

Freudian Psychology: an Analysis on Catherine Barkley in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

Yulistiyanti
Stikubank University

Abstract

A Farewell to Arms is one of Hemingway's works which uses battle field as setting. This novel is full of humanism message which depict social problem people have. The social problem, war depicted causes personal problem for people represented by one of Hemingway's character, Catherine Barkley. Sigmund Freud contributes to find out the personal problems which form ego self-defense mechanism. There are five ego self-defense mechanism; repression, projection, reaction-formation, fixation, and regression. The five ego self-defense mechanisms are found in this novel.

Key words: *ego self-defense mechanism, repression, projection, reaction-formation, fixation, regression.*

Introduction

War is destructive. It causes bad effect on many fields. Environment and social life are disturbed by this condition. Gun fire and bomb can destroy the environment and human beings' works can be ruined for example the ruin of building and the fire of forest. Social life also changes because war attracts some people to join it to show their nationalism and humanism. It can also happen because people are insisted to join the war. It is really unfair for a group of people who are insisted. They do not tend to get involved in that war but they should do it.

Ernest Hemingway through *A Farewell to Arms* depicts how cruel war is. It separates a falling in love couple. Frederick Henry should do his service and Catherine Barkley is a nurse. Both of them get conflict when they realize that they live in the middle of battle (World War I). They are trapped in war how to get their love back. It is not unusual story when a soldier falls in love with a nurse, but the story turns to be an interesting one when Catherine is left by Henry to do the service in front but she also leaves for Switzerland.

To analyze this literary work, I focus on the female character, Catherine Barkley. Otherwise, Henry also gets his own psychological conflict, but here I prefer to discuss more on Catherine. Analyzing Catherine, I use Freudian psychology especially using ego self-defense mechanism; repression, projection, reaction-formation, fixation, and regression. Discussing Catherine using ego self-defense mechanism it is better to explore the personality structure first; id, ego, and superego. It is useful to know how her personality develops. Beside that part, I find the most interesting part that is castration complex. It causes Catherine die after she gives birth. Death after giving birth can be traced the causes, in other hand it is the end of the story. But here, I find that Hemingway wants to describe how war can cause deep internal conflict.

Freud introduces his personality structure which constructs in everybody's personality. First, id derives from the basic need of human beings, for example eating, drinking, and sexual need. It drives since human beings are born. Id also called primitive instinct tends to relieve pressure and to get pleasure. The principle of id is pleasure. Second, ego will always consider the reality. Ego is psychological aspect to have relation with real world. Reality is the principle of ego. Third, super-ego is social personality. It emerges from parents' teaching how to behave in society. The function of ego is to decide whether the action is right or wrong according to the social norms and religious norms. Both ego and super-go do not have their own energy. They are driven from id.

Ego will react to condition when id drives out and super-ego responds it. If ego could not handle the unstable condition, it will build defense mechanism. There are some ego self-defense mechanism; repression, projection, reaction formation, fixation, and regression. They work to deny, false, or disturb the reality. They also work in unconsciousness, so that human beings do not realize it.

Ego Self-Defense Mechanism

Freud explains about the development personality of human being to go to the maturation. People will need self-defense which comes out from ego when it faces the two other

elements; the id and the super-ego. The ego will form many ways to get deal with them. Different conflict will create different action from the ego because the principle of ego is reality. There are five ego self-defense mechanism; (1) repression, (2) projection, (3) fixation, (4) reaction formation, and (5) regression.

Repression is used to deny the danger. The nullifying or restraining of a cathexis by anti-cathexis is called repression. There are two kinds of repression; primal repression and repression proper. Projection is used to externalize the danger. The defense against neurotic and moral anxiety is called projection. Fixation is used to stand still in the position. Sometimes the progression comes to a halt and the person remains on one rung of the ladder of growth instead of taking the next step. This condition can be called as fixation. Reaction formation is used to hide the danger. When one of the instincts produces anxiety, the ego may do in the opposite of what it feels. For example, to love is replaced by to hate. It is called reaction formation. Regression is used to retreat. Having reached a certain stage of development, a person retreat to an earlier level because of fear. This is called regression.

The five mechanisms will work interchangeable according to the conflict the ego faces. It will cover the ego position when it meets clash between the id and the ego.

Analysis on Catherine Barkley in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

Catherine Barkley is depicted as a beautiful woman and she is a nurse from England who helps the war victims in Italy in World War I. Before she falls in love with Lt. Frederick Henry, she has had engagement with a soldier for eight years but he was killed in the war. "He was a very nice boy. He was going to marry me and he was killed in the Somme" (1995:18). When she joins in the war and before she meets Frederick, she still loves her fiancé, although he has already died. Catherine and Frederick meet and then they fall in love. But, behind their love story, I find some problems on Catherine which are interesting to be discussed.

Id drives so much in Catherine's personality. Her id comes from her need of love. Fortunately, the ego can reduce the tension coming up her and the super-ego drives ego to be more moralistic at the first time. The super-ego drives her need of love (id) away. An

activity to reduce the tension and becoming more moralistic is joining nurse in Italy. It works well; she can use her energy to help others. Nurse is a good job even it is done in the middle of war. It needs much energy to help war victims. Being a nurse in the middle of war is one of her self-defense mechanism, repression. She represses her id by displacing her energy. She still memorizes her fiancé by bringing a stick. "What is the stick?" I asked...It belonged to a boy who was killed last year" (1995:18). Catherine displaces the object that is the fiancé into the stick which can make her close to him.

Catherine is still virgin when she engages with her fiancé until he dies. She thinks she has given him anything. To replace it, she tends to cut her hair. She changes the object to her hair as her sacrifice to him. The ego lets her to do it as the replacement, but she does not do it.

