

Cheated: The Psychoanalysis on a Transgender Person

Lorentia, H.

English for Creative Industry, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA

Email: m11413075@john.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This creative work tells a story about a husband who hides his true identity from his wife. He is actually a transgender person who has a desire to be a woman, but he represses his desire and tries to live as a man. I choose the transgender topic because there are a lot of transgender people around us who repress their true sexuality because of the society norms and beliefs. Therefore, my story wants to explore more on this topic with the help of the theory of defense mechanism by Freud to explain why and how the husband represses his sexuality, and to explain the effects caused by the repression. The story is presented through the drama and psychological thriller genre to suit the style of the creative work which focuses on the psychological state of the main characters and the complexity within them.

Keywords: Transgender, Repression, Psychoanalysis, Defense Mechanism, Eros, Thanatos

INTRODUCTION

This final project is a screenplay that talks about transgender people sexuality repression. For long, there has been a standard norm about gender that human is either a male or a female. However, there has been a lot of disagreements, as in fact there are a lot of people who do not fall into these categories. Some individuals grow some cross-gender behaviors, or think that they are born in the wrong body. Therefore, people start to look for the science behind and suggest a framework for understanding gender that moves beyond the rigid binary system, which we now know as Transgender theory (Pardo, 2008).

Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or gender expression do not conform with the gender they were assigned at birth. Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else; whereas, gender expression refers to the way a person communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics ("Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression", n.d.). So, simply saying, transgender people are males who feel they should have been born as females, thus have female gender identity and expression; and females who feel they should have been born as males, and have male gender identity and expression. Transgender is different from transsexual. The term transsexual is used by the clinical and medical communities specifically for transgender people who seek out sex-reassignment surgery. Transsexuals can be either pre-transition, transitioning, or post transition (Hird, 2002).

Gender theorists have long suggested that no social space exists in our society for trans people. Our society is transphobic, having irrational fear of, or discriminating against transgender or transsexual people ("Transphobia", n.d.). Transgender people are sometimes considered as having mental illness, or possessed by some kind of evil spirit. Eventually, they have to bear the social and economic marginalization. According to the research done by The National Center for Transgender Equality in 2012, 63% of their transgender participants experienced serious acts of discrimination—events that have a major impact on a person's quality of life and ability to sustain themselves financially or emotionally; and 23% of them experienced a catastrophic level of discrimination, having been impacted by at least three of the above major life-disrupting events due to bias. These events are such as losing their homes, jobs, and children; being bullied by teachers or coworkers; experiencing harassment physically and sexually; not treated by doctor nor defended by law; and rejection from family. They seemingly lose their rights as human beings created by God.

As a result, transgender people often generate health-harming behaviors such as consuming drug, alcohol, and smoking, as it has been proven by a series of researches done by the 'TransPULSE Project', a community-based research project that is interested in understanding the social exclusion and transphobia. What is worse, these discriminated transgender people are also prone to act of committing suicide because of the unbearable pressures they get. A research done by 'The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and National Center for Transgender Equality' says that transgender rate of suicide is 41 percent, which is actually 4.6 percent higher than the overall U.S population suicide attempt, and 10-20 percent higher than lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults suicide attempt (Haas, 2014).

All these facts about transgender prove that something is really wrong between transgender people and our society. Society does not acknowledge them as a part of our society, while transgender people have the same need like us. Having learned all the unjust and wrong treatment toward transgender people, I fell sympathy to them, with their inner conflicts and repressions from society.

I want to explore the inner conflict and repression of transgender people who pretend to be 'normal', live as their birth gender, and even get married. In my screenplay, I focus on talking about Jaewook, my main male character, who is actually a transgender woman, yet he does not want to change his physical appearance, and he gets married with a woman named Yuri. I want to explore about why and how he represses his true sexuality. I also want to know further about the effects of repressing his true sexuality.

