

THE DYNAMIC CHARACTER OF THE PROTAGONIST IN THE REVOLUTION OF BIRDIE RANDOLPH BY BRANDY COLBERT (2019) : A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY

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Abstract

This research aims to identify and analyze the character changes of the main character, Birdie Randolph, in the novel *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph* by Brandy Colbert (2019), including the factors influencing the character development and its implications. This research uses a qualitative approach and descriptive method. This research applies Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, including the concepts of id, ego, superego, and ego defense mechanisms. The data were collected through library research using reading and note-taking techniques on dialogues and events related to the research focus. The results of this research show that Birdie Randolph experiences gradual character development, from an obedient and controlled individual who follows family expectations to a more independent and courageous person who is able to make her own decisions. The character development is influenced by internal factors, such as inner conflict, and external factors, such as family pressure, relationships with other characters, and the revelation of family secrets. The findings also show that the interaction between id, ego, and superego, as well as ego defense mechanisms including repression, rationalization, and sublimation, plays an important role in Birdie's psychological development and emotional maturity.

Keywords: dynamic character, ego defense mechanisms, id, psychoanalysis, psychology of literature, superego

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INTRODUCTION

Character is one of the most important elements in literary works, especially in novels, because it functions as the medium through which authors convey ideas, values, and representations of human life. According to Abrams (as cited in Nurgiyantoro, 2019), characters are individuals presented in narrative or dramatic works who possess particular moral, emotional, and psychological qualities reflected through their speech and actions. Characters can be understood through the way they think, behave, and interact with others throughout the story. In literary works, especially novels, characters play a significant role in developing the plot and conveying the meaning intended by the author.

Some literary characters undergo significant psychological and behavioral transformations throughout the story. Such characters are commonly known as dynamic characters or developing characters. According to Nurgiyantoro (2019), dynamic characters experience changes in attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors due to the

experiences and conflicts they encounter. Character development in literary works not only functions as a narrative device but also reflects the psychological processes experienced by individuals in real life.

The psychological aspects of literary characters can be analyzed through the approach of psychology of literature. Psychology of literature examines literary works as representations of human psychological experiences and behaviors (Prawira, 2018). Wellek and Warren (1986) state that psychology contributes to literary studies by helping readers understand human behavior, emotional responses, and psychological patterns represented in literary texts. One of the most widely used theories in psychological literary studies is Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which explains human personality through the interaction of three psychological structures: id, ego, and superego (Minderop, 2016). According to Freud, personality development is influenced by the dynamic relationship among these three components, which shape human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Alwisol, 2015).

In contemporary society, psychological development is often influenced by family environments and parenting styles. One of the parenting patterns frequently discussed is overprotective parenting. Wardana et al. (2023) found that excessive parental protection tends to produce negative psychological impacts, including low self-confidence, emotional pressure, and difficulties in social adjustment. Similarly, data from Pew Research Center (2023) indicate that many parents tend to exercise excessive control over their children due to concerns about their psychological well-being. From a psychoanalytic perspective, such conditions may create conflicts between personal desires and external moral expectations, resulting in psychological struggles and identity conflicts.

The relationship between psychological conflicts and character development can also be found in contemporary literary works that portray adolescent experiences and identity formation. One of these works is *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph* by Brandy Colbert. This novel tells the story of Birdie Randolph, a teenage girl who experiences psychological conflicts while struggling to discover her identity amid family expectations, social pressures, and hidden family secrets. Throughout the story, Birdie undergoes significant character development influenced by both internal and external factors. Therefore, this novel provides an interesting object for analyzing character development through the perspective of psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Based on the explanation above, the research questions in this study are: how does the main character in *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph* experience character development; what factors influence the character development of the main character; and what are the implications of the character development experienced by the main character. The objectives of this research are to identify and explain the character development of Birdie Randolph, to analyze the factors influencing her character development, and to examine the implications of these changes.

This study focuses on the psychological development of the main character by combining literary psychology and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of id, ego, superego, and ego defense mechanisms. Unlike previous studies that mainly focus on characterization or psychological conflicts separately, this research specifically examines the process of character development and its psychological implications. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of literary studies, particularly in the fields of psychology of literature and psychoanalytic criticism.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach and descriptive method. The descriptive method is used to describe and analyze the character development of the main character, Birdie Randolph, in *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph* by Brandy Colbert. The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data source is the novel *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph* by Brandy Colbert, published in 2019 by Little, Brown and Company: Books for Young Readers, consisting of 206 pages. The secondary data were obtained from books, journals, articles, and other relevant references related to psychology of literature, psychoanalysis, and character development.

