



THE MAIN CHARACTER'S EGO DEFENSE MECHANISM AGAINST THE STORYLINE OF THE NOVEL *CARITA CALIN* BY APRILIA FATMAWATI

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the form of the main character's ego defense mechanism and its relationship with the development of the storyline in the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati. This research is motivated by the tendency of previous literary psychology studies that focused more on identifying types of ego defense mechanisms, but has not studied much about its relationship with narrative dynamics. This study uses a literary psychology approach with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, especially the concepts of id, ego, superego, and ego defense mechanisms. The method used is qualitative descriptive with reading and recording techniques. The research data is in the form of dialogue quotes, narratives, actions, and psychological responses of Calin characters that show symptoms of ego defense mechanisms. The analysis was carried out through the stage of data reduction, classification based on the type of ego defense mechanism, psychological interpretation, and drawing the relationship between the character's psychological response and the development of story events. The results of the study show that Calin uses several ego defense mechanisms, namely repression, diversion, projection, rationalization, regression, formation reaction, denial, sublimation, and fantasy. More prominent mechanisms are repression, diversion, projection, regression, and denial as they arise in situations of family conflict, jealousy, a sense of loss, and a need for recognition. The findings of the study show that the ego defense mechanism not only describes Calin's psychological state, but also relates to how the character responds to conflict, builds relationships with other characters, and influences the dynamics of the storyline. This research contributes to the study of literary psychology by placing the ego defense mechanism as an interpretive bridge between the inner dynamics of the characters and the narrative structure of the novel.

Keywords: Ego Defense Mechanisms, Freud's Psychoanalysis, Literary Psychology, Protagonists



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INTRODUCTION

Literature is a representation of human life that reflects experiences, feelings, ideas, and values that develop in society through the medium of aesthetic language (Seydullaevich, 2023). As a form of creative expression, literature not only functions as entertainment, but also as a means of reflection on social and humanitarian realities. Through literary works, authors reconstruct life experiences, both personal and collective, so that they can be understood and interpreted by readers (Rosida and Hikam, 2025). Novels are a form of literary works that have a wide narrative space to present life in a more complex way through the development of events, characters, conflicts, and storylines.

As a literary genre, novels give authors the freedom to display various life problems in more depth than other forms of literature (Khadka, 2023). This complexity is not only evident through the series of events, but also through the formation of the character and the inner conflicts that accompany it (Dibekulu et al., 2024). The main character has an important position because his presence is the center of the development of events, conflicts, and changes in the direction of the story (Rahmah et al., 2021). The dominance of the main character is not only determined by the intensity of his appearance, but also by his ability to influence relationships between characters, trigger conflicts, and determine the dynamics of the plot (Setiawan Negara, 2024). The main character needs to be understood not just as a story builder, but as a psychological center that drives the narrative structure of the novel.

The characters in the novel can also be understood as representations of human psychological symptoms (Maghfiroh and Hikam, 2025). The portrayal of a character is usually born from the author's observation of social reality and inner experiences which are then processed through creative imagination. This process produces characters who not only have certain traits, but also experience complex psychological dynamics (AlGhufauli, 2025). This dynamic is often seen through inner conflicts, social pressures, emotional tensions, and characters' responses to situations that threaten their psychological comfort. Analysis of characters in novels can be directed to understand the relationship between the psychological condition of the characters and the development of the story (Tulus, 2025).

The inner conflicts experienced by the main characters are generally related to psychological distress that arises due to the conflict between personal desires, social norms, and the reality faced (Lestari and Sugiarti, 2023). Certain situations can cause anxiety so that the character shows a psychological response as a form of self-adjustment (Sari and Kurniawati, 2025). The response does not always appear consciously and rationally, but often works unconsciously to protect oneself from emotional distress. It is this symptom that makes characters in literary works can be analyzed as subjects who have personality structures and psychological conflicts like humans in real life.

Relevant literary psychology approaches are used to understand the psychological dynamics of characters in a more systematic way (Bagtayan & Lantowa, 2022). This approach views literary works as the result of the author's psychological activities as well as a representation of the psychological condition of the characters in them (Blais et al., 2025). Through literary psychology, researchers can examine the personality, inner conflicts, anxiety, and psychological responses of characters based on a certain theoretical framework (Amelia and Hikam, 2025). This approach not only helps to understand the meaning of a literary work, but

also clarifies the relationship between the inner experiences of the characters and the structure of the story.

One of the theories that is widely used in the study of literary psychology is the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. Freud divided the structure of human personality into three main components, namely the id, ego, and superego. The id works on the principle of pleasure and instinctive impulses, the ego works on the principle of reality to mediate the impulses of the id, while the superego represents moral values and social norms. The conflict between the three elements can cause inner conflict and anxiety (Faizzin, Rohman, and Wijayanti, 2025). In literary works, the conflict between the id, ego, and superego can be seen through the actions, dialogues, and decisions of the characters when facing pressure (Maesaroh et al., 2026).

