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# **CULTURAL NARRATIVES**

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## The Depiction of the Meaning of Death through Iola and Anest Character in *Salt Root and Roe*

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### ABSTRACT

Death has meaning for each individual, which sometimes holds meaning about the psychological soul in literature. Anxiety, fear of abandonment, and betrayal become unconscious individual factors. These factors are not only conveyed in physical and emotional form but also in the written form of literary works such as contemporary drama. This study discusses how the meaning of death is tied to anxiety, fear of abandonment, and betrayal in a play entitled *Salt Root and Roe* by Tim Price. This literary work shows how the deaths of the main characters, namely Iola and Anest, twin sisters, are linked to incidents of anxiety and fear originating from childhood trauma, so this influences their subconscious decisions. To analyze and answer the study objectives, the author used qualitative research methods with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory approach. This study analyzes from the perspective of Freud's psychoanalysis using the tripartite theory of id, ego, and superego of the characters Iola and Anest to discover the character's desires and decisions influenced by their environment. In the process of this analysis, it was discovered that the twin characters, Iola and Anest, had trauma in their childhood, which resulted in anxiety, betrayal, and fear of being abandoned by each other or being abandoned by their loved ones due to the influence of an environment and family that was less than supportive during their childhood. In addition, this study found that Iola and Anest's meaning of death tied each other to each other, indicating that their relationship did not want to be abandoned again and experienced the trauma and disappointment of being abandoned in the past. Tragic death in this literary work means a togetherness created by the characters' deep-seated fears, traumas, and betrayals.

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### INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is one of the factors that every individual has a fear of something they want to protect or avoid. It becomes the urge of humans to defend themselves with all existing mechanisms. One of them is the fear of abandonment initiated by Masteron, quoted from the journal belonging to Palihawadana et al. (2018), which explains that this fear is characterized by a symptom, namely the attachment of insecurity that gives birth to an intense but unstable relationship. The response from humans is also different, as they maintain a broken relationship or support something positive along with impulsive actions such as anger, agreement, and others.

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Death always comes to all humans without exception, making some people worried about it, and some people do not have time to worry about it because they are focused on achieving their goals in the world. This anxiety can also develop into a very drastic fear for some people, especially during a crisis where an individual or group of people has problems both psychologically and mentally, especially at older ages. Zhang et al. (2019) explain that parents have the experience of 'commonly' suffering from mental disorders or anxiety of death. In addition, adults have a heavy burden that sometimes they must prepare for a prosperous future so that later they die in peace or not in debt or even poverty. However, this psychological problem becomes a common phenomenon when people have an unhealthy flow of anxiety so that it becomes pressure that even leads to burnout or suicide before fate is determined. This anxiety will be worse for members or other community members if an unconscious mindset about the anxiety of death influences it. It can happen in the status quo that the negative influence is embedded in other people, such as young people.

The influence of this anxiety phenomenon also becomes people's mindset so that there is a habit that gives birth to culture. This general phenomenon that occurs in society is also written and stated in the literature by the authors. Habbar (2003) has argued that cultural elements are expressed through writing in a literary work that contains educational, moral, and social values. The authors are witnesses that they can become heroes, perpetrators, or even victims who convey ideas or messages either implicitly or explicitly to the reader. The message can contain a criticism that is intended to open people's minds to move towards prosperity goals because the authors believe that a literary work can move people's minds consciously or not. This literary work can take any form, such as drama, prose, and poetry.

This representation of human anxiety and fear is also depicted in the contemporary literary drama *Salt, Root, and Roe*. Social-psychological issues such as anxiety are also still interesting to discuss for some professionals in contemporary literature. Compared to drama in modern times, which does not discuss the explanation of humans doing an action and why we need a change about which one is right, contemporary can open it (Narey, nd). *Salt Root and Roe*, written by Tim Price, is one of contemporary dramas that portrayed the sibling connections or relationship between Iola and Anest. The play's emotional description coupled with a bit of humor in the realism scenes (Juntunen, 2019) presents the audience with how the two sisters come to terms with the complexities of family relationships related to grief and loss (Bainbridge, 2013). The play shows the fears formed in childhood that make both sisters dependent on not wanting to be abandoned by each other and eventually choosing the decision to commit suicide. Furthermore, the play gives a message to the opposition of what happens to the cultural norms that include Menna, in the end, suicide which is not commonly done with cultural norms (Bainbridge, 2013) becomes a decision that ends in an acceptance in Iona's and Anest's decisions.

