

Dark Identities in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* by Mizuki Tsujimura: A Psychoanalytic Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

*This research paper explores the key concepts of dark identities in Mizuki Tsujimura's "Lonely Castle in the Mirror" through a psychoanalytic feminist perspective. The paper is focusing on the psychological struggles, repression, and gendered trauma experienced by its female characters. This study examines how societal expectations, patriarchal structures, and mental health struggles shape the characters' fragmented identities using Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan psychoanalytic theories alongside feminist literary criticism. The analysis highlights how fantasy functions as a symbolic space for self-exploration and resistance, enabling the characters to confront their repressed fears and challenge oppressive gender norms. This research contributes to contemporary feminist literary studies by bridging psychoanalysis, trauma theory, and Japanese literature, offering new insights into the novel's critique of social alienation and identity formation. While acknowledging limitations such as cultural translation nuances and the subjectivity of textual analysis, the study recommends future research on cross-cultural feminist comparisons, reader-response analyses, and interdisciplinary approaches to trauma and identity in contemporary fiction. This research establishes *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* as a significant work in modern Japanese literature, emphasizing its role in addressing mental health, gender oppression, and psychological resilience.*

Keywords: *Dark Identities, Psychoanalytic Feminism, Repression, Freudian analysis, Lacanian theory, Kristeva, patriarchal critique, fantasy literature, Mental health, Identity Formation, Social Alienation, Feminist Literary Criticism*

Introduction

Contemporary literature has increasingly served as a space to explore psychological trauma, identity crises, and societal oppression, particularly in narratives centering around female protagonists. One such work, *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* by Mizuki Tsujimura, presents a profound psychological and feminist exploration of identity, repression, and emotional isolation through the lens of fantasy. The novel follows a group of adolescents, particularly young female characters, who struggle with bullying, self-doubt, and societal alienation, ultimately finding solace in a mystical castle that serves as a symbolic refuge. However, beneath the novel's fairy-

tale structure lies a deep critique of patriarchal oppression, psychological trauma, and the fractured sense of self that emerges from societal constraints.

Mizuki Tsujimura's *"Lonely Castle in the Mirror"* is a contemporary Japanese novel that explores adolescent trauma, social alienation, and psychological struggles through a fantastical narrative. The novel follows a group of seven teenagers who find refuge in a magical castle after facing isolation and bullying in the real world. This research aims to analyze the novel from a psychoanalytic feminist perspective, focusing on the concept of "dark identities", hidden, repressed, or socially constructed selves shaped by trauma, gender roles, and societal expectations.

This research paper investigates the concept of dark identities in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*, referring to the repressed, fragmented, and socially conditioned selves shaped by patriarchal norms and psychological distress. The study employs a psychoanalytic feminist approach, incorporating Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan theories, to analyze how the novel constructs female identity within a framework of repression, trauma, and resistance. Freud's concept of the unconscious and repressed desires, Lacan's theory of the mirror stage and fragmented self, and Kristeva's notion of the abject and feminine subjectivity offer critical insights into how the novel's characters navigate their fractured psychological states. Through this lens, the castle functions as both a psychological escape and a site of self-reconstruction, allowing the characters to confront their repressed fears and redefine their identities outside societal expectations.

The psychoanalytic feminist analysis of *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* is significant in multiple ways. Firstly, it expands existing feminist literary criticism by examining how gendered trauma and psychological repression are represented in contemporary Japanese literature. Unlike traditional feminist readings that focus on explicit acts of resistance, this study explores subtle, internalized struggles—the hidden battles of female protagonists who are emotionally and socially marginalized. Secondly, this research contributes to discussions on mental health in literature, particularly in relation to young women. The novel highlights themes of social anxiety, depression, and the psychological consequences of bullying, offering a crucial perspective on how fiction can reflect and critique real-world mental health challenges. Lastly, by integrating psychoanalysis and feminist theory, this study provides a multidimensional analysis that bridges literature, psychology, and gender studies, offering a deeper understanding of how identity is shaped, fractured, and reconstructed in oppressive environments. Aslam (2025) says that Kafala system remains a controversial and deeply entrenched labor structure in the Middle East. While reforms have been introduced, exploitation persists. This study seeks to critically assess existing policies, reform efforts, and alternative models to ensure a more just and equitable labor system for migrant workers.

