

DECK OF LIVES

Pudjiono, E.Y.¹ and Darma, B.²

^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA

E-mails: m11411008@john.petra.ac.id; budi.darma14@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study is accomplished to assist the readers of the novel project that is created to understand more about the elements in the novel *Deck of Lives*. The purpose of this novel is to educate people about the psychological aspects, what cause it and the results, and to support those who have similar psychological disorder. Using the theory of Death Instinct by Freud and Borderline Psychological Disorder, this novel will show the story and the attitudes of the main character. As a conclusion, one cause of the psychological aspects is the neglect and abuse, whether it is emotional, verbal, or physical done by the parents. This will help the readers to understand more of what to do to children to avoid such psychological aspects.

Keywords: Novel, Psychological, Borderline Psychological Disorder, and Death Instinct

The reason why *Deck of Lives* is written is because the author wants to tell the readers some feelings that people sometimes do not recognize and that someone here understand those kinds of feelings.

In some of the author's novels, the author sometimes put the feelings that the author see and analyze from other people, for example the dilemma between pity and love. Let's say someone has been feeling lonely for years and that person longs for attention. When someone comes and gives attention, there will be a dilemma whether this attention for that person is pity or love. The person also needs to decide whether the feeling is actually a want to be pitied or to be loved. That decision might lead to one or more feelings and dilemmas.

By writing all these things, the author wants to tell the readers who happened to have the same feeling as my characters in the novel that there is at least someone who can understand them. This someone can help expressing their feelings through words or acts of the characters of the novel that the author writes. Though it is only a character of a fiction-fantasy novel, the author wants to make it clear to the reader that the author understands what they feel. Thus they will feel that they are not alone in feeling what they feel and they will feel stronger in dealing with those feelings as they know that there is someone supporting them.

The author has this kind of want because the author wants to help people the way the author has been helped as the author has had similar problem to express my feeling before. When the author reads some novels, some words in those novels that she had read helped her to express it. The author also feels like she has been helped a lot, like there is a support from the novel for her to face the feelings she had at that time. Not only that, as the author observed some people who also have difficulties to express their feeling, especially her friend, the author found that they feel fine being understood by some words or sentences from a character or narrator in a novel and it gives them a sudden magical strength to keep on facing their problems or feelings.

Also, like Horace's words, *dulce et utile* or sweet and useful, a story needs to have benefits or give advice and not only become something enjoyable to read. So here, the author would like to share some advices of support to the readers in hope the readers will feel better after reading the novel. These advices will be provided by the acts and words of my characters.

Then the reason why the author chooses novel as the media is because a written thing will be able to be understood and remembered by people easily. It also could build empathy better than a movie or stage or play. Christina L. Hamlett, a playwright, novelist, and author of articles, in the article titled *FILM, STAGE OR NOVEL? Choosing the Right Vehicle to Convey Your Story* (Hamlett, C. L. (n.d.). *FILM, STAGE OR NOVEL? Choosing the Right Vehicle to Convey Your Story*. *Absolute Write*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from

http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/film_stage_or_novel.htm) said that using a book, someone could read it anyway they want, using the imagination from anyone's point of view but a movie or stage or play is limited using only the director's point of view. She also says that using novels, people can understand the characters and their thoughts intimately while in movie and such, people will be distracted by the actors. Therefore, the author concludes, to make the readers understand the characters and stories better, to make them feel connected with the characters and story, it is better to just use novel rather than movie or play or stage.

Short stories might be good too, but in a novel, the story will be able to be more complete, with past, present, and future which will be able to be presented rather than short stories which usually contain special occasions only. Even when short stories is able to give a whole complete story, there is a possibility the explanation is not enough. Bret Anthony Johnston, the author of *Remember Me Like This*, in an article titled *18 Short Story Authors On Why They Decided To Write A Novel* in (Woodard, B. (2014, August 16). *18 Short Story Authors On Why They Decided To Write A Novel*. *BuzzFeed*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/benwoodard/trying-to-ski-jump>) said that he is okay writing short stories but when the story he wrote got even more complex and longer, he came up with an idea to make those things well explained, that is in the form of novel. Therefore, using a novel would be better, especially in the theme of the novel, which is psychology, because the author could give the background of the psychological disorder the character is having in a more descriptive way.

