

ALAN'S SCHIZOPHRENIA IN PETER SHAFFER'S *EQUUS*

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Abstract. This article is about Alan's schizophrenia in Peter Shaffer's play *Equus*. Schizophrenia is a kind of mental disorder. The symptoms of Alan's schizophrenia as well as its causes are analyzed and it is related to theory of Freud's psychoanalysis. The research method is descriptive qualitative research method. By using descriptive qualitative research method, the data are processed qualitatively and explained descriptively to answer the research problem statements. The answer of the first problem statement is about the symptoms of Alan's schizophrenia and its causes exposed in the play. The symptoms are delusion and hallucination. Dr. Dysart, as a psychiatrist tries to find out why Alan always adores horse, and he is surprised when one night he blinds six horses with a spike when he has a date with a girl named Jill. He shows some symptoms of schizophrenia like delusion and hallucination through his actions and misinterpretation of a horse. Dysart uses some methods during the treatment to help him cover the things such as hypnosis and give drugs. The answer of the second problem statement shows how Alan's schizophrenia is seen from Freud's psychoanalysis theory Alan's actions and behaviors show that they are influenced by id, ego, and superego.

Keywords: mental disorder, schizophrenia, delusion, hallucination, psychoanalysis theory

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a reflection of human's life. It is an appropriate media to retell the individual and social phenomenon. Literature also provides a role in solving a various events, based on human's problem against themselves and their surroundings. Dealing with it, literature has a strong correlation with human personality and behavior. In this case, psychological study observes the psychological condition of the character in literary work. Among the psychological issues, mental disorder is one of global phenomena which occur in surrounding to be discussed.

Mental disorder refers to mental health conditions that affect the mood, thinking, and behavior. People with mental disorders, however, often have to bear the special burden of the societal stigma

associated with their conditions. This burden sometimes prevents people from acknowledging their illness and from seeking support and affective treatment for it. Just as physical health, failure to address symptoms early on can have serious negative consequences. Mental disorders also take a toll on adolescent, their parents, and friends, and contribute significantly to health care costs. The consequences can be short- or long-term. Indeed, most mental disorders diagnosed among adults began during adolescence, although other mental disorders experienced by adolescents may diminish by early adulthood if they are treated.

There are common types of mental disorders; one of them is psychotic disorder. Psychotic disorder is severe mental disorder that causes abnormal thinking and

perceptions. People with psychotic disorder lose touch with reality. Two main symptoms are delusion and hallucination. Delusion is false beliefs, such as thinking that someone is plotting against people or that TV is sending people a secret message. Hallucination is false perceptions, such as hearing, seeing, or feeling something that are not there.

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. Schizophrenia is categorized as a psychotic disorder. Schizophrenia is a set of symptoms psychiatry has labeled as a disorder. According to DSM-IV-TR (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders, text revised, published by the American Psychiatry Association in 2000), the diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia are: Two (or more) of the following, each present for a significant portion of time during a 1-month period (1) delusions (2) hallucinations (3) disorganized speech (4) grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior (5) negative symptoms, i.e., affective flattening, *alogia* (poverty of speech), or a volition (lack of motivation). Only one these symptoms is required if delusions are bizarre or hallucinations consists of a voice keeping up a running commentary on the person's

behavior or thoughts, or if there are two or more voices conversing with each other. For a significant portion of the time since the onset of the disturbance, one or more major areas of functioning such as work, interpersonal relations, or self-care are markedly below the level achieved prior to the onset. There have been continuous signs of the disturbance persisting for at least six months.

One of literary work that discusses about schizophrenia is Peter Shaffer's play entitled *Equus*. The symptoms of Alan's schizophrenia as well as its causes will be analyzed in this article and related to Freud's psychoanalysis theory.

RESEARCH METHOD

The underlying aspect which links psychology and literature is that both focus on human behavior. While literature works more on expressing thought, ideas and, experiences of people, psychology focuses on understanding it. Yet, from this simple point, both artist and psychologist share similarity within the mission they carry. And for many years, this overlapping convergent has been employed in the use of literature to test psychological theories and to understand human behavior in historical times, in the psychological analysis of literature, and in psychological studies of authors and readers.