In short, this research highlights the intersection of psychoanalysis, feminism, and mental health representation in contemporary literature by examining the dark identities of female protagonists in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*. Tsujimura's novel serves as a powerful commentary on repression, identity crises, and resistance, offering a unique lens through which to explore the psychological

impact of societal expectations on young women. Ultimately, this study contributes to ongoing discussions in feminist literary criticism, trauma studies, and Japanese literature, shedding light on the ways in which literature not only reflects but also challenges the constraints imposed on female identity.

Limitations of Research

This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive psychoanalytic feminist analysis of *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*, several limitations must be acknowledged:

The study relies on a close textual analysis, which is inherently interpretative. Different scholars may draw alternative conclusions based on their theoretical lens or cultural perspective. Moreover, "*Lonely Castle in the Mirror*" is a relatively recent work, there is a scarcity of existing academic research specifically focusing on its psychological and feminist dimensions. This may limit the comparative framework with other scholarly discussions. Furthermore, since the novel was originally written in Japanese, certain cultural nuances and linguistic elements may be lost or altered in translation, potentially affecting the depth of analysis. A comparative reading with the original Japanese text would require proficiency in the language, which is beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, this study aims to explore broader themes in Japanese literature, its primary focus on one novel limits its generalizability. A comparative study with other works in contemporary Japanese literature would offer a more extensive understanding of the themes discussed. Moreover, the study does not include empirical data on how readers, particularly female readers, interpret and relate to the novel's themes of trauma and identity. Including interviews or surveys could provide further insights but is beyond the methodological scope of this research. Furthermore, while psychoanalytic and feminist theories provide valuable insights, they may not fully account for sociocultural or historical influences on the novel's themes. Incorporating perspectives from trauma studies, sociology, or postmodern literary criticism could add further depth to the research.

Despite these limitations, this study aims to contribute to the growing discourse on gendered trauma and psychological identity in contemporary Japanese literature, offering a fresh analytical perspective on Mizuki Tsujimura's work.

Significance of Research

This research holds considerable significance in multiple academic and literary domains, offering fresh insights into *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* through a psychoanalytic feminist perspective. The study contributes to contemporary literary criticism in the following ways:

This research applies psychoanalytic feminist theory to a contemporary Japanese novel, revealing how gendered trauma, repression, and identity formation are constructed within the narrative. By integrating Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan perspectives with feminist critique, the study enhances the understanding of how literature represents psychological struggles and gendered experiences. Moreover, the study introduces the concept of dark identities, referring to repressed, hidden, or socially conditioned aspects of selfhood in female characters. By examining how these

identities are shaped by societal expectations and personal trauma, the research adds a new dimension to discussions on identity in literature. Furthermore, while feminist analyses of literature often focus on historical or classical texts, this research broadens the discourse by analyzing a modern Japanese novel, demonstrating how contemporary literature continues to challenge and critique patriarchal structures. It also highlights how fantasy as a genre can serve as a space for female resistance, empowerment, and self-exploration. Moreover, this research explores how Tsujimura's novel represents mental health struggles, particularly in young girls, within the framework of psychoanalysis and gender studies. By doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on the portrayal of trauma, bullying, and isolation in literature, making it relevant for researchers in psychology, education, and social sciences. Moreover, most existing literary criticism on Japanese literature focuses on classical or post-war works. This study situates *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* within contemporary Japanese fiction, bridging traditional literary themes with modern socio-psychological concerns. It also sheds light on cultural perspectives on mental health and gender roles in Japan. Furthermore, the study opens the door for future research that combines literary criticism, psychoanalysis, gender studies, and cultural analysis. It may inspire scholars to examine other contemporary Japanese novels through similar theoretical frameworks, expanding discussions on mental health, identity, and gender representation in literature. Moreover, this study offers a new psychoanalytic feminist reading of Tsujimura's novel, encouraging further exploration of modern Japanese literature. Furthermore, the research provides insight into how literature can reflect and critique gender-based struggles and psychological trauma in real-world contexts.