When dealing with anxiety, the ego can develop certain strategies to maintain an individual's psychological balance. This strategy is known as the ego defense mechanism. Ego defense mechanisms are psychological responses that aim to protect oneself from pressure, threats, or emotional experiences that are difficult to accept (Asmillah, Nensilanti, and Syamsudduha, 2021). These forms of mechanisms include repression, rationalization, projection, sublimation, regression, diversion, denial, and other forms (Ratnaningsih, Istiyaroh, and Kurniawan, 2024). In literary works, the ego defense mechanism can be reflected through the character's actions, thoughts, dialogue, and relationship with his environment so that it can be used to understand the psychological condition of the character more deeply (Khoirunnisa and Nugroho, 2023). Studies on the ego defense mechanism in literary works have been conducted by several researchers previously. Examined the self-defense mechanisms of the character Matsumi in the novel *Perempuan Kembang Jepun* by Lan Fang and showed that the main character uses various forms of ego defense in response to the pressures of life (Areh et al., 2026). Widatama, Sudiatmi, and Septiari analyzed the main character's ego defense mechanism in the novel *Two Lost Souls* by Pia Devina by highlighting the relationship between inner conflict and character behavior (Widatama, Sudiatmi, and Septiari, 2022). Aprianti and Burhan researched the ego defense mechanism in the novel *Yang Sulit Dimengerti Adalah Perempuan* by Titrawan Umar and found that the psychological pressure of the characters triggered the emergence of self-defense mechanisms (Aprianti and Burhan, 2022). Meanwhile, Maharani, Farizt, and Mulyaningsih examined the self-defense mechanisms of female characters in the film *Sehidup Semati* and showed that traumatic experiences and unequal power relations can affect the psychological response of the characters (Maharani, Farizt, and Mulyaningsih, 2025).

Although these studies have made important contributions to the study of literary psychology, most of them still focus on identifying the types of ego defense mechanisms experienced by characters. Analyses linking ego defense mechanisms to narrative functions, especially how they shape, direct, and extend storylines, are still relatively limited. In addition, the object of study in the previous study was different from the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati. This gap is an important basis for this research, which is to place the ego defense mechanism not only as a psychological symptom of the character, but also as an element that plays a role in the development of the storyline.

Novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati has the potential to be studied through the perspective of literary psychology because it presents a main character named Caliandra Rowana or Calin who experiences psychological pressure in layers. Calin is described as an angry, jealous, and emotionally inclined figure (Fatmawati, 2018). However, this character cannot be

understood only as a negative trait, because Calin's behavior is related to inner conflicts that arise due to changes in family structure, the presence of his stepfather, and his relationship with a half-sister named Mora. The pressure from the school environment and relationships with peers also amplified Calin's anxiety. The external conflicts in this novel have a direct relationship with the psychological condition of the main character (Sain et al., 2023).

These pressures encourage the emergence of an ego defense mechanism in Calin in response to anxiety, insecurity, jealousy, and emotional dissatisfaction. This mechanism not only affects Calin's behavior, but also sets in motion conflicts between characters and prolongs the tension in the storyline. Calin's anger, rejection, jealousy, and tendency to distract or justify his behavior are part of the narrative dynamics that keep the story developing. Analysis of Calin's ego defense mechanism is important to understand the relationship between the psychological state of the main character and the construction of the plot in the novel

Based on this description, the novelty of this research lies in two main aspects. First, this study uses the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati as an object of study that has not been widely researched in the context of literary psychology, especially related to ego defense mechanisms. Second, this study not only identifies forms of ego defense mechanisms, but also analyzes the relationship between these mechanisms and the development of storylines. In other words, this study views the ego defense mechanism as a psychological symptom as well as a narrative element that plays a role in building the structure of the story.

This research is expected to contribute to the study of literary psychology, especially in understanding the relationship between the psychological dynamics of characters and the narrative structure of the novel. In addition, this research is also expected to enrich the study of Indonesian literature through readings that place the main character as the center of psychological and narrative analysis (Moreyra et al., 2026). Through this approach, this research can open up opportunities for further studies that examine literary works not only from the aspect of themes and characters, but also from the relationship between psychological mechanisms and storyline development.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design. This design was chosen because the research focuses on interpreting the meaning contained in literary works, especially the psychological symptoms of the main character in the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati. The research data is not in the form of numbers, but words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, narratives, actions, and psychological responses that indicate the existence of an ego defense mechanism. Through this design, the research is directed to describe the forms of the main character's ego defense mechanism and explain their relationship to the development of the storyline.

