

Main Character's Different Reactions Toward Betrayal in Sarah Penner's *The Lost Apothecary*

Bagus Prawira Yuda^{1✉}, Sufi Ikrima Sa'adah²

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

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Fictional works frequently portray betrayal in love relationships, but there is limited discussion regarding reactions that occur within the wounded person's love life. Therefore, this research examines how the two main female characters in *The Lost Apothecary* react to the love affair. In order to find the element of personal encouragement to decide their reaction against their sorrow, the researchers employ the defense mechanism, a part of the psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud. This analysis attempts to obtain significant data on character responses to the mistreatment by their spouse with respective defense mechanisms. A suitable method for observing the whole frame of the story from the novel is the qualitative comparative method to help compare the characteristics of the protagonists, Nella and Caroline. Two significant comparisons in this investigation are found: Nella prefers to react by projection type. In turn, after feeling betrayed by her husband Fredrick, she takes revenge by selling poison to kill him and other men who rehearse the same treatment on other women. Meanwhile, Caroline's reaction follows a sublimation defense mechanism by finding another passion for living morally rather than harming a person who caused her grief.

INTRODUCTION

Literary work is a feasible medium for readers to reflect on their feelings when challenged by a predicament, and mostly, the problem comes with the discomfort that puts someone into sorrow. The emergence of fictional stories such as novels allows readers to filter how they can react to solve their sad emotions. Castañeda-Díaz & Menchaca-Morales (2018) found that Reading fiction can dive into readers' feelings and leave beneficial values. Also, it can shape new perceptions from the reader's vision of the problem. A betrayal by someone who loves can be heartbreaking, but everyone can react differently after facing those harmful conditions. The novel *The Lost Apothecary* by Sarah Penner immerses the reader who faces sorrow, especially in a love relationship.

This analysis focuses on the different reactions of the two main characters, Nella and Caroline after they experience harmful treatment by their husband to relieve their annoyance. "In general, a person wants to live a calm and trouble-free life. However, in reality, humans always have problems to make them learn to face problems and survive" (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to help find the different reactions that readers can implement wisely in their lives. Psychoanalysis guides how the character deals with their defense mechanism, which is sublimation and regression related to this issue in building their decision. Through this analysis, we aim to gain insight into the differing choices made by Caroline and Nella based on their alignment with their different action toward conflict, respectively. This exploration of a woman's affair allows this analysis to gain data on the actions taken by Caroline when she prioritizes her morals over seeking revenge, contrasting to Nella, who is more exaggerated to pursue her hatred against her feelings. Consequently, we can uncover the impacts experienced by both of them, and the readers can learn the proper character choice to accept while facing harmful treatment.

The experience of unpleasant treatment plays a crucial role in shaping human reaction, as evidenced by Nella and Caroline upon realizing their husband's involvement with another woman, which resulting adverse impact. Therefore, in facing their sorrow, Nella and Caroline must survive using self-defense mechanisms. Zahrah and Wijayanti (2023) claimed that the existence of anxiety in characters leads them to react as a mechanism in an effort to deal with their worst situation. The anxious feelings of both Nella and Caroline give the reader a perspective of life concerning two different women's reactions to betrayal. Even though they were subjected to the same adverse treatment by their spouse, they were disinclined to respond similarly.

The researchers utilized the theory of defense mechanisms found by Sigmund Freud. The purpose of self-defense mechanisms is to provide a personalized strategy for dealing with anxiety-related stress. As a result of conflict, the impulses of the id collide with the responses of the ego. Purwo and Andayani (2022) state that according to Freud, self-defense or the implementation of defense mechanisms becomes necessary when the id is agitated, disrupting the ego's pursuit of satisfaction. The nature of these mechanisms, such as projection, is the combination of denial and displacement. Anshori (2016) argues that the mechanism of projection closely resembles a synthesis of denial and displacement, often stemming from repression. This phenomenon renders individuals unable to acknowledge the veracity of their own attitudes. Denial reflects the unacceptable, uncomfortable reality faced by the person. Meanwhile, displacement is when the individual blames another person who does not engage.

