

**PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS IN *MO DAO ZU SHI*:
THE COMPLEXITIES OF WEI WUXIAN, LAN WANGJI, AND
JIANG CHENG**

Dissertation

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **Psychological Underpinnings in *Mo Dao Zu Shi*: The Complexities of Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji, and Jiang Cheng** is a bonafide record of research done by **Avyā Anand Dev** (Register Number AIAWMEG010), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Place: P.Vemballur

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Mo Dao Zu Shi, also known as *Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation*, is a Chinese web novel written by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu. It belongs to the danmei (boys' love) genre and has gained significant popularity in various forms of media. The novel was first published in the Chinese literary website Jinjiang Wenxue Cheng in 2015.

On its surface, it is the story of the powerful cultivator Wei Wuxian and his dramatic life journey filled with both triumph and tragedy. However, beneath its layers of intricate world-building and intrigue, *Mo Dao Zu Shi* is a profoundly psychological work that lends itself well to psychoanalytic interpretation through the lens of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. At the core of Wei Wuxian's character is the Freudian construct of the id – the primal, instinctual part of the psyche focused on pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. Wei Wuxian is audacious, hedonistic, and defies convention at every turn, bringing to mind Freud's famous line that the goal of all life is pleasure. His magical creation of the vengeful tormenting spirit of corpses (resentful energy) is the ultimate expression of the id runs amok – the externalisation of unchecked aggression and destructive drives.

Yet Wei Wuxian's id is constantly at odds with two opposing forces – his superego, represented by the strict codes and morals of cultivator society he constantly chafes against, and his ego, embodied through his close cultivation partner Lan Wangji. The superego's function is to control the id through creating a sense of guilt, while the ego seeks to balance instinctual desires with reality. In many ways, Lan Wangji serves as Wei Wuxian's ego ideal – the upright, disciplined cultivator he secretly longs to emulate, while simultaneously rebelling against such restraint.

Their profound bond can be viewed through the Lacanian lens of the mirror stage – the process where an infant recognizes their own image in a mirror, marking the beginning of the construction of the ego. For Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji represents his ideal self, gazing at him as one would gaze into a mirror to see themselves reflected in their most perfect, desired form. Yet this narcissistic illusion is inevitably shattered, leading to the Lacanian realm of the Symbolic - the entering of language, law and social codes that replace the simplicity of the Imaginary realm.

Wei Wuxian's violation of cultivator rules leads to his fall from grace, death, and rebirth as the body-hopping Mo Xuanyu. This shattering resembles the Lacanian notion that the acquisition of language and entry into the symbolic order is experienced as a trauma, a loss of the blissful union of the Imaginary realm. Wei Wuxian's death and resurrection can be read as the subjective decentering by which he is radically alienated from the person he once was.

Chinese danmei literature, a genre of male-male romance fiction, has gained significant popularity in recent years. "Danmei " translates to "indulgence in beauty," and these stories often explore complex relationships between male characters. Originating from online platforms, danmei stories range from historical to contemporary settings, incorporating elements of fantasy and cultivation. One prominent example is *Mo Dao Zu Shi* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, that combines cultivation fantasy with intricate character relationships. These narratives often involve themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and overcoming societal expectations. Danmei literature has carved a niche by providing a space for diverse romantic narratives that challenge traditional norms. While it has faced occasional controversies due to its explicit content, it also serves as a platform for exploring love and identity. Readers appreciate the genre for its nuanced character development and engaging plotlines,

contributing to the broader landscape of Chinese literature. Danmei's popularity reflects changing societal attitudes towards LGBTQ themes, offering a unique perspective within the rich tapestry of Chinese literary expression.

Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, the pseudonymous Chinese author, has gained acclaim for her contributions to the danmei genre, particularly with works like *Mo Dao Zu Shi* and *Scum Villain's Self-Saving System*. Known for her storytelling prowess, she weaves intricate plots, rich character development, and explores themes of love, loyalty, and identity. Her writing style often combines elements of fantasy, cultivation, and historical settings, creating immersive worlds that captivate readers. Mo Xiang Tong Xiu's narratives are characterised by complex relationships, moral dilemmas, and a blend of humour and drama. Despite occasional controversies surrounding explicit content, Mo Xiang Tong Xiu has played a significant role in expanding the appeal of danmei literature, contributing to its growing popularity both in China and internationally. Her works have been adapted into various forms, including animation and live-action dramas, further extending their reach. Overall, Mo Xiang Tong Xiu is recognized for her storytelling prowess, pushing boundaries within the danmei genre and leaving a lasting impact on the landscape of Chinese Literature.

One notable contemporary writer associated with danmei is Priest, the author of *Guardian* (Zhen Hun) which has been adapted into a popular Chinese drama. Priest is admired for her storytelling skills and ability to create intricate and emotionally engaging plots within the danmei realm. Another influential author is Old Xian, known for the highly acclaimed danmei manhua "19 Days." Old Xian's work is celebrated for its beautiful artistry and nuanced depiction of relationships. Since the danmei genre has been flourishing, numerous writers continue to emerge, contributing

diverse stories. Writers like *Meatbun Doesn't Eat Meat* (Rou Bao Bu Chi Rou), *Turtle Recall* (Wu Gui Hui Yi), and many others have gained recognition for their unique storytelling and character development.

Psychoanalytic literary theory applies principles of psychoanalysis, initially developed by Sigmund Freud, to the study of literature. This approach seeks to uncover the unconscious motives of characters, the psychological conflicts within the narrative, and the latent content of the text itself. Central to this theory are concepts such as the id, ego, and superego, which represent different aspects of the psyche, and the Oedipus complex, which explores familial and sexual dynamics. By examining characters' actions, thoughts, and dialogues, psychoanalytic theory aims to reveal underlying desires, fears, and unresolved conflicts that drive the narrative forward.

Freudian psychoanalysis focuses on how unconscious desires and childhood experiences shape characters' behaviours and relationships. For instance, repression, defence mechanisms, and sublimation are analysed to understand characters' motivations and actions. Additionally, the theory looks at how symbols and imagery in the text might represent deeper psychological truths, allowing for an exploration of themes such as identity, trauma, and desire.

Lacanian psychoanalysis builds on Freud's ideas, emphasising the role of language and the symbolic order in the formation of the self. Jacques Lacan introduced concepts like the mirror stage, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, which help to analyse how characters construct their identities and interact with the world around them. Lacanian analysis often focuses on how language structures the unconscious and how characters grapple with their sense of self within the confines of societal norms and expectations.

Overall, psychoanalytic literary theory provides a profound lens through which to examine literature, uncovering the hidden psychological dimensions of texts and offering insights into the human psyche. Through this lens, literature becomes a rich field for exploring the complexities of human emotions, desires, and conflicts.