In order to help me explore the topic, and in order to develop my story conflict and characters, I use a theory by Sigmund Freud called 'The Defense Mechanism of Ego'. Freud believes that humans have three levels of awareness: the preconscious, the conscious, and the unconscious. Freud specifically compares human's awareness to an iceberg in order to describe three levels of the mind. On the top of the iceberg is our consciousness. Conscious mind is our rational thoughts and awareness at the present time. The conscious mind communicates with the outside world through speech, pictures, writing, physical thoughts (Thomas, 2010). Next part is pre-consciousness. Preconscious mind consists of accessible information we usually call as memory. We can become aware of this information once we direct our attention to it ("Three Minds," 2013). Lastly, the big unseen part of the iceberg is unconscious. The unconscious mind is actually the most important region because here lie the processes that are the real causes of most behavior (McLeod, 2013). The unconscious mind is like the storehouse of all memories, desires, and past experiences, that were often too frightening or painful to be acknowledged. Thus, they are forgotten and no longer important to use. ("The Conscious, Subconscious, and Unconscious," 2014).

This theory of awareness is further developed into The Psyche theory, a theory about Id, Superego, and Ego. Id, Superego, and Ego are actually elements of human personality. These three elements work together and form complex human behaviors.

The id is the set of uncoordinated or unconscious instinctual behavior and desires driven by the pleasure principle, which strives for immediate gratification. If not satisfied immediately, we would be in the state of anxiety and tension. Id is divided into two based on the instinct. They are Eros, instinct that drives human to procreate or have survival skills; and Thanatos, a death instinct which compels humans to engage in risky and self-destructive acts that could lead to their own death ("Explaining Thanatos", n.d). In other words, thanatos is a desire to return to the inorganic state.

Superego plays the critical and moralizing role. It provides guidelines for making judgments based on our internalized moral standards and ideals, that we acquire from both parents and society, including those in our unconscious (Cherry, 2016). There are two types of superego, which are ego-ideal and conscience. Ego ideal are the rules and standards for good behaviors. Obeying these rules leads to feelings of pride, value, and accomplishment. On the other hand, the conscience includes those which are not approved, or viewed as bad, by parents and society. These behaviors are often forbidden and lead to bad consequences, punishments, or feelings of guilt and remorse (Cherry, 2016).

The last component of personality to develop is the ego. The ego is the organized, realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. The ego operates based on the reality principle, which strives to satisfy the id's desires in realistic and socially appropriate ways.

Often, the Id is too disturbing for the ego to cope with, so the superego needs to come and repress the over-disturbing drives. Therefore, there emerges the conscience which makes a person feels guilty, threatened, and anxious. This anxiety then causes ego to deploy Defense Mechanisms, unconscious mechanisms to get rid of the anxiety and guilt ("Defense Mechanism", n.d.).

People can have some different types of defense mechanisms according to the two ways people cope with anxiety. In the first category, in which people employ defense mechanism in order to reduce the anxiety, there are denial, repression/suppression, withdrawal, displacement, and projection. In the second category, in which people employ defense mechanism to learn to cope with the situation, there are rationalization, sublimation, identification, compensation, and undoing ("Defense Mechanism", n.d.).

Defense mechanism is generally a healthy way to cope with life, but malpractices of defense mechanism can result in danger such as suicide. According to a book titled *Suicide Across The Life Span*, an attempt to do suicide is basically caused by the collapse of defense mechanism of the ego, which is caused by the over demanding superego (Stillion & McDowell, 2015, p.49).

In potential suicides, the superego is said to operate according to the perfection principle: to seek out the perfect and to reject anything less than absolute perfection. At first, people will use all the available energy to achieve their perfectionist standard everyday. However, when used every day, they will be lacking of energy, and what is worse is they are still far from meeting their perfectionist standard. Then, the superego will make them suffer from guilt and anxious. Eventually they experience more intrapsychic conflict.

