

LAURA'S POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN RUTH WARES' *THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10*

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ABSTRACT

This study will examine Laura's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Ruth Wares' *The Woman in Cabin 10*. This study will examine four issues: Laura's PTSD symptoms, PTSD causes, PTSD effects, and the defense mechanisms Laura employs to manage her PTSD. This study uses a literary psychology approach with PTSD concept theory by Rogers & Liness of the National Institute of Mental Health and and defense mechanism theory which will focus on how Laura defends herself in dealing with PTSD. This study uses a qualitative research method. The source of the data is Ruth Wares' *The Woman in Cabin 10*. The writer uses data collection techniques by reading the whole novel, identifying, collecting, classifying and analyzing data. Based on the analysis, Laura experiences four symptoms: re-experiencing, avoidance, arousal and reactivity, and cognition and mood. Laura has PTSD due to a break-in at her flat that left serious scars on her face after a burglar tried to lock her in a room and she spent two hours trying to escape and call for help. These events affect aggression, panic attacks, insomnia, claustrophobia, hallucinations, illusions, and horrific imaginations. Laura uses Defense Mechanism as a self-esteem boost to protect herself from disturbing feelings and thoughts that she cannot handle. From the data, Laura uses several defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, rationalization, sublimation, projection, reaction formation, and displacement. Repression and rationalization are the defense mechanisms that Laura uses the most. Laura uses repression to put her anxiety due to PTSD into her subconscious and forget about it so that it does not interfere with her daily life. Laura uses rationalizations to justify her feelings and actions to attain comfort and ego satisfaction.

Keywords: *PTSD, symptoms, defense mechanism*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human behavior and thoughts deal with aspects of psychology. People with psychological problems are more in control of how they think about acting and reacting to things. Psychological problems are also related to mental development, which will affect activities in daily life, and such problems have a negative impact on an individual's development in all areas of their life, namely self-esteem, relationships, academic success, career, and lifestyle choices (Dogra & Cooper, 2017: 12). These problems can affect anyone at any age and can be triggered by various factors, such as family, environment, or personal experiences. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a severe mental problem that affects around seven or eight out of every 100 people, with most being women (Rogers & Liness, 2000). PTSD is a condition that develops after exposure to traumatic events such as interpersonal violence, combat, life-threatening accidents, or natural disasters. People may experience fear during and after a traumatic situation, which is part of the body's normal response to potential danger. PTSD can lead to paranoia, flashbacks, and difficulty engaging in interpersonal relationships. Symptoms may include panic attacks and anxiety when memories of the traumatic event

come back, making life full of worry. To respond to stressful situations and gain a sense of security, Freudian defense mechanisms, which operate at a subconscious level, involve self-deception or incorrect explanations to protect the ego from being overwhelmed by anxiety. This defense mechanism aims to lie to oneself and avoid getting lost in the trauma that causes anxiety.

In this research, the writer wants to deepen the PTSD analysis in Ruth Wares' *The Woman in Cabin 10*. The writer wants to find out the symptoms, causes, and effects of PTSD experienced by Laura, the main character in the novel, and how she uses coping skills to deal with her PTSD.

There are several previous studies that are related to the analysis of PTSD. (Fadilla, 2020) in her thesis entitled "Post Traumatic Disorder Found in Sharp Objects Gillian Flynn" analyzes the symptoms, causes, and effects of PTSD experienced by the main character in the novel. The purpose of this research is to find out about post-traumatic symptoms, causes, and effects experienced by the main character. This study uses library research, and researchers use psychoanalytic theory because this theory is related to the suffering experienced by the main character. The results of the research found by the researchers are that the main character suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder due to the death of his sister and causes trauma and self-harm. The PTSD experienced by the main character in this novel affects the social and personal life of the main character.

In addition, Pratiwi (2022), in her thesis entitled "Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Alicia Berenson in *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides," analyzes the symptoms and causes of PTSD experienced by Alicia as one of the main characters. This study uses the theories of literary psychology from Wellek and Warren and PTSD theory from Carlson and Ruzek. The results of the research found that Alicia suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, which is characterized by several symptoms caused by many things, especially childhood trauma.

