

THE CHARACTERISATIONS OF PISCINE MOLITOR PATEL IN YAN MARTELL'S *THE LIFE OF PI*

Ni Komang Arie Suwastini
English Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha
e-mail: arie.suwastini@undiksha.ac.id

Ni Wayan Desy Prema Asri
English Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha
e-mail: niwayandesypremaasri@gmail.com

Luh Gede Eka Wahyuni
English Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha
e-mail: ekawahyuni@undiksha.ac.id

Kadek Ayu Dewi Prastika
English Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha
e-mail: ayuprastika07@gmail.com

Abstract

Literature like novels can contain many moral teachings, including how a human being develops into a better person because of certain events experienced during the plot development. The present study focuses on the character development of Piscine Molitor Patel in Yan Martell's *The Life of Pi* as he had to survive the Pacific Ocean for 227 days on a lifeboat with a hungry tiger. By employing close reading, it is revealed that Piscine Molitor Patel was revealed as a curious, smart, competitive, empathetic, obedient, loving, and humble character. These characterizations were revealed directly through the author's description and indirectly through thought, speech, and action. From these character revelations, it can be concluded that the development of Pi's curious, smart, competitive, empathetic, obedient, loving, and humble character had help Pi survive the Pacific Ocean and continued living as a better person. By employing Freud's psychoanalysis, Pi's characterizations were then classified as reflections of his id, ego, and superego. The present study concludes that Pi's characterizations reflect the development of the balance between his id, ego, and superego, which allowed him to survive the shipwreck and grow into a better person.

Keywords: characterizations, character development, character revelations, psychoanalysis.

INTRODUCTION

Freudian psychoanalytic has been widely used as an approach in literary criticism (Hallab, 1971). As an example, Henry James' work finally benefits from that criticism as the approach reveals that his works are precious with eternal conflicts faced by humans (Hallab, 1971). Niaz, Stanikzai, & Sahibzada (2019) explain that Freudian psychoanalysis is very helpful in literary analysis because it helps find the relation between the author's experience with the

characters being developed in their works. Psychoanalytic criticism is also addressed towards literature such as on *Sherlock Holmes*, *Divergent*, *Sister's Keeper*, and many others (Mario, 2015; Padilla, 2015; Pangestu & Sunardi, 2016; Putri Wiyani, Nurhasanah; Surya Sili; Valiantien, 2017; Septiadi, Andayani, & Wardani, n.d.). Mario (2015) used the theory of id, ego, and superego in explaining Sherlock Holmes' selfish, self-destructive, and perfectionist character. Furthermore, Mario found the connection between one of the characters, namely Dr. John Watson, with the author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, as the story in *A Study in Scarlet* has similar ideas found in Doyle's biography. Meanwhile, Padilla (2015), Pangestu (2016), and Wiyani (2017) separately used Freudian's criticism to identify deviant behavior in teenagers in *Divergent*, self-defense mechanism in *The Fault in Our Stars*, and psychological problems in *My Sister's Keeper*. Padilla (2015) found that the contradiction between the id, ego, and superego causes psychological problems in the main character in *My Sister's Keeper*. Pangestu (2016) revealed that deviant behavior in Beatrice Prior characterization in *Divergent* was a result of a failure in controlling personality, physical, biological, the role of the family, self-concept, and natural support system. Meanwhile, Wiyani (2017) found that the self-defense mechanism and its causes come from the development and the main character's childhood in *The Fault in Our Stars*. Those studies indicate different results in how the id, ego, and superego work in the characters' characterizations in literary works of various authors.

