
Bonnie Castle's Anxiety Disorder that Leads to Identity Crisis as Portrayed in William Irish's *Waltz Into Darkness*

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Abstract

This study focused on the correlation between anxiety disorder and identity crisis that portray in William Irish's *Waltz Into darkness*. First, the study figured out how the anxiety disorder leads to identity confusion and how this confusion shaped personality traits. Second, it figured out how the anxiety disorder teaming up with identity diffusion. The thesis coined Erik Erikson Psychoanalysis theory and Freudian psychoanalysis to explain the main character. The Method of study used a library qualitative method. The finding of the study discovered that the anxiety disorder and identity confusion experienced by the main character actually was the result of the unpleasant and traumatic childhood and adolescent experiences.

Keywords: adolescent, anxiety disorder, childhood, Erik Erikson, Freudian psychoanalysis, identity crisis.

Introduction

Teenagers often find that adolescence period is really difficult to deal with. As teenagers, the sense of identity becomes one of the most important thing to achieve. When one is able to identify themselves, they would then be able to seize self-actualization. According to Ekowarni, during the adolescent period, teenagers have to face complex developmental challenges. They are going to need every help from their family and closest friends to deal with these developmental challenges, otherwise they might develop maladaptive responses (Ekowarni 1993). Maladaptive responses or behaviours, are behaviours that interfere with everyday activities (Brad Hill – Adaptive and Maladaptive Behavior Scales – Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Community Resource Center - come-over.to/FAS/VinelandCompare.htm). This kind of behaviour prevent one to be able to cope well with their problem, and they would not be able to focus well on their daily activities as well. As a result of this, one cannot figure out their identity because they are still confused with the problems they are facing.

In order to stop those things from happening, society needs to increase their attention and awareness to adolescents' development. Family, especially parents, have a big role in helping their teenage daughters and son pass the adolescent period well. However, it turns out that family is not the only thing that matters. Peers also become one important factor.

“These students search for role models and are greatly influenced by what their peers have to say about all aspects of life” (Anna Freud's quoted in Gillani's 105)

Since teenagers tend to listen and trust their peers more than they trust their own parents, then parents should control with whom their teenage daughters and sons are being friends with. It is hoped that parents' control would help the teenagers filter what behaviours are good and what behaviours are bad and unacceptable in the society. Without the help of the closest and beloved ones, this process would be a really difficult phase for teenagers. They also tend to be more depressed and anxious.

Anxiety is a feeling of being very worried about something (Cherry). According to Freud, there are three types of anxiety: reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety. Actually, anxiety functions by human's unconscious mind to deal with their fear or anger. However, anxiety that occurs without any support from family, friends or professional helpers would lead into anxiety disorder, where the person fails to cope with his or her's fear or anger. When a person is suffering from anxiety disorder, his or her

personality would change. They will probably become aggressive and paranoia (Arlinda 2). To deal with this kind of problem, psychoanalysis is needed so that the person can cope with their anxiety disorder.

In its development, psychoanalysis also takes an important role in literature since the composition in a literary work cannot be separated from psychological aspects. Lidya quoted Thomas in her thesis that the relationship between literature and psychology is that both of sciences are from the same branches that are humanity sciences (Lidya 1). There are a lot of essays, journals and theses that analyse about psychological issues in literary works so it means that all psychological problems which relate to human life can be found inside literary works.

This phenomenon has been portrayed in literature since literature is a reflection of what happens in reality. One example of a literary work that contains a lot of psychological issues in its story is a novel entitled *Waltz Into Darkness* written by William Irish.

Waltz into Darkness is a dark-noir themed novel that tells a story about a man named Louis Durand, who married to a woman named Julia Russel, whom can be said as a stranger to him since they had never met each other before the marriage. Louis was introduced to Julia by a matchmaker service that he saw on a newspaper. Louis was a practical businessman, thus he did not believe in love. He just wanted to marry Julia because he was getting older and he would like a wife that could give him children to take care of him when he got old and also to take care of his business. But when Louis looked into Julia's face for the first time, he automatically fell in love with her exquisite beauty. The marriage then took place immediately after they met. Louis did everything he could to keep her happy including gave her full and unlimited access to both of his accounts.

One day, Louis got home only to find that his wife had run away, carrying all of his money with her. Soon Louis also discovered that his wife was not the real Julia Russel, her real name was Bonnie Castle. The real Julia Russel had gone missing and the police had been looking for her. It came to Louis' mind that his wife had seduced him in order to get his money. It also turns out that Louis was not the first and the only person Bonnie had been deceived, in fact, Bonnie made her living by deceiving people. As the story continues, the readers are given Bonnie's dark childhood experience. During her childhood and adolescence period, Bonnie had gone several traumatic events that made her act the way she did: doing crime and having no guilty feeling about it.

