

TRANSGENDER PERSONALITY REFLECTED IN BUFFALO BILL'S CHARACTER AS SEEN IN HARRIS' *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*

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Abstract

This research discusses transgender phenomenon as seen in Thomas Harris' novel entitled *The Silence of the Lambs*. The main purpose of this research is to reveal the Transgender symptoms in the novel through the main character Buffalo Bill. Transgender is a term of which one who fantasies being a woman or man by wearing woman or man dress and make gestures like woman or man. Transgender occurs because his or her background phenomenon of life. The writer arranges the literary review by discussing theory and approach. The theory that the writer applies is queer theory developed by Michael Foucault. Besides, the writer uses the theory of Judith Butler that explains and describes about sex, orientation and gender. This queer theory is more correlated and understandable for the analysis. In addition, Psychology Literature approach by Ramajuru is also applied. The Result of this analysis shows some symptoms that exist in the character of Buffalo Bill. It was started with cross-dressing, assertion that transgender vital body parts are disgusting, have a desire to change gen types, existence of behavior and physical appearance of inside or abnormal genetic makeup. The writer hopes that by conducting this research it could give the reader more understanding about how is the implementation of queer theory in the literary field or work and become the new guidance to the future reader that are interested in discussing with same theory.

Keywords: *The Silence of the Lambs*, queer theory, transgender

Introduction

According to Foucault, "if sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom."

Nowadays, LGBT is not a rare thing again to be known by public. But still, there is a wall that keeps the LGBT people feel so shame or hesitate to express them if they are part of LGBT. The things that could make LGBT people feel so afraid to show their real identities because the social surrounding is still anti-LGBT. Besides, they will get social harassment or even discrimination from heterosexual people.

"Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination,

harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those that identify themselves as heterosexual." (Subhrajit, 2014)

So the social harassment is coming because of the society stigma that LGBT is nearby HIV/AIDS disease. This term is actually mistakenly understood by the society since the fact the cause of HIV/AIDS spreading is not only coming from LGBT people. The discrimination towards LGBT is so extreme, started from bullying, discrimination or even murderer that done by heterosexual people.

Transgender especially, is one of the social parts that mostly get the discriminations and harassment. The cause is because they are explicitly shows their passion and sense in dressing not according by the gender culture. They are easily recognized and normal or heterosexual people will bully them directly.

Moreover, there is still a chance of LGBT or homosexual to live normally and happily with heterosexual. The support also came from some of the great people and also some artists that could influenced the society through their works such as film, novel, drama, poetry or even music, such as the ex-president of America, Barrack Obama and some artist and singer such as Lady Gaga, Demi Lovato and others.

In literary field for example, there is a novel that represents how is the life of being a LGBT especially transgender and the novel is entitled *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris.

The Silence of the Lambs is a novel by Thomas Harris, he is an American author. He wrote the bestselling Thriller Psychological Horror in *Hannibal Lectur Series*, *Red Dragon*. *The Silence of the Lambs* novel was originally published on July 15 1988. This novel narrates about how is the life of a man nicknamed Buffalo Bill, he wants to be a Transgender , he wants to get surgery to change his identity as a woman , because He hates his identity, he is not comfortable with his gender as a man. The issue that started Buffalo Bill has lack of attention from his family, never making friends, since he was kid he thought that no one love him or care about him, since he was kid He suffered violence by his father, and his mom cannot give attention to him because actually His mom was a model, but she failed in one of competition, it made her become depression and consumed drugs and alcohol. After she got a baby, she expected that she has a baby girl so her baby can be a model like her, but in fact she had to face the reality that she got baby boy, so because of that she never accept buffalo bill as her child.

After one day buffalo bills saw a pupa , it's so ugly and disgusting but after it transformed becoming a butterfly, its look so beautiful, so after that he saw it, he thought he have to change become a woman ,he hope that after he change, everybody will love and accept him.

Thus, the writer here wants to conduct an analysis by using psychological approach. To support this research, the writer uses queer theory from Judith Butler.

