

**Title : The cause of abbie's affair in desire under the elms
by eugene o'neill**

Name : Bernardus Hero Geolantika

NIM : C 1300007

Abstract

This research is a library research with a descriptive qualitative analysis. This thesis takes the main data from Eugene O'Neill's work entitled *Desire Under The Elms*. The researcher is interested much in the psychological issues that is why he analyzes it in the thesis. Since the researcher focuses on the Maslow psychological analysis undergone by the main character, the researcher states the problem from the psychological point of view, especially through it's main character, named Abbie.

The purpose of the research is to find out the factors that cause Abbie to do affair, and to find out what the main character wants in her affair based on Maslow psychological theory.

Based on the analysis, it is found that: since Abbie came in Cabot's family, she was interested in Eben, her step son. Abbie tended to have a sexual relationship with Eben in order to satisfy her physiological needs. When Abbie's physiological needs had been satisfied, Abbie's psychological needs emerged, Abbie demanded love from Eben.

From the analysis, the researcher concludes that: Abbie always tried to do everything in order to fulfill her desire, She thought that her sexual need would be fulfilled with Eben. In Abbie's affair, Abbie demanded not only sexual gratification but also love from Eben. The relation between love and sex is powerful and undeniable. Sexual enjoyment will be created when a couple loves each other. Sex without love is just a contact. Sex with a stranger may be exciting, but it can also be humiliating, foolish and dangerous. Apart from it, sex with love is very special sex, and should be done in the context of conjugal relationship.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Basically, every individual always needs love. Love is not a dumb feeling and it is not an empty attraction. Love is a particular set of insights, a process that is motivated by passion and focused on affection. One may be motivated to make a close or intimate relationship with his or her opposite sex partner not only because of sexual attraction but also because of the feeling of love.

In reality, a pair of lovers may love one another but after several months their relationship breaks up. A new married couple, similarly, only several months lives together before they get divorced. This short-term relationship may be due to one reason, namely physical attraction. It can be said that love and physical needs are closely related. Love can inspire the wish for sexual union. Physical union will be nothing without the possibility of sexual fulfillment. On a much deeper level, love can not be just sexual desire because what Aristophenes called as “infinite yearning of love is never satisfied by sex, no matter how passionate of satisfying or often repeated the sex is” (Solomon, 1998, p. 114).

Enrich Fromm, a psychologist, says that love has various types depending on the kind of object of love, one of them as he calls is erotic love. “Erotic love is the love between man and woman only in the sense of erotic fusion, full commitment and all aspects of life but not in the sense of love for all human being” (Fromm, 1956 , p. 46). Erotic love is a unique individual attraction between two specific persons. Love is always related to human life, how can people fall in love? Sometimes love can not be avoided, everyone in the world can fall in love every time and everywhere and it seems that everyone can not choose with whom she or he falls in love because the feeling itself sometimes appears impromptu naturally. But it is difficult to place out feeling into some one else’s rightly. That is why people say that love is blind. Sometimes love can make someone lose their healthy minds and forget the norms of life. This condition influences people to do the bad things such as an affair.

Dealing with this matter, the writer found a substance of affair in the play *Desire Under The Elms*, an interesting play by Eugene O’Neill in 1924. Eugene

Gladstone O'Neill was born on October 16, 1888, in New York City, appropriately in a hotel at Broadway and 43rd Street, the area that became the heart of the theatre district. O'Neill began his literary career in 1912. It is the most memorable time in his life. In early spring 1912, he tried to commit suicide, unfortunately he did not succeed in killing himself. However, his attempts seemed to satisfy his inner rage since after that, he was relatively calm. O'Neill died in a hotel in Boston, on November 27, 1953. "Born in Goddam Hotel room and dying in hotel room!" (Encyclopedia of Americana, 1991, p. 735).

His notable works included *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *The Hairy ape* (1921), *Desire Under The Elms* (1924), *The Great Brown* (1925), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929-1931), *A Touch Of The Poet* (1935-1942). His chief failures are *Gold* (1920), *The first Man* (1921), *The Fountain* (1920-1921) *Welded* (1922-1923), *Lazarus Laughed* (1925-1926), *Dynamo* (1928), and *Days Without End* (1932-1933). O'Neill won the Nobel prize in 1936 and was awarded Pulitzer prizes for *Beyond The Horizon* (1918), *Anna Christie* (1920), *Strange interlude* (1926-1927), and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1940-1941). O'Neill is among the most subjective dramatist of all time, one who led a tragic life that provided the heart and substance of his finest writings.

