

THE SEARCH FOR SELF-IDENTITY IN EBERSHOFF'S THE DANISH GIRL

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Abstract: Humans typically are born as either men or females, with their own body parts and reproductive organs. But there are some cases where people experience confusion or uncertainty about their gender identity. This research categorized as qualitative research. The Psychoanalysis by Freud based on the three fundamental components: the id, ego, and superego is used to analyzed the data. It is revealed that as he searches for his true identity in a way that he tries to behave as a woman, has an attraction to men that should be done by women, wears women's clothes, and finally performs sex reassignment surgery to become a woman. Although he decided to change his identity as a woman, his wife Gerda still accepted, cared for and helped him at that time. Einar was happy with his new life, despite many obstacles and eventually died after undergoing surgery during his self-discovery process.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, Search, Self-identity, The Danish Girl.*

INTRODUCTION

Having a self-identity is seen to be essential for us as humans. Through it, we will ultimately "understand" who we truly are and be able to choose and pursue our life's mission. In addition, if we already had a sense of who we are, we wouldn't be lost in how to function in society (Maru, 2014); (Maru, 2018). Given the potential scenarios, the concept of the search for self-identity is a crucial one. According to Kartono and Gulo (in Purwanti 2013), self-identity is the principle of unity that distinguishes one person from others. The individual must decide who he really is and what his role in life will be. In addition to knowledge and self-sustainability, self-identity includes acceptance of one's commitments, orientations, and life objectives so that one is able to act in accordance with one's own needs and social expectations.

Humans typically are born as either men or females, with their body parts and reproductive organs. But there are some cases where people experience confusion or uncertainty about their gender identity. This is similar to the character of Einar Wegener in Ebershoff's novel, *The Danish Girl*. Einar, who later identifies as Lili, feels uncomfortable with his male body and wants to undergo surgery to become a woman. The novel is about discovering Einar/Lili tries to find his gender identity. "The Danish Girl" written by David Ebershoff, is a story of self-discovery and identity. In this study, the researcher chose and analyzed, the search for self-identity in "The Danish Girl" one of David Ebershoff's work.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research was an analysis about The Search for Self-identity in David Ebershoff's *The Danish Girl* and this categorized as qualitative research, because this research does not deal with numbers, diagrams or formulas but it deals with words and motion pictures. Qualitative research according Bogdan and Bicklen (1992) state that "Qualitative research is descriptive research. The data are collected in the form or word or picture rather than numbers. The written result of the research contains quotation from data to illustrate and substantive the presentation" (Adyqsha, Moge, Sabudu, 2022).

Data Collection

The Bogdan and Bicklen theory claims that in conducting qualitative research The researcher in constructing this research would have had kinds of source, primary and secondary source. The primary source in this research is a novel named *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff. And for the secondary source by journals, articles, books and internet browsing. Some of the work procedures in this research include:

1. This novel got from buying the novel in the online marketplace. Also, searching the books, journals, and articles related to this study found by internet browsing.

2. Analyzed by watching and reading thoroughly and repeatedly the novel.
3. Choosing the significant things as well as terms stated in the novel, those are to support the researcher assumption and argumentation.
4. Adopting some theories, statements or quotations from the data.
5. Following data collection, the researcher begins data analysis using the literary approach used in this study. Furthermore, it is the time to write here to analyze the data and describe what the researcher finds.

Data Source

Data are information or facts that discussed or used to figuring out research question answers. According to Griffith There are two types of evidence that are relevant for literary analysis: primary sources are the literary works themselves, and secondary sources include facts and opinions that are not related to the original work (Runtu, M., Moge, T., Lolowang, 2022).