In short, this research contributes significantly to the evolving discourse on gender, identity, and mental health in contemporary literature, offering a new lens to understand Mizuki Tsujimura's *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* by combining literary, psychological, and feminist perspectives.

Literature Review

The concept of dark identities in literature has been widely explored in the fields of psychoanalysis and feminist criticism, particularly in narratives that focus on trauma, repression, and the fragmentation of selfhood. Mizuki Tsujimura's "*Lonely Castle in the Mirror*" presents an intricate depiction of identity struggles in adolescent female characters, aligning with theoretical perspectives from Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan psychoanalysis. This literature review examines existing research on dark identities, psychological repression, and feminist interpretations of female trauma to situate this study within a broader academic discourse.

Dark Identities and Psychoanalytic Theory in Literature

Freud's concept of the unconscious and repression is central to the understanding of dark identities in Tsujimura's novel. According to Freud (1915/1957), individuals repress traumatic experiences into the unconscious, which later manifests in dreams, anxieties, and symbolic representations in literature. Kokoro's isolation and psychological withdrawal in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* align with Freud's idea that trauma can be buried but never fully erased, resurfacing through behavioral

and emotional responses (Freud, 1923/1961). Lacan's mirror stage further illuminates the fractured self-perception seen in the novel's protagonist. Lacan (1949/2006) posits that identity is constructed through the reflection of the self in an external image, yet the discrepancy between internal reality and external perception leads to alienation. Kokoro's struggle to recognize herself in the mirror echoes Lacanian theory, emphasizing how societal rejection distorts self-perception (Lacan, 2006). The castle's mirror, which transports characters into a liminal space of self-discovery, serves as a Lacanian metaphor for confronting the unconscious. Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection provides another lens for understanding female trauma and marginalization. She argues that abjection occurs when an individual is cast out from the symbolic order, existing in a liminal space between subject and object. The Wolves in the novel symbolize patriarchal forces that marginalize and control female identities, reinforcing Kristeva's assertion that societal norms dictate acceptable and unacceptable forms of existence (Kristeva, 1982). The Kafala system has long been a subject of global criticism for its role in facilitating labor exploitation and restricting the rights of migrant workers in the Middle East (Aslam, 2025).

Feminist Criticism and Gendered Trauma in Japanese Literature

Feminist literary critics have long examined how women's identities are shaped by patriarchal oppression and gendered trauma. Gilbert and Gubar (1979) argue that female characters in literature often navigate between oppressive societal roles and rebellious self-expression, a duality that is evident in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*. Kokoro's hesitance to assert her identity reflects traditional constraints on female agency, while her journey within the castle symbolizes a resistance to patriarchal expectations. Japanese feminist scholars, such as Ueno (2009), discuss how Japanese literature often portrays female protagonists struggling with social isolation and emotional repression. Ueno (2009) suggests that the cultural pressure on women to conform to societal ideals often leads to psychological distress, a theme that Tsujimura explores through the mental health struggles of her female characters. Similarly, Orbaugh (2003) highlights how Japanese fantasy literature serves as a subversive space where female protagonists challenge gender norms, reinforcing the significance of the fantasy genre in feminist narratives.