Another form to convey this could be via poem but the author personally thinks that poem or poetry is a bit too hard to understand. In poetry, people will need to 'go beyond' in order to understand the meaning of it while in novel, people can just read it as it is. Sure there are many styles of poem which could be seen like a short story or novel, for example *Iliad*, but it is not that nice to read since it is still look a lot like poem which many people in this modern day dread enough to read.

The last choice that the author wants to discuss is the game element. The author chooses game for the novel because game is something familiar to people up to young adults, though the author manages to find some adults playing games too. She chooses Role-Playing Game because it is a game where there is a story in it and people usually play as the main character to achieve the character's goal, also it is the easiest medium to explain the characters. Since the main character's, Keira, hidden goal is to die and she is actually afraid to hurt herself, let alone dying in the real world, the author wants to state her bravery to die using the game. In Role-Playing Game, when the player is weak or their health point is reduced, they could use healing things or skills to strengthen the player and make the player healthy again. They even have potion to revive the players who are dead. In *Deck of Lives*, the main character has the skill to heal herself from any injuries. Thus she finally has the courage to hurt herself by receiving hit from her enemies and even cutting herself.

Then, the novel the author write for the project is actually the third novel of a series of seven novels. However, each of the novels consists of different stories with different main character though one or two novels will have similar characters. That way, each novel also has different storyline and name of game the characters need to play which make the readers free to read the novels not in the exact order. Though it seems that the whole series is not related, there is a relation of all the novels which will be explained in the last novel.

The author has already finished the first novel though it is in Bahasa Indonesia which means she would need to translate it and she is doing the second one in the Creative Writing for Adults class, so the author decided to continue with the third one as the project instead of looking for new inspiration for a new novel.

From the project the author makes, she would like to explore some psychological aspects:

1. How could a child grow as if without ambition and unconsciously do whatever needs to be done? Like in the story where Keira Reincre grows up, living her day-to-day life carelessly without giving a care to other things she does not want to care. It makes people sees her as someone without ambition or goals to pursue in her life.
2. Why would someone have a desire to die whether it is consciously or unconsciously? Here, Keira has an unconscious desire to die. Though sometimes she voices it out, she will quickly deny it again.

3. What things do parents not realize they have done to their children? This will be implemented and explained in the story, of how Keira's parents do to her which will also help to answer the question number one and two above.

Also, from this project, the author hopes she can show the answer related to the problems she has stated above:

1. The cause why a child grows as if he or she does not have ambition as is related to Keira and her parents' attitude toward her.
2. The reason someone would have the desire to die and how they act to this desire. This will be told in the story by Keira's flashback stories in some of the chapters. It also contains the symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder which is one of many disorders resulted from depression.

This novel is one media where the author would like people to realize and think about all the problems above. As this novel has a psychology theme, the author would like people to realize the signs of people having this psychological disorder, not for people to bully them but to help the people who are having this disorder to understand the world better. This novel would also present an important lesson for people, especially the young adults as they are the target of this novel, about the things parents unconsciously do to their children. The author also hopes people will realize that and have enough consciousness not to do that to their children.

For the novel, there will be two theories that the author will use. The first one is Psychoanalytic theory by Freud that is the Death Instinct. The other one is Psychology theory that is Borderline Personality Disorder. Basically, the two theories are similar as those two's goal is to die. Since the author will use the symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder for Keira with a bit mixture of other depression symptoms, she decides to put the psychology theory here too.

Theory

There will be two theories related to the novel. The first one is the Death Instinct by Sigmund Freud, taken from the book *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* by Calvin S. Hall (Hall, C. 1954. *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*. Cleveland: World Pub.) and the second one is the Borderline Personality Disorder, taken from the website of the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) (NAMI - The National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). Retrieved September 25, 2014, from http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=By_Illness&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=44780).

