

## THE MAIN CHARACTER'S DEFENSE MECHANISM IN ANDRZEJ SAPWOSKI'S NOVEL THE WITCHER: THE LAST WISH

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper is entitled The Main Character's Defense Mechanism In Andrzej Sapwoski's Novel The Witcher: The Last Wish, The writer analyzes this novel to reveal the portrayal of the main character Geralt of Rivia's defense mechanism. The method used to analyze this novel is a qualitative descriptive method, in which the writer first reads The Witcher: The Last Wish novel, and then classifies the data with Sigmund Freud's Anna Freud defense mechanism theory. The findings and discussion of this paper are Geralt's defense mechanism: Denial, Isolation, Projection, and Sublimation.*

**Keywords:** *Defense Mechanism, Main Character, Sigmund Freud Theory, Literature, Anna Freud Theory.*

### INTRODUCTION

In literature, authors often depict the form of a human being in a different color, and in some cases, such as fairytales, it is impossible to create moral values, while others are simply there to entertain children or even adults. Within the changes in human personality traits, many changes in behavior and demeanor came into the human character which then provide theory and criticism that readers use to analyze a literature (Bailey & Pico, 2022). Psychoanalysis literary criticism, "which is defined as "a type of literary criticism that employs some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature." Sigmund and Anna Freud develop a whole new set of concepts dedicated solely to a defense mechanism, which is defined as a theory that is initiated unconsciously when there are too many anxieties disturbing the ego (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015). These anxieties have the potential to negatively impact a person's mental health, leaving them vulnerable. As a result, these mechanisms can be used as strategies to avoid anxiety (Husni, 2019). A previous research titled as "The Main Character's Defense Mechanism in Cormac McCarty's Novel The Road" by Husni Mubarak focuses on the "father figure" inside the novel, and the paper writer uses characterization concepts as well as Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis theory to gather seven defense mechanisms: repression, regression, denial, projection, rationalization, introjection, and displacement (Snowden, 2006). For this paper, the writer employs The Witcher: The Last Wish novel, written by Andrzej Sapwoski in Polish (1993) and later translated into English in 2007. Geralt of Rivia is the main character from The Witcher: The Last Wish Novel, created by Andrzej Sapwoski. What makes this novel interesting is that back then Andrzej recognized that folklore stories were trending and he wanted to create a whole book filled with phenomenal characters for the readers to love. In 2019, Netflix produces and creates a show directed by Lauren Schmidt Hissrich, with Henry Cavill playing Geralt of Rivia, which was the perfect pitch. This causes such a big commotion for the novel to become famous, but the PlayStation game before this had its fan base (Wellek & Warren, 1989).

**LITERATURE REVIEW****Psychoanalysis and Literature**

According to Weliek & Warre (1989), the psychology of literature can relate to how a writer puts down the principles of psychology in a text like literature and for psychology readers (Freud, 1948). The psychoanalytic approach is the link between fiction and psychoanalysis, as Freud demonstrated his theory within the analysis of a character in a story in one of his works on psychology methods. Fictional stories are similar to our dreams in that they are surrounded by our imagination, which cannot feed into the real world because our material is realistic, whereas fiction has little validation or realness (Ryan, 2011:129).

**Defense Mechanism**

Sigmund Freud, known as the father of psychoanalysis, began to discuss defense mechanisms for the subconscious defenses of the id, ego, and superego in the 19th century. Although Freud's daughter, Anna, wrote a book in 1939, *The Ego and the Defense Mechanism*, that explained her father's theory of defense mechanisms, we have yet to make a definitive statement about how Freud defined defense mechanisms. In Chapter 4, "The Mechanism of Defense," page 42". Anna Freud stated that the term "defense," which she used so freely in the previous three chapters, is the earliest representative of the dynamic standpoint in psychoanalytic theory. It takes place for the first time in 1894. " Sigmund Freud's "The NeuroPsychoses of Defense" describes the ego's struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or effects in several of his subsequent works, "The Actiology of Hysteria," "The Further Remarks on the NeuroPsychoses of Defense." Later, however, that term was dropped and replaced by "suppression." Sigmund Freud has made defense mechanisms a response method designed to protect us from pain. The problem is that by defending ourselves in the short term, we harm our longer-term chances of dealing with reality and, as a result, maturing. Denial, displacement, projection, rationalization, Reaction Formation, Regression, Repression, Isolation, Withdrawal, and Sublimation are all defense mechanisms according to his theory. With the assistance of Anna Freud, who expanded on her father's theories, an American Psychiatrist and Harvard Professor Goerge E Valliant published a book titled "Adaption of Life" in 1996 August, in which he discussed defense mechanisms as a mature way to cope because, in reality, humans tend to grow slowly when it comes to sensitivity and psychology. Freud created a collection of defense mechanism types by interpreting psychoanalysis theory. To sum it up, the defense mechanism is an unseen resource that your ego uses to reduce or alleviate stress. Patients will frequently tell you that their behavior was wrong because they have unconscious resources to limit the conflict within themselves (Husni, 2019).

