CONFLICTS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL "*REEDEMING LOVE*" BY FRANCINE RIVERS: A FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

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Abstract: This research examines the conflicts experienced by the main character, Angel, in a novel entitled Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers, using a psychoanalytic approach grounded in Sigmund Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego (1923). The study aims to identify and classify the psychoanalytic elements within the narrative and analyze their implications on character development. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the data for this research was collected from the scripts in the novel and then classified based on Freud's theory as the foundation to analyze the conversations found in the scripts. The findings showed that Angel's past experiences have shaped her into a woman who finds it difficult to trust others, particularly in romantic relationships with man. The relationship between Michael and Angel as well as Michael Hosea's strong ego play. Crucial roles in mediating these conflicts are providing Angel with the love and support necessary for healing. These findings demonstrate that understanding the psychoanalytic elements offers deeper insights into the characters' emotional struggles and their journeys toward self-acceptance and redemption.

Keywords: *conflict, character, Freudian psychoanalytic approach, Redeeming Love, Redemption*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a written language that expresses ideas, feelings, and concepts through the imaginative and creative use of language. This type of writing is often found in literary works such as dramas, novels, poems, and essays. Literature also reflects the beliefs, values, and identities of specific communities. It is a creative experience that describes human concepts or desires that are often nearly impossible to define precisely. Wellek and Warren (1971) state

that literature is a mirror of human life that reveals human feelings, thoughts, and perceptions based on personal interpretation.

A character is an attitude portrayed by the author in a literary work. A character is inseparable from a work of literature, as without characterization, there would be no character. Abrams (in Nugriyanto, 2010:165) states that characters are the people depicted in a narrative or dramatic work who are interpreted by the reader as having particular moral qualities and tendencies as expressed in what they say and do. Characters in novels, for example, play a central role because they convey the author's message and can present many values relevant to human life, such as morality, education, love, ambition, emotion, and more. According to Bennet and Royle (2016), it is the characters that give life to literature. They have a strong connection with people because they function as focal points for interest, admiration, dislike, awe, and human judgment. This aligns with the statement by Asia and Samanik (2018), who claim that literature and psychology are closely connected.

A person's personality is shaped by various factors, including biological conditions, childhood experiences, and social environment. Most importantly, the cumulative effects of these influences over time ultimately shape one's character. Personality development benefits one's confidence and self-esteem. As a result of personality development, people often cultivate a more positive outlook. Since individuals are constantly challenged to grow and adapt, even in seemingly minor ways, self-improvement becomes an absolute necessity. Some of the greatest psychological thinkers have focused significant attention on the process of personality development.

There are two types of conflict in human life: internal and external. In external conflicts, characters are pitted against outside forces beyond their control, such as other characters, society, or nature. These external forces obstruct the character's motives and create tension as they strive to achieve their goals. Conflict is also closely tied to human psychology. According to Lewin (2013), conflict is the ability to push a person in two or more different directions at the same time.

In the context of education, gender inequality often becomes a significant source of social conflict, triggering discrimination and gender-based violence. Therefore, increasing gender awareness through education is crucial to reducing this injustice and, in turn, minimizing potential conflict. Efforts to promote gender equality can create tension in society,

especially in communities with traditional norms. Inclusive education thus serves as a tool for conflict resolution by teaching values of equality and mutual respect. From a psychoanalytic perspective, understanding gender identity and how childhood experiences and family dynamics shape it is highly relevant in analyzing educational content that may reinforce or challenge gender norms.

Gender stereotypes formed and maintained through psychoanalytic experiences can be altered through education that teaches students about gender equality, thereby helping them to critique existing power structures. Furthermore, education that focuses on gender awareness can provide students with space to discuss emotional experiences and trauma, and to reformulate gender representations in ways that help them build more positive and inclusive identities. Therefore, integrating an understanding of conflict and psychoanalytic dynamics into education can contribute to the creation of a more just and inclusive society (Warouw, 2024).