This study uses library research techniques for data collection. The researcher read the novel repeatedly and carefully, then identified and noted dialogues, and events related to the character development of the main character. The collected data were subsequently classified and analyzed using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of id, ego, superego, and ego defense mechanisms. The data analysis process involved data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions systematically. The technique of data presentation in this study is descriptive-analytical. Each data is presented in the form of data numbers, contexts, quotations from the novel, and explanations of the analysis based on the theoretical framework used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Character Changes of the Main Character

The findings of this study show that Birdie Randolph is a dynamic character who experiences gradual character development throughout the story. At the beginning of the novel, Birdie is portrayed as an obedient, controlled, and passive teenager who tends to follow her parents' expectations and suppress her personal desires. She grows up in a family environment that emphasizes discipline, achievement, and perfection, causing her to avoid conflict and prioritize the values imposed by her family. This condition is reflected in Birdie's statement:

"I'm not sure how long I'll be able to escape the fact that my parents have my whole life planned out for me" (Colbert, 2019, p. 13).

This quotation demonstrates that Birdie realizes that most aspects of her life are determined by her parents rather than by her own desires. Her awareness of this condition indicates the existence of internal dissatisfaction, although she initially lacks the courage to challenge these expectations.

Birdie's character development becomes apparent through her changing attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives. Her relationship with Booker, the return of her aunt Carlene, and the revelation of family secrets encourage Birdie to question the values she has accepted throughout her life. As a result, Birdie develops into a more independent, assertive, and emotionally mature individual who is capable of making decisions based on her own beliefs and experiences. This transformation demonstrates that Birdie's character develops from being externally controlled to becoming a person who actively constructs her own identity.

"I never do things like this, and I can't believe how good it feels" (Colbert, 2019, p. 21).

This statement illustrates Birdie's emerging desire for autonomy and personal fulfillment. Her experiences with Booker and her increasing willingness to make independent choices encourage her to question the values she has accepted throughout her life.

From the perspective of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Birdie's character development reflects the dynamic interaction among id, ego, and superego. At the beginning of the story, Birdie's behavior is strongly influenced by the demands of her superego, represented by family expectations and moral values. However, as she experiences psychological conflicts and emotional struggles, her ego gradually develops and becomes more capable of balancing personal desires, moral obligations, and external realities. Consequently, the ego functions as the dominant psychological structure that facilitates Birdie's character development and emotional growth.

"And there it is, the new, unfamiliar part of me that cropped up the other night when I was with Booker. The one that ignores all the good decisions I've made in the past and gives in to the pure, uninhibited craving that twines through me when I see or think about him" (Colbert, 2019, p. 67).

This quotation demonstrates the emergence of Birdie's unconscious desires and emotional needs. Simultaneously, her ego gradually develops the ability to negotiate between personal desires and social expectations, ultimately leading to emotional maturity and identity formation.

Factors Influencing Character Changes

The findings indicate that Birdie's character development is influenced by both internal and external factors. The internal factors mainly consist of psychological conflicts, emotional struggles, and Birdie's desire to understand her own identity. Throughout the story, Birdie experiences internal conflicts caused by the contradiction between her personal desires and the expectations imposed by her family. These psychological conflicts motivate her to question her beliefs and eventually contribute to her personal transformation.

"What if I'm doing everything wrong? What if I've always been doing everything wrong and that's why Mitchell dumped me?" (Colbert, 2019, p. 44).

This quotation illustrates Birdie's self-doubt and psychological anxiety regarding her identity and life choices. According to Perrine's theory of conflict, this situation represents internal conflict (man against self), which significantly contributes to Birdie's character development.

Another important internal factor is Birdie's emerging emotional desires and personal needs. This is evident when she acknowledges her feelings toward Booker:

"The one that ignores all the good decisions I've made in the past and gives in to the pure, uninhibited craving" (Colbert, 2019, p. 67).

This statement indicates that Birdie begins to recognize emotional needs that had previously been suppressed due to familial expectations and personal obligations. In addition to internal factors, external factors also play a significant role in Birdie's character development. Family pressure, social relationships, and the revelation of hidden family secrets become important influences that shape Birdie's personality.

The return of Carlene and Birdie's relationship with Booker expose her to new perspectives and experiences, allowing her to develop a more independent understanding of herself and her environment. Furthermore, the overprotective parenting style practiced by Birdie's family creates emotional pressure and identity conflicts that contribute to her psychological development.

"They're not close; maybe my aunt doesn't know her well enough to understand how much Mom values planning and order" (Colbert, 2019, p. 11).

The quotation illustrates the strict and highly controlled environment in which Birdie is raised. Such circumstances limit her personal freedom and contribute to the internal conflicts she experiences.

Furthermore, Birdie gradually realizes that her mother does not fully understand her personal desires:

"It annoys me that she thinks she knows everything about my life when she doesn't know what I want at all" (Colbert, 2019, p. 60).

This quotation demonstrates the emotional distance between Birdie and her mother, which becomes one of the primary external factors contributing to Birdie's character development.

