

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1 Intrinsic Element

2.1.1 Character and Characterization

The concept of character is fundamental to narrative, representing a blend of inherent traits that drive the story. Abrams (2019, p. 42) defines characters as individuals with distinct moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities revealed through their words and actions. Therefore, character is a dynamic set of internal attributes that actively influences the unfolding of a story. Characterization is the process by which these internal traits are presented to the reader. According to Abrams (2009, p. 43), characterization is generally established through two broad methods: "showing" (the dramatic presentation of a character's actions and words without explicit authorial judgment) and "telling" (where the author authoritatively intervenes to describe and evaluate the character's motives and disposition). These techniques shape how the readers perceive the complexities and psychological depth of the characters.

2.1.2 Setting

The setting of a narrative or dramatic work is a concept with multiple aspects, defined as the general location, historical time, and social circumstances of the action (Abrams, 2009, p. 330). Within this broad framework, the purely visible

or "picturable" aspect of a particular setting in any work, is sometimes referred to by the Greek term *opsis*, or "spectacle" (Abrams, 2009, p. 330). Therefore, a complete understanding of context requires a recognition not only to the abstract social and historical context, but also to the specific sensory details that form its direct visual presence.

2.1.3 Conflict

M.H. Abrams defines narrative conflict as a central element where the plot is driven by pitting a protagonist against significant opponents or external forces (Abrams, 2009, p. 265). This opposition establishes the core tension that drives the narrative forward and achieves specific emotional effects. In this context, conflict is not merely a sequence of external events but a structural clash between the protagonist and their environment or antagonists. This external struggle inherently functions as a catalyst for internal psychological crisis, forcing the character to deploy defensive strategies in response to the tension.

2.2 Psychoanalytic Framework

2.2.1 Defense Mechanisms

According to Sigmund Freud, defense mechanisms, within psychoanalytic theory, are unconscious psychological strategies employed by the ego to protect itself from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts or impulses, these mechanisms operate outside of conscious awareness, preventing disturbing content from entering consciousness (1936, p. 11). The concept of defense mechanisms evolved from the study of conflicts between the id (primitive drives) and the ego

(mediator between id and reality) (1936, p. 69). He argues that the ego plays a central role in instigating these defenses, often rooted in early childhood experiences (1936, p. 21). As Anna Freud (1993, p. 42) points out, the concept of the ego and the mechanism of defense is a cornerstone of the dynamic perspective within psychoanalytic theory. As a result, defense mechanisms are fundamental to understanding how individuals cope with internal conflict and support psychological stability.

2.2.1.1 The Types of Defense Mechanism

Anna Freud (1993, p. 55) described specific types of defense mechanisms by citing nine established methods—“regression, repression, reaction formation, isolation, cancellation, projection, introjection, self-reversal, and reversal”—and adding a tenth, sublimation, which she noted was “more relevant to the study of normality than neurosis”. Furthermore, this text distinguishes denial from internal defense mechanisms; unlike classical methods, denial serves to reject painful external realities, particularly as a defense mechanism against "objective anxiety" rather than internal conflict (A. Freud, 1993, p. 93).

2.2.1.1.1 Repression

Repression is a defense mechanism that hides painful thoughts into the unconscious or turn them into socially acceptable actions. Anna Freud (1993, p. 14) explained that repression occurs when ideas remain hidden before they become conscious, and she noted that the force responsible for keeping them suppressed is later experienced as resistance during analysis. This shows that repression is not

only a way of avoiding distressing thoughts but also a process that actively resists attempts to bring them into consciousness.

2.2.1.1.2. Reaction Formation

Reaction Formation is recognized as "one of the most important measures adopted by the ego as a permanent protection against the id" (Anna Freud, 1993, p. 8). This mechanism functions to replace intrusive thoughts with the opposite of them, although it is unclear whether the ego can consciously focus on the original thought before the replacement occurs (Anna Freud, 1993, p. 8-9). Furthermore, she suggests that this defense is a "kind of reaction formation against the affect" which effectively reveals a "parallelism in the methods adopted by the ego for the avoidance of unpleasure from external and from internal sources" (Anna Freud, 1993, p. 40, 93).

2.2.1.1.3. Projection

By projecting its own aggressive impulses and subconscious drives onto external objects, the ego succeeds in releasing itself from the inner conflict caused by guilt, transforming the moral pressure that poses an internal threat into a real, external threat that is actually perceived. However, this defense mechanism severely distorts interpersonal relationships, replacing internal self-reflection with intense intolerance toward others, and leaving a permanent paranoid imprint on the subject's character (A. Freud, 1993, p. 118–119).

2.2.1.1.4. Denial

Denial is a basic psychological defense mechanism used by individuals to refuse to accept external realities that are too painful to accept. Denial happens when a person refuses to accept reality to avoid distress. Anna Freud (1993, p.93) explains the method of denial as a mechanism in which an individual avoids painful realities by mentally reversing or rejecting them, especially when escaping the situation is not possible. Therefore, denial functions as a temporary shield against distressing information, allowing a person to unconsciously delay the psychological impact of a traumatic or threatening situation.

2.2.1.1.5. Sublimation

Anna Freud (1993, p. 52) classified sublimation as a mature ego defense mechanism belonging to the realm of normal psychology, rather than as part of neurosis. This mechanism is described as “the displacement of instinctual aims in conformity with higher social values”. It occurs because of the ego’s need to adapt the primitive drives of the id so that they align with the demands of the superego and established social values. Its impact is highly positive for the stability of the personality, rather than expending psychic energy on exhausting repression or creating neurotic symptoms, sublimation successfully transfers instinctual energy into constructive and adaptive creative, social, or intellectual activities without triggering guilt or anxiety.

