

**THE MAIN CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S
SHORT STORY "THE BLACK CAT"**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining
the Bachelor Degree in English



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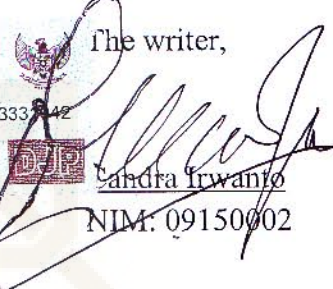
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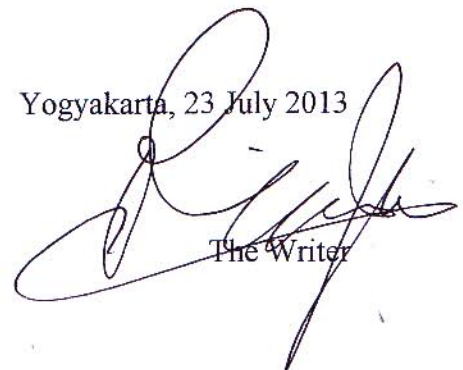
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The Writer

Motto:
Nothing is nothing



Proudly I dedicate this to my younger brother:

Aziz

The next fighter

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ABSTRACT

The main character's personality in a literary work is central to the development of the story, and it is especially true of the main character in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat." He has good nature, but he lives in bad nurture that has turned him into a person with abnormal personality. This research is intended to more deeply analyze how the factors of nature and nurture build his personality and to elaborate the development of the main character's personality based on Freud's concept of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Thus, this research uses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and for the method, it applies qualitative research method.

Based on the data analysis, it is found that the main character's personality in "The Black Cat" is very complex. He inherits his parents' personalities which are humane and docile (nature). However, he gets bad influences from the environment, such as his companions, his parents, his wife, but most importantly his pet: the black cat (nurture). Both factors are often in conflicts. The *id* and the *superego* often do not agree, and the main character's personality is more dominated by the *id* than the *superego*. He used to treat all his pets very nicely, but after he learned about the superstition of black cat, he respects black cats more while deep inside him, he was frightened and threatened by the presence of his black cats. It is his extreme fear that finally drives him to kill his black cats brutally. Also, he kills his wife because she does not believe in the superstition. In conclusion, he tends to behave according to his uncontrollable desire. Finally, his life becomes worse.

Keywords: personality, nature and nurture, *id*, *ego*, and *superego*.

INTISARI

Kepribadian sang tokoh utama dalam karya sastra menjadi kunci perkembangan sebuah cerita, dan ini sesuai dengan tokoh utama dalam cerita “The Black Cat” karya Edgar Allan Poe. Secara alamiah, kepribadian sang tokoh utama tersebut baik, tapi dia hidup di lingkungan yang buruk yang mengubah dia menjadi seorang yang buruk pula. Tujuan analisis ini adalah untuk mengetahui secara mendalam tentang bagaimana faktor keturunan dan lingkungan berperan dalam membangun kepribadian sang tokoh utama sekaligus menjelaskan perkembangan sang tokoh utama dilihat dari konsep *id*, *ego*, dan *superego* dari Freud. Jadi, penelitian ini menggunakan teori psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud dengan metode kualitatif.

Berdasarkan data yang terhimpun, kepribadian sang tokoh utama “The Black Cat” sangat rumit. Dia mewarisi sifat dari orangtuanya yang amat manusiawi dan penurut (faktor keturunan). Namun, dia mendapatkan pengaruh yang buruk dari lingkungan sekitar seperti orang tuanya, teman masa kecilnya, istrinya, dan yang paling berpengaruh adalah binatang peliharaannya: kucing hitam (faktor lingkungan). Kedua faktor tersebut sering menciptakan konflik. *Id* dan *superego* sering tidak sejalan, dan kepribadian sang tokoh utama lebih didominasi oleh *id* daripada *superego*. Dia terbiasa bersikap baik pada semua binatang peliharaannya, tapi setelah ia mengetahui mitos kucing hitam. Dia lebih sering memperhatikan kucing hitam. Dia khawatir dan takut dengan kehadiran kucing hitam tersebut. Puncak dari rasa takutnya menuntun dia membunuh kucing hitam tersebut. Selain itu, dia juga membunuh istrinya sendiri karena sang istri tidak percaya sama sekali pada mitos itu. Singkatnya, sang tokoh utama cenderung bersikap berdasarkan nafsunya yang tidak terkontrol. Akhirnya, hidupnya menjadi kacau.

