CONFLICT OF LOVE IN ANTON CHEKHOV’S *THE SEAGULL* (1895):
AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The study is about how the conflict of love in Constantine Treplieff character is reflected in Anton Chekhov’s The Seagull. The aim of this study is to the major’s character personality based on the structural elements and the individual psychological perspective by Alfred Adler. In analyzing this play, the writer uses individual psychological approach and qualitative method. This research is using two data sources, namely primary and secondary data. The primary data source is the script of the play itself, while the secondary data is taken from the information needed. The method of data collection in this research is using qualitative method. The analysis of Constantine Treplieff character starts by analyzing his inferior feeling and compensation, striving for superiority, style of life, creative power, social interest, and fictional finalism. Next, writer analysis discusses the conflict of love that occur in Contantine Treplieff character. According to the analysis that has been conducted, the result of this study shows that unrequited love of Treplieff leads to personality alteration. Until the end of the play, he failed to overcome his personal love issues. Despite all of his effort to obtain Nina’s affection, Constantine Treplieff is unable to achieve what he truly wants which is to be loved by Nina. He is unable to accept the reality that Nina remains beyond his reach. This frustrates him and then leads him to commit suicide.

A. Background of the study

Love is both classical problems in daily life of human being and in literary works. It is a feeling of affection towards someone. It is uneasy to be defined because an individual may experience love differently from one to another. What is called love by one person is not always same on how other person defines it. One of the most influential traditions of love in the Western world is Platonism. Based on Plato’s writings on love, mainly the Symposium whose explicit subject is the nature of love and Phaedrus, and the Republic
and the Laws, the tradition flourished through Aristotle, Plotinus and the revival of neo-Platonism in the Renaissance (Amir, 2011: 01). Love is an important emotion, although sometimes forgotten—it has even been omitted from some psychologists' lists of the emotions (Ekman, 1972; Izard, 1977; Tomkins, 1984: 03).

Conflict refers to disagreements that lead to tension within, and between (Vestergaard, et al, 2011:04). The literary element conflict is an inherent incompatibility between the objectives of two or more characters or forces. Conflict creates tension and interest in a story by adding doubt as to the outcome. It is often that a literary work has more than a single conflict within its narrative. Conflict of love often becomes storyline of numerous literary works. One of them is the Seagull play by Anton Chekhov.

In this play, Constantine Trepleff as the major character does not acquire love from both Nina and his mother, two females that he loves much. They both much prefer on Trigorin, a famous writer who is the lover of Arkadina and later having affair with Nina. The play begins with an opening on an early summer evening in a park on the estate of Peter Sorin, brother of Irina Arkadina, a celebrated actress, a lake serves as natural scenery behind the stage. Constantine, a young writer, is busy getting preparation of his first performance of his play. He knows his mother Arkadina does not love him and doesn’t support him for his love for theater. He is in love with Nina, who arrives and shares her thought with Constantine on her becoming a famous actress. Constantine tells her he loves her, but Nina does not return his words. The play is rudely interrupted by Arkadina several times, who clearly shows her disliking for her son’s play. Trigorin, a famous writer and the love of Constantine’s mother, announces that he and Arkadina are to go back to town. He looks at the seagull that Constantine shot and conveys to Nina that she has inspired him to start a new story about a girl who is ruined by a man just like a seagull.

Constantine ends up crying because he knows he cannot get Nina's affection. Trigorin enters and asks Arkadina if they can stay on the estate. He
is then challenged by Arkadina about his interest in Nina. Fearing that she will lose the man she loves, Arkadina pleads and begs on her hands and knees for Trigorin to leave with her. Trigorin gets convinced to leave. But before he leaves, he shares a few private moments with Nina. Two years later, Constantine says about Nina having an affair with Trigorin and becoming pregnant, but, the baby had died. Trigorin then left her for Arkadina and was cheating on them both. Constantine, left alone in his study, is shown comparing his writing to Trigorin's with envy. Nina is shown entering the house, feeling nervous and in complete fear. They admit to each other that they have sought each other. Nina admits that her life is difficult and thinks nostalgically about their youthful love. Then, Constantine admits his love to Nina and that she was not present with him to enjoy his success, which is meaningless to him without her. Nina hugs Constantine and then runs out of the door. Constantine shot himself (Kloeppel, 2011: 03-05).