The urgency of the writer to conduct this research is to discover about how transgender is reflected in Buffalo Bill's character. Hopefully, this research can be a new guidance of other researcher in doing the analysis especially dealing with queer theory. As the result, the writer hopes that the reader could get new information dealing the issue.

a. Research Question

According to the background of the study which has been elaborated previously, the writer formulates the problem into: How is Transgender reflected in Buffalo Bill's character?

b. Research Objective

From the research question above, the objective of this research is: To reveal how is transgender reflected in Buffalo Bill's character.

c. Research Uses

There are two uses of study, theoretical use and practical use.

d. Theoretical Use

Theoretically, this research is expected to support and to contribute the field of literary study especially in a novel. So it will be advantageous for the readers who are interested in novel and the topic of discussion. Hopefully, this research is able to enrich the reader knowledge and to give brief information and understanding about LGBT especially transgender issue through Thomas Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*.

e. Practical Use

Practically, this research is to give information of LGBT especially transgender in the novel. This research is expected to be reference for reader or researcher who needs information about how the content of the

novel according to the queer theory is and how to apply the theory to their relevant research.

f. Research Scope

Based on the research question, the writer focuses on analyzing how transgender is reflected in Buffalo Bill's character. Thus, the approach and the theory used in this research are psychology literature approach and queer theory.

g. Theoretical Framework

i. Previous Studies

To conduct this research, previous study is needed when the writer wants to do a research that dealing with the topic, the writer hopes that it will help and give guidance to the writer when the writer conducts the research. And I found 5 previous studies:

- (1) Sexuality and Gender Findings from the Biological, Psychological and Social Sciences by Lawrence S. Mayer (2016).

This previous study gives brief information to the writer in understanding of how are the sexuality and gender findings from the biological, psychological, and social construction of a person. It shows that mental health could not only be genetic but can induced by the environments around the individual. So from this journal helps the writer to answer the research question that already elaborated earlier,

- (2) Transgender in Tom Hooper's Movie *The Danish Girl* by Indah Sari in 2016.

Transgender occurs because his/her background phenomenon of life. The movie *The Danish Girl* tells about the main character Einar Wegener becomes a transgender woman that causes by various factors. The result showed that transgender phenomenon that felt by Einar Wegener caused by biological factor

and self-perceive of gender identity. The third previous study from thesis, it gives brief information about Transgender that very useful for the writer to conduct the research. By reading this thesis, it is giving clear information to the writer about Transgender can happen by various factors.

- (3) Research into Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Adult Learning by Donna James (2010)

This third previous study gives brief data it explains that how is the gender identity of someone. It is unpredictable that if we are talking about gender identity. From this journal construction of gender itself is based on the society or the environment.

- (4) Transgender in Julie Anne Peters' Luna by Annastasya Tyandias Kusuma (2014)

This journal was written in 2014, it explains about Sex and gender are complex issues. Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women; while gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. People who could not play roles as their assigned gender, categorized as gender identity disorder.

- (5) Why Hip-Hop is Queer: Using Queer Theory to Examine Identity Formation in Rap Music by Silvia Maria Galis-Menendez.

In this journal, it used queer theory. However, the ambiguity surrounding the word "queer" presents unique difficulties in constructing an argument about the queerness of something, particularly as queer relates to race and gender. Queer has become widely used as an umbrella term, not only for LGBT* people, but also for

anything that is considered non-normative. As a result, “queer” is often stripped from its particular historical context and queer theory and queerness are often used to attempt to erase difference in experience along the lines of race and gender. However, the term and politics of queerness emerged during the AIDS crisis and the activism coming from the LGBT* communities, which is significant to defining and using ‘queer.’ So from this journal, it gives the writer to understand that using queer theory not only for analyzed LGBT but also it can use for analyzing the rap music . and this journal also give contribution by telling how to use queer theory and it helps the writer to answer the research question.

