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Puppetry of the Mind

Abstract:

This paper explores the impact of possible Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on Nathanael -- the main figure in the German Romantic tale *The Sandman* by E.T.A. Hoffmann -- and his relationships with other characters. By examining his interactions throughout the story, I attempt to prove that Nathanael is suffering from PTSD and that his relationships were hindered by it. To do this, I present (1) diagnostic criteria for PTSD from the National Institute of Mental Health, (2) examples from *The Sandman* that relate to the criteria, and (3) instances in which his relationships suffered. I found that Nathanael does fit the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, that his interactions and romantic relationships were significantly impacted by his sometimes violent display of symptoms, and additionally that the antagonist of the story used Nathanael's PTSD to toy with and control him. By applying knowledge of Nathanael's case and outcome to modern-day PTSD sufferers' romantic relationships, we can recognize signs of dating violence early on and take steps to prevent it.