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## Implying and Suggesting: A Critical Stylistic Study of Gender Identity Crisis in Ebershoff's *The Danish Girl*

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### Abstract

The paper attempts to portray a critical stylistic analysis of gender identity crisis as an ideology. Gender identity crisis means a sense of conflict inside an individual as a result of mismatch between his/her biological sex and his/her gender identity. Selected passages from David Ebershoff *The Danish Girl* (2000), are the data of the analysis. The novel talks about (Einar) who becomes unaware about his real gender. This sense of Einar occurs when his wife (Greta) asks him repeatedly to put on Anna's dress, a famous opera singer, whom Greta used to paint. The selected data presents Einar's suffering when he starts to believe that he has feminine features inside his body. The aim is to examine critically the language and to investigate the conceptual meaning of the terms in use. Further, the aim is to reveal the implicit meaning of the linguistic expressions that the writer has selected to reflect gender identity crisis in (Einar). In such analysis, a tool

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which is taken from Jeffries' approach (2010) named "Implying and Assuming" is used. The stylistic features and technical terminology are presented in relation to the textual practices of implying and assuming. The results may provide social and psychological impacts on the novel's readers.

**Key Word** : identity, critical, stylistics, implying, textual.

## التضمين والإيحاء : تحليل أسلوبى نقدي لأزمة الهوية الجنسية

### في رواية الفتاة الدنماركية للكاتب ديفيد إبرشوف

م.د اسن هاشم حمدون

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#### المستخلص

يحاول البحث عرض تحليل أسلوبى نقدي لأزمة الهوية الجنسية (GIC) ، باعتبارها إيديولوجيا. تعرف GIC بأنها الشعور بالصراع داخل الفرد نتيجة عدم التوافق بين جنسه البيولوجي وهويته الجنسية. مقاطع مختارة من رواية الفتاة الدنماركية للكاتب ديفيد إبرشوف (2000)، هي بيانات التحليل. تتحدث الرواية عن (آينار) الذي يجهل جنسه الحقيقي بعد ان تطلب منه زوجته (غريتا) وبشكل متكرر أن يرتدي فستان (أنا) ، مغنية الأوبرا الشهيرة، والتي اعتادت غريتا على رسمها. تعرض البيانات المختارة معاناة آينار عندما بدأ يعتقد بأن لديه سمات أنثوية داخل جسده. الهدف هو فحص اللغة بشكل نقدي والتحقيق في المعنى المفاهيمي للمصطلحات المستخدمة. كذلك الكشف عن المعنى الضمني للتعبيرات اللغوية التي ينتجها الكاتب لتعكس GIC في (آينار). في مثل هذا التحليل يتم استخدام أداة مأخوذة من نهج جيفريز (2010) تسمى "التضمين والافتراض". يتم عرض التعبيرات الأسلوبية والمصطلحات الفنية فيما يتعلق بالممارسات النصية للإيحاء والتضمين. تعرض نتائج البحث التأثيرات الاجتماعية والنفسية على قراء الرواية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الهوية ، النقد ، الاسلوبية، تضمين، نصي

### 1.1 Introduction

Ebershoff in his novel *The Danish Girl* uses various stylistic choices to convey gender identity crisis, henceforth (GIC). It is defined by (Christopher:1999) as a feel inside a male or a female when a strong identification with the opposite sex occurs and experiences considerable stress because of their actual sex. This sense of unease or dissatisfaction may be so intense. It may lead to anxiety and depression and then reflect

