



**OPPOSING REALITY IN 3 SHORT STORIES BY SHIRLEY REN
THE PINK UMBRELLA (2019), JASON SANFORD *THE EIGHT-
THOUSANDERS* (2020) AND ALYSSA WONG *A FIST OF
PERMUTATIONS IN LIGHTNING AND WILDFLOWERS* (2016)**

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Abstract

This research is an analysis of 3 short stories by Shirley Ren *The Pink Umbrella* (2019), Jason Sanford *The Eight-Thousanders* (2020) and Alyssa Wong *A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers* (2016). This research discusses about defense mechanisms applied to oppose reality. Defense mechanisms are commonly used in everyday life, a person applies defense mechanisms when the ego can no longer balance the id and superego and worries arise in the person. However, if this is done to oppose reality, it will cause new prolonged conflict. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method which is using psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud which deals with opposing reality and defense mechanisms. This research aims to find out what types of defense mechanism applied by character and how the symptoms appear. The analysis of this study revealed that the character applies 2 defense mechanisms, namely denial and displacement, to oppose reality and the symptoms that arise. The conclusion of this study is defense mechanisms applied to oppose reality is not good, not to change things that are not desirable but to cause new prolonged conflicts. Opposing reality means not being able to come to terms with reality and not being able to come to terms with one self so that as a result the characters go through life in misery.

Key words: Opposing Reality, Defense Mechanism, Denial, Displacement, Symptoms

A. INTRODUCTION

Humans are the most perfect creatures created by God among other living things. Intellect is one of the main qualities possessed by humans. In addition to intellect, emotion is another superiority that cannot be separated from it. We as a

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human have to balance our thoughts and emotions because when emotions have controlled us then all means nothing anymore. Goleman (2006) says that:

“If your emotional abilities are not in hand, if you do not have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you cannot have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.”

From the quote above it can be concluded that it does not mean anything for those who have above average intelligence but low emotional intelligence, because when we cannot control emotions, what we build will be destroyed. So that understanding our own personality is to understand ourselves as a whole. According to Encyclopedia of Personality (2000) Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. It means that we do understand who we really are, which make us comfortable and which do not. Freud (1986) states that humans have a psychological structure consisting of three elements; these are the Id, Ego, and Superego and the ego becomes the mediator between the id and the superego. When the ego tries to mediate between the id and the superego, the ego tries to balance what it desires and what is moral value in society, but ego failed to balance them, therefore worries arise in a person and try to oppose reality with Freud called "Defense Mechanism". People usually use various defense mechanisms throughout their lives. Wulidha (2020) argues that “Defense mechanisms are someone's strategy to hide and reduce anxiety” (p.97). The use of defense mechanism is to protect the mind/self from anxiety, social sanctions, or being a “Sanctuary” from situations that cannot handle. In the psychoanalytic school of Sigmund Freud, defense mechanism is Psychology strategies carry out by a person, group of people, or even a nation to oppose reality and maintain self-image. Several people disable to accept and face reality, they decide to refuse and oppose something that not accordance with their expectations.

As previously explained, one of the factors that is causing defense mechanism is the powerlessness of human beings to face reality. In Britton's book *The Blindness of the Seeing Eye: Inverse Symmetry as a defense Against Reality* (1994) states that as early 1893, Freud drew attention to a state of mind that he described as “Blindness of the seeing eye” in which “one knows and does not know a thing at the same time” (p.117). From the statements of the expert it can be revealed that in Freud describe about against reality as the blindness of the seeing eye means that they see a real thing, but at one time they do not see it. For example, Projection, projection is putting our own mistake with blame on objects or people around us, such as; a mother is cooking dinner, then a child comes asking if her mother saw her hair tie, but at the same time the mother's spoon fell and blamed her child for making the spoon fall. What Freud calls one real thing is that the spoon fell because his mother was negligent and she understood that was her mistakes but at the same time she tries to against reality with Freud described as *not seeing reality*, that is blaming her daughter for her mistakes. In 1938, Freud wrote of it as a “half measure” in which “the disavowal is always supplemented

by an acknowledgement; two contrary and independent attitudes arise and result in...a splitting of the ego” (p.204). So that Basch (1983) has suggested that unlike psychotic denial, it obliterates only the significance of things, not their perceptions. So, the mother just makes the accident did by her daughter but not change her perceptions that are her own mistakes.