The approach used in this study is the literary psychology approach. This approach is used to analyze the psychological symptoms of characters through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, especially the concept of personality structure and ego defense mechanisms. In this study, the ego defense mechanism is understood as the ego's psychological response when the character faces pressure, anxiety, inner conflict, or situations that threaten his or her balance. The literary

psychology approach is not only used to identify the psychological condition of the characters, but also to see how the psychological response affects the conflict and the movement of the storyline (Widodo & Anwar, 2025).

This research is also a literature research because all data is obtained from written sources. The main source of research is the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati, while supporting sources are books, journal articles, and previous research relevant to literary psychology, Freud's psychoanalysis, ego defense mechanisms, and the study of characters in literary works. Supporting sources are used to strengthen the theoretical foundation and help maintain the accuracy of data interpretation.

Research Target/Subject

The subject of this research is the main character in the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati, namely Calianra Rowana or Calin. The focus of the research is directed on the psychological dynamics of the main character, especially the forms of ego defense mechanisms that emerge when the character faces family conflicts, social conflicts, jealousy, insecurity, and emotional distress.

The research data is in the form of text excerpts in the novel that show the main character's ego defense mechanism, either through dialogue, narrative, action, or the character's inner response. The primary data source is the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati (Fatmawati, 2018). Secondary data sources are references that discuss literary psychology, Freud's psychoanalytic theory, personality structure, ego defense mechanisms, and relevant previous research. The selection of secondary sources is carried out based on suitability with the focus of the research so that the analysis has a clear theoretical basis.

Research Procedure

The research procedure is carried out through several systematic stages. The first stage is to determine the object of research, namely the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati, and to set the research focus on the main character's ego defense mechanism and its relationship with the development of the storyline. The second stage is to read the novel repeatedly to understand the structure of the story, the main conflict, Calin's character, and the events that cause psychological pressure on the main character.

The third stage is to identify the quotes that show the symptoms of the ego's defense mechanism (Pizziferro & Wachtel, 2026). The selected quotation must meet the relevance criteria, i.e. contain Calin's psychological response to stress, indicate the presence of inner conflict or anxiety, and have a relationship with the character's actions or the development of events. The fourth stage is to classify data based on the form of ego defense mechanisms according to Freud's theory, such as repression, diversion, projection, rationalization, regression, formation reaction, denial, sublimation, and fantasy.

The fifth stage is to interpret the data based on the literary psychology approach. At this stage, each quote is not only described as a form of ego defense mechanism, but is also analyzed based on the context of the event, the causes of the emergence of psychological responses, and the consequences for the relationship between the characters. The sixth stage is to connect the results of the psychological analysis with the development of the storyline. The relationship is seen from how Calin's ego defense mechanism affects the emergence of conflicts, changes in relationships between characters, increased tension, and the direction of story development.

To maintain the validity of the interpretation, this study uses repeated reading, matching data with theoretical indicators, and triangulation of theories through comparison with references to literary psychology and previous research. In addition, the data that has been classified is re-examined so that the determination of the type of ego defense mechanism remains consistent. With such a procedure, the analysis is expected to be not only descriptive, but also have a stronger and accountable basis for interpretation.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The main instrument in this study is the researcher himself as a human instrument. The researcher plays a role in determining the focus of the research, reading the text, selecting data, classifying quotations, interpreting meaning, and drawing connections between the ego defense mechanism and the development of the storyline. To assist the analysis process, this study uses supporting instruments in the form of data cards or data recording tables.

Data cards are used to record excerpts from novels that contain the main character's dialogue, narrative, action, or psychological response. Each data is recorded based on several elements, namely the data number, the page or section of the quote, the context of the event, the form of the ego defense mechanism, theoretical indicators, and its relation to the development of the storyline. The use of data cards aims to ensure that the classification process is not only based on subjective impressions, but also follows indicators that are in accordance with the theory of ego defense mechanisms.

The data collection technique is carried out through reading and recording techniques. The reading technique is carried out by reading the novel *Carita Calin* intensively and repeatedly to understand the storyline, conflict, character of the main character, and the relationship of the main character with other characters. After that, the note-taking technique is carried out by marking and noting the parts of the text that show the symptoms of the ego's defense mechanism. The data recorded is only selected if it meets certain criteria, namely showing the main character's psychological pressure, showing the ego's defense response, having a relationship with conflict, and influencing the development of events in the story.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique in this study uses qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data classification, data interpretation, data verification, and conclusion drawn. The data reduction stage is carried out by selecting quotes that are in accordance with the focus of the research, namely quotes that show the main character's ego defense mechanism and its relationship to the development of the storyline.