The main source of data in this study is the literary work itself, a novel written by David Ebershoff named *The Danish Girl*, and other sources by searching the books, journals, and articles related to this study found by internet browsing.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data the writer used a psychoanalysis approach from Sigmund Freud who states that each individual's personality is made of three parts: The Ego, The Superego and the Id. Together, these three contribute to the complexity of the human personality. Literary critics frequently analyze the actions of literary characters in a literary work, they stress on the ways in which these parts based the behaviors of the characters and subsequently affect the work as a whole. Psychoanalysis applies what humans know about these three aspects of a person's personality to understand how a person behaves. This process is psychoanalytic criticism. In this investigation, psychoanalysis will be used to apply what people already know about the three parts of Einar Wegner's personality and discover the

ways in which he behaves based on the three fundamental components: the id, ego, and superego by Freud (Freud, 1996).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Behaving Like a Woman

In Einar's youth was his friend name Hans. Hans was always concentrating on everything Einar did as they played together. Additionally, Einar was seen by Hans as a young woman who required protection. When they were flying kites, Hans asked Einar to stay in a dark place so he could avoid the sunlight. (Ebershoff, 2000). It's clear that Hans thought of Einar as a woman who needed to be protected from the sun, and Einar agreed without hesitation, confirming Hans's interpretation of Einar as a woman.

Later, as Einar played the role of the wife and Hans played the role of the husband waiting for a meal, In the kitchen, Hans asked to play. Hans takes off the grandma's apron and hands it to Einar. (Ebershoff, 2000).

Hans' treatment towards her indirectly had an impact on Einar's gender. Even so, Einar seemed happy after that.

Hans quietly said, "Light a fire. Boil some water. Drop in a few stone potatoes and mutton joint," "Einar, let's pretend" (Ebershoff, 2000). When Hans puts Einar's grandmother's apron on and whispers to him while they play in the kitchen, "You never played this game?" With his voice hot on Einar's ear, Hans muttered and take the apron closer to him. When Einar's father sees that scene, he gets furious and kicks Hans out of the place. (Ebershoff, 2000)

The utter "pretend" means Einar would pose as a wife when he was making meals for the husband. By playing the part of a woman who is adored by a man, Einar demonstrated his agreement and desire to play a more submissive position in the relationship while also demonstrating his attraction to femininity.

According to the passage above, The Superego represents the moral and ethical component of one's psyche, incorporating societal norms, values, and a sense of right and wrong. In the passage, Einar's immediate compliance with Hans's request to behave like a woman, his willingness to play along with the role-playing game, also his attraction to femininity and Einar's father's reaction, getting angry and ejecting Hans from the scene, further underscores the societal norms and moral standards imposed on Einar. This can be seen as the Superego acting to enforce these norms. This part of the analysis aligns with Freud's concept of the id, which operates based on instinctual desires and needs.

Attracted to Men

Talking about masculinity and male gender cannot be separated. The root cause is that Einar lacks manly characteristics. Female controls the dominant part. It indicates that Einar is a man who has an attraction to act femininely. However, when Greta asked him to be her model, his feminine side became very obvious. Just before that, there were just a few times of his male side.

Growing up, Einar lived with his father and grandmother in the same house. The dog would groan and sigh. Einar would do the same. He did this because he knew how much his father loved Edvard, and Einar wanted his father to love him just the same (Ebershoff, 2000).

Because of how much his father loved his dog, Einar realized he was immensely envious of him. Einar believed that his father loved their dog. He had deep feelings for his father, but he still liked him.

During the day Einar would sneak into his father's room while he was asleep. Reaching to touch his father's golden hair curls. Even more lovely was his hair because of his illness. Einar found his father beautiful (Ebershoff, 2000).

This could be proof that Einar's first love was his father. Since it's common knowledge that a son's mother is his first love, this situation looks a little out of the

ordinary. It appears that Einar had a strong sexual preference for men. Additionally, it shows that something unrelated to the topic, such as the environment, rather than sex, is what determines gender. Einar thought his father had disclosed his sexual inclinations. The fact that he was attracted to his father sexually encouraged the development of femininity in his body. But Einar was still a small child, and as he got older, things would get worse.

After analyzing Einar's Childhood Years, the author discovers that Einar has a sexual attraction to men, which causes another internal conflict. Because Einar believes he is a woman, the effect of clothing like one affects his sexual attraction. The author uses a number of arguments to support his analysis that Einar has an attraction towards men. First off, when they were younger, Hans was a buddy of Einar, also a frequent playmate. Young Einar is moved by Hans's treatment of him, treating him like a precious little princess who should be treasured. For Einar, it appears simple but is priceless.