Thanatos (Death) Instinct

According to Sigmund Freud, there are two basic instincts in human's life, the first one is life and the other one is death. Here in the death instincts, the ultimate goal is to return to the inorganic matter or easily said to die.

Freud said that the first occurrence is when the cosmic forces transmuted into living forms in the first evolution of the earth. They might not have long life but then from these living forms, there is life. It is resulted from the external stimulation which causing a disturbed state. Once it is no longer in disturbed state, the inorganic matters become the organic matters and from life, they get to reproduce as the life spans increases. However, in the end, death still lingers, only to remind them that nothing could lasts forever.

The death instinct works inconspicuously yet the result, the destructiveness and aggressiveness, is conspicuous enough for people to notice. Also, this instinct is not that well considered by people, unlike its counterpart, the life instinct.

The instincts, both life and death, reside in the Id. However, only the life instinct resides in the Ego. It will constantly make sure humans protect themselves from death by transforming the death instinct into aggression against enemies in the external world. The example in my story is when Keira decides to defeat her enemy in the fights rather than being hurt or even defeated with the excuse of pathetic abilities of the enemies.

However, this aggression will encounter the counter-aggression from authority figures or enemies. Later, in order to avoid punishment, the person learns to identify the counter-aggression.

This will make the person develops the Superego similar to the counter-aggression. Sometimes, it can be extreme as the Superego will try to destroy the Ego and it might lead to a suicide decision.

It happens because the Superego now has the same goal of the death instinct in the Id. As both of them have the same goal, the Superego and the Id will not go against each other and rather they will just co-exist. That is how the Superego is called the agent of death instinct.

The example in the story about the theory is when Keira was still a kid and she asked her caretaker why people in the crowded place do not see her. The caretaker answered that that was because for those people she was nobody and when she was nobody for someone that meant she had no relation or connection. It will make the person did not pay attention to her. It then stuck in her mind which is her Superego. So when she grew up after all the accidents with her grandmother and sisters, her parents unconsciously neglected her, not paying attention or looking at her, making her feeling like she was nobody. The Superego then slipped into her Ego, making Keira thought that she was nobody, and since she did not worth anything to her parents, she might as well die, considering living and dying will both leave her alone.

Borderline Personality Disorder

The term Borderline Personality Disorder or what people usually called BPD is resulted because this disorder is placed between psychosis and neurosis. It is a disorder serious enough to cause a lot of suffering and may lead to the act of suicide. It will need an accurate diagnosis and treatment to take care of the patient.

According to National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in United States of America (USA), Borderline Personality Disorder is characterized by low self-esteem, self-sabotaging acts, mood fluctuations, and impulsivity. In which that means the person who suffer from this will constantly have mood swings, thoughts of self-harm, and unhealthy relationships with other people.

NAMI also said that the most severe cause is abuse, whether it is emotional, physical, or sexual one. Loss and neglect may also contribute to this disorder. Also, there is a possibility of developing this disorder for people who have a higher biological or genetic vulnerability to this condition. Even only living with people who suffer from this disease might cause other people to suffer too. In other words, BPD is kind of infectious for some people.

American Psychiatric Association in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) IV* has published some criteria or symptoms of this disorder. It includes the frantic effort to avoid abandonment consciously or unconsciously whether it is real or imagination toward the person they depend on, an unstable and intense relationship, self-harm and suicidal thoughts, chronic feelings of emptiness and sometimes intense anger, and a paranoia caused by stress. Not only those symptoms, sometimes people with BPD will also suffer additional symptoms, like depression, eating disorder, anxiety, bipolar illness, and many other symptoms.

Methodology

These theories will be used in the main character, Keira Reincre, as the background of her attitudes and personalities. Since the point of view is mostly in Keira, the author decides to just use these in her.

