

Research Article

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Will Traynor's Suicidal Decision as Depicted in *Novel Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes

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Abstract

In this project, the writer analyzes Will Traynor's suicide decision which is reflected in novel "Me Before You" by Jojo Moyes. This paper used close reading method and psychological approach to analyze the story. The project aims to discuss Will Traynor suicide decision and how it is affecting to the other characters in the story. Through the analysis in this paper, the writer found several things that influenced Will Traynor suicide decision which was his characteristic, his internal and external conflict, and his psychological aspect. The writer also found that the other characters are really affected by Will's decision.

Keywords: Jojo Moyes; suicide; intrinsic; close-reading; characteristic

1. Background of the Study

Suicide is today's major public health problem and one of the main causes of death. The effects of suicide go beyond the person who acts to take their life: it can have a lasting impact on family, friends, and communities. According to Menninger, all suicides have three interrelated and unconscious dimensions namely: the wish to be killed (guilt), the wish to kill (revenge), and the wish to die (hopelessness) [1]. In general, there are two common aspects that cause suicide. The first one is psychological aspect and the second one is social aspect. In literature, the writer found the psychological aspect in novel entitled *Me Before You*.

Me Before You is a novel by Jojo Moyes [2]. It implicitly speaks about love and suicide; how love cannot save a man from willingness to do suicide. In brief, the novel is about Will Traynor whose suffering after he got hit by a motorcycle and caused him paralyzed. Will's then falls in love with his personal nurse, Louisa Clark. But their love cannot disestablish Will's willingness to suicide by help of some suicide organization.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Characters and Characterization

According to Abram, characters are the persons who are described and represented in a literary work, usually in a narrative work [3]. Characters are also 'endowed' with certain qualities of behavior, habit, and intellectual. Those certain qualities can be seen by their dialogue.

Character and characterization cannot be separated. It continuously influences each other. Regarding of the extrinsic element discussion, explanation of character and characterization is necessary.

2.2. Conflicts

Conflict plays an important part of plot. According to Holman conflict is "The struggle which grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot". Conflict is the start of problem rising between the characters in the story [4]. It is also the peak of a plot, conflict usually happens between the protagonist and antagonist character.

2.3. Suicide Theory

Shneidman describes suicide as a "drama of the mind." He coins the term "*psychache*", which is the psychological pain consisting of negative emotions and unmet psychological needs that an individual experiences. It differs from physical pain since it stems from emotional, rather than physical, discomfort. Psychache creates an overwhelming amount of distress in an individual so that perceives suicide as the only way to escape the pain [5].

Menninger who develops Freud's ideas states that "All suicides have three interrelated and unconscious dimensions which are the wish to be killed (guilt), the wish to kill (revenge), and the wish to die (hopelessness) [1]. Individuals who are suicidal wish to be killed in order to relieve their loved ones of a burden. Yet they also wish to kill in order to express their anger and aggression at those they feel have wronged them. Finally, they wish to die, due to the unbearable pain". Furthermore, Coleman divides the factors that cause suicide into four categories, which are interpersonal crises, failure and self-devaluation, inner conflict, and the lost of meaning and hope [6].

3. Research Method

This study requires close reading research method in order for the writer to develop and understanding the meaning of suicide in novel "Me Before You" by Jojo Moyes. Brummett states that "one of the most useful techniques is close reading, one used across a wide range of theories and methods, is the detection of form which is structure, or pattern that organize a text." (2009 : 49) [7]. Moreover, the writer uses a psychological approach in this writing. The writer uses psychological of literature approach to find the psychological aspect in the novel "Me Before You".

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *Will Traynor's Character and Characterization*

Will Traynor is a rounded character, which means that he changes his characterization through several events that happen along the story. As it can be seen that the story begins with prolog of him that shows the readers his life before his accident, Will is a successful international businessman. He is the man with passion and full of ambition, he determines his life to live fully and not to do anything useless. "I can't do those sorts of holidays. I need to do something." (Moyes. 2012:1) [2]. Will is born as a leader, it is his nature to lead and to be heard as his mother Camilla Traynor has described him as a kind of person whose words are always heard. "He was a man who was used to being heard. After all." (Moyes. 2012:123) [2]. That is explain how he becomes a successful businessman.

Will is also an adventurous person and really love doing extreme sport in his past life. He really love his past life, what he has done makes him a person full of passion in his life. Will always smiles and talks enthusiastically when reminiscing of his past

Will was silent for a moment. I watched him, wondering where he really was. When we had these conversations he became like the boy in my class, the boy who had distanced himself from us by venturing away. ... "Trou d'Eau Douce bay, Mauritius. Lovely people, beautiful beaches, great diving. Um... Tsavo National Park, Kenya, all red earth and wild animals. Yosemite. ..." (Moyes, 2012:215) [2].