This research used the psychoanalysis theory of defense mechanisms concerning projection and sublimation to effectively find the data of Nella and Caroline's different reactions. Nella seems to relate to this type of projection because she cannot accept the betrayal, which turns her to revenge by poisoning her husband and other men who hurt women. Lakshmi et al. (2023) affirm that projection refers to the continual preoccupation with negative perceptions of others' behaviors toward them, resulting in self-hatred directed toward others and themselves. On the other hand, Caroline follows the sublimation type by accepting reality and finding other passions to reduce her sorrow. Zulfaisya and Hasra (2020) assert that the character's strategy after facing bad treatment can be resolved by sublimation because the character accepts his difficult self-acceptance in positive behavior and projection where he cannot deal with his problem and reacts immorally. The psychological self-defense mechanism aspect based on Sigmund Freud is found in *The Lost Apothecary* novel because the main character has a different perspective on how they can express their reaction to harmful behavior by others.

Top of all, the research on the main character's reaction toward betrayal from *The Lost Apothecary* novel hoped to motivate readers to apply appropriate reactions to someone who hurts their feelings and influence readers to think before considering their reactions, even when facing complex problems. It also serves as an illustration for individuals not to commit unfaithfulness in love relationships, which can affect others in grief or even make the victim react in the wrong way. To examine the factors of the different reactions, first, it explores Nella's reaction after being betrayed, second is Caroline's reaction after being

betrayed, and last, how is the incentive for Nella and Caroline to react in different ways after being betrayed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous issues have been addressed by Bagtayan and Lantowa (2022) entitled *Psychology Analysis of Main Character in the Novel Gitanjali* by Febrialdi R. This research is concerned with the female character's psychological aspect after treating despair, which shapes the character's decision to react to her depression. The same issue was also addressed by Winarsih and Margareta (2021). They analyze the female character's struggle against the inequality posed by the male. Therefore, it teaches women to react to revolt against environmental conditions. The same case is also related to research by Ghammaz et al. (2020). This journal discusses the manifestation of violence against women in Jordan through text analysis of the novel "Falling in the Sun" by Sanaa Shalan, focusing on the representation of physical, psychological, and economic violence against female characters in the novel. Another research by Nasution and Sahri (2020) seek the impact of infidelity on married couples in the novel *Before I Go to Sleep*, which results in divorce, illness, loneliness, and emotional trauma, and emphasizes the importance of continuous communication in overcoming these problems. The last research on women's reactions to harm treatment is conducted by Afifulloh (2019). This research deals with a woman who has a strong faith but must rebel and escape her environment after being prostituted by a male.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, the analysis emphasizes both central female characters' issues in the reaction toward conflict triggered by their husbands' infidelity. This research utilizes a comparative qualitative method to gain significant data to explore the character's life in a novel story. Using the comparative qualitative method can archive the different perspectives and situations of the main character that prove the result data on the character's life experience. Data is collected by classifying both characters, Nella and Caroline's responses in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis defense mechanism approach to dissect factors of their different choice. The following steps continue by interpreting the differences between the two main characters regarding unfair treatment from their

husband. After interpreting the data, this research will provide new knowledge on how characters can be different to respond to similar problems.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Nella's Reaction After Being Betrayed by Her Husband

Nella, residing in 1790, took over her mother's pharmacy upon her mother's demise, specializing in treatments for women due to prevalent social inequalities. Encountering Frederick as her first romantic interest brought her joy, ending her solitude. However, subsequent betrayals led her to harbor resentment, causing her to poison Frederick and men who mistreated women. Motivated by her loneliness and her mother's teaching about the scarcity of medical aid for women at that time, Nella sought to safeguard women by resorting to poisoning. Her defense mechanism, akin to projection, involved nurturing deep-seated animosity towards her husband, persisting over time. "This defense mechanism is called projection. Lustful, aggressive, and other unacceptable impulses are seen as being possessed by other people, not by oneself." (Luthtiyyah, 2017).

Nella could not accept the fact that she had been betrayed by the person she loved and was carried away by deep feelings of hatred. Nella views her husband's treatment as a matter that makes her hopeless in continuing her life to be a better person because of the difficulty of accepting it. Therefore, the strong, unacceptable feeling from Nella had turned her into a murderer who killed other people so that she could vent her frustration. The self-defense mechanism projection is formed from a combination of denial and displacement. We can see denial here from Nella, who does not want to accept that she can be better without Fredrick, even if she could find someone better than him. Carvalho et al. (2019) found that people who lack social interactions tend to exhibit a propensity for denial, wherein they struggle to accept harsh realities.