Although several studies on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the novel have been carried out by previous researchers, the writer found that neither of them discussed the coping skills used by the characters to deal with PTSD. Therefore, the writer wants to study PTSD more deeply, such as symptoms, causes, effects, and coping skills used by Laura as the main character in the novel, by using the theory of defense mechanisms.

2. METHOD

In this research, the writer uses a literary psychology approach. The definition of psychology in literature is explained by Wellek & Warren (in Aras, 2015: 252) as follows: By 'literary psychology' we mean the psychological study of the writer, as a type and as an individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of types and psychological laws present in literary works, or the influence of literature on readers (audience psychology)". Based on the several definitions of literary psychology above, the use of literary psychology as a study of the types and psychological laws that exist in literary works. To analyze the PTSD experienced by the character in the novel, the writer uses PTSD theory by Rogers & Liness from the National Institute of Mental Health and Freud's theory about defense mechanisms which are coping skills that can help the character being analyzed deal with the PTSD she is experiencing.

This research is a content analysis. The research design is qualitative. According to Cresswell (in Atieno, 2009), "Qualitative research is descriptive in nature, where researchers are interested in processes, meanings, and understandings obtained through words or pictures". Research in this sense means that researchers must be interested in processes and meanings, which are then described in the form of words and pictures. The writer chooses this type of qualitative research to describe in detail and interpret the data obtained during the analysis. The results of the data are presented descriptively. Therefore, qualitative research was applied in this study because it analysed the PTSD

experienced by Laura, the main character in the novel Ruth Ware, *The Woman in Cabin 10*, which was released in 2016.

To obtain and analyse the data in this study, the writer used documentation as an instrument. The writer reads the entire text of the novel and makes notes using a notebook to get data from the novel. The steps used in collecting data were the writer reading the novel "The Woman in Cabin 10", then making some notes to identify and classify, and then analysing post-traumatic stress disorder and how defence mechanisms apply to the characters in the novel. The data analysed is in the form of monologues, dialogues, and characters' expressions, as well as the author's descriptions in the novel, which are written in the form of words, phrases, or sentences. After the contents of the novel are understood, the writer performs several procedures in analysing the data, such as reviewing, classifying, then analysing the data based on the theory used, and finally drawing conclusions and summarising the results.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. RESULT

Table 1 PTSD Symptoms Data

No	Laura’s PTSD Symptoms	Frequently	Total
1	Re-experiencing Symptoms	5	16
2	Avoidance Symptoms	4	
3	Arousal and Reactivity Symptoms	4	
4	Cognition and Mood Symptoms	3	

Based on the table above, it can be seen that Laura experiences the most re-experiencing symptoms with 5 data, then followed by avoidance, arousal, and reactivity symptoms, which have 4 data each, and finally symptoms of cognition and mood, which have 3 data.

Table 2 Defense Mechanism as Coping Skill Data

No	Laura’s Defense Mechanism (Coping Skill)	Frequently	Total
1	Repression	5	16
2	Denial	1	
3	Projection	1	
4	Displacement	2	
5	Sublimation	1	
6	Rationalization	4	
7	Reaction Formation	2	

Based on the table above, the 16 data shows that Laura mostly uses repression as a coping skill to deal with her PTSD. Then rationalization with 4 data which also shows that Laura uses this coping skill a lot. Then displacement and reaction formation with 2 data and denial, projection, sublimation which have 1 data each which shows that Laura rarely uses these coping skills.

3.2. DISCUSSION

This chapter contains an analysis of PTSD experienced by Laura Blacklock. This chapter consists of four sub-chapters which explain the PTSD symptoms experienced by Laura, the causes and

consequences of PTSD experienced by Laura, and the last is the coping skills used by Laura using defense mechanisms.