In exploring themes of alienation, desire, trauma, and the construction of identity, *Mo Dao Zu Shi* emerges as a rich text ripe for psychoanalytic exploration. More than just an entertaining fantasy narrative, it probes the deepest layers of human psychology in both its beauty and brutality. An unflinching look at the tortured ways we grapple with our most primal longings in service of the unattainable ideal.

The objective of this psychoanalysis is to delve into the intricate psychological profiles of Lan Wangji, Wei Wuxian, and Jiang Cheng, three central characters in *Mo Dao Zu Shi*. By employing Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories, this analysis aims to uncover the underlying motivations, internal conflicts, and emotional struggles that drive these characters. For Lan Wangji, the focus will be on his struggle with emotional repression, the influence of strict moral codes, and his journey towards reconciling personal desires with societal expectations. Wei Wuxian's analysis will explore his rebellious nature, the impact of trauma and loss, and his defiance against societal norms, which leads to both creative innovation and personal turmoil. Jiang Cheng's psychoanalysis will examine his sense of duty, the deep-seated feelings of inadequacy and jealousy, and the emotional repression resulting from his upbringing and the traumatic events he endures. This psychoanalytic exploration seeks to provide a deeper understanding of their complex personalities and the psychological dynamics at play in their interactions and development throughout the narrative. There have been many studies on this book but most of them were focused on Chinese culture

and queer community. The goal of this thesis is to do a psychoanalytic study of the narrative and its major characters.

To achieve this goal the project is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the general introduction to the work, about the author and a brief description of the literary theory to be used. The second chapter analyses the protagonist of the novel, Wei Wuxian. His dual identity as both a heroic figure and a feared demonic cultivator mirrors the Freudian concepts of the id, ego, and superego. The third chapter analyses the male lead, Lan Wangji. Lan Wangji represents the superego, embodying rigid adherence to rules, ethics, and order. The next chapter analyses another major character of the novel, Jiang Cheng. Jiang Cheng symbolises the impact of familial and societal expectations on the individual psyche. The final chapter is the conclusion.

Chapter 2

Wei Wuxian as an Epitome of Id

Wei Wuxian is the protagonist of the novel. He is the adopted son of the Jiang family. He is shown as a spoiled young master of a big clan who is always up to no good. He is a loud boisterous, mischievous person who often gets into trouble because of his curious nature. He is an extrovert who tries to make friends wherever he goes. Even though he is shown as a happy go lucky guy, analysing Wei Wuxian through a psychoanalytic lens, reveals elements such as his unconscious desires, defence mechanisms, and the impact of early experiences.

Outwardly Wei wuxian seems to be the perfect example of Freudian Id - the part of the psyche that is pleasure-seeking, driven by instinctual desires and seeking gratification. His brazen defiance for rules, disregard for authority and indulgence in taboo are a hallmark ruled by wanton impulse. However, a deeper psychoanalytic examination reveals that beneath Wei Wuxian's rebellious veneer lies a complex web of dysfunction rooted in a profound experience of lack, alienation, and thwarted desire.

He lost his parents at the age of four and was left to survive in the street until the age of ten. The trauma left him with a fear of dogs, preference for extremely spicy food and problems with memory retention. Even though his fear of dogs is talked about in a comedic manner, the reason behind it is anything but a comedy. He had to fight with the dogs for a meal in the street and was bitten by dogs multiple times when he was young leading to his fear of dogs. Likewise his preference for extremely spicy food is his unconscious way of protecting his food from other contenders - human and animal alike. Being in the streets and starving for prolonged intervals of time, he might have picked up on the fact that most people dislike extremely spicy food, which

might have been his reason for the preference for extremely spicy food. His memory is a talked about topic by his family and peers. His inability to remember anything is attributed to his childhood trauma. He does not remember his parents, only an image of him riding a donkey with his mother while his father walks beside them with the donkey's reins in his hands.

He was rescued by Jiang Fangmian who introduces himself as Wei Wuxian's father's friend. He is taken in as the Jiang sect leader's pupil and given the position of the head discipline above his own son at a very young age. His apparent "favouritism" towards Wei Wuxian gained the ire of his wife Yu Ziyuan. Wei Wuxian is abused both mentally and physically by her. The children of Yu Ziyuan and Jiang Fangmian accept Wei Wuxian as a playmate. This further irks Yu Ziyuan so she creates a split among them by comparing him to her children and berating them for not being better than him.

Wei wuxian's antisocial acting out can be said to be fueled by melancholic underpinnings. According to Freudian theory, melancholia stems from experiencing the loss of a loved one or loved object. Unable to process this loss, the ego interjects or internalises the lost object, leading to the establishment of an impoverished, degraded, ambivalent, and cruel ego. Wei Wuxian's predicament of being orphaned and abandoned at a tender age leaves him with a primal lack he can never resolve - the lost maternal object that psychoanalysis posits is the very first lost "thing" that structures the human mind. This experience of lack fuels Wei Wuxian's narcissistic personality structure and his grandiose overcompensation for feelings of worthlessness. Wei Wuxian's act of breaking rules, jumping head first into danger, acts bringing glory to the sect are all his defence mechanisms against a deep core of insecurity, emptiness and self-loathing.

Even though Wei Wuxian's father Wei Changze is said to have been a servant of the Jiang sect, if examined closely it can be seen that he was more of a bodyguard to the then Jiang sect heir Jiang Fangmian than a servant of the sect. He was highly skilled with a dagger and proficient in martial arts, he was invited to study at the Lan sect. But he is always referred to as a servant of the Jiang sect in front of Wei Wuxian to undermine Wei Wuxian's position and highlight his lack of noble parentage. His father's status as a servant is used multiple times by different people to question his authority or to undervalue his achievements. He is an intelligent person who is able to think on his feet. Along with his sacrificial nature, he is often seen helping others out of trouble while endangering himself. His lack of self esteem is due to the years of abuse he faced at the Jiang clan.

Wei Wuxian can be said to be a victim of long term manipulation and gaslighting (it's the manipulation of someone to the level that they question their reality). On the first glance Jiang Fangmian's policy of letting Wei Wuxian get away with anything can be seen as indulgence. But the scene in which he leaves Wei Wuxian and Jiang Cheng shows that it was indifference not indulgence.

"I will go back," Jiang Fengmian said. "You two will leave. Do not look back and do not return to Lotus Pier. Once ashore, immediately find a way to head for Meishan to look for your sister and grandmother."

"Jiang-shushu!" Wei Wuxian cried out.

Once the shock passed, Jiang Cheng frantically kicked at the side of the boat, sending it rocking incessantly. "Father, release me! Let me go!"

"I will go back to find San-Niangzi," Jiang Fengmian stated.

Jiang Cheng glared at him. "Can't we go back to find her together?!"

