

Hierarchy of Human Needs Through the Main Character in “The Danish Girl”

Komang Wulandari Oktapiana

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar

wulandarioktapiana28@gmail.com

I Made Perdana Skolastika

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar

perdana.skolastika@unmas.ac.id

Abstract:

In a literary work, especially a movie, a character is a very important element. Each character in a story has a different mental or psychological condition. This study aims to analyze the hierarchy of human needs contained in the main character named Einar Wegener in the The Danish Girl movie directed by Tom Hopper. The theory used in this movie is the psychological theory by Abraham Maslow. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. The results of this study, the researchers found that the main character, Einar Wegener, succeeded in fulfilling his four basic needs consisting of physiological needs, security needs, love and belongingness, and self-esteem. However, there is one need that he failed to fulfill, namely self-actualization.

Keywords: *Hierarchy of Human Needs, Character, The Danish Girl*

INTRODUCTION

Psychology is one of the sciences that are loved by society today. With psychology, we can learn how to understand other people. The scientific study of thinking and behavior is known as psychology. Additionally, psychology is a discipline that will teach you fresh perspectives on your ideas, feelings, and behavior (Saylor, 2010 p.6-7). The focus on emotions and the human soul in both psychology and literary studies has similarities. A literary work benefits from psychology in that it presents characters more effectively, accurately conveys their moods, and immerses the reader in the psychological side of human existence. The majority

of what we want to know about literature may be found in psychology because it is a branch of the mind (Emir, 2016 p.49).

Literary psychology is a branch of literary studies that sees literary works as psychological activities and reflections. The meaning of psychology in literature is explained by (Wellek and Warren, 1963 p.81) as follows: “By ‘psychology of literature’, we may mean the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or, finally, the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology)”. Literary psychology studies certain psychological phenomena experienced by the main characters in literary works when responding or interacting with themselves and their environment. Literary works themselves have the meaning of copyrighted works that contain problems that exist in the surrounding environment or problems experienced by the author. The symptoms of the soul found by the author in everyday life are stated in the text. When researching the study of literary psychology, the object of study has four study concepts. First, the focus of research on the psychology of the author as a type. Second, examine how the author's creative process towards his psyche. Third, linking psychological theories to literary works. The fourth examines the psychological impact of literary texts on the reader. The purpose of literary psychology is to reveal the interrelationships of aspects of literary works that give birth to overall meaning. The literary psychology approach is expected to be able to produce a maximum analysis of literary works. Literary psychology is a cross-disciplinary science, which has the concept that literature is the result of the author's creative works that can be immortalized. Literature is created because of the creative ideas and moods of an author, which includes the expression of the author's feelings. Thus, psychological symptoms can be revealed through characters in a literary work such as a movie.

Movie is the most popular kind of literary works. One of the movies related to human psychology is *The Danish Girl* (2015) by Tom Hopper. *The Danish Girl* is a movie 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 movie tells the story of a pair of artists named Gerda Wagener and Einar Wagener. Both work as painters. The conflict started when Gerda's paintings were judged to be not selling well by a businessman, when Gerda was about to sell her paintings. She who was fretfully thinking about how to make her painting even better finally found a way. She asked Einar to be a model for her painting. However, what was unusual about Gerda's request was, Einar had the appearance of a woman. Einar was just replacing Gerda's female friend, but it seems that Einar became interested when he 'turned' into a female figure. Problems escalate when Gerda invites Einar to a party. Einar returns to be a female figure named "Lili Elbe" on the idea of Gerda who already knows Einar is interested in women's clothing. To Gerda's expectation, it turns out that Einar is enjoying her role as Lili more and more. The researcher is inspired to choose this movie as a research subject because of Einar changes in his bodily and psychological state. The task of using Maslow's theory to determine how Einar might fulfill every needs in his life is a challenge to the researcher.

In general, Maslow's theory is applied to examine how people behave in daily life. However, literary characters have intricacies that mirror the complexity of real-life people (Wellek and Warren, 1963 p.88). In other words, characters also have similarity to humans in terms of requirements, behavior, needs, motivation, and emotions. Thus, a character in a movie can be studied using Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The researcher only focuses on characterizing Einar and learning how he goes about meeting his needs in life. The study does not include any more topics not previously mentioned by the researcher.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHARACTER AND CHARACTERIZATION

Characters are like humans in terms of their moral and psychological traits, as well as their name and physical appearance (Abrams, 2009 p.20). The heart and soul of a book is its characters. They are the focus of the audience's praise, criticism, and feelings of both fascination and intrigue (Bennett and Royle, 2014 p.63). The researcher also decides to examine a character from a movie in addition to this research. The author's presentation and development of characters is known as characterization. A writer can employ both direct and indirect characterization to reveal a character's attributes. The author just describes the character to the readers through direct characterization. The author makes it very simple for the reader to comprehend the character. Indirect characterization is when a character is revealed through speech, thought, and dialogue (Griffith, 1982 p.61-62).

