

I AM ENTIRELY MYSELF: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF EINAR WEGENER CHARACTER

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Abstract

Scenes in movies are the reflections of how human being would act and react in facing daily life real drama. This study sought the types of human psychology when they deal with life realms that are portrayed in a movie called *The Danish Girl* based on Freud's *Tripartite Psychological Model*. The method utilized in this study was mainly descriptive qualitative design. The data source was a biographical movie entitled *The Danish Girl* directed by Tom Hooper, which was released in 2015. The subject was the character named Einar Wegener, who transgendered himself into a woman named Lili Elbe. The objects were all scenes that are in accordance with the Freud's *Tripartite Psychological Model*. The data were collected by merely observing the movie for 120 minutes and marking the relevant scenes. After the data were obtained, based on the *Tripartite Psychological Model*, the results suggest that there are 48 scenes of Einar altogether; 36 scenes representing the identity, 7 scenes representing the ego, and 5 scenes representing the superego. In conclusion, although he was biologically male, Einar was indeed born transgender in this movie which can be interpreted through his motives of life.

Keywords: Psychological analysis, tripartite model, The Danish girl, literature analysis, transgender.

1. Introduction

Psychology is the study of human behavior, while literature is the vessel where all these kinds of souls can be represented real. People can see themselves, others who they are familiar with, or others who they are not familiar at all in the forms of literature. There are various types of literature nowadays that people are enjoying, such as novels, poetry, music lyrics, and movies. The last one seems to be the most popular among other types of literature

since movies provide real sound, real setting, and real involvement when people are watching them. It is undeniably true that when a movie is made, there are psychological aspects that appear to be inseparable from the whole story. These aspects cling to the characters and characterization that act out the scenes. It is from these characters that movie viewers grasp the sense after watching, whether they are happy, sad, depressed, or else feelings.

The issue of transgender is being studied in this paper. Psychologically, transgender is seen as gender dysphoria, which means a mental disorder that manifests into sexual deviance. Those who are transgender believe that they are living a different entity inside their biological body. That is why they are convinced that even though they are born male, gender might not be male. As supported by Cameron and Kulick (2003), they define that gender is a social being that lives in a certain type of biological body (either male or female) and has a certain erotic desire (which refers to sexual orientation). Simply put, gender is how someone feels inside and what they do about it. Sociologically, this phenomenon has been interpreted as a negative matter worldwide as they are considered not normative because they do not follow the scripts and norms of society (Lantaffi & Bockting, 2011). Those who are transgender are not treated equally by their society, they tend to be rejected. As Cameron (2005) points out that most transgender is basically burdened by confusion from outside world pressure such as from parents, peers, or neighbors.

As feminism and gender studies have continuously growing, sex and gender are now two completely different insights. Eckert and McConnel (2003) have identified that sex is what people are born with, either male or female. Meanwhile, gender is what people feel about themselves as they progress to grow and how they perform it, either feminine or masculine. Hence, it is possible to have a masculine male, a feminine male, a masculine female, a feminine female, or even androgyny (the combination of both) through the process. Briefly, gender is seen different from sex as transgender is also different from transsexual. The issue of gender concerns mostly with behavior rather than physical so that people can still manage their behavior by doing therapy and medication. This postulates that a transgender is not necessarily to be a transsexual and to have a deviant sexual orientation. It is the mind that is in need to be cured, not the genitals. A transgender admitted that even he has done the sexual reconstruction surgery, the euphoric feeling of being a woman could not last long enough, and it even breeds other psychological issues of the disorder. Below is what Walt Heyer (Laura as the female) testifies about doing the sex-reconstruction medical operation, a man who has lived an eight-year time as a transgender woman:

“Over time, I discovered that life as a woman could not give me peace. To my dismay, I still fluctuated between being Walt and being Laura, sometimes several times in one day. Whatever caused me to want to change my gender identity had not been solved by sex-reassignment surgery or by living as a woman. I kept searching for an answer”.
(Heyer, 2016).

The story of the transgender pioneer, Lili Elbe, in her memoir: *Man into Woman in 1933* is being screened in the movie *The Danish Girl*—which is based on the actual story (Jaya & Prawiradiredja, 2017). There have been several studies on this movie alone as below. First, it is a study by Dessensia (2017). In this study, she aimed at finding out Einar Wegener transsexual phases. The method used was mainly library research which means she employed all literature on characters and characterization as well as literature on gender and sexuality to ground her research result. The data source of her research was *The Danish Girl* novel version—as this biographical true story was originally a novel published in 2000. The results

uncover three facts: first, Einar has the tendency to be feminine; second, Einar feels insecure and uncomfortable as he biologically is and he is also attracted to men; and third, to pursue his identity security, he trans-sexualized his genital organ.