Hans was using a reed to tickle Einar's tummy. His face was so near Hans's that he could feel Hans's breath through the grass. At that time, Einar desired to lie so close to Hans that their knees would touch, and Hans looked open to everything. (Ebershoff, 2000).

Hans has the ability to create a comfortable environment for young Einar, allowing him to feel at ease in his presence. The vivid memory of Hans treating Einar with special care and the desire for physical closeness offer a glimpse into Einar's deeper feelings. This unspoken connection, veiled in innocence and admiration, sets the stage for a more profound understanding of Einar's intricate journey of attraction to male.

Next, when Einar starts to realize that he was a woman, the desire for men becomes more obvious. It also serves as the climactic moment because Einar is powerless to transfer his emotions to other guys. After the ballroom celebrations, when Einar expresses himself by wearing women's clothing and assumes the identity of Lili, Henrik Sandhal is a man that Einar meets in the ballroom, and he immediately

starts staring at Lili as soon as she walks into the room. Moreover, when Lili looks at Henrik, she thinks she sees her father. Lili can't fool herself into thinking the guy is interested in her. Henrik and Lili engage in a conversation to get to know each other better. In the middle of their talk, Henrik shows his interest in Lili by requesting to kiss her.

Henrik landed a kiss on Lili, his lips flat and purple, cracked just down the center. They withdrew as his mouth met hers and his head swooped in. He did again, and again. The man's kiss startled her the most because of the way his whiskers were scratched and how hot and heavy his arm was. His tongue's tip was perfectly smooth, as though a scald had removed the rough edges. Lili tried to push him away, but she was unable to accomplish this, and it appeared abruptly unachievable. She felt as though her fingers would never be able to remove Henrik, whose curly hair was wrapping around her throat like a rope. (Ebershoff, 2000).

According to the evidence, Lili cannot quit enjoying Henrik's kiss. He was Lili at the time, and Einar was scared that he was being covered by a gown as Lili. She was worried if Henrik knows, and reject her. But, that's not make Lili did not stop to meet Henrik. Lili desires to be loved by Henrik as a woman in her heart. But, Seeing that Greta requests that she no longer see Henrik, but Einar as Lili declines it.

"I don't want to stop seeing him," "Then please, stop seeing him for me." Lili said she would try, but she knew it would never work. Standing before Einar's empty easel in the front room, she knew she was lying to Greta. Lili, though, was powerless to resist. She was unable to stop herself. (Ebershoff, 2000).

According to that interactions, Einar likes Henrik even though they frequently meet in secret. When Einar discovered something new, he was always pleased to run across Henrik. They always kiss one other to show their love when they meet. This activity make obvious seen that Einar sexual attraction to man.

The Ego in this analysis may be seen plays a central role in mediating Einar's evolving understanding of his identity, gender, and sexuality in the context of the challenges he faces. It helps him navigate the conflicts between his inner desires and societal expectations

Wearing Women's Dress

After growing up, Einar grew and became what we can see as a successful painter. In addition, we know that he married Greta. Greta was less well-known than Einar, despite the fact that they were a couple. They are all painters. Because the seller constantly complimented Einar's works of art, Greta's artworks had to be exhibited in the same exhibition as Einar's. Einar directed Ramussen, the craftsman dealer, to evaluate his suggestion. Ramussen agreed that Greta's paintings were on exhibit for about 14 days (Ebershoff, 2000); (Maru et al., 2022); (Maru et al., 2023). Recognizing Greta's struggle to find a suitable art dealer for her creations, Einar was determined to assist her in finding satisfaction with her masterpiece.

While Einar played a significant role in advancing his wife's career, his actions reflected a humble nature and a sense of self-doubt, despite his own fame and recognition. In some circumstances, Greta requested Einar to act as her model because she could not find an alternative. The matter was that Greta's model was a female. Greta asked Einar to adopt the role of a female model in this situation. To appear like a real woman, Einar had to dress like a female model. The moment Einar Wegener's wife requests to wear Anna's dress and shoes, odd things begin to occur, which causes Einar to become confused. Einar start to feel at ease, she even names his female character Lili. Lili was Einar at the moment, and Einar was Lili.