MASLOW HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS

Every human being has needs that he or she must fulfill in daily life. Human being will never be satisfied with his or her needs. According to Abraham Maslow (1943), these needs are the basis of motivation for all human behavior. Every action we take is motivated by certain needs that we must fulfill. According to Maslow, a human being must fulfill his lowest needs, then move up to a higher level, and so on until he can actualize himself. A person is a living being who will never be completely happy with their existence since once one need is met, other ones will inevitably arise. Alternatively stated, basic needs must be met before a person is free to move from psychological need, and these needs in turn must be satisfied before the person can fulfill self-actualization wants. The hierarchy of needs for humans is composed of five primary levels. The person can move on to the next step if they have met some of the fulfillment at the first stage. Unconsciously, they have completed the first step even as they work to complete the second step. On this basis, people take additional action and being self-actualized.

Physiological Needs

This basic need is the lowest or very first need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory concept. That is, this need includes biological and physical needs. This basic need must be met by an individual to reach the next level. Examples of these needs include food, water, sleep, sexual needs, and so on. When these things cannot be fulfilled, it is impossible for the individual to

go up to the next level. Maybe this need is not met to reach the next level, but in practice it will interfere with the next need. Simply put, rich people must have their food and clothing needs fulfilled, so they can easily fulfill other needs such as buying houses, vehicles, luxury goods, and so on.

Safety Needs

After being able to survive with physiological needs. Then an individual begins to think about the level of security. Maslow explained that this sense of security is a sense of security both mentally and physically. If physiological needs have been met, then a new set of needs emerges, which can be categorized as security needs (security, stability, protection dependence; freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos; needs for structure, order, law and boundaries; protective power). and so forth). This need is needed by someone to be more focused on meeting their needs. furthermore, as well as safely against threatening forces such as fear, anxiety, danger, and unrest. This need for security is a need that will be fulfilled by a person after his physiological needs are adequately met. This need is needs that encourage individuals to obtain peace, certainty, and order from environmental conditions. The need for security is different from the physiological need in that it cannot be completely fulfilled. Thus, the need for security is a need that its fulfilment is not always fully fulfilled because humans can never be protected completely from unknown threats or harmful behavior that is not known how they come, but this need will still be met by the individual as much as possible to achieve peace and prosperity in order to meet further needs.

Love and Belonging Needs

If the physical and safety needs are well met, the need for love, affection and belonging will emerge. the need for love involves giving and receiving affection. When this need is not satisfied, a person will feel very lost friends, spouse, or children. The individual need for love and belonging is a need that encourages individuals to have effective relationships or emotional bonds with other individuals, both with the same sex and with the opposite sex, in the family environment or in a group environment in society. Individuals have the right to love and be loved by other individuals. The need for love and belonging will continue to be important throughout life. The need for love is the need for mutual respect, respect, and trust. According to Maslow, love is a healthy relationship between human partners that involves feelings of mutual respect, respect, and trust. Being loved and accepted is the path to healthy and worthwhile feelings, otherwise without love leads to futility, emptiness, and anger. Thus, the need for love and belonging is a need whose fulfillment cannot be denied by the individual.

Self-Esteem Needs

]After the need to be loved and owned is satisfied, humans are free to pursue the need for esteem. The fourth need is the need for self-esteem. Maslow found that everyone has two categories of esteem needs, namely lower and higher needs. Low needs are the need to respect others, the need for status, fame, glory, recognition, attention, reputation, appreciation, dignity, even respect from others. The need for self-esteem is a need that must be met by individuals both respect or appreciation from themselves and from others in order to know

or believe that they are valuable and able to overcome all challenges in living their lives. The fulfilment of the need for self-esteem gives birth to a feeling of self-confidence, value, strength, ability, and skill, a feeling of being useful and needed in this world. However, failure to fulfil this need creates feelings of inferiority, weakness, and powerlessness.