Actually, the reason why the writer is interested in analysing this novel is because of its rich plot and characterizations. Moreover, each character has complex characterization. There is no character that is a hundred percent protagonist or antagonist in this novel. Every character is portrayed as a normal human being who can do good and bad things altogether. Also, psychoanalysis issues are very strong in *Waltz into Darkness*. Indeed that psychoanalysis takes an important role in literature since the composition in a literary work cannot be separated from psychological aspects. Thomas stated that the relationship between literature and psychology is that both of sciences are from the same branches that are humanity sciences (Thomas 10).

In *Waltz into Darkness*, every major character is undergoing an issue in their personality that is related to psychological problem. However, the writer believes that the character of Bonnie Castle is the most interesting since she is the most complex character in the story. She is depicted not as angelic character or as a devilish one. Readers could hate her but also could fall in love with her. At first, it may seem that the author, William Irish, purposely portrays Bonnie Castle in such mysterious way to make the readers guess. However, as the story continues, it is obvious that Bonnie Castle herself is confused about her identity, and readers would see how she struggles to figure out her truly self. Here, it can be seen that Bonnie Castle is experiencing an issue usually known as 'identity crisis'. According to Erikson, 'identity crisis' is a process when we start to look at ourself in different ways from what is expected from us by the society but we cannot embrace this new identity due to a lot of reasons (Erikson 11).

This study aims to examine the way the main female character, Bonnie Castle's identity crisis portrayed in the novel. Beside that, this study also wants to discover certain events that happen in Bonnie Castle's adolescent experience in her life that shape her sense of identity. Furthermore, the writer would also like to see how Bonnie Castle's identity crisis affect her in her thoughts and actions. The writer of

this thesis expects that the readers will gain more understanding about how certain events can shape someone's identity and how someone's identity crisis can affect his/her thoughts and actions. And the last, hopefully, this thesis would make more students of English literature interested in analysing William Irish's works, a great author whose works have been acknowledge worldwide.

In order to keep the study in the expected field, the writer will limit the characters that will be analysed into one specific figure, which is Bonnie Castle. The writer believes that this character has complex childhood background and also traumatic adolescent experiences is the cause of her having identity crisis which becomes the main topic to discuss in this thesis. In analysing Bonnie Castle's character, the focus would be on the traumatic events of her childhood and adolescent time: what the events are and how they shape her identity. Furthermore, the writer would also like to discover how her adolescent experience affect her thoughts and actions and how they are portrayed in the novel. The writer would only focus on Bonnie Castle's character so that any other character that would be mentioned in this thesis functions merely to support the analysis and therefore would not be discussed further.

Psychoanalysis is a theory firstly proposed by Sigmund Freud. This theory looks closely at the unconscious drive of the human mind that motivates them to act and behave in certain ways. Freud always emphasized his focus on the human's mind, because he believed that the mind is responsible for both conscious and unconscious decisions which are based on drives and forces (Newman 12).

There are three aspects of human's mind according to Freud: id, ego and superego. The 'id' is a part of human's unconscious mind that holds all their basic instincts, for example the need of pleasure, desire and etc. It is impulsive and often disconnected from reality and thus it does not acknowledge any risks or consequences at all. While 'ego' is there to create some balance between pleasure and pain. Human's 'ego' realizes that not ever desire can be fulfilled at any given time, however it still continues to look for pleasures. So, its job is to find a way to fulfill the id's desire while still act accordingly to reality. The last one, super-ego, is considered as the 'conscious' of the human's mind because it can differentiate which acts are right and which are not. Super-ego operates based on the morality values that are adopted by the society (Roedinger 470).

Sometimes or even often, the id, ego and super-ego come into conflict. When this conflict occurs, it can make the person who is experiencing it becomes anxious. If this anxiety cannot be settled immediately, that person can suffer from anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorder can make a person becomes paranoia and have aggressive behaviour. During this times, if a person successfully deal with their anxiety, they will have the psychological strength to deal with other conflicts that will occur later, but if they fail to deal with their anxiety, they may not be able to deal with other conflicts that will come and they may not develop their psychological strengths that is needed for a strong sense of identity (Cherry). Without a strong sense of identity, they will not have the psychological strength needed to cope with the psychological issues or challenges that lie ahead. The theories above was proposed by Sigmund Freud, that were than debated by his only daughter and also his student, Anna Freud. One of Freud's student that is also interested in psychological development theory is Erik Erikson, not only then he debated Freud's theory, he develop a new perspective of human's psychological development.