The extrinsic approach applied in conducting this thesis is the psychological approach. As a branch of psychological approach, psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud is a theory that discuss about the personality of a human and how to treat a person who has mental illness. Therefore, to make the analysis more focused, psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud is applied. Psychoanalysis is one of the branches in psychological study that learns about the personality of human. This theory of personality was invented by Austrian

neurologist, Sigmund Freud, in late 19th century (Feist, 2009).

According to Flett (2007:279), to understand Freud's theory of personality, it must begin with the concept of the unconscious. This is the basic idea in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis suggests that personality characteristics are mostly a reflection of the contents of the unconscious part of the mind. Freud believed that most behaviors are caused by thoughts, ideas, and wishes that are in a person's brain but are not easily accessible by the conscious part of the mind. In other words, the brain knows things that the mind does not. This conception of which the humans are unaware is called the unconscious.

When analyzing literary texts, the psychoanalysis theory could be used to interpret the hidden meaning within a text, or to better understand the author's intentions. Through the analysis of motives, Freud's psychoanalysis can be used to help clarify the meaning of the writing as well as the actions of the characters within the text.

Qualitative research is used in this research. to find the conversation form of texts or sentences that relate to the concept of psychoanalysis. Qualitative research is used to gain understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insight into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses. The qualitative research is relevant with this topic because it supports to find how Alan's schizophrenia is represented in the play.

The data source is a play written by Peter Shaffer entitled *Equus*. The form of the data is the quotations from the play. The writer will select the data that relate to the topic of research. The other references which relate to the topic are used to support the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Symptoms of Alan's Schizophrenia and Its Causes

Alan Strang is seventeen year-old boy who recently blinds six horses with a spike and he has nightmares often, screaming in his sleep. Dysart, a psychiatrist, begins to uncover things about Alan's family life; his father, Frank Strang, bans television from their house. His mother, Dora Strang, is devoutly religious and she reads Alan bible passages very frequently while he grows up. Each parent believes that the other's actions while raising their son have something to do with the crime he ultimately commits. Alan's schizophrenia can be seen through the symptoms and its causes as follows.

Delusion

Delusion, previously called as paranoid disorder, is a type of serious mental illness in which a person cannot tell what is real from what is imagined. People with delusion generally experience non-bizarre delusion, which involves situations that could occur in real life, such as being followed, poisoned, deceived, conspired against, or loved from distance. These delusions usually involve the misinterpretation or perceptions or experiences. In reality, however, the situations are either not true at all or highly exaggerated.

The delusion which has been experienced by Alan actually is caused by his childhood experiences while he grows up. It starts from his parents, Frank and Dora Strang who have always different ideas. In literature, different idea can be refer to the different parenting style. Different parenting style will affect children's outcomes. In this case, Frank, a very strict parent, as the head of the household takes the control of his family. On the other hand, Dora seems indulged Alan. Those differences of parenting style which

occur to Alan while he grows up make him create his own perception about something. . Dora says that her grandfather often rides a horse every morning. The delusion may occur to someone while he or she is given some information repeatedly and they accept it but they cannot make a good interpretation in real life or on the other word what they hear is what they believe.

When Dysart starts to uncover the things about Alan, he tells that whenever he sees a horse, he acts as if he talks to a horse. He thinks that a horse is another shape of God. He imagines that what happens to a horse is exactly the same as God. Wearing chain in a mouth and it is pulled by the fellow, being whipped whenever the fellow wants to go faster and Alan always thinks that must be hurt.

Something else, when the horse first appeared, I looked up into his mouth. It was huge. There was this chain in it. The fellow pulled it, and cream dripped out. I said 'Does it hurt?' and he said—the horse said—said— (Shaffer, 1975:55)

This misperception appears when Dora tells Dysart that he actually extremely adores the horse and she is used reading him the same book over and over about a horse. She also reads him a bible night after night while he grows up. Dora says that his fondness toward a horse begins when the first time he sees a horse at the beach, and he describes how he feels when he rides a horse. The feeling that he feels shows how Alan extremely adores the horse. He feels he gets a power when he rides a horse.