Kata kunci: kepribadian, faktor keturunan dan lingkungan, *id*, *ego*, dan *superego*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

Short story is one of literary works which is well-known in the world. According to Abrams, short story is one of the oldest and most widespread forms. Some of the types which precede the short story are the *fable*, the *exemplum*, the *folktale*, and the *fabliau* (Abrams 159). Short story became popular in nineteenth century (DiYanni 41). People can find a short story not only in literary textbooks, but also in magazines or newspapers. In some newspapers, a short story is used to attract the readers, that is why there are always different stories in some newspapers and magazines. As short story becomes popular among people, of course, it can raise the benefits of some people or institutions.

Short story is a work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the components, the types, and the various narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well (Abrams 157). Besides that, Edgar Allan Poe, defines what he calls “the prose tell” as a narrative that can be read at one sitting period from one and half hour to two hours, and that is limited to a “certain unique or single effect,” to which every detail is subordinate (Abrams 158). It means, a short story has to focus on one problem.

In a short story, however, there are two important elements namely plot and characters. They both have different functions to make the story interesting.

Firstly, plot is the time-sequence that is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it... (Forster 86). Therefore, in a narrative story, the plot asks “why can it happen?” not “and then?”. According to Aristotle’s poetics, “the first principle of tragedy—the soul, in fact—is the plot, and second to that the characters” (quoted by “Whalley” 75).

Secondly is character. Abrams (21) defines character as the persons, in a dramatic or narrative work, endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say—the dialogue—and what they do—in action. Characters and characterization in short story have also important roles because characters are the doer/ the actor who play the roles in a story. Besides that, characters can determine quality of a story whether it is good or not. Bennet states that “the foundation of good fiction is character-creation and nothing else. Style counts; plot counts; originality of outlook counts. But none of them counts anything like so much as the convincingness of the characters” (quoted by “Beaty” 102).

Characters can be divided into major and minor, and flat and round character. In DiYanni (54) a major character is considered as an important figure at the center of the story’s action or theme, whereas a minor character is to support and illuminate the major character. About a flat character Foster said that “it is built around ‘a single idea or quality’ and is presented in outline and without much individualizing detail, and so can be fairly adequately described in a single phrase or sentence” (quoted by “Abrams” 21). Besides, Foster states “a round character as a complex character because we see all sides of him” (quoted by

“Kenney” 29). The round character is more interesting than a flat character. The round character can surprise the readers, whereas the flat character cannot. Foster (78) states that if it never surprises, it is flat. Besides, in *Analyze Fiction*, Foster via Kenny (30) says that the complex, or round, character is a higher kind of achievement than the simple one.

However, characters are formed by the author. The author can make his characters in his story whether they are good or bad. They all have their own functions. The good or bad character is usually influenced by the genetics and the environments. In many fictional stories, there are lots of good characters turn into the bad ones or the other way round. Sometimes, a good character can turn into a bad one because of being affected by their living environment, terrible past or genetic factor. The characteristic of these characters will also determine how their personality is. Personality is the distinctive and relatively enduring ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that characterize a person's responses to life situations (Robins 2007 via Passer 454). The good character in short story will show good personality, whereas the bad character will show bad personality. The good personality is usually represented by a patient person, a pious person, a helper, etc., whereas the bad personality is usually represented by an arrogant person, a sly person, a murderer, etc. Whether it is a good personality or not, it is complicated because personality is also complex. Based on Freud's structure of personality, the good or bad character is developed by various process.

Some explanations above can be clearly seen in “The Black Cat.” The short story was written by Edgar Allan Poe, a great poet and American short story.

He was born on January 19th 1809 in Boston. Best known for his tales of the macabre and mystery, Poe was one of the early American practitioners of the short story and a progenitor of detective fiction and crime fiction (www.feedbooks.com). According to *Merriam-Webster's: Reader's Handbook* (250), in Western, horror story began to emerge in the 18th-century pre-Romantic era, then in the Romantic era American Edgar Allan Poe raised the horror story to a level far above mere entertainment through his skillful intermingling of reason and madness, eerie atmosphere and everyday reality.