That explains why Will has such a hard time adapting to quadriplegia. He is never the type of person who just sits around and think. He always has to be doing but now he cannot do very much at all. "I don't do anything, Miss Clark. I can't do anything anymore but sit. I just about exist" (Moyes, 2012:122) [2].

Ironically, Will is not injured by any of these extreme exploits; he survived all of those just fine. He is injured one rainy day when he was simply crossing the street an irony he refers to as "God's little joke" (Moyes 2012:128) [2].

4.2. *Conflicts*

4.2.1. Internal Conflict

The internal conflict happens because Will cannot cope with his new life as quadriplegic. Will is suffering for quadriplegia or spinal cord injuries which causes him a total loss of us of leg and limited use of the arms and hands. It also can be seen in Will's changing character after his accident, he tried to cover his depression by changing his attitude and limiting himself with outside world and any contact with other people. It seems Will is having self-devaluation toward his new condition, therefore he did not want to go outside because he hates when people looks at him with compassion.

Will really loves his old life, somehow deep down inside him and the fact that he is not able to live the way he wants to live makes him so depressed. As he says to his mother

that this is not the life he wants “*I don’t want to live like this, mother. This is not the life I chose. There is no prospect in my recovery, hence it is perfectly reasonable request to ask to end it in a manner I see fit.*” (Moyes. 2012:123) [2]. Will also often awakened and scream because in his dream he still able to walk, ski, and doing all those things he used to do back then.

4.2.2. External Conflict

There are several external conflicts that are experienced by Will, which are his conflicts between him and his family, and with his love story. Will’s conflict with his family occurs because he tells them that he wants to do a suicide with an assist of suicide organization. It takes a while for his mother to process his requests and finally agrees as his mother know that he will never stop asking. His sister is so mad at him and confronts him when she knows about what he has been planning, she does not believe that he is so selfish and does not think about the effect of his decision could be bad for his family. “You are the most selfish man I ever met!” a young woman was shouting. “I can’t believe this, Will. You were selfish then and you’re worse know”. (Moyes. 2012:25) [2].

The first external conflict that involves love story is when Will’s ex-girlfriend Alicia and his good friend Rupert come to visit and tells him that they are getting married. When they explain that to him, the only respond that Will gives to them simple and sarcastic words “congratulations” (Moyes. 2012:56) [2]. After they gone Will expresses his anger by crushing all the photograph in a shelf, he was pissed and broken hearted knowing his ex-girlfriend marry his good friend.

The second external conflict of love story happens between Will Traynor and Louisa Clark. It is when Will sticks to his decision to end his life and nothing can change his mind to do a suicide. After all the things that happen between them, all of the efforts that Louisa has put in to change Will’s mind is not enough to keep Will from wanting to end his life. His mind is set and nothing can change it, and it leads to great disappointment for Louisa, especially coming so soon after the closest moment the two ever shared. “It’s not enough for me. This—my world—even with you in it.” (Moyes, 2012:360) [2].

4.3. *Will Traynor’s Suicide Decision*

4.3.1. The Reason

Will’s new life costs a lot for him, he clearly feels hopeless since none of his recovery program after a year of trying has not shown any progress. “He’s not going to walk again, Louisa. That only happens in Hollywood movies.” (Moyes, 2012.150) [2]. In his current condition, Will is suffering for several physical pains. His body does not work the way it should be. When his unfit, his vital can drop easily that’s made him hospitalized several times.

There was stomach pain from digestive problems, shoulder pain, pain from bladder infections—an inevitability, apparently, despite everyone’s best efforts. He had a

stomach ulcer from taking too many painkillers early on his recovery, when he apparently popped them like Tic Tacs. (Moyes. 2012:106) [2]

From that evidence above, it can be seen the great deal of pain that Will suffers. Will also suffers psychologically, as it can be seen in his internal conflict. He cannot accept his new life and the part of his old life is always ringing in his mind. Will really loves his old life, he has a big dream and ambitions for his future, but they were all stolen from him instantly and it is hard for him to know the fact that he has lost his independence and ability to do the things he loves. He also has to face the prospect that it is only going to get worse. That is a reality he has to live with every day and leads him to a great deal of psychological turmoil.