Therefore, the researcher wants to examine the mechanism of self-defense in the form of literary works, with 3 short story entitled; *the pink umbrella* (2019), *The Eight-thousanders* (2020) and *A fist of permutation in lightning and wildflowers* (2016). The authors of the short story are an author who has won best winner awards from print media such as in magazines, newspaper and on websites, so their works publish as a book and traded. This study aims to find out through literary works, especially in these 3 short stories what defense mechanisms are often apply by characters and how the characters apply defense mechanism to oppose reality. From these three short stories the reader can see how terrible it is if we apply defense mechanisms to oppose reality and do not want to deal with reality, so that make prolonged conflict and living in misery, therefore this research is very suitable for doing a research..

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research use Psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud. Theory of psychoanalysis is a theory that explains the development of the human personality. This element includes both internal and external aspect. The basis of this theory is that the personality will begin to develop when there are conflicts from the psychological aspects themselves. Therefore, this theory is suitable and related to this research due to the researcher analyzes the battle between the desire principle and reality principle and causing conflicts to the character. So that the mechanism of self-defense is weapon for the character to defend what is desire and oppose reality. So, the researcher identifies the symptoms shown by the character when applying defense mechanisms and it is very suitable to apply psychoanalytic theory in this study.

This research uses a Qualitative research which is research that is descriptive and tends to use analysis. Process and meaning are highlighted in qualitative research. The theoretical basis is used as a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts on the ground. Therefore researcher conduct research using qualitative methods because the short story is analyzed with using a psychological approach. The researcher applies fictional devices such as setting, character, plot, symbol and figurative language. The data analyzed based on Psychological approach which include defense mechanism. To understand the three short stories, the researcher reads the stories repeatedly and then marks the quotations that are considered important in this research which uses close reading method. According to Kain (1998) from Harvard University “When you close read, you observe facts and details about the text. You may focus on a particular passage or on the text as a whole”. From the experts above it can be conclude that when we use close reading we can easier to reveal the things that

we want to reveal so that the researcher may find out a thing that important in the text for this research. So that researcher finds and arranges the data systematically.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

In this research, researcher finds that the characters in 3 short stories applies the same of type defense mechanism which is denial but the last short story entitled *A Fist of Permutations In Lightning and Willdflowers* is using 2 defense mechanisms namely denial and displacement. When they apply defense mechanisms, of course, there are symptoms that indicate that the character apply what kind of defense mechanisms. The first is *The Pink Umbrella* (2019), the symptoms that appear in the character "he" after being analyzed are; avoiding thinking about the problem and not feeling anything, staying in some behavior that despite negative consequences and performing manipulative actions and the character refusing to talk about the problem. The second story *The Eight-Thousanders* (2020) symptoms that show Ronnie applies denial are; doing manipulative actions, getting angry about anything that can damage his ego, refusing the help of others that he really needs and avoiding thinking about problems and not feeling anything. The last *A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers* (2016) symptoms that appear when Hannah applies denial namely; opposing reality by going back to the past. Then the symptoms that indicate that Hannah applies displacement are; she vents all her anger to objects, venting her emotions to the people around her and destroys objects related to memories.

