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**AN AFFIRMATION OF THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX
BASED ON THE DREAMS OF KAFKA TAMURA,
A CHARACTER FROM MURAKAMI
HARUKI'S *UMIBE NO KAFKA***

Wawat Rahwati and Juratif Damiyati***

Abstract

*This research aims to analyze the hidden themes behind the dreams of Kafka Tamura, a character in Haruki Murakami's novel *Umibe no Kafuka*. The writer will use Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis to uncover the themes of the dreams featured in *Umibe no Kafuka*. Research into Kafka's dreams have shown that they are driven by a desire to totally possess his mother. They led Kafka into carrying out his father's prophecy that he will murder him and sleep with his mother and older sister, though he carried out these acts in a dream. His dreams show symptoms of the mental condition known as the Oedipus Complex.*

1. Introduction

Murakami Haruki is one of the leading figures in contemporary Japanese literature, as he's renowned both in Japan and around the world. His works have been translated into English and other languages. Born in Kyoto in 1949, Haruki Murakami majored in Greek theatre at Waseda University before he embarked on his writing career. But he did not finish his studies as he spent most of his time reading film scripts at the university library.

Murakami started off his literary career by publishing his first novel *Kaze no Uta wo Kike (Hear the Wind Sing)*, which won him the 1979 Gunzo Prize for best new writer. Murakami is a prolific writer. Following the publication of *Kaze no Uta wo Kike*, Murakami wrote a string of bestsellers

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such as *Noruwei no Mori*, *Dansu Dansu Dansu*, *After Dark*, *Umibe no Kafuka*, and other novels.

For his readers, Murakami's books seem strange, magical and yet addictive. His characters are often portrayed as larger than life and brilliant but secretive. They also have relationships with mysterious women, as shown in his novel *Umibe no Kafuka*. This novel is a surrealist work which combines a story grounded on reality with absurd fantasies. *Umibe no Kafuka* centers on two main characters, Kafka Tamura and Satoru Nakata, both of whom are the novel's narrators.

The novel describes the journey of a boy who calls himself Kafka Tamura who left his home on his fifteenth birthday. It also describes a prophecy which says that one day Kafka will murder his father and sleep with his mother and older sister. Kafka's mother and older sister have left him when he was four years old, long before he himself left home. Accompanied only by his conscience, which he referred to as the crow, Kafka left home and headed to a small town called Takamatsu. There, he met the caretaker of the Komura family's library, who offered him a job there after he admitted his age as seventeen years old. Here he was introduced to the library's owner Saeki, whom Kafka believes to be his mother.

A number of problems arose during Kafka's exile in Takamatsu, among them his father's murder at the hands of Satoru Nakata, an elderly man in his sixties. Kafka felt that he had a hand in his father's murder though he didn't commit the crime. At the moment of his father's murder he dreamt that he killed a person and woke up with blood stains on his clothes and hands. During his panicked state following his father's murder, Kafka dreamt that he slept with Saeki, who turned into a fifteen year old girl as well as with Sakura, a girl that he met on the way to Takamatsu.

In the novel the dreams are experienced over and over again by Kafka, leading me to assume that the dreams have important meanings that can unlock the main character's desires and fantasies. Dreams are important in psychoanalysis because they manifest hopes and dreams which cannot be fulfilled in the real world. Dreams are regarded as a form of displacement or *anti-catechists*, which occurs when the subject do not feel fulfilled. (Freud,

2002:86)

Based on the above assumption, I wish to analyze how Kafka Tamura's dreams can express the character's hidden desires. I will use Freud's concept of dreams, which form a major part of the field of psychoanalysis, to analyze the dreams that Kafka Tamura experienced in *Umibe no Kafuka*.

As a field of psychology, psychoanalysis is often used to analyze literary works because they are closely connected. In his book *Freud and Interpretations of Literature*, Milner said that psychoanalysis are one of the social sciences which played a major role in developing theories of modern literature (Milner, 1992:33). Endraswara even said that the study of psychoanalysis in literature is closely connected with the mechanisms of dreams and fantasies (Endraswara, 2006:201). Based on Endraswara's statement, we can be sure that literature and psychoanalysis is intertwined as they both have dreams and fantasies as their objects. This can be seen in Haruki Murakami's novel *Umibe no Kafuka*.

2. Dreams in Freud's Concept of Psychoanalysis

In general, dreams are defined as any activity in the form of images or shapes which resemble the real world during one's sleeping state. Incidents in dreams can be pleasant or unpleasant. For our ancestors, dreams are an important part of life. They use dreams to foretell the future or as an omen, like the ancient Greeks who base their actions on their interpretation of dreams (Freud, 2002:83).

