



SUICIDAL IDEATION IN REG CRIBB'S PLAY *LAST CAB TO DARWIN* (2003)

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of a play written by Reg Cribb, entitled *Last Cab to Darwin* (2003). It explored the issue about suicidal ideation which is an irrational mindset by a person who think his lives is not useful for having a terminal illness and to what extent the character and setting contributed to identify the issue. This play related to the concept of Death Instinct (Thanatos) by Sigmund Freud. The uses of the theory are based on the interpretation of the text and context of the play. The result of this analysis shows the causes of suicidal ideation by two groups. First is suffering. Second is hopelessness.

Key words: *Suicidal Ideation; Suicide; suffering; hopelessness*

A. INTRODUCTION

Last Cab to Darwin (2003) Australian drama/comedy stage play written by Reg Cribb reflects the issues about Suicidal Ideation. It is marked by an impulse of the character to commit suicide. It is an irrational act by a person who think his lives no longer useful. This individual sought the help of others to end their lives was considered morally acceptable. Suicidal ideation is marked by an impulse to commit suicide. He thinks the action of killing or the death of hopelessly sick or injured individuals is relative painless way for reasons of mercy. In this analysis, Suicidal ideation refers to the causes of Max wanted to end his life for suffering from terminal stomach cancer illness. His purpose is to assure a dignified and peaceful life. If the individual who is under the unbearable pain is not able to decide for himself then it surely will destroy his life. In that case it will surely be a negation of his dignity and human rights. T

Character and setting applied in analyzing this play. Suicidal ideation caused by two factors. First is suffering. Second is hopelessness. Suffering depicted the issue of suicidal ideation. Max thinks he has a right to live a life with at least minimum dignity and if this standard is falling below that minimum level then he should be given a right to end his life. He decide to end his life to stop the suffering

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of the terminal illness. He knows he will die soon but the problem is he wants to take his life with his idea of suicidal rather than strive for the illness. He is tired to be sick all the time. He thinks his life as a grief. He could no longer distinguish between right and wrong.

While the hopelessness, he wants to do suicide. He thinks his life is useless. The most important thing he thinks is the argument of quality life or dignified life. He says that everyone is entitled to dignified life and when the quality of life falls below the expected level of dignity, he has the right to die. To him, quality of life is more important than the value of life itself. He thinks life is said to have value only if it is worth living. He better ends his life rather than keeping his spirit to heal the pain. He also argued that the doctor has a moral obligation to put an end to the sufferings of patient who is in extreme pain.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The analysis of play *Last Cab to Darwin* (2003) by Reg Cribb has done through text and context-based interpretation. Character and setting are the strategies that used to reveal the meaning of the play. It reflects suicidal ideation through character and setting. This analysis deals with the concept of Death Instinct which is also called *Thanatos* by Sigmund Freud.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Last Cab to Darwin is a 2003 Australian drama/comedy stage play written by Reg Cribb and based upon the true story of taxi driver Max Bell who was diagnosed with terminal stomach cancer in the early 1990s.. Taking advantage of the controversial Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995 in the Northern Territory, Max decides to end his own life with dignity. His request under the law is in bitter dispute but Max sells up everything he owned, says goodbye to his neighbor and good friend Polly, and drives the great distance from Broken Hill, New South Wales to Darwin, Northern Territory where taking his own life would be legal. The analysis show the two causes of suicidal ideation. First is suffering. Second is hopelessness.

1. Suffering

Max suffers the stomache cancer terminal illness which makes his life full of pain as well as mental pressure. His painful life began when the doctor diagnosed him having the cancer. He tried to relieved the pressure by getting drunk, but one thing he knew that his life would not be long.