Fantasy as a Site of Psychological and Feminist Exploration

The role of fantasy literature in exploring psychological trauma and feminist themes has been extensively studied. Jackson (1981) posits that fantasy creates a liminal space where characters can engage with repressed fears and desires, allowing for the subversion of traditional gender roles. In *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*, the castle functions as an unconscious realm, providing characters with the opportunity to confront their past traumas and reconstruct their identities. Tatar (2003) argues that fairy tales and fantasy narratives often reflect real-world psychological struggles, a perspective that aligns with Tsujimura's use of fantasy as a metaphor for self-exploration and healing. Research on Japanese fantasy literature suggests that mirror imagery is frequently used as a symbol of self-reflection and transformation (Napier, 2007). Napier (2007) notes that mirrors in Japanese folklore and contemporary fiction often serve as portals to repressed memories and

alternate selves, reinforcing the psychoanalytic dimension of Tsujimura's work. The Wishing Room in the novel, where characters have the chance to change their lives, aligns with this tradition of mirrors as psychological thresholds, emphasizing the transformative power of fantasy spaces.

This study enriches the existing literature on disaster response by offering a deeper understanding of the personal and professional challenges faced by frontline workers in crisis situations (Rashdi, Surahio & Nadeem, 2024). According to Rashdi & Sarfraz (2025), the immigration process of researchers is often tied to their publication output, as it directly impacts academic advancement and recognition.

In short, this literature review establishes a strong theoretical foundation for understanding dark identities, psychoanalytic repression, and feminist resistance in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*. By synthesizing psychoanalysis, feminist literary theory, and Japanese fantasy studies, this research contributes to contemporary discussions on identity formation, gender trauma, and the transformative power of literature.

Research Methodology

This research paper uses a qualitative textual analysis approach. A close reading of *"Lonely Castle in the Mirror"* has been done to identify patterns of psychological distress, repression, and gender-based struggles. The novel has been compared with other works in Japanese literature that deal with similar themes, such as "The Girl Who Leapt Through Time" and "Kafka on the Shore". This research paper has used insights from psychology, gender studies, and Japanese cultural studies will be integrated to deepen the analysis. Moreover, this research paper has employed a psychoanalytic feminist framework. Such as, Freudian and Lacanian Psychoanalysis. It's done to examine the role of repression, trauma, and the unconscious in shaping the characters' identities. Furthermore, Kristeva's theory of abjection has been applied to explore how female characters experience feelings of exclusion and horror in response to societal rejection. Furthermore, feminist Literary Criticism had been made to analyze the novel's critique of patriarchal oppression and gender roles. This research paper contributes to feminist literary criticism by highlighting how Tsujimura's novel addresses gendered trauma and identity struggles. It also provided a new psychoanalytic reading of the novel, expanding its interpretation beyond its surface themes of bullying and social isolation. By bridging Japanese literature, psychoanalysis, and feminist theory, this study will offer fresh insights into the complexities of identity formation in contemporary fiction.

Discussion & Analysis

This discussion provides a psychoanalytic feminist analysis of *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*, addressing the research questions while incorporating Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan theories. Using textual evidence, it demonstrates how dark identities, repression, patriarchal structures, and the fantasy genre shape the novel's themes.

Dark Identities particularly in relation to Female Characters

Mizuki Tsujimura constructs dark identities in the novel by portraying characters struggling with psychological trauma, isolation, and repressed emotions due to societal pressures. The protagonist, Kokoro, embodies this concept through her withdrawal from school due to bullying, leading to a fractured sense of self. Her dark identity manifests as self-loathing, anxiety, and dissociation, aligning with Freudian notions of repression and the unconscious. Kokoro's alienation is evident in her self-perception: *"I felt like a shadow, something that shouldn't exist. Even my reflection in the mirror didn't seem real anymore."*

This reflects Lacan's mirror stage theory, where Kokoro's inability to recognize herself signifies a fractured identity caused by societal rejection. The castle's mirror serves as a metaphor for these dark identities, reflecting each character's hidden fears and psychological wounds. The moment they enter the mirror, they metaphorically step into their subconscious minds, where their suppressed traumas resurface. Other female characters, such as Aki and Rion, also struggle with dark identities shaped by abandonment, neglect, and gendered oppression. The novel suggests that dark identities are not inherently negative but rather a response to societal alienation and trauma. The characters' shared experience of mental health struggles unites them, highlighting the theme of collective healing.