Later, the next study was conducted by Jaya and Prawiradiredja (2017) which sought the ideological value in Einar Wegener's character. They used semiotic analysis that consists of reality, representation, and ideology of before-whilst-after progression of trans-sexuality of Einar Wegener. The results of their study unveil that, initially, in reality regarding the appearance, the before-appearance of Einar was a man with Edwardian style which was used in Denmark in 1920; the whilst-appearance was he started to wear Victorian style dresses; and his after-appearance, the way he dressed was still Victorian, but the color changes into calmer color tones. Later, in the representation regarding the filming technique, before the trans-sexualization, the camera only took the close-up part when Einar wore lady's clothing; whilst the trans-sexualization, the camera took his body curve as it were a woman's body. In this stage, the camera was trying to build the trend of transgeneriness through the story. And after the trans-sexualization, Einar was full of confidence dressing as Lili Elbe and convinced that even though in the male body, he has found his truest self as a woman. Last but not least, it was found that the ideology underlying this movie was liberalism.

Lastly, it is a study by Rohmawati (2017). She studied the conversation of the transgender dialogue preferences of the character Einar Wegener. She used the conversation analysis method in her study. She found that the character of Einar used more dispreferred dialogue, refusals, and unexpected answers. However, the type of dialogue preferences did not alter after he turned himself into Lili.

What appears distinctive in this current research project is that the focus of this study is analyzing the psyche of the transgender character in *The Danish Girl* that has not been analyzed in the prior studies mentioned above. The problem that this study seeks to find the answer for is as formulated below:

- What are the id scenes, ego scenes, and superego scenes of the character Einar Wegener in *The Danish Girl* movie?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Psychology in Literature

Psychology in literature is seen as an interdisciplinary study. It is indeed hard to achieve a consensus between literature and psychology because there is always logic in psychology, an element that is not always found in the literature (Santos, Santos & Silva, 2018). They further add that psychology of literature is mainly studying the psyche of the writer, the creative process, the laws brought in the literary work, and the effects of the literary work on the readers or viewers. This current study is considered as the initial type of psychology in literature study since the story is based on a true event which means that the writer must have reflected all effort to resemble the real character. Psychoanalysis of the Tripartite Model is a type of behavioral analysis introduced by Sigmund Freud in 1923 (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). There are three types of behavior; they are Id, ego, and superego. Id is a source of all psychic energy so that Id is a major component in personality. Id is the only component of personality that is present from birth; the aspect of his personality is aware of and includes instinctive and primitive behavior. Id is driven by the principle of pleasure that seeks to fulfill all desires and needs, if not fulfilled, anxiety and tension will arise. According to Freud, Id tries to resolve the tension created by the principle of pleasure with the main process involving the process of forming the mental image of the desired object as a way to satisfy

needs. For example, when you feel hungry or thirsty, you will immediately fulfill those needs by eating or drinking until the Id is fulfilled.

The second is the Ego. Ego is a component of personality that is responsible for dealing with reality. According to Freud, the ego develops from the id and ensures that the impulse of the id can be expressed in a way that is acceptable in the real world. Ego functions both in the conscious, preconscious and unconscious mind. The ego operates according to a secondary process. In other words, the function of the ego is to filter out the impulses and to balance between expectation and reality. And the last component is the Superego. The superego is a picture of awareness of the values and morals of the people planted by customs, religion, parents, and the environment. Basically, the Superego is a conscience, so the Superego provides guidelines for making judgments, whether right or wrong. Superego is present consciously, preconscious and unconsciously. Id, Ego, and Superego influence each other; the ego together with the superego regulates and directs the fulfillment of id based on the correct rules in society, religion and good or bad behavior (Lapsley & Stey, 2011).

To be more specific, there are more details as in the following. Id is an original personality system; each person's personality only consists of id when born. Id is a place to live instincts. ID is less organized, blind, demanding, and urgent. Like a continuously boiling and turbulent crater, the id cannot tolerate stress, and works to release that tension as soon as possible and to achieve a homeostatic state, governed by the principle of pleasure directed at reducing stress, avoiding pain, and obtaining pleasure, id is not logical, immoral and driven by one interest: satisfying instinctive needs according to the principle of pleasure. Id has never matured and has always been a spoiled child of personality, not thinking, and only wanting or acting. Id is unconscious (Corey, 2009).

Ego (*das ich*) serves to bridge the demands of the id with the reality of the outside world. Ego is the mediator between animal desires and rational and realistic demands. Ego is what causes humans to subjugate their animal desires and live as rational beings. Ego moves based on the principle of reality. Ego (*das ich*) has an element of consciousness, capable of living inwardly or outwardly. *Das ich* displays reason and mind. It is always ready to adjust and control impulses.