Desire Under The Elms tells about a family which consists of a father (Cabot Ephraim) and three sons from different wives. They lived together in a farm house in new England in 1850. All of his sons really hated their own father because of his authoritarian. Cabot married a young woman Abbie Putnam since he felt lonesome. The problem appeared when Abbie came in Cabot's family. Actually the problems

existed before Abbie coming yet. The coming of Abbie made the problem more complicated. The main problem in Cabot's family about heritage. First of all, Abbie wanted to marry Cabot because she wanted to get the farm house. Nevertheless, she was interested in Eben, her husband's son and then fall in love with him. She was impressed by Eben's physical features.

Actually, there are three reasons why people interested in good-looking people : firstly, good lookings are in and of themselves aesthetically pleasing secondly, there are prestigious values associated with merely being seen with a good-looking partner (Sigall and Landy, 1973 ; Waller, 1937). Thirdly, in accordance with the beautiful or handsome is good stereotype. Most people assume that the handsome and beautiful posses socially desirable personality traits and lead happier and more successful lives than do unattractive person, indeed the stereotype may be right (Dion, Berscheld and Walster, 1972).

Love in *Desire Under The Elms* becomes a conflict because it is influenced by passion in unconscious condition. Perhaps if love in *Desire Under The Elms* is a pure love like a mother with her several children and love them all equally there will be no conflict, because one of them love more than one person romantically. The affair was caused by the life instinct which blinded them both. The researcher decides to choose *Desire Under The Elms* as an object of his minor thesis because the researcher finds this story has interesting characterization, the story gives a psychological insight toward the readers.

1.2. Problem statement

In accordance with explanation mentioned in the background, the researcher presents the problem statement as follows: what factors caused Abbie to do her affair?

1.3. The Objective of the Research

The purpose is to describe the factors that cause Abbie to do her affair.

1.4. The benefit of the research

The researcher hope that the result of this research will give some benefits to the readers and give them a contribution to understand *Desire Under The elms* viewed from Abraham Maslow's theory of psychology. The researcher also expects this research will give additional information which can be used by the other researchers who are interested in analyzing *Desire Under The Elms*.

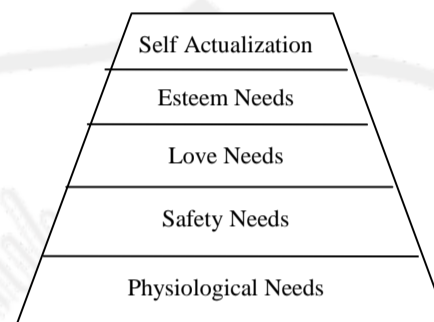
1.5. Research methodology

The data in this research are classified into two groups, they are the primary data and secondary data. The primary data is taken from Eugene O'Neill's play *Desire Under The Elms*, published in 1924. The secondary data are taken from other relevans information that support the primary data.

1.6. Theory and Approach

The researcher applies Abraham H. Maslow's humanistic theory. Abraham Harold Maslow was a founder of humanistic psychology in the 1960's along with Carl Roger, Rollo May, and other. They advanced their movement as "third force" that provided an alternative to the school of behaviourism and psychoanalysis. According to Maslow, there are general types of needs (physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization) that must be satisfied before a person can act unselfishly. Satisfying needs is healthy, blocking gratification makes humans sick or evil (Maslow, 1987, p. 71).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



The five basic needs are:

1. Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are the very basic needs such as air, water, food, sleep, sex, etc. When these are not satisfied humans may feel sickness, irritation, pain, discomfort, etc. These feelings motivate humans to alleviate them as soon as possible to establish homeostasis. Once they are alleviated, humans may think about other things.