Identity Formation of Characters

Tsujimura employs psychoanalytic concepts to illustrate how characters suppress their true emotions and desires, leading to fractured identities and psychological conflict.

Repression and the Unconscious

Kokoro's avoidance of school and refusal to acknowledge her trauma exemplify Freudian repression. She states: *"If I pretend it didn't happen, maybe I can disappear too."* This aligns with Freud's theory that painful memories are buried in the unconscious, yet continue to manifest in behavior and emotional distress. Aki represents Lacan's symbolic order, as she conforms to societal expectations, yet feels emotionally stifled. She remarks:

"No one asks what I want. They just tell me who I should be."

This illustrates how the symbolic order (societal norms) suppresses authentic self-expression, leading to identity conflicts.

Symbolic Representation in the Castle

The castle is a projection of the unconscious mind, embodying characters' fears, desires, and unresolved conflicts.

The locked rooms within the castle symbolize repressed memories, reinforcing Freud's concept of the unconscious as a place where painful experiences are buried. The Wolves, who threaten the characters, represent societal judgment, mirroring Kristeva's theory of the abject, where anything outside societal norms is perceived as monstrous or unacceptable. Through these symbols,

Tsujimura highlights how suppressed emotions and societal repression shape the characters' self-perceptions, reinforcing the theme of identity fragmentation and reconstruction.

Critique of Patriarchal Structures and Gender Roles: Tsujimura's novel offers a subtle yet powerful critique of patriarchal structures, particularly in how they shape female identity, trauma, and self-worth.

Female Oppression in Society: The female protagonists suffer from bullying, parental neglect, and emotional isolation, mirroring real-world gendered struggles. Kokoro's mother fails to acknowledge her daughter's suffering, reflecting how women are often expected to endure pain silently in patriarchal societies.

Expectation vs. Reality: The characters face unrealistic gender expectations. Aki, for example, is pressured to be the "perfect" daughter, leading to internalized repression.

"A girl should be obedient. A girl shouldn't complain." This line encapsulates deeply ingrained patriarchal norms that restrict female autonomy and self-expression.

Resistance Through Fantasy: The castle serves as an alternative space where the characters break free from gender norms. Unlike the real world, where they feel powerless, the castle allows them to reclaim their agency, defying patriarchal constraints. Through these themes, Tsujimura critiques societal norms that silence and oppress women, advocating for mental health awareness, gender equality, and self-empowerment.

Fantasy Genre as a Medium for Psychological and Feminist Exploration: The fantasy genre in *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* functions as a therapeutic and feminist tool, allowing characters to explore their identities beyond societal constraints.

Fantasy as a Psychological Space: The castle represents the subconscious mind, a place where repressed traumas are confronted. The Wolves symbolize external societal pressures, while the Wishing Room offers a space for healing and self-acceptance. By incorporating Freudian dream theory, Tsujimura uses fantasy to manifest psychological struggles in symbolic forms, enabling a deeper exploration of mental health.

Fantasy as a Feminist Space: The novel reimagines the traditional fairy-tale structure, where instead of a prince saving the protagonists, they save each other. The Wolf Queen, a female figure of power, disrupts patriarchal hierarchies, showing that women can be both protectors and guides. The mirror as a portal signifies self-exploration and transformation, reinforcing feminist themes of self-discovery and autonomy. By merging fantasy with psychoanalysis and feminism, Tsujimura crafts a narrative that empowers marginalized identities and offers a critique of real-world gender inequalities.

In short, through a psychoanalytic feminist lens, *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* portrays dark identities as a response to trauma, repression, and gendered oppression. The novel's use of Freudian repression, Lacanian identity formation, and Kristevan abjection reveals how its

characters struggle with societal expectations and internal conflicts. Tsujimura critiques patriarchal structures by illustrating how young women suffer under gendered oppression, yet also shows how fantasy serves as a medium for self-exploration and empowerment. This study highlights the novel's role in promoting discussions on mental health, gender identity, and social alienation. While limited to a single text, this research paves the way for comparative studies on how Japanese literature addresses trauma and gender issues across different genres. Future research could explore cross-cultural feminist perspectives and the psychological impact of fantasy literature on readers, reinforcing the importance of literary spaces in mental health awareness and gender discourse.