Jiang Fengmian gazed steadily at him. He suddenly reached out. His hand paused in midair for a moment before slowly stroking Jiang Cheng's head.

"A-Cheng. Be well."

"Jiang-shushu," Wei Wuxian pleaded. "He'll never be okay if anything happens to you."

Jiang Fengmian shifted his gaze over to Wei Wuxian. "A-Ying... Look after A-Cheng." (Xiu 163)

While he instructs his son to be well, the instruction for Wei Wuxian is to take care of his children. This incident raises a few questions on Jiang Fangmian's affection for Wei Wuxian and his father Wei Changze, his friend. What could have been the reason for Wei Changze to leave the sect and become a rogue cultivator if he was favoured by the sect heir. He decided to roam the lands with his wife and young child instead of returning to the sect, a safer option. This shows that the story behind Wei Wuxian's parents is not as simple as the rumours said. Wei Wuxian is basically used as a shield for the sect. His parents most probably figured out that giving their loyalty to a sect that does not have any consideration for them would be detrimental for them. It could have been the reason they left. They did not want that kind of life for themselves or their children. But unfortunately Wei Wuxian ended up replacing his father's position in the sect, the shield for the Jiang sect heir with a blind loyalty. If not for the gratitude for saving him from the streets, brainwashed into believing he owed his life to them. He was not told about his parents by practically anyone. He was not allowed to talk about them in the Jiang clan because of Yu Ziyuan's hatred for them. Others who talked about them assumed he knew about them because he lives in his father's previous sect with the sect leader being a close friend to them.

Another character who had a huge influence on Wei Wuxian's life is Jiang Yanli. She is the daughter of the Jiang sect leader. She is said to be the person who loved and cared for him. She cooked for him when he was sick or was whipped by Yu Ziyuan. But under careful analysis her actions and words seemed to be aimed at ensuring his continued loyalty towards the Jiang sect and Jiang Cheng. Whenever Jiang Cheng is angry at him unnecessarily she would come to him with empty platitudes and food. She would say that Jiang Cheng is sorry for behaving that way and offer the lotus root and pork rib soup made by her. Anyone would know the appeal of food for an orphan who was forced to live on the streets. So instead of correcting anyone or defending him she diverts his attention to food, especially food made by her own hand so his mind is filled with her "care" rather than the injustice he had to face.

Reading the book it can be seen that her strategy worked as he gave his golden core (this is the most important part for a cultivator because without the golden core a person could not be a cultivator) to Jiang Cheng when he lost his during the attack. Even when he had to be awake throughout the painful surgery for one and two nights, he was adamant about giving his core to Jiang Cheng saying that he is repaying his debt.

Wen Qing first refused to do the operation but he blackmailed her saying that he may try to do the operation with the help of someone else. Since it was a risky procedure she reluctantly agreed. After all, golden core transfer was only a theoretical concept, no one has ever tried something like this before. Her seniors scolded her saying she was indulging in flights of fancy and the idea was completely impractical. For anyone concerned no one would willingly give away their core as it would render them fundamentally crippled. They would never be able to reach the pinnacle of their ability and would remain mediocre for life. Even with multiple warnings from Wen

Qing, Wei Wuxian was adamant to go through the procedure. He did not want Jiang Cheng to know about the procedure so they made a plan to trick him. For Wei Wuxian his safety is not important compared to Jiang Cheng's pride. He was brought up believing he is less than Jiang Cheng or his sect's "face". Jiang's stellar parenting paid off.

Psychoanalytic theory suggests that individuals often repress traumatic memories to protect themselves from the pain. However, these repressed memories can resurface in various ways, influencing behaviour and emotions. Wei Wuxian's decision to adopt demonic cultivation can be seen as a manifestation of his repressed anger and grief. By embracing a forbidden and dark form of cultivation, he attempts to gain the power necessary to protect those he loves and avenge the wrongs done to his clan. He tortures Wen Chao, Wang Lingjiao and Wen Zhuliu, who were instrumental in the destruction of Lotus Pier. He was the main force behind the sunshot campaign. Without his corpse army and demonic cultivation, they would have never won the war against the Wens. But after the war he became the enemy number one due to the power he holds.

When he met Wen Qing asking for help to rescue Wen Ning, his debt repaying mentality kicked in and he immediately tried to locate Wen Ning. When Wei Wuxian rescued the Wens from Qiongqi path and fled to the Burial Mounds, he was once more useful to someone. He found someone who depends on him to alleviate his sense of worthlessness. That is why when the Wens were killed in the siege he decided to commit suicide.

When was brought back to life in Mo Xuanyu's body, he is again met with people who need his help. The condition of the ritual was that the spirit who gets the body must complete the wishes of the castor. He has to avenge Mo Xuanyu if he wants to

stay in the body otherwise he will die again. Mo Xuanyu's life was miserable so he feels pity towards him. He encountered the Lan juniors in trouble soon after which flared his protective instincts. His curiosity again leads him to solve a mystery. When he finds people who still need his help, need his presence in their life, he decides to dedicate his time for them.

His reunion with Lan Sizhui , who he considered as his own son, is a heart touching one. It is quite ironic that he makes a home in the same place which he scorned in his previous life. Even though he was fond of Lan Wangji, he never really liked the Lan sect which he quite often complained was stifling with all the four thousand rules. His mother's advice can be considered to be the culprit here. Her advice was that one should forget all the good things that one does for others and all the bad things others do for you. It is harmless advice to give to a child where the good and bad experiences he might encounter are with the other children.

It could be because it is one of the very few things he remembers about his mother that he follows this advice always in his life. It is this advice that is behind his easy forgiveness of all the wrong doings he had to face in his life. There are many instances in the novel where the people near him seem confused when they come to know that he doesn't remember the person who hurt him before. His self-sacrificial nature started from here. Even though it may not seem as important, if one does not remember the good things one does for the others what they remember are the bad things that accumulates the guilt. Combining it with the fact that he also does not remember the bad things done to him, only the good ones, it creates a false reality. Reality was people were doing good things to him but he is only ever doing them wrong.

Remembering only the good things in life is a form of self-protection. Madame Yu's constant reproach of him always brings shame to the sect. These two things mirror the advice his mother gave him. Thus Wei Wuxian grew up in a false reality. He is now forced to question his past now that he is living in the cloud recess with Lan Wangji and Lan Sizhui.

Freud introduced the concept of "the return of the repressed," which refers to repressed thoughts, desires, or memories resurfacing in one's life, often in symbolic or disguised forms. Wei Wuxian's resurrection is a literal return of the repressed. After his initial death, caused by the culmination of his conflicts and traumas, he is brought back to life through a dark ritual.