2. Safety Needs

Safety needs have to do with establishing stability and consistency in a chaotic world. These needs are mostly psychological in nature. Humans need the security of a home and family. However, if a family is dysfunction, i.e., an abusive husband, the wife cannot move to the next level because she is constantly concerned with her safety. Love and belonging have to wait until she is no longer cringing in fear. Many in society cry out for law and order because they do not feel safe enough to go for a walk in their neighborhood. Many people, particularly those in the inner cities, unfortunately, are stuck at this level. In addition, safety needs sometimes motivate people to be religious. Religions comfort people with the promise of a safe secured place after death and leave the insecurity of this world.

3. Love Needs

Love and belonging are next on the ladder. Humans have a desire to belong to groups: clubs, workgroups, religious groups, family, gangs, etc. Humans need be

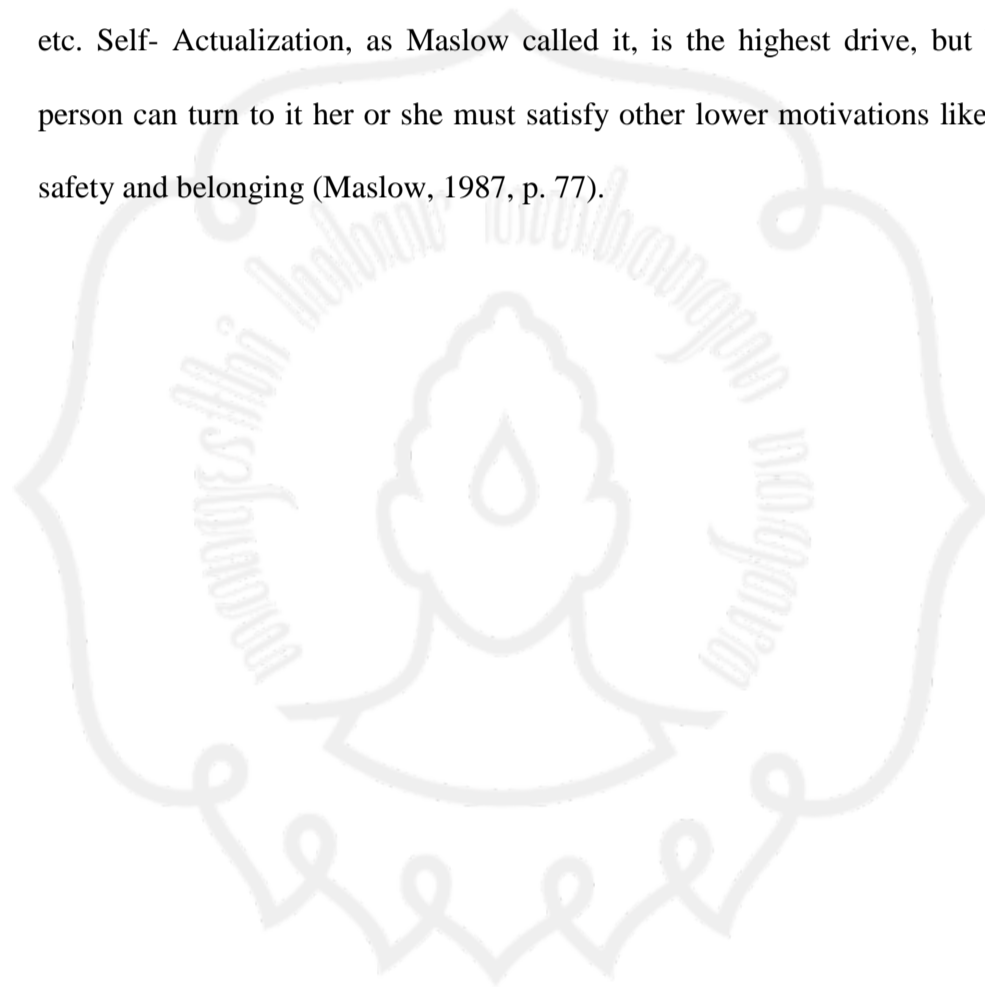
loved (nonsexual) by others, to be accepted by others. Performers appreciate applause, human need to be needed.

4. Esteem Needs

There are two types of esteem needs. First is self-esteem which is resulted from competence, or mastery of a task. Second, there is the attention and recognition that comes from others.

5. Self-Actualization

Self-Actualization becomes one important aspect of this theory. The need for self-actualization is the desire to become more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. People who have everything can maximize their potential. They can seek knowledge, peace, esthetic experiences, self-fulfillment, etc. Self- Actualization, as Maslow called it, is the highest drive, but before a person can turn to it her or she must satisfy other lower motivations like hunger, safety and belonging (Maslow, 1987, p. 77).