Ego has contact with the external world from reality. Ego is the executive of the personality who rules, controls and regulates. As the "traffic police" for the id, superego, and external world, the main task of the ego is to mediate instincts with the surrounding environment. Ego controls awareness and implements sensors. By being governed by the principle of reality, the ego applies realistically (Corey, 2009).

Corey (2009) further narrates that upper ego is a moral or legal branch of personality. The superego is an individual moral code whose main business is whether an action is good or bad, right or wrong. Superego represents the ideal rather than the real thing and encourages not to pleasure, but perfection. Superego represents the traditional values and ideals of a society that are taught by parents to children. Superego functions to inhibit impulses id. Then, as the internalization of the standards of parents and society, the superego is related to rewards and punishments. The rewards are feelings of pride and self-love, while the punishments are feelings of sin and inferiority.

2.2 *The Danish Girl* Movie Summary

The Danish Girl was a biographical movie based on a true story which was originally made out of a novel with the same title. The novel was written by David Ebershoff in 2000. Then, in 2015, the movie version of this novel was released where Tom Hooper was the director. The production companies involved were Working Title, Pretty Pictures, Artemis

Production, Revision Pictures, and Senator Global Production. The character of Einar Wegener was cast by Eddie Redmayne, and Gerda Wegener was played by Alicia Vikander.

The summary is as follows. In the middle of 1920s, an artist Gerda Wegener asked her husband to pose as a model for her portrait. Her husband, Einar Wegener who has an unmask identity of a woman named Lili Elbe, was interested in doing the feminine poses. It was going temporary at first, but as it progresses and more art dealers are interested in Lili's portraits, Einar had to act out as Lili more often. On the other hand, Einar had been struggling with Lili's character through all his life. As Lili continued to exist, Einar could barely escape the temptation. Even he was then interested to have an affair with a man. Einar told this to Gerda, and she brought him to see a doctor who claimed that he was suffered from schizophrenia and he needed to be committed to an asylum. As the plot progress, Gerda could not stand her beloved husband to crave for something he really wanted, so that they both saw Dr. Warnekos who could do trans-genital surgery. There were two operations needed: the male genital omission and the female genital construction. The second one was risky because nobody had survived the process yet. Both Einar and Gerda agreed on the first surgery, and it was successful. As Einer, now Lili, wanted to fully be a woman, he insisted on continuing to the genital construction surgery, which was disagreed by Gerda at first. Because of Lili's insistence, Gerda could not argue and she let Lili went to Germany for the surgery. With very little hope of survival, Lili left for Germany. As it had been happening to other patients, Lili eventually did not survive because of the surgery complications. The scene ends as Lili died in Gerda's cuddling and her scarf was drifting away with the wind.

2.3 The Character of Einar Wegener

Eigner Wegener is Danish man who was once an artist. But after he got married to Gerda, he did not prolong his painting activities. Instead, he assisted Gerda—who was also an artist—to manage with her paintings, exhibitions, and so on. Gerda was considered as an eloquent painter and she had received more and more jobs, as well as being invited for her exhibition to Paris. Once, Gerda felt unmotivated and she lost her creativity. By then, in attempt to remotivate Gerda, Einer put on Gerda's dress, shoes, and make-up; and he posed for Gerda's to be drawn. Even Gerda was happy that her husband was so devotedly helpful. She talked to him as if he was truly Lili and treating him as a woman. Of course, they were only playing with dresses but not for Einar. His emotional feelings were attached to the character that they both made—Lili. He felt higher self-esteem and confidence as Lili. His propensity toward the femininity of Lili grew larger each day until finally he really wanted his genital to be changed. He craved to a woman as a whole, and at the moment he decided the genital surgery, he lost his life.

The character of Einar Wegener himself in portrayed to be submissive—which means he does anything that other people want him to do even though he does not want to. This is considered a feminine nature (Guez & Allen, 2000). Another feminine characteristic of Einar is that he is also inferior. Despite the fame he had once as a painter, he did not crave for it any longer. He did not pursue his painting desires, but he helped Gerda to be famous, instead. And the last feminine factor is that he is emotional. Einar would cry for even simple things and he was too afraid that people would not like him anymore.

3. Research Method

The study employed a descriptive study where the researchers looked for the status of a certain phenomenon. The data in this study are in the forms of motion pictures from which

the Einar Wegener’s character is identified and analyzed based on the psychoanalytic model. In this case, a transgender character in *The Danish Girl* was seen as a phenomenon and a psychological analysis was used to define the true color of the character Einar Wegener. The subject of this research was solely the character Einar Wegener, and the objects were all scenes in the movie that include Einar Wegener. There were two steps done during the data collection process: watching the movie and marking the scenes of Einar. Later, the data were analyzed using the Freud’s psychoanalytic theory including id, ego, and superego states. So, the scenes were categorized into the *Tripartite Model*, then the categorization was reassured, and finally, the conclusions were drawn.