His resurrection symbolises the re-emergence of his unresolved conflicts and traumas. Wei Wuxian must confront his past actions, the consequences of his choices, and the relationships he left behind. This process reflects the psychoanalytic idea that repressed elements of the unconscious must be confronted and integrated to achieve psychological healing.

Chapter 3

Lan Wangji as the Embodiment of Superego

Lan Wangji is the male lead or the romantic interest of the protagonist of the novel. He is the second son of the illustrious Gusu Lan clan. He is sect heir after his brother Lan Xichen. Both of them together are called twin jades of Gusu, known for their beauty and prowess in sword cultivation. They are often put on the pedestal as a role model for all the cultivators alike. The Lan sect is renowned for its rigid adherence to rules and discipline. Raised in an environment that values order, restraint, and moral integrity, Lan Wangji's superego is strongly developed. This early formation of his superego shapes his identity and influences his behaviour throughout the story.

Lan Wangji represents the superego, embodying rigid adherence to rules, ethics, and order. His relationship with Wei Wuxian, marked by both deep affection and ideological clashes, can be interpreted as the ego's attempt to reconcile the demands of the id and the superego. The tension and eventual harmony between these two characters illustrate the psychoanalytic process of integration and resolution of internal conflicts.

On the surface, Lan Wangji appears to be the consummate follower of the Symbolic order, having thoroughly internalised the patriarchal law and cultural edicts represented by the Lan clan's codified precepts of conduct known as the Four Thousand Rules. But a clearer psychoanalytic study reveals profound fissures and rifts beneath Lan Wangji's placid, unruffled exterior that hint at unconscious strivings and traumas. With an imprisoned mother and an absentee father, he can also be considered an orphan since young. His mother was imprisoned by his own sect allowing him to visit her once a month. The circumstances of her imprisonment are rather fishy. There

seems to not have been a fair trial to prove if she was guilty or not. Any questions regarding her crime seems to be met with scorn and a call for obedience. Even the circumstances of her death are mysterious. Lan Wangji was not told how his mother died, only that he should stop visiting his mother as she was gone. It was expected of the six years old to listen to his elders and not ask questions.

His father, the previous sect leader is said to have chosen self-imprisonment due to guilt.

“My father encountered my mother in his youth outside the city of Gusu on the way back from a Night Hunt.” He smiled. “Apparently, it was love at first sight.” ... “But she did not reciprocate his feelings,” Lan Xichen continued.

“And then she killed one of my father’s mentors.” ... “After that,” Lan Xichen resumed, “when my father learned the truth, he was naturally anguished. But after much struggle, he nonetheless secretly brought her back here.

Disregarding the clan’s objections, not speaking so much as a word to them, he bowed to the Heavens and the Earth with her in wedding rites. He then told everyone in the clan that she was his wife for life, and that anyone who wanted to lay a finger on her had to first pass through him.”

Wei Wuxian’s eyes widened.

“Once the ceremony concluded, my father found a cottage and confined my mother within,” Lan Xichen continued. “He then found another place for himself and confined himself in turn. He called it seclusion, but in truth, it was self-reflection.” (286)

This is what Lan Xichen told Wei Wuxian when asked about his parents. The Lan brothers still don't question their elders about this matter even after they have grown up. They were raised to have blind faith in their elders and sect.

Lan Qiren is the younger brother of sect leader Lan. After sect leader Lan went into seclusion, he became the effective sect leader and his nephew's guardian. It's unclear whether Lan Qiren knows the full truth of what happened. Whatever he knew made him hold on to the clan rules strongly and imparted the same importance of rules to his nephews. But careful analysis shows that he is not as rule-abiding as he presented himself to the world. He holds a grudge towards Cangse Sanren for playing pranks on him. He writes off Wei Wuxian as a prankster when he comes to know that he is Cangse's son.

Due to his intolerance for deviation from established norms, he sees Wei Wuxian only as a difficult student rather than as a child who needs help. He believes the worst of him without giving him a fair chance. The rules about not holding grudges and not indulging in gossip are forgotten by him. He seems to be holding a grudge against his sister in law as well. He blames her for his brother's plight, even though it was his brother's decision about both the marriage and seclusion. His brother saw her on a night hunt and fell in love with her but she didn't reciprocate. It can be concluded from this that she didn't marry sect leader Lan of freewill. She was then imprisoned by the Lan sect, forced to bear children for the sect leader but not allowed to raise them. She can only see them once a month. She seems to be the victim in the whole scenario but Lan Qiren holds a grudge against her for his brother's decision. It is visible in the way he treats Lan Wangji's relationship with Wei Wuxian. He sees madam Lan in place of Wei Wuxian and sect leader Lan in place of Lan Wangji. He believes Lan Wangji's relationship with Wei Wuxian will end in the same way his father's did. Thus he rejected the relationship strongly. His fear for his nephew and his prejudice towards Wei Wuxian led him to be partial in every decision he made towards anything concerning him.

Lan Xichen is Lan Wangji's elder brother. He embodies calmness, wisdom, and a deep sense of responsibility. His psychological profile reveals the impact of leadership and the burden of maintaining balance and harmony. Lan Xichen's early life is shaped by the responsibilities of being the heir to the Gusu Lan Clan. His upbringing emphasises discipline, moral integrity, and the importance of upholding the clan's values.

When Lan Wangji met Wei Wuxian, he saw that Wei Wuxian is so unapologetically himself that he felt a sort of attraction towards him. He was taught from a young age to control his emotions. So seeing someone so free struck a chord in him. This is the start of his fascination with Wei Wuxian. They do hold that phrase opposites attract true. At first glance they are opposites of each other, one said to have a cold jade face while the other is always laughing. One silent as a feather gliding through the air, only using his words sparingly while the other could be heard before he could be seen, always joking around making merry with his friends. Lan Wangji's sense of self is initially formed within the confines of the Gusu Lan Clan's rules and values. The clan's rules and the cultivation world's norms represent the Symbolic order, which Lan Wangji adheres to strictly. His deep feelings for Wei Wuxian and his eventual rebellion against societal norms signify his connection to the Real, the aspect of existence beyond the Symbolic order.

The romance between Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji is tragic from the beginning because of the limitations imposed by language and societal rules. These constraints prevent them from achieving a perfect and fulfilling connection. In the ideal world, their bond would be complete and satisfying, but reality imposes a sense of lack and unfulfilled desires.

Their relationship, at its best, resembles a close friendship between men, known as homosociality, rather than a fully realised romantic relationship. This form of bond is an illusion that diverts them from their true desires, which are shaped by societal expectations and paternal authority (the Name-of-the-Father).

When Wei Wuxian starts practising demonic cultivation, he challenges the established social and moral order (the Symbolic order). This puts Lan Wangji in a difficult position. Despite his deep feelings for Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji feels compelled to uphold the rules and norms of their society. As a result, he has to distance himself from Wei Wuxian, contributing to Wei Wuxian's downfall.

