

Analyzing Theodore Finch's Character in The Novel "All The Bright Places" Using Psychoanalytic Theory

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Abstract

Every human being must have psychological problems, including one of the characters the writer will analyze. This study focuses on the main character Theodore Finch in the novel *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven. This study aims to identify personality problems in Theodore Finch by using Lois Tyson's Psychoanalytic theory. The method used is descriptive qualitative. Reading the novel carefully and deeply and then making some notes are the steps in collecting data. The data source is from the novel *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven. The results of this study indicate that Theodore Finch's childhood trauma impacts his present life.

Keywords: Novel, psychological problem, trauma

Abstrak

Setiap manusia pasti mempunyai permasalahan psikologis, termasuk salah satu tokoh yang akan penulis analisa. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tokoh utama Theodore Finch dalam novel *All The Bright Places* karya Jennifer Niven. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi permasalahan kepribadian pada diri Theodore Finch dengan menggunakan teori Psikoanalitik Lois Tyson. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Membaca novel secara cermat dan mendalam kemudian membuat beberapa catatan merupakan langkah-langkah dalam pengumpulan data. Sumber datanya dari novel *All The Bright Places* karya Jennifer Niven. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa trauma masa kecil Theodore Finch berdampak pada kehidupannya saat ini.

Kata kunci: Novel, Masalah Psikologis, Trauma

INTRODUCTION

The complexity and uniqueness of human life and its activities have been the subject of great interest in literary works and astounding debates. Everyone has something special. This means that each person is unique. Everyone has a unique character, temperament, and behaviour. Literature and psychology are closely related, both indirectly and functionally. Both literature and psychology have something in common in their subject: the study of human life. Psychology and literature both examine the mental state of other people, so they have a functional relationship, but the difference is that the symptoms are real in psychology. In contrast, in literature, the symptoms are imaginary.

According to Lois Tyson (1999), the influence of the family on the psychological development of children is considerable. Children tend to imitate their parents' behaviour because it is from the family that children learn to start everything. If the atmosphere in the house is safe, comfortable, and fun, it will help the child's psychological development. Vice

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versa, if the atmosphere in the home feels tense and scary and makes the child feel unsafe, it will hurt the child's psychology. The main male character in *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven experiences the same thing.

While writing this study, the writer found and inspired by previous research or study that related to the study that the writer has been conducted. They are in journal form. The first article by Amanda Putri Wira Dharma, Mardliya Pratiwi Zamruddin and Famala Eka Sanhadi Rahayu (2022) entitled "Adlerian Strategies in Willy Wonka's Character in Tim Burton's Film *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*". This research was conducted in April 2022. The writer concluded that there was a representation of Adlerian strategies in Willy Wonka's character. Willy Wonka's inferiority arises because of factors, namely neglected lifestyle, strict parenting patterns and birth orders.

The second article by Rawadan Reza Rachman (2019) is entitled "Theodore Finch's Borderline Personality Disorder in Jennifer Niven's *All The Bright Place*". This research was conducted in 2019. The conclusion of this research, Rawadan Reza Rachman, said that Theodore Finch meets seven of the nine symptoms and he could be said to have a borderline personality disorder. Finch's interpersonal relationship with his parents in a family environment created the symptoms of his borderline personality disorder. He fears being abandoned by Violet because Finch perceives her as the one who he can depend on, and he thinks that Violet will not leave him.

The third article by Wiwin Aprilia, H. M. Natsir, and Nita Maya Valiantien (2021) is entitled "Elizabeth Bennet's Personality in *The Novel Pride and Prejudice (A Study of Psychology of Literature)*". This research was conducted in October 2021. In this research, researchers conclude that there is the impetus of id, ego, and superego in Elizabeth Bennet. The impetus of the id in Elizabeth was able to be fulfilled by the responses of the ego and the basis of considerations' superego. In addition, Elizabeth Bennet's personality is categorized into the choleric personality type because it is known that the characteristic of personality from Elizabeth Bennet is included in the characteristics of the choleric personality type.