Observing this issue, this study analyzes how the perspective of a sister family relationship emphasizes the meaning of death which defies social norms that are very immortal. Although some previous studies used contemporary literature about contemporary drama (Love, 2020) analyzing Beckett's *Happy Day* focusing that fear of abandonment was affected by the past war and unnoticed in the twenty first century as human-centered anyone, while in Obeid et al s study (2019) focusing in education and

counseling solution for this issue. Arguing in this issue, Schechter (2022) which examined psychoanalysis studies on the direction of suicide from 1999-2017, self-passing using the Freud approach reviewed that suicide became a decision because of feelings that could not be avoided and became an urgent need. However, these studies do not explain why anxiety is ultimately a structured long-process that even changes cultural principles that reject the concept of suicide to normalize the character in their individual state of mind. This study explains the gap on new perspective that anxiety and the meaning of suicide death is a very long process felt due to childhood trauma using "Salt, Root and Roe" contemporary drama.

This study explains a deeper perspective of the anxiety and fear present in childhood leading to a counter-cultural decision. To analyze how this decision becomes a desire of the characters Iola and Anest, the author needs to use Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis as the most suitable approach to analyze how behavior and personal development are influenced by childhood trauma (Freud, 1917). In psychoanalysis, the author analyzed the formation of unconscious state decisions in the id, ego, and superego that are correlated with the fear and meaning of death (Freud, 1963). In addition, this approach is best suited to illustrate how anxiety relates to the core issue of fear of abandonment shaping an adult's mind (Freud 1917, p320). Considering the framework of this problem, this study has two research aims, which are how childhood trauma shaped characters' ego decisions and the meaning of their death.

## METHOD

Based on the objectives of this study, the researcher used a qualitative method by using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach as a tool to analyze the data. The author conducted qualitative research by Creswell (2007) which helped to analyze the research from the assumption, perspective, and theoretical literature. Moreover, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach was used to analyze the depiction of fear of abandonment and meaning of death through the drama script "Salt Root and Roe" by Price Tim. Freud's psychoanalytic approach is a theory of psychology that focuses on the subconscious as a major factor in shaping the behavior (Freud, 1917). Through this approach, the author provided the problems felt by the main characters, Iola, Anest, and Menna. The criteria of this characters were based on Freud's explanation, the psychoanalytic related about the trauma comes from the behavior or individual personality felt by the main characters who feel the most core issue of anxiety which is the fear of abandonment (Tyson, 2015), especially the characters Iola and Anest who are the characters have the tendency of childhood trauma leads into suicidal death. This psychoanalytic approach helped to analyze the psychological history trauma in childhood of Iola and Anest as identical siblings which is associated with juvenile and adult parents.

In this study, there are four steps in analyzing the data. First, the author did a close reading and saved part of the script of Tim Price's Salt Root and Roe drama as primary data to see the problems experienced by Iola and Anest about the trauma she had and explore the issue of suicide decisions by the main character. Second, the researcher analyzes and connects the fear of abandonment that forms the id, ego, and super ego and related to the meaning of Iola

and Anest's suicide death using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory and other sources. To disclose the meaning, the author applied the unconscious system to reveal the subconscious act of the characters that are id, ego, and superego (Freud, 1966). Moreover, the author applied the fear of abandonment in the history of the characters, which influence the id, ego, and superego of the characters. Through the analysis of the fear of abandonment mixed with tripartite analysis (id, ego, and superego) revealed the meaning of death attempted through the characters. The last step, the author concludes the analysis of the study that answers the objectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Fear of abandonment Iola and Anest

Fear of abandonment is one of the cores of issues based on childhood trauma. According to Sigmund Freud, he explained that there is an unconscious influence on a person from the unconscious, which is self-anxiety (Freud, 1963). This anxiety can have many factors, such as the fear of abandonment and forms of betrayal that arise from our feelings of childhood trauma, which can be influenced by the family environment (Freud, 1966). This anxiety or fear stems when the fear of abandoned by closest or beloved people such as friends, family, lovers, or others from the world leaving its existence (Freud, 1966).