3.2.1. *Laura's PTSD Symptoms*

According to Rogers & Liness (2000), there are four main types of symptoms: re-experiencing, avoidance, arousal and reactivity, cognition, and mood. The writer finds that Laura experiences the four symptoms of PTSD which are shown by some of the author's monologues or narrations in the novel.

3.2.1.1. *Re-experiencing symptoms*

The writer found 5 data showing that Laura experienced the most symptoms of re-experiencing or flashbacks-reliving the traumatic event, including physical symptoms such as a racing heart or sweating, reoccurring memories or dreams related to the event, thoughts and feelings that trigger these symptoms, such as words, objects, and situations. The following excerpt shows that Laura is experiencing symptoms of re-experiencing.

I looked up, into his friendly blue eyes, and then back down at the later glove, with dark hairs showing through, pressed against the rubber, and thought, I must not scream. I must not scream. (Ware, 2016: 114)

In the quotation above, one of the chefs wearing latex gloves reminds Laura of the thief. The thief who broke into her flat also used the same latex gloves as the chef. The flashback made Laura limp in fear and try to hold back her terrified screams. The quotation shows that these symptoms are caused by an object that is similar to someone who traumatised Laura in the past, reminding her of the traumatic event.

3.2.1.2. *Avoidance Symptoms*

The writer finds four pieces of data showing that Laura experienced avoidance symptoms, which were marked by Staying away from places, events, or objects that were reminders of the experience and avoiding thoughts or feelings related to the traumatic event. The following is a quotation that shows Laura's avoidance symptoms.

I had to get away from here
I got up, stumbling, trancelike with exhaustion, and pushed my feet into my shoes, and my sleeves into my coat, over the top of my pajamas. Then I picked up my bag If I couldn't sleep, I'd walk. Somewhere. Anywhere I'd try to exhaust myself into sleeping
If sleep wouldn't come to me, then I'd damn well hunt it down myself (Ware, 2016: 22)

Based on the quotation above, Laura is having a hard time living in her flat. Laura has insomnia due to being alert and afraid because she is still haunted by the theft incident. Laura decides to stay away from her flat for a while as it's not the safest place for her.

3.2.1.3. *Arousal and Reactivity Symptoms*

The writer finds four pieces of data showing that Laura experienced symptoms of arousal and reactivity, which were characterised by difficulty sleeping, difficulty concentrating, and being tense and alert. The following is an excerpt that shows Laura's symptoms: it is difficult to concentrate when panic attacks her.

Panic washed over me like a cold sea wave and I tried to think-we weren't moving yet. There was a chance the gangway was still down I would have heard it being raised. I

remembered from when we set out from Hull that the engine had hummed and thrummed for a good long time before we actually departed. But it was a ticking clock How long did I have? Half an hour? A quarter? Perhaps less, given there were no passengers on board, no reason to hang about (Ware, 2016: 314)

In the quotation above, Laura only has a little time to escape from the locked room. She is locked up in a secret, stuffy room with no windows. No one knows about it, including the cabin crew. The only person who knows about it is Bullmer, the suspect and owner of the luxury ship. Laura's fear and panic made it hard to think and focus on anything she could do to escape that place.

3.2.1.4. *Cognition and Mood Symptoms*

The writer finds three pieces of data that show that Laura experienced cognition and mood symptoms characterised by negative thoughts about herself or the world, difficulty feeling positive emotions, and ongoing negative emotions such as fear and even guilt for blaming others to protect her ego. These things are illustrated in the following quotation:

I imagined burying my face in Judah's shoulder and for a second I nearly burst into tears, but I clenched my teeth and swallowed them back down Judah was not the answer to all this. The problem was me and my weak-ass panic attacks (Ware, 2016: 49).

In the quotation above, Laura has negative thoughts about herself. After a fight with her boyfriend, Judah, she starts regretting all the actions she took just to win over his ego. Although Laura needs Judah to support her, she denies it out of guilt. Judah isn't the answer to solving her problems, so she thinks she and her panic attacks are the only ones to blame.

