

A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE NARRATOR “I”

IN EDGAR ALLAN POE’S *ANNABEL LEE*

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ABSTRACT

Abstract, The purpose of this thesis is to analyze Edgar Allan Poe’s *Annabel Lee*. The writer intends to describe the mental state which the narrator endures upon Annabel Lee’s death. The writer discusses figurative language, namely symbol and irony, to describe the mental state in the poem. The writer adopts Sigmund Freud’s theory of levels of mental life and *id ego superego*, and John lee’s theory of obsessive love to describe the mental state. The methods of her intrinsic and the extrinsic discussion are applied through book observation, library research, and the internet browsing. The result shows that in a love relationship there are two kinds of moments, happy and sad one. This final academic paper shows that the death of the beloved one greatly affects the narrator’s life; he loses his self control and becomes depressed.

Keyword: narrator, levels of mental life, id ego superego, obsessive love, symbol, irony

1. Introduction

Love is supposed to be the outcome of a spontaneous, emotional reaction, of suddenly being gripped by an irresistible feeling. To love somebody is not just a strong feeling, it is a decision, it is a judgement, it is a promise (Fromm, 1956:51). Love relationship is not always about a happy occasion. There is a relationship which has a sad occasion. *Annabel Lee* is the poem which describes this sad occasion in a love relationship. The poem was written by American poet, Edgar Allan Poe. It is a sad poem about the a man who lost his loved one and how he lives his life after that. Lost love due to death or other reasons is not something one would expect to happen to him/her. If someone loses a loved one, it means he is apart from his lover and his love. The experience of separation arouses anxiety. He would be helpless and could not do anything properly (Fromm, 1956:15). So does what the narrator ‘I’ in the poem experiences when he loses Annabel Lee.

The topic of this poem is about death of a loved one. Edgar Allan Poe has made a lot of quotes, one of which is used in Poe’s poems which tells the death of beautiful young woman. The quote is “The death of a beautiful woman is the most poetic topic in the world”

(Poe, 1846:5). Many people believe that the story of *Annabel Lee* is based on a true story. The poem can be referred to a number of women in Poe's life, but most of people believe that Edgar Allan Poe wrote this poem to commemorate the death of his young wife, Virginia Eliza Clemm Poe. This is supported by the fact that he married Virginia at a young age, matching with one of the line in the poem, "I was a child and she was a child" (Poe, line 7).

Edgar Allan Poe tells that the story of *Annabel Lee* gradually starts from how the characters meets to how Annabel Lee's death makes the narrator loses his mind. There are a total of six stanzas in this poem. He begins the story with how the narrator meets Annabel Lee in 'a kingdom by the sea'. After that, Poe tells the reader what kind of love the narrator and Annabel Lee have in their relationship. The story seems like a happy story. After the happy occasion of how they love each other, however, Poe begins to give the conflict to this poem: the death of Annabel Lee. The last part of the story is about how the narrator lives his life after she has gone. Poe describes the story of this poem as if this was a fairytale supported by the phrase 'kingdom by the sea', but this is the one which has a sad ending. Poe also writes many repetitions in this poem in order to better express the emotion. The story in this poem reveals many aspects connected to love, such as life and death.

This thesis analyzes both intrinsic and extrinsic side of Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*. This poem tells the readers the feeling of lost love and what happens after someone experiences the feeling. The writer chooses *Annabel Lee* because it is the last poem of the American poet who wrote for his wife, Virginia. The writer believes that the poem can be an appropriate example of how lost love can greatly affect the life of someone whether he will continue his life and forget the lost one or he will continue to mourn over the death of someone and does not care about his life. Moreover, the writer hopes that the reader can understand and enjoy Poe's emotion through the narrator in the poem.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Intrinsic Elements

A poet often uses a symbol to express his imagination. The symbol may suggest a disguised intention for a real intention. Holman explains that "A symbol is something which is itself and yet stands for or suggest or means something else." Symbol is one of the figurative languages which is difficult to find. Perrine explains that "The symbol is the richest and at the same time the most difficult of the poetical figures. Both its richness and its difficulty result from its imprecision." In *Annabel Lee*, one of the symbols is noticed with the

proper noun 'Annabel Lee' itself because the proper noun stands for one of the character of the poem and also has the meaning beyond the character herself.

Holman states about the irony "Irony is a figure of speech in which the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning." In *Annabel Lee*, the irony is noticed after Annabel Lee is dead. The narrator is devastated over the death of Annabel Lee, and because of that he makes himself depressed. Instead of being happy with Annabel Lee, the narrator is deeply sad. So, his sadness is ironic.