**METHODS**

In this study, the writer employs the descriptive qualitative method a technique for conducting this study because it is more adaptable when analyzing materials and behavior together, resulting in an intriguing result. According to Johnson and Kristensen, qualitative methods are used to analyze materials and hypotheses more flexibly, whereas descriptive methods are used to explain phenomena by studying and interpreting behavior. This method aims to analyze the main character defense mechanism in Andrzej Sapowski's novel *The Witcher The Last Wish*, which was written in Polish (1993) and translated into English (2007). The writer reads and analyze the novel, classifying and describing the main character Geralt of Rivia's defense mechanism portrayal using the concepts of psychoanalysis criticism and to arrive at the conclusion and discussion of this paper.

**Denial**

Denial in defense mechanism system is meant to use for a character that dislike the idea or emotion from the inside and outside, like creating a barrier from happiness or sadness that can happen around them. Geralt explains that he denies emotion not only through the process of mutation as a result of an accident that had to happen to him during his first encounter in killing a monster, but he also goes into these twisted emotions by tagging around a woman which did not end well for him and he realizes that there is no point in going around woman business if it has nothing to do with making love with them rather than finishing his work and moving on with his day.

“My first monster, Iola, was bald and had exceptionally rotten teeth. With some fellow monsters and deserters, he pulled out a little girl, maybe 13 years old. His companions held her father while the bald man tore off her dress. I rode up and said the time had come for him, too - I thought I was very witty. The bald monster released the girl and threw himself at me with an ax. He was slow but tough, and only then did he fall. I wanted the girl, sobbing with gratitude, to kiss her savior on the hands, and her father to thank me on his knees. In reality, her father fled with his attackers, and the girl became hysterical and fainted in fear when I approach”.

**(Sapowski’s Page 147)**

Geralt shows his first incident fighting a monster to save a girl, after which he wants to mingle as her love interest, but her father disagrees and harasses Geralt, so he leaves and never returns to Kaer Morhen ( a place where Geralt was born). Geralt was not born there; his mother, a sorcerer, decided to throw him there so he could be mutated from a human to a wizard; despite this, he is the only different wizard because of his pale skin and white hair. Nobody likes him or tries to like him there, and even when he tries to like him after saving the girl from the monster, no one appreciates him. Geralt goes on his journey alone after leaving Kaer Morhen, but he has this calm energy that women sometimes like but he still ignores them, one of the evidence is shown after a wizard named Stregabor had pleaded Geralt to help him kill a human and turn into a monster, just like Geralt's mutation process, this woman named Renfri (She was born in the midst of the prophecy surrounding the Black Sun eclipse and grew up to be aggressive and violent. She was portrayed as a rambunctious Snow White. She is not the first character to be linked to the fairytale character, as many others have been depicted as twisted versions of adorable princesses or animals. Aridea, her father's wife, hired someone to kill her and steal her heart, just like in the fairytale. Instead, she robbed and raped her employer instead of killing her.) She eventually made a lot of enemies, and Geralt had to decide whether to side with the sorcerer or Renfri, because she did flirted with him, it almost works however Geralt find out her true side and decide to leave her alone.

Renfri: “Don't go . . . she moaned, curling up in a ball  
He didn't reply”.

Renfri: “I'm . . .cold . . .

He said nothing. Renfri moaned again, curling up tighter as her blood flowed into the cracks between the stones.

Geralt . . . Hold me . . .

The Witcher remained silent”.

**(Sapowski’s Page 142)**

Geralt had no intentions for her, and he didn't care about the time he spent with her; all he did was look for his sword, which he found, and leave the area.