2. Discussion

2.1 *The Pink Umbrella* (2019)

The type of denial applied by the main character in this story is denial of fact. Freud (1986) explained that when someone denies a fact, those who use it will lie to the truth of the fact, a lie to themselves or to others. So it can be revealed that main character applies one of defense mechanisms, namely denial of fact because the main character rejects the death of his wife, does not want to admit that his wife is dead and assumes that his wife is still alive, still lying in the hospital by doing routines like his wife is still alive. In the story the researcher find that the wife of this main character is dead, we can see it on page 8 paragraphs 3-7:

“Back in the bakery, the baker sighed as she watched the old man wobble away. “What’s wrong ma’am?” Her apprentice walked in from the back kitchen, carrying another batch of freshly baked treats.

“You see that old man?” She wiped her hands on her apron and pointed to the figure disappearing into the horizon.

The apprentice nodded – he’s seen that man quite a few times now, always asking for a slice of honey cake.

“Poor guy, his wife passed away four years ago but he ain’t believing it. He’s gone mad, still goes to the hospital ‘to visit her’...” She shook her head in pity.” (p.8)

From the conversation of baker with her employees, it is clear that the main character here has often bought cakes at the baker’s shop so from her conversation it is clear that the baker knows very well about the character "he" until he says that his wife is dead but the old thing he had done every time he met his wife or the things he used to do while his wife was alive he continued to do it over and over again until then. After the researcher reads and identifies the story *The Pink Umbrella*, the researcher finds several symptoms that indicate that the main character in this story applied denial as his defense mechanism to oppose reality. As Freud (1962) said that "denial is denying the anxiety by refusing the reality" it can be revealed that the first symptom is the character avoid thinking about the problem and not feeling anything. Instead of remembering the death of his wife, the main character does not think about the problems he is experiencing, the character actually thinks about what he will tell when he meets his wife later. This can be seen on the first page of the 4th paragraph.

“It hit him that it’s already been three days since his last visit – three long days, each longer than a year. He had so much to tell her: how he caught a cockroach on Friday, called the kids on Saturday, and almost set the stove on fire. Yesterday while making soup for dinner. He chuckled at that last thought and blushed – she’d tease him for sure. As if to hide his embarrassment, he busied himself by checking the pathetically few possessions in his pocket one last time: a wallet overfilled with loose coins, a tiny bottle of emergency pills, a set of rusted keys, an ancient pocket watch that was always five minutes behind, and a single flower freshly picked this morning from the small pot sitting on the window sill – quite distinguishable among his antique collections.” (p. 1 & 2)

The quote above explains that the main character does not think about the problems he is experiencing at all, instead it can be seen that the character does not feel anything about the problems, he is experiencing such as emotional overflow and so on. It seems that the character does not feel anything because the denial he applies actually treats himself by always reminiscing that his wife is still alive, what things he will do later when he meets his wife, what he will tell later when he is near his wife and what he thinks is all about his wife who is still alive and still lying in the hospital.

The second symptom that explains that he applies denial to oppose reality is that the main character stay in some behaviour that causing negative consequences and commits manipulative acts. The last symptom that appears in the story *The Pink Umbrella* is that the character refuses to talk about the problem.

2.2 *The Eight-Thousanders* (2020)

Ronnie with his arrogant and does not want his self-esteem down opposing reality by using defense mechanism of denial, still insist that he will not use additional oxygen cylinders even though he really needs it, not only that some events also show the behavior of denial, Ronnie also confesses that he does not need help from anyone. Freud (1926) argues that “If some situation is just too much handle, the person refuses to experience it”. From Freud's opinion above can be revealed that things related to the destructiveness of his ego then he will apply denial as a form of opposing reality and as a form of Defense for his self-esteem such as refusing to use additional oxygen cylinders and refusing any help from others and stand in his own legs without realizing his behavior was putting him in danger.

The symptoms that indicate that the character applies denial to oppose reality and maintain his high self-esteem, namely doing a manipulative actions, Ronnie throw a new oxygen cylinder and says that the oxygen cylinder is empty.

