

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the theme of Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory* through the portrayal of the protagonist using psychological approach by Sigmund Freud, I would like to draw some conclusions in this chapter. The protagonist of this novel is Frank, a sixteen-year-old teenager. Frank was told by his father that he was castrated by his family dog when he was three-year-old. However, at the end of the novel, it is revealed that the castration incident is just a made-up story; Frank is actually a girl, and his father uses that made-up story of Frank's castration incident as an opportunity to change Frank's gender.

In the novel, Frank is portrayed as a static character who is cruel, manipulative, and misogynistic. Using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality development, it is found that Frank's childhood environment plays a huge role in shaping Frank's personality. Freud believes that a healthy adult personality is the result of completing the psychosexual stages, which consist of oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latent stage, and genital stage. In each stage, there is an issue or conflict concerning the individual's manifestation of sexual desire which should be resolved in order for the individual to move onto the next stage smoothly without being fixated in a certain

psychosexual stage. In *The Wasp Factory*, Frank has unresolved issues when completing the psychosexual stages in his childhood due to his environment, and this later affects Frank's personality when he grows up.

Frank's first dominant characteristic is cruel. This characteristic can first be seen when Frank narrates that he likes to wake up early to watch the hammer of his clock goes off and hits the wasp that he ties into the top of his clock. It can also be seen when Frank cruelly kills a huge rabbit and explodes all of the rabbit holes to kill the rest of the rabbits in the Rabbit Grounds. Furthermore, Frank's cruelty is also seen from his unusual habit of hunting birds for entertainment.

Frank's cruel characteristic is the result of the unresolved issues he experienced in two of his psychosexual stages: phallic and latent stages. At the phallic stage, it is said that all male children will develop castration anxiety because of the father. In this novel, however, Frank is told by his father that he was castrated when he was three years old. This causes Frank not to possess castration anxiety like other normal males as in his case, he is already castrated. The castration incident also makes Frank feel that he loses his masculinity and power, for a penis is usually associated with those things. As a compensation for his condition, Frank attempts to show his masculinity by being cruel. In the novel, Frank himself admits that he enjoys being cruel by torturing and killing animals as it helps him to atone for his lack of masculinity.

Frank's cruel characteristic is also reinforced by the unresolved issues happening at his latent stage. According to Freud, at this stage, children will forget about the memory of their sexual desire in the previous stages because it is suppressed. Instead, they will develop social skills and values by interacting with their peers. In this novel, however, Frank cannot repress his early childhood sexual desire because he is still unconsciously

fixated to his earlier psychosexual stages. Moreover, Frank cannot interact much with his peers as he is shunned by people in the town due to his older brother Eric's madness. These cause Frank not to be able to grow up like other children at his age and make him unconsciously focus more on the traumatic events in his early childhood, thereby reinforcing the cruel characteristic that has been developed in the previous psychosexual stage.

Other than cruel, Frank is also portrayed as manipulative. This characteristic can be seen when he kills Blyth using a snake then pretends to have no idea about Blyth's death in front of others so that he will not be accused of the murder. Frank is also being manipulative when he influences his little brother, Paul, to believe that the bomb he discovered in the beach is a giant bell so that he can kill Paul using the bomb. After that, Frank acts as if he is guilty for Paul's death in front of his older brother Eric and others so that they will not blame him for Paul's death. Frank's manipulative characteristic is also seen when he influences his cousin, Esmerelda, to play the giant kite which he builds specially to kill her. Just like before, Frank pretends to be traumatic in front of other people after the death of Esmerelda so that people will think he is innocent of the murder.

Frank's manipulative characteristic is actually the result of the unresolved issues he experienced in three of his psychosexual stages: anal, phallic, and latent stages. At the anal stage, it is said that children will be influenced heavily by their parents' parenting style. Children with authoritative parents will usually develop anal-retentive personality, while children with liberal parents will usually develop anal-expulsive personality. In this novel, Frank is raised only by his father, who is too controlling towards Frank in a negative way. This leads Frank to possess anal-retentive personality which causes him to

have a desire to control his surroundings, and this is reflected through his manipulative personality.

Frank's manipulative characteristic is then reinforced by the unresolved issues happening at his phallic stage. At this stage, it is said that male children will develop castration anxiety. In Frank's case, however, the situation is made worse as the castration incident happens at the same time with the birth of his little brother, Paul. This causes him to have penis envy and resentment towards his sibling, which in turn trigger him to eliminate Paul and his other victims. The act of murder that Frank does provides a space for his manipulative characteristic, which has been developed at the anal stage, to be manifested for real since Frank has to do some manipulation first in order to be able to kill his victims. Frank also considers being manipulative and killing his victims as a way to make up for his lack of masculinity and power since by doing so, Frank can show his dominance over his surroundings and display his masculinity. Later, Frank's manipulative characteristic is also further reinforced by the unresolved issues happening at his latent stage – the same as what has been explained in the discussion of the cruel characteristic.

Other than cruel and manipulative, Frank is also portrayed as misogynistic since he hates women and believes that men are better than women. This characteristic can first be seen through Frank's choice of words when he explains that he has to sit down like women when using the toilet due to his castration incident. He describes his condition an “unfortunate disability” and states that he feels like “a bloody woman” for having to do such an action. Frank's being misogynistic can also be seen when he states that he hates women because they are stupid, weak, and dependent on men. Furthermore, this characteristic of Frank is also shown through his thought when his friend and a girl try to

help him when he gets drunk in a bar. He thinks that girls in general are weak and have negative intention towards men. Frank's being misogynistic is also seen when he thinks that Eric goes mad because he is mentally weak like women.

Frank's misogynistic characteristic is also the result of the unresolved issues he experienced in two of his psychosexual stages: oral and latent stages. At the oral stage, mother is an important figure for a child, but Frank is left by his mother since he is born. This causes Frank's oral need not to be fulfilled as his mother, who is the source of his sexual pleasure during this stage, is not present. Frank never develops any bonding nor receives any affection either from his first object of love, his mother, as he should. This eventually leads Frank to resent his mother and hate women in general. In other words, the absence of his mother causes Frank to become misogynistic when he grows up. Frank's misogynistic characteristic is then reinforced by the unresolved issues happening at his latent stage – the same as what has been explained in the discussion of the cruel characteristic.

In general, based on the portrayal of Frank as seen using Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality development, it can be seen that Frank's personality is heavily influenced by his environment, especially his parents. Therefore, it can be concluded that the theme of this novel is "one's childhood environment greatly affects one's personality."

After conducting an analysis of this novel, I am of the opinion that Banks as a writer has succeeded in relaying the message about how the environment plays a huge role in shaping one's personality through his character, Frank. As can be seen in the analysis, Frank is actually a dark and disturbing character, but instead of making the readers immediately feel appalled with the character, Banks invites the readers to

understand the character through such a detailed portrayal. This, in turn, enables the readers to grasp the idea that the character becomes who he is as the result of his environment. In other words, Banks has succeeded in showing the readers that Frank is only a product of his environment.

In the end, as a researcher, I learn that our childhood is a really important phase in our lives. This goes in line with the environment in which we grow up. It plays a huge role in determining our future, especially our personality. If it is done in a wrong way, the outcome will be a chaos to ourselves, like Frank's story. The environment during his childhood greatly affects himself in a negative way, which leads him to be who he is in the story.