For the Death Instinct, it will be shown in some of Keira's thought though not often. In the story, Keira will be shown to have heavy feeling of emptiness, self-harm thoughts, and eating disorder. The keyword here is the self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Those are some characteristics in Borderline Personality Disorder.

Another characteristic that the author uses is the eating disorder. Keira will have the habit to eat whenever and whatever she wants to. Mostly, the author shows it by having her eating fruits and salads in random time.

Her depression will mostly be shown when Keira was having her breakdown upon seeing her sisters were in the game too.

Mostly, the theories will be shown by Keira's thoughts and actions, both subtle and clear. The subtle one will be from her thoughts and the clear one was when she was doing something.

CONCLUSION

Here is the conclusion from the writing of *Deck of Lives*. On the first part will be the lesson the author has learned from writing her own novel, both personally as in the way she write her novel and also from the story itself and the second part is the author's future plan for it.

Lessons Learned

There are three things that the author has learned from the story, they are how parents' attitude affect the children, what will happen to the children, and what should someone do to face such problem. These three things are actually connected to each other. Next is the lesson the author learned about the way she write her novel.

What the author learned from this is the fact that parents sometimes really do not realize what they have done to their children when they only pay attention to one matter, for example the health of Kae and the death of Keira's grandmother. Thus, they are neglecting the other children and make that child suffer with their attitudes.

Another simple fact that she learned is the fact that when they have been neglected, the children will have a hard time to trust other people, but then once they want to trust, they trust for real. It will be dangerous when the people they trust is the wrong people that will give them bad influences, such as drugs, alcohol, and such.

The last simple one is from Seirone and Keira where Seirone does not want to give up to try to make Keira open up to him. The author finds it that once people want to try to coax the children and when the children see that there is someone who really care for them and do not want to just walk away from them, they will be able to trust that people. When that happens, the one who has helped the children needs to support the children continually.

Last is the personal lesson when the author writes a novel. She needs to write better and further explanation for the novel so people could easily imagine and catch what she means in the novel.

Future Plans

The author's future plan is to continue my novel series and more importantly to improve the way she writes the novel. The author might look for some agents or communities for fellow authors so she can have more inputs to write the novels. Thus, she will have people to discuss with about the novels and she can get more advices.

She wants her novels to be able to help and support other people in being a better one. So of course, the author needs to look for publishers to make it true. Since without publishing it people will not be able to read it, the author is currently posting some of her stories in WattPad and she will continue to do so. The author would rather choose to publish the novel, though, because there will be the copyright rules which make the stories unable to be copied. If she could not find the publishers who want to publish the novels, she might resort to self-publishing, though.

REFERENCES

- Riordan, Rick (2005). *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One: The Lightning Thief*. United States of America: Miramax Books.
- Riordan, Rick (2006). *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Two: The Sea of Monsters*. United States of America: Miramax Books and Hyperion Books for Children
- Riordan, Rick (2007). *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Three: The Titan's Curse*. United States of America: Miramax Books and Hyperion Books for Children.
- Riordan, Rick (2008). *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Four: Battle of the Labyrinth*. United States of America: Hyperion Books for Children.
- Riordan, Rick (2009). *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book Five: The Last Olympians*. United States of America: Disney and Hyperion Books for Children.
- Rowling, J.K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J.K. (1998). *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secret*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit, Movie One: An Unexpected Journey*. [Movie] Dir. Peter Jackson, 2012.

- Woodard, B. (2014, August 16). 18 Short Story Authors On Why They Decided To Write A Novel. *BuzzFeed*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/benwoodard/trying-to-ski-jump>
- Hamlett, C. L. (n.d.). FILM, STAGE OR NOVEL? Choosing the Right Vehicle to Convey Your Story. *Absolute Write*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/film_stage_or_novel.htm
- Hall, C. 1954. *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*. Cleveland: World Pub.
- NAMI - The National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). Retrieved September 25, 2014, from http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=By_Illness&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=44780