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The Connection Between Trauma, Pathological Personality, and Defense Mechanism in *Lord of The Mysteries*

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Abstract

The psychological problems that happen in society are growing day by day. Trauma is a common thing that can happen to somebody, and with trauma, there are also ways to handle it called defense mechanisms. From the defense mechanism, a pathological personality emerges. A person who has a pathological personality will use a defense mechanism to protect his psychological state. The connection between trauma, defense mechanisms, and pathological personality traits has become a prevalent topic of discussion This scenario can also be found in the Lord of the Mysteries web novel where Klein Moretti as the main character experienced psychological issue in the new world. The qualitative descriptive method was used to objectively analyze the material, targeting the trauma from the main character, his defense mechanism to overcome it, and the pathological personality that emerged based on his trauma. Thus, the research aims to investigate the connection between Klein's trauma and his pathological personality and to elaborate on what kind of defense mechanism Klein employs to overcome his trauma. Using the phenomenology approach, the researcher can collect the data based on the phenomena that happen to the main character. The researcher also does close reading while using Freudian psychoanalysis in defense mechanisms. The researcher found that trauma can create a defense mechanism due to the fact that the main character needs something to defend himself from the stress and anxiety caused by the trauma. From that trauma, pathological personality was also used by the main character to employ the defense mechanism. The researcher concludes that Klein's defense mechanism and pathological personality are the result of his trauma.

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Introduction

Mental health problems have been a hot topic among Millenials (1981-1996) and Gen Z (1997-2012). As the generations move forward mental health problems worsen. According to Laderer (2023), a 2022 survey of Gen Z young adults (ages 19 through 24) found that 42% are diagnosed with a mental health condition. Four of the most common issues are attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) Many factors cause this. Unhealthy expectations from family, friends, or society, pressure from the workplace or school, and abusive parents can cause mental health problems. Some people will disregard these mental health issues as something that is not important. As a result, there are a lot of teenagers with mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and many others.

Aras (2015) explains the strong connection between psychoanalysis and literature. Because both fields deal with people and their interactions, perceptions of the world, tragedies, hopes, wants, disputes, and individual and societal issues, he claims that there is a strong similarity between literature and psychology. The other correlation between literature and psychology comes from the fact that literature is the most significant means to obtain knowledge of a certain story or character, just like psychoanalysis thatcan get knowledge of someone's unconscious desire and hidden personality. Each story is unique, whether it is from a piece of literature or people's experiences in psychoanalysis. Different theories offer different concepts, perceptions, and approaches to analyzing a piece of literature. For example, in psychoanalysis, it has many branches. There is Lacanian psychoanalysis which focuses on personality development. There is also Carl Jung with his archetype theory.

One kind of psychoanalysis that the researcher will use in my paper is Freudian psychoanalysis, specifically the theory about defense mechanisms. Freudian psychoanalysis focuses on self-discovery and the connection between the artist and their creation. It analyzes subjects created by the author by paying attention to their behaviour, history, backstory, and desire. By using Freudian psychoanalysis, the researcher can analyze what is on the author's mind and personality and also what he/she put in their works as a product of his/her imagination and feeling which is an important aspect of an artist, more importantly, the process of creating a work of literature itself. Imagination influenced by the author's psychological condition can result in a unique work of literature. That is why every piece of literature is unique according to the author's imagination, even if it was plagiarized. These subjects that the author has created became symbols to expose the meaning of something that can be analyzed and interpreted.

Concerning trauma, someone who experienced a traumatic event and gets triggered when they see something, hear something, or feel something is called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD can happen when someone experiences a life-threatening event or has been severely injured. The main characteristic of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the emergence of intrusive memories following a traumatic incident, coupled with symptoms of elevated arousal, avoidance of triggers linked to the trauma, and adverse changes in mood and thought processes (Reis et al.,2016). For example, if someone has an accident while driving a car, that person will develop trauma from driving a car. While people experience PTSD, they may experience intense physical and mental reactions while reliving through their memories of the accident. They will start sweating or even fainting. A person with PTSD when they are forced to face their trauma have different defense mechanisms from person to person. One person can be aggressive and out-of-control, they can be angry with the slightest provocation. Another person will run and stay as far away as possible from the trigger, they may try to not recognize it and be nonchalant about it but in reality, their defense mechanism kicks in to respond to the PTSD. The others will freeze upon facing their trauma, they may take a long time to come to their sense again and will need other people's help. As seen in the web novel, where Klein experienced psychological issue such as PTSD.