The evidence may be seen as follow:

Max : My name's Max. It's not short for anything, its just max. When you say the name over

and over again, it doesn't sound stupid either, it just kind hangs in the air like an annoying blowie. I'am a taxi driver and i have been all my days. Well as least since i left school. I thought it was honest way to earn a crust now... well that's all i've ever done. So there ya go. Ya know the worst thing about the dust? It gets into your beer.. mind you, i am not one to complain. Actually I am feeling pretty good today. I was feeling real crook but... there's no pain anymore. I wonder how that happened? (10)

After he has been diagnosed has terminal stomach cancer, Max begin lose his life spirits. This can be *foreshadowing* of what will happen to his life. He is in pain. He likes to be alone and put away himself from others even his society. He feels like he lost he purposes of his life he always dreamed of before. He thinks that his illness becomes bad thing that makes him unable to do more thing he like before and makes him feel that his life does not have any means anymore.

This condition occurs when these states are at a peak. Max is on the top of his desperation. It creates desire for suicide, whereas the capability to act on suicidal desire requires that one overcome fears of death and suffers that are a natural part of attempting suicide. If someone's experience of living is characterized by suffering, Max is essentially being depressed for living, which can decrease desire to live. Through conflict, it can be sen that Max is having death instinct. Death instincts is unconscious wish to die, as death puts an end to the everyday struggles for happiness and survival. Death instinct dominates his way of thinking. It can be noticed from the death instinct in the desire for peace and attempts to escape reality through fiction, media, and substances such as alcohol and drugs. It also indirectly represents itself through aggression.

This condition supported by following quotation :

MAX : Ya hear that? That is loneliest sound in the bloody world. A mongrel barkin' on a country road. Every day at this time barks. Ya should set your watch to it. Someone's not feedin' it or someone's not lovin' it or.. Some bastard's just walked away from it. Wouldn't 'ave it a second look just... left in behind. Everything gets left behind in this town. Houses. Pubs. Littered with 'em. People just.. walked away. Boarded up and left to rot. Ahhhh.. ya spend all ya time here avoidin' road kill. A town full of road kill. It's like a plane over one day and dropped a whole fuckin' abattor on us.

Even the Xmas decorations look like road kill this year. But that won't keep the tourist away. Oh no. They keep flockin' just to take photos of us before we all turn to road kill they should put up a sign up outside the town (p.12)

From the quotation above, through character, it can be interpreted that Max experiences strong life pressure that he thinks that everything around him left him behind.. "*Everything gets left behind this town*", this utterance means because of his illness, he thinks that everything that once belonged to him, which he had and was around will just disappear because of the illness he was suffering from.

Additionally, it is also the explanations for someone who is having suicidal desire and for acting on suicidal desire. In particular, it is stipulated that the combination of perceived burdensomeness and low belongingness and hopelessness about his surrounding creates desire for suicide, whereas the capability to act on suicidal desire requires that one overcome fears of death and pain that are a natural part of attempting suicide. Thus, it can be viewed the desire of suicide to be positioned within the ideation to action of suicide.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that Max is on hurried thoughts, emotions, desires and impulses that not readily accessible to his life. All this are completely hidden and untouchable. These are the underworld of personality that has no concern on realities, rights and rules of society. Another quotation as follow :

MAX : I always thought I'd need a bloody good reason to get outta here. Maybe i just like drivin'. Oh did i teall ya about the dust? It gets into everything. Into ya tears, ya clothes, ya hair, ya bones, every God-given orifice ya possess. It crawls into your furniture and your porridge and... will ya sht the bloody mongrel up!!! Somebody ? will ya!! It's in pain! Anyone can hear that? Somebody put it out of its misery. If you don't, i will. It's easy. Ya hold its snout down with ya boot and ... bang! A 22 in the back of the head. Simple!! Only someone who loves it will do that for it. So.. it's not gonna happen. (p.10)

This quotation depicts the desire of Max to end his life where nobody can understand him. Max wants people to know how painful and how much he suffered

from this deadly disease. Ironically, the disease he suffered could only be felt by himself. He thinks that no one understands his condition and it is very severe. It can also be seen that humans tend to complain rather than have a desire to overcome it. All of this is only cursing his life without thinking of a way out of his own problems.