2. Analysis

In this part, the researcher discusses and analysis the problem statement that has been mentioned before. The analysis is about Abbie's motivation to do affair.

2.1 Physiological Needs

O'Neill describes Abbie's physical appearance as follows: Abbie was a mature woman, thirty five, buxom, full of vitality. Her round face was pretty, there was strength and obstinacy in her jaw, a hard determination in her eyes, and about her whole personality the same unsettled, untamed, desperate quality which was so apparent in Eben.

Cabot was seventy five, tall and gaunt with great and wiry concentrated power, his face was described as hard as if it were hewn out of a boulder, yet there was a weakness, in it, a petty pride in it's own narrow strength. His eyes were small, close together, and extremely near-sighted, blinking continually in the effort to focus on objects, their stare had a straining, in growing quality.

Eben was a young man, he was twenty-five, tall and sinewy. His face was well- formed, good- looking, but it's expression was resentful and defensive. His defiant, dark eyes remind one of a wild animal's in captivity. There was a fierce repressed vitality about him. He had black hair, mustache and a thin curly trace of beard.

It was normal that Abbie was interested in Eben, she looked him from the sexual attraction only and forgot that Eben was husband's son, Abbie married

Cabot because she faced the failure of losing both his husband and a son. Abbie wanted to change her life by marrying Cabot Ephraim only to get his farmland after a long time became a harlot. Unfortunately, her will was lessened by her own passion or lust to Eben. When Abbie met Eben for the first time, she felt that her desire was awakened by his youth and good looking. "for a moment she stands looking at Eben. He does not notice her at first. Her eyes take him in penetratingly with a calculating appraisal of his strength as against hers. But under this her desire is dimly awakened by his youth and good looks". (O'Neill, 1924, p. 21).

In this case, her sexual needs was working normally. Abbie had desire when she met Eben after longing mans touch, and then she tried to get Eben's attention. According to Maslow sexual drives possibly arouse whenever man and woman get closer each other. Sexual drives between man and woman will lead to sexual fulfillment. Maslow also said that sex is part of human physiological needs, which make man and woman commit physical union in order to fulfill their physiological needs, or biological needs.

Abbie was deeply in love with Eben and made her blind, because when people fall in love it was hard to think about anything else. It's seen that Abbie was really aggressive in approaching Eben. Abbie tried to do anything to pursue Eben. Firstly to get Eben's attention she tried to pretend as Eben's mother because she knew that Eben was really loved and admired her a lot.

Abbie also used her ability by tempting Eben passionately and behaving him as a mature man who has full of strangeness. To make sure Eben that she could be a good woman, she told Eben that she could be a solution about the contradiction between Eben and his father. "I don't want 't' pretend playing 'mawt'ye, Eben – ye're too big an too strong fur that. I want t'be frens with ye - mebbe with me fur a fren ye'd find ye'd like him here better. I kin make it easy fur ye with him, mebbe I calclate ikin git him t;do most anythin' fur me" (O'Neill, 1924, p. 21)

She also like to strive the power and control, that was to dominated everything that she want.

(with a cool Lough of confidence) yewr'n ? I we'll see bout that (then strongly) waal if I did need a hum? What else'd m,arry an old man like him fur? This be my kitchen - ! – An' upstairs-that be my bed room-an'my bed! I hain't bad nor mean 'ceptin 'fur an enemy but I got t'fight fur what's due me out o life, I ever' spect' git it (O'Neill, 1924, p. 22)

Secondly, she said to Eben that both had the same feeling of loosing the mother. She also told about her bad experience in her marriage to Eben.

I'd feel the same at any stranger comin't' take my maw's place-my maw died afore I'd grawed. I don't remember her none. I was an orphan early and then I married an'he turned out a drunken speer an so he had to wuk fur others an'me too agen in other folks hum's an' the baby died an' my husband got sick an died too (O'Neill, 1924, p. 21).