At the same time, they will also employ more defense mechanisms in order to get rid of the guilt and anxiety. However, at the end, they will have no more energy left because they use too much energy to cope up with unrealistic standard. The defense mechanisms have failed, and the people are overwhelmed with feeling of helplessness. Finally, they will have intense negative feelings that lead to suicidal thoughts and action

Further, certain use of Defense Mechanism named Displacement has been proved to have higher suicide risk by a research done by Shushan Hovanesian, Isak Isakov, Kelly L Cervellione. The journal starts the hypothesis by giving definitions of Displacement in various ways, such as: ". . . the individual copes with an emotional conflict or with an internal stressor, by generalizing or redirecting his emotions to a different, usually less threatening object" (Vaillant, 1986, p. 104) or ". . . the purposeful, unconscious shifting from one object to another in the interest of solving a conflict" (p. 108) or ". . . the redirection of emotions towards a relatively less important object . . ." (p. 115). "Displacement means expression of an affect, impulse or action towards a person, object or body part, which was not the one that originally evoked that affect or emotion. The affect is completely known, but is now aimed at a less conflictual target" (Vaillant, 1986, p. 131).

Among the definitions mentioned, there are common elements. First, there is no change in the unpleasant emotion. Second, the emotion is shifted from the original object to a new object. Any object can be included in this category, including the self. In simpler words, people who project displacement do not do anything to cope up with their emotion nor the situation. They simply move their negative emotion to another, which may be themselves. This means people who employ defense mechanism would like stay in a cycle of anxiety which uses up a lot of energy.

For my creative work, I choose drama and psychological thriller genre. These genres are to suit the style of the creative work which focuses on the psychological state of the main characters and the complexity within them.

Drama delivers the emotional and relational development of realistic characters in a realistic setting. It offers intense character development and tells an honest story of human struggle (McKenzie, 2013). These realistic characters enable audience to relate with the characters. Especially, with the normal everyday environment setting, audience will be able to sympathize and empathize with the story, because once in a while they must have faced similar situation.

I remember my film lecturer once said that a successful short film screenplay has always had a hybridity of genre. An article written by Sony Pictures story consultant also says that selling a screenplay

needs to use the classic idea of giving the customer two or three for the price of one (Truby, 2009). This means, it is important to add layer of genres in our story if we want to sell. In response, I mix drama with the element of psychological thriller.

Psychological thriller usually has narrative that talks about thrills with no use of blood, guts, gore, and serial killer. The narrative is actually a ‘slow burner’ where the tension builds inexorably, and there is no escape, no cop out, and no cavalry riding to rescue. (Packer, 2007. p.86). The climax usually involves death or danger to the mind or intrinsic identity or values of the main character. (“Elements of the Psychological Thriller, Mystery, Suspense and/or Crime Fiction Genres”, n.d.). The story also includes a plot twist, that seems to come out of nowhere and shocking, and the revelation means you have to go back and rethink about everything that happened during the course of the entire movie. (“These Movies Will Hurt Your Brain”, n.d.).

Second, there are some consistent themes used in psychological thriller, such as reality, perception, mind, existence or purposed, identity, and death (Bowie-Sell, 2012.). The themes are usually combined with fear or anxiety in order to create a character in the stake of jeopardy and to create all kinds of psychological ripples. Later on, the themes will result in the third convention, psychological thriller usually has a character’s driven story. A character’s driven story is an exploration of the protagonist’s internal development over the course of a story, and the writing focuses on the inner conflict of the characters (“Character Driven v. Plot Driven Writing”, n.d). Specifically, in psychological thrillers the characters often battle their own minds in attempt to determine what is real, who they are, and what the life purpose is. As a result, the story often messes with readers’ mind. Readers or viewers will spend time thinking about the characters and their attitudes, personal evolutions and decisions, and how those, in turn, change the shape of the plot and the story as a whole.