harmful. It is reflected through the behaviours of Einar when he started to believe that he has a feminine features from inside. This feeling leads him to face a number of surgeries to change his identity as a girl named Lili. Actually, the novelist tries to express his feeling about specific case using his own style. He tries to draw images using exciting linguistic constructions to attract the readers' attention. This style may raise the sense of suspension towards the possibility of changing the gender. Readers, in this sense, become participants in the events and as witnesses to these events. The message is conveyed to the readers may have ideology that reflect social and psychological intentions. Critical stylistic analysis is adopted to uncover the hidden ideology. According to De Tracy (1801) ideology is the science of ideas shown in the texts. It is realistically presented far from metaphysics. It relies on the existing truth and social phenomena which is mixed with social and psychological sciences (Kennedy, 1979: 354). Therefore, critical linguistics indicates the stylistic workmanship that the novelist possesses. This style gives distinction and uniqueness by virtue of these stylistic features (Ryan, 2015). In this respect, Jeffries (2010) asserts that textual conceptual function is used to display the implicit ideologies produced by stylistic choices. From this point of view, the study of form and function represents this textual conceptual function, which help recognize how an ideology can be injected into these texts. It is useful for critical stylistic analysts to be aware of such hidden ideologies. Implying and Assuming is a tool from Jeffries' approach (2010). This tool is under consideration of implicature and presupposition respectively. The two concepts refer to set of items or structures (p. 94-95).

### **2.1. Presupposition**

Levinson (1997:186) states that presupposition is what the speaker assumes to be the case prior to make an utterance. It reflects what is to be true in a sentence which asserts other information. When someone says "the child sneezed again" this sentence has the assumption that the child had sneezed before. One of the properties of the assuming is that they are liable to disappear in certain context. This disappearance can be either in immediate linguistic context or in the less immediate discourse context. It may occur in circumstances where contrary assumptions are made. Yule (2000: 27) sees that assuming has been associated with the use of a large number of words, phrases, and structures.

These styles of expressions are considered to be indicators of potential assumptions, which can only become actual suggestions in a specific linguistic context.

### **2.1.1 Types of Presupposition**

Lexical choices in any text are normally assumed, then may reflect ideology. Hence, six types of presupposition are provided as the following (Aditya, 2014: 21): First, the existential presupposition: it is represented through the use of specific words. These words are assumed to be presented either in possessive constructions (such as: your car suggests that you have a car) or in any definite noun phrase as in: the King of Sweden. in which the speaker assumes the existence of the entities being named (the king). Second, the factive presupposition: occurs by the use of specific words such as know, realize, regret, glad, odd and aware. Third, the non-factive presupposition: by the selection of words like dream, imagine and pretend. Fourth, the lexical presupposition: it is represented through the use of words such as manage, stop, and start. Fifth, the structural presupposition: occurs when part of a sentence structure is assumed to be true. For instance, the wh- forms (i.e. when, where, etc.) as in When did John leave? It suggests that John left. Finally, the counterfactual presupposition: it is represented through the use of linguistic expressions which are not only true, but are the opposite of what is true, or contrary to facts. For example, the sentence: If you were his friend you would have helped him suggests that you are not his friend (Aditya, 2014: 21).

### **2.2. Implicature**

Pragmatics deals with people's intended meanings and the kinds of actions that they are performing when they speak. It studies the assumptions, the goals, and the purposes of the language being uttered. Implicature is a component of the speaker's utterance meaning. It can be viewed when the interpretation of this utterance depends on the context. It constitutes an aspect of what is meant in speaker's utterance without being part of what is said (Laurence, 2006: 3). Implicature is an additional conveyed meaning when a speaker or writer intends to communicate more than just what the words mean. The producer of the language whether written or spoken communicates something via implicatures and the listener or the reader recognizes those communicated meanings via inference. Implicatures are inferred when it is based on assumption that the speaker

observes or flouts some principles of cooperation. Hence, the speaker did not said what actually wants to say and the hearer should understand what is the speaker means (Yule, 1996, 35). The following example gives some illustration (Ni'maturrohmah, 2015: 10):

A : How is Jane feeling after her first year at university?

B : She did not get enough units and cannot continue.

The style of B's utterance has ambiguity in the words 'get' and 'units'. Different meanings can be inferred in other context. It means that utterance of B provides implicit meaning which needs specific context. Based on 'B' utterance and the context, it means that Jane cannot continue her university studies.