Poe's short story, "The Black Cat", tells about a superstition of a black cat. It is interesting and important to be analyzed. "The Black Cat" is worth to be analyzed for several reasons. The first reason is viewed from its main character. The main character of this story is bad for his being an alcoholic. It is interesting since this story puts an antagonist one as the main character. Aristotle in his poetics ever said that the main character must have been good, but the main character in "The Black Cat" is not. It means that the bad character in "The Black Cat" has a different view about the reformed character. The second reason is that his personality develops unpredictably. The narrator who loves a cat since his childhood begins to hate the cat and kill it in his adulthood. The third reason is the causes that influence the main character's personality. Many factors make the main character complicated whether it is from his genetics or it is from his environment. Sometimes he becomes good and sometimes he becomes bad. However, both have strong influences to his personality.

Therefore, Poe's "The Black Cat" is reasonable to be the object of this research. "The Black Cat" breaks Aristotle's concept about main character. "The Black Cat" provides more conflicts of the main character's personality with his many influences than talking about the superstition. The consideration of the analysis of personality as the best choice is because it has good significances in real life. Hopefully, by understanding the concept of personality some people can understand that everybody has not the same personality as others. They cannot judge other people as themselves. Everybody has different experiences. So, the researcher analyzes the main character's personality by using psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud.

B. Scope of Study

The researcher analyzes the main character's personality by using psychoanalysis. The researcher focuses on the role of nature and nurture in forming the main character's personality and the role of id, ego, and superego towards the narrator's characterization and actions of the main character.

C. Problem Statements

1. How do the factors of nature and nurture shape the main character's personality?
2. How is the development of the main character's personality based on Freud's concept of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*?

D. Objectives of Study

Based on the problem statements above, here are the main objectives of this research:

1. to analyze how nature and nurture shape the main character's personality;
2. to elaborate the development of the main character's personality which is viewed based on Freud's *id*, *ego*, and *superego*.

E. Significances of Study

The research is important based on some reasons. The first importance is that the research talks about personality. Analyzing personality is important to people in society since by understanding the personality of human beings, people can more understand each other and it can avoid conflicts among them. People will not judge a condition based on their own experiences only because everyone has different experiences in life. Besides, people can also learn how the different experiences can form the different personality of human beings.

The second importance is the study of the characteristic of the main character. The main character who has good character changes to be bad character because of some factors. It explains that actually many factors can influence the personality of human beings easily. The analysis of "The Black Cat" provides an understanding to the readers that the change of the personality is caused not only by the recent experience, but also by the previous experience. Finally, the whole

of significances hopefully can be additional reference, especially for people who are studying literature.

F. Prior Research

There are three researches that have already discussed the same object, “The Black Cat”. The researcher takes the three articles from the Internet. The first is the research entitled *The Base and The Moral: A Black Cat* written by Jill Cromwell. The research was published on February 26, 2010. He analyzed “The Black Cat” as a symbol of moral and the base perverseness. According to Cromwell, the black cat is symbol of moral law which fights with base perverseness of man. Poe uses unnamed character to represent that every man has the base. The conclusion in this article is that the murder of Pluto represents the base soul’s attempt at a final vanquishing of the “moral.” (<http://www.helium.com/items/1754877-edgar-allan-poe>).

The second is the research entitled *Psychoanalysis of Pluto's Delusional Revenge* written by Monica Gomez. This research was published on April 23, 2009 and last updated on April 28, 2009. She analyzed that “The Black Cat” had its revenge to the main character or narrator because the narrator killed Pluto. So, the narrator’s house was burnt, his wife was dead, and he fell also in poverty (<http://www.helium.com/items/1754877-edgar-allan-poe>).

Third is the research entitled *Literary Analysis: “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe*. The research was written by Selina McCormack. He analyzed the relation of the main character with his consumption of alcohol. He said that

his alteration to the worse is caused by his bad habit as an alcoholic (<http://www.helium.com/items/1754877-edgar-allan-poe>).

However, all of the prior researches are different from this research. The researcher focuses on the nature and the nurture and the mechanism of id, ego, and superego of the main character.

G. Theoretical Approach

Based on the object that is analyzed, the research uses psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalytic theory is one of the great intellectual contributions of modern times, and it continues to influence Western thought today (Passer 443). Besides that, Freud is the person who breaks understanding of traditional psychology through his work. In 1900 Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

According to Ryan (129) the book contains revolutionary ideas because it breaks understanding of traditional psychology. Traditionally, the psychology considers everything that happens in mind is only limited in conscious mind, but according to Freud, actually there is another dimension that has important role in forming the behavior of human beings, it is unconscious mind.

