

Digory's personality development in *The Magician's Nephew*: A Lacanian psychoanalytic study

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Abstract

The study examines the influence of closest people's existence on Digory Kirkey's personality development in CS. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew* using Jacques Lacan psychoanalytic theory. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method. The primary data was acquired by reading the novel, while the data was analyzed using three orders of Lacan psychoanalytic which are the imaginary order, symbolic order, and real order. The research's finding reveals that Digory's personality is heavily shaped by people around him. Digory makes a choice by thinking about his mother, his uncle, his friend, and Aslan, the ruler of Narnia. Digory was a reckless teenager, but he changed throughout the story. These relationships influence his transition through three orders of Lacan psychoanalytic. The study concludes that the existence of closest people has an impact on Digory's personality development.

Keywords: Digory, existence, lacan psychoanalytic, personality development, *The Magician's Nephew*

INTRODUCTION

Characters of the story have their own distinct which divide them between each other. Character is an important part of the story. Characters are divided into two, major characters and minor characters. Both have their own contribution to the story; however major characters are the ones who mostly appear in the story. Even though minor characters only appeared briefly, their contribution is not worthless. The presence of minor characters is vital. *The Magician's Nephew* characters such as Digory as major character cannot stand alone without minor characters. In the story, minor characters are a compass throughout Digory's journey in Narnia world.

The story mainly uses pattern protagonist against antagonist. This pattern is often found in children's literature. The goal of this kind of pattern was to show the conflict clearly so that children can understand the story easily. *The Magician's Nephew* also uses the same pattern; therefore, the story became favorite of many children. The protagonist of *The Magician's Nephew* is Digory Kirkey and he lived with his sick mother and crazy uncle. Digory, living under a big pressure, made him become a reckless child who does everything without worrying about the consequences. Digory wanted a happier life, instead he is stuck with his uncle named Andrew Ketterley. Digory's uncle is often called crazy because of his weird experiment.

The research conducted using Lacanian psychoanalytic to understand the character development of Digory Kirkey which influenced by his closest people. Particular the method is Lacanian psychoanalytic theory of three orders which are imaginary order, symbolic order, and real order. Each order has its own meaning. imaginary order is the self-image by ourselves, while symbolic order is the rule, and lastly real order is the reality of life, even though sometimes it was bitter. This theory explains how identity is formed through relationships with others.

The story of *The Magician's Nephew* intrigued the researcher to conduct this research. Most of study about Digory's character is about heroism, moral values, and Christian allegory within the story. However, scholars have not given big attention to psychological analysis. Lack of research about Digory's character development from the point of view of psychoanalysis should be lifted to scholars. Therefore, this research is conducted to fill this gap by analyzing the impact of other people's presence on individual personalities using Lacan psychoanalysis, which focuses on Digory, the main character of the story.

The objective of this study is to analyze Digory's character to the fullest and his development character throughout the story. The development character analyzed by using Lacan psychoanalysis. It is expected that this study will contribute to literary criticism by providing a deeper understanding of personality development through interpersonal relationships. This research is also expected to become a guide for new parent to understand their kids.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive-qualitative method since the results are in the

form of description based on the analysis of the character development *Narnia: The Magician's Nephew* novel. Qualitative research is a method emphasising on the inductive reasoning where the researcher obtains to develop hypotheses from observers (Koh, 2000, p. 220). Kalof (2008) in Aspers (2019, p. 146) explains that qualitative research focuses on understanding processes, experiences, and the meanings people assign to things. Qualitative method is descriptive. In descriptive method, the data is collected in the form of words or pictures. The data is analysed by transcribing and focused more on the process rather than the products (Bodgan, 1998, p. 6). In analysing the data of the research, the researcher herself is the instruments of collecting the data by reading *Narnia: The Magician's Nephew* novel, journal articles, books, internet source, and other references which are related to the topic. After reading all of them, the researcher takes the essential material as references to do the analysis.

In collecting the data, the researcher uses some steps. Firstly, through reading the novel. While gathering data, the researcher extensively examines the novel to capture the intricacies of the narrative. Moreover, the researcher delves into the entire novel, conducting a thorough exploration to gain a deeper comprehension of the story in connection with the study's topic. During this phase, the researcher also discerns the overarching issue that becomes the focal point of the study, subsequently formulating the research problem statement aligned with the novel's storyline. While gathering data, the researcher extensively examines the novel to capture the intricacies of the narrative. Moreover, the researcher delves into the entire novel, conducting a thorough exploration to gain a deeper comprehension