Wei Wuxian's use of demonic cultivation became a significant threat to the existing order, leading to his ostracization. Lan Wangji's actions, dictated by his loyalty to societal norms, force Wei Wuxian onto a tragic path, ultimately ending in his apparent death. Their relationship, while profound and meaningful, is undermined by the societal pressures and expectations that dictate their actions and choices. This leads to a tragic conclusion where their bond cannot withstand the demands of the world around them. It was at the end when Wei Wuxian's end was imminent that Lan Wangji realised that he can't be passive but then it was too late.

Lan Wangji's interactions with other characters, such as Jin Guangyao and Nie Huaisang, further highlight his internal struggles. His sense of justice and moral integrity often put him at odds with characters that manipulate and deceive others for their gain. These conflicts reflect Lan Wangji's unwavering commitment to his principles and his difficulty reconciling his ideals with the complexities of the world.

Lan Wangji seems to suffer from obsessional neurosis, which means he tries to control his hidden desires through extremely strict behaviour and a lack of spontaneity. He lives his life according to rigid routines, rules, and guidelines, as seen

in the Four Thousand Rules of his clan. These rules are meant to keep him in check, but they also reveal his inner conflicts and the deep, unspoken desires he struggles with.

His obsessional neurosis is evident in his dedication to cultivation arts and his strict control over his emotions. Lan Wangji's adherence to these disciplines is his way of managing his inner turmoil. He uses his disciplined lifestyle to counteract the ambivalences and wishes he cannot accept or express.

At his core, Lan Wangji experiences deep conflicts and desires that he feels he must constantly suppress. This inner struggle leads him to overcompensate through his strict routines and moral codes. His need for control and order is a way to deal with the agonising feelings and wishes that he cannot acknowledge openly.

In essence, Lan Wangji's disciplined life and emotional restraint are symptoms of his obsessional neurosis. They are his way of managing and counteracting his inner conflicts and desires, which he finds too troubling to confront directly. This extreme control over his actions and emotions helps him maintain a sense of order and stability in his life, even though it also reflects his deep-seated psychological struggles.

Lan Wangji's focus on emotional restraint, self-punishment, and ensuring he always behaves correctly through his guqin playing and musical scores can be seen as signs of strong superego influence. The superego is the part of the psyche that represents internalised authority, often taking the form of a harsh, judgmental inner voice. Lan Wangji has internalised this voice so deeply that it dominates his entire identity.

The superego constantly monitors and criticises the ego for its thoughts and actions. In Lan Wangji's case, this internalised voice of authority is so harsh and punitive that it drives him to pursue correctness to an extreme, even damaging, level.

His life is governed by strict rules and self-discipline to such an extent that it stifles his vitality and spontaneity.

Lan Wangji's dedication to his strict routines and moral codes, and his use of the guqin to instil these principles, are manifestations of the superego's control. This intense pursuit of perfection and correctness shows how the superego's relentless demands have taken over, leaving little room for personal freedom or emotional expression.

In simple terms, Lan Wangji's identity has become entirely shaped by his internalised need to be perfect and correct, a need imposed by his harsh inner critic. This has led to a life of rigid discipline and self-repression, demonstrating how an overpowering superego can dominate and stifle a person's true self.

Lan Wangji's journey is also one of redemption and healing. His unwavering support for Wei Wuxian, even in the face of societal condemnation, reflects his deep sense of justice and moral integrity. This commitment to doing what he believes is right, despite the personal and social costs, is a significant aspect of his character.

Through his relationship with Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji finds emotional healing and redemption. Their bond allows him to confront his repressed emotions and integrate them into his conscious identity. This process of self-acceptance and emotional growth is essential for his psychological well-being and fulfilment.

Lan Wangji's character in *Mo Dao Zu Shi* offers a rich and nuanced case for psychoanalytic exploration. His early life, relationships, internal conflicts, and journey toward self-acceptance reflect core psychoanalytic concepts such as the id, ego, superego, repression, and the integration of repressed desires.

By applying psychoanalytic theory to Lan Wangji's story, we gain a deeper understanding of his motivations, struggles, and personal growth. Lan Wangji's

journey is not only a tale of stoic discipline and moral integrity but also a profound exploration of the human psyche and the enduring quest for identity and redemption.

Lan Wangji's story serves as a powerful reminder of the complexities of human nature and the importance of confronting and integrating repressed elements of the unconscious to achieve psychological healing and self-acceptance. Through his experiences, we see the transformative power of love, friendship, and personal growth, offering valuable insights into the depths of the human soul.

Chapter 4

Jiang Cheng's Quest for Validation

Jiang Cheng is the son of sect leader Jiang, heir to the powerful Jiang sect. He inherited his mother's temper, later gaining him the moniker - Sandu Shengshou.

On the surface, Jiang Cheng embodies the strict principles of morality, duty, and adherence to rules within the cultivation sects. As the heir to the influential Jiang Clan, his role is to maintain the clan's esteemed reputation and follow the established codes of conduct. However, beneath this exterior of discipline and authority lie deep-seated desires, trauma, and personal struggles, making him a rich subject for psychoanalytic analysis.

Jiang Cheng's stern demeanour and commitment to rules are a reflection of his internalised sense of duty and responsibility. As the leader of the Jiang Clan, he feels immense pressure to live up to the expectations and legacy of his family. This surface-level commitment to rules and propriety hides a more complex inner world, shaped by past traumas and unconscious desires.

The psychological turmoil within Jiang Cheng includes unresolved issues and deep-seated insecurities, stemming from his relationships and personal experiences. His relationship with his adoptive brother, Wei Wuxian, is particularly significant. Jiang Cheng's feelings of jealousy and resentment toward Wei Wuxian's talents and choices reveal his own insecurities and unmet desires.

Jiang Cheng's internal conflict is also influenced by the trauma of losing his parents and the burden of leadership thrust upon him at a young age. These experiences have left him grappling with feelings of inadequacy and a deep need for validation. His strict adherence to rules and the clan's traditions can be seen as a way

to cope with these inner conflicts, a means to impose order and control in a world where he often feels powerless.

This hidden turmoil and subjective distress make Jiang Cheng a compelling character for psychoanalytic exploration. His outward appearance of strict morality and duty masks a complex inner landscape filled with unconscious desires and unresolved traumas. Understanding these underlying psychological factors helps to explain his actions and relationships throughout the narrative.

In simpler terms, while Jiang Cheng appears to be a strict and dutiful leader, underneath he struggles with deep personal issues and traumas. These hidden aspects of his personality, including his insecurities and past experiences, greatly influence his behaviour and relationships. Analysing these psychological elements reveals a much more complex and conflicted character than what is seen on the surface.