Dysart tries to dig the information deeper from Dora's point of view. She adds that she ever reads him one of passage in

bible that perhaps makes him believes that horse is a God's shape.

Dysart gets other information from Dora. Dora tells him a fact about the photograph of horse which is hanged up in Alan's bedroom and he never takes it down. That picture always attracts him. Dora explains that actually the photograph which is hanged up in his bedroom takes a place of another kind of picture altogether. She says that the picture is just the same as a reproduction of Lord on his way to Cavalry. Alan is always in love with the photograph.

Frank knows something weird happen to Alan at one night when he goes upstairs fetch something. But, when he comes along he heard the sound of chanting which is his mother's always reading to him. Alan repeats the words over and over.

His delusion becomes worst at that night when Alan starts acting like a horse and says words over at the same time. Franks says to Dysart that the religion is the bottom of all those things. Both Frank and Dora do not try to talk to him about it. The delusion is getting worse when Alan's parents choose to keep those misinterpretations for a long time and do not try to talk to him as parents while he grows up. Alan starts worshipping the horse religiously. His action shows how Alan deems the horse as another shape of God.

Franks describes how the action of his son while he is worshipping the picture which hangs up in his bedroom. According to Frank all those things happen because of the bible her mother always reads to him. The bible makes him very religious. However, the saddest thing according to Frank is that his son is adores horse and worship it like a God.

Hallucination

Hallucination is sensory experiences that occur in the absence of a stimulus. These can occur in any of the five senses (vision,

hearing, smell, taste, or touch). "Voices" (auditory hallucination) is the most common type of hallucination in schizophrenia. The voices can either be internal, seeming to come from within one's own mind, or they can be external, in this case they can seem to be as real as another person's speaking. The voices may talk to the person about his or her behavior, commands the person to do things, or warn them. Sometimes the voices talk to each other, and sometimes people with schizophrenia talk to the voices that they hear. This happens to Alan. Alan has been experiencing some hallucinations, which is proved in the quotations below.

Alan's hallucination appears for the first time when Jill invites him to go to the stable. She says that she cannot invite him to her house because her mother will not allow her to go with a boy. According to her, a straw in a stable will make them both feel comfortable. Alan directly refuses her invitation. He says to Jill that the horse will see them. The horse will watch them, and he doesn't want it to happen. He is afraid of horse as if he is afraid to be watched by God. Jill looks confused with Alan's behavior.

Jill: What on earth's the matter with you? ...

Silence. He won't look at her.

Look, if the sight of horses offends you, my lord, we can just shut the door. You won't have to see them. All right?
A rich light falls.

Furtively Alan enters the square from the top end, and Jill follows. The horses on the circle retire out of sight on either side.

(Shaffer, 1975:141)

His anxiety about the horse is getting bigger. He asks Jill to close and lock the door so the horse will not see them in a stable. The

hallucination appears when the misinterpretation of something is created by someone who is experiencing the hallucination. In this case, Alan creates his hallucination by accepting the story of the horse and relating it to the passage in a bible while he grows up.

The hallucination that happens to Alan is created by his own perceptions about a horse. It happens because his mother always tells him a story about a horse and relates it to the passage in a bible while he grows up. Those perceptions are getting uncontrolled because he has no place to express his feeling even to his parents. What he gets from his parents while he grows up is reflected to his behavior in the future.

Alan tells Dysart that at that time when he almost has a sex with Jill, he feels that although the door is shut, the God can watch him. He feels that the horse is another shape of God who mocks what he does with Jill in the stable. He realizes that what he does is wrong though Jill tries to convince him about what they do in a stable is normal thing to do as teenagers. Alan still could not deny that he is always watched by Him. Alan is always a religious boy since he has a close relationship with his mother rather than with his father. His hallucination brings him to the big anxiety.

