Traumatic Experiences of Abigail in *Columbus Circle* Movie Directed by George Gallo (2012): A Psychoanalytic Approach

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by:

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**ABSTRACT**

This research is proposed to analyze traumatic experiences in a film with the title *Columbus Circle* using Psychoanalytic Approach. There are two objectives. The first is to analyze the film in term of structural analysis and the second is to analyze the film based on Psychoanalytic Approach. The research paper belongs to the qualitative research. The object of the study is the personality of Abigail in *Columbus Circle* movie. There are two kinds of data sources used in this research, they are primary and secondary. The primary data is the film itself and the secondary data sources are biography of the author, books and internet. The technique of data collection in this research is summarizing, paraphrasing, and documenting the data. In analyzing the data, the writer employs descriptive qualitative analysis. Based on the structural analysis it is evident that in this movie, George Gallo wants to deliver a message that an experience should be a lesson in the future. The structural elements are related to each other and form a unity. Based on the psychological analysis, it is clear that in *Columbus Circle* movie George Gallo describes a psychological phenomenon, in which the major characters Abigail*Columbus Circle* has some traumatic experiences.

**Key words:** Psychoanalytic, Traumatic Experiences, *Columbus Circle* movie.
1. Introduction

**Background of the Study:** Psychological trauma makes a person would be a very severe stress. If the trauma is sustained, it will lead to disruption of one's soul. According to Bryant and Ehlers (2003:45), psychological trauma is “a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a traumatic event.” Traumatic experience is “a sudden and acutely shocking experience that washes over the individual, rendering him or her powerless for a brief or a longer period of time. The event can lead to a post-traumatic stress reaction or even disorders” (Wolters, 1991).

There are several things that cause a person get a psychological trauma. It can be from the human error or natural disaster. The psychological trauma is caused by human error such; sexual abuse, bullying, domestic violence, indoctrination, and mechanized accidents (car, train, or plane crashes, etc.), while the psychological trauma is caused by natural disaster such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslide, flash floods and etc. This is reflected in the *Columbus Circle* movie. The writer chooses one of George Gallo’s movie entitled *Columbus Circle* in his study.

*Columbus Circle* is a 2012 American thriller film directed by George Gallo, written by Kevin Pollak. The film had a panel at the Lightning Entertaining on July 22 and was released in United States on August 6, 2012. *Columbus Circle* used budget $10 million at the Hollywood.

*Columbus Circle* was a story about Abigail Columbus Circle Life. Abigail Clayton is a wealthy lady who lives in exclusive apartments very alone, in fact she is attractive heiress on Columbus Circle apartment. In the past, Abigail disappeared almost two decades from the public, media, and only via messages posted under the door with Klandermann building’s concierge who helped. Organise much of her administration, and she just communicated with her the neighbor, Mrs. Lonnigan the old woman as a confidante.

One day, when the death of her elderly neighbor, Frank Guardiallo as NYPD detective investigated the homicide case in Columbus Circle apartment, and he asks for question about the chronology for a minutes, and also who asks for question about the Agoraphobic of her disease. When the elderly woman in the opposite apartment passes on, Abigail is anxious of newcomers to her floor and tries to buy the apartment ex Mrs. Lonnigan. But the her neighbors Mrs. Lilian and Mr. Charlie keepstay in new apartment. Since the couple moves into deceased woman’s apartment, Abigail finds herself is exposed and not quiet, because she becomes the witness when Charlie beats and tortures Lilian.
Abigail’s distressed and scare, because of her past. She has bad traumatics on her family, she was also physically abused when her father drunk. On the fact, a violent episode between Lilian and Charlie just pretend of them, because they have secret mission to unload the real identity of Abigail Clayton. They cooperate with Dr. Raymond Fontaine as Abigail’s sole confidant at lastly betrayal. Based on the story above, Abigail Clayton as Justine Waters, a mysterious lady who has disappeared since seventeen years ago.

One night, Abigail invites Lilian to dinner in her room, and Lilian persuades to take Abigail outside, it is the moment when Abigail is careless, and soon Charlie searches information by checking Abigail’s room. Charlie tries to install computers hacker to get information about her, social security code, and the signature. Finally, they know that Abigail Clayton was the heiress of water’s family.

*Columbus Circle* is interesting movie to be researched. There are some aspects that make this movie really interesting. 1) The movie is about realistic story. 2) There is education in social life. 3) There are some traumatic experiences in certain life.