2.2 Extrinsic Elements

Extrinsic elements of literary work can be found in a psychological trait of literary works. The trait can be a symptom of personalities. One of them can be found in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. In this thesis, the writer suggests that Freud's concept of levels of mental life and *id*, *ego*, and *superego* and John Lee's theory of obsessive love can be used to analyze the extrinsic elements of Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*.

One of Freud's theories of personality is the theory about human's unconsciousness and their drives. Human's words and actions are always done either consciously or unconsciously. Davidoff states about unconsciousness,

"The unconscious contains all those drives, urges, or instincts that are beyond our awareness but that nevertheless motivate most of our words, feelings, and actions. Although we may be conscious of our overt behaviors, we often are not aware of the mental process that lie behind them." (Davidoff: 24)

The unconsciousness, in this sense, affects the narrator's actions in Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*. The narrator is motivated to blame another person for an action which is not done by them when he is actually not aware of it. The instinct of the narrator takes over his mind unconsciously and makes him do an irrational action. Consciousness also plays an important role in human's life. Davidoff explains that,

"Consciousness, which plays a relatively minor role in psychoanalytic theory, can be defined as those mental elements in awareness at any given point in time. It is the only level of mental life directly available to us." (Davidoff: 25)

Therefore, the narrator's actions in Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee* in the beginning part of the poem can be referred to as his conscious's drives. Davidoff states about preconscious,

“The preconscious level of the mind contains all those elements that are not conscious but can become conscious either quite readily or with some difficulty.” (Davidoff:25)

The writer notices that the preconscious becomes the transition in between the unconscious and the conscious. Because the preconscious is in transition, it is not observable easily. So, in a poem the preconscious may not always be present.

According to Freud, there are three components of personality. The three components are *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Feist states about the definition of *id*,

“At the core of personality and completely unconscious is the physical region called the *id*, or the not-yet-owned component of personality. The *id* has no contact with reality, yet it strives constantly to reduce tension by satisfying basic desires. Because its sole function is to seek pleasure, we say that the *id* serves the pleasure principle. The *id* is primitive, chaotic, inaccessible to consciousness, unchangeable, amoral, illogical, unorganized, and filled with energy received from basic drives and discharged for the satisfaction of the pleasure principle.” (Feist: 27)

It can be inferred that *id* is the unconscious part of human's personality whose work is based on pleasure principle. *Id* is an uncontrollable drive which always has one goal. It wants to be fulfilled with its need whatever it takes and does not care about the result. Feist states about *ego*,

“The *ego*, or *I*, is the only region of the mind in contact with reality. It grows out of the *id* during infancy and becomes a person's sole source of communication with the external world. It is governed by reality principle, which it tries to substitute for the pleasure principle of the *id*. As the sole region of the mind in contact with the external world, the *ego* becomes the decision making or executive branch of personality. However, because it is partly conscious, partly preconscious, and partly unconscious, the *ego* can make decisions on each of three levels” (Feist: 29)

It can be inferred that *ego* is the component of personality whose work is on reality principle base. *Ego* can communicate with reality and *ego* is also the drive which can make a decision to every of human's action. Feist explains about *superego*,

“The *superego*, or above-*I*, is guided by the moralistic and idealistic principles as opposed to the pleasure principle of the *id* and the realistic principle of the *ego*. The *superego* grows out of the *ego*, and like the *ego*, it has no energy of its own. However, the *superego* differs from the *ego* in one important respect, it has no contact with the outside world and therefore is unrealistic in its demands for perfection.” (Feist: 30)

It can be inferred that *superego* is a part of human's personality which works based on the moralistic and idealistic principles. *Superego* is also the unconscious part of human's personality like *id*. The main function of *superego* is to tell about what people should do and what people should not do.

John Lee states about obsessive love,

“*Mania* or *obsessive love* is one of the secondary theory colors of love, which is a combination of Eros and Ludos. Manic lovers lack the self-confidence associated with eros and the emotional self-control associated with ludos. Usually, mania lovers have low self esteem, believe that love will cure their self esteem issues, depend on others for happiness, perceive love as rescuing them, and think that they need their lovers. Mania lovers also inclined to speak of their significant others in superlatives and possessives. They are desperate to fall in love and to be loved, begins immediately to imagine the future with the partner, wants to see the partner daily and is extremely possessive. This love type is irrational, extremely jealous, obsessive, and often unhappy (Lee, 1973: 15).”

