



**AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER IDENTITY IN DAVID EBERSHOFF'S
*THE DANISH GIRL***

THESIS

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FACULTY OF HUMANITY
JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

2018



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Submitted to English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember, inpartial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Sarjana Sastra in English Studies

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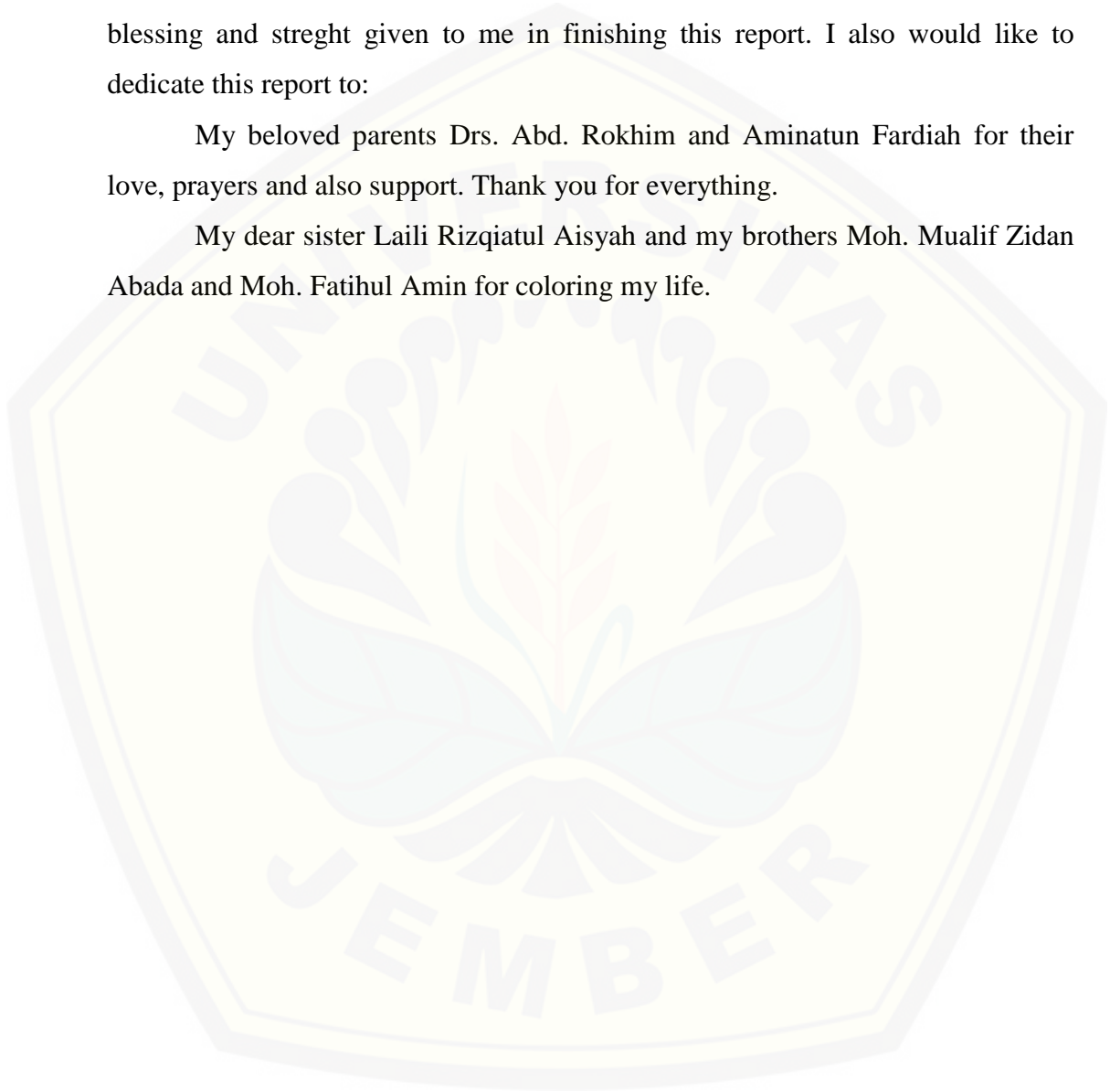
**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
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2018**