### **2.2.1. Types of Implicature**

There are two types of implicature: conversational implicature and conventional implicature. Conversational implicatures are examples of more being communicated than is said primarily. Some basic cooperative principles must assumed in operation in order for these conversational implicature to be interpreted. The co-operative principles are related to the maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner. Conventional implicatures are associated with specific words (Levinson: 1997). When those words are used in a specific style, they have a result in additional conveyed meanings. Grice (1975) said that the conventional meaning of the words used will determine in some cases what is implicated. They help to determine what is said. If someone says: "June is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave" he certainly assures an idea. The power of the meaning of the word (therefore) tells that since June is Englishman so he is brave (P.44). The following list of words have conventional implicature when they are used in utterances (Bach, 1999):

adverbs: already, also, barely, either, only, scarcely, still, too, yet

connectives: but, nevertheless, so, therefore, yet

implicative verbs: bother, condescend, continue, deign, fail, manage

subordinating conjunctions: although, despite (the fact that), even though

These words are allowing significant ideology to be conveyed. When the speaker or the writer uses one of them in his/her style of the language, then implicit meaning is being conveyed. This style of text can influence the hearer's or reader's viewpoints in one way or another (Jeffries, 2010: 93).

Therefore, the ideology of GIC in Ebershoff's *The Danish Girl* can be shown by examining critically the lexical choices of the selected passages. Critical stylistic analysis of the various realizations of presupposition and implicature has been intended to achieve the aim of the current study.

### **3.1. Methodology**

The intended research investigates GIC which has been conveyed through the choice of words to describe Einar and his reaction towards wearing woman's dress. The aim is to show how styles of these words imply and assume the ideology under investigation. Jeffries' tool "implying and assuming" is the instrument of the research.

### **3.2.Data Collection**

The investigation of GIC as an ideology is being tested. This ideology may be conveyed through the choice of words in describing Einar's psychology. After intensive readings of the text, passages are intentionally selected. The selected passages describe the anxiety of (Einar) when he starts to believe that he has a feminine features inside his body and reflect his GIC. The tool of the analysis is applicable on the selected passages to show the ideological representation of GIC. The discussed indicators of conventional implicature and presupposition are viewed to show their implicit and explicit meanings.

### **3.3 Chosen Passages from the novel: *The Danish Girl***

- "Now Einar saw that the door to the pickled-ash wardrobe was open, and hanging inside was Anna's dress. It was white, with drop beads along the knee-hem and the cuff. A window was cracked, and the dress was swaying gently on the hanger. There was something about the dress—about the dull sheen of its silk, about the bib of lace in the bodice, about the hook-buttons on the cuffs, unlatched and split apart like little mouths—that made Einar want to touch it. "Do you like it?" Greta

- asked. He thought about saying no, but that would have been a lie. He liked the dress, and he could nearly feel the flesh beneath his skin ripening" (p.7).
- "A strange watery feeling was filling Einar as he stood on the lacquer trunk, the sunlight moving across him, the scent of herring in the air. The dress was loose everywhere except in the sleeves, and he felt warm and submerged, as if dipping into a summer sea. The fox was chasing the mouse, and there was a distant voice in his head: the soft cry of a scared little girl" (P.8).
  - "Lili felt as if she were carrying the greatest secret in the world—she was about to fool all of Copenhagen. At the same time, another part of her knew that this was the most difficult game she would ever play" (P.43).

### **3.4. Analyzing the Passages**

The above passages from the novel under investigation describe the Einar's GIC. The tool (implying and assuming) with reference to the semantic and pragmatic concepts, have been used. These concepts are presupposition and implicature respectively. The passages have a number of words which presuppose and imply GIC in Einar. The meanings of the analyzed expressions are examined by using Oxford Dictionary.

#### **3.4.1. Implying and Assuming**

Textual conceptual function is represented through the study of form and function. So, the analysis is taken from both semantics and pragmatic since they are specialized by the study of form and function respectively. The focus would be on two linguistic concepts presupposition and conventional implicature. They help to recognize how an ideology can be injected into these selected passages.

