



THE IMPACT OF POST-TRAUMA ON THE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN MATT HAIG'S *THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY*: A PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY OF CHARACTER

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ABSTRACT

The *Midnight Library* represents that childhood trauma is something that happens to a child unconsciously. This study indicates that trauma that occurred in a child's past can affect the development of his character in adulthood. This study examines Matt Haig's novel *The Midnight Library*, with the close reading method. Psychoanalysis is a research method used in this study. This study looks at how the influence of trauma on the main character in a novel. There seems to influence the decision-making of an adult woman who was traumatized in her youth. The tendency to make decisions from the subconscious affects the woman.

Keywords: *Trauma, Character, Psychoanalytic, Adulthood*

INTRODUCTION

Trauma is one of the psychological problems experienced by humans. Trauma is generally cumulative from what they have participated in in the past. This resulted in many of them disrupting their daily activities. Many finally choose to isolate themselves and do not interact with others. One of the literary works that deal with this kind of trauma is *The Midnight Library*. It is a novel by Matt Haig. The novel was released in 2020 and won the Goodreads Choice Awards 2020 Best Fiction. This contemporary novel explores many psychological issues of trauma and alienation. *The Midnight Library* tells the story of a 36-year-old woman who experiences severe depression in her life. Apart from that, she also had a lot of regrets about the mistakes and failures she had gone through. The woman's name is Nora. She often has the desire to end her life in any way she can. She suffers from trauma that she felt for her life.

Traumatic events change people's lives. This accumulated pressure also causes excessive stress and fear for them. Alienation is the impact of trauma experienced by someone.

They are afraid to interact with others and choose to live alone. Later this can escalate until they choose to end their life to stop their suffering. Heidarizadeh describes trauma in terms of psychoanalysis. According to psychoanalysis, trauma has severe long-term detrimental effects. In essence, the characters' minds are impacted by terrible memories and past tragedy. Trauma is caused by confusion and uncertainty, and common psychoanalytical triggers include sexual abuse, workplace discrimination, police brutality, bullying, marital violence, and particularly traumatic experiences as a child (Heidarizadeh 2).

The discussion here will focus on the trauma and alienation that occurs to Nora, the main character in this novel, and how trauma and bad memories in the past affect human life in the future. Nora had many traumatic events and regrets that made her feel like she had to end her life so that all those regrets would disappear and not be felt. This research uses New Criticism to analyze the trauma and alienation in *The Midnight Library*.

The Midnight Library brings stories that are contemporary in fiction. As the main character, Nora has problems struggling with her trauma. This trauma is an accumulation of problems and regrets that she experienced during her life. Nora chose to end her life and then was between life and death. There she can choose which life she wants to live, so she doesn't feel regret. But no life has been able to fulfill her satisfaction, and she remains in that trauma and regret.

Review of Related Literature

The Midnight Library is the latest work by Matt Haig. This novel was released in 2020. The writer finds it difficult to find articles and research related to *The Midnight Library*. However, the authors found writings on trauma and alienation using different research objects. Cesar (2021), in his study "Main Character's Resistance Against Traumatic Experience in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*: Freud's Tripartite Model Analysis," used psychoanalytic to complete this research. The thesis uses Sigmund Freud's Personality Theory to see the trauma experienced by the main character in this story 'Mary.' Mary, in her childhood life, did not get enough affection from her closest people. The development of Mary's life experienced many traumatic issues.

Still using Sigmund Freud's Personality Theory, Rahmatesa (2012), in his thesis "the impacts of the traumatic experiences of the main character's unconsciousness in Sidney Sheldon's *tell me your dreams*: a psychoanalytical study of character." Ashley, as the main character, has experienced sexual violence from her father. This has a traumatic effect on Ashley and causes her to become a loner. From this research, it was found that Ashley's

childhood trauma effect made her a child with multiple personalities, and her subconscious has the intention to kill other people.

Next is a study by Shukla and Banerji (2012), "The theme of "alienation" and "assimilation" in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri: A socio-literary perspective." This research uses the Post-Colonialism approach. In this study, alienation was found in the main character, who was transferred from West Bengal, India, to an area in the USA. This transfer shows many psychological, social, and economic conflicts. Then it was also found that there was assimilation that occurred in the colony that moved with the main character

Gusrizal's (2019) "traumatic loss in hero's journey in rick riordan's novel percy jackson and the olympian: the lightning thief" uses descriptive analysis to find Traumatic Loss. Traumatic Loss is the phase when the main character Percy can get rid of his trauma. Percy is known to use stages from Monomyth's theory to relieve his trauma. Then Percy can become a character who has heroic intuition. This study examines how trauma and alienation affect Nora as the main character. This research will answer the following questions; What psychological problems did Nora experience since she was a child, and how it is affecting her personality? Evidence that shows this novel provides conflict about trauma?

The Midnight Library is a novel that scholars have not widely discussed. The writer wants to discuss this novel in general about the psychological problems experienced by Nora as the main character. This research also proves the impact of Post-traumatic on personality development. This research aims to increase the reader's awareness of the existing psychological issues. This research will aim to see how trauma affects personality development. Psychoanalytic theory in literary works is influenced by studies of the human psyche based on theories invented by Sigmund Freud. The human mind has three parts that are popular with psychology students. They are unconscious, preconscious, and conscious (ego, superego, it) (Cesar 20). This research applied the theory of psychoanalysis proposed by Sigmund Freud. Freud is a psychologist who studies aspects of the soul. The unconscious plays a large role. Most of the human psyche is not realized; only a small part is manifested in the conscious. In Critical Theory Today, Sigmund Freud talks about the unconscious in human life. "The notion that human beings are motivated, even driven, desire, fears, needs, and conflict of which they are unaware that is, unconscious" (Tyson 12).