The description of this trauma first explains how traumatised Iola and Anest feel by the sea. During their childhood, Iola and Anest lost their father figure, as described in scene five. In this scene, it is told how Iola uses mermaid humour to Menna how she remembers Menna's father or grandfather acting like a mermaid borrowed by women, so that someday the mermaid or the father must return to the sea. This humour has a tragic meaning that Iola and Anest's father has a stash in the phrase "I'm borrowed girls" which will later be taken back by the sea in the phrase "He was borrowed from the sea. And one day we'd have to give him back" which means that her father left them to his mistress. Moreover, in scene eleven it explains the details about the father which Iola and Anest are reminded of their "borrowed" father joke. Their father, as a mermaid, who is incapable of living on the land where Iola and Anest and their mother live around the beach, because their father lives in the sea or living in another world with his other lover. In the end, Iola and Anest are so traumatised by the loss of their loved ones that they do not return to the beach where they always played before with their father.

This fear kept them from being allowed to return to the sea by their mother for a long time. The incident left a deep trauma for the family, not only her mother but also Iola and Anest. At that time, her mother was very depressed, trying to avoid all places or things closely related to her husband, who left them there. The beach was supposed to be home for them turned a cold house. Furthermore, Freud explained that psychological disorders occur because of past experiences (Wack, 2021), so this would also be very suitable for the psychological state experienced by Iola and Anest. It can be concluded that trauma causes anxiety so that they have an identity as people who are afraid of being abandoned.

Iola: Borrowed he was see. 'I'm borrowed girls, make a fuss of me now, because tomorrow they might want me back' that's what he'd say. He was borrowed from the sea. And one day we'd have to give him back. That's

why he never went with us to the beach, said he was scared we'd give him back. After he died I was scared of the sea for years. Thought some big fish would come and take me to the bottom and ask me lots of questions. That's why we never went in the sea

Iola chuckles.

Menna: You and Mam never went in the sea?

Iola: Once he died that was it. Never again, neither of us. Drove our Mam mad she loved swimming but she couldn't get us to go in. We didn't go back in till you came along. (Tim Price, scene Five)

Iola Tell me about Dad.

Anest He was borrowed.

Iola That's right.

Anest Borrowed.

Beat.

From the sea.

Beat.

Couldn't live on the land.

Beat.

Couldn't die in the sea. (Tim Price, Scene Eleven)

Furthermore, the sadness of this loss is again expressed in detail in scene eleven. In this scene, when Iola and Anest have just lost their father, they always wait while looking for shells and pebbles at home every night. In this part, Anest recalls how they lost their father figure in her life. The father who was initially thought to be missing, had been waited at the sea by collecting pebbles and shells as a form of time spent until they ran out of "run out of space" or the time that they never come back to the sea. This trauma is embedded in Anest's dialogue in scene five, when they cry and keep looking for beautiful stones and shells in the hope that they will come with beautiful memories and expectations to divert Iola and Anest's feelings of trauma during their childhood. The shells and pebbles sometimes make them cry and sometimes stunned. The symbol of the shells and pebbles is the time and hope of Iola and Anest waiting for their father to return to them but the father figure they expected to lose was borrowed by the sea. This sadness and hope became one of the downfalls of Iola and Anest's time so that the two of them together grew up with the strength of strong siblings to each other.

Anest : When our Dad, went missing; we stuck a new shell on here for every night he didn't return. Then we ran out of space.

Beat.

We'd just bring a shell, or pebble home.

Slowly it dawns on Iola who Anest is.

Brought so many home Mam made us put them in the garden. We'd play with them and sometimes they'd make us cry, but we were always on the; look out. Nice pebble. Nice shell. (Tim Price, scene fifteen)

In the end, this deep childhood trauma scarred Iola and Anest so much that they chose to commit suicide. In this drama, it is told that Anest has the idea to return to the beach to die with Iola. This is due to Iola's situation with her dementia which makes it difficult for her to remember the past and is at risk of death. Because of their anxiety and not wanting to be left behind, the two choose to end their lives together at sea by tethering themselves with a skipped rope and carrying pebbles. Iola and Anest still chose the beach because they were still trapped in their past lives unconsciously and returned to their home, the sea with its pebbles, in the hope that they would go to heaven with their usual souvenirs. The skipped rope that held them together during their suicide is a form of the strength of Iola and Anest's relationship that was formed since they were children, where they often played together until they aged together until death.

Light on Iola and Anest in heavy coats, tied together by a skipping rope (Tim Price, Scene one)

Menna holds her hands to her mouth as the twins leave and Anest pulls a skipping rope out of Iola's pocket.

As they walk and talk, Anest goes into the bag and pulls out more pebbles, putting them into her own pockets as well as handing them to Iola.