Jiang Cheng symbolises the impact of familial and societal expectations on the individual psyche. Jiang Cheng's early life is shaped by his position as the second son of the Yunmeng Jiang Clan, a respected and powerful family in the cultivation world. His father, Jiang Fengmian, is kind and wise, while his mother, Yu Ziyuan, is strict and demanding. This dynamic creates conflicting expectations and pressures on Jiang Cheng, significantly influencing his psychological development. Central to Jiang Cheng's psychical makeup is an acute experience of lack stemming from his fraught family dynamics. As the legitimate son of the Jiang clan leaders, he is positioned to inherit the paternal legacy, power and privilege bestowed by the Name-of-the-Father. Yet his status as the rightful heir is perpetually shadowed by the disruptive, usurping presence of Wei Wuxian - the charity disciple taken in by the family who eclipses Jiang Cheng in talent, acclaim and his parents' esteem.

Madam Yu hated Wei Wuxian for being better in cultivation than her children. The constant comparison instils a sense of inadequacy and a desperate need to prove himself. Madam Yu's harsh and controlling parenting of her son Jiang Cheng comes from her own disordered need for validation. She cannot see Jiang Cheng as his own person, only as a reflection of her desires and ambitions. She tries to mold him into the perfect heir for the Jiang clan because she unconsciously wants to create a grand and cohesive sense of self through him. However, this intense pressure also causes Jiang Cheng to rebel. His resentment toward Wei Wuxian is actually a way of expressing his anger and frustration toward his mother, who restricts his personal growth and identity. This rebellion reflects his deep-seated struggle against the unrealistic expectations and control imposed by his mother, which suffocates his individuality.

From a Lacanian viewpoint, Wei Wuxian acts as Jiang Cheng's "objet petit a" – the mysterious cause and object of his desire. Wei Wuxian's rebellious actions disrupt societal norms, making him both a source of fascination and frustration for Jiang Cheng. He embodies a forbidden pleasure, or "sinthome," that Jiang Cheng can never fully access. Psychoanalytically, Jiang Cheng subconsciously sees Wei Wuxian as the outcast who still enjoys a freedom and fulfilment that Jiang Cheng, constrained by social rules and expectations, cannot have. This dynamic highlights Wei Wuxian as the unattainable ideal, embodying the pleasure and defiance Jiang Cheng secretly longs for but is denied by the rigid structure of the social order he adheres to.

From his point of view Wei Wuxian gets away with anything. He is not punished by the sect leader no matter what he does. Jiang Yanli and the rest of the sect's brothers and sisters adore him. He is always happy which Jiang Cheng is not.

Jiang Cheng's harsh enforcement of rules, violent outbursts, and cruel behaviour towards Wei Wuxian can be seen as expressions of deep, primal aggression that lies beyond socially accepted behaviour. This aggression is connected to the murderous impulses that the social order, symbolised by the Name-of-the-Father, forbids.

Jiang Cheng's brutality towards Wei Wuxian serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it's an attempt to destroy the unsettling presence of Wei Wuxian, who represents a threat to the structured social reality Jiang Cheng is committed to maintaining. Wei Wuxian, as Jiang Cheng's "objet petit a," embodies everything Jiang Cheng secretly desires but cannot allow himself to pursue due to the constraints of societal rules. Wei Wuxian's rebellious and carefree nature disrupts the stability of Jiang Cheng's world, making him a constant source of tension.

On the other hand, Jiang Cheng's aggression is also a reflection of his own repressed feelings. Despite his outward hostility, Jiang Cheng subconsciously identifies with Wei Wuxian. Wei Wuxian represents a part of Jiang Cheng that he has to suppress to adhere to social norms. This identification creates a deep internal conflict within Jiang Cheng, making him simultaneously resent and envy Wei Wuxian. By punishing Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng is also trying to punish and suppress those parts of himself that he cannot accept.

The sadistic enforcement of rules by Jiang Cheng can be seen as his way of asserting control over his environment and himself. By rigidly adhering to rules, Jiang Cheng tries to suppress his own chaotic desires and impulses, projecting them onto Wei Wuxian. Wei Wuxian becomes the scapegoat for everything Jiang Cheng hates and fears within himself. The violence directed at Wei Wuxian is, therefore, a way for Jiang Cheng to externalise and combat his own inner turmoil.

Furthermore, Jiang Cheng's violent outbursts can be understood as manifestations of his own unresolved anger and frustration. His ruthless treatment of Wei Wuxian is an outlet for these emotions. In a way, Wei Wuxian becomes the target for all of Jiang Cheng's pent-up aggression, serving as a convenient figure to blame for his own unhappiness and sense of inadequacy.

Jiang Cheng's actions highlight the complex dynamics of human relationships, especially when intertwined with unacknowledged desires and repressed feelings. His interactions with Wei Wuxian reveal the struggle between maintaining social order and confronting one's own inner chaos. The cruelty Jiang Cheng exhibits is both a defence mechanism and an expression of his internal conflict, illustrating how deeply psychological issues can manifest in behaviour.

In summary, Jiang Cheng's harsh treatment of Wei Wuxian is a multifaceted response to his own inner conflicts and societal pressures. It reflects his struggle with forbidden desires and repressed identifications, making his violence both a means of control and an expression of internal strife. By attacking Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng is trying to eliminate the threat to his structured reality while also battling the parts of himself that he finds unacceptable.

After Wei Wuxian's death, Jiang Cheng becomes extremely bitter, vengeful, and nihilistic. This reaction can be seen as the behaviour of someone who is deeply melancholic and unable to cope with the impossible reality of his loss. The loss of Wei Wuxian, who was like an idealised, intimate part of him, shatters the structure of his world, which was upheld by the "paternal metaphor"—the social and symbolic order that gave his life meaning.

Jiang Cheng is unable to properly grieve and move on from Wei Wuxian's death. Instead, he internalises Wei Wuxian's presence within himself, creating a harsh,

unforgiving superego. This superego is like a tyrannical inner voice that constantly criticises and punishes Jiang Cheng, preventing him from finding any peace or resolution. He becomes consumed with anger and a desire for revenge, focusing all his energy on destroying any trace of Wei Wuxian's existence.

This obsessive need to erase Wei Wuxian from the world can be seen as Jiang Cheng's way of dealing with his grief. He cannot accept the loss, so he turns his sorrow into a destructive force. This process causes his sense of identity, which was based on the established social and symbolic order, to fall apart. The overwhelming grief he experiences becomes a raw, uncontrollable reality that disrupts his ability to function within the norms of society.

