration (pressure), staring, touching, abusing, and rape are examples of these sexual behaviors. Sexual assault can have physical, psychological, and social effects on children. The hymen may sustain tears or wounds as a result of the physical impact. Mental trauma, dread, embarrassment, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts or attempts are examples of psychological effects. As Orange & Brodwin (2005) stated that social effects include being treated cynically by those in their immediate vicinity, being afraid to enter into relationships, and other things.

In addition, according Leifer, et al (2004) that the main contributor to sexual harrasment and violence against children is the problem of maternal events that occur in the mother, including negative and abusive heterosexual relationships (the mother of a child who experiences sexual violence is usually the victim of sexual violence when she was small), lack of maternal attention and an ambivalent relationship between mother and grandmother. It can be said that girls experience more sexual violence in the family than boys. Girls ask for help more often than boys.

In line with paragraph above, Bondest & Lundqvist (2020) also argued that, forms of child abuse can be physical, psychological, or sexual violence. Sexual violence against children has become a separate phenomenon so far. Therefore, most children who are victims of sexual violence are reluctant to report it. Parents are required to recognize the signs that children are experiencing sexual violence. Everyone is aware that sexual violence is defined as any act that targets a person's body or reproductive system and degrades, insults, harasses, or harms it. Hence, this act has an impact on the psychological and physical suffering of the victim. Every year, the number of cases of sexual assault in Indonesia rises, and what is even more unfortunate is that the majority of those who commit these crimes are from families, which includes their own houses, schools, educational institutions, and the social circles of their children.

Self-defense mechanisms are protective strategies that originate from a person's subconscious. Subconsciously, a person will protect himself so that his feelings are not hurt by something or a situation that is unpleasant and uncomfortable. According to Freud (in Bertens, 2006), people utilize mechanism self-defense as a tactic to deal with stress by putting the superego over the ego and preventing the open appearance of id drives in an effort to lessen or soothe tension. Semium (2006) also explains self-defense mechanisms in flow Freud's psychoanalysis is a psychological strategy carried out by a person or group people, or even a nation to face reality and maintain self-image. A defense mechanism is not something that aims to overcome problems in socializing, but is a reaction carried out spontaneously by a person. In other words, a person's self-defense will automatically activate when facing things that can trigger negative feelings, such as anger, sadness, disappointment, fear and shame. Rather than reacting with excessive emotions, a person will compromise with himself by activating defense mechanisms. In the world of psychology, self-defense mechanisms are a person's way of protecting themselves from unpleasant things.

Regarding to the paragraph above, literature imparts a wealth of positive life lessons, like courage, empathy, and other virtues. Literature explains the different disputes and issues that people encounter. Everything is presented as a readable work of fiction, which readers of many genres will find enjoyable. Based on Sukirman (2021:17), even though literature is the imagination and result of the feelings of the author’s soul, literature cannot be separated from observations, experiences and lessons about the lives of humans and other living creatures in the real world which are then realized in the world of fiction by the author. Literary works are a branch of art created based on ideas, feelings and creative thoughts related to cultural elements expressed through language.

Literary works are creations for aesthetic purposes. Faruk (2012: 47) stated that the world in literary works is an imitation of the actual world of reality is also the world of ideas. The world in literary works forming oneself as a social world that is an imitation of social world that exists in reality. Literary works can be considered as fictitious and imaginative power to be able to directly grasp social building directly. Literature's social purpose is demonstrated by how deeply it penetrates people's lives. Literary works have the power to change someone's perspective. Given that literature is essentially a form of culture. Value systems constitute one aspect of culture.

As a result, a literary work will undoubtedly describe a value system. People's mental patterns are then created by these ideals, which are regarded as norms that can be relied upon to be true, thanks to literary works. Literature comes from the inner experiences experienced by the author to the audience of literary works. Then it becomes a forum for expressing ideas, ideas and thoughts that come from experiences. Literature reflects ideas about the universe and societal realities that are timeless, in addition to serving as a social mirror.

Even if literary works mimic nature and the subjective world of humans, literature presents life and primarily consists of social reality, therefore the tie between literature and everyday life and cultural values cannot be separated. Literature functions as the soul of society. As a result of culture, literature provides and encourages awareness and understanding to students or readers of the culture that is the source of the creation of literature. Based on Saragih (2021: 102) that one form of literary work is the novel. A novel is the totality of an artistic whole. The intent is artistic, namely depicting characters, movements and scenes of real life in a plot or a situation that is somewhat chaotic or tangled, and can even be experienced as real life as presented by the author. Muspawi (2014: 45) also added that in every novel usually there is a conflict or problem experienced by the character. Conflict can be understood as a conflict that occurs between what someone expects of themselves, other people, and the organization and the reality of what they expect.