DEDICATION

First of all, I would like to dedicate this report to Allah SWT for all His blessing and streght given to me in finishing this report. I also would like to dedicate this report to:

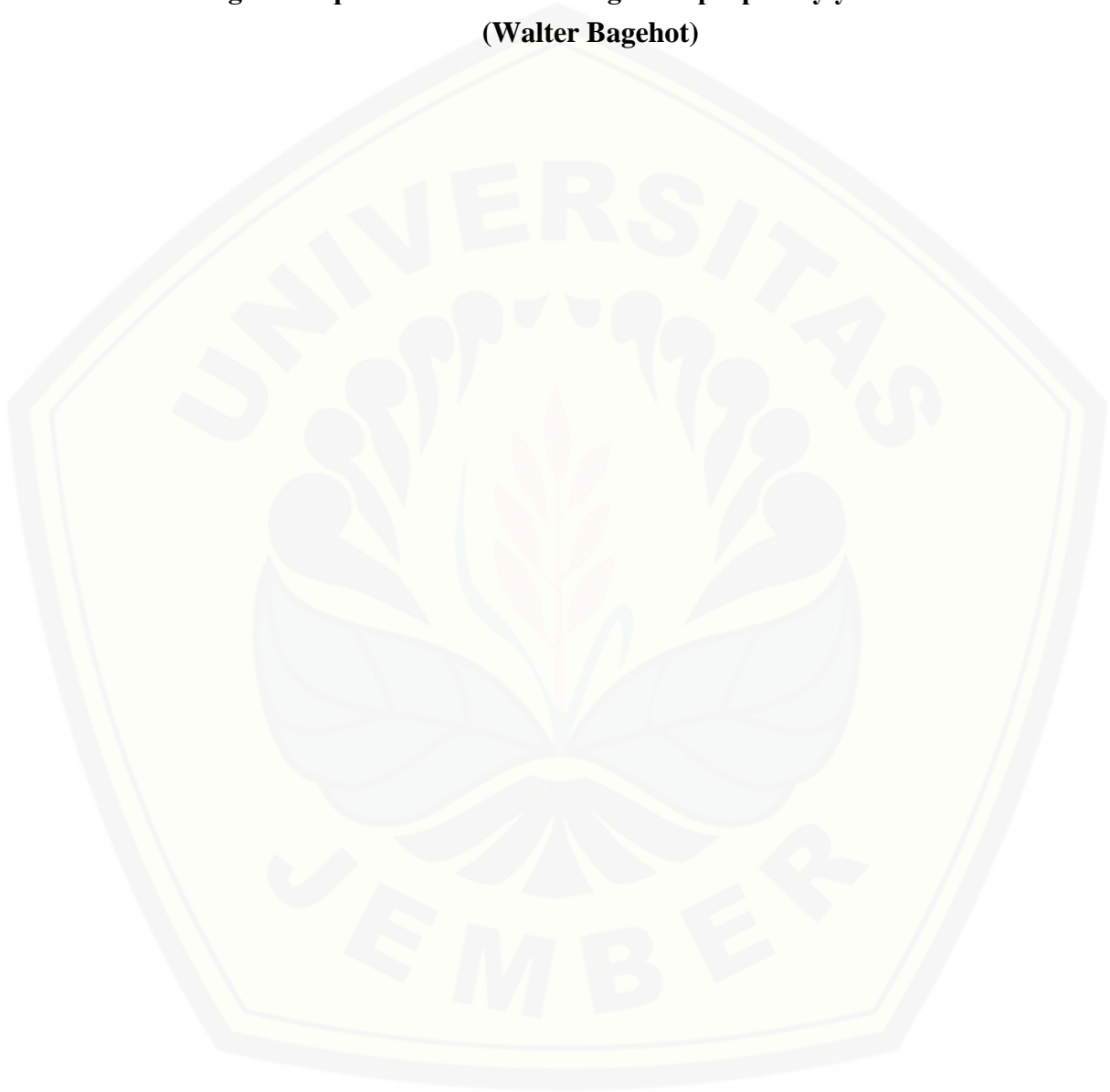
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MOTTO

**“The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do”
(Walter Bagehot)**



DECLARATION

I hereby state that the thesis entitled “An Analysis of Gender Identity in David Ebershoff’s *The Danish Girl*” is an original piece of writing. I declare that this analysis and the result described in in this thesis have never been submitted for any degree or any publications.