In this world, there is nobody who does not have a side of them that hides their bad behaviour that cannot be seen by the masses. The human sense of morality is an abstract concept that people consider to be an important guide to living in a society (Zacharopoulos et al., 2021). Some people can be dependent, others can be narcissistic, and others can be hedonistic. Many other pathological personality traits are negative and will badly impact not only the person who has these pathological personality traits but also the people who he or she interacts with. Just like eyes as the windows to the soul, these pathological personality traits can also be our window to understanding someone's past and trauma. Someone with pathological personality traits does not mean he or she is a bad person. Rather it can be that they had experienced something terrifying in their life that makes them defensive about certain events which makes people think that he or she has a bad personality. The pathological personality of a person is created by many means. It can be created through their environment, consciousness, and experiences. These experiences are not normal experiences but traumatic ones. Traumatic experiences can create a pathological personality trait in somebody. For example, there is a kind person who offers to give a ride to a stranger on a road, but that stranger is a bad person. Luckily, the driver survived the assault and ran away. With that experience, it is safe to assume that the driver will never give a ride to a stranger ever again. Is the driver a bad person for not helping the stranger in need? Of course not. It is just his defense mechanism in response to the trauma of being assaulted by a stranger that takes effect. This phenomenon will create a trauma in the driver's consciousness and it will be hard to erase. Some way to alleviate the damage to his mind is by visiting a psychologist in the hope of overcoming his trauma. Another way to ease the burden is through the passage of time.

A trauma creates pathological personality traits and pathological personality traits will, in a sense, create a defense mechanism. Defense mechanisms refer to strategies unconsciously used to protect an individual from anxiety that arises from unacceptable thoughts or feelings (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). A defense mechanism appears when someone experiences a really bad and terrifying event in their life and they unable to resolve the trauma that was created by the event. These defense mechanisms can be some kind of buffer to protect a person in facing their trauma. In order to hide from anxiety, a defense mechanism comes in many forms. Defense mechanisms not only emerge in real people. Defense mechanisms can also emerge in fictional characters created by an author.

This kind of artificial defense mechanism is created by the experience of the author as a literary artist. One example of literary is *Lord of the Mysteries* by Cuttlefish that Loves Diving. In the novel, the main character's way to handle the burden in his life is dissociation defensive mechanism, as such Klein, the main character, goes by many personas in the novel as a defense mechanism to survive in the new world. The trauma he got creates the defense mechanism that affects his choice of actions. These defense mechanisms will be Klein's shield or even savior in some circumstances when he gets into conflict with his enemy and allies. These traumas create pathological personality traits that grow with him as he becomes stronger. In the novel, the main character uses a lot of names to handle many different things. Not only names but also uses literally different faces when he is facing different situations.

Zhou Mingrui's struggles in the new world by using a different personality can be analyzed using psychoanalysis. His tragic story creates an interesting and intriguing story that the reader can analyze. Currently, no journal or article explains the literature aspect of this web novel. There is only one dissertation that explains the translation and dissemination of the *Lord of the Mysteries* web novel which is "Chinese Web Novel Translation and Dissemination: A Case Study on Lord of Mysteries" by Yating Dong. The study found that the foundation of Lord of the Mystery web novel popularity is the reputation of the platform and the quality of translation. This information is not useful and does not correlate with my study about psychoanalysis in this web novel. This article serves as an example of how to use the *Lord of the Mysteries* web novel as an object of research. A

Qualitative descriptive method will be used in analyzing the web novel *Lord of the Mysteries*. The reason for choosing this method is to gain a deeper understanding of the object of research. It also will give the researcher the material that he needs to analyze the object using the theory that has been picked before. This research aims to investigate the connection between Klein's trauma and his pathological personality traits that emerge during his journey to the new world in the *Lord of the Mysteries* and to elaborate on what kind of defense mechanism Klein employs to overcome his trauma and how he uses it in the *Lord of the Mysteries*.