“Nyima and the other guides had cached oxygen bottles here yesterday, but I didn’t know if I’d last long enough to reach them. As Ronnie lead me toward the cache between two rocks, the weather cleared for a moment. I saw the headlamps and illuminated tents at South Col and the lights of the other climbers who were nearly to the camp. Then the wind shifted and I again saw only a half-dozen meters in the swirling snow.

“There’s only empty bottles,” Ronnie screamed, leaning over the cache. A number of red bottles lay scattered across the snow and rock, left from when the other members of our expedition changed out their oxygen earlier. But one of the

bottles still had the seal over the threads to keep out ice and snow — it hadn't been used.

“That one,” I said, pointing at the full bottle. “They left it for me.”

Ronnie picked up the bottle. But instead of handing it to me he threw it with a strength he shouldn't have had. The bottle bounced off a rock below us and tumbled over the edge of the mountain.

“It's empty,” Ronnie yelled. “Empty. But there's air all around us. Breathe it, Keller. Breathe!” “ (p.4 & 5).

In the above quote, it can be revealed that Keller looks that there is an additional oxygen cylinder which according to his prediction had been left by the head of his expedition, Nyima, for him but Ronnie is seen manipulating this to throw away the additional oxygen cylinder and says if there is no more contents, this reveals that he does not want his ego to be hurt with the additional oxygen cylinder because he really needs an oxygen cylinder. With his position and arrogant, he also endangered Keller's safety because he does not want Keller to use the supplementary oxygen cylinder. On the phrase "Breathe it, Keller. This also shows that he still uses his arrogant, saying that it can be revealed that the air outside of many of us does not need additional oxygen cylinders.

The second symptom is that Ronnie is angry about anything related to things that can damage his ego, precisely because of the supplemental oxygen cylinder.

“Ronnie yanked my face mask off, the precious oxygen bleeding into the blizzard. “She found you an oxygen tank,” he yelled, pointing his ice axe at her. “Where the hell's our camp?” I shook my head, not knowing. Ronnie turned his anger on Ferri, shifting his ice axe so the pick end pointed at her chest. His eyes, which had seemed hopeless moments before, sharpened into the fire which anyone who opposed him in the tech world knew only too well.” (p.6)

In the above quote it can be revealed that Ronnie persisted in his arrogance, his ego hurt because the supplemental oxygen cylinder use by Keller made him angry and open the oxygen cylinder used by Keller. The last statement also makes it clear that his daily life such as no one can oppose him and therefore his arrogance makes him do whatever he wants including throwing away the oxygen cylinder and not wanting others to wear it nearby.

The third symptom is That Ronnie refuses help from others who actually himself at that time needed the help of others due to lack of oxygen which made him unable to act normally anymore. The last symptom is avoiding to think about problems and not feeling anything. When Ronnie was in a worsening body condition he start to feel nothing and does not think about any more problems about how he suffers because of his deny.

2.3 A fist of permutations in lightning and wildflowers (2016)

Defense mechanism which are applied by the character in this story is denial and displacement. The death of his sister give Hannah such a deep wound that from Mubarak's statement about denial it is very related to this story because it is the wound that makes Hannah unable to accept reality and finally decide to oppose reality. The paragraph supporting the statement that Hannah show the denial is on page 4.

“I would give you only the best things. The kindness you deserved, the body you wanted, a way out that didn't end with the horizon line ripped open, possibilities pouring out like loose stuffing, my world shrieking to a halt.

I would have fixed everything.

The day my sister—“ (p. 4)

And from paragraph 8 still in the same page:

“I will, I will. I will fix this.” (p.4)

The quote above shows that Hannah in the story is trying to resist the death of her sister. Hannah oppose reality by trying to fix everything by going back in time when her sister ended her own life and this is a statement that refers to denial that Hannah applies to avoid unpleasant feeling about what has happened. The second defense mechanism that Hannah applies in this story to oppose reality is Displacement. According to Saraswati (2020) "Displacement is a feeling of displeasure towards one object to another, which is more possible". So it can be concluded that Hannah's character oppose reality by venting all her anger to the people that closest to her and other objects that used to be memories with her sister, Melanie.