The resemblance of any character with the real-life human is built through characterization. The authors arrange the characters' presentation so that they appear to be real (Gill, 1995). Gill (1995) differentiates the presentation as direct and indirect characterization. The first one refers to how an author tells about a character to the reader, while the second explains that the reader can comprehend what the character is like from what he or she sees. The characterizations in novels combine both presentations where direct telling is useful for introducing a character and indirect showing provoke the readers to see further the quality in character (Gill, 1995). Gill (1995) explains that one way to reveal the characterizations is how the characters speak that makes them recognizable and memorable, such as speaking complexity, the use of common saying and proverbs, and the talkativeness. Gill (1995) also states that the character's thought, both declared and undeclared, informs the reader about the characterization. The dress and appearance of the characters also differentiate them from one to the others, as they represent personalities, social status, and the atmosphere of the story (Gill, 1995).

The Life of Pi is a novel written by Yann Martel. *The Life of Pi* presents a story about a boy named Piscine Molitor Matel or known well as Pi. Pi is a normal boy, but he has a unique interest that is learning three religions at the same time. Pi and his family have a zoo in his hometown, in India. One day, his family decided to move to Canada and bring most of their zoo animals with them. Unfortunately, on the voyage, they were hit by a storm that sunk the ship in the Pacific Ocean along with his family and all the animals, except for Pi and a tiger named Richard Parker. Relying on a lifeboat, Pi had to survive the Pacific and the tiger for 227 days. The novel was very popular that it was adapted into a film adaptation in 2012. Owing to the good quality of special effect used, the film adaptation added to the popularity of the novel, although the film itself was a work of its own if viewed from the perspective of infidelity criticism (Kranz and Mellerski, 2008; Suwastini, 2013).

The novel describes the story from the past event to the present event. There are some developments in Pi's character, which shows positive development. "*The Life of Pi*," a novel was written by Yann Martel has a statement in "The Author Note" part saying this story will make you believe in God (pp. 5). The novel has a unique structure. The readers are taken into a

fictional and "factual" world in which the author in the novel, who seemingly is Yann Martel, tells a probably "true" story (Pendery, 2015). Here, readers can see how an actual writer associates with fictional characters (Pendery, 2015). Therefore, the novel seems to show a true story that can make the readers believe in God. It is then interesting to analyze one of the elements of this novel, which helps the story believable. The element that will be analyzed is the main character named Piscine Molitor Patel, or known as Pi's characterization. Pi's characterizations are unique and life-like.

Pi's characterization will be analyzed by applying the psychology approach. Sigmund Freud is well known as a great psychology theorist. One of his theory called human mental life (Lapsley and Stey, 2011). Freud's theory or Freudian theory of human mental life distinguishes human mental life into three branches named id, ego, and superego (Lapsley and Stey, 2011). This approach is suitable for analyzing Pi's characterization because Pi's characterizations represent human mental life and how humans in real life. A similar approach has been applied repeatedly to literature. Toksöz (2017) found three characters in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* symbolize id, ego, and superego. Vladimir symbolizes ego, Estragon symbolizes id, and Mr. Godot symbolizes the superego (Toksöz, 2017). However, these characters cannot be separated (Toksöz, 2017). sao lu (2015) found that the characters in the novel entitled *Scarlet Letter*, written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, cannot balance the id, ego, and superego. The result of the previous analyses shows a different result. Then, this paper would see whether the id, ego, and superego of Pi could work in harmony or not.

METHOD

The present study is conducted as a close reading Yan Martell's *The Life of Pi* (2001). The reading is focused on one of the novel's internal elements, namely the characterizations of the main character. The main character in this novel, as mentioned in the title, was Pi, whose complete name was Piscine Molitor Matel. The characterizations identification of Pi is supported by the other novel elements analysis (the plot, the settings, the theme, the point of view, and the tone of the novel). The next step of the analysis would be classifying Pi's characterizations, whether they reflect his id, ego, or superego in the perspective of Freud's Psychoanalysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the reading jointly conducted on Yan Martell's *The Life of Pi* (2001) to identify Piscine Molitor Matel as the main character, seven main characterizations are identified. These seven characterizations are curious, smart, competitive, empathetic, obedient, loving, and humble.

Pi's Curiosity

Pi's curiosity characterization is revealed through indirect characterization by his action and his thought. There is a description that shows Pi's thought "*Despite attending a nominally Christian school, I had not yet been inside a church, and I wasn't about to dare the deed now.*" (pp.79). The description shows Pi's curiosity even he did not dare to go to the Church.