The data reaction of Nella to her husband is Nella's revenge for her husband's bad treatment by poisoning her husband. From the novel quote, Nella sees more displacement in her decision to react to the repression defense mechanism caused by the improvement of the projection mechanism. It causes her negative thoughts about her man to turn her into immoral behavior to reduce pain and replace her sadness by seeing the person she hates. In life norms, Nella's reaction to killing people does not follow the moral life standard that changes her into a criminal and trapped in a situation that makes her create new problems to satisfy her emotions by seeing other people suffer. In this case, Setiawan

et al., (2021) affirm that individuals influenced by their id react by seeking retribution and raise criminal actions that defy societal norms when confronted with unpleasant treatment.

After being betrayed, the wounded apothecary reflects her emotion to other males who commit the same guilt that distressed the woman. Nella's feedback on this novel is to choose to change her pharmacy by selling poison to a woman to kill her unfaithful husband or man who hurts a woman. The reason for her sealing poison, because she is not satisfied only by killing her husband, is the example of a person driven by her id and happened from their unconscious mind. "after Frederick's betrayal and after I began dispensing poisons to women across London" (Penner, 2021). In applying the psychoanalysis approach by Sigmund Freud, which focuses on defense mechanisms, Nella's response can be identified as displacement, which relates to Nella's life as anti-social. "Each character in the story survives with his loneliness in different ways; there is a displacement where the character vents his feelings with other objects and the formation of a reaction where he/she" (Atzama & Wahyuni, 2022).

The improvement of Nella's character after being betrayed becomes further misery as the days continue. It can be seen from her condition after becoming a poisoner who spends time creating poison, which turns her face older than her age, and her body becomes weaker due to the venom effect. The last of her job poisoners, she jumps at the bridge after police chase her for being suspected of the apothecary killer, "Apothecary Killer Jumps from Bridge, Suicide" (Penner, 2021). By the end of her life, she commits suicide and regrets her choice because someone who buys her poison dies after helping her. By this, Nella's reaction follows the projection defense mechanism that can change sadness by watching other people suffering, as her experience can be fair. However, it is a temporary pleasure that enhances other problems and complicates people's lives. By the end of Nella's life, after implementing projection, her life is wholly miserable, and she regrets their choice.

Caroline's Reaction After Being Betrayed by Her Husband

Caroline lives in the present; she is a college graduate in London, and while studying, she dated James, who later married her. Here, Caroline is also described as having many companions. When someone betrays her, she tries to find new comfort by going on holiday where she can be busy with a new community and new activities to calm herself. In implementing a defense mechanism, sublimation suits Caroline's reaction to her sorrow. Caroline faces her sadness by finding a place to discover, such as moving to London and

meeting some people in muddling activity. "I was in London alone, grieving and furious and jet-lagged, with a life-changing decision to make" (Penner, 2021). Thus, she does not put herself into deep grief and focuses on other things that make her reduce her hatred.

Caroline does not want to blame and think about other people's wrong treatment for a long time, so she chooses not to focus on her husband's behavior, which causes her to feel distressed. In the approach of Sigmund Freud's defense mechanism, Caroline can control herself to depend on her sublimation strategy. After being betrayed, she also can feel sad and angry, which causes her to leave her husband, but instead of hurting other people, she focuses more focus on reducing her pain. Because of this choice, Caroline's reaction motivates her to find other passions and not commit other problems, such as her reaction to her husband's harassment. It made her peaceful by accepting her condition and focusing on her love.

In her first reaction to the news of her husband's affair, Caroline put herself in the bathroom while crying to overcome her sadness: "Following James's news, after I'd locked myself in the bathroom, he'd tried to break his way inside where I lay curled up on the bath mat. I begged him to leave me alone" (Penner, 2021). Caroline did not take revenge for what her spouse did; even after she left, her spouse came back to chase her, and she continued to communicate with her ex-husband without any feelings of wanting to hurt him. This indicates Caroline's strong sense of morality, which makes her not want to hurt her ex-husband. Siregar et al. (2022) said that by utilizing a sublimation defense mechanism, individuals manage to transmute their emotions, exchanging discomfort for activities considered beneficial rather than detrimental within social norms.

In going about her days with others, Caroline still looks normal to others and does not do harmful things to the individual society she found on holiday. Despite being on vacation, she prioritized staying in touch with her friends, enabling the mutual sharing of stories to promote her emotional comfort. She remains good friends with men such as Bachelor Alf, who guides her community during mudlarking activities, and Gaynor, who assists her in the library. Over her activities with her companion in London, she gradually began to accept the departure of her ex-husband, James. From this, we can infer that Caroline exhibits a greater capacity for emotional restraint, managing her feelings without involving others in the bitter ordeal she experienced. Agita Br Tarigan et al. (2022) found That sublimation drives individuals to gain recognition and acceptance in a social environment.