I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, September 19th, 2018

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SUMMARY

An Analysis of Gender Identity in David Ebershoff's *The Danish Girl*; Laila Riska Rahmawati, 150110101105; 54 pages; English Departement, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.

The Danish Girl is a novel written by David Ebershoff, an American author, in 2000. *The Danish Girl* tells about the life of transgender pioneer which struggles to seek his true identity. I identify the gender identity of the main character through his characterization. Not only the characterization of Einar, there are also other characters. However, this thesis focuses on Einar's characterization.

I use qualitative data analysis because it aims to analyzing and explaining the meaning of the message inside the novel. Sociological approach and queer theory utilized to help this research in understanding more about transgender. The result of the research shows that Einar is a transgender, named Lili. It is analyzed through the characterization of Einar that leads this research finds the gender identity through his cross-gender identity behaviour and also his psychological suffering. Therefore, Einar insists to transform his identity becoming Lili Elbe. This research also explains pertaining to the transformation of Einar becoming a transgender. He obtains his family support until successful being a transgender. Queer theory is uses to conceive how Einar's gender identity is constructed by society. According to Butler, gender is not following the sexual identity because sexual identity is not determinant by gender, gender is constructed by culture and society.

Furthermore, the social context and author motives in the novel also discussed. The social context in the novel located in Denmark represents the society when the novel is written. I analyze the social condition in Denmark 1930's corresponded to gender identity issues which the society in Denmark 1930's accepted trans-person.

Besides, to analyze the author motives I have to figure out the author's way of thinking towards the problem in the novel. Ebershoff delivers his motives in the novel by exploring the struggle of Einar as a transgender person who succeeded being trans-sexual and accepted by his family. He succeeded to influence his close relatives about his problem as transgender through his behavior, ideas and opinion as well from the dialogue.



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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates about the background of research which explicates the reason of researcher to conduct the study. Through the introduction, it also conveys what material is analyzed and the theory is applicable toward the research implied in research topic and background. Moreover, the research focuses on the research questions and purposes provided in this chapter.

1.1 The Background of the Study

The Danish Girl is a novel from the United States written by David Ebershoff in 2000 that talks about transgender. This is actually his first novel which was inspired by the real love story of transgender pioneer, Lili Elbe and her wife Greta Wegener. The story in the novel took place in Copenhagen, Denmark. Einar Wegener was happily married to his wife, Greta Wegener. Einar and Greta were American portrait painters. One day Greta had to do a portrait painting for a famous opera singer, but her model was busy therefore Greta convinced her husband Einar to put on the opera singer's dress and Einar agreed. Greta thought he looked so pretty and then called him Lili. This event made Einar decided to dress as Lili and ventured out in public sometimes. Meanwhile, Einar had quit painting. Instead of painting, he visited a peep show to watch women strip not for sexual reasons but for learning how to move more like a woman did. Einar became more and more depressed with being Einar and he wanted to be Lili. Fortunately, Einar had the support from Greta and her brother Carlisle and decided to find a doctor named Professor Bolk who had developed a surgery to physically change a man into a woman.

In writing this novel, Ebershoff said in audio recording at Barnes and Noble, Astor Place, "I was reading a book of gender theory that somebody passed me and in there, parenthetically, was a reference to a man named Einar Wegener who had gone on to become a woman and I was struck that I had never heard of this name and that this story of the first transsexual was not known. There was enough there in that paragraph that evoked something in my head. I was also very struck by

who this wife was and how could she involves and what kind of marriage could sustain such a transformation”. David Ebershoff seems less willing to do the hard imaginative work of illuminating the character behind the idea, the pure romanticism to the way he depicts Einar in the novel and decided to do a surgery to remove his male parts and became a transgender.