Anest hands some more pebbles to Iola

Anest continue to fill their pockets with pebbles

Iola waves as Anest ties it around Iola's waist and then her own. The sound of the waves increasing as used in all the underwater scenes.

The twins are alone (Tim Price, Scene Sixteen)

Based on Iola and Anest's story, anxiety and fear of abandonment are the root causes of the oedipal complex due to childhood trauma. Freud (1966) in Tyson's book (2015), explains that family is the biggest influence on how trauma and anxiety are formed because a person's personality is a product of what has been taught by a complex family that is formed from our subconscious in long progress. Likewise with Iola and Anest, the loss of a father figure makes them sad and traumatized as well as a deep sense of depression until they are mature and old. In addition, from Iola and Anest's conflict with their unfinished father, these twin sisters make their identity have a subconscious desire, namely a defense, namely avoiding something related to trauma (Freud, 1966) including avoiding the sea and dying together as a result of the trauma of not wanting to be abandoned. Although Iola and Anest both avoid the sea, in the end, they subconsciously want to return to their childhood when they were still playing and happy in the paradise they wanted with their souvenirs of ropes and pebbles.

### **Id, Ego, And Superego of Suicidal: Iona, Anest, and Menna**

In this part, the author will use Freud's id, ego, and superego about how the subconscious and conscious considerations maintain a narrative that actually cannot be defended if we enter the values of the majority of cultures in the world. However, humans have a tendency to maintain the value of their pleasure or will first without regard to the values, philosophy,

or culture of the society that considers our desires to be wrong. Freud (1966) explained these three elements explaining in the tripartite theory, the id, is the greatest desire that comes unconsciously containing instincts or subjective desires without regard to existing cultural values and norms. The superego is our conscious instinct to reject or support something that is adjusted to cultural values or acceptance in the social environment (Freud, 1966). The consideration between the two is called the ego, which is an instinct that is in the conscious world and shows a feeling of stability and determines a change between the two. With the relationship of the three, we will know about the principles in their character that play a role in culture as they do about themselves (Freud, 1966).

### *Iola and Anest*

Iola's subconscious reveals the ideology about her id that he wants to die together with her sister, Anest, through suicide. This is because of the trauma they experienced, which was a sense of betrayal and being abandoned by their loved ones. Suicide was one of the mechanisms offered by Iola to her, even though it was not acceptable to those around her. Emile Durkheim explained in her book *Suicide* which I quoted from Aryani's article (2017) that this suicide can be influenced by the level of depression so that the integration of cultural values is weak which is included in the type of egoistic suicide. That way, Iola could maintain a bit of a narrative that at least the only thing left that was most precious to her (Anest) would never leave her or vice versa, Iola would never leave Anest. Furthermore, the superego experienced by both of them is a narrative that develops in society and religion that suicide is also a sin against a predetermined destiny, namely death. Rabbani (2021) explains in the article that the narrative of suicide, which is rejected by most, is influenced by social and religious norms, which are reinforced by the opinion of religious philosophers who see suicide as an immoral and unethical act. The egos of both have arbitration about which value they stand for. However, they hold on to their id of committing suicide because of the much greater trauma and shut down their awareness of the cultural value of unconsciously suggesting suicide.

In the context of this drama, Anest and Iola have the same id because they experience the same psychological disorders and mechanisms, while Menna (Anest's daughter) has an id to deny this reality which is sometimes inversely proportional to the superego. Through Freud's (1966) psychoanalytic approach, the ego, which is the result of the conflict between the id and superego, Iola and Anest have more of their high *nasu* towards something that reverses the cultural norm of dying together as a defense from the fear of abandonment. Therefore, the cultural context fails in Iola and Anest's subconscious perspective of how the world works and is considered. In addition, the inappropriate cultural context in Iola and Anest makes this individual character there is a subconscious rejection making the id much higher than what society wants (Freud, 1966). Iola and Anest's id representation is evidence that the concept and meaning of life and death in the unconscious works differently from the meaning of life and death in society. For example, cultural norms that do not normalize suicide due to immortality may restrict individuals from committing suicide. However, this

is different in Iola and Anest's subconscious formation which considers death by suicide as something meaningful rather than cultural norms.