The interaction among id, ego, and superego further explains Birdie's psychological transformation. While the id motivates Birdie to pursue personal satisfaction and emotional fulfilment, the superego continues to impose moral restrictions and family values. Consequently, the ego develops as a mediating force that enables Birdie to construct a more balanced and mature identity.

The interaction between id, ego, and superego further explains how Birdie's character develops throughout the narrative. Birdie's id represents her personal desires and emotional needs, while her superego reflects the moral values and family expectations imposed upon her. As the conflicts intensify, her ego gradually develops the ability to mediate these opposing forces, allowing Birdie to achieve a more balanced and mature personality structure.

Implications of Character Changes in the Perspective of Literary Psychology

The results of this study reveal that Birdie's character development has significant psychological implications, particularly in terms of emotional maturity, independence, and identity formation. Through various conflicts and experiences, Birdie develops a deeper understanding of herself and becomes capable of making decisions independently. This process demonstrates that psychological development is influenced not only by external experiences but also by an individual's ability to process emotional conflicts and adapt to changing circumstances. This development can be seen when Birdie finally accepts the complexity of her identity and experiences, as reflected in her statement:

"Booker was right. My life is like a puzzle now, with so many pieces to make sense of and try to fit together. But I have all the pieces now, and every single one belongs to me" (Colbert, 2019, p. 200).

This quotation indicates that Birdie has achieved a greater understanding of herself and has successfully integrated the experiences that previously caused confusion and emotional distress.

The analysis also indicates the presence of several ego defense mechanisms employed by Birdie in dealing with emotional pressure and psychological conflict. During the early stages of development, Birdie demonstrates repression by suppressing her personal desires and emotions in order to maintain the image of an ideal daughter. This condition is illustrated when Birdie admits:

"I'm not sure how long I'll be able to escape the fact that my parents have my whole life planned out for me" (Colbert, 2019, p. 13).

This quotation demonstrates how Birdie suppresses her dissatisfaction and continues to comply with her parents' expectations. She also exhibits rationalization when attempting to understand her parents' actions despite experiencing disappointment and anger. This mechanism can be seen in the following statement:

"I think they did it to protect you. So you could grow up with the best, most normal life possible. It's fucked up, but they did it because they love you, Dove" (Colbert, 2019, p. 183).

Through this process, Birdie attempts to reduce her emotional conflict by understanding her parents' motives. Furthermore, Birdie eventually demonstrates sublimation by transforming emotional suffering into self-reflection and personal growth. This process is reflected in her realization:

"The anger inside me has been slowly melting away as they talk. It's not completely gone, but the more they tell me, the harder it is to be so furious with them" (Colbert, 2019, p. 189).

This quotation indicates that Birdie gradually transforms her emotional pain into understanding and personal maturity. These defense mechanisms contribute significantly to her psychological development and emotional adjustment.

The findings also suggest that excessive parental control and the pursuit of perfection may negatively affect an individual's psychological development. Birdie's experiences illustrate how family pressure and emotional secrecy can create identity conflicts and emotional distress. This condition is reflected in Birdie's statement:

"It annoys me that she thinks she knows everything about my life when she doesn't know what I want at all" (Colbert, 2019, p. 60).

This quotation demonstrates the emotional distance and misunderstanding that contribute to Birdie's identity conflict. Conversely, openness, communication, and acceptance play important roles in supporting healthy identity formation and emotional maturity. This development becomes evident when Birdie begins to understand that family relationships are not solely defined by biological connections:

"And as much as you don't want to hear this, it doesn't change what you have with any of them, either" (Colbert, 2019, p. 183).

Ultimately, Birdie succeeds in accepting her past experiences, understanding herself more completely, and developing into a more mature and independent individual.

This achievement is reflected in her ability to express her own desires and make independent decisions, as illustrated when she says:

"Yes," I say, stopping to look at her. "And I miss it. I miss it a lot, Mom" (Colbert, 2019, p. 199).

This statement demonstrates that Birdie has developed the confidence to prioritize her own needs and construct her identity independently, marking the successful completion of her psychological and emotional development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that Birdie Randolph in Brandy Colbert's *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph* undergoes gradual character development from an obedient, passive, and controlled teenager into a more independent, assertive, and emotionally mature individual. This development is influenced by both internal factors, including psychological conflicts and emotional struggles, and external factors, such as family pressure, interpersonal relationships, and hidden family secrets. From the perspective of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Birdie's character development reflects the dynamic interaction among id, ego, and superego, in which the ego gradually becomes the dominant psychological structure in achieving emotional maturity and identity formation. The study also identifies several ego defense mechanisms, namely repression, displacement, rationalization, and sublimation, which contribute significantly to Birdie's psychological development. Ultimately, this study highlights that psychological conflicts, family environments, and emotional experiences play important roles in shaping personality development and individual identity formation.

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