

ANALYSIS OF EINAR'S NEEDS IN *THE DANISH GIRL* FILM USING MASLOW'S THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The research discusses the main character's needs in a movie titled *The Danish Girl*. *The Danish Girl* tells the story of Einar Wegener, a painter who decided to be transgender after he became a woman model for the painting of his wife, Gerda. He became two different people incorporated in a body. First, he was a talented painter and a great husband. Second, he was Lili Elbe, an elegant woman who was the model of Gerda's painting. The research aims to find out how Einar met his needs in life using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. The research applies a qualitative research method and the findings are presented in descriptively. The research finds that Einar Wegener managed to meet his needs for physiological needs, security, love and belonging, and esteem. The findings reveal that Einar Wegener failed to meet the self-actualization need. The researcher finds that Einar Wegener wanted to complete his transformation to be a woman to secure a happier and more comfortable life. When Einar transformed into Lili following, Einar no longer painted and buried Einar's biggest talent as a painter. He merely focused to make a total transformation to be Lili following his decision for surgery. At last, he passed away before fulfilling his need to be a real woman. Therefore, it can be concluded Einar failed to meet his self-actualization need.

Keywords: needs fulfillment, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, *The Danish Girl*

ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini membahas tentang kebutuhan tokoh utama dalam film *The Danish Girl*. *The Danish Girl* menceritakan tentang Einar Wegener, seorang pelukis yang memutuskan untuk menjadi transgender karena pernah menjadi model wanita untuk lukisan istrinya, Gerda. Dia menjadi dua orang yang berbeda dalam satu tubuh. Pertama, dia adalah pelukis berbakat dan suami yang hebat. Kedua, dia adalah Lili Elbe, wanita anggun yang menjadi model lukisan Gerda. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana Einar memenuhi kebutuhan hidupnya menggunakan teori Hirarki Kebutuhan Maslow's. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan temuan-temuannya ditampilkan secara deskriptif. Hasil*

penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Einar Weneger berhasil memenuhi kebutuhan fisiologis, keamanan, cinta dan rasa memiliki, dan harga dirinya. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa Einar Weneger tidak berhasil memenuhi kebutuhan aktualisasi diri. Peneliti menemukan bahwa Einar Weneger ingin menjadi wanita seutuhnya untuk mendapatkan kenyamanan dan kehidupan yang lebih bahagia. Saat Einar menjadi Lili, dia tidak lagi melukis mengubur bakat terbesar Einar sebagai seorang pelukis. Dia hanya fokus untuk berubah total menjadi Lili dengan mengambil keputusan untuk melakukan operasi. Pada akhirnya meninggal sebelum memenuhi kebutuhannya sebagai wanita seutuhnya. Sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa Einar gagal memenuhi kebutuhan aktualisasi diri.

Kata kunci: pemenuhan kebutuhan, hirarki kebutuhan Maslow, *The Danish Girl*

A. BACKGROUND

Literature is a fictional work. It is formed from human expression and imagination which is expressed through words. It is also a reflection of real-life (Robson 4). So, it can be said that literature contains the depiction of human life arranged in such a way into written form. There is the classic form of literature that includes prose, drama, and poetry (Klarer 3). However, over time, literature has expanded its scope to visual works such as film.

Film shares and communicates many elements, similarly, to literature such as the ability to use narrative structures and devices that represent life-replicating actions, images, and words (Boggs and Petrie 41). Humans have to fulfill all their needs in order to survive and establish relationships with others. Needs are specifically defined as “nutrients that are essential for growth, integrity, and well-being” (Ryan and Deci 10). The word ‘nutrient’ emphasizes that if a need is not fulfilled, a person will experience deficiencies or problems in his life. Needs are divided into physical and psychological. Physical needs are related to food, oxygen, and water. Meanwhile, psychological needs are related to a feeling of belonging or a feeling of security. Some experts discuss human needs in life; one of them is Abraham H. Maslow. In his theory, he classified needs into five levels that form the pyramid (Maslow 35). This theory is also known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Basically, Maslow's theory is used to analyze humans in real life. However, characters in literature have complexities that represent real-life human beings (Wellek and Warren 88). In other words, characters also have motivation, needs, behavior, thoughts, and feelings like humans. Thus, Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be applied to study a character in a film. The film that the researcher chooses is *The Danish Girl*.