3.2.2. *Cause of Laura's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*

several factors can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, including severe traffic accidents, specifically train, plane, or bus accidents that put a person in a situation where there are multiple victims and one person witnesses the victim firsthand, encounters with violent crimes like robbery, attempted murder, and rape, and war or terrorism so that we see many victims fall as a result of ceasefires received by our friends or relatives (Hamblen & Barnett, 2018). In this novel, the writer finds that the cause of PTSD experienced by Laura is robbery, which is shown in the following quotations.

But unwanted images kept intruding. The locksmith saying "a quarter of all burglaries are repeats." Me, cowering in my own bedroom, feet braced against the floorboards. The sight of strong hands encased in pale latex, the black hairs just showing through. Shit Shit. I opened my eyes, but for once the reality check didn't help Instead I saw the damp bathroom walls looming over me, shutting me in.

You're losing it again, my internal voice sniped. You can feel a you? (Ware, 16: 2016)

The cause of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Laura was a robbery that occurred in her flat. The thief not only stole but also locked her in the room when Laura saw the theft. Laura got a scratch on her cheek because the thief who pushed Laura into her room was quite rough. The description of the thief's characteristics was so vivid in Laura's memory that there were too many flashbacks of the day of the theft that she couldn't easily erase from her memory.

I told him-between sobs. Everything I hadn't told Jude. What it had been like, waking up, realizing there was someone in my flat, realizing that no one would hear if I cried out, realizing that I had no way of getting help. no chance of fighting the intruder off, that I was vulnerable in a way I'd never thought I was before that night (Ware 2016: 84)

In the quotation above, Laura also explains in detail the chronology of the theft in her flat and how this incident affected her mentally.

Based on the quotations above, it can be concluded that Laura's post-traumatic disorder was caused by a theft that occurred in her flat.

3.2.3. Effect of Laura's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

According to Sadock & Sadock (2010), people who experience PTSD are described as dissociative and experience panic attacks, even illusions and hallucinations, experience decreased memory and attention, aggression, violence, poor impulse control, depression, and substance-related disorders. Laura in her character shows several examples of this behavior as a result of PTSD.

In this analysis, the authors found several effects caused by PTSD experienced by Laura such as aggression, insomnia, panic attacks, hallucinations, illusions, horrific imaginations, and claustrophobia. The following is an example of a quotation taken from the novel.

This room was larger at least, and I felt the growing sense of claustrophobia lift slightly. The ceiling was still low, and there were still no windows, but the room opened out into a small dining room, a lot like a miniature version of a hospital canteen. There were only three tables, each seating maybe half a dozen people, but the Formica surfaces, the steel grab rails and the powerful smell of institutional cooking all combined to underline the difference between this deck and the one above. (Ware, 2016: 109)

In the quotation above, it is explain that Laura also suffers from claustrophobia. Claustrophobia is an excessive fear or anxiety of small and closed spaces. Her past trauma makes Laura afraid to be in a small and windowless room, and she will panic whenever she is in a place that reminds her of the traumatic incident. Laura also experiences an overactive, horrific imagination whenever confronted with a situation that frightens her.

3.2.4. Laura's Defense Mechanism

Freud sees defense mechanisms as a form of self-defense that every individual has. Ego defense mechanisms are one of the psychoanalysis concepts that concern how individuals live. Sigmund Freud uses the term defense mechanism to denote unconscious processes that protect a person from anxiety through distortion of reality. The theory of defense mechanisms accounts for the psychological processes in dealing with stressful situations. They are mechanisms that help humans avoid reality by developing ways of coping with psychological problems (Spielman, 2002). The writer finds that Laura uses defense mechanisms to overcome and reduce stress due to her trauma or the conflict she is currently facing. The defense mechanisms that Laura uses are repression, denial, projection, displacement, sublimation, rationalization, and reaction formation.