In the first passage, the style of the sentence (Now Einar saw that the door to the pickled-ash wardrobe was open, and hanging inside was Anna's dress) describes the scene while Einar was standing in front of the closet of Anna's clothes, a female opera singer whom Greta used to paint. The writer uses the verb (saw) which represents factive presupposition. He is committed to the truth of the proposition expressed in the words which is followed by. The existential presupposition which is represented through the use of the possessive ('s) in (Anna's dress) assumes the existence of the female dress. The use of the lexical verb (open) describes the case of the door which leads to the woman

clothes. The use of the implicative verb, one of the types of conventional implicature, (saw) implies that Anna's dress is available to be used by Einar. The next sentence (It was white, with drop beads along the knee-hem and the cuff) describes an additional woman's stuff. The selection of the word (white) presupposes that the dress is pure, clean and simple. This color implies everything good and right. It is helping human minds to focus and aid for an organization. The structural proposition (with drop beads along the knee-hem and the cuff) reveals the woman's accessories which are available with the dress. The style of the next sentence (A window was cracked, and the dress was swaying gently on the hanger) shows the scene of Anna's dress and how it is moved softly by the air which comes from the broken window. The lexical verb (cracked) presupposes the state of the window. The selection of the definite article (the) which is used before the word (hanger) assumes the existence of a decorative stripe of cloth in the scene of the Anna's dress. By the use of the adverb (gently) implies conventional implicature. The next sentence (There was something about the dress—about the dull sheen of its silk, about the bib of lace in the bodice, about the hook-buttons on the cuffs, unlatched and split apart like little mouths—that made Einar want to touch it) reveals positive description of Anna's dress. The structural presupposition of (about the dress) assumes that the following new information is going to be mentioned about the existential entity which is (the dress). It has brightness in its silk which presuppose its smoothness and implies positive description. The style of the expression (about the bib of lace in the bodice) assumes the beauty of the upper part of that woman dress. It is worn between throat and waist. Its tucker designates a piece of lace or linen which is worn in or around the top of the bodice. It has the buttonhook on its cuff to facilitate the closing of the dress. The expression (unlatched and split apart like little mouths) reflects additional positive feature about the dress. The selected word (like) presupposes the similarities between the dress and the little mouths. It implies that the dress has the ability to speak and tells Einar to wear it. The next expression (that made Einar want to touch it) reveals conventional implicature by the use of the implicative verb (touch). It reflects the admiration of Einar to such dress. The lexical presuppositions by the selected verbs (made, want, touch) reflect his desire to come into contact with the dress. The question given by Greta (“Do you like it?” Greta asked) reflects a structural presupposition. It assumes the awareness of



Greta about the feeling of her husband Einar and how he admires the dress. This feeling is assured by the style of the next sentence (He thought about saying no, but that would have been a lie). The lexical presupposition (thought) assumes the possible answer to his wife's question. It is supposed to say no but the selection of the connective conventional implicature (but) cancel this possibility and provides the opposite answer which is (yes, he likes the dress), and if he would say no it would be not true. The style of the next sentence (He liked the dress, and he could nearly feel the flesh beneath his skin ripening) assures the desire of Einar to touch and wear the woman's dress. The factive presuppositions assumed by the use of the verbs (like and feel) assure his admiration towards the dress. The selection of the adverb (nearly) implies conventional implicature. They provide hints about the starting points of Einar's GIC.

The next passage talks about Einar while he is wearing a woman's dress. He accepts the suggestion of his wife. She wants him to go with her to a party and advises him to wear woman's clothes and transform his identity from man to woman. She introduces him to the attendants of the party as the sister of Einar. The style of the sentence (A strange watery feeling was filling Einar as he stood on the lacquer trunk, the sunlight moving across him, the scent of herring in the air) is supposed the idea that Einar starts his GIC and wants to change his gender identity. The selection of the word (feeling) preceded by the words (strange and watery) give additional information about Einar's feeling. This feeling makes him as if he is standing on the body of the lacquer. The expressions (the sunlight moving across him) and (the scent of herring in the air) provide metaphorical description. The use of the definite article before the word (sunlight) presupposes the existential of this entity. Also, the use of this article before the expression (scene of the herring) provides emarginated scene which is given by the writer to show the happiness of Einar while he is wearing the woman's dress. The next sentence (The dress was loose everywhere except in the sleeves, and he felt warm and submerged, as if dipping into a summer sea) implies that Einar has a comfortable feeling. The use of the definite article (the) before (dress and sleeves) assumes the existential presupposition of both in the scene. The selection of the connective conventional implicature (except) implies the delicate movement of the whole dress but its sleeves is excluded from this free movement. The selection of the factive verb (felt) followed by (warm and