"I was going to cut it all off when he died...I wanted to do something for him. You see I didn't care about the other thing and he could have had anything he wanted if I would have known. I would have married him or anything."(1995:19).

She regrets he dies before she marries him. It is her projection to replace what she should give him by cutting her hair.

Reaction-formation is used by Catherine when Frederick tries to kiss her. "She had slapped my face hard. Her hand had hit my nose and eyes."(1995:26). She reacts to protect herself. The ego works, she does not want to take any advantage in off-duty evening. It is the opposite of what she wants. She needs to release her tension as id needs but she also thinks that it is not appropriate to get any pleasure in war as the superego reacts. So, the ego takes the defense mechanism by slapping Frederick.

Actually, Catherine still remembers her fiancé, she cannot open her heart to other men so that when Frederick kisses her, she does not give her soul to him. She represses herself not to open her heart. It is repression. "I kissed her hard and held her tight and tried to open her lips; when they were closed tight."(1995:27).

After meeting Frederic in Italy, her id goes out and she gets the proper object that is Frederic who loves her. Id dominates her for about four months (July to October) when

Frederic is injured. She finds the object-choice which replaces her fiancé, Frederick Henry. With him, she can release her tension and gets pleasure. The id drives in this situation. Now, she can forget her fiancé.

“Come to bed again...You see,” she said. “ I do anything you want.” (1995:106).

She is ready to sacrifice herself for Frederick. She gives the most important thing for women to Frederick which she does not give to her fiancé.

Although in an occasion when they meet the priest, they get personal marriage sacrament. Catherine looks so happy having this sacrament, they only imagine the music and the wedding ceremony. Id drives more from her. Ego allows it happen, super-ego could not stop it.

Having relationship with Frederic, Catherine feels comfortable with him. She feels comfortable because the id can release freely and id gets some pleasure. Its needs are fulfilled when she is close to Frederick. Both of them need to release their tension. They are always together for about four months.

“We have such a fine time,” Catherine said. I don’t take any interest in anything else anymore. I’m so very happy married to you.”(1995:154).

When he will go to the front, suddenly she says that she is afraid of rain. The id will not be fulfilled the pleasure need because she does not meet Frederick. The superego conducts her ashamed to say directly what she needs and wants. Then she says that she is afraid if she dies or he dies in rain. It is projection. She changes the object of what she is afraid. Seeing rain is not the cause of her anxiety.

At this moment, she knows that she is pregnant and Frederic will leave her for service. She does not tell him because she thinks it is not the right time to tell in the chaos condition. Super-ego conducts her ego not to tell it. It will disturb him because he will go to front where he will face some problems. It does not want him to think much on her especially her baby. She represses her anxiety.

She cannot stand living without Frederic, but Frederic cannot be always with her. Then, she decides to leave for Switzerland to find safe place while she waits for him and

the baby born. She represses her feeling not to meet him. She hopes they will live together in Switzerland. When she represses her feeling, she tries to keep in touch with him in Italy by letters. She informs her where she is now. But, her letters are always returned to her. It is her way to relieve her tension when he is away. She communicates what happens to her. One way to communicate with him is by talking to his picture. It is displacement which also happens in repression. This displacement satisfies her to fulfill her need to meet him.

Taking her picture only on head is her regression. She covers her pregnancy by taking the head only. If it is taken in whole body, she will be known that she is pregnant. She does not want to admit that she is getting fat than before. She is afraid if he will leave her because she is not slim any more.

“...I’d look lovely, darling, and be so thin and exciting to you and you’ll fall in love with me all over again.”(1995:305)

She does not want to get married when she is pregnant, so that she refuses Frederick’s proposal to get married. She is in regression when her superego conducts to marry but the id wants her to perform well. She does not want to admit that being pregnant will cause her fatter. She cannot stand facing this problem, so that she does not want to move further.

“I suppose if we really have this child we ought to get married”, Catherine said...Let’s get married now,” I said. No...It’s too embarrassing now.”(1995:293).

She thinks she will be embarrassed if she gets married in pregnant. What will people say? “When will we be married? ...Any time after I’m thin again.”(1995:293). Being slim is always dreamt by women. Some of them think that men will love their partner more if they are slim. Catherine also has the same idea as slimmer being more loved by man.

Finding her twenty letters returned she gets fainted. She might think that he dies or he does not care her any more. She feels disappointed. It is useless to live without him. The death instinct drives her so that she does not have any spirit to live longer. She has ever experienced before, and now she has inborn baby. She castrates herself because she cannot stand living without Frederic. Her father figure is lost. Her first castration is when her

fiancé is killed in the war. She tries to castrate herself by cutting her hair. Cutting hair for women is a symbol of disappointment. She thought that it does not need to have long hair because her fiancée is already dead. The second one, when she has relationship with Frederic, she does not have any response from letters which can be meant two things (he dies or he leaves her). Moreover, she is pregnant and the baby is his. It is really complicated for her at that time. Tragically, she dies in rain. What she worries happens to her.

Conclusion

War is a hard time. People could not express their feeling freely. They are barred by this chaos condition which irritates many people. Catherine cannot get her need because Frederic should do his service in war. To anticipate her feeling, Catherine does many ways to reduce her anxiety. Repression, projection, and fixation are used by her ego when id and super-ego come out. She cannot relieve her tension and anxiety when she realizes that her father figure is lost. She could not live longer. Being depressed and repressed causes she castrates herself. She does not have any spirit to live longer. Although, she meets Frederic but it is too late.

Bibliography

- Hall, Calvin S. 1956. *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*. New York: The New American Library
- Hemingway, Ernest. 1995. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.