4. Results and Discussion

Below is the result of this study.

Table 1. Scene results

Number of scene	Id scenes	Ego scenes	Superego scenes
	36	7	5
Total	48 scenes		

From the table above, it can be learned that most scenes that are acted out by Einar Wegener are considered as id scenes, which means that changing into a woman was really part of his identity. Below are provided a few examples of such scenes. First, when Einar decided to go, Dresden, because he wanted to do the surgery. In this scene, he really showed that he was interested in the agenda of surgery that could change him completely into a woman. This was what he had always wanted. So he acted based on his primary need instinctively. This is in line with the statement from Frederick, Behanu, and Bartlett (2017) that the motivation lying behind gender reassignment is psychological. Another example is the scene when Lili told Gerda that she wanted to get married. In this scene, she was really dreaming of turning into a woman more than genital reconstruction, but also by having children. As it is supported by Rohmawati (2017) that the nature to caress is the nature of femininity that shows who Lili really was. The other example is when Lili woke up from her second operation. Although she knew she would not survive because of the operation complexity, she finally achieved what she wanted by saying “I am entirely myself”. It is learned that it is her primary identity that she revealed when she stated the sentence.

Later, some examples of ego scenes are also provided below. The first sample is in the scene where Einar and Gerda tried on wigs and high heels. This was considered the ego type because Einar did this because he merely wanted to have fun with Gerda, not to impress her necessity to be dressed as Lili—although it unluckily continues to be real. Ekins and King (2006) outline that when someone is attached to the condition of converting one gender over the other; it involves the dressing practice in identifying his/her identity.

Another example is when Lili worked as a perfume salesperson after she performed her first operation. This activity was seen as a secondary activity because of the fact that she is now a woman, so she needed to find a group of a woman too to work and cooperate. This was done to train her social life as Lili. The last example of ego scene is when Einar was asked to put on the stockings and shoes. He did this because Gerda asked him to do it, not solely on his own willingness to dress-up. So, this performance is considered secondary rather than primary. In addition, Schilt and Connel (2007) state that transmen are interested in the discussion of girl-talk such as appearance, dress, and menstruation, while transwomen are more attracted to talk about sports and cars. This is relatable to Einar who is a transman since he expected to get involved in woman activities and interest.

Finally, the superego scenes are the ones that indicating norms where all people should live appropriately ideal. The example of this scene is when Einar attended the artists' meeting and he talked around like a normal man both in the way he acted and the way he dressed. This was done to achieve the society normative value among the artists. The next example is when Gerda fell apart because she desperately needed her husband back. At that time, Lili decided to turn as Einar back and promised Gerda that he would remain as Einar. This is basically against his will whereas he, at this phase, had appeared as Lili in both the way he behaved, talked, dressed, and all. And last, the superego scene is when Einar was brought to Gerda's art exhibition in Paris but he was asked to dress as Einar instead of Lili. He showed great insecurity at that time. This was also against his willingness to appear as Einar again that leads him to a profound low self-confidence. All of Einar's actions in these scenes are considered to meet the normative pattern of the society so that he can be accepted. Stephen and Jayaseelan (2016) supported that if a transgender is seen in public, people tend to make him/her as an object of ridicule because the way he/she expresses him/herself is considered different and inappropriate.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results shown above, it is concluded that the plot suggests that Einar was naturally born transgender. There are three reasons underpinning this conclusion. First, it is because the scenes that show Einar's identity when he felt completely secure and happy as he dressed up as a woman, had an affair with a man, alter his sexual organs into woman's organ that led him to death. The fact that he sacrificed his life for the gender alteration proves that he really wanted to be who he was—Lili Elbe. Second, the ego scenes—where Einar should be a man as he physically is—are depicted to be uncomfortable for him. It was shown in the scene where he felt clumsy as Einar in Gerda's party, but full of confidence when he appeared as Lili. Finally, the superego scene in which he had to face the society (the doctor) who diagnosed him to be suffered from schizophrenia and he was completely out of his mind and tried to commit suicide because he did not want to accept the fact, yet he could not. The implication that can be stated about the result of this study is that Understanding human behavior is not enough to just reveal aspects of consciousness, but rather the most important thing is to uncover aspects of his unconsciousness. As supported by the psychoanalysis theory, what shown in public is only the superego which is controlled by a person's morality, not by his/her true self.

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