of the story in connection with the study's topic. During this phase, the researcher also discerns the overarching issue that becomes the focal point of the study, subsequently formulating the research problem statement aligned with the novel's storyline. Second, Identifying the problems in the story. Upon understanding the overarching issue, the researcher proceeds to pinpoint more specific and concentrated problems. The researcher meticulously gathers and identifies data from the novel, organizing it into paragraphs, sentences, and utterances relevant to the research problem. Throughout this procedure, emphasis is placed on every section that correlates with the topic and holds a high likelihood of serving as primary or supportive data for analysis. Lastly, interpreting the data and connecting it with the study's topic. During this phase, the researcher employs Lacan's psychoanalysis theory to interpret all paragraphs, sentences, and utterances supported by the characterization, plot, and setting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narnia novels have been hugely popular since their first publication to the present day, because of the writing style that invites readers to enter the fantasy world created by the author, C. S. Lewis. The Narnia series comprises seven books; however, in this study, the researcher will focus on one novel in the series, titled "Narnia: The Magician's Nephew". The novel under investigation features numerous characters, each of whom plays a significant role in shaping the plot. In a novel, the story typically centres on the main character, and this is also the case with "Narnia: The Magician's Nephew". The main character in "Narnia: The Magician's Nephew" is Digory, and it is this character who will be the subject of the researcher's study for the

final assignment. In this study, the researcher will focus on analysing Digory's character development throughout the Narnia novel using Lacanian psychoanalysis. In Chapter II, the researcher has identified various academic articles relating to the analysis of a novel using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. These articles have yielded new findings that may contribute to the reader's understanding. This section presents findings from the novel "The Magician's Nephew". The researcher read the novel carefully and then analyzed it using Jacques Lacan's research method. This research method is an evolution of the earlier psychoanalytic research method developed by Sigmund Freud. Jacques Lacan's research method, known as Lacanian psychoanalysis, has three core components: the real order, the imaginary order, and the symbolic order.

The real order is the truth of Digory's hard life. Digory is the main character in the novel "The Magician's Nephew", but in this story he meets many characters who influenced his character development. Digory's story is quite sad; he lives with just his seriously ill mother and his uncle, who is often considered crazy by many people because of his absurd research. Digory's uncle is called Andrew Ketterly. Andrew often orders Digory to do as he pleases. Living under pressure made Digory see himself as someone who is reliable. In the novel "The Magician's Nephew", Digory and his close friend Polly are tricked by Andrew to prove his crazy research. Andrew tells Polly to touch a yellow ring without telling her that the object possesses magical powers that transport her into a strange world. Polly's disappearance made Digory angry with his uncle, but he didn't know what to do. Consequently, he became vulnerable to Andrew's manipulation. Andrew told Digory to touch a green ring, claiming it would bring Polly back, but this

turned out to be a lie as, in fact, Andrew had never even done that. So, Andrew was simply using Polly and Digory as his guinea pigs. Digory's behaviour when he panicked after Polly went missing and tried to save his friend, even though it turned out he had been tricked by his own uncle, is proof that Digory is easily led astray in his eagerness to help his friend. He didn't think twice, even though he knew his uncle was mad. Digory believed that the most important thing was to save his friend by any means necessary, setting aside the potential consequences whether good or bad of his actions. In short, Digory is a reckless person. From this incident, we can tell that imaginary order of Digory's character development is that he cares deeply for others, especially his mother and his friend. He believes that he must be a hero to others or someone reliable. However, Digory's careless mistake caused him and Polly, his close friend, to end up in a strange, unknown world, a world completely different from the one they both lived in. Digory was filled with regret, but Polly, as his close friend, made him realise that they had to find a way out of this situation immediately. Therefore, Digory realised that whilst he had been wrong to trust his uncle, it did not mean he had failed to save his friend. The two friends walked along the path in this strange world until they came upon a palace. The place was deserted, yet its beauty was truly breathtaking, which made Digory curious about the palace. Digory and Polly entered the palace and found a warning sign and a bell. The warning sign forbade anyone from ringing the bell without stating a reason. This made Digory curious about what would happen if the bell were rung. Polly felt they should heed the warning, but Digory didn't care because he was so curious. Eventually, Digory rang the bell. The sound of the bell echoed throughout the palace, and at that