3.2.4.1. Repression

The writer finds 5 data that show that Laura mostly used defense mechanisms of repression. Laura uses repression as a form of defense which occurs when she believes that a certain situation or conflict has disturbed her comfort and is beyond her control, and she chooses to forget or refuses to acknowledge it. In the novel, repression is shown by Laura in several quotations, and the following is one of them:

I had spent the train journey avoiding thoughts of Judah and trying to distract myself with research on the trip ahead. Richard Bullmer was only a few years older than me, but his CV was enough to make me feel hopelessly inadequate—a list of businesses and directorships that made my eyes water, each a stepping-stone to an even higher level of money and influence. (Ware, 2016:35)

In the quotation above, Laura talks about an argument she had with Judah about getting married. Judah wants Laura to move into his flat right away so she doesn't have to worry all the time. Laura is angry and feels stifled, so she keeps thinking about it. But Laura chose to put her thoughts about Judah into her conscious and tried to forget him by distracting herself by reading so as not to continue to feel guilty for blaming Judah.

3.2.4.2. Denial

Denial is the most common ego defense mechanism, but that doesn't happen to Laura much in the novel and the writer only finds 1 data showing Laura uses denial as her defense mechanism as shown in the quotation below.

I flashed back to the time I smashed a heavy metal lamp into his face. What I am thinking? You're not thinking, I told myself. You are half asleep. It's not your fault. It was an accident.

Freud said there were no accidents, said the voice in the back of my head. Maybe it's you. I shook my head, refusing to listen. (Ware, 2016:50-51)

In the above quote, it can be seen that Laura tried to deny the fact that she was guilty of hitting a metal lamp in Judah's face, arguing that she did it half asleep or unconsciously and that it was just an accident. Laura knows she is at fault for what happened, but she tries to justify herself by trying to deny it.

3.2.4.3. Projection

Laura uses this type of defense mechanism to defend themselves from feelings, thoughts or emotions that are difficult for them to accept, they will project these feelings onto others. In the novel, Laura, who is confused by what she is experiencing between reality and illusion, projects her emotions onto others. This can be seen in the following quotation.

I said nothing. I sat there cold and hard with rage against Nilsson, but mostly against Ben Howard. That was the last time I confided in him. Would I never learn? (Ware, 2016:145)

In the quotation above, knowing that Ben had told cabin crew, Nilsson, about Laura having trauma and taking antidepressants makes Laura very angry. At this stage, Laura is projecting her anger onto Nilsson, not Ben.

3.2.4.4. Displacement

The next defense mechanism that the authors found was displacement with two data. Laura uses displacement to transfer feelings or tension to another person or object that is not threatening. In *The Woman in Cabin 10*, this defense mechanism is demonstrated by Laura Blacklock in several quotations.

I knew the anger that flooded through me at his questions was unreasonable he was only doing his job. But the burglar was the person who'd committed the crime. So why did I feel like I was the one being interrogated? (Ware, 2016:12)

In the quotation above, Laura feels annoyed at the police, who are constantly interrogating her about the thief. Laura feels that the interrogation questions aimed at her makes her a criminal but her anger is unfounded because she could not immediately scold or express her annoyance at the thief, so she wanted to take out her anger on the police who are in charge of dealing with the problem with the thief. Laura doesn't immediately scold the police on duty because she is still aware that her anger is unfounded.

3.2.4.5. *Sublimation*

The writer found 1 data showing that Laura uses this defense mechanism to channel strong emotions or feelings towards objects or activities that are safe and appropriate. Laura uses this defense mechanism to fight her stress as shown in the quotation below.

As I lay there in my cocoon I tried not to think about the burglar. I thought, very deliberately, about work, about all the practicalities I had to sort out before Sunday. Pick up my new bank cards. I had to pack and do my research for the trip. Would I see Jude before I left? He'd be trying my old phone. (Ware, 2016: 18)

In the quotation above, Laura tries to get rid of her negative thoughts regarding the thief by doing other more productive activities, such as office work, that she has to finish soon. Laura thinks that doing more helpful things will help her clear her mind so that the past doesn't keep coming back to haunt her.