Thirdly, she tried to tease him by convincing him that he denied to himself for feeling love to her in raising his lust. "waaal, I kissed ye anyways-an'ye kissed

back – yer lips was burnin – ye can't lie 'bout that ! If ye don't care, why did ye kiss me back – why was yer lips burnin'?" (O'Neill, 1924. p. 33).

Finally she pursues him by pretending as his mother. In this matter, she was motivated by her desire for a child and lust for him. She did these all in order to get relaxation and to reduce her tension from her sexual needs.

Abbie didn't want to loose Eben because she would lost her chance in fulfilling her sexual needs. Usually sexual pleasure always makes one addictive, it needs more and more satisfaction. "the tendency of an instinct to repeat over an over again the cycle from excitation to repose is called the repetition compulsion". (Ibid, 1926, p. 38).

Actually the purpose of Abbie in marrying Cabot was to get the farmland, she wanted to posses it deeply but unfortunately her sexual needs dominated her desire in possessing Eben and she forgot about her first purpose to the farmland. "Abbie stands for a second staring at him, her eyes burning with desire. Then with a little cry she runs over and throws her arms about his neck, she pulls his head back and covers his mouth with kisses. They stand speechless and breathless panting like two animals" (O'Neill, 1924, p. 33)

According to Maslow motivated behavior leads to a goal. The goal maybe an object, a situation or a changed condition of the organism, once the goal has been reached, behaviour changes. Maslow also said that satisfaction was relative. He notes that satisfaction no longer motivates. Abbie committed sexual intercourse with the man in order to achieve her goal, her goal was to fulfill her sex needs.

2.2 Love Needs

Abbie was growing up as an orphan since she was child. “(calmly saying to Eben) my maw died afore I’d growed. -I don’t remember her none (a pause). I kin tell that by lookin’ at ye. Waal – i’ve had a hard life, too – I was an orphan early an ‘had t’ wuk for others folks hums” (O’Neill, 1924, p. 21)

As an orphan she never got the attention and affection from his father, so that she always long for the caring and loving from her father. That’s why as a compensation when she met Eben, she tried to get love from Eben the one whom she loved.

Furthermore she had a bad experience in her marriage. She married the drunken man and had a son but she lost both of them since they were dead. It influenced her to change her life by marrying Cabot Ephraim. Actually, she never loved him but his farmland. The beauty of farmland was made Abbie tried to get the farmland.

Abbie saying quite frankly that was the only reason she married Cabot and Eben threatening to tell his father. In garn, Abbie threatens to get Ephraim to drive of the place, and she carefully and specifically asserts her ownership of the farm, home, kitchen, and bedroom, yet finally ask that they be friends (O’Neill, 1924, p. 22).

Abbie never loved Cabot she pretended to take pity on him. “And Abbie responds that she wouldn’t love a weak thing like him (Cabot, I only wanted yew fur a purpose o’ my own” (O’Neill, 1924, p. 33)

According to Maslow, love gave security and a sense of being important to someone cared for, and protected but without love, human growth and development would be disturbed. Human tends to be motivated to satisfy his deficiency needs, if he was unable to alleviate his needs he would become sick. Person who lacks of love called mentally ill. Healthy personality of individual will only be reached if he was able to love and to be loved. Abbie had suffered from physiological and psychological problem. Abbie had successfully alleviated her physiological needs but she had failed to fulfill her psychological needs. Her failure to fulfill her psychological needs had driven her to do foolish things. Abbie wanted to be seen as a good woman in the eyes of the man. It is all right like the proverbs say that 'too much love will kill you' meaning that love can be the weapon for human. She thought that Eben didn't want to have a baby and made him hate her. She concludes that the baby became the obstacle for her to have Eben, even though the baby was Eben's son. Then she killed the baby.

As far as the infant is concerned, Eben wishes it would die : "I wish he never was born ! I wish he'd die this minute ! I wish I'd never set eyes on him it's him - ye havin him a purpose to steal -that's change everythin' ! ...

Abbie says that if Eben hates the child, so too will she : "he won't steal ! I'd kill him first ! (O'Neill, 1924, p. 48)

Abbie was very selfish. She only thought about her purpose in fulfilling her sexual needs because she could do the worst thing as a woman by killing her own child.