As Edwin Shneidman's in the theory of suicide (1993), he describes psychache (i.e., emotional or psychological pain) as the primary motivator of an attempt. He posits that suicide occurs when an individual's threshold for tolerating psychological pain is surpassed and that this threshold varies across individuals. Thus, Through a desire to die, Max motivation common to all suicide attempts. His attempts may be motivated by a myriad of reasons such as escape, communication, altering one's environment, and dealing with an unbearable state of mind of suffering from the terminal cancer illness. It can be also seen from another quotation :

POLLY : I know where it is. Max you barely
been outta Broken Hill.
MAX : So, ya told me already. I'm
getting worse Pol
POLLY : You don't look any worse.
MAX : Everything's shutting down Pol. Inside
me. I need a bucket next to me most
days now
POLLY : Ya gotta start listening to your
Doctor,Max
MAX : What for? She doesn't tell me anything
I wanna hear. I'm going down fast
(p.30)

It clearly can be seen how Max suffered from his terminal illness. he became a very pessimistic person to live his life. He was willing to sacrifice his life rather than living the life with the illness he was suffering from. Max's character here is very weak and helpless. The desire to end his life is getting stronger along with the development of his terminal illness.

From the utterance "*Everything shutting down inside me,Pol*" clarify and made it clear that Max really wanted to end his life because of such severe pain. Pain might cause suicidal ideation. In the contrary, if someone in pain has hope that his situation can improve and that the pain can be diminished, the individual will strive to achieve a future with diminished pain rather than consider suicide.

Max, is the opposite, he cannot think the goodwill to strive for diminishing the pain because of the death instinc derives from himself. For this reason, it is the development of suicidal ideation. That is, if someone's life includes considerable pain, and he feels impossible that the pain will improve, he will consider ending his life. In can be seen from another quotation :

MAX : Don't lie to m woman! I dont

invite you over here for a beer
so's I can listen to your lies.
POLLY : You told me that the pain was
under control
MAX : I lied (p.30)

Max tends not to listen to the words of others because for him all he needs is what's on his mind. If someone can not think logically, then everything is right for him. Max with his ideation can make a suicide attempt; therefore, the final step of this conditions under which strong ideation leads to a suicide attempt. Another quotation :

G.P : You are not dying yet Max
MAX : but i don't have long. Do i?
G.P : We're all dying Max
MAX : How long have i got?
G.P : That depends
MAX : cancer of the gut eh? Sounds painful
Basically iam fucked (p.17)

Max expresses his desperation of suffering through various things. One of them was by trying to keep telling himself he is messed up. He tries to make himself like his life will be useless to life like before anymore, whether it is mentally or physically. He turns into different person than he is before.

Max's suicidal thoughts and behaviors are not the natural consequence of serious life stresses. He experiences a stressful life event and may feel intense sadness or loss, anxiety, anger, or hopelessness, and may occasionally have the thought that he would be better off dead. He experiences of stressful life events do trigger him recurring thoughts of death, creation of a suicide plan, or intent to die. It suggests that Max is suffering from depression. Another quotation follows

Polly : if you do this thing Max, that is exactly where
you will be going. You hearing me?
Max :It's all legal Polly. It's called the right to die
bill
Polly : more like the right to be fucking killed bill!
Max : its okay polly, really its okay (p.31)

Instead of having treatment with the doctor to heal the illness, Max thinks he has right of refusing the treatment. While denying that it could ever be right for a patient to judge that his life was no longer worth living. He differs, in his ability to tolerate pain, and what may be excessively painful for him may not be so for another. He thinks the legalization of the self-killing is the way to end his life. He

travelled to Northern Territory in Australia just to end his life where the place would be legal to do the suicide.

Suicidal ideation and attempts are treated as states or traits. In other words, is suicide ideation and attempt better conceptualized as an experience someone has at a moment in time or as an individual difference variable attached to anyone who has thought about or attempted suicide at least once. Unfortunately, Max explicitly considered or rationalized in this condition, and knowledge about suicide and suicide risk suffers as a result.