The realistic story of*Columbus Circle* outlines the story of Abigail Columbus Circle and her traumatic experiences when she was child. The story starts out when Abigail grew up in the American where she disappears from the American government and public. Then, when she comes to Columbus Circle Apartment, she just communicates with Klanderman as the apartment building’s concierge and Mrs. Lonigan her neighbor or soles confidant, and the last they are dead, caused by the betrayal of Dr. Raymond Fontaine and new neighbor. Hope they can unload the real identity and dominate Abigail’s wealthy, so they kill her confidant.

Education in social life can be found when the people get a saver traumatic event. But there are a few common aspects. Frequently, there a violation of the person’s familiar ideas and of their human rights, putting the person in a state of extreme confusion and insecurity. This is also seen when people or institutions, depended on for survival, violate or betray or disillusion the person in some unforeseen way.

Traumatic experiences can be analyzed from behaviors of certain character, especially the major character, Mrs. Abigail, in *Columbus Circle*. The approach being implemented is psychoanalytic approach; it is concerned with motivations of human thought and actions. It is as a therapeutic method, originated by Sigmund Freud, for treating mental disorders by investigating the interactions of conscious and unconscious elements of one's mind and
bringing repressed fears and conflicts into conscious mind, using technique such as dream interpretation and free association.

Based on the reason above, the writer analyzes the traumatic experience and the reaction of the major character, Mrs. Abigail, in ‘Columbus Circle’ by using the traumatic experience in psychoanalytic view. Furthermore, the writer entitles his study:

**Traumatic Experiences of Abigail in Columbus Circle Movie Directed by George Gallo (2012): A Psychoanalytic Approach**

**Problem Statement** of the research background of choosing the subject above, the problem is “How is the traumatic experience reflected on the major character in Columbus Circle?”

**Objectives**: To analyze the movie in term of its structural elements and analyze the movie based on the psychoanalytic approach.

**Literature Review**: There is no literature review in Columbus Circle Movie, at least in universities across Central Java. Especially in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

2. **Research Method**

**Data**: There are two types of data; Text and Image. Text data in this research is movie manuscript, which consists of words, phrases and sentences. Image data in this research are image capturing of an action in the movie which is related to the research.

**Data Source**: The researcher uses two data; there are Primary Data, taken from the movie directed by George Gallo entitled *Columbus Circle* (2012), and Secondary Data, which are taken from other sources that relate to the primary data, such as author’s biography, books and website relate to traumatic experience and many other data related this research.

**Data Collection**: The technique of data collection in this study is documentation. The writer views the primary data repeatedly to reach more understanding of resource. Next, the writer takes, compares, quotes, and studies other data into some categories and develops them into unity.

**Data Analysis**: In this study, the technique which is used to analyze the data is descriptive analysis. This technique describes the event better than the summary. It is begun with the author and his work, the structural analysis of the movie and finally psychoanalytic analysis of the movie.
3. Psychoanalysis

a. Notion of Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a theory, which was proposed by Sigmund Freud for the first time in 1896 about human being. Furthermore, it is developed and has three meanings in basic and principles. They are psychoanalysis (theory of personality and psychopathology); psychoanalysis (method of therapy for personality for disturbances); and psychoanalysis (a technique for investigating an individual’s unconscious thoughts and feeling) (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:86).

Psychoanalysis is a branch of psychological study that analyze the human being personality based on the unconscious thoughts. Psychoanalysis has the basic concept that human’s mental lives are divided into two levels, the unconscious and conscious (Feist, 1985:21). Unconscious is all the thoughts, experiences, and a feeling of which human unaware (Pervin, 1984:71) and the conscious is everything about human’s feeling and experiences in awareness (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:86).

b. Major principles of Personality

Freud divided three aspects of personality, they are; id, ego, and superego. Although these aspects have each function, component, principle work and self dynamic, but they have relationship each other. Id, ego, and superego are the unity and human being behavior is the result of these aspects.

1) Id

According to Freud (Pervin 1984:76) id represents the biological substratum of humans, the source of all drive energy. The energy for a person’s functioning originally resides in the life and death, or sexual and aggressive instincts, which are part of the id. The id seeks the release of excitation, tension and energy. According to Freud (Pervin, 1984:76) the id cannot tolerate frustration and is free of inhabitations. It shows no regard for reality and can seek satisfaction through action or through imagining that it has gotten what it wants, the fantasy of gratification is as good as the actual gratification. It is without reason, logic, values, morals, or ethics. The id is demanding, impulsive, blind, irrational, asocial, and selfish and finally pleasure loving.