But actually, Abbie's feeling of love toward Eben was real. "ill profe ye, I love ye better'n ... better'n anything else in the world ! ..." (O'Neill, 1924, p. 50)

When she knew that Eben would visit the prostitute, her name was Min, she became so jealous and alleged to Cabot that Eben was trying to pursue her to make love with her. It was a kind of compensation of her jealous. Then she tried to pursue Cabot by giving him a son later so that, Cabot would give his farmland to her and to the son. But actually she would give it all to Eben and own by him forever.

Warga in "the personal awareness" says that "jealousy is the fear of loss something to which one feels entitled, and one does feel entitled to a certain significant amount of respect and affection from a lover. (Warga,1983, p. 163).

It is human nature, when a person is in love she or he will feel keenly and acts affectionately. A person who is starving for love and affection will strive with great intensity to achieve his goal. Abbie acted keenly and warmly because of her feeling of love toward Eben. It is natural when a person is in love his feeling will be sensitive towards the one he loves, she will be easily happy or sad. In love with Eben, Abbie became sensitive. She became so jealous. Jealousy is a good emotion; it is a proof of love. According to Maslow, jealousy is an emotion which is intricately tied up with the sense of possession that love demands. Seen from Maslow theory, Abbie's jealousy was a form of Abbie's sense of possession towards Eben. In the mind of Abbie, Eben belonged to her, she became inconvenience knowing Eben came to see another woman.

In love with Eben, Abbie could not think clearly; her mind had been strongly influenced by her emotion of love. Now she had been dominated by her sense of hunger, she was hunger for love, for affection, for belongings, which drove her to seek for alleviation. According to Maslow theory to fulfill her psychological needs Abbie aggressively strived to get the man's love. Her strong feeling of love had made her unable to see the fact that the man whom she loved was her step son.

But actually, when she faced Eben there was a conflict between the lust and desire for a child because she ever had a son but he was died. There was a sincere maternal love as a mother, even she adapted a very motherly attitude, not pretending really believing in herself that she loved Eben as her lovers and her son.

(Seductively Abbie say to Eben) I'll sing fur ye! I'll die fur ye! (in spite of her overwhelming desire for him, there is a sincere maternal love in her manner and voice – horribly frank mixture of lust and mother love). Don't cry, Eben. I'll take yer maw's place! I'll be everythin' she was t' ye! Let me kiss ye, Eben! (She pulls his head around he makes a bewildered pretense of resistance, she is tender). Don't be effeered! I'll kiss ye pure, Eben's-same's if I was a mawt'ye and 'ye kin kiss me back's if yew was my son – my boy – sayin' good night t' me! – Don't leave me, Eben! Can't ye see it's fur yewt' be happy!" (O'Neill, 1924, p. 30).

3. Conclusion and suggestion

3.1. Conclusion

After analyzing the play *Desire Under The elms*, written by Eugene O'Neill using psychological theory of Abraham Maslow, the researcher draws conclusion as follows :

3.1.1. In *Desire Under The Elms* Abbie always does everything in order to fulfill her physiological needs, in this case her sexual needs. She has strong desire, and she is really aggressive because she never gets enough the sexual needs since she loses her husband. She also can't get enough sexual needs with Cabot because he is too old for her. She thinks that her sexual needs will be fulfilled with Eben. In fulfilling her sexual needs she kills her own son.

3.1.2. Abbie also never gets enough attention and affection because she is an orphan. Furthermore she has a bad experience in her marriage. In order to fulfill her love needs this condition forces her to become more aggressive in getting man's love. But the most important factor influencing Abbie in doing an affair is love. Her love to Eben is a real love from a mature woman to a man. She is interested in him since she sees him for the first time. In this case, Eben is trapped by Abbie's love.

From the researcher's point of view, it would be wrong to say that love is only sex. However the relation between love and sex is

powerful and undeniable, sexual enjoyment will be created when a couple loves each other, sex without love is just a contact. Sex with a stranger may be exciting, but it can also be humiliating, foolish and dangerous, but sex with love is very special sex. Apart from it the researcher defines that sex in love should be done in the context of conjugal relationship.

3.2. Suggestion

From the analysis of this thesis, the researcher then offers some suggestion that maybe useful for readers and other researchers. Firstly, this research is considerable as guidance for the readers, especially those who are intensively engaged in studying literature, to understand deeply about O'Neill's play *Desire Under The Elms*, in particular the affair between Abbie and Eben.