Dysart asks him about what the God says after seeing what Alan does in the stable. Alan answers that He says he always watches him whatever he does and wherever he is. His hallucination shows that when he sees back a horse, a horse seems like to give him warning. He screams when he sees the horse's eyes rolling towards him. According to him, the horse is talking to him. The most common hallucination in schizophrenia is auditory hallucination which includes hearing voices. The voices may be heard as warning, command or so on. This happens to Alan. He

always hears the voices. He feels that he is haunted by the voices. His hallucination is caused by his false belief of what he believes that the horse is just another shape of God.

The Lord thy God is a jealous God. He sees you. He sees you forever and ever, Alan. He sees you! ... *He sees you!*

Alan: [in *terror*] Eyes! ... White eyes—never closed! Eyes like flames—coming—coming!... God seest! God seest! ... NO! ... (Shaffer, 1975:121)

The voices are terribly approaching him. Alan loses his control, so he screams loudly. He shows to Dysart how he wants to avoid those eyes which stare straight to him. His belief has changed the whole sides of himself. He gets a lot of anxiety and he cannot control himself of what he believes.

Alan's Schizophrenia Seen from Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory of personality argues that human behavior is the result of the interactions among three component parts of the mind: the id, ego, and superego. The structural theory of personality places great importance on how conflicts among the parts of the mind shape behavior and personality. These conflicts are mostly unconscious.

Freud's psychoanalysis also tends to look at experiences from early childhood to see if these events have affected the individual's life, or potentially contributed to current concerns. This form of therapy is considered a long-term choice and can continue for weeks, months, or even years depending on the depth of the concern being explored. The therapy could be hypnosis or giving a drug to the patient. Most of psychiatrists will use hypnosis and giving a

drug while patient is in a treatment. In this case, Freud's psychoanalysis theory will be used to cover Alan's schizophrenia and how the psychiatrist uses those therapies toward Alan. The following analysis shows that the id, ego, and superego are represented in Alan's personality.

Id, Ego, and Superego in Alan's Personality

. As a teenager, Alan always has a right to go out with a girl he likes. The id is when Alan feels that he needs to go out with a girl. However, at that time he refuses it because he knows that his father would not allow him and his mother is waiting for him. The ego shows that even he wants to go out with the girl, he thinks another thing including the prohibition of his father; on the other word, Alan wants to show her that he is actually an obedient child toward his parent.

Jill seems disappointed with Alan's refuses. She tries to convince him many times. She says that going back to home is just something that Alan actually doesn't want to. The superego is something inside human personality that relates to some rules, whether it is bad or good, dangerous or not and so on. Deep inside Alan's heart, he actually wants to go out with Jill, but the ego controls it. When Jill tries to convince him, he starts to think again and accept Jill's explanation.

He collapses, lying upstage on his face. Jill lies on her back motionless, her head downstage, her arms extended behind her. A pause.

Dysart: [*gently*] What was it? You couldn't? though you wanted to very much?

Alan: [*to Dysart*] I couldn't ... see her.

Dysart: What do you mean?

Alan: [*to Dysart*] Only Him. Every time kissed her—*He* was in the way. (Shaffer, 1975:117)

The quotation above shows how id, ego and superego always work together in human's personality. The id always relates to the human's desire. In this case, Alan tries to fulfill his desire with Jill. The ego will try to get how that desire can be filled. Though Alan wants to have a sex with Jill and it almost happens, he realizes that it would be a big sinning. The superego will control the action of human's desire. It usually relates with the norms and rules in society. The superego will make someone consider their actions whether it is right or wrong, good or bad before they decide. The superego finally makes Alan doesn't do that. He feels that he is always watched by Him.

Freud's psychoanalysis theory also talks about some methods that are usually used to cure the patient. The most common methods are hypnosis and giving a drug. The analysis below shows how Dysart, as a psychiatrist uses those methods to cover the things of Alan's schizophrenia.