### **Isolation**

Isolation is defined as those who withdraw from events or a room that is filled with emotion or sadness, but who can still explain everything without displaying emotion, such as murders in detail. Geralt of Rivia's case of isolation is described as him mocking the dead and referring to how to kill a monster in detail, he sometimes does not care about how he speaks even in front of royalties because he believes in spreading information without removing anything, this is the cause of how many times he saw dead and kill monster pieces through pieces, his feeling disappeared into giving empathy for others. As a result, he just talks about the dead as if it's nothing serious.

Geralt: “pay attention if— And now pay close attention. If you believe the case is hopeless, murder her. If you break the spell, but the girl still isn't... normal. If you have any doubts about whether you have been completely successful, kill her”.

King Foltest: “Do not be concerned; you have nothing to fear from me. I'll yell at you in front of others, expel you from the palace and the town, and that'll be the end of it. Of course, I'm not going to give you the reward, but maybe you'll be able to get something from you know who”.

**(Sapowski Page 20)**

According to the quotation above, Geralt is forced to confront King Foltest after his brother-in-law informs him that his niece, the princess, has turned into a striga, and Geralt simply explains to them that this situation is not easy to handle and that the killing must take place quickly. Although Geralt's isolation does not gravitate towards how he describes dead in detail, because the witcher explains part of which he kills a monster in his denials, the death of a princess turns into a "striga" is like a comedy for him, in the sense that Geralt explains how they can kill the "monster" and also him asking gross things about her like how she devours or kills her victims.

Geralt: “Does she always eat her prey?”.

Velerad : “Come on, Geralt, it'll be dinner time soon.' Pish! Devours, bites, leaves aside, it varies — no doubt depending on her mood. She only bit the head off one, gutted a couple, and picked a few more clean to the bone, sucked them dry. 'My mother's—!’”.

**(Sapowski's Page 21)**

Geralt does not seem to care that the princess was a human before and that the curse turns her into a Striga , again his isolation remain straightforwardly with the fact he only wants to finish her off and nothing more, because the sentiment which the King gave to him was not enough to convince him, by changing his tone of speaking or rights to describe or ask such gruesome details about dead. Moreover, the story ends with Geralt battles the Striga, hesitant to use his silver sword. He binds the striga with a silver chain, which she breaks free of, although silver is an antithesis to magical monsters. Geralt eventually scares her away by projecting the hatred and malice in her mind back at her. Geralt retires for the night in the double coffin to await the dawn (not allowing the striga to sleep in her original coffin until the third crow of the rooster which would break the curse).

## Projection

Projection is defined as a person who is constantly preoccupied with what others may think or believe about them. They project negative thoughts about what people may think of them by leaving this hard mark of hating on people or hating themselves because their self-respect has been taken away from them. In this case, Geralt of Rivia is a very straightforward person who preaches what he believes, such as how corrupt society on middle-class villagers react to paying taxes or wedges properly on hardworking people who need money. And he believes that rich elite kingdoms should pay their warriors and helpers more than usual because statistics are meaningless without equality of discipline, thought Geralt will do anything to get the money he would not let people get away from offending them, in Geralt mind if people ask to bargain the money in exchange of something else or pay the cash later after he finishes the job Geralt already knew what these other character projects of him, which is kind of ridiculous since they ask the witcher who is sensitive and logical in first but this particular instant made him will that the projection will happen more than often, not until the end Geralt shows how powerful he is than the other characters.

Geralt: "Those wise men, 'they still have the money, no doubt? Witchers don't take payment in advance".

Velerad: "No doubt they still do".

Geralt: "No doubt they still do, 'Does the rumour say how much they offer?".

Velerad: "Some say eight hundred—' 'Not much when you bear in mind that rumour likes to exaggerate. And the king is offering three thousand.' 'Don't forget about the betrothal,"What are you talking about? It's obvious you won't get the three thousand".

Geralt: "How's it obvious?".

**(Sapwoski's Page 15)**

According to the dialogue above, Velerad, the brother of Adda, a queen who bore a princess who was later cursed as a Striga, is asking for help from Geralt, someone he had never met before these events, and he already talks about "Geralt's betrothal," which he is referring to witchers lusting over a woman for money, so he mocks Geralt more and more throughout the story Geralt's thought process goes to what people have initially thought he's done, whether true or not, and rarely does the witcher not react negatively to people's negative talk about him. His reaction to a situation like this is to keep a cool head and consider what more projection of others he can think of because this is the reality of sensitive people who react to poor judgment; they tend to think more of it. Another example of everyone's projection of the witcher is not only money but also status ranks in powers and appearance.

