

Grief and resilience: The individual emotional transformation in Kanae Minato's *Confessions*

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History:</i> Received 30 June 2025 Approved 05 July 2025 Published 31 July 2025 Keywords: <i>Confessions</i> , defense mechanism, emotional transformation, five stages of grief, grief	This paper explores the emotional transformation of Yuko Moriguchi, the central character in Kanae Minato's <i>Confessions</i> , following the sudden loss of her daughter. Utilizing Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief and Sigmund Freud's theory of defense mechanisms, the study investigates how grief manifests and evolves into various emotional and psychological states. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research uses literary analysis to trace Yuko's journey through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, alongside the deployment of defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, rationalization, sublimation, and projection. The findings reveal that the trauma causing sorrow is experienced in accordance with the five stages of grief, and successfully channels this sadness into behaviors that do not harm and are acceptable to society. The paper concludes that Moriguchi's actions reflect a human struggle for emotional transformation and survival after trauma..

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How to cite (in APA style):

Bastomi, N.A. & Anam, Z. (2025). Grief and resilience: The individual emotional transformation in Kanae Minato's *Confessions*. *Rainbow : Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies*, 14, 215-223. <https://doi.org/10.15294/rainbow.v14i.29959>.

INTRODUCTION

As social creatures, humans suffer from traumatic events. Trauma is a psychological issue caused by deeply distressing or disturbing events that can lead to intrusive thoughts and intense psychological reactivity, and avoidance of the stimuli associated with the trauma (Levine, 1997). Everyone suffers painful events that can be traumatized, for instance, the death of a beloved one, so they certainly need some measures called defense mechanisms. According to Barlow (2014), defense mechanisms are relatively inflexible, automatic, and unconscious psychological strategies individuals use to manage unpleasant emotions or thoughts. In the face of trauma, our defense mechanisms try to cope with it. The

psychological problems that arise can be reflected in literary works.

Confessions (告白, *Kokuhaku*) is Kanae Minato's debut novel published in Japan by Futabasha Publishers in 2008. This is her most popular novel. It is the first of Minato's novels translated into English by Stephen Snyder and published by Mulholland Books in August 2014.

The novel *Confessions* tells the story of the main character, Yuko Moriguchi. She is a teacher at a junior high school in Japan, whose daughter was killed by two of her students. This novel tells the journey of Moriguchi's emotional transformation that fluctuates until she drowns in prolonged sadness.

Several researchers used *Confessions* as the object of the research in previous studies. The

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researcher collected the studies to understand the novel with various approaches better. The first study is Analisis Karakter Moriguchi Yuko dalam Novel Confessions Karya Minato Kanae (Takide et al., 2023). This study analyses the novel's intrinsic elements and Moriguchi's transformation from a compassionate teacher and single mother into a vengeful figure after her daughter's murder, which is told from a first-person perspective using a descriptive qualitative method and content analysis.

The second study is Konflik Batin Tokoh Novel Confessions Karya Minato Kanae (Kajian Psikologi Sastra) (Choiriyah et al., 2023). This study analyzes characters' internal conflicts in Minato Kanae's Confessions through the lens of Alfred Adler's psychology, which used a descriptive qualitative method and content analysis.

The third study is Trauma: A Trigger for Victims to Become Perpetrators in the Novel Confessions by Minato Kanae (Rusdianti, 2025). This study analyses trauma, when unprocessed, fuels destructive behavior, and challenges the boundaries between guilt, accountability, and forgiveness of Moriguchi, Shuya, and Naoki within the context of Japanese societal and legal norms that using close reading as the primary method and theoretical frameworks from Stephen Frosh's theory of atonement and Dominic LaCapra's concepts of loss and absence.

The fourth study is Analisis Wujud Masalah Sosial dalam Film Kokuhaku Karya Tetsuya Nakashima (Kajian sosiologi sastra) (Rahayu et al., 2022). This research examines social issues depicted in the film Kokuhaku by Tetsuya Nakashima using the sociology of literature approach by Wellek and Warren, combined with Soekanto's theory of social problems. Utilizing a descriptive-analytic method, the study identifies 27 instances of social problems, including juvenile delinquency, family disorganization, crime, and bureaucracy. The causes are predominantly psychological and cultural, while the resolutions primarily adopt repressive methods. The findings highlight how the film serves as a social critique, reflecting issues such as systemic injustice, psychological trauma, and the inadequacies of juvenile law in Japan.