The data classification stage is carried out by grouping quotes based on the type of ego defense mechanism. Each data was classified by paying attention to the theoretical indicators, the context of the event, and the form of the character's psychological response. The interpretation stage is carried out by explaining the psychological meaning of actions, dialogues, or narratives related to Calin's character. This interpretation refers to Freud's psychoanalytic theory and the concept of the ego's defense mechanism in response to anxiety or inner stress.

The verification stage is carried out by re-checking the suitability between the quotes, the categories of ego defense mechanisms, and the interpretation given. This examination is carried out to reduce the possibility of subjectivity in the analysis. After that, the data was further analyzed to see the relationship between the ego's defense mechanism and the development of

the storyline. Conclusions are drawn based on the pattern of the most prominent ego defense mechanisms, the context of their emergence, and their role in shaping the conflict and story dynamics in the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Shape of the Main Character's Ego Defense Mechanism

Analysis of the main character in the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati shows that the psychological dynamics of Caliandra Rowana or Calin appear through several forms of ego defense mechanisms. The mechanism arises when Calin faces emotional distress, family conflict, jealousy, a sense of loss, and an inability to accept certain realities. In Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, the ego defense mechanism works as a psychological strategy that the ego uses to reduce anxiety due to the conflict between the impulse of the id, the demands of the superego, and the reality that the character faces (Freud, 2009). Based on the textual data in the novel, the ego defense mechanisms seen in the character of Calin include repression, diversion, projection, rationalization, regression, formation reactions, denial, sublimation, and fantasy. However, each mechanism has a different level of emergence and strength of textual evidence so the analysis is carried out based on the context of the quote, the psychological response of the characters, and their relationship to the events of the story.

Repression

Repression is an ego defense mechanism that works by suppressing painful experiences or emotions into the subconscious so that they do not appear directly in consciousness. In the novel *Carita Calin*, this mechanism is seen when Calin rejects the presence of his stepfather. The rejection is seen in the following quote:

"Hah! My father? I don't know who should be my father? I don't even know where my own father is. Should I call you Daddy? Nope. Mama forced me to be a family with them, even Mama never asked me whether I agreed or not with your marriage. He was like any other man Mama had ever married. He is not worthy of me to call him Dad," (Fatmawati, 2018).

The quote shows that Calin is not only socially rejecting the stepfather figure, but is also dealing with the emotional wounds related to the loss of the biological father figure. Calin's rejection of the "Dad" call can be understood as a form of repression because he does not openly express grief and loss. Emotions that should appear as sadness are actually restrained and appear in the form of anger and rejection. In this context, Calin's ego tries to protect itself from the pain of loss by suppressing the experience and rejecting the paternal surrogate. The repression of Calin comes in a situation when he is faced with the reality of a new family that he has not been able to accept emotionally.

Redirects

Displacement is an ego defense mechanism that occurs when a person vents emotions to objects or other people who are considered safer than the actual source of emotion. This mechanism appears when Calin feels jealous of Mora, but his anger is directed at Gibran. This can be seen in the following quote:

"From the beginning you were wrong, Gibran." Nada Calin raised his voice. "Involve me in this ridiculous drama. And you're worried about Mora! Is that what was said from you after not long of meeting? You didn't ask how my condition is now. Every single eye of those kids here and at school has looked at me the worst."

"You are wrong, Gibran. Stupidly I want to follow your wishes. Even now my position is like a maid in this situation for your costume and Mora's later. I don't understand. Actually what do you want from me?"

Gibran lowered. Not sure if he could fix his anger, Calin decided to stop and walk alone to the side of the road. I don't know if it is appropriate to vent anger because it is clear that Gibran's attention is focused on others. Easy. Why is it someone else who cares about it, not him? (Fatmawati, 2018).

The quote shows that Calin's main source of emotion is related to jealousy towards Mora and feelings of being unnoticed. However, Calin did not directly confront Mora as the source of the jealousy. Instead, he directed his anger at Gibran who was considered easier to be the target of emotional overflow. Psychoanalytically, this diversion suggests that Calin's ego seeks to reduce inner distress by moving emotions from more threatening objects to safer ones. Calin's anger at Gibran did not stem entirely from Gibran's actions, but from anxiety and jealousy that he was not yet able to recognize accurately.

Projections

Projection is an ego defense mechanism when a person diverts feelings, impulses, or inner conflicts that are difficult to accept in him to others (Gunawan and Meilantari, 2026). In the character of Calin, projection can be seen when he accuses Gibran of being the cause of the circumstances that make him uncomfortable. This is evident in the following quote:

"You are wrong, Gibran. Stupidly I want to follow your wishes. Even now my position is like a maid in this situation for your costume and Mora's later. I don't understand. Actually what do you want from me?"

"I didn't know you were so mad at me, Calin. This is not what I want," (Fatmawati, 2018).