According to Freud (Burger, 1986:56), id is “the most basic system of personality where the innate instinct exists. Freud says that the Id is concerned only with satisfying personal desires, regardless of the physical or social limitations that might prevent desire, getting whatever we want. The id functions entirely in the unconscious and is closely tied to instinctual biological urges (to eat, sleep, defecate, copulate) that energize our behavior (Hjelle, 1992:88)
2) **Ego**

According to Freud, the *ego* evolves out of the *id* to enable the organism to deal with reality. According to Freud (Hall, 1985:34) the *ego* can distinguish between things in the mind and things in the external world. The *ego* must continuously differentiate between things in the mind and things in the outer world of reality. The hungry person in search of food, for example must distinguish between a mental image of food and an actual perception of food if tension reduction is to occur (Hjelle, 1992:88).

The *ego* understands that this action can lead to the problems and instead attempts to obtain good and this reduce tension, in such manner that the person does not end up in a lot of trouble (Burger, 1986:57). Freud explained that the *ego* is able to separate wish from fantasy, can tolerate tension and compromise, and changes over time. Freud says that the function of the *ego* is to express and satisfy the desires of the *id* in accordance with reality and the demands of the *superego* (Pervin 1984:77).

3) **Superego**

According to Freud (Pervin 1984:77) the *superego* represents the moral branch of our functioning, containing the ideals we strive for and the punishments (guilt) we expect when we have gone against our ethical code. The *superego* has functions to control behavior in accordance with the rules of society, offering rewards (pride, self-love) for good behavior and punishment (guilt, feeling of inferiority, accidents) for bad behavior.

According to Freud (Hall and Lindzey: 1985:35) the *superego* represents the ideal world rather than pleasure of the real world. It tries to reach perfection rather than pleasure. Freud divided the *superego* into two subsystems: the conscience and the ego-ideal. The *superego*, while attempting to inhibit completely any *id* impulse that would be condemned by society, also tries to guide the person toward absolute perfection in thought, word, and deed. In short, it tries to persuade the *ego* that the pursuit of perfectionist goals is better than the pursuit of realistic ones (Hjelle, 1992:91).

Freud (Feist, 1985:27) maintained that the *superego* is also previous the ideals, and the *ego* is used to determine if a behavior is virtuous, and therefore worthy of praise. The *superego* is a moral element branch of justice from personality system. The *superego* thus places more restrictions on what an individual can or cannot do (Burger, 1986:57). The *superego* represents the ideal world rather than pleasure, or the real world. It tries to reach perfection rather than pleasure (Hall, 1985:35).
4. Theory of Trauma

a. Notion of Trauma

Traumatic experience is “a sudden and acutely shocking experience that washes over the individual, rendering him or her powerless for a brief or a longer period of time. The event can lead to a post-traumatic stress reaction or even disorders” (Wolters, 1991).

There are several things that cause a person get a psychological trauma. It can be from the human error or natural disaster. The psychological trauma caused by human error such as sexual abuse, bullying, domestic violence, indoctrination, and mechanized accidents (car, train, or plane crashes, etc.), while the psychological trauma is caused by natural disaster such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslide, flash floods and etc.

b. Characteristics of Trauma

Van Der Kolk (1987) described the characteristic of trauma as follow:

1) Depression.

Unexpressed and unfelt emotion lead to flat internal world or agitated anxious depression. Anger, rage and sadness that remain unfelt or unexpected in a way that leads to no resolution.

2) Anxiety

Free floating anxiety, worries and anxieties that have no where particular to pin themselves or look for a place to project at, phobias, sleep disturbances, hyper vigilance.

3) Cycles of Reenactment

Unconscious repetition of pain-filled dynamics, the continual recreation of dysfunctional dynamics from the past.

c. Trauma in Human Experience

People who go through these types of extremely traumatic experiences often have certain symptoms and problems afterward. How severe these symptoms are depends on the person, the type of trauma involved, and the emotional support they receive from others. Reactions and symptoms of trauma can be wide and varied, and differ in severity from person to person (Briere, 2006:37). A traumatized individual may experience one or several of them.
5. Research Finding

a. Analysis of Evelyn’s Personality

1) Id

Abigail’s first id begins when Detective comes to Abigail’s apartment, and to ask a question about her neighbor as a homicide cases. But she wants to refuses. Her id wants to be free from a question of Detective.

Abigail : I just needed to talk to you about your neighbor, if I may.
Abigail : I didn’t know her.
Detective : Look, no body...

Iam sorry, Iam very busy right now.

(Columbus Circle, 00:08:40-00:08:50)

The Second id of Abigail occurs in the morning. When She wants the day off from the job and spends the time with Raymond. Because Abigail needs the suggestion from Raymond about homicide cases and a new neighbor. Her id wants to see Raymond, and need the suggestion, so that Abigail is being calm.