The fifth study is Konflik Batin Tokoh Moriguchi Yuuko dalam film Confession karya Tetsuya Nakashima (Ariani et al., 2021). This study aimed to identify and analyze the inner conflicts experienced by Moriguchi Yuuko in the film Confession, directed by Tetsuya Nakashima. Using Kurt Lewin's field theory and a descriptive qualitative method, the research found that Moriguchi underwent two types of inner conflict: avoidance-avoidance conflict and approach-avoidance conflict. The former involved choosing between two adverse outcomes, such as staying unmarried to avoid future discrimination toward her child. The latter reflected her desire to punish her students and uphold her role as a responsible teacher. The findings showed that deep emotional trauma and moral dilemmas framed her psychological struggles.

The researcher concludes that their main concerns are different from the topic that has been chosen for this final project. To make diversity and enrich the perspective of the primary object studies, the researcher takes on another aspect of the novel that has not been analyzed or discussed in another study. The researcher decides to take on Yuko Moriguchi's grief and her defense mechanism as the main character, as seen in the novel. In addition, this study will reveal the stages of Moriguchi's grief.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grief is a natural and necessary process of healing and adaptation. It is not a sign of weakness or mental illness. It is a normal human response to loss (Worden, 2018).

Denial is the most common reaction to bad news. It is a defense mechanism that protects us from being overwhelmed by the pain of loss. People who lost someone or something they loved tried to refuse the reality that happened (Ross, 2009).

Anger is an emotional response to the reality of the loss, often directed at others or oneself. Anger is a natural reaction to the injustice of death. We may be angry at the person who died, at God, or the world in general (Ross, 2009).

Bargaining is an attempt to negotiate with a higher power or oneself to change the outcome of

the loss. Bargaining is a way of trying to control the situation. We may promise to do something good if the loss can be undone." (Ross, 2009).

Depression is a period of intense sadness, despair, and withdrawal from social interaction. Depression is a time of mourning. We feel the full weight of the loss and the pain of our grief (Ross, 2009).

Acceptance is a state of recognizing and acknowledging the loss while starting to adjust to life without the lost object. Acceptance is not about being happy with the loss. It is about accepting that it has happened and finding a way to go on living (Ross, 2009, p. 57).

Psychological theory, closely related to the literature, is a psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud. The defensive mechanism is one of Sigmund Freud's theories. Sigmund Freud established that the identity consists of three distinct components: the id, the ego, and the superego (Freud, 1973).

The id is a portion of personality driven by internal and external primary motivations and wants, as well as charm, which are all innate. The id behaves following the pleasure rule, in that it avoids sorrow and seeks happiness. The id is the biological part of the personality (Alwisol, 2015).

The Ego is the executor of personality, with two primary functions. The first is to choose which stimuli to respond to or which instincts to gratify based on priority demands. Second, select when and how those demands are met based on the availability of low-risk possibilities (Alwisol, 2015).

Super Ego is a moral and ethical psychological strength that functions on idealistic ideals as opposed to the id's gratification principle and the ego's practical principle (Alwisol, 2015). The superego limits the id drive, the violent impulses that society forbids, pushes the ego to do something moral rather than practical, and requires flawlessness. The overly tends to restrain the id and ego in this method, establishing an ideal thought. When something contrary to what the superego should do happens, it frequently causes someone to feel guilty and regretful (Lapsley & Stey, 2012).

The majority of defense mechanisms are unconscious and function to protect a person from negative emotions and ideas. Defense mechanisms

try to make the person feel better by helping them deal with stressful situations or painful memories (Freud, 1967).

Denial is commonly seen when people attempt to avoid acknowledging some painful feelings, events, or thoughts that have occurred. It functions subconsciously and involves obstructing awareness of outside occurrences. When something becomes too much for a person to take, they will not tolerate going through it (Freud, 1967).

Repression is the act of pushing unwanted thoughts, feelings, or memories out of your conscious awareness. This can be a helpful way to cope with trauma or other painful experiences, but it can also lead to problems later on if the person does not eventually deal with the repressed material (Freud, 1967).

Projection is attributing one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors to others. For example, someone feeling angry might accuse others of being angry with them. Projection can be a way of avoiding responsibility for one's actions and feelings, but it can also damage relationships (Freud, 1967).

Rationalization is creating a logical explanation for one's actions or feelings that is not the real reason. For example, someone who did poorly on a test might say that the teacher did not teach the material well, even though they did not study. Rationalization can avoid shame or guilt but can also prevent people from learning from their mistakes (Freud, 1967).