### *Menna*

As a result of Iola and Anest's mutually supportive agreement, Menna has a perceived mental burden of committing suicide. Of course, as a child, they must put their parents in the best position which is their happiness until death. Children are certainly one who has a goal to make their parents live the way they want without being restrained by the demands of children that make them suffer. Menna, who is none other than Anest's child, has an id that she refuses her mother's planned suicide at sea and wants to let Iola die according to her destiny without having to bring Anest to die with her. Menna's superego explains that she should accept that belief because it was Anest's only wish in old age, or it could be said that it was her last wish. Iola herself was jealous when he saw Anest, who loved Iola more than herself. Iola knew very well how Anest saw Iola as a life, which meant her life would be like death without Iola. Therefore, Menna's ego maintains her mother's happiness regardless of cultural values and philosophy that suicide is not acceptable, which is her superego that wins over her id.

### **Meaning of Death Iola and Anest**

The meaning of death can be influenced by subconscious decisions that are hurt, especially by the experience of trauma. Based on the explanation of the trauma of loss along with the character's id, ego, and superego, the impact of death experienced by Iola and Anest can be explained. This is influenced by the past trauma of being abandoned by their father so both Iola and Anest don't want to lose each other. This reason becomes Iola and Anest's ego, which maintains the id rather than the superego. This death wish is expressed in the script in scenes Details are increasingly being discovered so this is like a puzzle that makes the best experience for a reader or audience who sees performance or reading. This is obtained in scene fifteen. They have a habit of collecting pebbles as souvenirs for them to keep at home later, which is expressed below. But there is a symbol that exists between them and pebbles, which means something that must be brought home.

...See. And you like;collecting pebbles, look at these.

Anest She's not with us.

Menna Yes she is. Picking up a pebble, Menna shows Iola. Look, you're always finding these and keeping them as ornaments around the house" (Tim Price, scene fifteen)

Anest pulls another two pebbles out and puts them in her own pockets. You'll probably need to get someone in to fix the wwhat you call" (Tim Price, scene sixteen)

This scene is here to explain the past that is present through an object, namely pebbles. Again, this is because their well-kept memories of the beautiful memories on the beach with the Pebbles family also became silent witnesses when Iola and Anest brought pebbles as souvenirs when they died together. The expression above (scene sixteen) shows as if death is their last home. As usual, when it indicates something valuable, they have, namely happiness at the moment they have. The two of them died with the joy of the fact that they died together.

The meaning of death in the characters of Iola and Anest is happiness and their way of not being separated. This means that they want to escape a disaster which is thought to be afraid of being abandoned despite the Iola has a dementia illness and predicted to leave shorter. Regardless of the cultural values that exist in Iola and Anest's lives, they just want to live and be left together without having to wait and be miserable. Apart from that, Iola and Anest end the story of their lives walking along the sea with their bodies tied to each other, this gives the meaning of returning home (to the sea) where their father left them. They together become people borrowed by the sea or die in their own way.

The meaning of the death of Iola and Anest is one of the defenses that belong to self-deconstruction. Freud (1966) explains that the intention to die (including suicide) is a form of physical self-destruction caused by psychological fears of being alone or abandoned. This fear is clearly illustrated in how Iola and Anest's lives are deteriorating, haunting their subconscious always with childhood trauma about their family. This fear becomes one of the controls of their subconscious towards death, which is a sense of wanting to destroy themselves together through psychological experiences. Freud's explanation is in line with the meaning of death desired by Iola and Anest because of the strong sibling bond symbolized by the skipping rope, the two of them are bound even when they drown themselves in the sea. This means that they are bound to each other's death based on the psychological makeup of children who have lost a parent. Thus, death is also Anest's fear if she becomes alone so collective or mass death becomes one of the consequences of a great sense of trauma and destruction (Freud, 1966).

## CONCLUSION

The fear of abandonment is the root cause of the anxiety felt by Iola and Anest, influencing their subconscious to commit suicide together. The analysis of the study shows the childhood trauma of Iola and Anest about losing family figures such as father and mother since childhood. Therefore, Iola and Anest have a great fear of not wanting each other to leave, so that the id of both of them is formed to choose suicide rather than cultural norms or cultures that oppose suicide decisions. Iola and Anest's deaths have strong evidence of the true meaning behind a strong relationship with their loved ones with similar traumas and life journeys. Menna, on the other hand, previously chose her decision to be selfish with Anest to stay alive and then slowly became helpless by accepting the choices of Iola and Anest. In short, this analysis congruently explains how the circumstances of childhood trauma greatly affect one's id despite the superego cultural norms against suicide. This representation of literature will certainly be very useful in the future to be analyzed and developed along with the current cultural reality for future research studies.

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