Redeeming Love is a novel written by Francine Rivers. It was first published in 1991 and has since gained widespread popularity, becoming a bestseller in Christian fiction. The story is a retelling of the Book of Hosea from the Bible, set during the California Gold Rush of the 1850s. It retells the story of Gomer and Hosea in a transformative narrative about God's unwavering, redemptive, and time-consuming love. *Redeeming Love* explores themes of love, forgiveness, and redemption in the face of deep brokenness. The novel has become very popular due to its emotional depth, powerful storytelling, and its approach to difficult issues while delivering messages of hope and grace.

The story portrays a lady named Angel, a young woman who endures a traumatic and violent past that leads her into a life of prostitution. She was sold into prostitution as a child and suffered physical and emotional abuse. This trauma shapes her negative view of love and human relationships. Over time, she eventually repents and becomes a Christian due to the love and patience of a frontier farmer named Michael Hosea. Michael Hosea, a devoted Christian and farmer, feels called by God to marry Angel and demonstrate unconditional love, reflecting the biblical story of Hosea and Gomer. However, Angel is a woman in a difficult condition. The novel discusses human life and the emotions that surround it. These emotions include affection, inner turmoil, desire, and ambition. These are the aspects that make the novel suitable for literary psychological analysis.

Based on the explanation above, the writer uses the main character Angel in the literary work *Redeeming Love* as the object of research, aiming to portray Angel's character as a reflection of real-life experiences encountered by individuals around the world. Furthermore, the writer employs a psychoanalytic approach to provide a deeper and more meaningful analysis of the conflict faced by the main character in *Redeeming Love*, contributing to our understanding of human psychology and the process of personality formation based on the events experienced by the protagonist.

By referring to the previous paragraphs, the statements of the problem of this study are: 1) what are the psychological conflicts and conditions that shape Angel's character and behaviour throughout the novel *Reedeming Love?* 2) How does the relationship between Angel and Michael Hosea contribute to Angel's psychological healing and cahracter transformation?

This study refers to several previous research studies relevant to the topic and analysis of character and conflict. The following works are used as references and points of comparison:

1. Jangguar *et al.,* (2022) - *An Analysis of Conflict of the Main Character in Brave the Wild Wind*

    This study discusses various personal, cultural, and social conflicts faced by the main character and how they are resolved. Although a different theory is used, the study is relevant in understanding how conflict shapes character development.

2. Paris, B.J. (2017) – *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels: A Psychological Approach*

    While this study explores existential elements in the film *How to Train Your Dragon*, it shares similarities in the psychological approach to character analysis.

3. Nurbaya, N. (2021) – *The Inner Conflict of the Main Character of Bumi Cinta: Kurt Lewin's Conflict Approach.* This article uses Kurt Lewin's theory of conflict and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to examine inner conflict. It is relevant due to its focus on internal struggles and their influence on personality.

4. Harahap & Ningsih (2022) – *Psychoanalysis of the Main Character in Rainbow Rowell's Fangirl*

    This study applies Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory (id, ego, superego) to examine

character conflict and personality. It is directly relevant as it uses the same theoretical framework as this research.

5. Gonibala & Mariana (2022) – *Psychoanalysis of the Main Character in Dubliners by James Joyce*
This analysis of five short stories focuses on the id, ego, and superego elements in characters. It is an essential reference due to its consistent application of Freudian psychoanalysis to character analysis.

6. Yollanda (2023) – *The psychological conflict of the main character in Reedeming Love.* At glance, this previous study might look similar to the current study. However, there is a strong research gap between the two. Yollanda's study implemented conflict theory by Muis and Kurt Lewin regarding types of inner conflicts experienced by a person. Meanwhile, this current study implemented Freudian Psychoanalytical Approach that focuses on character development (from negative to positive) and self-redemption.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative methodology, specifically a descriptive qualitative method that utilized library research. The stages of the research process involve collecting and analyzing data. At data collection stage, the researcher identifies the behavioral changes experienced by Angel as the main character in the novel *Redeeming Love* by highlighting dialogues and events depicted in the story that represent the focus of the study. The researcher then classifies these into the components of id, ego, and superego. After identifying and classifying the data based on Angel's characteristics through the lens of id, ego, and superego, the researcher organizes the data into categories of character development and conflicts presented in the novel. The collected data is then described and analyzed using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of id, ego, and superego. The researcher adopts Sigmund Freud's theory (1923) because it provides a framework for understanding the internal dynamics that contribute to conflict. The impulsive desires of the id, the ego's attempts to balance these desires with reality, and the superego's moral constraints all create tension and conflict. By exploring the unconscious mind, internal struggles, defense mechanisms, and past experiences, the researcher can gain valuable insights into the origins and resolution of conflict.