In this study, the writer chose the novel *All The Bright Places* because the writer felt attracted to the male lead in this novel. *All the Bright Places* is a young adult fiction novel by Jennifer Niven, first published in January 2015, based on the author's personal story. This novel tells the story of two friends, Violet and Finch, trying to overcome their traumas. However, the writer will only analyze the male lead's character, Finch. Finch lives in the shadow of trauma and often contemplates ending his life. He even often imagines ways to deal with death. The trauma faced by Finch occurred due to the divorce of his parents. It left a deep wound in Finch's heart. Because of the accumulated childhood trauma, Theodore Finch often felt depressed, and no one could hear his story. But after meeting Violet, Finch's dark world sometimes turns a little brighter.

METHOD

This study aims to identify personality problems experienced by the male lead. This writer was analyzed using the psychoanalysis theory by Lois Tyson. The type of data in this article is qualitative. The data is taken from the novel *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven. The method used in this article is descriptive qualitative. The initial research stage is reading, making notes, and finally interpreting the data. The data from this research contains writings, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, dialogues and narrations related to psychoanalytic theory.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will discuss the results of the writer. There will be evidence to support each analysis. Based on the theory that the writer has chosen, namely, the psychoanalytic by Tyson. There are a few things to discuss.

Basic Concept

The Family

According to Lois Tyson, the psychoanalytic theory of our adult personality results from our emotional experiences growing up. And our first emotional experience begins with family because, from childhood, we must be with family. Similar to the character Theodore Finch in the novel "All The Bright Places".

In the novel, it is told that Finch suffers from mental illness OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) which happens because of his childhood trauma. Finch himself has realized that he has OCD because his father used to be cruel as a child. Perhaps because of biological factors, Finch considers himself like his father. This can be proven in the following quote:

" I'm OCD," "I'm depressed," "I'm a cutter," they say. One poor bastard is ADHD, OCD, BPD, bipolar, and on top of it, all have some sort of anxiety disorder. I'm the only one who is just Theodore Finch (Niven, 2015: 181).

Finch often wanted to kill himself. He hated living in a world with people he thought were cruel. Finch hates his cheating father and prefers to stay with the woman of his choice, and knowing that his father has a son named Josh Raymond makes him feel even worse. Trouble begins when his father divorces his mother, leaving him to live with a woman he loves named Rosemary. This family affair breaks Finch's heart and leaves a deep scar on his heart. He no longer feels happy, protected, or a complete family. As a result, Finch becomes a strange and mischievous teenager who often causes trouble. Because of his misbehaviour, he must receive special attention at school.

Ever since my dad left, she's tried hard to be the cool parent. Still, I feel bad for her because she loves him, even though, at his core, he's selfish and rotten, and even though he left her for a woman named Rosemarie... Ever since then, I've done what I could to be pleasant and quiet (Niven, 2015: 31).

I take a breath and dive, grateful for the darkness of the water and the warmth against my skin. I swim to get away from Josh Raymond, my cheating father, Violet's involved parents, her friends, my sad, deserted mother, and my bones. I dive deeper, lungs tight and burning (Niven, 2015: 142).

The data above shows that the family plays a very important role in the psychological development of children, just as Finch feels. Due to her parents' divorce, he feels like his world is falling apart and often feels like ending his life. That is why the family's role in children's development is important. After the incident, when his father left Finch, his mother rarely spoke to Finch because he was busy at work. Even when there are important events at school (expelled from school), Finch doesn't tell his mother because he doesn't want to burden his mother's mind at work. This evidence is one factor that the role of the family is very important for a child.

Repression and the unconscious

We all tend to ignore experiences we feel we can't handle. The clearest sign that emotional problems are being suppressed is the repetition of self-destructive behaviour, Tyson writes in his book "Using Critical Theory."