The quote suggests that Calin placed the blame on Gibran, even though the discomfort he feels is also related to jealousy, insecurity, and the need for attention. In this case, Calin has not been able to accept that some of these emotions come from himself. Ego then shifts the inner conflict to Gibran through accusations. This projection makes Calin feel as if the source of the problem is outside of him. Projections in Calin arise when he is experiencing emotional distress, but has not been able to admit feelings of jealousy and insecurity as part of his inner conflict.

Rationalization

Rationalization is an ego defense mechanism that is carried out by providing a seemingly logical reason to cover up feelings, impulses, or actions that are actually difficult to accept. In the novel, rationalization appears when Calin tries to explain his attraction to Dervish on a reason that is acceptable to others. This can be seen in the following quote:

"Why are you interested in Darwis? You're not the type who likes to report artists or the media. Honestly say Again Hendriko's interrogation made Calin clumsy. There is no way he could tell the spirit of Dervish to see him, they would not believe it.

"It just happened that I opened the internet and read the news. Then I remembered Wiran." Calin didn't dare to look at his interlocutor. Afraid that a lie would be seen in his eyes later. Afraid of being read in his mind. However, it seems that Calin's words were not heeded because Wiran did not seem to like the discussion of his accident in the past. It seems like he was traumatized. Indeed, in their friendship, Wiran has never been in a vehicle accident." (Fatmawati, 2018).

The quote shows that Calin is hiding his true reason. He did not dare to mention his experiences related to the figure of Dervish because he was afraid of not being believed. To protect himself from other people's judgments, Calin gave a reason, which sounded reasonable, namely that he only read the news on the internet and remembered Wiran. In Freud's perspective, rationalization serves to maintain self-image and reduce psychological distress when a person is in a situation that is difficult to explain openly (Freud, 2009). Rationalization in Calin arises when he seeks to reconcile his subjective experience with the demands of social reality.

Regression

Regression is an ego defense mechanism characterized by a person's return to a more childish behavior pattern when facing pressure, anxiety, or unpleasant situations. In the character of Calin, regression is seen when he shows an attitude of wanting to win on his own and having difficulty controlling his emotions when dealing with Mora. This can be seen in the following quote:

"The little thing doesn't appeal to me. Nothing involved if I wore it. I want something that can be seen. Be the center of attention. Like that." Calin pointed to the dress that was being pasted on Mora's body.

"Don't be greedy, Caliandra!" snapped Mama.

"It's okay if I don't get bought. I can take it" Calin forcibly pulled the dress that Mora was holding.

"You already have everything, don't be stingy. Don't you have to share?" whispered Calin with a smirk to Mora before quickly leaving the room.

Mama chased Calin who had gone to the room and locked him. The door knock was ignored by Calin.

"You're such a shame!" cried Mama emotionally.

Behind the door of the room, Calin stared at the dress that had already moved in his hand. Greed reigns, who cares. (Fatmawati, 2018).

The quote shows Calin's behavior returning to a childish pattern. He wants to be the center of attention, snatch the object that Mora is holding, then lock himself in the room when he is reprimanded. This response shows that Calin has not been able to deal with envy and disappointment maturely. Ego Calin chooses a simpler pattern of behavior, namely seize, reject reprimands, and avoidance. In this case, a regression appears when Calin feels his position is threatened by Mora. This behavior cannot be directly understood as the sole cause of the conflict, but as a psychological response that shows Calin's emotional instability in the face of competition for attention.

Formation Reaction

Formation reactions are an ego defense mechanism that arises when a person displays an attitude that is contrary to true feelings. This mechanism was seen when Calin received a car gift from Mr. Handaru. Emotionally, the gift evokes sadness, loss, and regret, but those feelings come in the form of anger. This is evident in the following quote:

Calin again pressed the horn more screechingly. Once he caught the calming green color of the traffic light, he knew exactly the source of his anger. Calin felt sad to have received this great gift. He should be happy to have a personal vehicle that he wants rather than a feeling of hatred.

"Why is it good to me?"

This car reminded Calin of Pak Handaru. Calin didn't understand why Mr. Handaru did this to him. If he feels happy with Calin's attitude on Mora's birthday, he should buy a car as soon as possible. Why even now? It would be different if Mr. Handaru gave it when he was still in good health. Where should this gratitude be conveyed by the intended person who is no longer there? (Fatmawati, 2018).

The quote shows the contradiction between feelings of sadness and angry expressions. Calin actually felt loss and regret because he did not have time to express his gratitude to Mr. Handaru. However, the feelings that come to the surface are actually anger and hatred. In the perspective of psychoanalysis, this condition can be understood as a reaction formation because the ego replaces an unacceptable emotion with the opposite expression. Calin's anger serves as a protector from sadness and guilt that is too heavy to deal with directly.