3.2.4.6. *Rationalization*

Another defense mechanism that the writer finds in this novel is rationalization with 4 data. Rationalization is when someone tries to explain unwanted behavior with natural ideas of their own making. In this way, they feel more comfortable with their choices, even though sometimes they consciously know that what they believe is wrong. In the character of Laura Blacklock, the writer finds a quotation that shows a rationalization defense mechanism. Here is the quotation: As I checked and rechecked the doors and locks, I reflected that the one silver lining to being so shattered was that it couldn't possibly be a repeat of last night. (Ware, 2016:21)

In the quotation above, Laura tries to rationalize her thoughts by thinking that even if the thief attempts to break into her flat again, she won't wake up because she's fast asleep. Laura tries this defense to protect her thoughts and feelings. Even though she had checked the door several times, anxiety would always arise, so she convinced herself that the thief would not return, and even if he did, Laura would not be conscious.

3.2.4.7. *Reaction Formation*

People who use this defense mechanism tend to act or say things that are the opposite of how they feel. Reaction formation also appears as a defense of social law. If someone is afraid that others will criticize them for something, they will do something to show that they are personally far from a position to be feared. In the novel there are 2 data which the writer finds that Laura shows self-defense by using reaction formations.

About 95 percent of me wanted to tell Ben Howard to piss off, and that he had forfeited the right to my trust by blabbing about my private life and reliability as a witness to Nilsson. Unfortunately the remaining 5 percent seemed to be particularly forceful. (Ware, 2016:150)

The above quotation shows that Laura has no one on the ship she can talk to about the strange things that happened to her, except for her ex-boyfriend Ben, who is one of the best choices. Laura thinks everyone on the ship, including the cabin staff is involved, so she shouldn't tell anyone about the woman in cabin 10 who went missing because she could be next. But when Laura sees Ben tell Nilsson without shame that she has always been on medicine for depression and has PTSD, it makes her think twice. Laura has more questions than trust, but she doesn't hold on to her doubts. Instead, she starts to be more honest with Ben. This action is reaction formation because Laura opposes what she wants

4. CONCLUSION

After finding and analyzing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, causes, effects, and defense mechanisms portrayed on Laura in Ruth Ware's "The Woman in Cabin 10", the writer provides some conclusions.

After analyzing the data, the writer concludes the conclusions of this study. First, the writer finds 4 PTSD symptoms experienced by Laura in Ruth Ware's "The Woman in the Cabin 10", such as re-experiencing symptoms, avoidance symptoms, arousal and reactivity symptoms, and the last one is cognition and mood symptoms. The writer finds that re-experiencing symptoms is the most common symptom Laura experiences when she always has flashbacks of her traumatic events, which makes her heart beat fast and causes physical stress. In avoidance symptoms, Laura often avoids places and thoughts that would lead her to flashbacks of traumatic events. In several quotations, Laura is also described as having easy restlessness, feeling tense and alert, having difficulty concentrating, and having difficulty sleeping or staying asleep, which are symptoms of arousal and reactivity. Regarding cognition and mood symptoms, Laura often blames herself and often feels negative emotions such as fear, anger, and guilt.

The second is that the cause of Laura's PTSD is the break-in in her flat. The act of robbery that happened before her eyes and how the thief locked and slammed the door left a big scratch on Laura's cheek. The result of this traumatic event has many effects, such as aggression, insomnia, panic attacks, hallucinations, illusions, horrific imaginations, and claustrophobia.

The last one is how the defense mechanism works for Laura in dealing with her PTSD. Some of Laura's self-protection efforts using defense mechanisms are repression, denial, projection, rationalization, sublimation, formation reaction, and displacement. The defense mechanisms Laura often uses are repression and rationalization. The repression Laura uses is to push anxiety into her subconscious and try to forget it so it doesn't interfere with her daily activities. Meanwhile, Laura uses rationalizations to make logical reasons to justify feelings or behavior to achieve comfort and satisfaction for her ego.

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