Finch's character in this novel also often repeats self-destructive behaviours such as smoking,

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even though Finch himself is not a smoker. Finch performs this behaviour when anxiety arises and is difficult to remove from his mind.

Theodore Finch, an '80s kid, doesn't smoke. God, I hate him, the clean-cut, eager little prick. I leave the cigarette in my mouth unlit, trying to chew the nicotine out, pick up the guitar, play along, then give it up and sit down at the computer (Niven, 2015: 29).

The data above depicts Finch trying to calm his anxiety by smoking, even though he is not a smoker. In his mind, Finch thought maybe this was a way to get rid of the excess anxiety he was feeling, so Finch did it over and over again. Finch smoked while sitting at his bedroom computer. That way, he thought everything would be fine even though the calm feeling was only temporary. Similar incidents were repeated. When Finch's anxiety struck again, he started smoking and running around town.

The nicotine scrapes at my throat, which is already raw, and I feel like throwing up, so I pull over onto the shoulder and walk around. I bend over, hands on my knees. I wait. When I don't get sick, I look at the road stretched out ahead and run (Niven, 2015: 165).

When Finch felt his nervousness run through him, he started to run. He accidentally burned a few cigarettes while running for a long time while circling the city. Since Finch didn't smoke, he felt anguished when the cigarette's nicotine accidentally scratched his throat, forcing him to vomit. Finch continued on his way and started running again, even though he didn't care.

Finch is constantly plagued with suicidal thoughts. This desire came back to him again and again. Finch would find his fears getting worse and out of control if he didn't. In this state, Finch continues to look for ways to plan a suicide attempt and find the right time. Finch thought his suicide attempt had to be well planned to make his death look cool and peaceful. The fear felt by Finch's character made him continue to look for ways to commit suicide. Finch had read articles about suicide all the time, so he was familiar with characters who committed suicide. With this insight, he felt he could easily follow in their footsteps. This action is very deviant and includes dysfunctional behaviour.

And then I go up to my room, climb onto a chair, and contemplate the mechanics of hanging. Interesting fact: Hanging is the most frequently used method of suicide in the United Kingdom because researchers say it's viewed as both quick and easy (Niven, 2015: 90). The data above shows that Finch is practicing the method of suicide which he knows is widely practiced in the United Kingdom. He chose that method because he said this method is very fast and easy to do if you want to kill yourself.

I push the Saturn to ninety-five. I slam the gas harder. Then, precise fraction of a moment before my heart might explode or the engine might explode, I lift my foot up and off and go sailing across the old, rutted pavement, Little Bastard carrying me on its own as we fly up over the ground and land hard. (Niven, 2015: 41).

The data above occurs when Finch experiences anxiousness at night, making it challenging for him to fall asleep. He makes a concerted effort every night to find a solution to cope with this extreme anxiousness. A suicidal preoccupation always surfaces when Finch experiences anxiety. He exited Little Bastard while still driving his car at 95 mph. His heart was racing as he liked driving a vehicle that seemed to glide above the ground. He mentally pictured his body being close to being swallowed up in the metal debris, and the automobile he was driving burst into flames as if it were a brave thing. His hands were firm, not shaking until the car stopped. He acts in ways that could injure himself because of his drive to end his life, yet he sees it as usual despite appearing as though he is going insane.

CONCLUSION

This study uses the psychoanalytic theory by Lois Tyson. Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the character Theodore Finch in the novel *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven has a mental disorder, namely OCD. It happened to Finch, who always felt excessive anxiety inside him. This extreme anxiety makes Finch lose control of himself. So, he often performs actions that can endanger himself. This cause occurs because of the various factors implied in Finch's problems as a teenager who grew up in a broken home family. His parents' divorce had an impact on Finch's psychological development. The author hopes this research will be helpful for people who might do similar research on psychoanalysis in the future. The author realizes that there are still several things that can be improved in this research analysis of various conflicts. However, the authors hope to provide a strong foundation for future researchers studying literary work, especially psychoanalysis theory.

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