very moment a woman approached. The woman was known as the White Witch; she was cursed to sleep forever and would only wake if the bell were rung. The White Witch was cursed because of her evil deeds. Once again, Digory's carelessness led to consequences that put the two friends in danger. In this incident, the character of Digory, as written by C. S. Lewis, makes it increasingly clear that Digory never thinks about the consequences of his actions or the choices he makes. Digory realises that he is very careless. This is the self-image that Digory feels. His carelessness helps no one and instead puts himself and Polly in danger. Overcome by a profound fear of the White Witch, Polly and Digory ran out of the palace. This fear made him realise that he had made a mistake. This realisation of his mistake represents a symbolic order. Digory realised that he should have obeyed the rules written on the warning sign. Ringing the bell was a grave mistake on Digory's part, one that would lead him and Polly on an even more challenging journey. In this incident, the researcher observes that Digory realised his mistake only after everything had gone awry. He is a person with a strong sense of curiosity and high hopes. It is these feelings that cause him to lose his way and make various mistakes. Digory is a good boy, yet he fails to see the cause and effect of his actions. However, following the incident at the palace, Digory begins to realise and accept his mistake. He sees for himself that his actions can have dire consequences. All this happened because he was deceived by his uncle, Andrew Ketterly, even though he knew that his uncle was untrustworthy. Digory's recklessness in trusting his uncle to save his friend ended up having dire consequences for the two friends. New problems arising from Digory's recklessness occurred again because

he believed that ringing the bell would have no consequences.

However, the symbolic significance of Digory's character development is further emphasised when he meets Aslan. Digory regards Aslan as a god who holds authority over many things. Aslan knows that Digory is the one who has awakened the White Witch. Therefore, he gives Digory a mission. Aslan wants Digory to fetch an apple from the Garden in the West. However, before that, Aslan warns Digory to take only one apple and not eat it. The journey to the Garden in the West is very long and exhausting. Upon arriving there, Digory sees that the White Witch is also in the garden. The White Witch eats an apple, and this makes her look far more beautiful and powerful. The White Witch also notices Digory's presence and persuades him to eat an apple. It is here that the symbolic order of Digory's character development becomes increasingly clear. Digory, who had been warned by Aslan to take only one apple and give it to him, began to experience inner conflict. Digory thought that taking the apple for his mother might cure her illness. The conflict experienced by Digory is proof that he has undergone character development. From someone who initially only thought of his loved ones without considering the risks of his choices, he becomes someone who begins to consider the rules and warnings given to him by others. Digory realises that there are consequences to the choices he makes. Whatever choice he makes will have consequences; he simply must decide which is the best one. It is worth remembering that Digory is a teenager, and at this age teenagers often think of themselves rather than the rules. Therefore, when Digory ultimately chooses to heed Aslan's words, his character has developed. He used to be very reckless and tried to be a hero for those closest to him,

but now that Digory has realised the mistakes he made that led to him and Polly being trapped in a strange world, he considers the consequences of his choices and does not merely follow his heart but also the commands of someone of high authority, namely Aslan. In Digory's eyes, Aslan is a special figure; Digory wants to prove that he is someone who can be trusted. Digory has made many mistakes due to his immaturity, so he wants to act in accordance with the rules to prove that he can atone for the mistakes that have put Narnia in danger. The White Witch's awakening from her eternal slumber was Digory's fault, and Digory is determined to ensure this mission is a success. Digory begins to acknowledge his mistakes and tries to make amends by carrying out Aslan's commands faithfully.

Through these findings using Lacanian psychoanalytic particularity three orders which are imaginary order, real order, and symbolic order. The research has many functions in social relations. As we know, *The Magician's Nephew* is a children's literature, therefore most of the readers are kids or teenagers. Children's opinions about this novel are important because every opinion about a story is valid, especially since "*The Magician's Nephew*" is a work of children's literature. This type of literature carries meanings that can influence a child's development. Reading books at an early age can influence behavior and ways of thinking. Therefore, the selection of books children read is very important. This novel in the Narnia series features a teenage protagonist. Adolescence is often referred to as a time of self-discovery. Digory is described as a brave character. He derives his bravery from his curiosity. Digory wants to try all sorts of things. However, that desire gets him into trouble. As mentioned earlier, some people find Digory to be an annoying character. It's

highly likely that this opinion stems from Digory's recklessness in reacting to situations. According to researchers, this is a perfectly normal reaction for a child. Some young children have already learned that acting recklessly is foolish. However, recklessness can lead to progress, as some children begin to learn only after they make mistakes. The child's opinion that Digory is annoying is entirely valid and normal, but it indicates that he still doesn't understand that making a mistake isn't the end of the world, a mistake might be a new path toward something better. The meaning of this Narnia series begins to emerge: to show everyone, especially children, that making mistakes is natural. We all make mistakes, whether as children, teenagers, or adults. Mistakes are there to be corrected, just as Digory did to atone for his mistake of awakening the White Witch, the cruelest witch in Narnia, by completing the mission given to him by Aslan.