3. Discussion

3.1 Intrinsic Aspects

3.1.1 Symbol

3.1.1.1 Kingdom

In Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee* the word 'kingdom' is mentioned several times.

It was many and many a year ago,
In a *kingdom* by the sea, (line 2, stanza 1)
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

'Kingdom' in the first stanza gives us the prosperous situation in the poem. Reading the first stanza, the writer thinks that this poem is like a kind of 'once upon a time' fairytale. The characters live in a kingdom and the story has happened long ago. This situation, however, changes in the third stanza.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this *kingdom* by the sea, (line14, stanza 3)
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling

My beautiful Annabel Lee;
 So that her highborn kinsmen came (line 17, stanza 3)
 And bore her away from me, (line 18, stanza 3)
 To shut her up in a sepulchre (line 19, stanza 3)
 In this kingdom by the sea.

In the third stanza, Annabel Lee is pronounced dead. The whole happy situation in the first stanza turns gloomy. In the third stanza, the writer reads additional information about the kingdom. The kingdom becomes the symbol of power because there are the words 'highborn kinsmen' in the line seventeen. The narrator believes that the power which the highborn kinsmen have separates him from Annabel Lee. So, the highborn kinsmen only makes the narrator sad because they keep Annabel Lee apart from the narrator.

3.1.1.2 Sea

It was many and many a year ago,
 In a kingdom by *the sea*, (line 2, stanza 1)
 That a maiden there lived whom you may know
 By the name of Annabel Lee;
 And this maiden she lived with no other thought
 Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
 In this kingdom by *the sea*, (line 8, stanza 2)
 But we loved with a love that was more than love— (line 9, stanza 2)
 I and my Annabel Lee—
 With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven (line 11, stanza 2)
 Coveted her and me. (line 12, stanza 2)

The sea can represent the narrator's freedom and loneliness. The writer sees the sea as water flowing unrestrained in its entity. Flowing unrestrained means that the sea represents the narrator's freedom. The surrounding sea becomes the symbol because the narrator cannot set himself free as long as he cannot have Annabel Lee. In its entity means that the sea may also represent the narrator's loneliness because the narrator is lonely without the presents of Annabel Lee. So great is the narrator's love for Annabel Lee that, upon her death, he knows that her soul is set free while he feels deep loneliness, just like the deep sea hides the life inside it.

3.1.1.3 Highborn Kinsmen

And this was the reason that, long ago,
 In this kingdom by the sea,
 A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling

My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her *highborn kinsmen* came (line 17, stanza 3)
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

Highborn kinsmen represent not only the power but also nobleness. Highborn kinsmen come from high social status and usually they also become the ruler in their societies. For the lower social classes, highborn kinsmen's existence is highly respected. In this poem, however, the narrator thinks that the 'highborn kinsmen' are just eyesores and they also want separate him from Annabel Lee.

3.1.1.4 Sepulchre

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a *sepulchre* (line 19, stanza 3)
In this kingdom by the sea.

Sepulchre is a symbol of confinement. The writer thinks that the sepulchre represents how the narrator's approach to Annabel Lee is forbidden. Annabel Lee's death becomes a shock for the narrator because it is so sudden, so, the narrator thinks this separation as a confinement. First, he is unable to get close to Annabel Lee by highborn kinsmen who takes Annabel Lee to bury her. Second, the sepulchre becomes his enemy because the sepulchre interferes the narrator to get close to Annabel Lee. The narrator thinks the sepulchre as a barrier which traps Annabel Lee inside forever and it makes the narrator unable to reach Annabel Lee anymore.

3.1.1.5 Angels

Angels symbolize virtue. The angels are supernatural beings or spirits who guide people to do good deed.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by *the sea*,
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my Annabel Lee—
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven (line 11, stanza 2)
Coveted her and me.

In the second stanza, the narrator still regards the angels just as the creatures who covets their relationship and not as the killer of Annabel Lee because they can still happily live each other. The angels in the following stanza, however, seem to symbolize vice. The angels in this poem have the quality of being vicious because the angel are envious to the narrator and Annabel Lee.

The *angels*, not half so happy in Heaven, (line 21, stanza 4)
Went envying her and me—
Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

The angels in this poem are portrayed like the demons who are dark and bad. The narrator find it difficult to accept Annabel Lee's death and instead he blames everyone and everything for her death, including the angels. He says that the angels envy the narrator's relationship to Annabel Lee, and decides to separate the lovers by chilling Annabel Lee.