Some descriptions show Pi's action, "*I came upon the rectory. The door was open. I hid around a corner to look upon the scene.*" (pp. 79). The description showed Pi's action when he was sneaking up to the Church because he was curious about the Church and wanted to see how Church looked like from the inside. "*And little to be understood. I advanced and observed inner*

sanctum." (pp. 79). The description also shows that Pi decided to observe the inner Church. His decision to sneaking up and observe the Church even though he was not a Christianity shows his curiosity to take over his action. It means he was only thinking about his desire to stop his curiosity by observing and sneaking up to the Church. If the curiosity did not take over his action, he would first think about the consequence that he might get if a pastor caught him looking inside the Church.

His curiosity can be classified as the id since id refers to the storage of human basic instinctual, which motivates humans to look for pleasure or desire (Lapsley and Stey 2011). When id takes over human thought, a human will follow his/her instinct only without thinking or deciding a correct action. Then, Pi's curiosity leads him to follow his instinct only without thinking of any consequences of his action. Therefore, his curiosity is a reflection of Pi's id.

Smart

Pi's smart characterization is revealed through direct and indirect techniques of character revelations. The author's description of Pi shows direct characterization. "*I was a very good student if I may say so myself. I was tops at St. Michael's College four years in a row. I got every possible student award from the Department of Zoology...*" (pp. 13). The description shows how smart Pi was. It is stated that he was an outstanding student, and he was a top student in his college for four years in a row.

Moreover, the indirect characterization by his action also shows how smart he was. "*Before the teacher could say a word, I picked up a piece of chalk and said as I wrote: My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as –I double-underlined the first two letters of my given name- Pi Patel. For good measure, I added $n= 3.14$, and I drew a large circle, which I then sliced in two with a diameter...*" (pp.37). the action shows that he knew Math well, then he used it to protect himself, so his schoolmates would not mock his name again. "*Now, it was time to improve my situation. I turned to the contents of the locker and the many promises they held.*" (pp. 255). The action shows his decision to improve his situation when he was stranded in the Pacific Ocean. The novel then continues with a description, "*It would play a double role: it would provide extra flotation to compensate for the vertical weight of the mast, and it would make for a slightly raised seat for me.*" (pp. 257). It shows that his decision helped him provide extra flotation and extra seat for him, so he could survive without being thirsty and should not be in one lifeboat with a tiger named Richard Parker.

His smart characterization can be classified as ego. The ego is the modification of id caused by influences from the external world (Lapsley and Stey 2011). Then, his smart characterization, which shows how he tried to explain Math to his friends to make them stop mocking his name and how he improved his situation by building a second watercraft. It can be classified as a reflection of Pi's ego because all his actions and speech showed that he did not merely follow his instinct, but he could use his logic to decide the right action to deal with his situation in real life. The ego also the center of reasoning, reality-testing, and human common sense (Lapsley and Stey 2011). Pi's actions and speech correspond with ego because his actions and speech were the results of reasoning, reality-testing, and human common sense.

Competitive

Pi's competitive characterization is revealed through direct characterization, which is described by the author. A description states, "*Something in me did not want to give up on life, was unwilling to let go, wanted to fight to the very end.*" (pp. 145). The description reveals Pi's

characterization as a competitive person because he did not want to give up on his life even though he was stranded in a big ocean, Pacific Ocean, with a tiger on the same lifeboat.

Moreover, his competitive characterization can be classified as the reflection of his ego. As explained before, the ego is the modification of id, which is the center of reasoning, reality-testing, and human common sense (Lapsley and Stey 2011). Pi's decision is the result of reasoning, reality-testing, and human common sense caused by the influences of the external world. His decision to never give up on life even though he was stranded in the Pacific Ocean is a shared sense of humanity. Therefore, his competitive characterization is classified as a reflection of his ego.