Today dreams are not merely a means to predict the future or omens, but they are also important objects in the study of psycho analysis, particularly Freudian psychoanalysis. In Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, dreams are regarded as a manifestation of instinctive urges in humans that were not given a proper outlet.

According to Hall, Freud's concept of psychoanalysis states that the human personality is a structured unit whose function is to control instincts that existed since birth. The structure's personality comprises of the *id*, *ego* and *superego*. *Id* is the subconscious in the human mind which existed since they are born. The basic urges that we know as instincts originated in the *id* and are projected in dreams. On the other hand, the ego is based on a principle

that consciousness is based on reality, which also determines what is real and rational. The last stage of the personality is the *superego*, which is formed prohibitions and or external orders, such as that taught by parents to their children. The *superego* determines behaviors that stimulates feelings of guilt and regret.

Hall (1993:68) said the human personality has its own dynamics aside from the *id*, *ego* and *supereg*. These dynamics can be thought of as a complex energy system, whose source can be obtained by foods and used for various functions. The functions include circulation, breathing, muscle movement, observation, memory and thought. Aside from that, human beings have physical needs that can bring about tensions or desires that can be uncovered through a number of mental needs that we refer to as instincts.

Instincts are a manifestation of physical tensions that needed an outlet since humans are born. Psychological tensions are known as desires, whereas physical needs that are brought up by those desires are known as needs. Freud grouped the two instincts in two major groups, which are the instinct to live (*Eros*) and the instinct to die (*Thanatos*). The instinct to live is aimed at maintaining human life and conceiving offspring. Hunger, thirst and sex are included in this instinct, whose basic power is known as libido. On the other hand, the deadly instinct (*Thanatos*) is regarded as more destructive. This instinct tends to work in a more secretive manner than the instinct to live, making it less likely to be detected (Hall, 1993:69-73).

These instincts are determined by the psychologic energy in humans and are distributed as well as used by the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The use of energy to produce a movement or notion to satisfy the instinct is known as the choice of an object or object catechist. Catechism is the factor that determines gratification and eases tensions, and is closely linked to the energy used by an object which will strive until its instinct gained gratification. On the other hand, the obstacles encountered by an object seeking the gratification of its instincts are known as an anti-catechist. If the object seeking a catechist failed to gain any gratification then it will seek a substitute object, a step known as displacement. This is brought about by the flexible and liquid nature of energy (Hall, 1993: 75-77)

Dreams are among the means used by humans to seek displacement or an object for their gratification. Desires or tensions that are not fulfilled in the conscious world are displaced in dreams or the subconscious world of dreams. For Freud and students of psychoanalysis, dreams are an important theme. According to Freud, dreams can be influenced by the subject's physical state and their subconscious experiences. For Freud, dreams are an unpredictable reaction to mental phenomenon that originated from physical stimulation. Dreams are also manifestations of hopes that went unfulfilled in the conscious world. Therefore dreams are viewed as fulfilling desires, or hallucinative experiences (Freud, 2002:86).

Dreams apparently have a similar structure as neurotic symptoms, such as the formation of substitutes and other unconscious mechanism, because they occur in the subject's sleeping state. This is possible because physical and psychological activities are at minimized during sleep. In this state, conscious guards are relaxed, allowing repressed thoughts to enter the subconscious.

Freud classified dreams as either manifest or latent, depending on their content. Manifest dreams are those that appear when we wake up or try to remember them, while latent dreams are hidden (Milner, 1992:26). According to Freud, dreams undergo a number of unconscious processes. He identified them as condensation, displacement and symbolization. (Milner, 1992:29)

The first stage of dreams is condensation, in which two or more ideas converged to form the dream. Therefore the dream has two ideas which give the dream a deeper meaning than its imagery (Freud, 2001:38). Condensation itself has three stages. First, a most of the latent dreams simultaneously fade away. Second, only a few of the latent dreams left behind go on to be manifested. Third, the latent dreams that have the same characteristics as most manifested dreams are merged into them. The condensation process can be analogized to a writer who creates a character from the characteristics of real-life people, as well as fictional elements.

The next stage in dreams is displacement. Displacement is defined as a part of a dream that seems meaningless until

it is intertwined with a related element. In other words, this process resembles what in rhetorics is called metonymy, or the substitution of one sign with another.