When a person applies defense mechanisms there are certainly some symptoms that indicate that what type of defense mechanism is being applied by the character and in this section discuss symptoms that indicate that Hannah applies denial as her defense mechanism to oppose reality. The symptom that indicates that the character denies the fact that her sister is dead is to oppose reality by going back in time. This symptom occurs when the character is no longer able to contain her grief so decides to try to fix it in the past. She tries to go back in time by using her magic.

“The day I ended the world, the very first time, my plane touched down early and I sprinted to catch a cab before the impending monsoon swept the city. This time around, I made it four miles from the house before a six-car pileup—tires slick, drivers panicked in the storm—stopped traffic entirely. It took everything in me not to shunt the water aside in front of everyone else, to stumble into neck-deep currents and anchor my feet to the asphalt below. It took forever to get home, and when I did, Melanie was not there. An hour later, my sister’s body floated up in the new river behind our house, covered in bruises, red plastic cups bumping at her bare feet, and lightning spiked white-hot through my chest, searing the ground of my heart into a desert. All I could see were cities burning, houses shelled, every regret and act of cowardice twisting through me into blinding rage.” (p.4)

In the quote above, it can be revealed that the first time Hannah returned to the past she only returned within a few hours before she saw her sister end her life so that when she came the rainstorm immediately poured down and flooded her hometown. When she searched for her sister at home she didn't find her, she finally found her sister dead floating on the flash flood. Her first efforts to go back in time failed because it didn't change anything and only changed how her sister died. She repeated back to the past 5 times but do not make any changes.

When Hannah in this story applies displacement-type from defense mechanism, the author will show the symptoms that occur so that it can be revealed that the character applies displacement to oppose reality, and this happens when Hannah returns for the third time to change the fate of her sister. This can be revealed on page 5, paragraph 5 & 6.

“The week before my sister ended the world, I didn’t go home. I stayed in the theater and broke every plate, every mug in the green room, hurling the shards in the faces of every person who’d come to court me. I blinded my agent, I crippled my director, I hamstrung the rest of the actors with porcelain shrapnel. Gale-force winds whipped around me, a crushing power at my back, the storm building behind my pulsing temples, and I blew out into the city, heading downtown.

At Melanie's favorite bakery, where we'd ordered donuts as big as our heads the last time she'd come to visit, I ripped the boards out of the floor one by one, sending them flying through shattered windows. Icing splattered, electricity scorched wood and sugar alike; the scent of ozone was ripe and acrid in the air." (p.5)

The first symptom that can be revealed in the quote above is in the quote "The week before my sister ended the world, I didn't go home. I stayed in the theater and broke every plate, every mug in the green room,..." that is, to vent all her anger to objects. Hannah cannot accept the fact that her sister has ended her own life, when she goes back in time for the 3rd time she vents her anger at a smaller object that is to the things. As Heller (2005) said that "Displacement is a kind of defense that switches impulses coming from the dreadful object into the lesser one" (p.70). Since she cannot vent her anger to fate, the thing she can do is to vent everything to a smaller object so that her emotions are a little overflowed.

The second symptom is to vent her emotions to those around her, this can be revealed in the quote "... hurling the shards in the faces of every person who'd come to court me. I blinded my agent, I crippled my director, I hamstrung the rest of the actors with porcelain shrapnel." Not feeling relieved by just damaging the objects around her, Hannah actually vented all her anger by hurting those around her. Saraswati (2020) argues that "Displacement is a feeling of displeasure towards one object to another, which is more possible". So that in this quote it can be revealed that Hannah vents all her anger only to those around her, to the object that allows her to vent all her emotions.

The last symptom is damaging objects that are directly related to the memories she once had with the object so that the memories are destroyed and the object may not remind her of memories that she may not want to remember again.