Emphatic

Pi's emphatic characterization is revealed indirectly through his speech. There is a scene where Pi says, "*Bapu Gandhi said, 'All religions are true.' I just want to love God.*" (pp. 105). His statement shows that he was an emphatic person, especially about learning three religions simultaneously. He said that when the leader of each religion complained and said that Pi could not learn three religions simultaneously, he refused to pick one religion as his, even when the leader of each religion tried to make the other religions look worse than. However, Pi still firmly held on his decision to learn three religions simultaneously because he just wanted to love God, and he believed all religions were good and faithful.

Pi's emphatic characterization can be classified as the representation of his ego as well. It can be classified as an ego because his statement is based on reasoning, which is suitable for the ego. Ego is the center of reasoning (Lapsley and Stey 2011); his decision is based on a strong reason. Therefore, his emphatic characterization is classified as an ego.

Obedient

Pi's obedient characterization is revealed indirectly through his action and his speech. There is a scene when his father taught him about wild animals and showed him how wild and dangerous a tiger was. When his father asked PI "*Are tigers dangerous?*" (pp. 52) he answered, "*Yes, father, tigers are dangerous.*" (pp. 52). His answer showed that he obeyed his father's instructions.

His obedient characterization can be classified as an ego. It is because he obeyed his father's statement and instructions. His decision to be an obedient son is based on ego's characteristic that is human common sense and reasoning (Lapsley and Stey 2011). For a child, to be obedient to his parents is one of the human's ordinary senses. An obedient child is suitable for the real world because the world and society would accept obedient children. It can be a reason for Pi to behave like an obedient child because he wanted to be a good child for his parents.

Loving

Pi's loving characterization is revealed directly through the author's description. There is a description that states, "*Richard Parker have stayed with me. I've never forgotten him. Dare I say I miss him? I do...*" (pp. 14). The description shows how Pi missed Richard Parker after their survival. Even though Richard Parker was a tiger, hence he was a wild and dangerous animal, but the survival made Pi love Richard Parker. The survival unconsciously builds Pi's positive emotion toward Richard Parker. His loving characterization also revealed indirectly through other character's thoughts. Moreover, the narrator also noticed P's loving characterization, as he

stated that “*He’s a sweet man.*” (pp. 65). He thought Pi was a sweet man because whenever he visited Pi, Pi would prepare delicious food for him and always welcome him warmly.

His loving characterization can be classified as a superego. Since the superego is the fountain of conscience (Lapsley and Stey 2011), Pi's loving characterization can be classified as a reflection of his superego because loving is part of human conscience. Besides, his loving characterization is a result of his character development. It is a positive character development because at first, Pi was afraid of Richard Parker, but later, he realized that he should fight with Richard Parker and decided to tame the tiger. Then, unconsciously he started to love Richard Parker. It is suitable for the other characters of the superego, a further diversity of ego and id (Lapsley and Stey 2011). His character development to be a loving man shows the further diversity of ego, which means he did not only use his logic to tame Richard Parker but also grew to love Richard Parker.

Humble

Pi's humble characterization is revealed indirectly through the narrator's speech and Pi's action. The narrator's speech that showed his humble goes, “*He makes me the zestiest yet subtle macaroni and cheese I've ever had.*” (pp. 40). Since the relationship between Pi and the narrator was a professional one, Pi's action to cook and share meals with the narrator reflects how Pi respected the narrator, even though the narrator worked for Pi to write down Pi's story and to earn money from it. However, Pi treated the narrator more than just an employee. Pi treated the narrator as an equal human being. Thus, he was willing to welcome the narrator, spend time cooking for him, and shared his meal with him. The fact that Pi cooked macaroni and cheese also reflected Pi's humility, because Mac-n-Cheese is a portion of comfort food, simple food that creates a sense of belonging.