This research applies Sigmund Freudian Psychoanalytic Approach to analyze the main character and behavioral transformation in Francine Rivers' novel *Redeeming Love*. Freud's theory emphasizes the role of the unconscious mind in shaping thoughts and behavior. According to Freud (1923), the human personality consists of three major components Id, Ego, and Superego.

Id is the most primitive part of the personality, containing instinctual drives and biological needs. It operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification. The Ego acts as a mediator between the id and the superego, operating on the reality principle. It strives to meet the id's desires in a socially acceptable way. Superego represents the moral conscience, shaped by internalized societal and parental standards. It seeks to control the impulses of the id.

Freud emphasized that internal conflict often arises from the tension between these three components of the psyche.

While, according to Kenney (1966), conflict in literature is the opposition between the protagonist and antagonist or other forces such as society or the self. Conflict is a vital element in shaping character and advancing the plot.

Based on Card (1988), character can be analyzed through actions, motives, backstory, reputation, stereotypes, habits, behavioral patterns, talents, preferences, and physical appearance. Characterization reflects human traits and behavior, forming the core of a literary narrative.

Plot refers to the sequence of events arranged causally from beginning to end. Perrine (1970) states that a plot typically consists of five stages: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The plot plays a crucial role in depicting conflict dynamics and character growth.

Setting includes the time, place, and atmosphere in which events occur. Wellek and Warren (1970) assert that setting can reflect social and cultural conditions and serve as an expression of character

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Angel's Internal Conflict

According to Sigmund Freud, internal conflict occurs when the three components of

personality: id, ego, and superego are in opposition to each other. The id seeks immediate gratification, the superego demands perfection, and the ego attempts to balance both. This conflict often happens unconsciously and may result in anxiety, restlessness, and various other psychological issues.

a. Id

The id is present from birth and is the first component of the human personality. It represents our basic instinctual drives and desires.

> *"Sarah dug frantically beneath the covers and plugged her ears. So the little princess didn't want to hear the awful truth? Well, that was just too bad. Furious, Cleo dragged the blankets off her. When Sarah scrambled away, she grabbed her by the legs and dragged her back. 'Sit up and listen to me!' She pulled the child up and shook her. Sarah squeezed her eyes shut and turned her face away. 'Look at me!' Cleo raged, not satisfied until she obeyed."*

(Rivers, 1991: 30)

This behavior clearly demonstrates Cleo's actions driven by the id. Her behavior is marked by immediate gratification, aggression, and a lack of consideration for others hallmarks of Freud's concept of the id.

b. Ego

In Freud's theory, the ego serves as the mediator between the id (instinctual drives) and the superego (moral standards and social norms). The ego seeks realistic and socially acceptable ways to satisfy the id's urges, while also considering the demands of the superego.

> *"Cleo touched Sarah's head. 'Cross your arms on the table and sleep awhile.' Sarah did as she was told, wishing they could leave. Cleo obviously wasn't ready to leave. She seemed to be having a good time, and she kept staring at Merrick and smiling in a way Sarah had never seen her smile before."*

(Rivers, 1991: 25)

> *"She followed Merrick into the hallway, watching as he dumped the blanket and pillow in the darkened room. Something large scurried down the hall and hid in the darkness. She stared at him, wide-eyed.*
> *'You sit right there and don't move. If you don't stay put, I'll find you and take you down to the sea and feed you to the crabs. Understand?'*
> *Sarah's mouth was dry, and she couldn't make any words come out. So she just nodded"*

(Rivers, 1991: 28)

Sarah's desire to leave indicates a more balanced ego. Her ego mediates between her discomfort and the social context, recognizing that Cleo's enjoyment may be in conflict with her own preferences. This excerpt reflects the interplay between the id, ego, and superego in shaping human behavior. Cleo's pleasure and Sarah's discomfort represent manifestations of both unconscious and conscious psychological states.

c. Superego

Superego is a function of the sociology of personality; its role is to determine what is right and wrong, appropriate or inappropriate behavior. Thus, a person can act according to moral standards in society.