Sublimation is the act of transforming an unacceptable impulse or desire into a socially acceptable one. For example, someone who is angry might channel their anger into exercise or creative pursuits. Sublimation can be a healthy way to deal with difficult emotions, but can also be used to avoid facing difficult realities (Freud, 1967).

Projection is the act when an individual deflects their own unacceptable thoughts, desires, or traumatic experiences by accusing another person (Freud, 1967).

METHODS

This study uses the descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell (2014), a

descriptive qualitative method is used to create a description of an event, situation, or occurrence to collect important information and data. In this study, relevant theories and facts from the books were read and observed to collect data. *Confessions*, a novel by Kanae Minato, published in 2008, serves as the primary data. The secondary data sources were collected from references to relevant works on Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud (1973), scholarly articles, books, and essays relevant to the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Death and the emotional transformation portrayed in Minato's *Confessions*

Emotional transformation is a profound, lasting change in perception, experience, and response to emotions, particularly after a child's death. It can be found in Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief theory. There are five stages of grief commonly experienced by grieving individuals (Kubler-Ross, 2009): denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance.

The first stage in the grief process is denial. It is portrayed in the quote, "I find myself crying now each morning when I reach out and realize that I will never again feel her downy cheeks or her soft hair" (Minato, 2008, p. 12). The use of sensory language ("smooth cheeks" and "soft hair") adds a layer of realism and immediacy, suggesting the memory is vivid and present. This reinforces the idea that the speaker's grief is still very much alive, and the boundary between memory and reality is blurred. This blurring is characteristic of denial, where the mind clings to sensory or habitual traces of the deceased to fend off the full emotional weight of their absence. The speaker knows the child is gone, but her daily behavior shows she has not entirely accepted this reality.

Anger is the second important stage in the healing process. It is portrayed in the quote, "When I told the principal I would be resigning, he asked whether it was because of what happened to Manami—which is just what you were wondering earlier, Miss Kitahara. And it's true that I've decided to resign because of Manami's death. But it's also true that under other circumstances, I would probably have continued to teach in order

to atone for what I'd done and to take my mind off my misery. So why am I resigning? Because Manami's death wasn't an accident. She was murdered by some of the students in this very class" (Minato, 2008, p. 12). In this quotation, the speaker, as teacher and grieving mother, does not merely resign because of her daughter's death. She resigns because of her perception that the tragedy was not accidental, but a result of a deliberate act of murder by her own students. The speaker's tone shifts from sorrowful introspection to pointed accusation, reflecting a need to externalize her grief through confrontation and blame. Her statement, "She was murdered by some of the students in this very class," is not just informational, but also emotionally charged. The fact that the perpetrators are her own students adds a layer of personal and professional betrayal, intensifying the emotional force of her anger. that reflects the psychological need to restore a sense of control in the wake of trauma.

In the bargaining stage, the individual creates a negotiation with oneself or with fate, trying to undo the loss or find a rational explanation that can mitigate the emotional pain. It is portrayed in the quote, "I called A to the science lab to find out the truth about Manami's death. At the time, I thought I could actually accomplish something by doing this. I suppose I was trying to deal with my own feelings of guilt" (Minato, 2008, p. 22). At this moment, Moriguchi calls 'A' into the school's science lab to find out the truth about her daughter's death. Yuko does this to alleviate her guilt as a parent. Here, Moriguchi, grappling with the devastating loss of Manami. Initiates an investigative act, calling someone to the science lab as a symbolic attempt to alter or understand the past. This action represents a psychological deal that "If I can uncover the truth, maybe I can lessen my guilt or make sense of this senseless death." The phrase, "I thought I could actually accomplish something," reveals the speaker's initial hope that this effort would yield closure or justice, which is typical in the bargaining phase. It embodies a desperate yearning to reverse or make sense of the trauma. The confession that "I was trying to deal with my own feelings of guilt" underscores how the action is less about objective justice and more about managing unresolved internal grief. Therefore, this quote reflects

Bargaining not in its traditional religious or pleading form (e.g., "If I do this, please let them come back"), but as a behavioral expression of inner conflict and guilt. The speaker is trying to "bargain" with their emotional reality, seeking to exert control over a situation that left them powerless and shattered.