Abigail : I need to see you, Ray.
Raymond : Abby, Iam bussy.
Abigail : I said I need to see you, Ray.
Raymond : Iam in the middle of something.
Abigail : Raymond, now!!

(Columbus Circle, 00:16:57-00:17:07)

The last id occurs when Abigail knows Lilian fighting with Charlie. She wants to help Lilian, when she is tortured by Charlie in front Abigail’s apartment.

Lilian : God damn it, you are drunk!
I want to go back inside.
Charlie : You are not going anywhere.
(slapping)
Bitch, did you just hit me?
Is that what you did?
Lilian : (screams)
Charlie : You don’t ever hit me.
Lilian : Iam sorry.

(Columbus Circle, 00:20:52-00:21:09)
2) Superego

Abigail’s first superego occurs when she is interrogated of detective in her apartment. Her id will refuse of a question from Detective. Her superego realizes that she has the thinks to avoid it, because she will hide the real identity.

Detective : I was just trying to break the ice.
Abigail : Yeah, well, I am not interested in breaking ice or engaging in small talk.

(Columbus Circle, 00:09:42-00:09:47)

The second superego of Abigail occurs in the apartment, when Abigail knows that she has a new neighbor. Her superego realizes that Abigail does not want to have a new neighbor.

The last superego occurs when Abigail knows that Lilian is fighting with Charlie in front Abigail’s apartment. Her id occurs when she wants to help Lilian, because Lilian is tortured by Charlie in front Abigail’s apartment. Her superego is that she is hesitant to help Lilian, and she takes a phone rashly to call Raymond, because she wants to get opinion from Raymond.

3) Ego

The first ego of Abigail occurs when she is interrogated of Detective in her apartment. Her id will refuse a question from Detective. Her superego realizes that she thinks to avoid it, because she will hide the real identity. She does not give occasion to Detective to ask more question.

The second ego occurs when Abigail meets Raymond in her apartment at the morning. Her id wants to meet Raymond and needs the suggestion from Raymond about homicide cases and the position of a new neighbor in apartment. Her superego realizes that she does not want a new neighbor to stay in apartment Columbus Circle. Her ego decides to calm, so that all situations unchange, and she agrees with advice from Raymond to stop inquiring about her neighbor.

Abigail : I just need things to stay the same,
I just need things to continue.
Evelyn : Abby, Abby.
Abigail : As they have been.
This is a disruption.
Raymond : Well, if change is what you don’t want
I strongly advice that you stop inquiring about the apartment
Across the hall.

(Columbus Circle, 00:17:54-00:18:11)
The last *ego* occurs when Abigail knows Lilian fighting with Charlie. She wants to help Lilian, when she is tortured by Charlie in front Abigail’s apartment. Her *superego* is that she is hesitant to help Lilian, and she takes a phone rashly to call Raymond, because she wants to get opinion from Raymond. Her *ego* decides to still help Lilian, but she does not want to be involved in the problem.

Raymond : Maybe, You should consider that now that you for help again. 
She will likely come back to you for help again. 
Have You thought about what you are gonna do next time?

Abigail : No. 
I just know, I don’t wanna be involved.

*(Columbus Circle, 00:34:34- 00:34:46)*

**b. Analysis of Evelyn’s Traumatic Experience**

Van Der Kolk (1987) describes the characteristic of trauma such Depression, Anxiety, and Cycles of Reenactment.

1) Depression

Abigail’s first *depression* arises when her identity as a Waters Family is uncovered. She is anxious and confused to find a good reason. She wants to find her concierge as the reason so that they are not more suspicious.

Raymond : Where are you going? 
Abigail : I need to get to the phone. 
Raymond : No, no. Not after the neuro-scan. 
Abigail : Let me call my Klanderman. 
Raymond : Let me see it. 

*(Columbus Circle, 00:14:39- 00:15:01)*

Her second *depression* of Abigail occurs when Abigail continuously shows her agitation. She looks bewildered by walking back and forth. Lilian tries to persuade Abigail to stay calm and not to be agitated.

Lilian : Look Abby, try to stay calm...
Abigail : I'm not a goddamn killer. 
Lilian : I didn't say you were. Let's go up to my apartment so we can sort this out. 
Abigail : No, no. We gotta go to a secure location. 

*(Columbus Circle, 00:15:33- 00:15:43)*
The third *depression* of Abigail occurs when she has to tell the truth to Lilian about her identity. Her sadness arises after she gives the real explanation.

2) **Anxiety**

Abigail is afraid when she must tell the truth to Lilian. She does not want anything bad happen to her. After Abigail is honest about the real situation, she hopes Lilian can accept the consequences that will happen to her.