As mentioned previously, the topic selected for this thesis is the identity crisis of Bonnie Castle's character, specifically the causes or motives, the effects it has upon Bonnie Castle's life. Regarding to the topic, Psychoanalysis theory by Erik Erikson is the most suitable theory to be used in the analysis, because it explains the psychological stages and psychosocial development of the human's mind comprehensively. Erikson also develop Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud psychoanalysis theory. Therefore, it is believed that by using Psychoanalysis theory, a deep and thorough analysis about Bonnie Castle's identity crisis can be reached. The useful data would be classified based on the issue in it..

This thesis is a qualitative study which means the data is taken from the object of the study itself, which is in this case, *Waltz into Darkness* by William Irish. In collecting the data, the writer applies library research method, digital and non-digital. After that the writer would classify the data into two categories: the one that is useful to the discussion and the one that is not

In analysing this thesis, the writer applies Psychoanalysis criticism. Psychoanalysis is a theory which believes that a person's childhood events could potentially affect their mental functioning when they become an adolescent or adult (Cherry). Based on the theoretical assumption, the writer would explore and discuss the way the childhood experiences of Bonnie Castle affect her behaviour and personality when she becomes an adult.

Discussion

Human beings are capable to think, feel and memorize by using their mind. By using their mind consciously or unconsciously, human beings are able to coordinate and organize all of their actions by means of their mental process (Freud 121). However, human's attitude and behaviour is always different from each other since each of them must experience different and complex psychological background. Psychologists believe that childhood experience is a psychological background that shapes adolescents and adults' behaviour of the present time (Tyson 14). Indeed, experience between birth and age 5 significantly matter to a child's long-term emotional and psychological condition (Cherry) therefore it is important to elicit one's childhood experience in order to explain why they act and behave in certain way.

According to Erikson, a person's personality development includes the entire lifespan, not merely childhood period. Erikson extended the stages upto eight. Each stages represents the age of a person and the major psychological crisis they might experiencing.

Stage	Age	Event	Central Thematic Conflict
1	Infancy	Breast-Feeding	Trust versus Mistrust
2	Toddlerhood	Toilet Training	Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt
3	Early Childhood	Independence	Initiative versus Guilt
4	Middle Childhood	School	Industry versus Inferiority
5	Adolescence	Peer Relationship	Identity versus Identity Confusion
6	Young Adulthood	Love Relationship	Intimacy versus Isolation
7	Adulthood	Parenting	Generativity versus Stagnation
8	Aging	Reflection on one's life	Ego Integrity versus Despair

(Erikson as cited in Gillani 108)

The first psychological stage is the "Trust versus Mistrust" that occurs during Infancy period, this is period where a child or an infant seek for the comfort and security from the mother. Bonnie Castle was born without knowing who her parents were, she was left in a foundling home and grew up there. As an orphan, Bonnie failed to experience love and care from a father and a mother. The missing figure of parents, especially mother, really affects a person. When they grow into an adult, they will look back and perceive the thought of being unwanted by their own parents, including Bonnie Castle. Even as a baby, one is already able to sense peace, comfort and the feeling of security. A baby is also able to sense the feeling of discomfort and insecurity, and they will carry this experience until they grow up (Turgeon).

That is why Bonnie always felt insecure and unwanted. As she grew up, those feelings became stronger. It is portrayed and shown in the novel, Bonnie had hard times trusting people, including Louis Durrand.

"You—" She called him a name that he'd thought only men knew. "I'm not good enough for you, am I? I'm beneath you. I'm just trash and you're a fine gentlemen. Well, who told you to come after me? Who wants you?" (Irish 260).

The dialogue above is what Bonnie said to Louis when they were fighting. Bonnie accused Louis of merely taking advantages of her. No matter how often Louis had proved his love and loyalty to Bonnie, Bonnie always felt insecure.

The second stage is "Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt", where a child is given a tasks that need to be completed individually, therefore a child can develop a sense of autonomy, but if a child does not have enough support from his/her family and is scolded for his/her actions, instead of autonomy, he/she will develop shame and doubt.

In the orphanage, Bonnie Castle was often scolded – most of the times even for the mistakes she did not do – she was also beaten by the adults in the orphanage. At the age of thirteen, Bonnie had to endure the shame of being accused of something that she did not do and shame of being punished in front of the other children in the orphan house, but when she is fifteen, she decided to ran away from the orphan house.

Bonnie was so used to the feeling of shame and doubt that they finally become part of her personality. This is why in the novel, Bonnie was depicted as a person who often doubted herself. Bonnie could not believe that she could disobey the order maker.