2. Hopelessness

Hopelessness of Max appears to be one of the strongest predictors of suicidal ideation. As May & Klonsky (2016) stated, Hopelessness is well known for demonstrating prospective prediction of suicide ideation and suicide attempts. In addition, like suffering, hopelessness is elevated in those who have experienced suicidal ideation and higher in attempters. The role of impulsivity in suicide is particularly noteworthy because impulsivity has long been conceptualized as a key risk factor for suicide attempts. Though a desire to die, hopelessness also a motivation common to all suicide ideation. Max desire and attempts may be motivated by a myriad of reasons such as escape from the reality, suffering, and dealing with an unbearable state of mind. It can be seen from the quotation below:

Doctor : Max, there's still some hope
Max : You can't spoon feed me on hope anymore. (p.36)

Losing interest and spirit in daily life is one of many indicators which are showed by Max to portray his desperation. He is also being self defeating as the effect of his mental health. His emotional that becomes worse as the reflection of his frustration and anger. Then, losing self-identity is also the indicator of his desperation which appears since he thinks that his life is not the same as he had before. He is also lacking productivity which happens because of his paralysis and losing hope of his life.

When someone desperate for help, it can be threatening for suicidal ideation. The pain and anguish of mental illness is as gut wrenching as any physical illness and just as fatal. According to Abramson, Alloy, Hogan, et al., 2000; Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy (1989), hopelessness is an important cognitive vulnerability associated with the risk for suicide. Specifically, hopelessness is thought to reflect a cognitive style consisting of negative attributions about the future and about one's helplessness to improve prospects for the future. In support of this perspective. Kuo, Gallo, and Eaton (2004) examined a large community sample and found that hopelessness predicted suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts. Additionally, hopelessness that Max experienced was a reliable predictor of completed suicidal ideation.

MAX : I'm not talking about a vet.
POLLY : ...to pump you full of drugs to send you straight to hell!
MAX : How do you know I'd be going to hell?
POLLY : If you do this thing Max, that is exactly where you will be goin'. You hearin' me?
MAX : It's legal Polly. It's called "the right to die" bill. (p.31)

From the quotation above, it can be depicted that Max is a person living with suffering experiences completely different thoughts after a depressive episode. This can lead to the person not understanding the options available to help them relieve their suffering. Max thinks himself as a people who suffer from depression report feeling as though he had lost the ability to imagine a happy future, or remember a happy past. He doesn't realize he is suffering from a treatable illness, and seeking help may not even enter his mind. Emotions and even physical pain can become unbearable. He doesn't want to die, but it's the only way he feel the pain will end. It is a truly irrational choice

E. David Klonsky, Alexis M. May, and Boaz Y. Saffer, Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia (2016) stated that the key determinant is whether the individual has the capacity to make a suicide attempt. They also suggests that fear of death is a powerful instinct that makes it extremely difficult to attempt suicide, even if experiencing strong suicidal ideation; thus, individuals can only attempt suicide if they have developed the capacity to overcome this barrier. In short, this ability is developed and increased through experiences with painful and provocative events that increase one's tolerance for pain, injury, and death. That is, habituation to experiences associated with pain, injury, fear, and death can, over time, lead to higher capacity for a suicide attempt. Finally, it is a factor that make a suicide attempt easier. Hence, this suffering, contribute to the capacity for attempted suicide, and individuals with strong suicidal ideation will only make suicide attempts if and when they have the capacity to do so. Another quotation follows :

G.P : The ah.. cancer has grown through the outside wall of the stomach and very rapidly will start attacking the nearby organs such as your spleen, liver, intestines, and kidney. But if you look after yourself.
MAX : Doesn't seem like there's much point.
G.P : Then we might be able to prolong your life by ooh.. A few months. (p.29)

From the quotation above, it can be interpreted that Max was tired and had resigned himself to the illness. The utterance “*Doesn't seem like there's so much point*” reflected that he thinks he is helpless. Through character, it can be depicted that for him there is not the slightest gap to recover from the disease. According to Freud in the *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), symptomatic of war psychological is a compulsion to repeat, a compulsion which brings no pleasure with it. It is a repetition of the original fright that is characteristic of its sufferers which is Max.