Stregobor: "One directed at me at that, 'And I considered you a friend. Counted on your help".

Geralt: "Our last meeting, 'was in the court of King Idi of Kovir. I'd come to be paid for killing the amphisboena which had been terrorising the neighbourhood. You and your compatriot Zavist vied with each other to call me a charlatan, a thoughtless murdering machine and a scavenger. Consequently not only didn't Idi pay me a penny, he gave me twelve hours to leave Kovir and, since his hourglass was broken, I barely made it. And now you say you're counting on my help. You say a monster's after you. What are you afraid of, Stregobor? If it catches up with you, tell it you like monsters, that you protect them and make sure no witcher scavenger ever troubles their peace. Indeed, if the monster disembowels and devours you, it'll prove terribly ungrateful".

**(Sapwoski's Page 105)**

From the conversation above, there's an argument of Geralt calling out Stregobor's honest lies that after so long they haven't met, now the wizard (Stregobor) wants the witcher to help him, and not to mention that Stregobor also didn't allow people to pay him after finishing a mission, so Geralt already projects this from the wizard since the understatement given to him was enough to know the character of Stregobor.

Stregobor: "initially decided to eliminate all of them. We got rid of a few . . . autopsies were done on all of them. One of them was even vivisectioned".

Geralt: "And you sons-of-bitches have the nerve to criticise witchers? Oh, the day will come when people will learn, and get the better of you".

Stregobor: "I don't think a day like that will come soon,' 'Don't forget that we were acting in the people's defence. The mutant girls would have drowned entire countries in blood".

Geralt: "So say you magicians, turning your noses up, so high and mighty with your auras of infallibility. While we're on the subject, surely you're not going to tell me that in your hunt for these so-called mutants you haven't once made a mistake?".

**(Sapwoski's Page 108)**

From this conversation, it is clear that Geralt is devastated by Stregobor because not only did Wizard Stregobor disrespect him by not letting Idi pay him after the mission, but Wizard's reputation became much better than Witcher's after Stregobor made a huge mistake that "they do not make often." Geralt's path is lined with stregobor towers, which the Wizard built to hide from Renfri, the mutant girl who transforms into a monster. Stregobor was entirely to blame, and he is now seeking Geralt's assistance. Nevertheless, Geralt's projection of him and seeing how weak he was, the witcher will analyze the problem on his own and complete the mission without Stregobor's help (because he is weak now and afraid of Renfri), and so Geralt had always projected that people would disregard him from head to toe because of his attire, skin tone, and so on. However, in this case, he truly accepts bullying to be normal around him, despite the fact that this projection is quite toxic, and he deals with it in such an eye-catching manner, demonstrating that he is attempting to be more sensible and confident with himself.

**Sublimation**

Sublimation is the transformation of negative emotions and instincts into positive actions, behavior, or feelings, known as growth. This allows people to hide their aggression while preventing them from displaying their anxiety, making them feel much better.

Geralt of Rivia, in the novel *The Witcher: The Last Wish*, has a different perspective on ways to reduce his anxiousness, which includes being more mature in handling his moods and frustration toward other people, Geralt first sublimation occurs because he has become more mature to understand that people will have a curiosity of his looks and power, so regardless of how he behaves around them, they will not change. And so Geralt began to be more reserved in conversation and listening, even though his profession requires him to do his job quickly, and as a result, the result of Geralt's sublimation lasts for a long time. One story that depicts this process in his meeting with Dandilion, although at first, he did not like Dandilion, in some instances, his sublimation shows frequently, and two stories are filled

with conversations between Geralt and Dandilion, that in some cases held prove of the witcher sublimation process.

Geralt: “don't sell anything. I don't go around enlisting men for the army and I don't know how to treat glanders. I'm a witcher”.

Dandilion: “It's a profession,' 'A witcher, do you understand? He kills strigas and spectres. He exterminates all sorts of vermin. Professionally, for money. Do you get it, alderman?”.

An Elderman: “Aha!'. A witcher! You should have said so right away!”.

Geralt: “Exactly,'. 'So now I'll ask you: is there any work to be found around here for me?”.