ANALYSIS

In my screenplay, the main character, Jaewook, has an id or desire to be a woman. It is described in the screenplay that he is on his verge of wanting to be a woman so badly. His id to be a woman can be defined as both Eros and Thanatos. It is an Eros because it explains his longing for a satisfying life, pleasure, and drive to live. At the same time, when he decides to cross-dress as a woman secretly, his id is a Thanatos. The act of cross-dressing secretly is a dangerous and risky act. If his wife finds out about his cross-dressing, it will have negative effects on him and his wife. “Apparently self destructive behavior was cathartic or gave emotional release.” (“Explaining Thanatos”, n.d.). The act of cross-dressing gives Jaewook only temporal emotional release, which results in more pain about wanting to be a woman.

Regardless his id as an Eros or a Thanatos, living in a gender-binary society in which having a desire to change one’s sex is taboo shows Jaewook the real portrait of how society, including those people he cares about specifically, cannot accept transgender people. He learns that society around him marginalize and discriminate transgender people. All of these facts must have horrified Jaewook, creating his conscience that tells him to repress his sexuality, his desire and urge to be a woman.

However, in accordance to Freud theory, id is not affected by reality or logic as it operates within the unconscious part of the mind (McLeod, 2016), Jaewook’s desire to be a woman is always there contrasting with his over perfectionist superego and results in certain anxiety. Therefore, Jaewook’s ego employs a series of defense mechanism that helps him to defend his anxiety.

Jaewook produces four types of defense mechanisms. First, he produces repression, an act of keeping bad things out of conscious awareness (Reitan, 2013). Jaewook represses all of his desire to be a woman by not doing sex reassignment surgery or dressing as a woman, and decides to live normally as a man and gets married with Yuri. However, his desire to be a woman keeps on getting stronger, as well as his superego. Then, he suffers from more anxiety. His ego then produces rationalization, creating guilt but acceptable excuses to justify unacceptable behavior (Georget, 2007). He starts to rationalize with his id and superego and convinces himself that the act of cross-dressing is fine, especially if he does it secretly. It can satisfy his desire without hurting Yuri or breaking any society norm.

Further, Jaewook produces another type of defense mechanism as his superego starts to act according to the perfection principle. We see how he insists he cannot leave Yuri because he has promised God to be with her and to make her happy forever when his woman's side asked him to leave Yuri. He really tries hard to live as a man. Therefore, when his wife suspects him of having an affair with another woman, or when he feels his wife knows about his woman side, he produces displacement and projection. Displacement is taking out our frustrations, feelings, and impulses on people or objects that are less threatening, whereas projection is taking our own unacceptable qualities or feelings and ascribing them to other people (Reitan, 2013). Jaewook takes out his frustration, feelings, and impulses toward his woman side though in fact actually he blames himself. He even tries to kill his desire, his woman side, when in fact he just wants to kill himself. Jaewook also feels like Yuri might leave him or do something very bad to him, when in fact he might be the one leaving Yuri. He projects the possibility toward himself by thinking that Yuri will leave him or hurt him when she knows about his true identity.

The biggest problem about Jaewook is that most of Jaewook defense mechanisms fall in the first category, his defense mechanisms only help him to reduce his anxiety temporarily without actually helping him to cope up with the situation. In specific manner, Jaewook also employs displacement, in which has been proved to cause higher suicide risk because of its inability to solve problems. At the same time, Jaewook's desire to be a woman gets stronger as he tries his best to not be a woman. As a result, his energy is depleted. His defense mechanisms finally also have no more energy to fight over his anxiety, and he falls into helplessness. He really has to choose between his id and superego, between being a woman or a man, regardless of all the consequences. However, he cannot choose. He does not want to hurt his wife and live as a woman, yet he also cannot live as a man with a demanding desire to be a woman. In his helplessness his ego gives up rationalizing and gives in to his id, unfortunately the thanatos one, which results in his wanting to commit a suicide because he is desperate with his life.

Luckily, Jaewook's suicide attempt is stopped by the wife who happened to open the door. This fate gives Jaewook a chance to reveal his hidden truth and a chance to live true to himself. At the end of the story, there is a change from his thanatos to eros. He finally can live true to himself, as a woman.