For approach, this analysis using the writer uses psychology of literature .because this approach more effective with this reseach question and in answering the research question.

Because the writer hopes that this approach can help the writer to analyze the main problem formulation that stated the symptoms reflected on the character in the silence of lambs novel .in psychology literature, the writer use psychoanalysis and the writer uses queer theory that mostly use in psychological field, this theory is aim to find out and to discover the symptoms that is appear in the literary work.

According to Foucault in Spargo (1999).

“‘Queer’ can function as a noun, an adjective or a verb, but in each case is defined against the ‘normal’ or normalising. Queer theory is not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire.” (Spargo, 1999, p. 9).

From the quotation, it is clearly seen that the definition of queer is the study of the same-sex relationship that does exist in the

object such as literary work, music film and so on. Queer is not a singular framework but a collection of intellectual engagements which means that all field in the study could analyze the object by using queer theory so do in literary field.

Many people misunderstand about they believe that the term "queer theory" is just a synonym for "gay and lesbian studies." In fact, queer theory is a specific part of the gay and lesbian studies based on "the idea that identity is not fixed and does not define who we are." The term was coined by Teresa de Lauretis in 1990. Then the term queer was introduced in 1990, the important figure in this theory are Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Diana Fuss who follows the work of Michel Foucault. These experts are rolling by the same flow of the theory and also the discussion. But, here the writer choose the theory that comes from Judith Butler as she stated in her book *Gender Trouble* that quoted by Wardhani in her journal.

Then here, the writer uses the theory of queer by Butler in Wardhani (2013) as the next developer of this theory. She states that

“The conclusion that Butler can be drawn from here is that sex, gender, and sexual orientation are something that is fluid, unnatural, and abstract, (and constructed by social conditions). So in Judith Butler's thought, LGBT is not a social aberration, but a variation in human identity based on performative action.”(Wardhani, 2013, p. 7)

From the quotation above, the writer believes that the theory of queer by Judith Butler could help the writer to conduct and finish the research and answer the research question that already written before. According to Judith Butler is someone would like to change their gender due to the environment and social structure.

And I put transgender element in this theory. The main issue that the writer wants to discuss in LGBT is about the T or Transgender, as the writer already mentioned earlier in the background of the

study. If we go back to definition, LGBT is a part of queer theory where the queer theory itself is an umbrella to LGBT itself.

ii. So what is Transgender?

According to APA (American Psychological Association) transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Or in the simple way transgender is a gender-changing that done by an individual because of they are not conform to the sex at their birth. Or in other word, Transgender is not something same as lesbian, gay or even bisexual. If we look deeper to the definition that already mentioned earlier, lesbian gay and bisexual are the people that has different sexual orientation (or called homo because they love the same gender as them) but they keep they sexual identity as their birth. Transgender is something different, according to APA that stated above transgender is someone that change their sex and gender because of they are not comfortable with it. And there are 7 symptoms that categories someone to be transgender.

- (1) Strong and persistent cross-gender identification
- (2) Transgender male preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire
- (3) Cross-sex role
- (4) Assertion that transgender vital body parts are disgusting
- (5) Feeling uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their sex anatomy
- (6) Have a desire to change gen types.
- (7) Existence of behavior and physical appearance of inside or abnormal genetic makeup

Methodology

The writer use qualitative and library study to support the writer's research. From internet research, the writer browsed some journals and articles then figured out some

theories from some books related to the research. The writer uses the qualitative method to explore the behavior, perspectives, experiences, and feelings of people and emphasize the understanding of these elements.

1. Data and Data Source

Data is very important element to support the writer in doing research. By this data, the writer can complete this research to prove the evidence about this research. In this research, the writer has data sources. Data in this research are words, quotation, and dialog from novel which describe about queer analysis of the main character in novel by Thomas Harris.