The Danish Girl is a film based on the true story of a couple of painters from Denmark. Previously, this story has also been written by David Ebershoff in the novel with a similar title. This film tells the story of Einar

Wegener, a painter, who decides to become a transgender woman because he has been a model for the painting of his wife, Gerda. He becomes two different people in one body. First, he is a talented painter and a great husband. Second, he is Lili Elbe, an elegant woman who becomes a painting model for Gerda.

Einar changes in physical and psychological causes the researcher is interested to choose this film as an object of research. The researcher feels challenged to find out how Einar can fulfill all the needs in his life using Maslow's theory. Therefore, the researcher plans to conduct a research entitled "Analysis of Einar's needs in *The Danish Girl* film using Maslow's theory".

The researcher only focuses on analyzing Einar's character; finds out his characterization, and how he manages to fulfill needs in his life. Other things beyond what the researcher mentions before are not discussed in this study. The main theory that the researcher used is Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

B. RELATED TO LITERATURE

1. Film

According to Boggs and Petrie, Film is recognized as a unique and powerful art form on a par with painting, sculpture, music, literature, and drama.

Boggs and Petrie also mentioned that film is similar to drama, where film is able to communicate by visually (through actions and gestures) and by verbally (through dialogue). Not only drama, film is also similar to novel, where it can be expanded or compress time and space, traveling freely back and forth within its wide limits.

Thus, it can be said that film is an incarnation of literature into an entertaining art, which means film is able to represent anything that people can imagine or perceive.

2. Character and Characterization

Characters are people who have moral qualities, psychological qualities, name, and physical form like humans (Abrams 20). Characters are the life of literature. They are the objects of the viewer's curiosity and fascination, affection and dislike, admiration and condemnation (Bennett and Royle 63). Therefore, literary characters often cease to be objects. As well as this study, the researcher chooses to analyze a character from a film.

According to Boggs and Petrie, there are three types of pairs of characters: stock characters and stereotypes, static versus dynamic characters, and flat versus round characters (55-58).

The characters must be real, easy to understand, and worthy of attention in order to be attractive to the audience. Thus, an author must be able to describe these characters very well. This depiction of characters is called characterization. Characterization is the process of developing a character in a film (Barsam and Monahan 536). And for

the characterization, Boggs and Petrie mentioned that there are eight ways of characterization they are: Characterization through appearance, dialogue, external action, internal action, reactions of other characters, through contrast or dramatic foils, caricature and leitmotif, and the last one is characterization through choice of name.

3. Hierarchy of Needs by Maslow

People have biological, psychological, and social aspects that give rise to various needs. Everyone's needs vary from basic physiological needs to social and psychological needs. Maslow stated that, each individual will look for other needs after the previous needs have been successfully achieved or met. He believes that, an individual has the motivation for every action that has been taken. Abraham Maslow later created the "Hierarchy of Needs" to put the needs in a particular order.

The Hierarchy of Needs Maslow consists of five stages that can include physiological need, safety need, love and belonging need, esteem need, and self-actualization need. As you can see, here is the pyramid of hierarchy of needs by Maslow. The needs, is start from the lower one than continue to the next step above, until reach the highest needs that is self-actualization need.

a. Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are the most basic needs of a person. It is the first level that motivates the individual to fulfill his needs. Examples of these needs are oxygen, food, drink, shelter, and clothing. In addition, physiological needs include sexual desire, sleep, caress, smell, or taste. Maslow stated that, these needs are mandatory because if they are not fulfilled to a certain extent, then other needs will not arise.

b. Safety Needs

Safety needs are the need to be free from anxiety so a person will be motivated to feel safe and peaceful. This need can be fulfilled by families and communities for examples police and medical expert. According to Maslow, examples of this need are emotional security, financial security, freedom from fear, social stability, and also health

c. Love and Belonging Needs

When physiological needs and safety needs are fulfilled, the need for love, commitment, and belonging arise. Maslow stressed that humans have an innate need for affection and love that can only be fulfilled by others. Maslow mentioned several examples of this needs, they are to make friends, to be with families, to show love to people around individual and to expect love from them.

d. Esteem Needs

In this level of need gratification, people want to be appreciated by those with whom they relate and also by themselves. These needs lead to feelings of worth, confidence, values, strengths, abilities, and being useful. Maslow classified the need for self-esteem into two categories. The first one is the need to be valued and respected by others which are linked to one's reputation, such as status, recognition, appreciation, or respect from others for examples status and prestige. The second one is the need for one's self-esteem, such as self-confidence, independence, success, talent, dignity, and achievement.