As for the genre, drama genre is the suitable genre for my short film screenplay as I want to talk about transgender issue in our society. My screenplay focuses on Jaewook's moral dilemma which is one of the common topic in Drama Genre. My story is also driven by the characters' inner conflict and struggle. And I hope through the drama genre, I can have more audience sympathize my characters and they can understand my message better.

My story is also a psychological thriller. The psychological thriller elements can be found in the narrative which has nothing related to blood, guts, and gore, but it still manages to have a lot of tension. The tension starts pretty much early when Yuri, the wife, comes home early one day and discovers a silhouette of a woman on her bedroom window. Then, the tension continues when Yuri starts to speak up about her suspicion toward her husband, followed by the discovery of the wine glass with a lips mark, and the rejection by the husband during the initial intercourse. Soon, the story progresses into the last tension, in which I present a cross-cutting story line between the husband who tries to kill a woman, and the wife who tries to attack / to thrash the husband. Here also happens the climax with a plot twist that reveals the husband's woman side, and that the story is actually about the husband who is about to end his life because of identity problem.

Since my story talks about identity problem and death, my story naturally uses the two common themes used in psychological thriller. So, the husband, Jaewook, he has to choose whether he wants to live as a woman or as a man. However, his inability to decide leads him to fear and anxiety as he tries to live as a man, yet secretly has to cross-dress as a woman to satisfy his desire. Eventually, this causes a series of psychological inner conflict that ends in decision to die. So, along the course of the story, audience follows the conflict of the characters, between the husband and the woman, that leads to husband's last decision to kill the woman, the one who audience think as the woman he is having affair with. However, then my story messes up with the audience mind when audience finds out that actually there is no other woman, but the woman has been the husband himself, dressed as a woman. In other words, audience has been following the inner conflict of the husband's mind.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Jaewook represses his sexuality because his superego learns the society's worldview which is against the transgender people and represses transgender people sexuality. The repression is done by employing some types of defense mechanism such as repression, rationalization, displacement, and projection while living as a man in society. Sadly, his superego grows stronger and acts according to the perfection principle, causing him to use too much defense mechanisms. In the end, his defense mechanisms do not function well anymore since he is in constant helplessness that leads him to commit suicide.

The genre of my story is drama and psychological thriller. I chose drama because it allows me to talk about social issues through realistic characters and realistic settings. At the same time, I also use psychological thrillers because it allows me to play with tension and a witty way of story telling. It allows me to present my story with layers and a plot twist that make my story more interesting to be enjoyed.

This screenplay is not the end product. It needs to be made into a short film. And when this screenplay is made into a short movie, there might be some changes that can happen to the details of the story which might affect the analysis as well. However, overall I wish that this screenplay can be a contribution to society, in the sense that my story can support transgender people to be true to themselves because repressing their true identity, their true self will result in death, either mentally or physically.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). What does transgender mean? Transgender people, gender identity and gender expression. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender.aspx>
- Pardo, S.T. (2008). An exploratory study of identity conceptualization and development in a sample of gender nonconforming biological females (Unpublished master's thesis). Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Retrieved from http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_trans-identity_0308.pdf
- Hird, M. J. (2002). Transsexualism in Society. For a sociology of transsexualism, 36(3), 577-595. Retrieved from https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2010/GEN141/um/Hird_transsexualism.pdf
- Transphobia. (n.d.). Retrieved April 12, 2017, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transphobia>
- Transequality. (2012). Injustice at every turn: A report of the national transgender discrimination survey [Exclusive Summary]. Retrieved from National Center for Transgender Equality website http://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf
- Haas, A.P., Rodgers, P. L., & Herman, J.L. (2014). Suicide Attempts Among Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Adults. Williams Institute, UCLA. Retrieved from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/AFSP-Williams-Suicide-Report-Final.pdf>
- McLeod, S. A. (2015). Unconscious mind. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html
- Thomas, Jeff. (2010, August 9). The conscious mind - How can we use it to create change? Part 2. Mindset habit [Supplemental material]. Retrieved from <http://www.mindset-habits.com/the-conscious-mind-how-can-we-use-it-to-create-change/>
- Three Minds: Consciousness, subconscious, and unconscious [Supplemental material]. (2013, May 23). Retrieved from <https://staroversky.com/blog/three-minds-conscious-subconscious-unconscious>
- McLeod, S. A. (2013). Sigmund Freud. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/Sigmund-Freud.html
- The Conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind – How does it all work? (2014, March 13). Retrieved from <http://themindunleashed.com/2014/03/conscious-subconscious-unconscious-mind-work.html>
- Explaining thanatos (The death drive). (2011, February 28). Retrieved from <https://thoughtsfromthemiddleseat.com/2011/02/28/explaining-thanatos-the-death-drive/>
- Cherry, Kendra. (2016, October 5). What are the id, ego, and superego? The structural model of