Denial

Denial or denial is an ego defense mechanism that works by refusing to accept painful reality (Jasmiko et al., 2025). In the character of Calin, denial is seen in his attitude towards the new family, especially towards the figure of the stepfather. The refusal was evident in Calin's statement that his stepfather was not worthy of being called a father.

"He is not worthy of me to call him Dad," (Fatmawati, 2018).

The statement shows that Calin refused to accept the fact that his mother had formed a new family. This denial differs from mere ordinary displeasure, since Calin's rejection relates to the inner wounds of loss and changes in the family structure. Calin's ego seeks to protect itself by rejecting reality that makes him feel replaced or unheard. Calin's denial came when he was not able to accept the presence of a new figure in his family. This mechanism shows that family conflicts in the novel are not only external, but also related to the inner struggle of the main character.

Sublimation

Sublimation is an ego defense mechanism that diverts negative impulses or emotions into more positive and socially acceptable activities. In the novel *Carita Calin*, an indication of sublimation is seen through Calin's involvement in activities related to style, costume, and appearance arrangement. However, the textual evidence regarding sublimation is not as strong as other mechanisms such as repression, diversion, projection, or regression. Therefore, sublimation in this study is more accurately understood as a supporting indication, not as a dominant mechanism.

Calin's tendency to pay attention to appearance and want to stand out can be read as an attempt to shift emotional tension to the realm of self-expression. However, because these activities are not always presented as a stable and positive creative process, the analysis of sublimation needs to be done carefully. Sublimation in Calin cannot be summed up as the most mature form of ego defense, but rather as a possible adaptive mechanism that appears in a limited way in certain situations.

Fantasy (Contextual Analysis Supplement)

Fantasy is a defense mechanism of the ego that is carried out by creating an imaginative world to obtain emotional satisfaction that is not obtained in reality. This mechanism appears when Calin is in a stressful situation and tries to calm himself down through his imagination. This can be seen in the following quote:

At night, Calin thought deeply by the window of the room. It was dark in the room, he deliberately did not turn on the lights. Only the moonlight was allowed to fall on his face as if transferring the power of the heavens into Calin. At the end of the day, he had to take a picture of the book he had been waiting for. (Fatmawati, 2018).

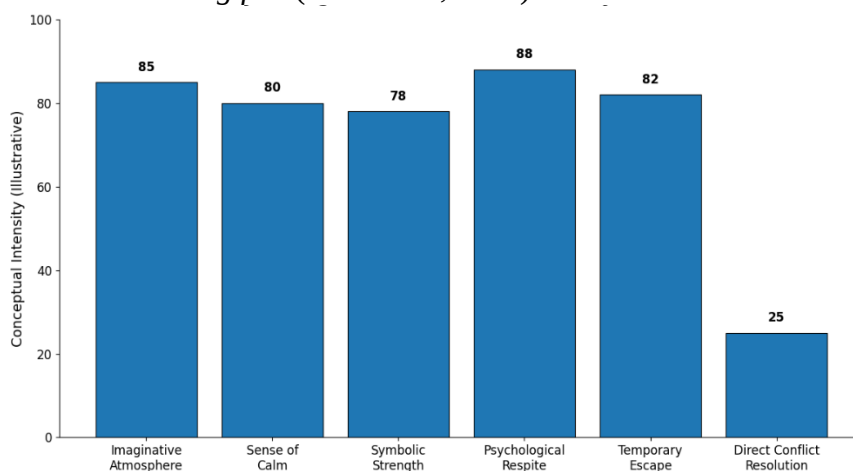


Figure 1. Psychological Functions of Fantasy in Calin

The quote shows that Calin built an imaginative atmosphere to gain a sense of calm. The moonlight is depicted as if giving him strength. From the perspective of literary psychology, this fantasy can be understood as an attempt by the ego to create a symbolic space when reality is unable to meet the emotional needs of the character. Fantasy doesn't directly resolve the conflict Calin is experiencing, but it does provide a psychological respite that makes him feel stronger in the face of pressure. Fantasy in Calin emerges as a temporary escape mechanism from oppressive reality.

Overall, the form of ego defense mechanisms seen in Calin's character shows that he more often uses less adaptive mechanisms, such as repression, diversion, projection, regression, and denial. The mechanism emerges when Calin is dealing with a sense of loss, jealousy, family pressure, and a need for recognition. Meanwhile, sublimation and fantasy indicate the possibility of channeling emotions in a more symbolic direction, although neither appear as strongly as other mechanisms. Based on these findings, the ego defense mechanism in Calin can be understood as a psychological response to inner pressure. This mechanism also relates to the dynamics of conflict in the story, but the relationship needs to be understood carefully as an interpretive linkage, not as a single cause-and-effect relationship.