There are several reasons of the writer to choose this play. First, the Seagull is considered as one of Chekhov’s plays that has huge impact in the world of theater. This play is remarkable for its existence as modern play. The play, along with Uncle Vanya, Cherry Orchard, and Three Sisters, is well-known for their rejection of melodrama and the conventional dramatic subjects and techniques that dominated the theater of Chekhov's time. “The Seagull represents a significant moment in the history of modern drama, for it shows a writer of genius beginning to create a new dramatic form. This play portrays people, their behavior, their psychology, frailties.” (Yarahmadi, 2011: 01).

Secondly, the plot of the Seagull is driven by the conflict of Constantine as the major character in pursuing his love affection. This made the play contains so many conflict of love within characters, especially the main character, Constantine. The artists in The Seagull are perhaps the most tortured characters in the play. They yearn for something abstract, unable to articulate exactly what will make them happy, so they place an almost sociopathic emphasis on the art they create (Lederhendler, 2014: 06).
Contantine’s conflict of love starts from his statement of his love toward Nina on Sorin’s estate, his mental change after knowing that Nina loves Trigorin instead, until his suicide after knowing that Nina still unable to accept his love even in her worst condition, this play has so many love conflicts to be observed using individual psychological approach.

Based on the reasons mentioned above, the writer intended to conduct this research entitled “CONFLICT OF LOVE IN ANTON CHEKOV’S THE SEAGULL (1895): AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH”

B. Research Method

This point is divided into four sub-points, they are:

1. **Object of Study**

   This research uses Anton Chekhov’s *the Seagull* as the object of study. Writer takes individual psychological approach to examine the object.

2. **Type of the Data and Data Source**

   a. **Type of the Data**

      The type of the data of this research is Anton Chekhov’s play entitled *the Seagull*. This research uses qualitative research to analyze the play.

   b. **Source of the Data**

      There are two types of the data sources in this research namely:

      1) **Primary Data Source**

         The primary data source of this research is *the Seagull* of Anton Chekhov. The writer uses the play Coradella Collegiate Bookshelf Editions Copyright ©2004 thewritedirection.net with 99 pages.

      2) **Secondary Data Source**

         Secondary data source is taken from individual psychological books and other relevant information related to the study and virtual reference of *the Seagull* by Anton Chekhov.
C. Individual Psychological Analysis

Individual psychology is one of psychological theories that can be used as an approach to analyze literary works. Individual psychological theory was introduced by Alfred Adler (1870-1937).

1. Inferiority Feeling and Compensation

After divorced from him, Arkadina along with Treplev moved away from Kiev. During his time in college, as he stated, he had neither brain money nor brain. This shows how insignificant Treplev saw himself despite he is the son of a famous actress. People adore Arkadina for her career but barely know that she has Treplev as her son. He also stated that he will have a happier life if his mother was an ordinary woman.

TREPLIEF. [Pulling a flower to pieces] She loves me, loves me not; loves—loves me not; loves—loves me not! [Laughing] You see, she doesn’t love me, and why should she? She likes life and love and gay clothes, and I am already twenty-five years old; a sufficient reminder to her that she is no longer young. When I am away she is only thirty-two, in my presence she is forty-three, and she hates me for it. She knows, too, that I despise the modern stage. She adores it, and imagines that she is working on it for the benefit of humanity and her sacred art, but to me the theatre is merely the vehicle of convention and prejudice. When the curtain rises on that little three-walled room, when those mighty geniuses, those high-priests of art, show us people in the act of eating, drinking, loving, walking, and wearing their coats, and attempt to extract a moral from their insipid talk; when playwrights give us under a thousand different guises the same, same, same old stuff, then I must needs run from it, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower that was about to crush him by its vulgarity. (act I: 8)

As new you writer, Treplev is pretty jealous to Trigorin who practically is the man Treplev wants to be. His jealousy increases when uncover that his love, Nina, adores Trigorin. Soon, after Treplev realized that Nina actually has her affection toward Trigorin, Treplev mocks Trigorin as the genius writer. It shows that he is jealous toward Trigorin’s fame and particularly Nina’s affection toward him.

TREPLIEF. All this began when my play failed so dismally. A woman never can forgive failure. I have burnt the manuscript to the last page. Oh, if you could only fathom my unhappiness! Your estrangement is to me terrible, incredible; it is as if I had suddenly waked to find this lake dried up and sunk into the earth. You say you are too simple to
understand me; but, oh, what is there to understand? You disliked my play, you have no faith in my powers, you already think of me as commonplace and worthless, as many are. [Stamping his foot] How well I can understand your feelings! And that understanding is to me like a dagger in the brain. May it be accursed, together with my stupidity, which sucks my lifeblood like a snake! [He sees TRIGORIN, who approaches reading a book] There comes real genius, striding along like another Hamlet, and with a book, too. [Mockingly] “Words, words, words.” You feel the warmth of that sun already, you smile, your eyes melt and glow liquid in its rays. I shall not disturb you. [He goes out.]