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is used to induce an altered state of consciousness characterized by deep relaxation and heightened suggestibility. It is generally induced by the monotonous repetition of words and gestures while the patients completely relax. Although almost everyone can be hypnotized, individuals vary greatly in susceptibility. The hypnosis is characterized by heightened suggestibility and represents an altered state of consciousness that occur in brain activity when a person is hypnotized.

The hypnosis goes successfully when the patient does not show the objection. Because it relates to the unconsciousness of the patient, the psychiatrist has to make sure that the patient is in a good condition; on the other words, the patient may not look

distressed, emotional, or chaotic. That is what Dysart does towards Alan before he uses the hypnosis. He explains to Alan that the hypnosis will make him feel like he is talking to Dysart in his sleep.

Alan says that it is a stupid thing talking to someone through his sleep, but as a psychiatrist, Dysart knows how to convince Alan without constraining him. He agrees and follows what Dysart says to him. First thing that Dysart should suggest to him is that the hypnosis will make him feel more comfortable and relaxed than before. After he successfully makes him feel comfortable and relaxed, then he asks him to look at the stain and keep his mind as blank as possible. Dysart then shows how the hypnosis work by tapping a pen several times and it is followed by Alan by closing-opening his eyes.

The hypnosis successfully works in Alan. Dysart is going to dig the information from Alan's point of view. He starts to ask him about an event in a beach where Alan for the first time sees a horse. When Alan looks up into the horse's mouth and sees chain in it, he tries to take it out from the horse's mouth, but the horse says back to him that the chain will never be taken out from his mouth. Alan just seems to imagines that what happens to the horse is the same as Jesus. From his imagination, Alan creates his own idea about the horse.

Dysart: Only his name isn't Jesus, is it?

Alan: No.

Dysart: What is it?

Alan: No one knows but him and me.

Dysart: You can tell me, Alan. Name him.

Alan: Equus.

Dysart: Thank you. Does he live in all horses or just some?

Alan: All. (Shaffer, 1975:76)

Besides collecting the information which relates to his schizophrenia, Dysart successfully makes him tell the truth. Alan tells him that he names the horse, *Equus*. According to Alan, *Equus* is live in all horses. Like his mother says to Dysart, Alan is always fascinated with that word. She says that the word of "*equus*" is the Latin word for horse. The information that has been collected by Dysart finally makes him understand why Alan always screams and cries of the word "*ek*" every night in his sleep.

He finds two important things by hypnotizing Alan. The first is his idea about the horse changes when the first time he sees the horse on the beach. For the first time, he sees a huge head stares down on him and chain in it. His misinterpretation appears when his mother always reads him a bible and story about horse while he grows up. It is getting worse when Alan feels that he has no place to express his idea about something. Another possible cause that makes him distressed is that both his father and mother always have different ideas. His father, Frank Strang, is a strict father and an atheist. He even doesn't allow Alan to ride a horse. On the other hand, his mother, Dora Strang, is indulged mother and very religious. She likes to read his son a bible night after night. The second is about his screams every night which are always heard like "*ek*". According to Dysart, his amazement towards the horse and the word "*Equus*" always haunt him.

He says to Hesther that his tricks which he has given to Alan before are just not enough to cover all the things. He needs another trick to make him say everything he feels. According to Dysart, his false belief and his hallucination appear when he feels there is no place to talk to, even to his parents. Dysart understands that what he needs is a figure who is always willing to hear him whenever he wants to talk. Dysart wants him to tell

everything while he is in good mood. The drug will help him more relaxed and stimulate his brain to tell the truth.

Dysart and Hesther are discussing about Alan. Dysart says to her that what happens to Alan extremely not fair. The world seems to ignore him. There is no friends, no entertainments, no things that he should get as a teenager. As a teenager, he needs to make a friend, explores everything of himself and the most important of that is the love of his parents.