The fourth stage is depression. It is portrayed in the quote, "I suppose I wanted to ask B the same thing, though for different reasons. Even if he couldn't bring himself to go get help for her, why didn't he just run away? If he had, Manami would still be alive! (Minato, 2008, p. 29). At this moment, Yuko Moriguchi asks why Student B killed Manami, her daughter. Moriguchi is upset with B for his reasons. If student B were unwilling to help Manami, he could choose to run away and just leave her, and Manami would not die. In reality, Manami was not dead when she was shocked by the electric wallet given by student A, but instead, student B chose to throw Manami into the swimming pool, which caused her to die. This quote illustrates a transition from the earlier stage of Anger into a more sorrowful tone as she retreat inward to confront the immensity of their emotional devastation. The hypothetical phrasing, "If he had, Manami would still be alive!" reveals the speaker's fixation on counterfactual thinking, a hallmark of depressive rumination. Rather than seeking justice or understanding, the speaker laments what cannot be undone. The repetition of "if only" logic underscores a heavy sense of regret. Furthermore, the phrase "I suppose I wanted to ask B the same thing" implies emotional distance and helpless resignation. It shows the speaker is not confronting B directly, but internally grappling with the reality that nothing can now change the outcome.

The Juvenile Law in Japan has plunged her deeper into profound sorrow. The murderer, who was her own student in junior high school, could not be legally prosecuted and was merely rehabilitated. Thus, Moriguchi certainly did not receive fair treatment, even from the state. Her daughter was murdered, yet the perpetrator was not subjected to legal proceedings simply because he was still under the age of eighteen. She was not able to do anything to gain justice from the state, except made herself depressed every day.

The last stage of grief is acceptance. Acceptance in grief signifies coming to terms with loss, moving beyond resistance, and focusing on meaning-making rather than despair. It is portrayed in the quote, "Funny—I think I've finally had my fill of revenge now. And with luck, I've at last started you out on the road to your own recovery" (Minato, 2008, p. 141). In this quote, Moriguchi acknowledges a cessation of the desire for vengeance, noting she has "had her fill of revenge." This indicates that her actions, previously driven by grief, rage, or a need for retribution, have exhausted her emotional utility. The phrase suggests closure but not necessarily moral or legal justice, but a psychological conclusion that allows Moriguchi to move forward. The acceptance here is not passive, but active. In this final stage, Moriguchi reaches her resilience. She will survive and quickly stand up if she faces the same problem in the future.

The psyche used by the individual to cope with the grief in Minato's *Confessions*.

Yuko Moriguchi experienced prolonged sadness due to the death of her daughter, Manami. Therefore, she needed a way to protect herself from uncomfortable feelings from the event called a defense mechanism or psyche. The psyche used by Moriguchi in Kanae Minato's *Confessions* is based on five forms.

a. Rationalization

In the text, rationalization is portrayed in the quote, "Of course, with Manami gone before Valentine's ever came, I regret not buying her that chocolate every day. (Minato, 2008, p. 11)." In this quotation, Yuko Moriguchi told her students in class that she regretted not buying chocolate for her daughter every day before she died. It can be analyzed through the structural model of the psyche: the id, ego, and superego, and the concept of rationalization as a defense mechanism.

The id, according to Freud, represents the domain of unconscious desires and instinctual drives, operating on the pleasure principle. In the case of Moriguchi, the id manifests through her latent desire to satisfy Manami's wants, which are symbolized by the Snuggly Bunny chocolate. Even though she adheres to her principle of buying only one item per shopping trip, the id still has the natural desire to please and care for her child, and

surfaces in the form of a longing to meet Manami's unfulfilled desires, which are now permanently unattainable due to her death.

The superego, which functions as an internalized moral conscience, imposes feelings of guilt and self-reproach on Moriguchi. Her regret over not buying Manami chocolate when she had previously stood firm in her decision not to buy it becomes a moral burden that frames her trauma. The superego criticizes her actions, increasing the emotional burden of her loss and suggesting that she has failed as a mother by not fulfilling this simple form of love.

The ego, which works on the principle of reality, mediates between the id and the superego. The ego recognizes that Manami is gone and there is no action that can restore the loss. In this situation, the ego uses the defense mechanism of rationalization. In this case, by publicly expressing his regret in a reflective, Moriguchi turns his unconscious guilt into a socially acceptable explanation by saying, "Of course, with Manami gone before Valentine's ever came, I regret not buying her that chocolate every day." (Minato, 2008, p. 11) rather than saying, "But a rule is a rule, and I wasn't about to let her get away with that kind of behavior... I reminded her about our rule and told her that she needed to behave herself. As a mother, I'd had to learn that there was a clear difference between loving your child and spoiling her", that seems too restrictive for a simple request (asking for a snugly bunny pouch).

b. Denial

In the text, denial is mirrored in the quote, "I find myself crying now each morning when I reach out and realize that I will never again feel her downy cheeks or her soft hair" (Minato, 2008, p. 12). In this quotation, Moriguchi told her students that she cried every morning, remembering her dead daughter, and realized that she could no longer touch the softness of her cheeks and hair.

