

**MEI'S ATTEMPT TO FULLFIL HER NEUROTIC NEED AS  
DEPICTED IN HWEE HWEE TAN'S NOVEL *FOREIGN BODIES***

**SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE**

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## **Abstract**

In human development, someone cannot stay away from problems whether they are conflict with others or conflict within themselves. Those who fail in overcoming their problems and reach self-realization are called neurotics. The purpose of this study is to analyze Mei's neurotic needs as well as her attempt to fulfill those needs as depicted in Hwee Hwee Tan's novel *Foreign Bodies*.

Psychological approach is applied to the analysis of the novel and the theoretical framework is derived from the idea of Karen Horney's theory of neurosis, which is taken from her book *Self Analysis*. The theory categorize neurotic's problems into ten kind of needs based on their own neurotic's behavior. Attention is also given to Mei's attempt to fulfill her neurotic needs in order to be a normal person.

The study finds out that Mei has neurotic needs of independence and self-sufficiency due to her traumatic childhood experience. Since then, Mei develops the withdrawal strategy that makes her becomes cold, aloof, and indifferent. Mei also hates her family, the Chinese culture, and her nationality. After going through some experiences, Mei finally accepts the fact that life is not always fair. She has to accept reality and forgive those who hurt her in order to get peace.

The writer infers that family relationship plays significant role in shaping Mei's neurotic behavior. The writer hopes that the next researcher will study about the other neurotic characters in this novel by using different approach.

**Keywords:** neurotic, needs, neurosis, Horney

The writer discovers that Mei uses withdrawal as her coping strategy since she has the characteristic as a cold, aloof, and indifferent human being. Mei withdraws herself from her surroundings by hating her nationality and Chinese cultures. Mei refuses to marry a Singaporean Chinese man and avoids Chinese custom. Also, she converts into Christian because she is afraid of Buddhist's hell. By using the moving-away strategy, Mei grows up into a successful independent young woman. However, the withdrawal strategy only makes the foreign bodies within Mei grows bigger. Instead of solving her neurotic's problems, Mei becomes more anxious about her life.

In the end, Mei understands that the only method to cope with her problem is by forgiving her parents. She admits the fact that sometimes the evil wins because human has a limited power. There are things that people have to let it go in order to keep moving forward in life. Thus, Mei forgives her father's mistake by visiting his graveyard for the first time in her life.

The writer realizes that this research still needs a lot of elaboration. The writer suggests that the further study will be able to analyze this novel by using Erik Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development. The writer expects the next researchers will come up with more subtle findings by applying their own perspectives.

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