The final process is analogical figuration. Analogical figuration is equivalent to metaphor, or the replacement of one figure of speech with another that is closely related. In his psychoanalytical research, Freud finds that most symbolism in dreams are linked to distorted sexual desires. (2002:86) Those sexual desires might be drives repressed by the individual to protect them from any excessive pressures that they might face (Hall, 1993:86). Anxiety from a lack of a proper outlet for these tensions could be manifested through some traumatic experiences that the individual faces in the stages of their growth. Hall divided the stages of the human psyche into five phases: the oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital phases (Hall, 1993: 90-95). Freud, however, emphasizes his research on the latent phase. He focused on this phase because focus on the genitals at this stage would bring about conflicts, such as the Oedipus Complex among boys and the Electra Complex among girls. These conflicts are the desire for children to sexually possess a parent of the opposite sex. Though the Oedipus and Electra complexes would be repressed, though they will arise in certain circumstances through dreams that appear vague because of dream distortion.

Freud said that distortion makes dreams seem strange and vague (Freud, 2002:137-150). He added that distortion is a by product of dreams and came about because of there are sensors to the dreams that modify, cloak or give hidden messages to their true meanings. To know the meaning of distorted dreams, we need to take another look at the condensations that arose in dreams to see how symbolism hide their true meaning, and how it can reveal more about the repressed sexual desires like those that gripped Kafka Tamura in the novel *Umibe no Kafuka*.

3. An Analysis of the Meaning of the Dreams of Kafka Tamura as Seen in the Novel *Umibe no Kafuka*

The novel *Umibe no Kafuka* is written in a stream of consciousness style going back and forth from the present to the past as told by the two main characters, Kafka

Tamura and Satoru Nakata. The two narrate the novel, with Kafka recounting the odd chapters while Satoru narrates the even numbered chapters. The alternate narration divides the flow of the novel into two distinct stories which are based on the experiences of Kafka and Satoru, respectively.

As I said before, Murakami Haruki's *Umibe no Kafuka* is rife with dreams, especially the dreams of the main character Kafka Tamura. When he was four, Kafka's mother and older sister abandoned him during his phallic stage. During this stage, which lasts between the ages of three to six, children are particularly focused on their genitals. The mental complex known as the Oedipus Complex is first detected in boys during this phase.

Kafka experienced the Oedipus Complex as his personality developed, bringing about his wish to totally own his mother. Here, Kafka's *Id* plays a major role. Humans are starting to be aware of their existence in the *Id* phase, and are first aware about desires as well as their instincts. Since Kafka is driven by the desire to own his mother. Kafka's desires prompted him to identify with his father, to the extent that he would imitate the older man's speech and behavior. However, Kafka realized that owning his mother totally is impossible due to his *ego*, a state which enables an individual to differentiate between fact and fiction.

Kafka soon realized that its impossible to have his mother entirely to himself because his superego, as the last stage of his personality which also imposed moral controls on him, brought about feelings of guilt in him. The feelings of guilt brought about by the superego made Kafka fear that his father will castrate him, due to his sexual desire for his mother. Therefore Kafka strongly repressed his concerns and his desire for his mother. Repressed feelings are brought about when the conscience takes out the object of its unnatural desires through an anti catechist. Kafka's repressed feelings found an outlet by using displacement as an anti-catechism. Displacement occurs if the catechist process would find an alternate form of gratification, if its original outlet was not flexible or liquid enough to meet its needs. Kafka used dreams as an unconscious form of displacement for his repressed sexual desires.

As I said earlier, dreams are very important in psychoanalysis. They fulfill the mind with a vague or hallucinatory form of fulfilment to wishes or desires that are otherwise repressed. Dreams not only reflect the person's current wishes or those they might have had as children. Again, dreams function as the manifestation of feelings or desires which are unfulfilled in the real world.

Dreams are brought about by an unconscious process. Freud refers to the process as condensation, displacement and symbolism. Condensation is the fusion of different ideas and imagery to a single image. The process transformed Saeki, a woman in her forties, to a fifteen year old in the teenage Kafka's dreams because of the taboo against expressing his desires for an older person.

"I felt a stir, then I woke up and there she was. Strangely, I felt a bright light in the room even though it was in the middle of the night. The light of the moon entered through my window. I knew that I drew the curtains before I went to bed, but the curtains are now opened wide. The outline of the girl was illuminated by the white light of the moon. She was about my age, fifteen or sixteen years old, but more about fifteen. She sat on the table with her chin on her hands, staring at the wall and contemplating. I did not think it was about anything complicated. She was so perfect that I knew she cannot be for real. She seemed like someone who just came out of a dream."

Ever since then, the image of a fifteen year old Saeki came back in Kafka's dreams in the following nights. The second time the fifteen year old image of Saeki returned in Kafka's dream, she did not only sit with her hands on her chin or stared at the wall, she made love to Kafka. The youthful appearance of Saeki not only eased Kafka's anxiety, it also allowed him to evade his Oedipus complex and feelings of guilt over a taboo for lusting over a woman his mother's age.