(act II: 36)

All of those reasons lead Treplieff to feel inferior and insignificant. Sometime, Treplieff uses his failure and insignificant feeling to get other people sympathy. In the last act, he proves that he is able to be a famous writer as the result of his effort during the gap between act III and act IV.

2. Striving for Superiority

As stated before, Treplieff is overshadowed by the fame of both Arkadina and Trigorin. These make Treplieff urge to become a great writer by his own way. At the beginning of the play, Treplieff expresses both his desires to be a writer, and to create significance works. His first attempt to be acknowledged as a great writer by all of the members of the estate is performing his own play with Nina as his actress.

ARKADINA. I smell sulphur. Is that done on purpose?
TREPLIEFF. Yes.
ARKADINA. Oh, I see; that is part of the effect.
TREPLIEFF. Mother!
NINA. He longs for man—
PAULINA. [To DORN] You have taken off your hat again! Put it on, you will catch cold.
ARKADINA. The doctor has taken off his hat to Satan father of eternal matter—
TREPLIEFF. [Loudly and angrily] Enough of this! There’s an end to the performance. Down with the curtain! (act I: 16)

In two years gap between act III and act IV, Treplieff is recognized as new talented young writer. His works published in many magazines and receive positive responds. People in Moscow adore him and wanted to know more about him. This achievement shows that Treplieff is succeed in his pursuit to be a great writer as the compensation of his inferiority feeling.
3. **Style of Life**

In order to make works based on his personal satisfaction as an artist, Treplieff desires to create art that he finds meaningful. In the act I, Nina criticizes Treplieff’s play for not having any living characters, then Treplieff states that theatre should show life seen as a dream. He expresses confidence in his ideals, and rejects others ideas of what theatre should be. He tends to have an absurd approach of writing.

NINA. Your play is very hard to act; there are no living characters in it.
TREPLIEFF. Living characters! Life must be represented not as it is, but as it ought to be; as it appears in dreams. (act I: 11)

Treplieff’s philosophy of writing comes full circle in Act IV of the play. At this point, Treplieff has achieved some success as a writer. Nevertheless, Trigorin seems to have different philosophy about what is writing should be. He even stated that with his current way of writing, Treplieff will not move any further.

TRIGORIN. He doesn’t seem able to make a success, he can’t somehow strike the right note. There is an odd vagueness about his writings that sometimes verges on delirium. He has never created a single living character. (act IV: 74)

However, Treplieff able to create works that are fulfilled his personal desire as a writer and gain positive critical acclaim at the same time.

4. **Social Interest**

Treplieff is the only child of Arkadina. He was before lived in Kiev and then moved to Sorin’s estate. In the first appearance, he seems to be more cheerful and warm-hearted when talking to other people in the estate, especially with Nina. He is loved by all the member of the estate.

TREPLIEFF. Attention, ladies and gentlemen! The play is about to begin. [A pause] I shall commence. [He taps the door with a stick, and speaks in a loud voice] O, ye time honoured, ancient mists that drive at night across the surface of this lake, blind you our eyes with sleep, and show us in our dreams that which will be in twice ten thousand years!
SORIN. There won’t be anything in twice ten thousand years.
TREPLIEFF. Then let them now show us that nothingness. (act I: 14)

However, after all the tragedies that happen to him, he becomes more quiet and melancholy. He becomes depressed and almost made no attention toward the surroundings. Even several times in a play, he does not reply to the words of others and chose to remain silent. He is rarely gathering with others and preferring to be alone and write.

ARKADINA. Won’t you play, Treplieff?

TREPLIEFF. No, excuse me please, I don’t feel like it. I am going to take a turn through the rooms. [He goes out.] (act IV: 72)

5. Creative Power

Treplieff is the only son of Arkadina. He is very unsure of himself and always seems to need approval from his mother. His mother is also seeing a writer, Trigorin, who happens to be very successful. Treplieff is threatened by this and puts a lot of pressure on himself. On the act I, he wants to show what he is capable of by performing his play but it is ill-perceived by his mother, and he feels completely alienated from her. Treplieff then urges to make a new style of writing. From the very first appearance, Treplieff shows his abstractions style of writing.

DORN. Tut, tut! how excited you are. Your eyes are full of tears. Listen to me. You chose your subject in the realm of abstract thought, and you did quite right. A work of art should invariably embody some lofty idea. Only that which is seriously meant can ever be beautiful. How pale you are!