Jiang Cheng's descent into bitterness and vengeance is a manifestation of his internal struggle. He cannot let go of Wei Wuxian, and instead of processing his grief healthily, he allows it to consume him. This leads to a collapse of his previous identity and a loss of any sense of stability or order in his life. His constant pursuit of vengeance against Wei Wuxian's memory reflects his inability to come to terms with the profound loss and emptiness he feels.

In essence, Jiang Cheng's transformation after Wei Wuxian's death highlights the devastating impact of unresolved grief and the collapse of one's symbolic framework. He becomes a prisoner of his own emotions, unable to escape the shadow of Wei Wuxian. His identity, once defined by social norms and relationships, is now dominated by a cruel and relentless superego that drives him to act out his pain and anger in destructive ways.

This psychological turmoil illustrates the profound effect that the loss of a deeply significant person can have on an individual. Jiang Cheng's behaviour underscores the difficulty of processing grief when it is tied to a complex web of emotions and

identity. His extreme reactions are a testament to the powerful and often overwhelming nature of unresolved sorrow, which can distort reality and lead to a cycle of bitterness and revenge.

Ultimately, Jiang Cheng's journey into bitterness and nihilism is a tragic example of how deeply grief can affect a person. His inability to let go of Wei Wuxian and the subsequent collapse of his symbolic identity illustrate the profound psychological impact of loss and the challenges of finding a way to move forward. His story serves as a reminder of the importance of processing grief healthily to avoid being consumed by it.

Even after Wei Wuxian comes back to life, Jiang Cheng remains a tragic and empty figure. He is stuck between giving up his role as the heir and chasing the impossible satisfaction that Wei Wuxian represents. This struggle leaves him perpetually unhappy and unfulfilled.

Jiang Cheng's many encounters with death, his physical injuries, and his patterns of self-destruction reveal his deep desire to escape his suffering by annihilating himself. This self-ruin seems like the only way out from the intense feelings of emptiness and despair caused by his losses and the constraints of societal expectations.

Jiang Cheng's life is marked by a constant conflict. On one hand, he is supposed to uphold his responsibilities as the heir. On the other hand, he is drawn to the freedom and joy that Wei Wuxian symbolises but which he can never fully achieve. This internal struggle makes him a hollow shell, unable to find peace or fulfilment in either role.

The loss of Wei Wuxian, followed by his resurrection, only deepens Jiang Cheng's turmoil. Wei Wuxian's return does not bring closure or relief. Instead, it amplifies

Jiang Cheng's feelings of inadequacy and failure. He remains haunted by the unattainable ideal that Wei Wuxian represents. This unfulfilled longing drives him to self-destructive behaviours as he tries to cope with his intense feelings of loss and desire.

Jiang Cheng's repeated brushes with death and self-inflicted harm can be seen as his way of expressing his deep-seated wish to escape his tormented existence. He cannot find solace in life, and so he turns to the idea of self-abolition as the only possible relief from his suffering. His actions reflect a melancholic's desperate desire to end the pain caused by their unresolvable grief and the constraints of their symbolic identity.

His story illustrates the tragic effects of unresolved grief and the struggle to find meaning and satisfaction in a world that no longer makes sense to him. The return of Wei Wuxian does not resolve Jiang Cheng's internal conflict but rather intensifies it, leaving him trapped in a cycle of despair and self-destruction.

Jiang Cheng's tragic fate highlights the profound impact of loss and the difficulty of moving forward when one is burdened by unfulfilled desires and societal expectations. His repeated self-destructive actions are a cry for escape from the torment he endures, driven by a deep-seated wish to abolish his own suffering through self-destruction.

In summary, even after Wei Wuxian's return, Jiang Cheng remains a tragic, hollow figure, caught between his duty as heir and his desire for the unattainable joy Wei Wuxian represents. His self-destructive behaviours reveal his profound wish to escape his torment, illustrating the melancholic's desire for self-abolition as a way to end the suffering caused by loss and unfulfilled desire. His story is a poignant reminder of the

devastating effects of unresolved grief and the struggle to find peace and meaning in the aftermath of profound loss.

His tumultuous relationship with Wei Wuxian, fraught with jealousy, loyalty, and betrayal, reflects the Oedipal dynamics and sibling rivalry explored in psychoanalytic theory. Jiang Cheng's inability to reconcile his love and resentment towards Wei Wuxian mirrors the unresolved conflicts that often plague familial relationships, leading to emotional turmoil and complex psychological landscapes.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Mo Dao Zu Shi, at its heart, is a deep exploration of how trauma and emotional pain are passed down through generations. It examines the hidden, often unspoken family issues and how suppressed emotions and unresolved conflicts disrupt the identities and relationships we build within families. Through its complex characters and detailed storylines, the series shows how problems from childhood and unhealthy family dynamics influence each generation, leading to both obvious manipulation and hidden psychological harm.

The story illustrates how the struggles and anxieties of one generation affect the next. For example, characters who experienced trauma or neglect in their youth often repeat these patterns with their own children, either through direct actions or through the emotional environment they create. This ongoing cycle of trauma and anxiety is a central theme in the narrative, showing how difficult it is to break free from the past.

Mo Dao Zu Shi is a complex story filled with warring clans, supernatural rituals, and tangled histories of betrayal. Central to this narrative are troubled parent-child relationships that reflect modern society's difficult relationship with authority, sexuality, and reproduction. These distorted familial connections highlight how the problems and failures of one generation are passed down to the next, creating a cycle of inherited trauma and unresolved issues.

The story delves into the deep psychological concepts of lack, extreme pleasure (jouissance), and the harsh realities of personal suffering (the Real). It reveals how the failures and shortcomings of parents affect their children, creating lasting wounds that are difficult to heal. These wounds are linked to the struggles with authority and the limitations imposed by language and societal rules.

In the narrative, the inability of parents to properly guide and nurture their children results in ongoing cycles of trauma and dysfunction. This mirrors the modern struggle with symbolic authority, where the rules and norms of society often fail to provide the stability and understanding needed for healthy relationships and personal development.

The story emphasises that breaking free from these cycles requires a radical change in thinking and behaviour. It suggests that only through unconventional wisdom and strong ethical courage can these inherited traumas and archaic patterns be overcome. This involves rejecting outdated identifications and confrontations with the painful realities imposed by societal expectations and language.

In simpler terms, *Mo Dao Zu Shi* shows how the problems and failures of parents can deeply affect their children, leading to repeated patterns of trauma and dysfunction. These issues are tied to the broader societal struggles with authority and the limitations of language. The narrative suggests that breaking free from these harmful cycles requires a bold and unconventional approach, embracing new ways of thinking and strong ethical resolve to confront and overcome these deep-seated issues.