However, psychoanalytic theory is complex. In *Literary Theory*, there are some essential concepts of Sigmund Freud is psychoanalytic theory. The assumption is that there are unconscious mental processes, the recognition of the theory resistance and repression, the appreciation of the importance of sexuality

and of the Oedipus complex—these constitute the principal subject—matter of psychoanalysis and the foundation of its theory (Carter 69).

Beginning in 1923 with *The Ego and the Id*, Freud offered another tripartite division to replace that of conscious, preconscious and unconscious: ego, id, and superego (Thwaites 36). Besides that, *The Ego and the Id* is the first detailed exploration of a new topography of the psyche (Thwaites 43). To understand the tripartite division clearly, here the researcher quotes the explanation of them as written by Thwaites.

The id has least organisation of all: it is made up of free, unbound cathexes; has no recognition of time; and is not governed by the need to avoid contradiction. The ego, on the other hand, is made up of bound (though not necessarily conscious) cathexes; it has a sense of temporality, and seeks to exclude contradiction (and hence resistance is one of its functions). Freud describes the ego as that external rim of the id which has been modified by its contact with the world – a bodily ego, in the sense that it is in effect a mental representation of the body's surfaces. The superego is the function of watching and judging, and holds itself apart from both of the other agencies. Unlike the id, its cathexes are bound, but in its critical function it divides itself off from the ego, often fiercely (Thwaites 44).

Sigmund Freud divides the structure of personality into three parts; id, ego, and superego. The Id is the innermost core of the personality, the only structure present at birth, and the source of all psychic energy. It exists totally

within the unconscious mind. The id has no direct contact with reality and functions in a totally irrational manner. It operates according to the pleasure principle. The ego has direct contact with reality and functions primarily at a conscious level. It operates according to the reality principle, testing reality to decide when and under what conditions the id can safely discharge its impulse and satisfy its needs. The last personality structure to develop is the superego, it is the moral arm of the personality. The superego contains the traditional values and ideals of family and society. These ideals are internalized by the child through identification with his or her parents, who also use reinforcement and punishment to teach the child what is right and what is wrong (Passer 445).

Besides, Murfin in his article, *Psychoanalytic Criticism and Jane Eyre* states that Freud, then, powerfully developed an old idea: that the human mind is essentially dual in nature. He called the predominantly passionate, irrational, unknown, and unconscious part of the psyche the *id*, or "it." The *ego*, or "I," was his term for the predominantly rational, logical, orderly, conscious part (1). If the understanding of id is concluded, so the id is the unconscious part of psyche which just receives happiness and refuses uncomfortable condition. Id works according to pleasure principle, for example, when someone wants to buy jewelry, but he has no money, he may steal it—it is the id—but, the ego prevents it. The ego considers it is dangerous because the ego thinks logically and stealing is a crime. In an article entitles *Id, Ego, and Superego*, it is stated that if the id is a cauldron of passions, the ego is the agent of reason, commonsense, and defense (Lapsley 6).

Then, another structure of personality is superego. It considers moral value. Why the ego prevents the stealing is because it does not agree with superego. The superego includes the conscience, which prevents us from behaving in a morally improper way by making us feeling guilty if we do wrong (Feldman 338).

Here, the researcher focuses on Freud's structure of personality; id, ego, and superego. The main character is analyzed by the three structures of personality that is related to the nature and the nurture as the supporting ideas. However, before the researcher analyzes the main character's personality by using psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud, the researcher analyzes the main character's personality seen from the nature and nurture. It is important to be used to analyze the main character's personality because the nature and nurture influence everyone in life. No one grows up free of environmental influences, nor does anyone develop without being affected by his or her inherited genetic makeup (Feldman 283). Nature is the inherited genetic, whereas the nurture is the environmental influences. It is hard to decide which is more dominant between nature and nurture in building human personality. In *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior*, it is stated that the levels-of-analysis framework also addresses an issue that has been debated since antiquity: Is our behavior primarily shaped by nature (our biological endowment) or by nurture (our environment and learning history)? (Passer 6).