> *"When the other children mocked Sarah and called her mother names, she looked at them and said nothing. What they said was true; you couldn't argue with it. When she felt the tears coming up, building like a great hard pressure inside her, hot, so hot she thought they would burn, she swallowed them down deeper and deeper until they became a hard little stone in her chest. She learned to look back at her tormentors and smile with cold arrogance and disdain. She learned to pretend nothing they said could touch her. And sometimes she convinced herself nothing did."*
>
> *(*Rivers, 1991:*35)*

Suppression may trigger feelings of guilt or shame within Sarah because she believes that she deserves the negative treatment.

2. Defense Mechanisms

a. Repression

Sarah's traumatic past, including sexual abuse and neglect, has deeply wounded her. To shield herself from overwhelming pain and emotional turmoil, she uses repression as a defense mechanism.

> *"She could play virgin for him. She could play grateful if it came to that. Oh yes, thanks a heap for saving me. She could play as long as she knew it only had to last a while."*
>
> (Rivers, 1991: 116)

b. Denial

Denial functions as a protective mechanism for Sarah, allowing her to cope with the extreme trauma she has endured. By avoiding painful memories and emotions associated with her abuse, she maintains her psychological stability. Denial is a central aspect of her character

in *Redeeming Love*.

> *"If only she could be like one of those mountain men who went out into the wilderness and stayed there, hunting their food and building their own shelter and never having to answer to another living soul for anything. Just to be left alone, that must be heaven."*

(Rivers, 1991: 88)

c. Displacement

Sarah's tendency to form unhealthy relationships with men, particularly those who are abusive and controlling, can be seen as a form of displacement. Her early experiences of sexual abuse have left her with deep trauma, which she unconsciously redirects.

> *"She stood up. Keeping her back to him, she ran a shaking hand along the mantle. 'You still don't understand, do you? Even if I wanted things to work, others out there won't let it happen. Like your fine upstanding brother-in-law.' She smiled dryly and looked up the wall. 'Did you see his face when he recognized me?"*

(Rivers, 1991:175)

d. Sublimation

Sarah's deep faith in God can be viewed as a form of sublimation, a transformation of pain and suffering into something constructive and meaningful. Her love for Michael is another example of sublimation.

> *"Michael accepted, and Angel's heart dropped as he went for their blankets. Excusing herself quickly, she went after him. 'Michael,' she said, searching for words to convince him they should keep in the wagon and not in the entwisted Altmans. He reached out and pulled her close, kissing her soundly. Then he turned her back toward the tent, saying next to her ear, 'Sooner or later you'll learn there are people in the world who don't want to use you. Now, back up your courage and go back in there and get to know a few."*

(Rivers, 1991: 238)

e. Reaction Formation

Sarah's rebellious and defiant behavior can be seen as a reaction formation, a defense mechanism where she acts contrary to her true feelings of vulnerability and helplessness. By being tough, she tries to protect herself from further harm or rejection.

> *"Michael took her wrist and turned her toward him. 'Leave the dishes.'*

When he began to loosen her hair, she could scarcely breathe. She was trembling and embarrassed. Where was her calm, her control?"

<div align="right">(Rivers, 1991: 285)</div>

3. Love and Patience

Freud (1925) realized that empathy and compassion are essential to building a strong therapeutic alliance. Sigmund Freud stated, "The task of analysis is to bring about a change in the patient's attitude towards his own experience; this is only possible if we understand him and can empathize with him." (1925). He believed that the therapist's ability to empathize and manifest it into love for the individual's experience would foster a safe environment where the individual feels understood and accepted. A sense of safety is an important element for exploring unconscious conflicts and repressed emotions.

Michael exemplifies Christ-like qualities by showing compassion, patience, and kindness. His gentle approach stands in stark contrast to Angel's harsh past experiences. This nurturing environment fosters a sense of safety for Angel, which she needs in her emotional healing process.