Each character in *Mo Dao Zu Shi* is carefully developed to reveal these intergenerational issues. Wei Wuxian, for instance, is deeply affected by his childhood experiences and the loss of his parents, which shape his rebellious nature and his eventual downfall. Jiang Cheng, on the other hand, struggles with the heavy expectations placed on him as the heir, as well as the complicated relationship with his parents and his sibling-like bond with Wei Wuxian. These relationships highlight how unresolved issues from the past continue to affect their actions and decisions.

The story also delves into how these unresolved conflicts and traumas lead to both obvious and subtle forms of manipulation and violence. Characters often find

themselves caught in power struggles and emotional battles that are rooted in deep-seated insecurities and unresolved issues from their upbringing. This creates a cycle of pain and conflict that is difficult to escape.

Mo Dao Zu Shi is a rich tapestry of character development, emotional depth, and intricate relationships. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, particularly focusing on the characters Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji, and Jiang Cheng, we gain a deeper understanding of their internal struggles, motivations, and growth.

Wei Wuxian's character is central to the narrative. His journey is marked by a relentless pursuit of justice, innovation, and a rejection of societal norms. From a Freudian perspective, Wei Wuxian can be seen as someone driven by the id—his desires and instincts often clash with the established rules (the superego) of the cultivation world. His development of demonic cultivation represents his defiance of traditional boundaries, a manifestation of his unconscious desire to break free from societal constraints.

His traumatic experiences, including the loss of his parents and later his sister Jiang Yanli, shape his psyche. These losses fuel his protective instincts, particularly towards the innocent members of the Wen Clan, whom he chooses to protect against the collective will of the cultivation world. This protective drive can be seen as an effort to reclaim a sense of family and belonging that he lost early in life.

Moreover, Wei Wuxian's resurrection after sixteen years symbolises a psychological rebirth. He must confront his past actions, reconcile with his old self, and navigate his new identity. This journey of self-discovery and redemption highlights his resilience and capacity for growth. His bond with Lan Wangji, which evolves from mutual respect to deep love, provides him with a source of stability and acceptance, essential for his psychological healing.

Lan Wangji, often seen as the epitome of discipline and righteousness, provides a contrasting yet complementary character to Wei Wuxian. His strict adherence to the Lan Clan's rules represents the superego, the part of the psyche that imposes societal norms and moral standards. However, beneath his stoic exterior lies a complex emotional world shaped by his deep feelings for Wei Wuxian and his internal struggle with the rigid expectations of his clan.

Lan Wangji's attraction to Wei Wuxian can be analysed through Lacanian theory, particularly the concept of the mirror stage, where the self is formed through interaction with another. Wei Wuxian's free-spirited nature acts as a mirror to Lan Wangji's suppressed desires and emotions. Through Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji confronts his own repressed feelings, leading to his eventual rebellion against the Lan Clan's strict codes to protect and support Wei Wuxian.

Lan Wangji's journey is one of integrating his personal desires with his sense of duty and righteousness. His unwavering support for Wei Wuxian, even when it means going against his clan, demonstrates his deep internal conflict and ultimate resolution to prioritise love and personal truth over societal expectations. This transformation is a significant aspect of his character development, showcasing his psychological growth and emotional maturity.

Jiang Cheng's character is shaped by feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, and a deep sense of duty. Growing up in the shadow of Wei Wuxian's brilliance, Jiang Cheng struggles with his own identity and worth. Freud's concept of sibling rivalry is evident in Jiang Cheng's relationship with Wei Wuxian. His constant comparison to Wei Wuxian fuels his insecurities and feelings of inferiority.

The pressure to uphold the Yunmeng Jiang Clan's legacy after the death of his parents further compounds his emotional turmoil. Jiang Cheng's resentment towards

Wei Wuxian is rooted in a perceived betrayal, as Wei Wuxian's decisions to protect the Wen Clan remnants and his use of demonic cultivation put the clan's reputation at risk. This resentment is also a projection of Jiang Cheng's own internal conflicts and unfulfilled desires.

Despite these negative feelings, Jiang Cheng's love for Wei Wuxian is evident. His grief over the loss of their familial bond and his eventual reconciliation with Wei Wuxian highlight the complexity of his emotions. Jiang Cheng's psychological journey involves coming to terms with his own shortcomings, forgiving Wei Wuxian, and finding peace within himself. This reconciliation is crucial for his emotional healing and the restoration of their brotherly bond.

The psychoanalytic exploration of Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji, and Jiang Cheng reveals the depth of their characters and the intricate interplay of their psyches. Each character's journey involves a struggle between their desires (id), moral codes (superego), and their conscious decisions (ego). Their interactions and relationships serve as catalysts for their psychological growth and development.

Wei Wuxian's arc is one of redemption and self-acceptance. His resurrection and subsequent actions represent his quest to reconcile with his past and forge a new identity. Lan Wangji's journey is about balancing his rigid adherence to rules with his personal desires, ultimately choosing love and personal truth. Jiang Cheng's path involves overcoming his insecurities and resentment, achieving reconciliation with Wei Wuxian, and finding peace within himself.

The relationships between these three characters also highlight the themes of love, loyalty, and forgiveness. Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji's bond exemplifies the transformative power of love and acceptance. Jiang Cheng's reconciliation with Wei

Wuxian underscores the importance of forgiveness and understanding in healing familial relationships.

The book doesn't shy away from showing the psychological impact of these dynamics. It portrays how the characters' identities and relationships are constantly destabilised by the intrusion of repressed memories and emotions. The tensions and conflicts that arise are not just about the present but are deeply connected to the past, illustrating how the unresolved issues of previous generations continue to influence the current one.

For example, the relationship between Wei Wuxian and Jiang Cheng is marked by both deep loyalty and intense conflict, reflecting their complicated family histories and the unresolved issues they inherit. Similarly, the manipulations and power struggles among other characters reveal how these dynamics play out on a broader scale, affecting not just individuals but entire families and communities.

Mo Dao Zu Shi is a profound meditation on how trauma and emotional pain are transmitted through generations. It explores the hidden family issues and suppressed emotions that disrupt our sense of identity and kinship. Through its intricate characters and narrative arcs, the story reveals how childhood anxieties and unhealthy family dynamics influence each generation, leading to manipulation and psychological harm. By delving into these themes, the series highlights the difficulty of breaking free from the past and the ongoing impact of unresolved trauma on our lives.

In conclusion, *Mo Dao Zu Shi* provides a fertile ground for psychoanalytic inquiry, offering a rich narrative filled with complex characters, intricate relationships, and symbolic depth. By applying psychoanalytic theory to this novel, we can uncover the psychological underpinnings that drive the story and its characters, shedding light on

the unconscious forces that shape human behaviour and interaction. This project will explore these dimensions in detail, providing a comprehensive psychoanalytic interpretation of *Mo Dao Zu Shi* and contributing to a deeper understanding of its enduring appeal and significance.

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