In this research, the researcher focuses on the first novel by Russell, which centers on Vanessa Wye and Jacob Strane, provides a fictionalized portrayal of a terrible sexual relationship, is the subject of this study. Wye, a lonely 15-year-old at boarding school, is being groomed for a sexual relationship by her 42-year-old English teacher, Strane, which would ultimately cast an unbearable shadow over her life. The first-person narrative of the book jumps back and forth in time between 2000, 2007 and 2017. Because Vanessa won't accept that Strane is a predator or that she is a victim, it is inferred that she is, at least partially, an untrustworthy narrator. Raised in the Maine village of Clifton, Russell attended Bangor's John Bapst Memorial High School. After completing her undergraduate studies at the University of Maine at Farmington, she went on to receive an M.F.A. from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in creative writing from the University of Kansas. She graduated with a B.F.A. in creative writing in 2006.

My Dark Vanessa book was a national bestseller and has been optioned for the big screen as well as translation and publication in 22 countries. Numerous outlets gave My Dark Vanessa favorable reviews, which sparked a public discussion on Russell's treatment of abusive sexual relationships in the book and the right to privacy regarding one's personal history. Russell's book My Dark Vanessa was also included on the Dylan Thomas Prize shortlist for 2021. This is why this novel is one of the works that are interested to be analyzed due to the appreciation that has been got by author and also the work itself.

From the explanation above, research on self-defense mechanisms is an important thing considering that there are many cases in the world of education where sexual harassment is rampant, this is something worth paying attention to. Therefore, the research “THE REPRESENTATION OF SELF DEFENSE MECHANISM IN RUSSELL’S MY DARK VANESSA NOVEL” is interested in conducting this research to investigate how self-defense mechanisms are reflected in the novel My Dark Vanessa using psychoanalytic theory that are formulated by Sigmund Freud.

**METHOD**

This research using a context-oriented approach, this research focused on examining the form of self-defense mechanism used by the main character in the novel My Dark Vanessa, in accordance with the research problems and objectives mentioned in the previous chapter. The context-oriented approach is the focus of this research. One of the theoretical approaches to literature is the context-oriented approach.

Theoretical approaches to literature are methods of interpreting literature from various perspectives such as text, reader, author, and context. Contextual approaches, according to Klarer (2004:78), aim to categorize literary writings based on genres and historical periods, as well as to situate texts against the backdrop of historical, social, or political processes. According to (Klarer,2004:94), the different movements also have an impact on the context approaches. Depending on the movement, this backdrop may include nationality, gender, literary genre, social and political background, or history.

Using this approach, the writer attempts to locate, discuss, and present the historical and social context. The researcher selects ideologies and ideological conflicts that appear in the literary work based on the historical context. The researcher elaborates on social aspects when the author of a literary work is alive, such as the sociological condition, the writer’s position in society, and other aspects, based on his or her social background.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section the researcher discusses the findings based on the data above. Which in this case is intended to find out the types of self-defense mechanisms described in the novel My Dark Vanessa. In this research, the researcher carried out an analysis using the theory of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. This section contains a description based on data findings. In this discussion, the researcher carried out an analysis based on theory. Which focuses on analyzing self-defense mechanisms described by the main characters in the novel. Several types of self-defense mechanisms have been discovered namely Denial, Repression, Regression, Projection, Rationalization, Displacement, Reaction Formation, Sublimation, Intellectualization, and Compartmentalization.

**1. Self Defense Mechanism Reflected in My Dark Vanessa Novel**

Self Defense Mechanism reflected in the Novel My Dark Vanessa through the context of the psychology really related to the phenomena that often happen in this life. This novel is investigated by using Freud’s Psychoanalysis theory to determine which behaviors, conversation and narratives in the novel imply self-defense mechanisms. Freud’s Theory of Defense Mechanisms, is that when a person seems unwilling to face a painful reality, people may accuse him of “denying.” However, if one tries to find a logical explanation for unacceptable behavior, one might argue that they are “rationalizing”. Denial and rationalization represent different types of defense mechanisms, or tactics that the ego uses to protect itself from anxiety. This idea is used to find out how closely related the characters in the novel are. Some of the most well-known defense mechanisms include denial, repression, and regression, to name a few.

**2. Kind of Defense Mechanism that is Reflected in The Novel My Dark Vanessa**

1. Denial

People in denial may block external events or circumstances from their minds. Therefore, they do not have to deal with the emotional impact. In other words, they avoid painful feelings or events. As explained in the quote bellow:

“....Softly, Ira says, “I’ve been worrying about you.” "You shouldn’t. I’m fine.”(Ira and Vanessa Conversation).