e. Self-Actualization Needs

Self-actualization needs are the highest level in the hierarchy. Maslow describes this level as the desire to achieve everything that one can, to be the best he can. For example, a musician must make music, an artist must paint, and a poet must write in order to be at peace with him.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Design

Qualitative research is a series of interpretive techniques that attempt to describe, decode, translate, and interpret certain phenomena that occur naturally in the social world (Maanen cited in Merriam 13). From these definitions, it can be said that qualitative research focuses on the description or interpretation of the phenomena occurring in individual and social life.

2. Data and Data Source

Data from qualitative research must be in the form of quotes from documents (Merriam 16). It is the reason why the data in this research were in the form of sentences or descriptions. Data in this study are Einar's utterances, characterization, and action that show how he fulfills his needs. This data were obtained by the researcher from the data source, namely *The Danish Girl*.

3. Research Instrument

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is its instrument. According to Bogdan and Biklen, the researcher in qualitative research is a key instrument (27). Thus, the researcher goes directly to gather, categorize, and interpret the data in this research. The researcher should be able to broaden her understanding and clarify the data to produce an accurate interpretation of her study.

4. Data Collection

Denscombe said that qualitative data need to be prepared and organized before they are analyzed (274). In other

words, the researcher collected the data first. Dey said that collecting data always involve the selection of data, and it will affect what is ultimately the 'data' for the objective of the study (cited in Merriam 86). There were several processes of collecting the data in this study as follows.

1. Watching the *Danish Girl* film to find indicators that point to the theory;
2. Paying attention to the main character, to find out how Einar can fulfill all the needs in his life;
3. Highlighting the estimated data from the script and writing some of the required data as evidence;
4. Repeating the above process several times to find all data.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of understanding data. Analysis of data becomes a process for answering research questions (Merriam 176). There are the step-by-step processes of analysis mentioned by Merriam (178-193).

1. **Category Construction**
At this step, the researcher reads the collected data again. While reading, the researcher writes notes, gives comments, and seems to ask for the data. At the same time, the researcher categorizes the data into groups in this study. To categorize data into one group, the researcher must find the indicators or keywords in the data. It is done so that the data is entered in the right group.
2. **Sorting Categories and Data**
After the researcher feels quite satisfied with the set of initial data, the categories are refined and made more powerful. The researcher checks the data again for better data. In this step, the data set in the category may be revised and reduced. In other words, the researcher looked more closely at the data in groups at this stage.
3. **Becoming More Theoretical**
The data require further analysis after the formation of a category. Here, the researcher plays an important role in explaining phenomena and understanding more things related to these phenomena. In this step, the researcher is asked to speculate how the categories might relate to one another.
4. **Drawing Conclusion**
After all the steps have been carried out, the researcher must make relevant conclusions where the conclusions contain the answers to the research questions made.

D. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

a. The Fulfillment of Einar's Needs

1. Physiological Need

The physiological need is related to the fulfillment of hunger, thirst, shelter, clothing, and even sexual desire (Maslow 35). This need is the most basic and important because it has an impact on a person's growth, health, and integrity (Ryan and Deci 98). When this need is not satisfied, it will be very urgent. Even people do not need anything else until their physiological needs are fulfilled.

GERDA: Do you know what time it is?

EINAR: [He smiles, sweetly suggestive of pleasure to come] Time you came back to bed?

GERDA: No. I'm ready to start work. (Coxon 3, 00:03:01-00:03:07).

From Gerda words, it is discovered that she is warning Einar about the time. He should have woken up because it is morning. Besides that, Gerda has already prepared breakfast for him. Here, Einar is stated to be able to meet his physical needs, namely the need to eat and sleep.

2. Safety Needs

The safety need is related to the fulfillment of emotional security, financial security, and freedom from fear, social stability, and also health (Maslow 39-41).). This need exists to maintain the existing situation and to prepare for future needs. In *The Danish Girl* film, Einar also fulfills his need for safety. It is proven by some of his actions that lead to emotional security and financial security, as in the following data.

EINAR: How was it?

GERDA: Fine.

EINAR: I finally mixed the right colour for the snow.