2. Data Collecting Technique

- a. Reading and Understanding and finding the issue that related with the research question or related with queer theory. The issue is related with research question that already elaborated earlier.
- b. Interprets deeply the chosen data from the novel to knowing whether or not the data denote the issue about queer people especially the transgender. In this part writer also do interpretation toward the meaning the text or the narration or the dialogue to find the answer for solving the problem formulation.
- c. Finding supporting data that can help the writer to do the analysis such as journals, books that related to the discussion of queer, LGBT and gender findings in order to fulfill the information that the writer needed in order to answer the research question. The supporting data here will help the reader in understanding the issue.
- d. Arranging the data based on determined order and gather into the right pattern as needed in this research. Here, the writer will arrange the data that the writer got dealing with the issue in the novel.

3. Data Analyzing Technique

Data analysis is a process of organizing the data into description, so the writer could find the theme and the issues. The data which the writer got in data collecting technique will be analyzed by following the stage. Here the writer uses several steps in analyzing the data:

a. Selecting Stage

This stage aims the writer to select the data whether or not the data that chosen is relevant and significant or not with the research. Selecting data also relevant with choosing the data whether or not the data is match with the issue that the writer wants to analyze.

b. Interpreting Stage and Classifying Stage

The points of this stage is to interprets the data that been chosen by the writer and construct how is queer character contained in the novel. In this stage, the writer uses the theory and the approach that the writer have choose to analyze the discussion.

c. Concluding Stage

This is the final stage of the analyzing technique. Every data that has been selected, classified and analyzed will be concluded after relate it with the explanation and description toward the issue. The concluding stage also has function as the answer of the research question that the writer has elaborated earlier. The conclusion will be putted after those steps earlier have been done.

Findings and Discussion

1. Feeling uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their sex anatomy.

After his first rinse, Gumb applied Friction des Bains, rubbing it over his chest and buttocks with his hands and using a dishmop on the parts he did not like to touch. His legs and feet were a little stubbly, but he decided they would do. Gumb towed himself pink and applied a good skin emollient. His full-length mirror had a shower curtain on a bar in front of it. Gumb

used the dishmop to tuck his penis and testicles back between his legs. He whipped the shower curtain aside and stood before the mirror, hitting a hipshot pose despite the grinding it caused in his private parts. (chapter 20, page 280).

From that the data it shows that buffalo bills got uncomfortable feeling with his own sex. The data that the writer put here is one of the symptoms that exist in someone's transgender. By understanding the data, the first symptom has been discovered.

2. Transgender male preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire

A big bathroom, all white tile and skylights and sleek Italian fixtures standing against exposed old brick. An elaborate vanity flanked by tall plants and loaded with cosmetics, the mirror beaded by the steam the shower made. From the shower came humming in a key too, high for the unearthly voice. The song was Fats Walter's "Cash for Your Trash," from the musical Ain't Misbehavin'. Sometimes the voice broke into the words: "Save up all your old newsPAPERS, Save and pile 'em like a high skyscraper.

Mr. Gumb played with the lights and his wigs for some dramatic effects, and he tried a wonderful choker necklace of shells over the collar line. It would be stunning when he wore a decollete gown or hostess pajamas over his new thorax. (Chapter 26, page 374)

In second data, it shows Mr Gumb or Buffalo bills, he wears wigs, necklace, he uses make up, he also imagine that how if he wears a decolette gown. Which is it is very queer as man but he likes to dressing like a female , so the second data is also prove that buffalo bills has symptoms of transgender.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Silence of the Lambs* novel by Thomas Harris, the writer discussed about Transgender Personality in one of character , which is Buffalo Bill, by

using Queer theory the writer found 7 symptoms that categories someone to be transgender such as Strong and persistent cross-gender identification, Transgender male preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire, Cross-sex role, Assertion that transgender vital body parts are disgusting, Feeling uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their sex anatomy, Have a desire to change gen types, Existence of behavior and physical appearance of inside or abnormal genetic makeup. From those symptoms it makes the writer easy to analyze this novel and finish the research, hopefully this research can be new guidance for new researcher that using same theory or for anybody that interesting to analyze Transgender issue.

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