Methodology

A Qualitative descriptive method is used in analyzing the web novel *Lord of the Mysteries*. The reason for choosing this method is to gain a deeper understanding of the object of research. It also gives the researcher the material that he needs to analyze the object using the theory that has been picked before.

The material that the researcher got then be grouped according to their purpose. The types of data that the researcher collects are the dialogue he uses, the behavior towards his situation, and the narrative regarding the main character that shows an event that creates a trauma and/or an event that shows the main character using a defense mechanism to handle his trauma.The phenomenology approach be used to collect the data. Phenomenology provides a thorough analysis of characters by revealing their inner dialogue, emotions, and lived experiences. This approach allows us to understand characters beyond their actions and uncover the underlying motivations and complexities that shape their behavior (Kudale & Kotte, 2024). This approach is perfect in conjunction with psychoanalysis because it deals with unconsciousness. The psychoanalysis theory is used to analyze the object, specifically Sigmund Freud's defense mechanism psychoanalysis theory. The purpose of this theory is to gain an understanding of how the defense mechanism develops in a person with trauma by analyzing the event that caused the defense mechanism to be created.

Results and Discussion

1. Traumatic Experience of Klein

Lord of the Mysteries web novel by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving tells a story about Zhou Mingrui who got transmigrated into Klein's Moretti body in an alternate Victorian era. Zhou Mingrui's soul merged with Klein's soul causing confusion and anxiety to Zhou Mingrui. After Zhou Mingrui sorted out Klein's fragmented memories in his brain, he found out that this world he transmigrated to was a magical world filled with mysteries. He also found out that Klein has siblings, 1 brother and 1 sister, whom he must take care of after the death of Klein's soul. Zhou Mingrui, who was an ordinary person, must become stronger by using supernatural power that was present in the new world. Throughout his journey, he experienced conspiracies, conflict, betrayal, mysteries, manipulation, and power struggles which traumatized him and made him unconsciously develop defense mechanisms. One example of "Klein's" defense mechanism is dissociation. Dissociation is a temporary drastic modification of one's character or feelings of personal identity to avoid emotional distress (Carvalho et al., 2019). He develops multiple personalities and roles to cover his true identity. This defense mechanism helps him to maintain his sanity from his trauma and navigate him in this new dangerous world.

Stress is one of many aspects of life which despite its negativity, cannot be separated from daily life. Stress itself is different from mental health disorders but can act as the trigger of mental health problems (Bulut, 2019), causing what is called a traumatic experience. Trauma includes all upsetting and painful situations such as memories of war, violence, natural catastrophes, unexpected death, severe illness, and so on. A traumatic event is defined as exposure to any of the following: actual or threatened serious injury, actual or threatened death, or actual or threatened sexual violence (APA, 2013; WHO, 2018; Kleber, 2019). Trauma can also be present in the characters inside a literary work, for example in the web novel *Lord of the Mysteries*. it is specifically shown in the character of Klein:

He looked down to see a slightly pale palm, drenched in blood, coming out the left side of his chest.

Megose isn't dead… No, a new enemy… The mastermind behind the scenes… Am I going to die?

