

**EGO DEFENSE MECHANISM REFLECTED IN NICHOLAS SPARKS'
THE LAST SONG (2009) : A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE**



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**EGO DEFENSE MECHANISM REFLECTED IN NICHOLAS SPARKS'
*THE LAST SONG (2009) : A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE***

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ABSTRACT

The objective is to analyze the novel based on the structural elements and to analyze the novel based on psychoanalytic perspective proposed. This research paper belongs to qualitative research. In analyzing the data, the researcher applies descriptive analysis. The result of the research is as follows: Sparks focused on the major character as the individual who used defense mechanism to cover up her feeling as the way to solve her problem. The last, Sparks writes The Last Song novel as one of literary work to describe defense mechanism that is common to be used by someone for something that can't be solved.

Keyword: the last song, defense mechanism, psychoanalytic perspective.

A. Introduction

The Last Song is a romantic tragedy novel by American author Nicholas Sparks. *The Last Song* is Sparks' fourteenth published novel (fifteenth published book), and was written specifically as the basis for the film adaptation by the same name. It was released on September 8, 2009 in United States by Grand Central Publishing. There are 405 pages and 37 chapter in this novel.

The novel tells about the life of a family with all of the problems. It is because the theme of the novel is generally found in our daily life. All of the characters in the novel have unique personality and feels real based on the interaction between another character and situation. The author of this novel tells a story from many points of view and also gives background information on the events in the novel and the characters that important to the development of the plot. The story of the novel teaches to forgive ourself, learn from our mistakes, and grow as a human being. Beside that, we also learn about love and affection.

There is literature review concerning with *The Last Song* by Nicholas Sparks, written by Mahfudho (UMS, 2013) with her research paper entitled *Growth of Veronica Miller's Personality in Julie Anne Robinson's The Last Song Movie (2010)*. In her research, she concluded that the power of love change s hatred, misunderstanding causes hatred, and hatred ends in regret along with the growth of Veronica Miller's personality. While in this research, the researcher focuses on ego defense mechanism used by the major character,

Ronnie to solve her problem. This research is analyzed by using psychoanalytic perspective according to Sigmund Freud theory of ego defense mechanism.

The issue of this research is defense mechanism used by major character of the novel to cover up her feeling as the way to solve her problem. It is analyzed by using psychoanalytic perspective. So, the writer is interested to analyse defense mechanism based on the novel by using psychoanalytic approach. So, the writer decides to carry out a study entitled: **Ego Defense Mechanism Reflected In Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song* (2009): A Psychoanalytic Perspective.**

B. Research Method

The researcher uses qualitative research in this study. It purposes to analyze the Ego Defense Mechanism reflected at Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song* using psychoanalytic perspective. The data sources are literary and library data.

The object of the study is Ego Defense Mechanism reflected at Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song* (2009). It is analyzed using psychoanalytic perspective. In this study, the researcher uses two types of data sources; they are primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is *The Last Song* (2009) by Nicholas Sparks. The secondary data sources are the other sources related with this study such as books, website and other source that support this study.

The technique the researcher used in analyzing the data is descriptive qualitative analysis of content. There are some steps of analyzing the data: (1) Reading the novel frequently, (2) Determining the main point of the novel that will be analyzed, (3) Taking some notes of the important part from primary and the secondary data source, (4) Selecting the data, by eliminating the information that is not relevant and searching the information that is relevant with the topic of the research.

C. Research Findings and Discussion

After analyzing *The Last Song*, the researcher found some research findings. The research findings will be discussed below.

1. Findings

a. Defense Mechanism

Freud defines an ego defense mechanism as “a mental strategy used by the individual to defend against open expression of id impulses and opposing superego pressures” (Hjell and Ziegler, 1992: 104).

Based on *The Last Song* novel, there are some defense mechanisms used by major character, Ronnie Miller those are following:

1. Repression

The most basic defense mechanism is repression. Repression is “regarded as the primary of ego defense mechanism. It is not only because serves as a basis for more elaborate defense mechanisms, but

also involves the most direct approach in avoiding anxiety” (Hjell and Ziegler, 1992: 104).

Repression is used by Ronnie when she knows her father has stomach cancer. She felt worried and sad about her father’s condition. She knows her father’s illness is dangerous, so she wants to do the best thing for her father. (p.400, 411)

2. Reaction formation

Reaction formation is “evident in socially acceptable that is compulsive, exaggerated, and rigid. As a defensive process, it operates into two steps, the unacceptable impulse and the exact opposite that expressed on a conscious level” (Hjell and Ziegler, 1992: 105).

In this novel, Ronnie uses reaction formation when she hates her father because of the divorce, she didn’t care with anything especially her father. She wanted to do this to cover up his disappointment by the acts that contravention to vent her disappointment to his parents. (p.11, 23)

3. Projection

Projection involves “the process which the person attributes unacceptable internal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to other people. It enables a person to blame someone for his/her own shortcomings” (Hjell and Ziegler, 1992: 104).