The Role of Ego Defense Mechanisms in Storyline Development

The ego defense mechanism experienced by the main character in the novel *Carita Calin* not only shows Calin's psychological response to inner pressure, but also relates to the development of the storyline. From the perspective of psychoanalysis, the ego defense mechanism is a strategy used by the ego to reduce anxiety due to the conflict between the id, ego, superego, and reality faced by the character (Freud, 2009). In a narrative context, this mechanism can be read as one of the elements that helps explain why the character acts, rejects, gets angry, avoids, or makes certain decisions. The relationship between the ego defense mechanism and the storyline in this novel is not a single cause-and-effect relationship, but an interpretive relationship between the character's inner state and the events that develop in the story (Pakaya et al., 2025).

The ego's defense mechanism plays a role in clarifying the psychological basis of the conflict experienced by Calin (A. Freud, 2018). For example, Calin's rejection of his stepfather shows a repression and denial of the reality of the new family. When Calin stated that his stepfather was not worthy of being called a father, the rejection not only showed family conflict, but also showed unresolved inner wounds due to the loss of the biological father figure (Fatmawati, 2018). Psychologically, the repression made Calin suppress grief and a sense of loss. Narratively, this condition helps explain why Calin's relationship with his new family is strained. In other words, repression and denial are not directly the only causes of conflict, but provide a psychological basis for the emergence of family tensions in the storyline (Daffa, 2024).

In addition, the transfer mechanism also appears to be related to the development of conflicts between figures (Darmawan et al., 2024). When Calin felt jealous of Mora because Gibran's attention was more focused on Mora, Calin's anger was directed at Gibran. In a quote that shows Calin and Gibran's quarrel, Calin blames Gibran for feeling involved in a situation that makes him uncomfortable and feels uncared for (Fatmawati, 2018). Psychoanalytically, the response can be understood as displacement or diversion, which is the transfer of emotions from the actual source of anxiety to another object that is considered safer. In the storyline, this diversion makes the conflict not stop at Calin's jealousy of Mora, but develops into tension between Calin and Gibran. The diversion mechanism plays a role in expanding the direction of conflict between characters.

Projection also has a relationship with the development of the plot because this mechanism makes Calin place the source of the problem in other characters. When Calin blames Gibran for his circumstances, he is actually dealing with insecurities, jealousy, and the need for attention. These feelings are difficult to accept as part of themselves, so the ego diverts them outside of themselves through accusations to Gibran (Gunawan and Meilantari, 2026). In the story,

projections make Calin's relationship with other characters unstable because he tends to read situations based on his inner wounds and emotional prejudices. This shows that conflict in the novel is not only built by external events, but also by the way the main character interprets events based on his psychological condition (Nurmayani, 2024).

Rationalization plays a role in showing how Calin tries to maintain his self-image when faced with situations that are difficult to explain openly. When Calin was asked about his interest in Darwis, he gave the reason that he only read the news on the internet and remembered Wiran (Fatmawati, 2018). The reason seems logical, but it's actually used to cover up an experience he doesn't want to reveal. In the perspective of psychoanalysis, rationalization helps the ego reduce stress by creating socially acceptable explanations. Narratively, rationalization makes the reader see the distance between the inner reality of the character and the explanation he presents to others. This distance is what reinforces the complexity of Calin's character in the storyline.

Regression is also related to the development of conflict because it shows the immaturity of Calin's response when faced with pressure. The incident when Calin snatched Mora's dress, ignored his mother's reprimand, and then locked himself in the room showed a pattern of childish behavior that emerged when he felt rivaled (Fatmawati, 2018). In Freud's theory, regression occurs when individuals revert to earlier or simpler patterns of behavior to reduce anxiety. In the context of the plot, the regression reinforces the picture that Calin's conflict with Mora stems not only from casual rivalry, but also from Calin's emotional need to be recognized and cared for. This mechanism makes family conflicts and half-sibling conflicts appear stronger psychologically.

The formation reaction shows a relationship between repressed emotions and opposite expressions. When Calin receives a gift of a car from Mr. Handaru, he should feel happy or grateful. However, what arose was anger, confusion, and sadness because he did not have time to express his gratitude to Pak Handaru when he was still alive (Fatmawati, 2018). In this case, Calin's anger can be read as a substitute expression of sadness and guilt. Narratively, the reaction of the formation deepens Calin's inner conflict as the reader can see that his harsh attitude does not always reflect his true feelings. This mechanism makes Calin's character not only appear as an emotional figure, but as a character who has a complex psychological layer.