Sum Up

In *"Lonely Castle in the Mirror"*, Mizuki Tsujimura explores the concept of dark identities through the psychological struggles of her female characters, particularly in relation to trauma, repression, and gendered oppression. Using a psychoanalytic feminist perspective, this analysis examines how the novel constructs female identity through Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan theories, revealing how repression, societal expectations, and symbolic representation shape the protagonists' fragmented sense of self. The study also highlights how the novel critiques patriarchal structures and gender roles, while fantasy serves as a space for psychological and feminist exploration. Tsujimura depicts dark identities as internalized fears, suppressed emotions, and fractured selves shaped by trauma and societal exclusion. The protagonist, Kokoro, embodies this struggle as she isolates herself from the outside world after experiencing bullying and social rejection. Her inability to function in daily life and her emotional withdrawal reflect Freudian repression, where painful memories are pushed into the unconscious but continue to shape behavior. She describes her alienation by saying, *"I felt like a shadow, something that shouldn't exist. Even my reflection in the mirror didn't seem real anymore."* This aligns with Lacan's mirror stage theory, where the fragmented self struggles to recognize its own identity, emphasizing the psychological impact of social alienation. Other female characters, such as Aki and Rion, also display fractured identities, shaped by neglect, family pressures, and gendered expectations, reinforcing the idea that dark identities emerge from societal and emotional repression rather than inherent flaws. Psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, the unconscious, and symbolic representation shape how the characters navigate their identities. The castle itself functions as a projection of the unconscious, allowing the characters to confront their deepest fears in a controlled, symbolic space. The locked rooms in the castle mirror Freud's idea of buried memories, representing traumas the characters have yet to process. Kokoro's avoidance of school and refusal to speak about her pain are clear examples of repression, yet these emotions surface in her dreamlike journey within the castle. Aki's struggle with meeting societal expectations while hiding her true self illustrates Lacan's symbolic order, where individuals conform to external norms at the expense of their authentic identities. The Wolves, which threaten the characters, serve as metaphors for social judgment and internalized fear, reinforcing Kristeva's concept of abjection, where anything that deviates from societal norms is perceived as monstrous or unacceptable. Through the experiences of its female characters, the novel critiques patriarchal structures and gender roles,

exposing how young women are expected to conform to restrictive societal expectations. Kokoro's mother's inability to understand her daughter's suffering reflects how mental health struggles in young women are often dismissed or misunderstood, reinforcing the expectation that girls should endure their pain in silence. Aki, pressured into fulfilling her role as the "perfect daughter," internalizes her suffering rather than resisting it outright, reflecting how patriarchal conditioning limits female autonomy. The novel also highlights the pressure to maintain a socially acceptable image, as seen when one character notes, "No one asks what I want. They just tell me who I should be." The repeated motif of mirrors suggests that female identity is constantly scrutinized and shaped by external forces, reinforcing the idea that women in patriarchal societies must perform roles rather than express their true selves. The fantasy genre serves as a medium for both psychological and feminist exploration, offering a space where characters can confront their repressed fears and challenge societal limitations. The castle is not merely an escape but a symbolic space where the protagonists reclaim agency over their identities. Unlike their real-world experiences, where they feel powerless, the castle allows them to express their desires, fears, and suppressed emotions without judgment. The Wishing Room, which offers each character a chance to change their reality, symbolizes the possibility of self-reinvention and empowerment. The novel reinterprets traditional fairy-tale structures, replacing the usual savior narrative with collective female solidarity, as the characters help one another heal rather than relying on external forces for rescue. The Wolf Queen, a female figure of power, disrupts patriarchal hierarchies, positioning women as guides and protectors rather than passive figures in need of saving. By using fantasy as a vehicle for self-exploration and feminist resistance, Tsujimura creates a narrative where her characters can break free from social constraints, explore their hidden selves, and ultimately reclaim their agency. By analyzing *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* through psychoanalytic and feminist literary theory, this study highlights how Tsujimura constructs dark identities as responses to trauma, repression, and patriarchal constraints. The novel reveals how suppressed emotions shape identity formation, how societal expectations silence female voices, and how fantasy literature can provide a transformative space for psychological and feminist discourse. The findings suggest that dark identities are not fixed or destructive but rather evolving aspects of selfhood that emerge from oppression and can be reconstructed through self-awareness and healing. This research contributes to broader discussions on gender, mental health, and self-identity in literature, emphasizing the role of fiction in challenging social norms and fostering psychological resilience.