In this case, the id commands Moriguchi's inner self to always give him the subconscious desire to try to touch and hug Manami every time he wakes up in the morning, who is no longer beside him. The inability to fulfill this instinctive desire causes deep psychic pain, exposing the unfulfilled desire for physical connection that is impossible due to death.

The superego, acting as the moral conscience and enforcer of societal expectations, confronts this desire with an understanding of loss and finality, generating feelings of guilt, sadness, and helplessness. However, the superego's imposition of this harsh reality adds to her internal conflict, as it stands in opposition to the id's denial of that reality.

The ego recognizes that Manami is gone and that no amount of yearning or guilt can change that reality, operating under the reality principle, mediates between the id's desires and the superego's prohibitions. In this situation, the ego uses a defense mechanism called denial to try to cope with the grief. In this case, Moriguchi knows that her daughter is gone, but she behaves each morning as if that reality is not fully accepted. This denial allows her to avoid the impact of her grief and function in her daily life.

c. Sublimation

In the text, sublimation is mirrored in the quote, "When I told the principal I would be resigning, he asked whether it was because of what happened to Manami... And it's true that I've decided to resign because of Manami's death. But it's also true that under other circumstances I would probably have continued to teach in order to atone for what I'd done and to take my mind off my misery" (Minato, 2008, p. 12). In this moment, Yuko Moriguchi announces that she is retiring because she is grieving the death of her daughter.

In Moriguchi's case, the id expresses itself through overwhelming grief, sorrow, and a desire to escape the painful environment of the school, which constantly reminds her of her daughter's absence.

The superego consists of internalized societal norms and moral judgments that are reflected in Moriguchi's strong sense of responsibility, discipline, and accountability, especially as a teacher and mother. Her statement that "But it's also true that under other circumstances I would probably have continued to teach in order to atone for what I'd done and to take my mind off my misery" reveals the influence of the superego. This shows that she considers continuing her profession not for personal comfort, but to adhere to the prevailing morals of society. The superego compels her to continue teaching despite the death of her daughter.

The ego serves as the rational mediator between the id and superego, weighing the conflicting demands for emotional relief (id) and imposition of moral duty that requires her to continue her job as a teacher (superego). The ego employs sublimation, a mature defense mechanism, in which socially unacceptable impulses or traumatic experiences are transformed into socially acceptable ones that shown when Moriguchi ultimately chooses to continue her job as a teacher only until at the end of the month when he speaks in front of the class to assuage his grief at the death of his daughter rather than express it in other destructive ways.

d. Repression

In the text, repressions are mirrored in the two events in Kanae Minato's *Confessions*. First example is in a quote: "When he realized why I had called him, he began telling the whole tale in a tone that was almost triumphant, as though he had been waiting for this day all along. The coin purse that he'd taken to the science fair was, as I'd suspected, the prototype of his Execution Machine" (Minato, 2008, p. 22). At this time, Yuko Moriguchi tells her students about the behavior of "A", the first murderer, when he was called to her room to face him. Instead of regretting his actions in killing Yuko's daughter, "A" proudly talks about the device he created in a tone like he was celebrating a victory because of her electrical purse is worked.

For Moriguchi, the id holds deep rage, maternal sorrow, and a primal desire for justice or revenge. The murder of her daughter by her own student is a blow that activates the id's most intense emotions, although it is never expressed directly.

Moriguchi's superego enforces composure, morality, and restraint that, as a teacher, she represents institutional authority, and as a mother, she is expected to grieve nobly. The superego judges any impulsive emotional reaction (from the id) as socially unacceptable. Consequently, Moriguchi suppresses her inner chaos and delivers her experience in a composed, reflective manner, maintaining her dignity and authority. Her decision to speak to her students calmly and to narrate the crime instead of retaliating physically illustrates how the superego moderates emotional release.

When overwhelmed by trauma, the ego uses defense mechanisms to maintain psychological balance. In this moment, Moriguchi's ego chooses repression same with superego do: she silences the raw affect of grief and channels it into a rational, controlled narrative. Moriguchi's narration of the encounter with "A" becomes a performative act of mastery, transforming emotional pain into a logical analysis of events. Her ability to describe "A"'s triumphant tone and the prototype of the killing machine without breaking down emotionally is not evidence of healing, but of the ego's success in repressing the trauma.