- personality. Retrieved from <https://www.verywell.com/the-id-ego-and-superego-2795951>
- Defense mechanism. (n.d). (2017, April 21). Retrieved from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Defense_mechanism
- Stillion, J.M., & McDowell, E.E. (2015). Perspective on the cause of suicide. Suicide across the life span: premature exits. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.id/books?id=oAceCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA46&lpg=PA46&dq=defense+mechanism+suicide+theory&source=bl&ots=JMSLuqujd-&sig=BpizaZHEVqdOco2uwwZVY_Er0NU&hl=ban&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=defense%20mechanism%20suicide%20theory&f=false
- Vaillant, G.E. (1986). Appendix: Six assessment schemes for defense mechanisms. In: *Empirical Study of Ego Mechanisms of Defense* (pp 101-152). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- McLeod, S. A. (2016). Id, Ego and Superego. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html
- Reitan, Ann. (2013). Remission of schizophrenia and defense mechanisms [Supplemental material]. Retrieved from <http://brainblogger.com/2013/12/24/remission-of-schizophrenia-and-defense-mechanisms/>
- Georget. (2007). Top 7 psychological defense mechanisms. Retrieved from <http://listverse.com/2007/11/15/top-7-psychological-defense-mechanisms/>
- Apter, A., Plutchik, R., Sevy, S., Korn, M., Brown, S. & Vanpraag, H. (1989). Defense mechanism in risk of suicide and risk of violence. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* ,36(11) , 1520 - 1527. doi: 10.1176/ajp.146.8.1027. Retrieved from <http://42051.faiithweb.com/Suicidal%20adolescents%20and%20ego%20defense.html>
- McKenzie, Hayley. (2013). Script angel: Is drama really one of the genre types? Retrieved from <http://www.scriptmag.com/features/script-angel-is-drama-one-of-the-genre-types>
- Packer, Sharon. (2007). Psychological thrillers and serial killers and the motif of madness. *Movies and The Modern Psyche* (pp 85-87). New York, NY: Greenwood Publishing Group. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.id/books?id=CX4goUP_yh0C&pg=PA87&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Bowie-Sell, Daisy. (2012). John madden on psychological thrillers. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/starsandstories/9032326/John-Madden-on-psychological-thrillers.html>
- These movies will hurt your Brain (In a good way). (2017, April 20). Retrieved 2017, May 2 from <http://www.refinery29.com/2016/03/105677/psychological-thrillers-mind-fuck-movies>
- Word Hunter. (2012) Psychological thriller. Elements of the psychological thriller, mystery, suspense and/or crime fiction genres. Retrieved from <https://hunterswritings.com/2012/10/12/elements-of-the-psychological-thriller-mystery-suspense-andor-crime-fiction-genres/>
- Truby, John (2009). Secrets of genre. Retrieved from <http://johntrubyscreenwriting.blogspot.co.id/2009/07/secrets-of-genre.html>
- Dorrance Publishing. (2014). Character driven v. plot driven writing: What's the difference. Retrieved from <http://www.dorrancepublishing.com/character-driven-v-plot-driven-writing-whats-difference/>