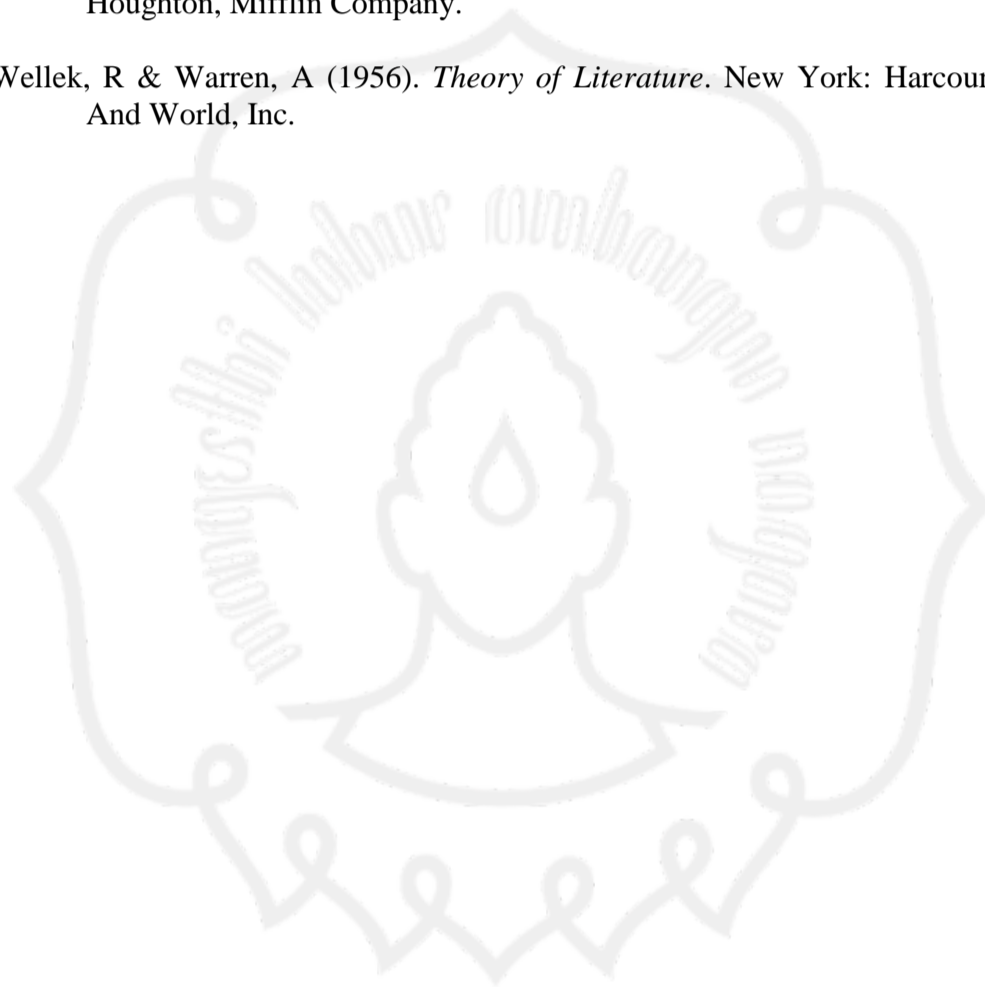
Secondary, this research can be a contemplation material for readers about the nature of human psychology, in particular of an abnormal affair between a step mother with a step son which is varied by revenge, betrayal, suffering or death, punishment, temptation or sin, hatred, obsession and redemption.

Abraham Maslow psychological theory in this thesis gives better understanding about human needs and motivations. How human's needs are hierarchical in nature and how human is motivated by his needs.