Reading children's literature for parents is essential because they can study their kids' character throughout the story, in this study which is *The Magician's Nephew*. Parents have a duty to educate their children. This education can be achieved through reading children's literature. By reading children's literature, parents can understand a child's behavior, especially that of a child who likes to explore their surroundings. Children like this are active and may be somewhat difficult to work with. In the Narnia novel "The Magician's Nephew", the main character is Digory, a fatherless boy whose mother is seriously ill. Furthermore, his uncle, who lives with him, fails to act as a good uncle to Digory. Digory faces pressure from various sources, which fuels his desire to become a hero for his mother and his friend. This "imaginary order" arises from Digory's hope for a better life. A child living under pressure often becomes

submissive or overly obedient. In Digory's case, he becomes a brave yet reckless figure. Digory's character can be considered "wild" because he frequently disobeys existing rules, as happens in the castle where the White Witch is imprisoned. Digory ignored the warning not to ring the bell and instead put himself and Polly in danger. In this case, it can be concluded that prohibitions make children even more curious and eager to do the very thing they're forbidden from doing. Therefore, parents should set a good example rather than simply forbidding things. By setting a good example, children can understand what they should and shouldn't do. The symbolic order in the researcher's analysis of Digory's character development also implies that children will respect their parents if those parents possess qualities worth emulating. Just as Digory was in awe of Aslan, leading him to eventually obey and complete the apple mission. Children should be taught about their rights and responsibilities. Digory understood this after meeting Aslan; he realized he had no right to defy Aslan because Aslan was a figure respected by all the inhabitants of Narnia. Parents who are worthy of respect are the ones whose children will obey them. Children will follow the rules if the person setting the example is someone they respect. Therefore, parents must improve themselves so that their children can see them as role models. Children tend to imitate people they like or respect; this happens quite often. Finally, this point is the one child like best: receiving a reward. Aslan gives Digory an apple after his mission is complete. At first, Digory wanted to steal an apple for himself in the magical garden, but he changed his mind because he wanted to make amends for his mistake. Children love receiving gifts after doing something; it makes them feel appreciated.

Their hard work feels worthwhile because there is tangible proof which is a gift. Therefore, give children gifts from time to time to make them happy. Gifts will become fond memories for children, and they'll be even more motivated to do good things in the future.

CONCLUSION

The researcher analyzed the novel "Narnia: The Magician's Nephew" using the Lacanian psychoanalysis research method developed by Jacques Lacan. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the child's character and how to address him. Digory, the main character in this novel, is introduced as an ambitious teenager. However, the reality which is the "real order" of Digory's character development—is that his mother is seriously ill and his uncle is considered insane by those around him, which frustrates him. Digory desperately wants to prove himself to the world. Yet the world refuses to listen to him. Consequently, Digory's excessive courage triggers problems in his life. Digory's frustration drives him in a negative direction because he believes he can do anything. The courage he possesses stems from his desire to be a hero to those closest to him, especially his mother and Polly, his best friend.

This desire to be a hero is the underlying theme of the analysis of Digory's character development. However, all of that crumbled when he met Aslan, a figure regarded by all the people of Narnia. Aslan's commanding presence made Digory feel inferior. He feels unworthy of being a hero. Therefore, he successfully completes the apple mission Aslan assigns him, even though the temptation to take more than one apple is immense. Digory remains obedient because he realizes that his behavior up to that point

has only served to trap himself and Polly in a foreign world. Furthermore, Digory also realizes that he possesses no power whatsoever compared to Aslan. This is what is referred to as the symbolic order in this analysis. All Digory's behaviors, ways of thinking and decisions starting from the moment he was tricked by his own uncle and then trapped in Narnia can be related to everyday life, especially in the lives of children. Children love to watch and imitate what they see on screen. Therefore, the role of parents is crucial in this regard, as the media children consume will influence their character development. Digory is a curious teenager, just like most children. Children are often scolded when they make mistakes, which makes them afraid; however, the best way to raise a child is by consistently setting a good example in front of them. As mentioned earlier, children love to imitate what they see on screen. Therefore, parents must always set the best example so that their children can grow up to be better people when they become adults. Parents can be associated with Aslan, while children can be associated with Digory. Aslan is a good role model for Digory. Digory obeyed Aslan even though he could have gotten what he wanted by breaking the rules. This was because Digory viewed Aslan as someone he deeply respected. Aslan set a good example for Digory, and that is why Digory obeyed him. Therefore, parents also need to be figures worthy of respect by doing positive things or engaging in open dialogue with their children. Giving rewards is also an important way to acknowledge a child's hard work after they've accomplished something. Digory received a magical apple that could cure his mother's illness after successfully completing a mission in the magical garden, and he was overjoyed. From that experience,

he realized that rules are meant to be followed.

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