Klein quickly lost his consciousness, his eyes almost losing focus. His body slumped to the side.
(Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch. 209)

The quotation above talks about Klein's unfortunate event. When he defeated his enemy, he did not expect that a second enemy would come and attack him. As a result, the new enemy attacks Klein by thrusting his hand into Klein's heart from behind. After the enemy attack, Klein felt desperation for the first time. That sudden attack shocked him and filled him with plentiful stress. Heidarizadeha (2015) said that trauma is a distressing event that involves a single event or experience that involves feelings and emotions. Although they appear to have relieved themselves of a tremendous deal of mental suffering by driving it from their memory and consciousness, the suppressed wish is still there in the unconscious, waiting for the right opportunity to become active and eventually be successful in entering consciousness, making trauma engages in a long-term flux of emotion that can suddenly burst out if something that triggers the trauma is in contact with the traumatized (Freud, 1923). Consequently, this event marks the first major changes in Klein's psychology and behavior. This phenomenon marks Klein's drastic changes, it acts as Klein's trauma source and makes him develop defense mechanisms while indirectly developing pathological personality traits. As stated by Vrabel et al. (2019), morality is an important aspect of society because it provides a set of social rules that allow someone to engage in communication with other people successfully and to function within society. However, people who undergo awful experiences in the past, are more likely to develop what are called pathological personality traits which might also impact their morality, causing them to behave immorally. Pathological personality traits are an important inhibitor of social functioning and well-being (Zacharopoulos et al., 2021).

Klein also has anxiety issues in which he is afraid of being harmed in any way. It is shown during another traumatic event that Klein undergoes when there is an intruder who searches his place.

At that moment, he caught sight of the paper on the desk at the corner of his eye.

It was facing the window, maintaining its original spot.

However, Klein clearly remembered that before he slept, this piece of paper was facing the chair and the bed!

It had flipped over and changed orientation after a night's sleep!

Klein's pupils constricted as he abruptly reached out and pulled the curtains open. He saw that the oriel windows were still shut tight, not letting even a waft of wind in!

Without any wind, the paper had rotated hundred and eighty degrees by itself!

No, someone came in without me noticing! Klein felt a chill run up his spine to his head.

He was shocked that he didn't realize it while sleeping!
(Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.234)

The monologue talks about when Klein fought with an intruder in his home. The intruder is actually the visitor from the afternoon who asked him the whereabouts of the person who commissioned him to find a missing person. But because of his principle of confidentiality, he turned down the visitor's request. Someone tried to kill him because he did not spill the location of his commissioner. In the fight, Klein killed the intruder. But because he is afraid that the intruder's partner will come and attack him, he sets up a paper written: "I don't know Ian Wright's whereabouts. I haven't seen him since we found Zreal's body." (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.227). Then when

he woke up in the morning, the paper had been turned indicating that there was someone or something that intruded on his room when he was asleep. This event creates anxiety in Klein's mind, making him generate a large amount of assumptions in his mind. It in fact, made him develop a defense mechanism. Carvalho, Reis, and Pianowski (2019) explained that a defense mechanism can be understood as an automatic response that is unconsciously active because of the trauma response of the individual.

Aside from the trauma that he got after he was transported to a different world. He also has a trauma from his childhood. It is shown when he is exploring an underground structure. He found masses of snakes in a pit which triggered his trauma

This stemmed from a psychological trauma in the past. When he was a child—despite being way past his bedtime—he liked to secretly open the door to his room and watch movies with his parents through a crack.

> *Unfortunately, his parents once watched a snake disaster movie. One scene involved the demolition of a building. The result was the unearthing of a large nest of snakes, and the dense squirming remained deeply imprinted in his mind.*
> (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.254)

> *When he was given a task to explore the underground structure, he found a pit of snakes. He instinctively takes a step back when he sees a wriggling mass inside the pit* (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch 259).

His fear of snakes stems from his experience when he was a child. He did not sleep when it was already his bedtime but instead, he watched a movie that his parent watched through the crack of his door. At one time, his parent watched a snake disaster movie. He watched through the crack of the door a scene that created trauma in his psychology. A scene of the demolition of a building. The result of the explosion was the discovery of a large nest of snakes. The scene from the TV and the condition of the snakes that are wriggling mass are strikingly similar to each other and it trigger Klein's trauma. Klein's trauma of snakes is a symbolization of his fears of something attacking him in the dark. Snake excels in sneak attacks because they come without a sound and their body which is usually dark can blend perfectly in the environment. As Alexandri (2015) stated animals could act as a representation of one's overwhelming sensation of fear. An animal characteristic can symbolize a fear of being constricted, attacked, or injustices and outright violations, it depends on how one interprets the metaphor and symbolization.