**(Sapwoski's Page 211,212 )**

Based on the conversation above, Geralt's sublimation occurs near the end of *The Witcher: The Last Wish* novel, when the witcher was looking for a job with this alderman while introducing himself. The Poet Dandilion suddenly appeared and spoke on his behalf, which was perplexing because Geralt had no idea who he was, but Dandilion was interested in him and wants to join his mission to get close to the Witcher. Geralt usually never allows anyone to tag in close with him however since he has become more calmer and sensitive around people his sublimation shows a sign of protection that he uses to cover not only anxiety but anger around Dandilion because the poet is quite an annoying person who likes to chat a lot which is quite opposite with the Witcher character. Geralt has grown much closer to Dandilion, displaying empathy for this human who patiently can be his friend. Dandilion is angry now because Geralt has underestimated his talent and intelligence, so he is attempting to wake Geralt up and make him feel more sensible, even though Geralt does not react much. After their first mission together, the witcher realizes that this man is incapable of being in dangerous situations and that Geralt must babysit him; now, the sublimation shows that he can surrender through his self-righteousness and find ways to adapt to people, including Dandilion. Going back to the storyline, they were fishing when the poet discovered a genie bottle that Geralt did not want him to open, but because of the previous understatement that he gave to the poet, he tries to annoy Geralt even more, and now the Witcher, as the hero, tries to sympathize with him and save his life.

Dandilion: “Oh, sure.' The poet hid the jar behind his back. 'And what more do you want? I'm the one who found it and I need all the wishes”.

Geralt: “Don't touch that seal! Leave it alone!”.

Dandilion: “Let go, I tell you! It's mine!”.

Geralt: “Dandilion, be careful!”.

Dandilion: “Sure!”.

Geralt: “Don't touch it! Oh, bloody hell!”.

**(Sapwoski's Page 278)**

From the dialogue above, we can see Geralt of Rivia going through another phase of sublimation, where he was protective of Dandilion before resenting him, and his character has changed for the better. The process of sublimation mechanism, as well as personality development, has altered Geralt of Rivia in many ways, especially at the finale of this novel. As a witcher and a hero, he has faced many challenges in his life; his mother abandoned him in Kaer Mohen so that he could learn to be an adult through the mutation process of becoming a witcher; however, this was not an easy task because Geralt is a character who is both calm and insensitive, emotional and un-progressive, and smart and

arrogant. And these characteristics have contributed to the outcome, which is that he has become more of an adult and has considered changing his lifestyle so that not only the other characters in the novel will accept him better, but also his depression and anxiety issues will be addressed. His true skin reveals that, while he is not the best person in the world, he has made a significant impact in terms of debunking the myth that not all people who are sensitive are evil, and people should learn that appreciating one's conversation or talent is not that difficult to do, because, in the end, Geralt, like anyone else, requires proximity from people around him so that the lonely do not eat him up. "Only Evil and Greater Evil exist, and beyond them, in the shadows, lurks True Evil. You can hardly imagine true evil, Geralt, even if you believe nothing can surprise you. Sometimes, true evil seizes your throat and asks you to choose between it and one of the lesser evils. This quote of Geralt by Andrzej Sapkowski shows what great choice for his destiny and he picks maturity and being more sensible in his future.

## DISCUSSION

Geralt of Rivia's defense mechanisms are divided into four categories: denial, isolation, projection, and sublimation. Denial is portrayed through Geralt statements and actions. First, he describes his life background process of becoming a human to a witcher and how that impacted his life. Second, Geralt has ignored many beautiful ladies who were attracted to him. Geralt depicts isolation as his reaction to not reacting well to the dead and making light of a serious situation, which resulted in him seeing the dead almost all of the time. Projection portrayed through Geralt statements the idea of taking or not receiving money is quite political to Geralt because royalties and villagers believe that The Witcher should not be paid after helping anyone, and so Geralt always projects bad and insensitive thoughts that others have of him. And Sublimation is demonstrated by Geralt's actions; as the main character, he has matured and tries to be more sensible around people; in this case, with Dandelion, the poet who constantly annoys the Witcher; previously, Geralt despised him, but now he has adjusted himself around the poet.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the content used is from a novel, and after reading and analyzing the novel, the writer had a better broader aspect of what literature is really about, especially considering that in every part of our world, different novelists carried aspects of literature by adding their culture folklore stories, just like how this novel by Andrzej Sapkowski is made and inspired by legends and myths from Poland, so the writer suggests not only to read this novel but also to try reading as many works in different languages and contexts as possible. Next, in terms of psychology in literature, the writer hopes that there will be more research on psychoanalysis criticism so that many writers can write research based on analyzing novels using the theory because there are very few articles or journals.

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