The development of Caroline's life after implementing the sublimation defense mechanism gradually reduces her hatred for her husband and makes her emotions go. The data can be seen in the novel when Caroline chooses to divorce but still communicates better with her ex-husband. From this, a character who reacts in a sublimation defense strategy can live in peace. Caroline's reaction is based on moral standards and does not cause her to become more depressed. Therefore, Caroline's decision to react after suppressing harmful treatment can make us realize that sometimes individuals must rise from their sorrow and continue their lives in a better direction. It can take time to find a new passion like Caroline's. "Suppression reduces the focus on disturbing intra-psychic states, shifting attention away from them while maintaining some away" (Herdi, 2023). Through this reaction, she can focus on making herself happy and accepting her condition, which can be an excellent example for readers to follow when they face a challenging situation or are wounded by other people's behavior.

The Motive for Their Different Self-Defense Decision

Nella lived in a social background that had only isolated herself in her mother's pharmacy since childhood. Then she, who lived alone when her mother died and discovered her husband was cheating, felt more pressure because she had no friends to advise and comfort her. Therefore, when betrayed by someone she loves, Nella focuses only on her feelings of revenge and does not consider the value of normality. Hence, Nella's reaction is caused by her vital Id and weak Superego. The ego forced her to react to projection when faced with a challenging problem. The deep feeling of resentment he has towards men makes him lose his identity and makes him maintain a defense mechanism projection. Therefore, Nella had to hurt other people because she wanted other men to feel her pain after being betrayed. Rabbani et al. (2019) discuss the impact of a vital id in motivating someone to react, which tends to form her life in suffering and cause death to other people. For instance, she becomes weaker, and in the end, she commits suicide and regrets her decision.

Caroline has lived in social environments such as on-campus before marriage, but she has many friends who can put her in a better situation. Apart from that, she also considers moral values reasonably, allowing her to remain who she is and not harm others, such as meeting new friends to calm her mind. For this reason, Caroline focuses more on herself than Nella does on other people. Caroline is not focused on revenge against her

husband. She focused on finding her happiness. The most crucial aspect is Caroline's ability to control her emotions, ensuring she refrains from harmful actions towards herself and others, prioritizing preserving her mental well-being. By surrounding herself with friends who kept her engaged in beneficial activities, she overcame her pain and emerged resilient.

From the different factors of the two characters, it is discovered that the reason the female protagonists in the novel *The Lost Apothecary* choose their reactions does not stem from how badly others treat them. However, they decide to react because their backgrounds are different, where Nella and Caroline lived in different periods and had different environmental situations. The characters' reactions are not caused by the treatment but by their experiences and social support. This is proven by the data from the background of the two characters, Nella and Caroline. However, individual reactions cannot be quickly dismissed as wrong or better. Even though both protagonists face the same problems and are treated by the exact figures, it is better to know their life experiences. It can be a lesson for readers to be careful about how they act towards someone because not everyone can react the same way.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the different choices both characters took after being betrayed in the psychological aspect approach were affected by the experience of their lives. There is a big gap between the two characters' backgrounds, such as life in different timelines, their relationship with their partner, and how they can calm themselves if they face a problem. In *The Lost Apothecary* novel, the character Nella, who strongly reacts to projection self-defense mechanism to control her sad emotions and not manage her desire, tends to make herself trapped by her immoral ego by hurting other males to fulfill her desire, which makes her suffer in pain and arise a new problem in her life. Caroline reacted in a sublimation defense mechanism because she was able to reduce her anxiety and not hurt other people. Subsequently, their life background frames their ego in reacting differently, which can cause characters to respond in different defense mechanism styles. Nella decides to stop her pain because she has suffered for a long time and has built an immoral reaction toward her husband and others. On the other hand, Caroline chose to seek positive passion because her life has surrounded many people she knows who love her. Hence, this result acknowledges readers that every individual decision to react on bad treatment is not cause

by the harm manners from others, but the cause of each individual to decide the ego is from their life experience. By the end of this analysis, it hope that reader learn to keep as good individual and choose the right decision to react on bad treatment from other people.

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