"At Melanie's favorite bakery, where we'd ordered donuts as big as our heads the last time she'd come to visit, I ripped the boards out of the floor one by one, sending them flying through shattered windows. Icing splattered, electricity scorched wood and sugar alike; the scent of ozone was ripe and acrid in the air". (p.5)

In this quote it can be revealed that Hannah vented her anger by removing the memories that had existed when her sister was alive by destroying what was in the bakery because the bakery reminded her of her sister because the bakery was her sister's favorite bakery. Therefore, by destroying these memories, her emotions may be cured but in fact the opposite.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the conclusions of the research of 3 short stories, namely *The Pink Umbrella* (2019), *The Eight-Thousanders* (2020) and *A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers* (2016) which answers about 2 questions in the research questions that have been summarized before, namely about what are the types of defense mechanisms applied by characters in the 3 short stories and then how they apply these defense mechanisms to oppose reality. Defense mechanisms have many types, but in this study there are only 2 types applied by the characters in the 3 short stories are denial and displacement. Short story with the title *The Pink Umbrella* (2019) the character applies defense mechanism with the type of denial, said to be denial because the character "he" in the short story opposes reality by rejecting his wife's death by assuming that his wife is alive and still lying in the hospital, the things he used to do while his wife was alive are repeated as if his wife was alive. The second story is *The Eight-Thousanders* (2020) in this story it is also found that the character Ronnie is applying denial. It is said denial because Ronnie opposes the fact that he cannot do anything alone and must need other people, so goes oppose reality and dies miserably. The last is the story *A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers* (2016), the character analyzed in this study applies 2 types of defense mechanisms, namely denial and displacement, said to be denial because Hannah oppose reality by rejecting the death of her sister who ended her own life, then said to be displacement because Hannah rejects the death of her sister and overflows her anger at objects and people around her.

When they apply defense mechanisms, of course, there are symptoms that indicate that the character apply what kind of defense mechanisms. The first is *The Pink Umbrella* (2019), the symptoms that appear in the character "he" after being analyzed are; avoiding thinking about the problem and not feeling anything, staying in some behavior that despite negative consequences and performing manipulative actions and the character refusing to talk about the problem. The second story *The Eight-Thousanders* (2020) symptoms that show Ronnie applying denial are; doing manipulative actions, getting angry about anything that can damage his ego, refusing the help of others that he really needs and avoiding thinking about problems and not feeling anything. The last *A Fist of Permutations in Lightning and Wildflowers* (2016) symptoms that appear when Hannah applies denial namely; opposing reality by going back to the past. Then the symptoms that indicate that Hannah applies displacement are; she vents all her anger to objects, venting her emotions to the people around her and destroys objects related to memories she once had so that memories she may no longer want to remember are destroyed. Thus, it can be concluded that the characters in the story apply defense

mechanisms to oppose reality and the symptoms that indicate the characters applies these defense mechanisms are also revealed. When a person applies defense mechanisms to oppose reality, not wanting to be at peace with the situation means they are not willing to be at peace with themselves. Then the consequences are new conflicts that are prolonged so that the results obtained are not results that are in accordance with the wishes but rather move the life in misery and that is what happens to these characters.

2. Suggestion

Defense mechanism is a type of defense that a person performs when the ego is no longer able to balance the Id and the Superego. A good defense mechanism is to apply it in moderation. Yet when we apply defense mechanisms to oppose reality is a very big mistake. Based on this analysis, it can be exemplified that when a person applies defense mechanisms to oppose reality, it is tantamount to putting themselves into other problems. Because the truth is that when we oppose reality it means that we cannot be at peace with meaningful circumstances nor can we be at peace with ourselves. Then the results obtained do not get better but make new prolonged conflicts. Therefore, researcher suggests to readers that accepting reality is the most effective medicine to live a life, forgetting the past and making the past a lesson to shape ourselves be a better person for the future.

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