3.1.1.6 Annabel Lee

Annabel Lee represents a woman's beauty and love. The proper noun 'Annabel Lee' is one of the characters in the poem. She appears in every stanza of the poem, and it becomes the main subject of the story. She is the one whom the narrator is in love with. The writer cannot figure out exactly the appearance of Annabel Lee in the poem except that she is beautiful: the narrator says repeatedly in stanza six,

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee; (line 34, stanza 6)
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee; (line 36, stanza 6)
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea—
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

3.1.2 Irony

The writer believes that what happens to the narrator in the poem is ironic. The irony which the narrator endures prevents him from a happy life which he wanted to share with Annabel Lee. The narrator's life with Annabel Lee was peaceful. They lived together in 'a *kingdom* by the sea' and lived their life without the disturbance from other people. The narrator and Annabel Lee only thought about each other, that is how to love and to be loved by each other. To this level of life of the narrator, the angels approved their love relationship.

So, the writer can infer that the two stanzas describe how the narrator loves Annabel Lee even from their childhood, and their childhood love was blessed by the kingdom and the angels.

The troubled life which the narrator endures begins when the highborn kinsmen and the angels interfere the love relationship between the narrator and Annabel Lee. Annabel Lee was suddenly found dead. The narrator could not believe that Annabel Lee died and left the narrator alone. The narrator, who could not believe that the woman whom he loved so much was already dead, blamed the angels. So, the angels who had been good creatures in the beginning turned into bad creatures like demons. The narrator, moreover, also blamed Annabel Lee's family, the highborn kinsmen, to be the people who separated him from Annabel Lee. Reading the situation, the writer feels ironic of how the narrator thinks that both the angels and highborn kinsmen caused Annabel Lee to die, to be separated from the narrator.

The writer believes that the ironic life of the narrator reaches its peak when the narrator found Annabel Lee lying lifeless in her sepulchre by his side. The narrator could not live his life again together with Annabel Lee because she was dead. The narrator could not think of anything but Annabel Lee. He could not put aside his feeling of loss for Annabel Lee and continued to grieve over her death. The narrator did not care about his life and continued to mourn over Annabel Lee's death by being close to Annabel Lee's tomb.

3.2 Extrinsic Aspects

3.2.1 Levels of Mental Life

3.2.1.1 Unconscious

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea. (stanza 3)

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
Went envying her and me—
Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee. (stanza 4)

In the third and fourth stanzas above, the unconscious's mind of the narrator starts to appear. The narrator is not aware that he blames another person for actions which they did not do. In the third stanza, the narrator blames the highborn kinsmen. He states that the highborn kinsmen, who are Annabel Lee's family want to separate him from Annabel Lee. In the fourth stanza, the narrator blames the angels in Heaven. He says that the angels is the killer of Annabel Lee.

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea—
In her tomb by the sounding sea. (stanza 6)

The narrator unconscious's mind is still working in this state. The narrator always thinks of Annabel Lee and cannot forget her. He wants to dream about her but he cannot do it. The narrator, who feels hopeless, feels tired about everything. In the end, he lies down beside the sepulchre of the woman he loved and gives up on everything.

3.2.1.2 Conscious

The conscious's actions of the narrator can be seen when he talks about his relationship with Annabel Lee. The narrator consciously tells about his feelings towards Annabel Lee. The narrator says that he and Annabel Lee only care about each other in the kingdom by the sea, to love and to be loved each other. The narrator says that both of them are children who are seriously in love. The narrator's and Annabel Lee's love are unordinary. He states that his love is special because his love is 'a love that was more than a love'. So great the narrator and Annabel Lee's love that the winged seraphs of heaven covets their love.

The narrator says that their love cannot be compared with anyone. The older and wiser adults who can be considered have more knowledges about life and the experiences about relationship cannot be compare with their love. The narrator's and Annabel Lee's love are stronger than those adults in love. The narrator also states that his soul and Annabel Lee will never be separated from each other by the angels and the demons. Eventhough later, when both of them are dead and cannot see each other anymore, the narrator's and Annabel Lee's soul will always stay together.

3.2.2 Main Components Of Personality

3.2.2.1 Ego

The first time the narrator's ego appears is when Annabel Lee is dead. The ego works when the narrator is unconscious. Annabel Lee's death is a great shock for the narrator. As the result, the shock gives the pressure for the narrator's mind. The ego makes the narrator unconsciously believe that the reason for Annabel Lee's death is because of the angels and not because of her sickness.