2.2.1.2 The Causes of Defense Mechanism

2.2.1.2.1. The Causes of Repression

Repression is caused by a conflict between the id's impulse, such as "sexual impulses" or "aggressive drives", and the high standards of the superego or external authority. The ego eliminates the ideational representations of these impulses from consciousness in order to relieve the superego, which fears to be overwhelmed by internal instinctual energy (A. Freud, 1993, p. 8, 35).

2.2.1.2.2. The Causes of Reaction Formation

Repression is caused by a severe conflict between primitive id impulses, such as sexual desires or aggressive drives, and the strict standards of the superego or external authority. In response, the ego eliminates the ideational representations of these forbidden impulses directly from conscious awareness. This operational strategy effectively relieves the psychic apparatus to protect the superego, which fears being completely overwhelmed by internal instinctual energy (A. Freud, 1993, p. 8, 35).

2.2.1.2.3. The Causes of Projection

Projection is primarily caused by the ego's inability to cope with internal tension, guilt, and objective anxiety triggered by its own reprehensible actions or desires. Rather than facing the superego's unpleasant self-criticism, the sensitive ego actively seeks a way to externalize the underlying psychological conflict. It achieves this by shifting its internal instinctual threat away from itself and turning it directly onto an external agent (A. Freud, 1993, p. 46, 51).

2.2.1.2.4. The Causes of Denial

Denial operates as a primitive defense mechanism, primarily utilized by the immature ego to protect itself from discomfort or exaggerated anxiety that comes from the outside world. This psychological strategy is automatically triggered when external reality becomes too traumatic or painful for the subject to process. Consequently, it prevents an individual with a developing mental state from being forced to adapt to that threatening information consciously (A. Freud, 1993, p. 70, 73).

2.2.1.2.5. The Causes of Sublimation

Sublimation stands unique as a mature, non-pathological defense mechanism that is caused by the ego's successful adaptation to higher social and ethical values. This psychic operation occurs when the psychological apparatus completely redirects a socially unacceptable, primitive instinctual drive away from its original target. Ultimately, this process channels that internal energy toward a constructive, valued purpose that aligns with societal expectations (A. Freud, 1993, p. 52).

2.2.1.3 The Effects of Defense Mechanism

2.2.1.3.1. The Effects of Repression

The effect of repression is the silent removal of forbidden desires and their associated emotions from conscious awareness, thereby achieving temporary psychic peace. However, this operation destroys the inner integrity of the personality by forcing a permanent, energy-draining anticathexis to keep the

threatening material buried. Ultimately, this unresolved subterranean friction forms the structural foundation for compromise formations and acute neurotic symptoms, such as hysteria (A. Freud, 1993, p. 49-50).

2.2.1.3.2. The Effects of Reaction Formation

Reaction formation permanently alters the ego by embedding rigid and exaggerated character traits that represent the exact opposite of the rejected impulse. The long-term impact of this strategy is a powerful limitation on vital psychic energy, which is continuously expended to maintain an artificial behavioral facade. This chronic internal strain often manifests as obsessional neurosis and a rigid, inflexible character shield that cannot adapt to a constantly changing environment (A. Freud, 1993, p. 47-48).

2.2.1.3.3. The Effects of Projection

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2.2.1.3.4. The Effects of Denial

The effect of denial is a protective distortion of objective reality through pleasant fantasies or behaviors that reverse painful facts into a tolerable opposite.

While this mechanism safely binds early anxieties, its prolonged use in later development forces a dangerous coexistence with reality testing. Consequently, this chronic reliance can lead to permanent character eccentricities, rigid self-delusions, or eventual neurotic symptom formation when the defense inevitably fractures (A. Freud, 1993, pp. 80-82).

2.2.1.3.5. The Effects of Sublimation

The effect of sublimation is the useful harmonization of id demands with superego expectations, allowing instinctual energy to find alternative gratification without generating anxiety or guilt. Because it resolves psychic friction adaptively rather than pathologically, this mature operation successfully functions without creating draining anticathexes. Ultimately, this process actively enriches the ego, preserves the integrity of the personality, and facilitates normal, healthy social functioning and creative development (A. Freud, 1993, pp. 44, 52, 56).

2.3 Research Method

2.3.1 Research Approach

This study adopts a Psychological Literature Approach, focusing on the intersection between psychoanalytic theory and literary representation. Through the lens of ego-psychology, which shifts the focus from the isolated mental processes of the author or character to the relationship between the ego and the external world (S. Freud, 1923, p. 105). This framework links the “movement of psychic energies” to the “play of language,” allowing for a balanced examination of both psychological depth and artistic structure (Wright, 1998, p. 52). To implement this, data is collected from qualitative reading to isolate narrative units that depict

psychological tension. These text excerpts were then analyzed using the Defense Mechanisms, which involved identifying specific mechanisms and interpreting their function in resolving conflicts between internal drives and external realities.

2.3.2 Method of Data Collection

This research is theoretically grounded in qualitative textual analysis, which relies on the systematic examination of primary and secondary sources to uncover the psychological dimensions within a narrative. According to Booth et al. (2008), academic libraries and digital repositories are essential for accessing the secondary theoretical literature needed to frame the study (p. 70). Concurrently, primary materials, such as original literary texts, serve as the fundamental raw data required for analytical research (Booth et al., 2008, p. 75). Within a psychological approach to literature, these primary textual elements are systematically evaluated against strict theoretical parameters, such as Anna Freud's concepts of defense mechanisms. This theoretical rigor is necessary to prevent analytical misapplication, ensuring a clear distinction between conscious behavioral concealment and genuine unconscious psychological phenomena. In this research, the primary data is obtained directly from the novel *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008) by Patrick Ness. The secondary data was collected from books, articles, theses, and journals.