

Magnanimity: A Screenplay Exploring the Unconditional Forgiveness

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ABSTRACT

This creative thesis focuses on unconditional forgiveness, exploring the question of how a son can really hate his father. The first theory, Parental Alienation Syndrome, answers how a child can hate one parent because of the insult from the other parent. The child affected by Parental Alienation Syndrome has eight distinct symptoms. Furthermore, this creative thesis wants to explore how the son can forgive his father without the father's repentance. Employing the Process Model of Forgiveness, the thesis shows the step-by-step journey of forgiveness without any repentance. Both theories will be applied in the creative work, a screenplay. The screenplay is about a victim of Parental Alienation Syndrome haunted by his hatred of his father ever since his parents' separation. The protagonist experiences the three symptoms of Parental Alienation Syndrome. Moreover, he will go through each stage of the Process Model of Forgiveness until achieving reconciliation with his father.

Keywords: Parental Alienation Syndrome, Process of Model Forgiveness, Screenplay, Unconditional Forgiveness

INTRODUCTION

Revenge is no doubt a famous theme that has been used in popular culture (Robson, 2019), often overshadowing its less-known counterpart, which is forgiveness. However, this creative work focuses on unconditional forgiveness. It means forgiving the wrongdoer without having atonement like an apology or repentance from the offender (Garrard & McNaughton, 2003, as cited in Faldetta, 2020). The unconditional forgiveness differs among people, some agree and some do not. For example, Swinburne disagrees with unconditional forgiveness and argues it's impossible without wrongdoers' repentance (2019), implying its impracticality. In contrast, Eleanore Stump asserts in her book "Atonement" (2018) that unconditional forgiveness is achievable by loving wrongdoers without their repentance. Personally, I agree with Eleanore Stump's opinion on unconditional forgiveness. I believe in the possibility of forgiving wrongdoers without requiring their repentance.

The reason why I want to highlight the concept of unconditional forgiveness is to let people understand its definition and to let people know that it is not impossible to do. Another crucial factor motivating this topic is a study by the Indonesian Police Force General Headquarters in October 2018, revealing that 80 percent of 574 murder cases had revenge as a motive (Yamin, 2018). This is a serious matter, because if people rely on an "eye for an eye" approach, they will create a cycle of hatred and bloodshed, risking a world without empathy. However, in a world where a mother can forgive the killer of her daughter (Ihsanuddin, 2022), surely revenge is not the right way to deal with grudges, and surely forgiveness is not impossible to do. That is why I want to touch on this topic.

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Another thing that I also want to bring up is the complex dynamics of the father-son relationship, inspired by Sigmund Freud's depiction of it as inherently tense and discomfort (Freud, 1933 as cited in Miller, 2012). This tension, according to Freud, signifies a gap or wall between the son and the father that creates discomfort. This creative work specifically focuses on this relationship is the concept of the "father wound," a term for the damaged relationship between the son's and his father (Miller, 2012). I find the father's wound interesting, especially its potential to impact the son's mental health, ranging from minor to significant effects (Miller, 2012). Among the various types of father wounds, this creative work concentrates on the absence of a father figure, exploring how the father's absence can lead to the son's resentment and hatred towards his father, because the absence of the father gives the most damage to the son (Pease, 2000). The absence of the father also can make the son unable to mature properly (Pease, 2000). I want to bring up the topic on how a son refuses to forgive his own father because the wound is too big.

My creative work will tell a story in the form of a screenplay. It is a form of storytelling that is told using pictures with dialogues, descriptions, and a dramatic context structure (Field, 2003 as cited in Nannicelli, 2019). Another definition of a screenplay is that it is a story with a beginning, middle, and end, that will be shown by the character's action, which in the end the final product, the movie, will embody the screenwriter's vision (Lance Lee, 2001 as cited in Nannicelli, 2019). However, the essence of the screenplay is that it unfolds a narrative with a distinct beginning, middle, and end, expressed through character actions and the screenwriter's vision (Field, 2003 as cited in Nannicelli, 2019). In the screenplay, emotions aren't explicitly explained but are conveyed through dialogue and behavior. Choosing the screenplay as my form of storytelling aligns with my goal of showcasing the story through actions, and creating a film as the final product. Furthermore, in the screenplay, the emphasis will be on the character dynamics, with an active protagonist for audience engagement. The chosen genre for the screenplay itself is drama. Drama as a genre in film means a story that portrays life, is serious and has an inner conflict that brings out the character's emotion (Reich, et al., 2017). This genre suits my aim to delve into the main character's emotional struggles for a more relatable and realistic narrative.