Michael put his hand lightly on her hair and felt her jump.

"*Let me show you how to do it." He hunked down beside her and held out his hand. She handed him tools. "First of all, you can't expect to get it perfect the first time. It takes practice." Like cooking stew, he wanted to say. Like living a different way of life*."

<div align="right">(Rivers, 1991: 128)</div>

Michael's gentle touch and his offer to guide Angel in her new task reflect a loving approach that is very important in building trust and safety in a relationship. He acknowledges that learning and healing are processes involving trial and error, reflecting a deep understanding of Angel's struggle.

Freud emphasized the importance of empathy and compassion in the therapeutic alliance, showing that these qualities enable the patient to feel understood and accepted, which is essential for healing. Michael's act lightly placing his hand on Angel's hair and offering to teach her shows a form of intimacy that is non-threatening yet invites openness and vulnerability.

> *Do you remember when you asked me what kind of name Hosea was and I said prophetic?" She began brushing her hair again slowly, but Michael knew she was listening to him this time, "Hosea was a prophet. God told him to marry a prostitute.*
> *She glanced at him with a mocking smile. "Did God tell you to marry me?"*
> *"Yes. He did."*
> *She was scornful. "He talks to you personally?*
> *"He talks to every one personally. Most people just don't bother to listen." It was better to humor him. "Sorry I interrupted. You were telling me a story. What happened next? Did this prophet marry the prostitute?"*
> *"Yes. He figured God must have a reason. A good reason"*
> *The same as he probably did. "Did this Hosea beat the sin out of her? I suppose she crawled to him on her face and kissed his feet for saving her soul."*
> *"No, she went back to prostitution."*
> *Her stomach dropped. She looked up at him and searched his face.*
> *He just looked back at her, solemn, self-contained, enigmatic. "So God isn't so all-powerful after all, is he?" she said quietly.*
> *"God told him to go and get her back again."*

(Rivers, 1991: 133)

Michael does not only support Angel's journey toward self-acceptance but also provides an example of how compassion can transform relationships and facilitate recovery from trauma.

4. Transference and Healing

Freud's theory of transference involves projecting feelings and attitudes from one person to another, often based on past relationships. Michael's consistent presence and his willingness to endure Angel's hostility reflect a loving approach that fosters trust. His ability to face internal conflicts is crucial to the healing process.

Michael Hosea's contribution to Angel's process of transference and healing, through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, illustrates the profound impact of compassionate involvement in the healing of a relationship. Freud believed that the therapist's display of love in this case, Michael's role was essential to facilitating emotional exploration and growth.

> *"Do you love him?" he sneered. "You think you could make him happy? Sooner or later, he's going to see you for what you really are."*
> *Her hand whitened on the stick. Shrugging, she turned away. "You don't care about anything, do you?"*
> *"Should I?" She began beating the blanket again.*
> *Paul wanted to grab her and swing her around so he could lay his fist into her arrogant face. "You're just asking for it." He headed straight for the steam.*

All the stiffness went out of her as Angel watched him go. She sat down weakly on a stump, refusing to acknowledge the feelings coursing through her."

(Rivers, 1991: 176)

Transference occurs when an individual projects feelings, expectations, and attitudes from past relationships onto a new one. In this conversation, Angel's defensive response to Paul's mockery reflects her unresolved feelings about her self-worth and identity.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the writer concludes that the conflicts experienced by the main characters, particularly Angel and Michael, can be understood through the interaction of Freud's three components of personality: the id, ego, and superego. Angel's id reflects her basic desires and instincts, evident in her struggle with her past and her need for love. The ego functions as a mediator, with Michael Hosea demonstrating a strong ego by balancing Angel's impulsiveness with the moral boundaries of her superego. Michael's compassionate approach allows Angel to explore her desires while confronting her guilt. Angel's superego, which mirrors the moral standards of society, shapes her self-perception and feelings of worthlessness as a result of social judgment. This conflict creates tension between her desires and moral guidelines, leading to significant emotional turmoil. The novel portrays a transformational journey where the characters' internal conflicts become catalysts for growth. By understanding the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego, they move toward healing and reconciliation.

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