The second example of repression is in the quote, "As he came to the end of his story, B added that he barely remembered the events he'd been describing due to the shock he had experienced at the time, but he felt that he'd been honest with me—that he'd told the truth. So this was how Manami really died" (Minato, 2008, p. 28). At this moment, Yuko Moriguchi tells her students about the confession of student B, who killed his daughter. Student B has told the real incident of how Manami died.

The id of Moriguchi wants vengeance and justice. Moriguchi's id manifests in the repressed grief and unspoken rage toward the students who murdered her daughter. The desire to hear the "truth" from the murderer himself and compel confession is not just moral, but also driven by the id's need for satisfaction.

Moriguchi's role as a teacher, and more importantly as a moral educator (superego), intensifies the voice of the superego. In the excerpt, the student's confession implies a performative honesty that can also serve as a way to appease the moral demands imposed by Moriguchi's authority. Instead of expressing her pain through hysteria or public outrage, she channels it into an educational framework, telling her student to confess to the crime he committed.

The ego as a mediator between the id and the superego uses the defense mechanism of repression to suppress the sadness and desire for revenge desired by the id. At this moment, Yuko Moriguchi listens to Student B reveal the full story of how her daughter, Manami, was killed. Though she receives this long-awaited truth, her emotional response is strikingly muted. There is no outburst, no immediate catharsis. Instead, her inner voice

simply states, "So this was how Manami really died." This clinical, almost mechanical tone reveals a significant psychological distancing from the actual trauma, a hallmark of repression.

e. Projection

Projection is portrayed in the quote, "Finally, he decides to go visit his mother. But before he can see her, he meets her new husband and learns she's pregnant. It suddenly dawns on him that he is really and truly abandoned, and he decides to take revenge on his mother" (Minato, 2008, p. 135). In this quote, Yuko Moriguchi tells Shuuya Watanabe, as "A", the first person who killed her daughter, that Shuuya Watanabe's mother remarried a scientist and is pregnant after previously divorcing Shuuya's father and being alone for a long time. Yuko Moriguchi also says that Shuuya Watanabe was truly abandoned by his mother and wants to take revenge.

Her id seeks vengeance is not just symbolic, but also emotional and absolute because her hatred for what he did to her daughter is so consuming.

Moriguchi's superego makes her realize that as a teacher and a moral figure, he cannot openly seek revenge without compromising his ethical position. By diverting his desire for revenge towards Shuuya, he maintains his socially acceptable role by merely expressing it without carrying it out.

Operating between the chaos of the id and the constraints of the superego, the ego does its job as a mediator between the two by carrying out Projection. In this moment, Moriguchi accuses Shuuya Watanabe of wanting to kill her mother for leaving him, while it was actually Yuko Moriguchi herself who intended to take revenge because her daughter was murdered by him. Moriguchi actually wanted to eliminate her trauma by taking revenge on Shuuya, but she concealed her intentions by accusing Shuuya of wanting to kill his own mother.

CONCLUSION

The emotional transformation of Yuko Moriguchi in Kanae Minato's *Confessions* is deeply rooted in the intertwined processes of grief and psychological defense mechanisms. Through the five stages of grief as theorized by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining,

depression, and acceptance. Moriguchi's internal journey showcases a harrowing yet compelling narrative of maternal loss. Each stage reveals a facet of her psychological struggle, from the numbing denial and visceral anger to the sorrowful depression and final reluctant acceptance. Her grief is not linear but recursive, with emotional relapses that deepen the authenticity of her experience.

In parallel, Sigmund Freud's theory of defense mechanisms offers insight into how Moriguchi psychologically navigates her trauma. Her use of rationalization, denial, repression, sublimation, and projection manifests in moments of moral ambiguity and emotional suppression, exposing the complexity of her inner life. These mechanisms serve both as barriers and enablers that help her survive the aftermath of her daughter's murder, but they also complicate her moral stance as both a victim and an agent of revenge.

Ultimately, the study concludes that Yuko Moriguchi's transformation is not merely a descent into vengeance but a profound psychological coping strategy. Her actions reflect the unbearable weight of unresolved trauma and the desperate need to regain control over a shattered reality. By framing grief and defense mechanisms through both literary and psychoanalytic lenses, the narrative of *Confessions* becomes a rich tapestry of human resilience, illustrating that healing is often nonlinear, messy, and morally complex. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of trauma in literature and enriches psychoanalytic readings of contemporary Japanese fiction.

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