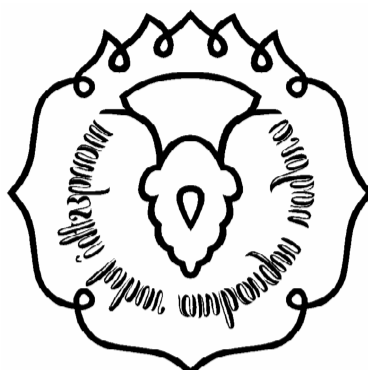
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**THE CAUSE OF ABBIE'S AFFAIR
IN *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS*
BY EUGENE O' NEILL
(A Psychological Approach)**



**Minor Thesis
Submitted as a partial fulfillment of requirements
For The Sarjana Sastra Degree
In English Department**

**By :
BERNARDUS HERO GEOLANTIKA
C1300007**

**FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FINE ARTS
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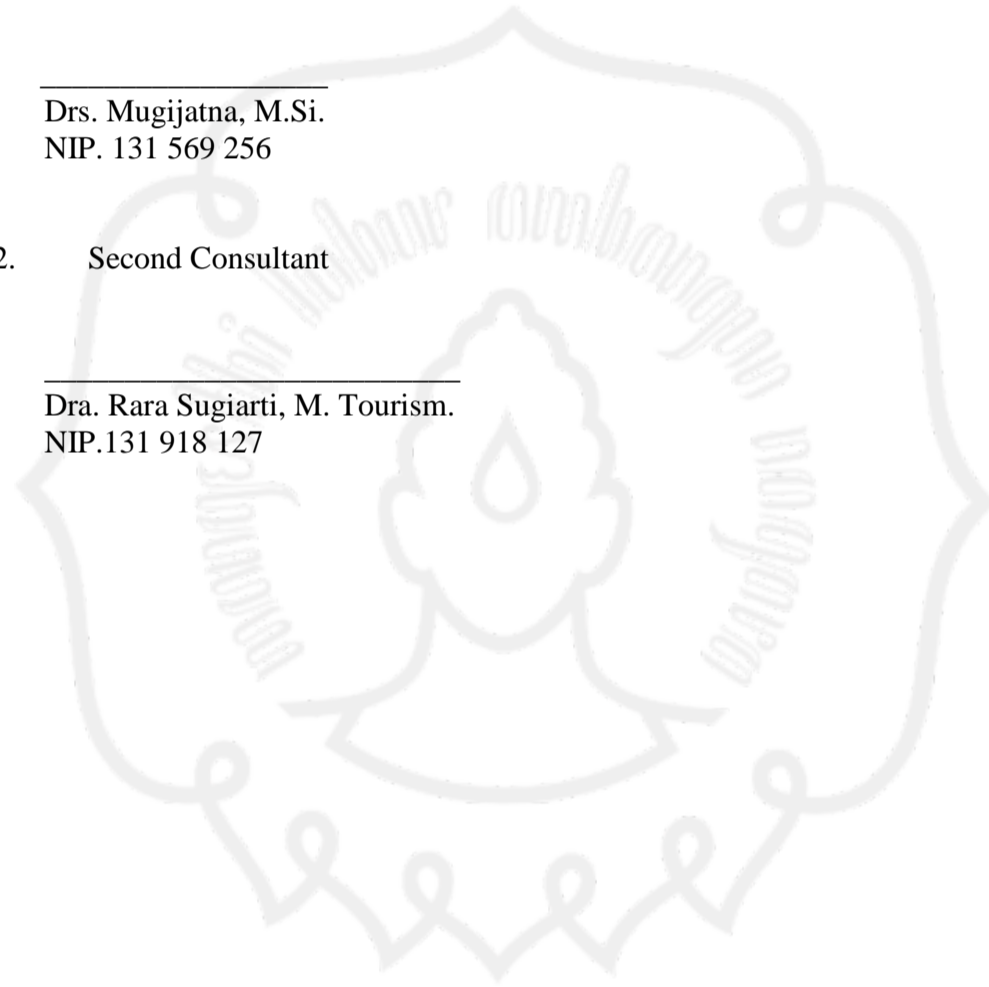
Thesis Consultant :

1. First Consultant

Drs. Mugijatna, M.Si.
NIP. 131 569 256

2. Second Consultant

Dra. Rara Sugiarti, M. Tourism.
NIP.131 918 127



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MOTTO :

There is a will there is a way

Life is a struggle



DEVOTION

This thesis is dedicated to :

My beloved Father and Mother

My Sweetheart

My beloved Sister and Brothers



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My greatest gratitude is praised to Jesus Christ, The Most Merciful and The Most Gracious, for His Blessing I can finish this thesis as one of the requirements for achieving The Graduate Degree of English Department of Faculty of Letters Without Him I am nothing.

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