“Then just slip it on for a few minutes.” Greta brought it to Einar and held it to his chest. “Greta,” he said, “what if I-” “Just take off your shirt,” she said. And he did. “What if I-” “Just close your eyes,” she said. And he did (Ebershoff, 2000).

That paragraph seems to indicate that Einar granted Greta's request to behave more like a woman. Einar initially didn't appear to want to dress as a lady, but he eventually did. Einar appeared to be devoid of the ability to refuse his wife's plea, rendering him seemingly powerless in the face of her request. Once more, this situation highlights Einar's submissive or passive nature. Even though he was a guy, he was powerless to turn down a woman, especially his wife. However, this perplexing moment reveals to us his woman gender, which was previously concealed by Einar's physique. And lastly, Einar is a part of Lili. After this, Einar began to feel odd about himself. He believed that the clothes he wore dressing like Lili made him who he was. There was a change in Einar. At times, Einar even wore clothing similar to Lili's. The outfit prompts Einar to recall a young girl he has been saving in his thoughts for a very long time. When Einar first sees the dress, he remembers that he has always loved it and has wondered if it could possibly belong to him. Since that time, Lili has been on Einar's mind constantly. He feels that Lili is a part of his life and that she should be known by others. The more Lili he dressed up as, the more frail Einar became. Additionally, Einar put himself in a comfortable position by looking like a lady, not only for a split second, but always.

As mentioned earlier, Greta found Lili instead of Einar when she woke up in the morning. Lili had previously dozed off with Greta; the two of them shared breakfast in women's silk pajamas decorated with cranes and went stocking shopping together. Dr. Hexler, was the medical professional Einar could speak with. Dr. Hexler was frequently told about Einar's other personality traits.

"Where do you go to find her? Dr. Hexler asked. "Inside me." Einar said.

"And is she always there?" "Yes" (Ebershoff, 2000)

This exchange with Einar above clarifies why Lili had always lived with him. Due to his dream about Lili, Einar began to think that he was actually male and female, Lili and Einar, inside of him. The aforementioned causes led to his transgender surgery.

After noticing that Einar looks well in women's clothing, he becomes more motivated to alter his gender. Gender, as stated previously, is a construct. Gender concerns our actions. Throughout his life, Einar maintained his internal gender as a woman despite inhabiting a human body. When Einar put on feminine clothing, he realized that he was now a woman. Even though he is still reserved, Einar is delighted to dress as a woman because it is the first time he has done so in public. Later, Einar develops a yearning to dress like a woman since he is aware that by doing so, he can make Lili appear inside of him. In addition, Einar discovers that dressing as a woman gives him more self-assurance. He chooses to dress like a lady when Greta's twin visits them because he finds great fulfillment in it.

“He’ll be here within the hour,” Greta said. Her brown wool outfit hugged her figure in a charming way. “Are you going to stay dressed as Lili?” She asked. “I thought I might.” “But I don’t think he should meet Lili right away. Not first. Not before Einar.” (Ebershoff, 2000)

In addition to the passage above, Hans' visit to Einar and Greta serves as further evidence that Einar lacks confidence when dressing as a man. Years have passed and Einar and Hans they rarely see each other. Because he isn't ready to see Hans just yet and because he feels more comfortable dressed as a woman both inside and outside of the house, Einar believes that he should dress as Lili. He will put on a nightgown for himself.

The author also finds that Einar feels more at ease when wearing a woman's clothing. Einar is smart enough to pick his own attire to make him appear good. Einar notices that the more he dresses like a lady, the more Lili's shadow appears in his mind. The more Lili's shadow crosses his imagination, the more he attempts to dress as a lady.

He then began to act, behave, and even like men. It is based on the premise that a man's behavior, not his gender, determines whether or not he is a man. Not being but becoming is gender. When Einar changed into Lili, a man became a woman. Gender is reversible. Gender is revocable. Women and men can both be the other.

The gender is unclear. Gender is not fixed and unchangeable. A body may bring any gender since it can act any gender.