In addition, the Freud's structure of personality; id, ego, superego is also supported by Freud's other views such as defence mechanisms and the role of

early experiences which is more dominant than later experiences in forming the personality. However, people in Western cultures, especially those steeped in the Freudian belief that the key experiences in development are children's relationship with their parents in the first five years of life, have tended to support the idea that the early experiences are more important than later experiences (Chan, 1963; Lamb & Sternberg, 1992 via Santrock 21).

H. Methods of Research

1. Type of the Research

The research uses library research because it takes the book entitled *Great Tales of Terror* which includes the short story "The Black Cat" as the object of study and other references to support the subject matter of the study. In addition, this research does not include survey or interview to some people.

2. The Data and the Source of Data

This research only uses the primary data. The source of the primary data is Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Black Cat". It is taken from one of Poe's books entitled *Great Tales of Terror* which was published by Watermill press, United State of America 1980, pages 70-86.

3. The Technique of Collecting Data

Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Black Cat", is close reading the primary data. The primary data is taken from the plot, ideas, narratives, attitudes, and thought of the narrator.

4. The Technique of Analyzing Data

This research uses a descriptive analysis, thus, all of the data is analyzed to get the result and the conclusion. In analyzing data, the researcher needs to identify, classify, analyze and find the conclusion. Therefore, the researcher takes the following steps:

- a. Identifying : the researcher identifies the main character's personality in this story.
- b. Classifying : the researcher classifies the influences of nature and nurture and classifies the main character's personality according to Freud's concept of personality; id, ego, and superego
- c. Analyzing : the researcher analyzes the nature and the nurture of the main character's personality. Then, the researcher analyzes the id, the ego and the superego of the main character's personality, and how they work.
- d. Concluding : the researcher finds the conclusion.

I. Thesis Organization

This graduating paper consists of four chapters and each of them is subdivided in subsequent divisions. It is arranged as follows:

Chapter one is Introduction. It consists of Background of Choosing the Subject, Scope of the Study, Problem Statements, Objectives of the Study, Significances of the Study, Prior Research, Theoretical Approach, Method of

Research, and Thesis Organization. Chapter two presents some intrinsic aspects consisting of the story, the summary, the characters and characterization, the plot, and the setting, point of view, the tone, the style, the diction, and the symbols to describe the story. Chapter three presents the analysis of the main character's personality in terms of the nature and the nurture that influence it and three Freud's structures of personality; the id, the ego, and the superego. Chapter four provides Conclusion.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that the nature and the nurture influence the mechanism of id, ego, and superego in creating the main character's personality. In "The Black Cat", the main character's personality is more dominated by the nurture than the nature. His good personality who is docile and humane cannot survive for long time. He lives in bad nurture that changes his good personality to bad personality. His bad character begins when he knows the superstition of black cat in his adulthood. The main bad nurture is from the black cat. However, before having bad personality because of the nurture, the main character's personality passes various process. It is caused by the nature that is opposite to the nurture. Finally, the nature and nurture often get conflicts that influence the mechanism of the id, the ego, and the superego.

Then, the three mechanisms are very complex. They try and show their roles each other. However, in "The Black Cat", the main character's personality is more dominated by the id than the superego because the main character does not want to be isolated by the environment. Although the superego often gives its role, but the id of the main character is stronger than the superego.

In addition, the ego as the decision maker tends to let the id to get its pleasure, although actually the ego works always fairly. The ego does not satisfy the id directly, but it sometimes postpones the id's will when the will does not agree with the superego or the ego does not satisfy the id's will when the will may endanger the main character himself. However, the id is dominated by some cruel

mistakes. The id claims not only its pleasure, but also more pleasure. When he dislikes the black cat (Pluto), he does not take it somewhere, but he wants the black cat to die. When his wife prevents him to kill the unnamed black cat, he does not ask her to just go away, but he kills his wife directly. As a result, although his murder is not known by anyone for awhile; finally the crime is solved and the main character gets punishment based on his deed.

The main character's personality who often follows his bad desire causes many disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is the death of his wife. Then, he tries to hide his crime to people. Of course, It is very contrary to what the Koran said in the Surah Al - Baqara, verse 42.

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

“And mix not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know (the truth).” (iQuran Pro).

In conclusion, the main character's personality is really complex. His personality is influenced by many causes. The causes is begun not only when he was born, but also when he is still unborn. He inherits his good nature from his parents. Yet, the bad nurtures influence him to be a person with bad personality.

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