In a world where many movies center on the revenge genre, this work centers on unconditional forgiveness. The creative work speaks particularly to those harboring grudges against family, friends, partners, or co-workers. While beneficial for a broad audience, this creative work especially speaks for the dynamics between sons and fathers, aiming to guide sons in forgiving their fathers. My expectation of this creative work is that it can create reflection among readers who may contemplate revenge so that they would reconsider. Moreover, for sons reading this work, the goal is to inspire forgiveness and the ability to let go of past resentments.

This creative work speaks for sons whose fathers have re-entered their lives after abandoning them. By choosing this topic, I want to highlight the significance of a father figure in a son's life and how it has a big impact on the son's life so that fathers who read it will not neglect their sons. The creative work emphasizes the potential damage of a "father wound" and how seeking revenge is not a healthy resolution. Instead, the work advocates for forgiveness as the key to letting go, challenging the notion of revenge as unjust. The creative work aims to speak to individuals who want to take revenge, telling them that forgiveness is possible even without closure or repentance from the wrongdoers.

The story that is explored by this creative work is about a son deeply affected by his father's abandonment during childhood, leading to a desire for revenge. The storyline revolves around the protagonist's journey to overcome this emotional wound with two theories. The first, Dr. Richard A. Gardner's theory of Parental Alienation Syndrome, explains how a child may

develop hatred towards a parent due to exposure to insults directed at that parent. The second theory, the Process Model of Forgiveness by Robert D. Enright, focuses on the forgiveness process when someone has wronged an individual. The main character struggles with these theories to heal from the pain caused by his absent father.

Parental Alienation Syndrome

Parental Alienation Syndrome was originally developed by Dr. Richard Alan Gardner. The theory itself shows how a child can be manipulated to hate one parent, especially in cases of separation or divorce (Baker & Eichler, 2016). This theory serves as a significant framework for my creative work, providing insights into why the protagonist has resentment towards his father.

Parental Alienation Syndrome Theory focuses on the consequences of parental separation, highlighting how exposure to unfair accusations by one parent can lead the child to reject and sever ties with the targeted parent (Baker & Eichler, 2016). The intentional alienation is often planned by the custodial parent, who bad-mouths the targeted parent so that the child develops false scenarios about the rejected parent, contributing to the child's hatred. Gardner identifies eight symptoms, including the campaign of denigration, weak rationalizations, and lack of ambivalence, which characterize children who hate the non-custodial parent (O'Donohue, et al., 2016).

In my creative work, I intend to use the first three symptoms, because the primary symptom of Parental Alienation Syndrome is the first one. The next two symptoms are used as a support for the first symptom. That is why the symptoms that are used in this creative work are the campaign of denigration, a symptom of Gardner's theory, which involves the child openly criticizing and speaking negatively about the alienated parent without facing repercussions (Gardner, 1992 as cited in Siracusano, et al., 2015). The weak, frivolous, or absurd rationalizations symptom reflects the child's inability to pinpoint the alienated parent's mistakes that justify their criticism (Gardner, 1992 as cited in Siracusano, et al., 2015). Lastly, the lack of ambivalence symptom extends beyond mere criticism to the point where the child sees no redeeming qualities in the alienated parent (Gardner, 1992 as cited in Siracusano, et al., 2015). These symptoms will be used in the creative work to depict and support the main character's behavior. These symptoms will manifest naturally in the protagonist.

Utilizing Dr. Gardner's Parental Alienation Syndrome theory in my creative work will offer a rationale for the main character's intense hatred towards his father, incorporating these symptoms organically into the character's development.

The Process Model of Forgiveness

Forgiveness itself has so many theories, but the theory that I will use for my creative work is the forgiveness theory from Robert D. Enright, Ph. D. which is called "Enright's Model of Forgiveness" or it is also known as, "The Process Model of Forgiveness." Enright's theory defines forgiveness as the ability to release resentment and offer peace to a wrongdoer after experiencing hurt or injustice (Dayton, et al., 2009). In the theory, four phases of forgiveness show the process of forgiving someone, the phases are the Uncovering Phase, Decision Phase, Work Phase, and Deepening Phase (Dayton, et al., 2009). In this creative work, the theory will be applied to explore how at first the main character does not want to forgive his father and the eventual journey toward unconditional forgiveness.