In Einar's case, dressing like a woman helps in her acquisition of a physically and sexually feminine personality. But Einar's meeting with Dr. Hexler also supports the theory that Einar genuinely wanted to replace Lili. Einar began to feel confident that he should trust his gut. Einar was fully aware that Lili represented his other half. His fantasies regarding female parts also become his will. In any case, Greta was the only one who acknowledged Lili's existence. Greta freed Einar so he may choose his Lili. She encouraged her spouse to date women.

“No. It’s just that I sometimes don’t know what’s going on with me.”

“But that’s not true,” she said. “We know exactly what’s going on with you. Inside of you live Lili. In your soul is a pretty young lady named Lili. It’s as simple as that. It has nothing to do with being crazy”
(Ebershoff, 2000)

Greta's certainty that Lili was inside of Einar was made clear by the exchange. However, Einar felt under some pressure as a result of Greta's encouragement. We can picture Einar's emotions. His wife encouraged him to identify as a woman. Although it was acceptable, Greta still did it. For Einar, it results in depression. Einar was perplexed. The misunderstanding affected his sexual drive in addition to the woman-like image that resided in his body. It was believed that Einar was a male. He was aware of his tendency to identify as a woman. At that point, Lili from Einar's fantasy world was brought by his pandemonium. It should be manly rather than feminine if he is a man. It causes Einar to become disorganized and downhearted about himself. He changed as a result of his condition and circumstances. He thought he wasn't a real lady, but he also thought he wasn't a true man. It suggests that he was only a partner since, despite playing both Einar and Lili, he was unable to fulfil Greta's female sex desires. Lili was the woman Einar believed to exist. It started when Einar agreed to be the subject of his wife's artwork. He first aspired to be a woman, then he began to dress like one.

Einar's journey of recognizing and embracing his true gender identity and transitioning to become Lili with using woman's clothes can be linked to the ego in Freud's theory.

Experimenting with Gender Reassignment

Transsexuals must go through a lengthy procedure before they may support and choose their own identity. Einar is also experiencing this, and he was bold enough to decide to become a woman after going through many experiences. Knowing that Einar has begun to admire a man and appears to like it, his uncertainty about himself grows every day. Greta's paintings start to get the attention of the French, so Einar and Greta decide to start again in Paris. Before departing for Paris, Einar and Greta seek medical attention for strange bleeding (occurring once a month and caused by a hormone change).

“You’re not really concerned about the bleeding?” Greta asked Dr. Hexler. “Not in the least?” “Not as much as I am about his delusion that he is a woman. Even X-ray can’t cure that. Would you like me to talk to Einar? I can tell him that he’s injuring himself.” “But is he really?” “Yes, of course.”(Ebershoff, 2000)

Einar is corrected in his belief that he is a woman by Dr. Hexler.. Greta is informed by Dr. Hexler that a man like Einar cannot be accepted in Copenhagen (Denmark). Greta considers relocating to Paris in an effort to improve Einar's mood. On top of that, Greta's painting of Lili captures French's fancy.

Einar is so frustrated with himself after relocating to Paris. Furthermore, Lili should be alive according to Einar, not him. In addition, he visits the library to read books on gender development, the sexes, sexual immorality, and normal and abnormal males. These books can help Einar identify his gender and make decisions on Lili's existence. False impression that she is a female.

After finishing this book, Einar is certain that he should do whatever is required to grant his wishes. Realizing that Lili is actually half of him, Einar. His fantasies also

reflect his longing for feminine organs. However, Greta is the one that supports and believes in Lili. Greta allows Einar the freedom to choose who he wants to be.

“No. It just that sometimes I don’t know what’s going on with me.”

“But that’s not true,” she said. “We know exactly what’s going on with you. Inside of you lives Lili. In your soul is a pretty young lady named Lili. It’s as simple as that. It has nothing to do with being crazy.”(Ebershoff, 2000)

Greta shows that she believes Lili exists, and this changes Einar's opinion of Lili. Because Einar thinks his own wife is standing by him, he frequently questions whether he is a man or a woman. It implies that when a person displays themselves as a lady, they should act in a feminine manner. In the instance of Einar, his perplexity is brought on by the fact that, despite the fact that he identifies as a dominantly feminine gender, his sex is a male.

Facing Einar's confusion about his identity is equally difficult. He frequently attempts to act like a man and forget about Lili, but he is unable to keep Lili hidden when he wakes up in the morning.