"After (Saeki) stripped naked, she crawled to my cramped bed and put her warm arms around my body. I felt her warm breath on my neck and her soft hair on my thigh. She must have mistaken me for her dead lover, and she must be doing what they used to do in this room. She must have slept and dreamt of doing the things that she used to do. I think I must wake her. She is making a big mistake

and I should notify her. This is not a dream...this is *reality*. But it happened so fast and left me confused, that I felt sucked in space and time."

Kafka's next dream showed his desire to have the fifteen year old Saeki back in his dreamscape. But instead of Saeki, Kafka saw the image of Sakura, a girl he met on his way to Takamatsu. Sakura is about the same age as Kafka. At this stage, Kafka's dreams entered the *displacement* stage, in which a disturbing or striking image or idea is replaced by another that is less disturbing or striking.

"Kafka, what are you doing?"

"It seems that I entered into you" I said.

"But why?" she asked in a dry, hoarse voice. "Didn't I tell you not to do so?"

"I couldn't help it".

"Get out!" she warned me. "And act like none of this ever happened. I can forget this ever happened and so should you. I'm your older sister and you're my younger brother. Even though we have no blood ties, its obvious that we're sister and brother. Do you understand what I'm saying? We are family. We shouldn't do this.

"Its too late" I told her.

"Why?"

"Because I already decided so".

"Because I already decided so" said the boy named Crow.

Kafka also underwent a strange experience before he saw the fifteen year old Saeki in his dreams. Kafka awoke in the bushes, though before he was asleep in a hotel room. The incident occurred on the eight night after Kafka ran away from home, the same night in which Nakata murdered his father in another part of Japan. Though Kafka did not kill his father, he still felt that he was mysteriously complicit in his murder.

"When I came back to the hotel, I noted everything I did that day on my diary, heard Radiohead through my walkman, read my book for a while then turned my lights off at 11. I imagined the girl at the hotel reception when I masturbated before going to bed. I tried to get rid of the

possibility that she might be my older sister for the time being. But on the eighth evening the sentimental part of my life fell apart (as I knew it would sooner or later). When I awoke, I found myself in the middle of some thick bushes and on top of a damp material on the ground which I thought was wood. I could not see anything because it was dark. Why is my left hand so heavy when I tried to lift it? I then took a closer look at the clock. The digital numbers read 11:26, and the date was still May 28th. I thought of my diary. May 28th...good, that means I have not missed a day. It means I have not lain here for days in the cold, At least, my subconscious and I only went apart for a few hours. About four hours, I think. I noticed something dark in the middle of my white shirt, which looked like a large butterfly with spread wings. I realized that it was dark blood, after I looked at it under a neon light."

As I said before, Kafka felt that he was complicit in his father's murder, which was committed by Nakata. Though he did not do it directly, the incident shows that Kafka's wish to kill his father could be carried out. On the other hand, Kafka's guilt is lessened because Nakata committed the murder. This is shown in Nakata's confession to Kafka below.

"Some time ago I uncovered the stone. "I uncovered it because I just felt I had to do so."

"I know. You uncovered it so that everything would be stored in their proper place."

Nakata then nodded. "Exactly".

"And you have the right to do so".

"I know about that. Besides, this is not something that I choose for myself. I have to tell you that I killed someone in Nakano in the stead of a fifteen year old child that should have been there. This is all Johnnie Walker's fault. I do not wish to kill anyone else anymore."

At a glance, the condensations in Kafka's dreams seem incoherent and meaningless. This is because dreams are part of an unconscious process that is closely linked to the *Id* in the human psyche. The *Id* is the most basic part of the human psyche that is not directly linked to the outside world. It contains the drives and instincts that drove

humans since they were born. The *id* is chaotic as it tries to fulfill the basic human desires. Kafka's dreams are also a form of displacement for his repressed drives, namely the desire to possess his mother and kill his father. Kafka's dreams also represent the sexual element in dreams, confirming Freud's observations that most dreams are sexual in nature. We can conclude that the meaning of Kafka's dreams are the fulfilling of his desires to love and totally possess his mother, a symptom of what psychoanalysts call the Oedipus Complex.

4. Conclusion

If we look at the dreams of the character Kafka Tamura, we can conclude that they are a displacement of his repressed desires to love and possess his mother as well as to kill his father. The displacement undergone by Kafka is an unconscious process, as it is done through dreams. The displacement occurred to avoid the taboos that are incurred if Kafka fulfilled his desires in the real world. Kafka's dreams symbolize the sexual nature of dreams and how they are a form of displacement for his desires.

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