“ ‘Do as I tell you !’ he ordered me fiercely. ‘Or I’ll put some compliance into you with my fists. ... And he gave me a push that nearly sent me face down to the deck boards.’”

“You went ?”

“I went. What could I do ?” (Irish 148).

The part of the story above shows when Bonnie was forced to do something by Billy. Billy was Bonnie’s friend that she met during her struggle to survive after leaving the orphan house. Billy taught Bonnie to be his partner in Poker game; to be exact they teamed-up to cheat so that they could win the poker games.

The third stage is the middle childhood stage, where a child learns to take initiative and acts according to his or her desire. Children naturally have no idea about what is acceptable and what is not in the society, and even if they have, they only have vague ideas about it. Here is where the family or parents’ observation is needed to teach the child what is right and what is wrong according to the social norms and the values in the society they live in (Erikson 12). However, the way parents teach their children also matters to the child’s psychological development. They need to teach their children with tender loving care, so that their children would learn new things and still feel comfortable about themselves. If children are comfortable about themselves, they would develop their initiative actions (Erikson 13).

On the other hand, if a child is scolded badly, he or she would develop the sense of shame and self-doubting. The truth is, those negative feelings can lead to guilt. Guilt can make one feel anxious. Excessive level of anxiety would lead to anxiety disorder and then destructive actions – just like Bonnie. Bonnie always had the second thought everytime she wanted to do the right thing or to stand for herself. She doubted that her action was the best one because she had been used to people telling her that she had done something wrong, that she had been the one to blame in every situation. Indeed, Bonnie’s consciousness realized that she should fight, that she should not just accept the unpleasant treatment and be submissive. However, her subconsciousness made her feel guilty everytime she was caught up in a bad situation. She unconsciously believed that she should take responsibility in the situation, hence her submissiveness when Billy threatened her and forced her to take Julia Russel’s place. Billy blackmailed her by telling her that she, too, was responsible for Julia’s missing. Being used to guilty feeling during her whole life, Bonnie believed that she was also the one to blame and had no other choice than to do as Billy told her. Guilt can be really destructive if not handled correctly and it can affect the child in the fourth stage of psychological development.

In the fourth stage, a psychological development of a child can result in two different conditions: the first one is industry, and the other one is inferiority (Erikson 16). Industry means a child could manage to take actions and be responsible for them. While inferiority is a condition where a child is afraid to take initiate an action or execute an idea. This can occur as a result due to the failure in the previous stages. And this is the condition that Bonnie was suffering from.

“It wasn’t I. I didn’t do it. He must have done something to her, for I never saw her again. But what it was, I don’t know. I didn’t see it done... .” (Irish 141).

There, from the quote above, it can be seen that Bonnie was defending herself when Louis Durrand accused her of being responsible of Julia’s death. Bonnie stood on her ground; telling Louis that she had nothing to with Julia’s death. Indeed Bonnie did not kill Julia, Billy did. But Bonnie had help him do that although she had not realized it back then. Nevertheless, she realized that she should be responsible, yet she did not. She, as a matter of fact, tried to cover what she had done (helping Billy kill Julia) by

pretending to be Julia. Here, Bonnie is depicted as a person who did not obtain industry quality in her psychological development, thus she did not dare to take any responsibility from her action.

Furthermore, Bonnie was also suffering from the inferiority feeling. All her life, people always looked down on her. She was never respected and truly loved in her life. It is almost the same as the first stage. All the feelings of being unwanted, unlovable and disrespected – from having abandoned by her parents, unpleasant treatment from the orphan house caretakers, and Billy's abusive words and actions – gathered together and finally resulted in inferiority feeling. Bonnie felt unworthy. And in the novel, it is portrayed that, no matter how hard Bonnie tried to earn her respect and love, she always failed.

This below quote tells when Bonnie and Louis rented a house to live in. Since the house was quite large, Bonnie suggested that they hired a maid. However, no maid could last more than three days. Bonnie tried to figure out the reasons why, and she also told Louis about it.

“There is something about me. They look at me and sneer. They do not respect me. They will take more from another woman, and be docile; they will take nothing from me, and still be impudent. Is this not my own house? Am I not your wife? What is it about me?” (Irish 169).

“They do not respect me... .” This shows how Bonnie had been disrespected, even by a maid. She told Louis that she did not understand why, she just knew that there was something in her that made them disrespect and underestimate her.