Dysart starts to ask him about Jill. At the first, Alan shows his rejection to tell more about Jill. He refuses to give more information about Jill, unfortunately Dysart knows that the pill works on him. He pushes Alan to tell him the truth and still tries to make him believe that he himself and the pill will help him. Seeing Dysart little bit enforces him and realizing that he is under influence of the pill, he finally tells everything to Dysart.

Dysart tries to make him keeping tell the truth. The problems are solved. Alan describes how he feels when he spends a night with Jill. He feels free. For the first time he can go out with the girl he likes, can see her eyes closely, and hold her hand. He never feels that feeling before. He is just a poor son that cannot feel everything as teenager, till he meets Jill. Dysart asks him to imagine what he wants to do with Jill. He says he wants to see her eyes little bit longer and see into her breasts. The film that he has watches with Jill grows his sexuality. After they both watch the movie, Jill asks him to the stable, but Alan refuses it. He knows that he cannot see a horse while he takes Jill with him.

Dysart finally uncover the whole things through his tricks. The pill has makes him tell everything when he and Jill are in the stable. His big anxiety that whatever he does as being watched pushes him to act over. He blinds six horses in the stable with a pick.

According to Dysart, he blinds them because they have already watched all the things. After Alan tells and acts it over, Dysart tries to make him feel better.

CONCLUSION

In Peter Shaffer's play *Equus*, schizophrenia which is represented through the scenes can be clearly seen. This proves that Alan Strang, the main character of the play, suffers from schizophrenia. His schizophrenia can be seen from its symptoms, delusion and hallucination that he experiences. The actions and behaviors of Alan's Strang also show that they are influenced by id, ego, and superego. The id is the most basic part of the personality and relates to the human's desire. While the ego deals with reality, trying to meet the desires of the id in a way that is socially acceptable in the world. The superego develops last, and is based on morals and judgments about right and wrong. Even though the superego and the ego may reach the same decision is more based on moral values, while the ego's decision is based more on what others will think or what the consequences of an action could be. Freud's psychoanalysis theory discusses human personality which consists of id, ego and superego that are reflected on the human's behavior.

Freud's psychoanalysis theory also deals with the treatments of schizophrenia. There are hypnosis and giving a drug which are done by a psychiatrist. Relating to those treatments, it is Dysart, a psychiatrist, who tries to help Alan to reveal the causes of Alan's schizophrenia. At first, Dysart tries to collect the information about him from his parents, Frank and Dora Strang. After investigating them, Dysart realizes that both of them always have different ideas while Alan grows up. Dora Strang is a very religious mother and seems to indulge Alan. She always

reads him a bible night after night. His father, Frank Strang, is an atheist and very strict towards him. Frank even forbids him to watch television.

As a psychiatrist, Dysart has uncovered the things from Alan's point of view, but he knows that he has to use special treatments to him. Dysart uses hypnosis. The hypnosis which is used by Dysart completely works on Alan. He makes him feel comfortable and relaxed. While Alan is being hypnotized, Dysart suggests him to go back in time when he meets a horse at the first time. Dysart finds that he gets misinterpretation about horse. His admiration about horse and the passage of the bible which his mother reads him while he grows up are the causes of his delusion. Alan also experiences hallucination. Whatever he does and whenever are watched by Him.

Dysart does not only use hypnosis, but he also uses a drug to get more information from Alan. The pill which is given to him is not quite different with hypnosis. According to Dysart, it will make him tell the truth. When Alan starts to drink it, Dysart asks him to tell everything about the girl who works at the stable named Jill. By drinking the pill, Alan is under control by it. He tells that Jill is the girl who takes him to watch a dirty movie. She also takes him into the stable. Jill enforces him to take off his clothes. He knows that he is always watched by Him, but his sexuality desire breaks it. When they just have a sex, his hallucination appears. He hears the horses' hooves come to approach him. He is in big anxiety. He screams loudly and asking forgiveness about what he does with her. He cannot control himself. He picks a spike and blinds the six horses in a stable. After through the process and treatments, Alan seems to be easy to control. At least, according to Dysart, Alan tries to express his feeling and idea which he cannot do it before to his parents.

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