Enright's Process Model of Forgiveness comprises four phases. The Uncovering Phase involves acknowledging the offense and its impact (Freedman, 2019). Furthermore, in this phase, the victim recognizes that there are permanent changes after the impact from the

wrongdoers (Close, 1985 as cited in Klatt & Enright, 2011). The next phase is the Decision Phase, where the victim willingly tries to forgive the wrongdoers. This action is driven by the realization that previous coping strategies failed (Klatt & Enright, 2011). The Decision Phase also emphasizes that forgiveness is not an abrupt reconciliation (Freedman, 2019). The next phase is the Work Phase, where the victim can view the wrongdoers differently, in a new light (Enright, et al., 2015). In this phase, the victim refrains himself or herself from seeking revenge, granting a moral gift to the wrongdoer (Klatt & Enright, 2011). Lastly, the Deepening Phase involves seeking life's meaning through the forgiveness process (Frankl, 1959 as cited in Klatt & Enright, 2011). In this phase, the victim will recognize one's imperfections, and the need for forgiveness from others (Cunningham, 1985 as cited in Klatt & Enright, 2011). The phases will be used in the creative work to show the struggle and process of the main character forgiving his father. The main character will go through all the phases until the main character finally forgives his father.

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

My creative work adopts the drama genre, known for telling a story that highlights the emotion of the character, and they utilize dialogue and action to move the story forward (Reich, 2017). The drama genre centers around the deep feelings and desires of the main character, that takes a serious and realistic storytelling route (Selbo, 2014). This means that the drama genre will have believable characters and conflicts. By using drama as a genre, it enables the audience to connect with the protagonist (Selbo, 2014). In this creative work, drama is used to highlight the intense hatred towards the father, and also delving into the character's internal conflict of whether or not he should forgive his father. The realistic elements of the drama genre aim to let the audience connect and relate with the main character.

In the screenplay there are literary devices to help me captivate the audience. The first literary device is character-driven story. I will use this literary device as the base of my screenplay. A character-driven story means that the story will mainly focus on the character's feelings, experiences, and also goals (Packer, 2021). By using this, it allows the audience to delve into the protagonist's feelings, experiences, and goals, creating a closer connection between the audience and the main character by exploring his psychology. In a character-driven story, the main character is the one who moves the story forward (Packer, 2021). This creative work uses this literary device from the start, portraying the main character in his early 30s still haunted by the hatred because of the impact of his father's absence. The narrative explores how this hatred disrupts his life, leading to unstable employment, strained relationships, and isolation. The character-driven approach is chosen to emphasize the protagonist's emotional journey.

The second literary device in my screenplay is the flashback, a cinematic technique where the screen transitions to a past scene either through a character's memory or narration (Turim, 2013). However, flashbacks cannot be used randomly but it is used when the past and present storylines are interconnected (Turim, 2013). In the creative work, this device is used to reveal the main character's past, so that the audience will have an understanding towards the main character's actions and the roots of his intense hatred towards his father. The flashbacks unfold the main character's traumatic childhood and the process of him being the victim of Parental Alienation Syndrome, allowing the audience to comprehend the depth of his animosity.

There are two works that influence this creative work, they are *The Judge* (Dobkin, 2014) and *Fences* (Washington, 2016). *The Judge* (Dobkin, 2014) centers on an attorney returning to his hometown after his mother's death, reigniting tension with his strict father, Judge Joseph Palmer. The film explores the challenging father-son relationship where the father is overly harsh. On the other hand, *Fences* (Washington, 2016) follows Troy, a husband and

father with unfulfilled dreams of becoming a baseball player due to racial barriers. The movie delves into Troy's tensions at home, including those with his son. Both films address the theme of father-son relationships, portraying the inherent tension in both dynamics.

Both *The Judge* (Dobkin, 2014) and *Fences* (Washington, 2016) have influenced my creative work, particularly in shaping the character of the father. Drawing inspiration from *The Judge* (Dobkin, 2014), the father figure in my work is strict and unsatisfied despite the son's achievements, reflecting a tough love dynamic towards the son. On the other hand, *Fences* (Washington, 2016) has influenced the father in my work to embody the imperfection and complexity. Like the father in *Fences* (Washington, 2016) he may exhibit problematic behavior but remains caring and responsible for his family. Thus, the father figure in my creative work combines the sternness seen in *The Judge* (Dobkin, 2014) and the imperfections depicted in *Fences* (Washington, 2016), creating the father character with depth and complexity.

Premise and Creative Principal

When a hated father comes back to the son's life after years of separation, the son has to learn how to let go of the past that has been haunting him for a long time and forgive his father after what he did to him and his family in the past, so that he can live his life to the fullest, because anyone who always looking at the back will always live in the past and never live in the present. I want to show that forgiving someone you hate without repentance is possible, but it is not easy and it takes time to forgive someone you hate. I also want to show that letting go of the past and moving on is a better choice to do, rather than staying in the past and being haunted by it.