Ronnie uses projection because she can’t accept about the divorce of her parents. She hates and blames her father with this

condition. She feels that all that happened in her life is because of her father who left him. (p.11)

4. Rationalization

Rationalization “involves giving plausible, but false, reason for action to disguise the true motives. It also involves relatively distortion, so it is considered a mature defense mechanism” (Cloninger, C. Susan, 2004: 63).

Rationalization that is used by Ronnie can be seen when she broke her relationship with Will after knowing about the accident at the church. She did it because she felt disappointed that Will didn't tell her early. In this novel, rationalization is used to find a reasonable excuse for his behavior related to disappointment. So, Ronnie breaks up her relationship to be the reason of her disappointment. (p.390-391)

5. Denial

Denial is described as “the ways in which the psyche protects itself from internal and external threat”. It is most typical young children and immature older individuals (Hjell and Ziegler, 1992: 107).

In this novel, denial is used by Ronnie to cover up and lies toward her feelings that she is fine when she knows the story from Ashley about what Will does to her, although she is very disappointed and angry toward him. (p.172,173)

6. Displacement

Displacement is one of defense mechanisms that means “the expression of an instinctual impulse is redirected from more threatening person or object to less threatening one” (Hjell and Ziegler, 1992: 105).

In this novel, Ronnie uses displacement to avert her disappointment and her anger because the divorce of her parents. She prefers to stop playing the piano and hates the piano, she also doesn't continue to audition in Juilliard. (p.108)

b. Causes of Defense Mechanism

Defense mechanism is the way used by people to cover up their feeling when they get problem, and they try to solve it by using defense mechanism. There are some causes when someone does defense mechanism. It is also applied by Ronnie :

1. To cover up disappointment.

She covers up her disappointment because of the divorce of her parents. It can be seen when she hates her father because of the divorce. She doesn't want to talk to him.

Beside that, she also covers up her disappointment when she is told by Ashley that Will fools her after she knows that what he is doing is same with another girl. Ronnie thinks that he is same with another guy although she said that she is fine with this condition. So, she doesn't want to talk to him and ignores him. (p.11, 176)

2. To release her anger.

Ronnie does defense mechanism to release her anger about something, finds a reasonable excuse for his behaviour related to disappointment. It is applied when she prefers to stop playing piano after her parents was divorced. She didn't want to enter audition at Juilliard although she can enter without examination. (p.12, 74)

3. To hide the true feeling.

Ronnie does defense mechanism to hide her true feeling or condition. It is because she is full of disappointment for something or someone, so her true feeling is closed by her disappointment. It can be seen when she broke up her relationship with Will after she knew that he didn't tell him about the truth in the accident of the church. (p.390-391)

c. Effects of Defense Mechanism

Defense mechanism used by Ronnie has the effect toward her problem or condition in her life. The effects of defense mechanism used by Ronnie are as follows:

1. Ronnie's personality was changed

Defense mechanism used by Ronnie changes her personality. In the beginning, Ronnie can't accept the divorcem of her parents. She becomes rebellious teenage and temprament girl. But, she becomes care with her father and didn't want to leave him after she

knows her father has stomach cancer, although she felt worried about his condition. (p.400)

2. Doing contradiction act.

Ronnie doing contradiction act to release her disappointment. It can be seen when she hates her father and blames him. This condition makes Ronnie do shoplifting and doesn't care with anything around her. (p.10, 24)

3. Defense mechanism makes the way of thinking was changed.

Ronnie becomes a mature girl, cares toward another people, learns to forgive someone especially her father without looking his fault in the past. It is showed that defense mechanism also change s her thinking when she tries to solve her problem. (p.367, 448)

D. Discusssion

The Last Song novel gives visible image of the major character with all of the problem and conflicts that happened. This novel focuses on the major character who tries to survive and solve her problem by using defense mechaism. Beside that, defense mechanism used by Ronnie also gives the causes and effects toward the conflicts that happened in her life. The defense mechanism used by her gives the influence and important role in building the major character's personality.

According to Wellek (1948: 75) psychology of literature means "the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the

creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or finally the effects of literature upon its readers”.

In this novel, Sparks describes psychology phenomena in major character, Ronnie Miller that survives in her problem by doing defense mechanism. Sparks focused on the major character as the individual who used defense mechanism to cover up her feeling as the way to solve her problem. The relation between psychology and literature influenced the readers feeling and knowledge. Sparks writes *The Last Song* novel as one of literary works to describe defense mechanism that is common to be used by someone for something that can't be solved.

It can be concluded there are good relation between the defense mechanism that have the important role in building the major character's mental condition with her personality.

E. Conclusion

After analyzing *The Last Song*, based on the psychoanalytic perspective, it can be concluded that in this novel, the author illustrates a psychological phenomenon in which people justify the problem by doing some ego defense mechanism. Sparks focused on the major character as the individual who used defense mechanism to cover up her feeling as the way to solve her problem. This phenomena can influence the readers feeling and knowledge about the story in this novel.

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