1. Reaction Formation

People who use this defense mechanism recognize their feelings, but they choose to behave contrary to their instincts. This is in line with quotes below:

“........“You know, I saw your old school in the news the other day.” I do not stop walking, but I stop thinking, stop looking. I walk past my building, cross the next street and keep going. I hold my breath and wait to see if she’ll push further. She only said your old school, not that man. "Well anyway,” she says with a sigh, “that place always was a hellhole.” (Mom and Vanessa Conversation)

1. Displacement

Displacement is the act of transferring a target object or person to satisfy a need that previously could not be done to another object person, this can be proven by the following statements:

“.....I remember the threat I made to Ira when, exasperated with my inertia, he’d said he was going to report Strane himself. “Ira, if you do that,” I said, my voice steady and cold, “if you tell anyone anything about him, you will never see me again. I’ll disappear.” (Vanessa Narration)

1. Intellectualization

Intellectualization works to reduce anxiety by thinking about events in a cool way. This protective mechanism allows a person to avoid thinking about the stressful and emotional aspects of the situation and instead focus only on the intellectual component. This is in line with the quotes below:

“......Stop thinking. Let yourself grieve—but how can I grieve when there has not been an obituary, nothing about a funeral, only these articles written by strangers? I dont know know who would even arrange a funeral, maybe his sister who lives in Idaho? But even if there is a funeral, who would go? I could not go. People would see me, and then they do know. (Vanessa Narration)

1. Regression

Some people who feel threatened or anxious may unconsciously “escape” to an earlier stage of development. This type of defense mechanism is perhaps most obvious in young children. If they experience trauma or loss, they may suddenly act as if they are younger again. This can be proven by the quote below:

“.......Meanwhile, I keep calling out of work, days lost to my open laptop, my nightstand crowded with food wrappers and empty bottles. I drink, smoke, and study Strane’s photos of me as a baby-faced, thin-limbed teen. In them l look impossibly young, topless and grinning in one, holding my arms out toward the camera( Vanessa Narration)

1. Projection

Some thoughts or feelings that individuals have about other people may make the individual uncomfortable. When people project those feelings, they misattribute them to others. Projection is a defense mechanism that involves taking on one’s own unacceptable qualities or feelings and attributing them to others.

“.....I try to smile, but I don’t like how he says “the best thing for you.” It brings up too much—memories of him saying the way I romanticized abuse was troubling, almost as troubling as the fact that I still kept in touch with the man who abused me. (Vanessa Narration)

1. Repression

Repression is an attempt to suppress an impulse produced by the id where the ego feels threatened and then this impulse is suppressed into the human subconscious so that it does not allow the person concerned to process it rationally. For example: Having been abused as a child but trying not to remember the abuse.

“......He’s disgusted at me. I know what he thinks, what anyone would think—that I’m an apologist, an enabler—but I’m defending myself just as much as I am Strane. (Vanessa Narration)

1. Compartmentalization

Compartmentalization can be said to be choosing not to bring up or discuss personal problems with other people and continue with one's activities.

“...... “I know how hard this must be for you,” he says, “but it could be an opportunity, right? To make peace with^ it and move on.” I force myself to breathe through the thought. “Make peace and move on” sounds like jumping off a cliff, sounds like dying. "Can we talk about something else?” I ask. "Sure,” he says. “Of course.” (Ira and Vanessa Conversation)

1. Rationalization

Someone might make up new facts to other people to cover up bad facts about themselves. This can be proven by the quote below.

“......As he starts to walk away, I call, “She’s lying.” He stops, turns. “The girl who wrote the post, I mean. It’s a bunch of lies.” I wait, but Ira doesn’t speak, doesn’t move. Another set of headlights approach and then pass over us. (Ira and Vanessa Conversation)

1. Sublimation

When facing a difficult situation, someone with the sublimation self-defense mechanism will divert their feelings or emotions into positive activities. This type of self-defense mechanism is considered a positive and mature defense strategy.

“.....She doesn’t understand how satisfying sadness can be; hours spent rocking in the hammock with Fiona Apple in my ears make me feel better than happy. (Vanessa Narration)

**CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results of the discussion in the previous chapter, the conclusion in this chapter are as follows:

1. The self-defense mechanism reflected in the novel, as represented in the novel, describes the story of Vanessa, a student who was traumatized by sexual harassment by her own teacher. He denied that he was a victim of sexual harassment by his teacher. Finally, the solution was for him to see his psychiatrist frequently to seek treatment and tell everything that she experienced, so that Vanessa can forget about the traumatic incident and forgive all the things he experienced in the past.
2. This research found 10 kind of self-defense mechanism that is used by character in the novel My Dark Vanessa did not admit to being a victim of sexual harassment Strane. When his friends and parents said that what Strane did to her was sexual harassment but Vanessa said no. Even parties’ psychiatrists said Vanessa was a victim of sexual abuse by Strane, because at that time Vanessa was still 15 years old, she was still a minor. However, Vanessa still says no, because Vanessa thinks it is also her fault because of her could not refuse and say no to Strane, he could only remain silent when Strane touching his body. From the plot, story and character of Vanessa, it is proven that Vanessa has the general response to this trauma is to deny being called a victim sexual harassment. The solution is that Vanessa must continue to undergo psychiatric therapy to recover from the trauma.

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