Self-Actualization Needs

The last level of Maslow's basic needs is self-actualization. Self-actualization needs are needs that do not involve balance, but involve a continuous desire to fulfill potential. These needs are needs that encourage individuals to reveal themselves or self-actualization. The individual's need for self-actualization can be interpreted as the individual's desire to gain satisfaction with himself, to realize all his potential, the desire to become more and more fully self-sufficient in his own ability, to be anything according to his abilities and to be creative to be free to reach the peak of his potential achievement to become a suitable person. with the desire and potential, it has to perfect itself through the disclosure of all its potential. Thus, the need for self-actualization is a need that encourages individuals to show their potential after other needs are met. This need requires individuals to be able to develop their potential according to their abilities in order to obtain satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a data in this research, the researcher uses a movie entitled *The Danish Girl* (2015). The movie's dialogue serves as the main source of data. The data is presented as English words, phrases, and sentences that were put together from the dialogue spoken by the movie characters. To examine the data obtained from the film, secondary data supported by references such as books, earlier journals authored by academics and universities, and internet sources utilized. Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Yvona (1994, p.1) is a field of inquiry in its rights. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. It is said to be descriptive in this research, the researcher describes the data to be analyzed in the form of the psychological aspects of the main character in the *Danish girl* movie by Tom Hopper based on the study of humanistic psychology of Abraham Maslow. It is said to be qualitative because in explaining concepts related to each other by using words or sentences instead of using statistical figures. The data in this study are written data in the form of dialogues of the main character and other characters contained in the *Danish Girl* Movie related to the psychology of the main character. There were several data collection processes in this study as follows. 1) Watch the whole *Danish Girl* movie to understand the content of the story. 2) Pay attention to the dialogues and scenes of the main character, to find out how he can fulfill all his needs. 3) Recording and analyzing dialogues according to Abraham Maslow's Psychology theory. 4) Repeat the above process several times to find all the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

THE FULFILLMENT OF EINAR'S NEEDS

In this part, the researcher explains about the fulfillment of Einar's need.

Physiological Needs

The physiological need is related to the fulfillment of hunger, thirst, shelter, clothing, and even sexual desire (Maslow, 1943 p.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, 2017 p.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. (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.

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, 1943 p.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. (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.

Love and Belonging Needs

The love and belonging need are related to the fulfillment of living together with others to receive and give affection and love (Maslow, 1943 p.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.] (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.

Esteem Needs

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... (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.

CONCLUSION

In this part, the researcher will conclude the research. In *The Danish Girl* Movie, the main character named Einar Wegener has two personalities or multiple personalities. On the one hand he is a famous painter and he is the husband of Gerda, on the other hand, he is a woman trapped in her male body. One of the environmental factors, made a difference for a Einar Wegener. By involving Abraham Maslow's theory, researchers can find human needs that can be met by the main character. Based on the results of the study, it was found that Einar Wegener can meet their basic needs, namely physiological needs, security needs, love and belonging needs, and self-esteem needs. He fulfilled these four needs during his life. However, there is one need that he cannot fulfill, namely self-actualization. He fails in meeting his self-actualization needs, but he has the motivation to fulfill them. In the movie, Einar does not accept himself as a man. He assumed that all along he had been living in the wrong body. In this case, Einar denied the nature of being born a boy. He wanted to transform himself into a woman named Lily. Einar Wegener felt that his life would be dissatisfied if he did not turn into a woman. Since he behaved as a Lily, he no longer developed his talent in painting, even he forgot the talent he had. Thus, it could be said that Einar failed to meet the need for self-actualization. Researchers found that Einar Wegener wanted to complete his transformation into a woman in order to secure a happier life. Eventually, he died before fulfilling his need to become a real woman. Therefore, it can be concluded that Einar failed to fulfill his self-actualization needs.

References

- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.
- Bennett, A., and Royle N. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2014
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. UK: Sage Publications Ltd, 2018.
- Emir, Badegul Can. *Literature and Psychology in the Context of the Interaction of social sciences*. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and social sciences*. Karadeniz Technical University, Turkey. 2016
- Griffith, Kelly Jr. *Writing Essay about Literature; A Guide and style sheeth*. Harcourt Javanovich, Inc. New York. 1982
- Maslow, Abraham H. *A Theory of Human Needs*. *Physiological Review*. 1943.
- Maslow, Abraham H. *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1970.

Prologue: Journal on Language and Literature Vol.8 No.2 (2022)

Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. *Self Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2017

Saylor. *An introduction to psychology*. Saylor Academy 2010-2019.

Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1949). *Teoria da Literatura*. Mira-Sintra, Portugal: Publicações Europa-América.

Wellek, R. and Warren A. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963.