Fantasy and sublimation have a more limited role than other mechanisms, but they still help explain Calin's way of dealing with pressure. Fantasy appears when Calin imagines the moonlight as if giving him power (Fatmawati, 2018). This scene shows Calin's attempt to create an imaginative space to calm himself from the pressures of reality. Meanwhile, sublimation is seen more weakly through Calin's tendency to channel attention to style, appearance, and creative activity. Both mechanisms cannot be said to be the main drivers of the plot, but can be understood as part of the way the character builds a temporary distance from the conflict that suppresses him.

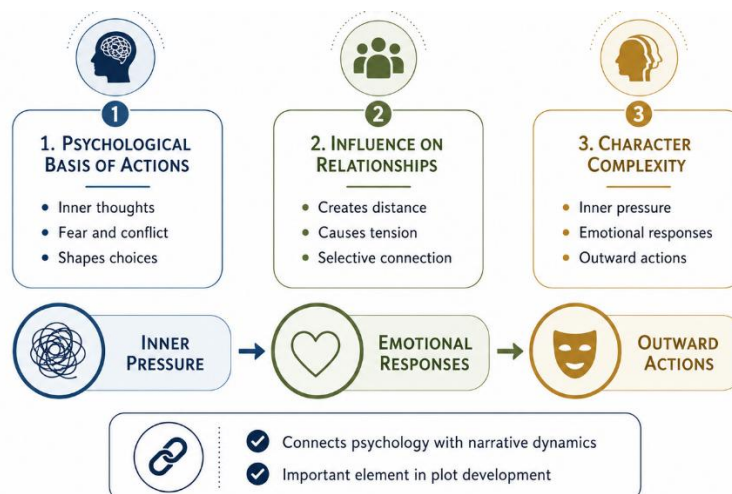


Figure 2. Ego Defense Mechanism in the Storyline

Based on this description, the ego defense mechanism plays a role in the development of the storyline in three ways. First, the mechanism helps explain the psychological basis of Calin's actions. Second, the mechanism shows how the inner conflicts of the characters affect Calin's relationship with other characters. Third, the mechanism reinforces the complexity of the character because the reader can see the relationship between inner pressure, emotional responses, and the actions of the character. The ego defense mechanism does not need to be understood as the only factor that determines the storyline, but as one of the important elements that connects the psychological dimension of the character with the narrative dynamics of the novel (Liana et al., 2025).

Overall, the development of the plot in the novel *Carita Calin* is not only shaped by external events such as family conflicts, relationships with Mora, relationships with Gibran, and social environmental pressures. The plot is also influenced by the way Calin responds to these events psychologically. Repression, denial, diversion, projection, rationalization, regression, formation reactions, fantasies, and sublimations show that Calin's actions have a complex emotional basis. Therefore, the ego's defense mechanism can be understood as a bridge between the inner world of the character and the events that develop in the story. Through this mechanism, the novel *Carita Calin* displays a close relationship between character psychology and plot dynamics, although this relationship must still be read as the result of literary interpretation based on textual evidence.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the main character in the novel *Carita Calin* by Aprilia Fatmawati, namely Caliandra Rowana or Calin, has complex psychological dynamics. These dynamics are reflected through several forms of ego defense mechanisms, namely repression, diversion, projection, rationalization, regression, formation reactions, denial, sublimation, and fantasy. These mechanisms arise as Calin's response to inner pressure, family conflict, a sense of loss, jealousy, a need for recognition, and an inability to accept certain realities.

Of the overall mechanisms found, repression, diversion, projection, regression, and denial appear to be more dominant than other mechanisms. The dominance of these mechanisms suggests that Calin's ego tends to use less adaptive defense strategies in dealing with anxiety and inner conflict. Meanwhile, sublimation and fantasy emerge as more limited mechanisms, so they are more appropriately understood as supporting indications in Calin's process of dealing with emotional distress.

Calin's ego defense mechanism also has a relationship with the development of the storyline. This relationship is seen through the way Calin responds to conflicts, builds relationships with other characters, and interprets events that occur around him. Repression and denial are related to tensions in the family, diversion and projection are related to conflicts between characters, while regression and formation reactions show Calin's emotional instability when faced with pressure. The ego's defense mechanism cannot be called the sole cause of the development of the plot, but it can be understood as one of the elements that helps explain the relationship between the inner state of the character and the dynamics of the story.

This research confirms that the analysis of ego defense mechanisms can help understand the main character more deeply. The character of Calin can not only be seen as an emotional and antagonistic character, but also as a character who experiences layered psychological pressure. Through the approach of literary psychology and Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this study shows that the inner dynamics of characters have an important role in enriching the characterization and clarifying the complexity of the plot in the novel *Carita Calin*. These findings are expected to contribute to the study of literary psychology, especially research that links ego defense mechanisms with the narrative structure of literary works.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used DeepL to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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