2. The Outcome of Klein's Trauma: Defense Mechanism to Pathological Personality

As mentioned before, defense mechanism is an automatic response which activates unconsciously due to traumatic experience that someone has (Carvalho et al., , 2019). It is used to keep the repressed stored deep in the unconscious mind (Tyson, 2015). People with painful and overwhelming memories tend to use defense mechanisms unconsciously, as depicted by the character Klein in the web novel *Lord or Mysteries*. In the novel, Klein uses several defense mechanisms in order to overcome his trauma, one of which is quoted below:

> *This is fine too, this is fine too… The things that I do in the future will not implicate them. The compensation given to them by the Nighthawks team and the police department will be enough for them to live a stable middle-class life, even if Melissa fails to find a job and Benson loses his job…*
> (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.213)

From the quotation above, it tells about the event after Klein has been pronounced dead. All of his colleagues and his family attend his funeral. He rose from the dead because of his power. The first thing that he did after he got out from his grave is to visit his family. But after he found his family, he did not want to interact with them anymore. He rationalizes the thought of him leaving his family so that his family will not be implicated and safe unlike him who died. His anxiety and sorrow of him

leaving his family create a rationalization defense mechanism. In order to deal with his anxiety, he rationalizes the thought that leaving is for the better. This defense mechanism alleviates guilt, anxiety, and sorrow that Klein feels. Since rationalization is a defense mechanism where the person justifies something that makes one have a negative emotion (Di Giuseppe and Perry, 2021). In this case, Klein justified leaving his family for the sake of their safety despite knowing that his action is actually based on his own fear, his anxiety, of overwhelming guilt that he might get if something happened to harm his family, as well as his attempt to avoid taking responsibility for protecting his family.
Not only that, Klein also uses other defense mechanisms in order to cope with his stress level. As in this quotation, "As he spoke, he suddenly stopped. His tears streamed down his cheeks and finally, he shouted softly with a choking voice, 'Captain… We miss you too!'" (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch 212)., where after the funeral of the victim of the attack, Klein rose from the dead and got out from his grave. He then searches for his captain's grave to mourn him. When he found his captain's grave, he recalled how they saved his city from enemy attack and how his captain sacrificed himself because he believed that Klein had a way to defeat the enemy. Then he suddenly stopped reminiscing, tears ran down his cheeks and he shouted softly with a choking voice. This is a type of defense mechanism called regression. The way he expresses his emotion by crying and shouting loudly can be a reminiscence of a child's behavior when overwhelmed by negative emotions, in line with what Tyson (2015) said as a regression process where one returns to past psychological state and relieved the current unpleasant realities. The behavior contrasts his usually calm and composed demeanor to cry like a little kid indicating a temporary regression to a more vulnerable condition.

Klein's anxiousness does not stop there. His mind is filled with an abundant amount of negative assumptions, making him unable to lower his guard at any cost.

> *Was it a member of the military's special department, or was it a powerful beyonder sent by the ambassador? From the fact that the paper wasn't returned to its original orientation, it's more likely to be the latter, indicating a certain level of warning… To be able to sneak in like that without a trace, how incredible… Should I thank him for his kindness? No, there must be a reason why he didn't do something that could've been so conveniently accomplished… They don't want to alarm the members of the military's special department who are monitoring the area? Klein couldn't help but think of countless reasons.*
> (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.234)

When someone was intruding his room, Klein became anxious because he is at mercy of others when he was asleep. However, not long after Klein's sudden shock, Klein starts to think of the identity of the intruder and how he sneaked in when Klein was asleep. This kind of action is considered a defense mechanism called intellectualization. Intellectualization is a defense mechanism where, instead of being anxious, someone will distract themself by thinking logically of how to analyze the situation (Di Giuseppe and Perry, 2021).

Meanwhile, intellectualization occur when Klein found out that there was someone intruding into his room he became scared and anxious for the moment being and switched to thinking logically about what happens and how it happens, he eliminated those negative emotions and took over the control of his reasoning thinking (Cariola, 2020).