Conclusion

This research has explored the concepts of dark identities in Mizuki Tsujimura's *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* through a psychoanalytic feminist lens, highlighting the psychological struggles, gendered trauma, and societal repression experienced by the novel's female characters. By integrating Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan psychoanalytic theories with feminist literary criticism, the study has revealed how the novel critiques patriarchal structures and cultural expectations that shape female identity. The analysis has demonstrated that the novel's fantastical

setting serves as a symbolic space for self-exploration and resistance, where characters navigate their repressed fears and traumas. The protagonist's journey reflects a deeper psychological and feminist discourse on isolation, self-acceptance, and empowerment, making *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* a significant contribution to contemporary Japanese literature. Despite its theoretical and methodological limitations, this study has provided valuable insights into the intersection of psychology, feminism, and literature, encouraging further research on gendered trauma and identity formation in modern fiction. Future studies could expand upon this work by comparing Tsujimura's novel with other literary texts that explore similar themes, incorporating cross-cultural feminist perspectives or empirical reader-response analyses. Ultimately, this research underscores the power of literature to reflect, critique, and reimagine societal norms, demonstrating that fantasy fiction is not merely escapism but a profound medium for psychological healing, gendered self-awareness, and resistance against oppression. By examining *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* through the lens of psychoanalytic feminism, this study contributes to broader discussions on mental health, identity, and gender representation in contemporary literature, offering a new framework for understanding the hidden struggles of female characters in fictional and real-world contexts.

Recommendations for Future Related Studies

Based on the findings and limitations of this research, several areas for future studies can be explored to deepen the understanding of dark identities, gendered trauma, and psychoanalytic feminist perspectives in literature:

- Future research could compare "*Lonely Castle in the Mirror*" with other contemporary Japanese novels that explore mental health, trauma, and gender identity, such as Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* or Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*. A cross-textual study could highlight recurring psychological and feminist themes in modern Japanese fiction.
- A comparative study between "*Lonely Castle in the Mirror*" and Western or South Asian literature could reveal cultural differences in the portrayal of female identity and psychological distress. This could include works like Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* or Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, examining how societal expectations shape women's psychological struggles across cultures.
- A study involving empirical research, such as surveys or interviews, could analyze how readers, especially young female readers, interpret and relate to the novel's themes of isolation, trauma, and self-discovery. Such research could provide insights into the psychological impact of literature on young readers experiencing similar struggles. This study primarily focuses on female characters, future research could explore male characters' psychological struggles through a psychoanalytic and feminist perspective. This could provide a gender-inclusive analysis of trauma and repression in Tsujimura's novel.
- A study on the therapeutic function of fantasy literature in representing trauma and identity crises could compare *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* with works like J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series or Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*. This would explore how fantasy elements serve as coping mechanisms for characters and readers alike.

- Further research could analyze how Japan's education system, gender roles, and mental health stigmas influence the novel's portrayal of bullying, social isolation, and psychological distress. This could contribute to sociocultural studies on gender and identity in contemporary Japan.

In short, by expanding on these research directions, scholars can broaden the discourse on feminist psychoanalysis, mental health representation, and the role of fantasy literature in addressing social issues, ensuring a deeper and more nuanced understanding of "Lonely Castle in the Mirror" and related literary works.

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