RESEARCH METHOD

According to Ferdinal, Seswita, and Sandika (2020), literary critics can use a variety of methods and theories to examine literary works from many angles, either qualitatively or statistically. The novel *The Midnight Library* is the formal object of this research. The writer reads this novel several times, looks for studies on the book, search for psychological themes in novel and other literary works, and applied the psychoanalytic theory. The writer reads the novel *The Midnight Library* and shares the insights in this study. The authors use a reading method to find answers to the questions in this study. The results of this study are presented in an illustrative format to help readers understand what the writer is saying. The reader's perspective of the story and the evaluation criticism that frequently comes with book reviews are sometimes distinguished by literary critique (Klarer 11). The author's perspective on the characters in the book *The Midnight Library* will be revealed in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how trauma affects the personality development of Nora Seed, the protagonist of the novel *The Midnight Library*. In her youth, Nora experienced many tragedies. She is always guided by his parents when making decisions and doing things. Then she lost her parents when she was a teenager. The past trauma can affect a person's personality development. The writer looks for Nora's behavior in adulthood as a reflection of what she felt during his teenage years. At the novel's beginning, Nora often spends time with Mrs. Elm in the library. Nora often went to the library to enjoy her free time. This can be seen as a reflection of Nora's unconscious choice of her library as a safe place. Libraries are quiet and lonely places. Nora can be alone without others organizing or disturbing her. It is essential ignored how her development is progressing. She develops an aggressive, irritable, disrespectful, and melancholy personality (Cesar 14).

When faced with a difficult moment, humans tend to go to a place of peace and quiet. Everything will not always be about the site. Sometimes it's also about the atmosphere of calm that is being sought. Nora was fed up with what she was going through, so she chose a quiet and lonely place. Nora could read a book or spend some quiet time in the library. They have, in fact, driven it out of consciousness and out of memory and saved themselves a significant amount of psychic pain, but in the unconscious, the suppressed wish still exists, just waiting for its chance to become active, and eventually succeeds in sending into consciousness, despite the fact that Nora is an adult and does not experience that anymore (Freud, 21). Her unconsciousness drives her to be in the library all the time. This makes the library a place where you find yourself in a stage between life and death after deciding to commit suicide.

The gloomy past results in a person searching for the easiest solution they can come up with. Sometimes the solution to the gloom is to end his life to end the gloom. The pleasure principle drives the id, which looks for immediate satisfaction of desires. The desires aren't always in line with what's desirable in society. Meanwhile, the superego is made up of the ideas that everyone aspires to and what society values (Boeroe 7). Other findings show that Nora decided to commit suicide. Nora has no choice in living her own life. It was known that she made many mistakes before deciding to commit suicide. Nora's unconsciousness drives her to commit suicide in response to all the mistakes Nora has experienced since her childhood. Trauma inflicted throughout childhood may result in poor coping mechanisms or low self-esteem (Longpre et al. 8).

Apart from being a coping strategy, the writer also sees suicide as a way to find satisfaction quickly. A person with severe trauma in the past is also sometimes accompanied by feelings of frustration. When someone has given up and feels frustrated, they will find the fastest way to find satisfaction or desire easily. If someone has a bad past, it is not uncommon for them to think that ending their life is the best satisfaction. Because he had put an end to all the bad things about him. According to Fairbairn's writings, the most severe trauma a child can go through is frustration with his need to be acknowledged as a person and to have his love accepted. Above all, it is this trauma that leads to fixations on the many forms of infantile sexuality that a child is forced to turn to in an effort to make up for the failure of his emotional relationships with his exterior objects through substitute satisfactions (Fairbairn 40).

The library has become the most comfortable place for Nora. This is evidenced by the library being a place for Nora to choose which life she wants to live. In this novel, it is found that the transit place between life and death is a place where a person feels comfortable. Nora meets someone else who is going through the same thing as Nora. The only difference is that the person with a place between life and death is a music store. Because during his life, that place is the place he most often visits and spends time. That makes Nora in the library a place between life and death. Trauma leads people to believe that traumatic occurrences do not just happen over time, according to Caruth, who contends that traumatic pathology cannot be found in a traumatic event. The event occurs "belatedly." She writes: "The impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (Caruth 9)

Nora can choose which life she wants to live in the phase between life and death. In this phase, Nora always seems to want to repeat the life that she could not achieve while she was

alive. Nora is not accepting the reality of all the failures she has gone through. It made her want to feel what he couldn't achieve. However, the fact is that after she chose that life, she couldn't even live the life she chose to repeat. She still couldn't deal with the bigger problems in her other life. Eliot has not taken psychology into account when he has presented his idea of objective correlation. Therefore, the idea is flawed and has to be criticized because it is unfinished. Eliot had to have thought about psychology in order to comprehend objective correlatives and enjoy poetry more.

CONCLUSION

Past trauma is one thing that can affect a person's personality development in the future. The influence can include how a person will make decisions and determine the course of his life. To develop self-knowledge and self-acceptance, they like retrieving and examining other memories from their exploited childhood and adulthood. It is a story about repression based on psychoanalysis (Heidarizadeh 5). Nora experienced trauma in childhood that affected her in her adulthood. Since childhood, Nora was always restrained by her parents. Nora also lost her parents when she was a teenager. It made her feel like a failure as a child to her parents. Then Nora also experienced difficulties in making choices and making decisions. She was always in a difficult position in making her choices. The choice Nora made never satisfied her and only resulted in disappointment. The trauma Nora felt affected her personality in adulthood.

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