What makes other people disrespectful and underestimate Bonnie, was actually her own very behaviour. Bonnie's inferiority feeling did not allow her to feel more powerful than anyone else. She always felt unconfident about herself. Even when she was the mistress of the house. The maids could see Bonnie's unconfidence from the way she talked to them, that is why they dared to disrespect her.

The fifth stage is the Adolescent Period, which is the most important psychological development stage (Erikson 17). This is a stage where a child starts to find who they really are, what their desires are and what they want to be. The physical and social environments are changing rapidly, the peer pressure and the demand of social role can make them experience identity crisis. Adolescent period happens between the age of 11-18, and after that they would enter the young adulthood period. It is important for them to cope with their anxiety and seize their self-actualization so that they can find their identity. Finding identity is really important to everyone so that they can start their adulthood period without having to struggle an identity diffusion.

In the novel, Bonnie's adolescent life has given her no chance to find an identity, she was struggling to survive after she ran away from the foundling house when she was fifteen.

“... , I ran away when I was fifteen. At thirteen I knew no better than to endure it, but at fifteen i no longer would. I climbed over the wall at night.” (Irish 143).

After escaping from the foundling house, Bonnie met another hardship;

“I came to Philadelphia. An old woman took me in for a while, an old witch. and showed me how to filch things from the counter without being detected. I ran away from her too, finally.”

“And then what happened ?”

“I worked a little, as a scrub girl, a slavey; I worked in a bakery kitchen, helping to make the rolls; I even worked as a laudress' helper. I was homeless more often than I had a place to sleep.” (Irish 144).

It can be seen from the quotation above, Bonnie had to deal with a lot of difficult and suppressing situations in order to survive when she was a teenager. Those too many difficult situations disabled her from figuring out who she really was thus she could not obtain any sense of identity.

And after that Bonnie met Billy, Bonnie then accepted Billy's offer to co-operating with him in card games. She was there as a magnet for decent men. When those men finally greeted her and talked to her, Bonnie would casually persuade them to play poker with Billy, who was pretending to be her brother. Bonnie would stay during each game and took a peek on other players' cards and signalled them to Billy, so that Billy could win.

“I replenished their drinks. Flirted a little, to keep them in good humor. I sided with them against my own brother when there was a dispute.”

“You signalled.”

“Her shoulders tipped slightly, in philosophic resignation. “That’s what I was there for.” (Irish 145).

Billy can be said as Bonnie’s first and only friend in life. He taught her a lot of things, and he gave Bonnie the easiest job she had ever had: just to refill empty glasses and signal the cards other players had. And also, he made Bonnie feel worthy by asking her to be his partner, even if it was a partner in crime.

Unfortunately, soon Bonnie learned that Billy was a violent person, and sometimes Bonnie became his target to leash his anger. Especially when Bonnie refused to do something he told her to do.

“He carefully took off his ring first, so it wouldn’t mar my skin, and he gave the back of his hand several times, until my head swan, and, as he put it, ‘it had taken a little of the religion out of me.’ He threatened me.” (Irish 151).

The quote above shows how violent Billy could be to Bonnie. However, no matter how many times she suffered from Billy’s violence behaviour, she could not leave him. Even though she managed to ran away from him several times, she always came back to him. That is because Billy had become a part of Bonnie’s identity. For the first time, someone wanted her. For the first time, someone took care of her. For the first time, someone looked for her when she ran away. She subconsciously not only absorbed, but also embraced her new identity as Billy’s partner, friend, sister or lover and she could not move on from that.

When Bonnie was pretending to be Julia, she tried to end her deal with Billy because she finally fell inlove with Louis, and she finally feel happy for the first time in her life. But her happiness came from pretending to be Julia, not being herself, and she was willing to do anything to stay as Julia and leave her self-identity as Bonnie. Knowing that, Billy threatened her even more and she knew it was a matter of time before Billy tell Louis, or before he kill her, therefore she chose to ran away from both of them.

A year after, Louis found her and he still referred to her as Julia and she did not like it.

“Don’t call me Julia,” she murmured remorsefully “That isn’t my name.”

“Have you a name ?”

“Bonnie, Bonnie Castle.” (Irish 142).

The dialogue above shows that Bonnie does not experiencing identity crisis, but she also did not commit to her self-identity as Bonnie. Therefore it can be said that Bonnie is experiencing identity diffusion, it is a condition where someone is not anxious because he or she could not find an identity, but they are anxious for not being able to commit in one identity (Marcia 85).

Conclusion

Bonnie Castle’s character has experienced many traumatic events since her childhood that made her can not develop psychological strength and grew up to be a pessimist, anxious and have no confident. She could not handle her anxiety and made her experience anxiety disorder, which then made her can not commit to one’s identity.

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