Will wants to end all of the pain, In fact that he has been trying to attempt suicide once and still wants to do a suicide. Now the attempt to suicide is with the help of suicide organization. It is a proof that he has seen suicide as the only option. In the end, all he wants is to end all of this miserable life of him, no more pain, no more anxiety, and be free.

4.4. Other Characters' Reaction toward Will's Suicide Decision

4.4.1. Traynor's Family

It is been hard times for the last past two years for Traynor's family, especially for Will's mother, Camilla. When Will first time told her about his plan to assist suicide she was shock but tried to stay calm and immediately leave Will then she stood in hallway for almost half an hour processing what just happened. Two weeks after Will first attempts to suicide, his mother finally agreed with what Will has requested. It is not she agree to help her son kill himself, it is because she did not had another option. The fear that haunts her, that Will would try to kill himself again makes her helpless. Camilla knows her son, once Will determines of something he would never let go of that, He will always try again and again.

Will's sister Georgina, is very disappointed with Will's decision. She even confronts him when she first time knows Will's plan and calls him selfish because Will does not think what will cost his family because of his decision "I can't believe this, Will. You were selfish then and you're worse now." (Moyes. 2012:113) [2]. Georgina is also mad with her parents, she does not believe that they will be agree with her brother has requested. It is all wrong and she can stand the fact that it is happening.

Not like the other member of Traynor's family, Steven, Will's father probably is the only one that does not feel burdened with Will's decision. It is not clear what actually his response toward his son's decision because he is always calm and never shows his concern. Camilla says that Steven and Will are not close to each other emotionally. "You were never really there for him. Not emotionally. You were just the absence he was always striving to impress." (Moyes. 2012:122) [2]. And the fact that he had an affair with another girl name Della and the reason that he and his mistress cannot be together is because of Will's. "Poor Della. I could see her fighting her instinctive urge to ask me about our future-to consider

how this unexpected development might affect it-but I didn't suppose she ever would. Not until this was all resolved." (Moyes. 2012:326) [2].

4.4.2. Louisa Family

Katrina or Treena, is the first person Louisa family to know Will's suicide decision. Louisa told her after she figured it out, Treena was shock at first but then she told Louisa to support Will in order to change his mind. She came up with idea of setting some outing, hoping that some outing and doing some other new activities would help Will cope with his new life and then change his mind. She even helped Louisa to set the outing plan.

Later on, after all those plans have failed to change Will's decision and the due date of Will suicide is close, Louisa finally tells her parents about Will's suicide decision. Her parents are shocked and cannot believe it. "As she spoke, Mum's hands went to her mouth. Dad shook his head in disbelief." (Moyes. 2012:379) [2]. Her father feels sorry for Will and for Louisa because she has to involve with this kind of situation but somehow as a man he understands Will's decision and respect it.

But Louisa mother cannot accept it. She could not believe that the Traynor's family would agree to that plan. "but his parents! They can't let him kill himself." Said Mum. "what kind of people are they?" (Moyes. 2012:380) [2]. She is really mad especially to Will's mother because she lets her son do such a dishonorable act.

Louisa and her mother even have a fight because her mother does not allow her to go to Switzerland to meet Will for the last time. But Louisa insists to go and their relationship does not even getting better till the end.

4.4.3. Louisa Family

Louisa is the main woman character in this novel. She is Will female caregiver, she works for Will since she lost her long-term jobs. Louisa knows his plan to assisted suicide accidentally, she overhears the conversation between Camilla and Georgia. She is shock, mad, and couldn't believe what she heard. She becomes mad with Camilla for having involved her in this mess. Louisa is really disappointed, she even decides to leave the job after knowing the fact that she has been employed to cheer up the man who has a plan to kill himself.

Then by the help and support from her sister, she decides to continue to work. She sets a plan, a plan that she wished it could work to change Will's mind. Louisa purposes her idea to Traynor's Family and they agree with her plan and are going to support it. However, the plan that she has arranged does not work the way she wants, on their last night in Mauritius island when Will and Louisa finally express their feeling, Louisa tells Will that she loves him and so does Will. But all of that does not change anything, Will still does not change his mind. He sticks to his decision to suicide, and he asks Louisa to go with him to Switzerland but Louisa cannot accept that.

5. Conclusion

From the previous discussion, the writer finds out that Will Traynor decision to assisted a suicide is influenced by his characteristic, conflict, and psychological effects. Will clearly feels hopeless with his condition, he also feels guilty as he cannot fullfill his psychological needs. That evidence also approves the use of Minninger theory in this analysis. The writer also found a prove of the use of Shneidman theory which is psychache or drama of mind. Will's drama of mind is about his past live that he cannot forget.

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