Freud stated that Neurotic unpleasure is present when libidinal pleasure is negatively experienced by the ego seeking to maintain its unity. In this condition, Max experience of fright cannot be understood as pleasurable within any space of our psychic being. This becomes evident primarily of the traumatized to his life because of the disease. Another quotation follows:

Max : There's no one left. Well there is somebody but. she's a long way from here, actually do ya mind if i make a quick call? (p.76)

Max's hopelessness can be seen from his life after he suffered the terminal stomach cancer. Some of the indicators are losing interest in daily life, which can be proved that he tend to say losing hope in many things. He also becomes a different person from before, which means he is losing his identity.

It examines that hopelessness is a prospective predictor of suicidal behavior. Hopelessness reliably predicted the occurrence of idea of suicide during Max's journey of suffering life. Since hopelessness at one time point, it follows that the ability of hopelessness to predict subsequent suicidal behavior would decrease the logical thinking of someone as time the suicidal ideation would be increased. Max continuously losing his hope to strive for living. Desire for hastened death among terminally ill cancer patients is problematic. Suffering and hopelessness are the strongest predictors of desire for hastened death in this population and provide independent and unique contributions. It can be seen from another quotation

:

Max : Do you wanna watch me fade away Polly? Eh? Like old Mr. Fester who used to drink down at the royal? By the end there, he was looking worse than the carcass of my old ute that i left on the side o the road out past Silverton. By the end there he'd look at you with eyes that said : “Kill me or don't fucking talk to me” is that you want? Or do you wanna wish me well?

Polly : jesus, who put you up to this?

Max : it's my decision (p.33)

Through character, he implied that it is already considered permissible to take human life under some circumstances like self defense but he forget that when he is going kill for himself and its nothing. With self-killing no one's life is being saved, life is only just taken. Human life has an absolute moral value. Because of his hopelessness, it is wrong either to shorten the life of a patient or to fail to strive to lengthen it. It is totally against the society and as well as the value of human beings.

Another quotation follows:

Polly : what are you really looking for Max?

Max : dignity (p.34)

If someone sincerely wants to die this may well be due to desperation or to a misapprehension of them. The decision to do suicide is not made solely by him but when self-killing is permitted without the necessity to abide by government regulations and laws, people will use it as a means to get out of even simpler trouble. They use it as means to kill themselves instead of finding the dignity. Hopelessness could increase the risk of suicide. The hopeless person believes that negative aspects of his life will never improve, and he will never achieve goals and success in life. Through conflict, Max's hopelessness has been shown to strongly correlate with suicidal risk and the interaction between negative thinking and negative life events contributes to a sense of hopelessness. Another quotation follows :

Max : Remember when Cliffy Young tried to run around Australia. He was 76 for Christ's sake

Polly : he was the maddest bastard of them all!

Max : i'll piss it in

Polly : what about your house

Max : i'll sell it

Polly : sell it? You were born in this bloody house!
What if no one buys it? (32)

It can be seen from the quotation that Max doesn't use his logical thinking as a sufferer of the cancer illness. He ignore the logic that the patient must be experiencing unbearable pain. He could not admit the pain and suffering experienced by terminally and incurably ill patients is had to face. He is willing to let go everything just to face the death. He thinks he has the right to judge the level of suffering that is acceptable and tolerable. There must be no other reasonable ground for his ideation to do suicide. People who are alive without hope of recovery

for lengthily periods of time can cause their loved ones much grief, survive in a state that the patient would not have chosen or wanted.

D. CONCLUSION

The issue of suicidal ideation is revealed in a play script *Last Cab to Darwin* (2003) written by Reg Cribb. Character and setting contributes in exploring the meaning beyond the play. Text-based and context-based are important strategies in uncovering the issue of suicidal ideation. This analysis also deals with the concepts of Death Instinct by Sigmund Freud. Suicidal ideation in this analysis refers to causes of attempting to end the life of character, Max, who is suffering from some terminal stomach cancer illness.

Through character and setting can be examined that suicidal ideation has done by with different causes. It can be seen through suffering and hopelessness. This individual is under the unbearable pain and not able to decide for himself then it surely will destroy his life. In that case it will surely be a negation of his dignity and human rights.

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