Synopsis

As a child, Wilson loved his father until alcohol turned him abusive, leading to his parents' divorce. Wilson's resentment grows due to his mother's influence, haunting him until he is in his 30s. His life is in disarray—his writing aspirations hindered, relying on his brother for employment, avoiding relationships, and haunted by traumatic dreams. His mother's death prompts a reunion with their father. Unlike Wilson, Brandon forgives and cares for their father. Wilson, aware of Brandon's cancer, opposes, leading to a heated dispute. After Brandon's death, Wilson confronts his father, blaming him for his struggles. Remarkably, after the confrontation, Wilson's dreams shift to positive memories, initiating his journey to forgive and move on from the past.

Characters

Wilson Liemanto

Age: 31 years old (present), 8, 9 and 12 years old (flashback)

Wilson, the eldest, is often stubborn, deeply caring for his mother and brother. Feeling responsible for his younger sibling, he loved art, especially poetry, in his childhood. Hatred towards his father emerges when Yuli bad-mouths his father, impacting Wilson's life in his early thirties, marked by loneliness and emptiness. Blaming himself and his father, he cannot forgive his father. Despite deep down he wants to let go of the past, but in order to do that, he needs to forgive his father.

Brandon Liemanto

Age: 29 years old (Present), 6, 7, and 10 years old (Flashback)

Brandon is Wilson's little brother. Brandon has a soft heart and is a loving person. Later in the screenplay, he gives another chance to his father. Brandon's decision of letting go of the past makes him able to have a successful life. He gives a job to Wilson who still dwells in the past and struggles. Unfortunately, Brandon was diagnosed with cancer. However, a tragic

accident got to him first before cancer. In his final breath, he tells Wilson to let go of the past and live in the present.

Halim Liemanto

Age: 62 years old (Present), 39 (Flashback)

Halim Sugianto used to love his children and his wife. All of that changed when he started drinking excessively. He turns into an abusive husband. His wife, Yuli, cannot take it anymore and she decides to divorce him. She took the kids with her. After 22 years of separation from his sons, he meets them again at his wife's funeral. He wants to reunite with them and make amends with his sons. His youngest is able to forgive him, but his eldest cannot.

Yuli Sugianto

Age: 60 years old (Present), 37 years old (Flashback)

Yuli is the ex-wife of Halim Sugianto. Yuli has wavy and dark hair. She has two sons, Wilson and Brandon. She loves her sons and wants the best for them. Yuli bad mouths her ex-husband to her sons which led Wilson to slowly hating his father. She died at the age of 59 because of an accident.

Dawn

Age: 28 years old

Dawn is Wilson's therapist. Dawn is a cheerful girl who loves music, everywhere she goes, she always brings her earbuds. She knows that deep down Wilson needs help. Dawn eventually sees that Wilson is more than meets the eye. Dawn will help Wilson to get through his trauma. In the end, the two of them become friends

Conflict

In my creative work, there will be two conflicts. The first conflict is man versus man or character versus character which means that the conflict revolves around the main character's desire or goals, and it is caused by someone (Jenkins, 2021). The second conflict is man versus self or character versus self which means the main character will have a personal battle with himself that was caused by external factors (Jenkins, 2021). In this creative work, Wilson will have a dilemma. He knows deep down that forgiving his dad is the only way to let go of the past. However, Wilson is still angry at his dad for what he has done to his mother and himself. The first conflict happens on the outside, but the second one is the battle that happens inside. The first conflict will determine whether the confrontation will make Wilson hate his father more or start to see the human side of his father and forgive him. The second battle will determine whether Wilson still stays in the past and is unable to forgive his father, or he lives in the present and is able to forgive his father.

CONCLUSION

This creative work highlights the victim of Parental Alienation Syndrome, especially on exploring how children can develop hatred towards one parent due to the other parent's bad-mouth. The victim who suffers from this syndrome Parental Alienation Syndrome can be distinguished by having eight symptoms. However, this creative work is focusing on the first three symptoms—campaign of denigration, weak rationalizations, and lack of ambivalence—the story unfolds as the main character slowly hates his father due to his mother's bad-mouthing remarks about his father.

Furthermore, the creative work also touches on how one can forgive a person who has hurt him or her without the repentance from the wrongdoer. Using the theory of Robert D. Enright's Process Model of Forgiveness, this creative work explores the process of

forgiveness. In the creative work, the main character will journey through the phases of the Uncovering Phase, Decision Phase, Work Phase, and Deepening Phase as he attempts to forgive his father despite his resentment from his past family tragedy

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