submerged) reflects Einar's comfort while he is wearing the woman's cloth. The connective conventional implicature (as if) implies the positive case of the dress which is worn by Einar. The movement of the dress like going for a short swim in the sea. The implicative verb (dipping) implies that the dress don't stay in the water for a long time. It also implies that Einar has a great time while he is wearing the dress but this enjoyment no longer exist and will be faded away. The GIC of Einar is implied in the style of the sentence (The fox was chasing the mouse, and there was a distant voice in his head: the soft cry of a scared little girl). The lexical presupposition of the verb (chasing) assumes what is going on in the mind of Einar. The existential entities (fox and mouse) are used to provide a similarities between them and the GIC exists between the heart and the mind. The fox is typically seen as cunning, mysterious, and tricksters. It is often used in the literature connected with the supernatural in folklore. The mouse represents many things despite its size. It is courageous and persistent. They have the ability to accomplish anything in the life. So, the comparison between the chasing of the fox to the mouse and the Einar's GIC is implied. Both creatures have the characteristics that make it difficult to determine which one will win the chasing. The style of the next expressions (and there was a distant voice in his head: the soft cry of a scared little girl) tells more about the GIC of Einar. The use of the connective conventional implicature (and) connects what is followed by with what is preceded. The selection of the words (voice and head) implies that this voice is chasing his head just like the chasing between the fox and the mouse. The nominal group (the soft cry of a scared little girl) presupposes that Einar is like a scared little girl and he is making a soft cry. It implies more about GIC when he feels hemsilf as a female kid. He makes delicate cry just like a new burn baby.

In the third passage Einar has changed his gender identity to be Lili. The style of the sentence (Lili felt as if she were carrying the greatest secret in the world—she was about to fool all of Copenhagen) reflects more about GIC. The use of the indicator of factive presupposition (felt) entails the truth of the proposition which is included within the sentence. The structural presupposition (the greatest secret in the world) implies that Einar is well aware that changing his gender identity is unacceptable. He considers this change to be the biggest secret in his life. He must keep it to himself. The next expression (she was about to fool all of Copenhagen) presupposes the wish of Einar to deceive all of

the people in Copenhagen and makes them believe that he is really a woman not a man. The next sentence (At the same time, another part of her knew that this was the most difficult game she would ever play) provides more about Einar's GIC. The use of the indicator of the structural presupposition (at the same time) entails that there are two contrasted things inside Einar. The expression (another part) assures the idea of that conflict. The selection of the indicator of the factive presupposition (knew) assumes the truth of the following information which is given in the sentence. The expression (this was the most difficult game she would ever play) implies the awareness of Einar about the difficulties of changing his gender identity. The style of the nominal group (the most difficult game) implies the similarities between the transformed gender with the game which is too difficult to be played.

#### **4.1. Conclusion**

The writer of *the Danish Girl* uses various positive stylistic images to reflect woman's dress. He selected expressions that presuppose and imply GIC. The message which is conveyed to the readers implies ideology that reflect social and psychological intentions. Readers become participants in the events and as witnesses to GIC which leads Einar to change his identity. The wonderful description of Anna's dress attracts the attention of the readers and arises their suspension to follow the reaction of Einar to such dress. It is supposed by the simplicity and the cleanness that are reflected through the colour of the dress which is (white). The de-contextual of this color implies everything good and right. It is helping human minds to focus and aid for an organization. Its smoothness and its silkiness are being interested. The delicate movement of the dress in the air gives more positivity. The textual-conceptual functions of all of these characteristics provide Einar with justification to wear the dress and arises GIC inside him. In addition, the way of describing the dress makes readers sympathetic to his condition and give him an excuse. He finds himself different from his original biological sex. He becomes discomfort and reflects the desire to change his gender identity. His decision to such change leads to his decline and loses all his life. He faces his death after more than one surgery. Therefore, his death assures the bad affects of these kind of

surgeries. It is a negative phenomena specially with the great influence of the cultural values of any society.

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