“After a restless night, Einar woke up. He told himself every day that he would live the day as Einar, but when he walked to the wardrobe to get dressed, it was like finding treasures hidden in the attic belonging to an ancestor.” (Ebershoff, 2000)

It demonstrates Einar's valiant attempts to uphold the manhood, but Lili's shadow followed him. Every day, his desire to be with Lili grows until he gives himself a year to make up his mind.

He also became a different person as a result of the uncertainty. It indicates that, while he is technically Greta's husband, he is unable to fulfill Greta's sexual needs and does not play the role of a husband

Then, Einar desires to change his genital into a female. Before undergoing transition surgery, Einar makes an effort to hide his penis by making it appear to be a vagina.

“...And when Einar closed his eyes so felt himself slipping down his soul’s tube, he pulled his “man vital area” back and taped it in the empty space just under his groin. (Ebershoff, 2000)”

According to the statement, Einar wants to have his “man vital area” vanish so he can dress appropriately. When Einar complains about having a “man vital area”, it is evident that his obsession with being a woman is there. From such a statement, the researcher infers that a transsexual aspires to behave and look like a member of the other sex. Einar participates in activities as a person of the opposing sex prior to deciding to get transition surgery. His work here is related to the acts that Einar did, such kissing a man and dressing like a woman. That long explanation implies that the opposite sex behavior is what a transgender does. Einar begins to become more confident about his desires he wants Lili and Einar to disappear. Once Einar has made up his mind, he confides in Dr. Bolk as his doctor. Transsexuals put their faith and future in the hands of medical professionals, particularly surgeons. This is where Einar meets Dr. Bolk to accomplish his wish. Professor Bolk recommends that he take a week off and unwind. A week later, Bolk comes into his room to tell him about the process.

Lili is still alive, and Einar has disappeared at this moment. Greta admitted as much throughout the session, saying that Einar had always been Lili. It suggests that Greta has known for a long time that her husband is really two people. Something exceptional is found by Professor Bolk, the physician who is able to understand Lili's desires. He inform that Einar has ovaries to Greta.

"I found something in his stomach, twisted in his intestine. He told Dr. Bolk." I found a couple of ovaries. For example, it is underdeveloped. Of course, it's tiny. Yet there they were." (Ebershoff, 2000)

It makes Dr. Bolk think Lili can have her uterus transplanted so Einar can become a lady. It is really unusual to hear that a man can fulfill all of the desires of a woman in general. From some of the aforementioned data, Einar appears to be envious of having a vagina or womb. Before considering modifying his genitalia, he tried to

conceal his "man vital area". After learning that Einar has two ovaries positioned beneath her genitalia, Dr. Bolk is more comfortable doing the surgeries. His gender-related problems have an impact on his mental health. He experienced confusion, depression, and frustration. Finally, he made the decision to have sexual surgery and become into Lili. He passed away after his transgender operation went wrong. He had to take a risk, but he was bold enough to be open about his gender. Additionally, he clarified that gender is a construct that can be altered.

The Id represents the primitive and instinctual part of one's psyche, primarily concerned with the gratification of desires and needs, often operating on a subconscious level. The struggle Einar experiences and his determination to fulfill his desires, even if it means undergoing a risky surgical procedure, all point to the operation of the Id, where basic desires and impulses are often unconscious and overpowering.

CONCLUSION

This analysis shows that the novel *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff reveals how the search for identity of the main character Einar who feels that he is a woman. It is revealed that as he searches for his true identity in a way that he tries to behave as a woman, has an attraction to men that should be done by women, wears women's clothes, and finally performs sex reassignment surgery to become a woman. Although he decided to change his identity as a woman, his wife Gerda still accepted, cared for and helped him at that time. Einar was happy with his new life, despite many obstacles and eventually died after undergoing surgery during his self-discovery process.

Even though it was against the norm. However, on the question of whether gender identity and medical transitions such as gender reassignment surgery are against the norm in Indonesia, it is important to remember that views on norms vary across cultures and societies. What is considered "normal" or "conventional" can differ

among different individuals, groups or generations, which happens to be the case in the western world.

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