The word transgender, according to Cambridge Dictionary (1995), uses to describe someone who feels that they are not in the same gender as the physical body they were born with, or who does not fit easily into being either a male or a female. In this case related to the novel, the main character Einar Wegener did not feel in the same gender as the physical body he was born. Einar had Greta as his wife but in the other hand he also loved Hendrik—he disoriented about his gender identity either being a male or female. From this problem, I consider to use queer theory because it deals with the topic of sex, gender and desire. Queer has been associated most prominently with bisexual, lesbian and gay subject but its analytic framework also includes such topics intersex, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Moreover, queer theory is compatible to explore the transgender and gender identity of Einar as the representation of gender complexity.

Queer theory examines the constitutive discourses of homosexuality developed in the last century in order to place “Queer” in historical context. Queer theory is a segment of academic thought that focuses on the constructed of gendered and sexual identities. To the queer theorist, heterosexuality and homosexuality are binary social constructs that hold saliency only in certain historical moments, rather than descriptors of innate sexual types (Seidman, 1994). Thus, rather than studying the homosexual or heterosexual individual, the queer theorist studies the webs of power and discourse that create the idea that such individuals exist (Henderson, 2003; Seidman, 2006; Steinman, 2001).

Based on the explanation above, there is a reason why I take gender as my research. Gender has to be understood because genders are about performances of identity, norms and gendered roles. Everything in lives are gendered, starting from the clothes that we wear, the language we speak, the jobs that we do and the

behavior that we do. Therefore, from this research I want to give further explanations about gender identity being clarified through the transgender character. I provide the study of transgender life through the main characters Lili Elbe as the transgender characters entitled “**An Analysis of Gender Identity in David Ebershoff’s *The Danish Girl***”.

1.2 The Research Topic

This research is about to scrutinize the gender identity of Einar as the representation of transgender subject and gender confusion to uncover his background to find his identity and the ideology constructed through the writer’s perspective of gender identity. The so-called Queer Theory is the appropriate theory to do analysis since the society acceptance of transgender is still complicated.

1.3 The Reseach Questions

In this discussion of the study there are three questions related to the problem in this novel. The focus of this discussion is the transgender character Einar Wegener who was confused about his gender identity. They can be stated as follows:

1. How does the novel represent the gender identity?
2. How is the contextual condition of the novel?
3. How is the critical position of the author?

1.4 The Goals of Study

This goal of study is written to get an understanding about the transgender character in this novel. The goals of this research are:

1. To know how the gender identity is represented in the novel.
2. To reveal how the contextual condition explored in the novel.
3. To know the critical position of the author *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The Danish Girl is David Ebershoff's novel that depicts about the life of transgender. The main character of the novel, Einar, experiences the disorientation of his belief. He presumes that there are two people living in his body because the emergence of Lili. In other words, he feels that he is not in the same gender as his physical body. Therefore, this condition becomes one of Einar's obstacles in showing his identity as transgender.

In this research, Einar has many obstacles in transforming himself to be a transgender. He went to some doctors but all of them did not believe Einar. They said that Einar was not normal, he had schizophrenia and needed a medical treatment. They also accused him as homosexual since he told them that he had ever kissed a man. In this novel, his Decision to be a transgender is supported by his belief in himself being a transgender. Nevertheless, He had Greta as her wife, yet he cannot fulfill his desire to be a Lili.

In transforming himself to be a transgender, his family helped him to find Professor Bolk. He helped Einar through the surgery to remove his genital. In the end of the novel, Einar Wegener successfully becomes Lili Elbe through the surgery but her body is getting weak. Queer theory helps me to criticize the gender identity of Einar in the novel *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff. Besides, the sociological approach is also used to criticize the society where Einar is trying to transform himself as transgender and the author's motive in writing *The Danish Girl*.

The Danish Girl gives us a character who has shown the gender identity varies. At the same time, the novel gives us lesson through Lili's character that transgender phenomena are very obvious reality in the midst of society. Apparently, society gazes gender only as a patent object, thus Einar could not live in both gender as male and female. The perspective of society forces Einar to do transformation becoming Lili. Einar may not only feel as a woman, but he must change his physical appearance to be woman since society sees gender through from physical aspect. This change of Einar becoming Lili is one of a new

discourse about gender identity developing in the society. Therefore, Ebershoff writes the novel as he tries to convey and to show that sexual orientation is not only seen from one aspect considering to gender masculine and feminine or sex male and female, yet sexual orientation is using both aspects to identify someone.



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