The narrator's ego appears when the high born kinsmen come to the kingdom by the sea. They come to take Annabel Lee and bury her dead body. The narrator's ego does not want to be separated from Annabel Lee eventhough she is already dead. The narrator states unconsciously that the highborn kinsmen want to trap Annabel Lee in a sepulchre to separate him from her.

The narrator says that the wind which chills Annabel Lee is perfomed by the angels in heaven who cannot be happy for his and Annabel Lee's relationship, which was supposed to have no problem until the death takes away Annabel Lee. The angels envy them and decide to blow the cold night wind.

3.2.2.2 Superego

Superego works on idealistic and moralistic principles. The narrator, who loves Annabel Lee, wants to have an idealized love in his life. The writer observes that the idealized love which the narrator wants is portrayed in stanza one and stanza two. In stanza one, the narrator introduces the writer to the place where he and Annabel Lee live. The narrator thinks that he only lives to love Annabel Lee in the kingdom by the sea. He has no other thought to think about anything else. In stanza two, the narrator tells the writer about what kind of love relationship which they have. The narrator says that the love which he and Annabel Lee have for each other is unordinary.

The idealized love life which the narrator wants, however, does not stay for a long time. Suddenly, Annabell Lee is found dead. Because of that, the narrator's superego has a conflicts with the narrator's ego. The first conflict between the narrator's superego and ego is with the highborn kinsmen. The highborn kinsmen come to the kingdom by the sea where the narrator and Annabel Lee live. They come to take Annabel Lee away and bury her in a sepulchre. The narrator thinks that if the highborn kinsmen take Annabel Lee away from him, the idealized life which he imagines will be gone. So, the narrator who does not want that to happen blames the highborn kinsmen to be the people who want to separate him from Annabel Lee.

The second conflict between the narrator's superego and ego is with the angels. The idealized love life, which the narrator imagines, is gone because of Annabel Lee's death. The narrator, who does not want to accept the reality, blames the angels to be the killer of Annabel Lee.

3.2.3 Obsessive Love

The narrator and Annabel Lee are a happy couple who live in the kingdom by the sea. In the first and second stanza, the writer sees that the narrator and Annabel Lee built their love relationship in the kingdom by the sea without any disturbance from anyone. The narrator imagines that he and Annabel Lee will be together forever. They have no other thought to do anything or to think about anything except to love each other. The writer infers that the narrator's love for Annabel Lee is very big. It makes the narrator very obsessive toward Annabel Lee. Because of his obsessiveness toward Annabel Lee, the narrator wants Annabel Lee by himself. He does not want anyone to take Annabel Lee away from him. The narrator always wants to live a happy life with Annabel Lee everyday. This situation, however, changes in the third stanza.

The narrator becomes depressed after Annabel Lee is dead. Annabel Lee's death, however, changes everything. The narrator is no longer able to live with Annabel Lee. In the third and fourth stanza, the narrator who cannot forget Annabel Lee blames other people for his loss. The narrator blames the highborn kinsmen and the angels. The narrator blames the highborn kinsmen to be the people who want to separate him from Annabel Lee. Meanwhile, the narrator blames the angels to be the killer of Annabel Lee.

In the sixth stanza, the narrator's obsessiveness toward Annabel Lee does not stop even though Annabel Lee is already gone. The narrator does not want to live his present life again. He continues to mourn over Annabel Lee's death and does not move on to live the life without Annabel Lee. He decides that his life is only for Annabel Lee. The narrator gives up everything and lies down beside the tomb of Annabel Lee.

4. Conclusion

Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee* is a poem about the narrator who loses his beloved one. The characters in the poem, the narrator and Annabel Lee, are the lovers who have woven their love relationship since they were children. This poem gives the writer a sad ending for their love relationship. The sadness emerges because suddenly Annabel Lee is found dead and leaves the narrator alone. The narrator, who does not expect Annabel Lee's

death at all, cannot grasp the reality or think rationally. Annabel Lee, whom the narrator loves so much, is a great influence in the narrator's life. So, when Annabel Lee is no longer alive, the narrator feels emptiness in his heart, and it makes him blame other objects for Annabel Lee's death.

The writer's description of the narrator's mental state in Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee* shows the narrator's feeling after he loses his beloved one, Annabel Lee. The narrator's loss affects him very much. It makes him unable to face the reality and continue his mourning over Annabel Lee's death. In this respect, the narrator's unconscious mind takes over the narrator's conscious mind and makes the narrator act irrationally. In addition, the narrator's ego supports the narrator's unconscious mind and leads the narrator to the wrong direction while ignoring his superego.

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