Pi's humble characterization can be classified as a superego since the superego is the fountain of human conscience (Lapsley and Stey, 2011). Being humble is one of human conscience. Moreover, his action in making good macaroni cheese for a person who was not close enough to share food reflects his deep conscience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the main character of *The Life of Pi* named Piscine Molitor Patel has seven characterizations. These characterizations are curiosity, smart, emphatic, competitive, obedient, loving, and humble. From the perspective of Freud's Psychoanalysis, Pi's characterizations can be classified into id, ego, and superego. Pi's curiosity represents the id. The ego is represented by Pi's smart, competitive, emphatic, and obedient characterizations. Then, the superego is represented by Pi's loving and humble characterizations. Moreover, Pi's id, ego, and superego work together well. It is shown by how Pi's characterizations develop well, starting from the id to the superego. Started with curiosity, then Pi develops into a loving and humble person. In the beginning, it seems that Pi only thought about his desire to learn three religions, but then he showed that he had a strong reason to learn it, and proved that he could apply the value of the three religions at the same time.

The result of this analysis shows the same result as the result of Toksöz (2017), which the id, ego, and superego in the characters works together well. It means that the id, ego, and superego cannot be separated. Therefore, a human must have the id, ego, and superego in themselves. Humans should be able to balance the id, ego, and superego. The id, ego, and superego contribute to the development of human self-identity (Isao lu, 2015). The id works for

the desire while ego works on the reality principle and decides whether something is appropriate or not, the superego works as the bridge between id and ego, representing moral value (Isao lu, 2015). When a person could find his/her desire and decide whether his/her action is appropriate and suitable with the moral value, that person will succeed in balancing his/her id, ego, and superego. These three branches should be balanced in order to avoid conflicts (Isao lu, 2015).

REFERENCES

- Gill, R. (1995). *Mastering English Literature* (Second Edi). Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Hallab, M. C. yost. (1971). *Psychoanalytic Criticism of the Life and Works of Henry James*. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.
- sao lu, H. (2015). A Freudian Psychoanalytic Analysis Of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. *The Journal Of Academic Social Science Studies*, 500-511.
- Lapsley D.K and Stey, P.C. (2011). Id, Ego, and Superego. *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, 1-9.
- Mario, G. (2015). *A Psychoanalysis on the Main Character and the Author of Sherlock Holmes: a Study in Scarlet*. Retrieved from http://www.beaconsociety.com/uploads/3/7/3/8/37380505/mario_giovanny_-_a_psychoanalysis_on_the_main_character_and_the_author_of_sherlock_holmes.pdf
- Niaz, A., Stanikzai, S. M., & Sahibzada, J. (2019). Review of Freud's Psychoanalysis Approach to Literary Studies. *American International Journal of Social Science Research*, 4(2), 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.46281/aijssr.v4i2.339>
- Padilla, Z. Z. (2015). *PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS SUFFERED BY ANNA AND SARA IN JODI PICOULT'S NOVEL MY SISTER'S KEEPER (A FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS)*. MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MALANG.
- Pangestu, N. A., & Sunardi, F. X. D. (2016). an Incomplete Psychological Novel: a Psychoanalytical Analysis of Hazel Lancaster in John Green'S the Fault in Our Stars. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 16(01), 20–28. <https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.2016.160103>
- Pendery, D. (2015). Life of Pi: Into the Divine, the Hard Way, or: Why the Tiger Didn't Bite. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 67-75.
- Putri Wiyani, Nurhasanah; Surya Sili; Valiantien, N. M. (2017). The Psychoanalytical Study on The Characteristics and Causes of Adolescent Deviant Behavior Found in Divergent Novel by Veronica Roth. *Journal Ilmu Budaya*, 1(2), 115–124.
- Septiadi, H. N., Andayani, & Wardani, N. E. (n.d.). ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER ' S PERSONALITY IN NOVEL ULID BY MAHFUD IKHWAN USING SIGMUND FREUD. *International Conference on Language, Literature and Teaching*, 176–184.
- Toksöz, . (2017). Psychoanalytic Analysis of the Characters in Beckett's Waiting for Godot. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 66-68.