Abigail : You're good.
KA-program is brilliant bull-shit,
but I'm officially off-duty.
Raymond : Abigail...
The name of the child Waters Family is, Abigail.
Abigail Clayton.
Abigail : Call Protective Services and
make sure they find my Klanderman.

*(Columbus Circle, 00:14:00- 00:14:49)*

Raymond tells her about his past in order Abigail will go back to him and complete the mission that has been planned before Abigail comes out of the Columbus Circle and leaves apartment. Abigail is afraid if everything will be revealed and they know that she is really a Justine Waters. In addition, Abigail also feels anxious and worried with the uncertain condition of her husband existence.

3) **Cycles of Reenactment**

Abigail has an experience which is not easy to forget. In her childhood, she has experienced a severe accident which has killed her parents. Abigail survives from the deadly accident. In unstable condition, she is influenced by Raymond to believe with him.

Raymond : What are you gonna do now?
Abigail : I don’t know, it is not my responsibility, right?
Raymond : You know as well as anyone this sort of thing
Only gets worse.
Maybe you should consider that now that
You have helped her.

*(Columbus Circle, 00:11:32 - 00:12:26)*

Her painful experiences in the past, makes her more carefully in making decisions. Anxiety and worry on Abigail turn to frightening when she has to lose one by one people she
cares about. Both of her parents and her confidant become victims. Now, Abigail lives in a lonely and full of rage.

Abigail: I just needed to talk to you about your neighbor, if I may.

Abigail: I didn’t know her.

Detective: Look, no body...

Detective: I am gonna come in here for a second.

(Columbus Circle, 00:08:40-00:08:50)

Another painful experience of Abigail occurs when the all of her confidant died, and at lastily Lilian cheated she will hide the real identity in order to be free from interogationof police.

6. Conclusion

Referring to the previous chapter, the researcher finally can take some conclusions. The single problem of the research that is how the traumatic experience is reflected in the major character in Columbus Circle movie, the writer attempts to draw conclusion in order to answer the problem.

Firstly, based on the structural analysis, it is evident that in this movie. In order to reveal the message, George Gallo creates Abigail as a major character. He delivers a moral message that the experience should be a lesson in the future. George Gallo puts setting of place in Washington D.C, New York and setting of place mostly occurs in the afternoon. George Gallo uses traditional plot or progressive plot. The beginning of the movie is when Evelyn Salt is being tortured in a prison in North Korea being accused of espionage. In the complication occurs when Evelyn continues her mission to assassinate the Russian President Boris Matveyev at the funeral of the American vice president. The climax tells about preparations to launch nuclear missiles at Mecca and Tehran and the resolution when Evelyn puts on a helicopter with Peabody and she explains everything to him. Knowing the movie throughly, the movie has combined all of those elements to have relation each other, and support the theme to make this movie be interesting.

Secondly, based on the psychological analysis, it is clear that in Columbus Circle movie George Gallo describes a psychological phenomenon, in which the major characters AbigailColumbus Circle has some traumatic experiences. By using Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychoanalytic the researcher will analyze the major characters, Evelyn Salt. Evelyn Salt as a major character always gives priority for her id. Evelyn is ambitious person. She wants to trap Lilian in Waters Bank. Her superego serves to limit the genesis of the id. So to reach her ambition, she will do anything even sacrifice of life.
Thirdly, based on traumatic experience analysis. The traumatic experience of Abigail occurs when she has to lose her family. Anxiety and worry on Abigail turn to frightening when she has to lose one by one people she cares about. This experience makes her always imagine and remember the important events in her lives. Her painful experiences in the past, makes her more carefully in making decisions. It will make a person have incredible fear.

The *Columbus circle* movie directed by George Gallo is very interesting to study. The researcher realizes that this research paper is far from perfect because of the researcher’s limited knowledge and understanding about literature. The researcher gives a chance to the other researchers to analize *Columbus Circle* movie by using different perspective. For example by using individual psychological approach. They can analyze the striving or the struggle of. Or completely they can analyze the elements of individual psychology such as striving for superiority, inferiority feelings, creative self, fictional finalism.

The researcher realizes that this study is far from being perfect. Finally, the researcher hopes that the readers can take the lesson from this study and it can be useful to the readers as comparison to the other research in widening the knowledge of literary studies. This research paper hopefully can contribute to English teaching proses. It can be used to enrich student’s vocabulary by using the movie script as reading material. Beside Fiction and Vocabulary, this research can be useful to add other skills such as speaking and listening.
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VIRTUAL REFERENCES


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