GERDA: [Gerda glances at the canvas, hostile.] Another view of Vejle. I don't know how you can paint the same thing over and over.

EINAR: I suppose I just haven't finished with it yet. (Coxon, 8-9 00:09:06-00:09:21)

The conversation above happens when Einar is finishing his painting and Gerda has just arrived home. Einar tells Gerda about his efforts to get the color of snow have been successful. Then, Gerda comments how Einar painted Vejle's landscapes over and over again. Einar replies that he just wants to finish the painting. In fact, Einar always repeats his paintings because he is not satisfied with the results. Einar wants to produce a real painting the same as the original. Therefore, he feels very satisfied when he manages to get the snow color that matches his expectations. Here, Einar fulfills his need for emotional security.

Basically, Einar just wants to present his best work to maintain his existence as a painter. He works totality and earnestly because he makes the painting as a source of livelihood. If he produces a good painting, he will earn money to guarantee his family's life. In other words, Einar's totality in work is a form of fulfilling his need for financial stability as well.

3. Love and Belonging Need

The love and belonging need are related to the fulfillment of living together with others to receive and give affection and love (Maslow 43). This need can only be fulfilled by others, such as family, close friends, or people in groups that have similar interests.

EINAR: Gerda...

GERDA: What? [She takes him in, smiling up at her. Shakes her head.] Your face... You think I can't resist you...

EINAR: Do you want to resist me?

GERDA: No. But I'd like you to ask nicely so I don't feel such a pushover...

EINAR: [Einar reaches towards her.] Gerda Wegener - my life, my wife...

[He pulls her into bed... A skittish piano comes up as they laugh, begin to make love.](Coxon,4 00:03:11-00:03:47)

From the data above, it can be said that they both have a feeling of love for each other. In the conversation, Einar tries to seduce his wife romantically by saying "my life my wife". Indirectly, this statement can represent how much Gerda means to him. Finally, by those words, Einar success in seducing Gerda, and then they make love.

Thus, that data proves that Einar has fulfilled his love and belonging need through a marriage. He receives and gives affection and love to his wife, Gerda. After this need is fulfilled, Einar will try to fulfill his other needs, namely esteem need.

4. Esteem Need

Esteem need is related to the fulfillment to be valued by people as well as by him. People who meet these needs will feel worth, confident, strengths, abilities, and useful. If these needs are not met, he will feel inferior, pessimistic, weak, worthless, and despair of accepting real life.

In the film, Einar fulfills his need for self-esteem by producing work. He is a painter known for his landscape paintings of Veijle, his hometown. From his beautiful paintings, he receives praise from many people. Einar even manages to hold an exhibition of his works.

OLDER WOMAN: *Don't you wish you could paint like that?*

GERDA: *I'm sorry...?*

OLDER WOMAN: *I said, don't you wish you could paint like your husband? Really - you must be so proud of him... (Coxon, 1 00:01:37-00:01:46)*

The conversation above takes place at Einar's painting exhibition. Gerda, who is looking at her husband painting, is suddenly greeted by a female visitor. The woman asks “does Gerda not want to paint like her husband” and she also says that Gerda must be very proud of Einar. From this woman's words, she conveys her praise for Einar by comparing his abilities with Gerda. In other words, Einar has successfully fulfilled his esteem needs by becoming a painter. He shows that he has talent so that others people appreciate him.

E. CONCLUSION

In *The Danish Girl* film, Einar has two different personalities. First, he is Einar Wegener, a husband, and a painter. The second is Lili Elbe, a woman trapped in a man's body. Based on research findings, it was found that Einar can fulfill four kinds of needs such as physiological need, safety need, love and belonging need, and esteem need. He does not succeed in fulfilling his self-actualization need, but he has motivation to fulfill it. In the film, Einar did not accept himself as a man. He assumed that all this time he had been living in the wrong body. In this case, Einar denied his nature who born as a man. He wanted to change himself into a woman named Lili. The fact shows that Einar even turned into a worse state than before, like burying his talent in painting. He was also no longer a painter even though he was very talented. Einar complained about his life. He did not feel enough with what he has, including the sincere love that Gerda gave to him. He still followed his ego to become Lili. Einar also had to sacrifice his marriage to Gerda. Thus, it can be said that Einar failed to fulfill his need for self-actualization. He even died before being able to fulfill all his needs as a real woman.

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