> *Klein saw a large hall beyond them. In the middle of the hall, countless snakes of various colors slithered together, forming an exaggerated nest of snakes about ten meters wide. The slimy, disgusting feeling assaulted his senses.*
>
> *Klein felt his scalp turn numb as he couldn't help but take two steps back. He even wanted to look away without daring to look straight ahead.*
>
> *Although he was a man, he was still afraid of snakes. Snakes were the animal that he was most afraid of.*

(Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.259)

As mentioned before, a snake is a symbolization of someone attacking him in the dark. Klein's fear toward snakes is a displacement of his true fear toward people who attack him when he least expects it. Snakes in the movie that he watched represent danger, threat, and unpredictability. Klein could have associated his fear of snakes with his fear of people attacking him from the dark. Displacement is a defense mechanism that shifts overwhelming negative emotion into a substitute target that is easier to handle (Anshori, 2011). In this scenario, Klein displaces his fear of unknown attack into a snake which is more real and tangible.

Klein's traumatic experience which leads him to adopt several kinds of defense mechanisms making him to have pathological personality traits.

> *I guess I'll head to Backlund first… Klein sighed and made a decision. He enveloped himself with spirituality and stimulated a descent, exiting the mysterious space above the gray fog.*
>
> *After completing his purchase, Klein found a hotel to wash up and change in. He rented a private carriage directly to the train station in Tingen in order to avoid meeting anyone familiar. Along the way, he purchased a newspaper and discovered that it was Sunday.* (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.213)
>
> *"Julianne, Marquis Black Tea," Instructed Mrs. Sammer. She then turned her eyes to Klein and asked, "How might I address you?"*
>
> *"Sherlock Moriarty. You can call me Sherlock." Klein had long thought of a fake name.*
> (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, 2020, ch.215)

When Klein comes back to life after his funeral has happened. He knows that he cannot go back to his previous life. Although he really wants to meet with his sibling again, he cannot implicate them with his matters. Then he moves to a different city away from his sibling and his former colleague and adopts a new identity, independent detective Sherlock Moriarty. Moving to a different city and cutting ties with his friends and family is a sign of detachment-pathological trait. He removed his attachment from his former life and avoided contact with them. His action is considered as immoral since neglecting a family is unacceptable in societal norms. As stated by Ivzāns and Mihailova (2018) in their research which shows how defense mechanisms and pathological personality traits correlate with each other, Klein pathological demeanor emerges as the consequences of his traumatic experiences, while utilizing the concept of defense mechanism to cope with the stress he experienced.

Conclusion

This study focuses on analyzing the connection between trauma, defense mechanism, and pathological personality traits by the main character of *Lord of the Mysteries* based on Sigmund Freud's theoryKlein experienced several traumatic events which caused a scar in his unconscious. Those traumas then act as the stimulus for Klein's defense mechanisms to actively protect Klein's psychological state. Based on the finding, Klein employed regression, rationalization, intellectualization, and displacement. An example of regression found in the story is when he visited his former captain grave.. Intellectualization occur when an intruder came to his room when he was asleep. When he bid farewell to his family for the last time, he employs rationalization defense mechanism. And displacement defense mechanism happens when he explores underground structure and he found pit full of snakes. From the data and explanation that have been mentioned above, trauma, defense mechanism, and pathological personality trait doeshave a connection to each other. This psychological phenomenon of Klein represents the correlation between trauma, defense mechanism, as well as pathological personality traits. To sum up, Klein's detachment-pathological demeanor emerges as the consequences of his traumatic experiences, while utilizing the concept of

defense mechanism to cope with the stress he experienced.

Although Klein's defense mechanism and pathological personality traits based on his trauma have been analyzed. There are still a lot of loose ends regarding this topic. Further studies with different objects may help readers understand more about defense mechanisms. Such analysis will provide a clearer understanding of how defense mechanisms operate inside unconsciousness. This topic should also be researched by students to provide an idea of how defense mechanism works and what its connection with trauma and pathological personality traits.

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