TREPLIEFF. So you advise me to persevere? (act I:22)

Despite all of this, he finally gains success as stated by Paulina in the act IV. This is the result of the effort he made during the two years after the departure of Arkadina and Trigorin from Sorin’s estate.

PAULINA. [Looking at the manuscripts] No one ever dreamed, Treplieff that you would one day turn into a real author. The magazines pay you well for your stories. [She strokes his hair.] You have grown handsome, too. Dear, kind (act IV:62)

6. Fictional Finalism

Each of the characters is romantically involved in some way with another, except for Sorin. In Treplieff character, he has the most
complicated romance. In this play A. Chekhov speaks mostly about love, Treplieff loves Nina, Nina’s love for Trigorin, Irina’s love for Trigorin, Masha’s love towards Treplieff, Medviedenko’s love for Masha. They suffer from their sad, monotone lives and misunderstanding each other. During the course of the first act, Treplieff talks to Sorin that his mother does not love him. Then he is ignored by Nina when he confesses his love.

   NINA. That would be impossible; the watchman would see you, and Treasure is not used to you yet, and would bark.
   TREPLIEFF. I love you.
   NINA. Hush! (act I: 10)

On the second act, Treplieff asks Arkadina to change the bandage on his head. He ends up crying because he mourns the loss of Nina's affection.Arkadina tries to cheer him up and tells him that Nina will soon come back to him because Arkadina is taking Trigorin away from the estate.

   TREPLIEFF. [Embracing her] Oh, if you could only know what it is to have lost everything under heaven! She does not love me. I see I shall never be able to write. Every hope has deserted me.
   ARKADINA. Don’t despair. This will all pass. He is going away to-day, and she will love you once more. [She wipes away his tears] Stop crying. We have made peace again. (act II: 54).

In the act IV, Nina enters the estate through the garden. Treplieff is surprised and happy to see her. Then, she suddenly embraces him and runs away, exiting through the garden. Treplieff pauses for a moment and then, for two full minutes, he tears up all his manuscripts. He exits into another room then commits suicide.

   TREPLIEFF. I am quite alone, unwarmed by any attachment. I am as cold as if I were living in a cave. Whatever I write is dry and gloomy and harsh. Stay here, Nina, I beseech you, or else let me go away with you.
   NINA quickly puts on her coat and hat.
   TREPLIEFF. Nina, why do you do that? For God’s sake, Nina! [He watches her as she dresses. A pause.] (act IV: 80)

Treplieff thinks that his true happiness is love acceptance both by Nina and her mother, Arkadina. However the major goal of Treplieff is to marry Nina. This also as the main force that drives the play.
D. Conflict of Love

*The seagull* is one of the greatest works of Anton Chekhov. It has a huge impact in the world of drama. Constantine Trepleff is overshadowed by his mother’s fame as an actress and Trigorin’s fame as a great writer. Trepleff’s social interest changes dramatically shortly after he is rejected by Nina. He becomes quieter and melancholy. He often refuses to participate and wants to be alone. The life goal is being loved by Nina. But it is never really meets Trepleff’s desire. Nina continues to love Trigorin, even after she is abandoned by him. The conflict of love in Trepleff is in the thematic web of love. It delivers messages about unrequited love of Trepleff to personality alteration. He failed to cope with his personal love issues. Trepleff is unable to achieve Nina’s love. His last decision to deal with his frustration is by committing suicide.

E. Conclusion

After analyzing *The Seagull* play by Anton Chekhov, it can be concluded the conflict of love in Constantine Trepleff character, as the main driving force of the play, messages about unrequited love of Trepleff to personality alteration as he failed to cope with his personal love issues. Despites being loved by Trepleff, Nina Zarietchnaya, a young girl, the daughter of a rich landowner, she falls in love with Trigorin and Arkadina and their lifestyles as noted artists instead.

Trepleff’s desperate need for approval and love from his mother and his continual dismissal of him is one of the driving forces in the play. Their relationship does not progress throughout the play but remains unbroken from the beginning to the end of *The Seagull*. However the most dominant force of the play is that his affection toward Nina. He desperately urges to have Nina’s love that sometimes leads to do extreme actions like shoot himself in head, put death seagull in Nina’s feet, and in the end he killed himself. Constantine Trepleff as many other character of the play, failed to transform his need to love and being loved that will lead him to personal satisfaction. This failure was unable to be overcome by Constantine Trepleff until the end of the play.
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