

Gender Dysphoria as Interpreted on Against Me!'s FUCKMYLIFE666

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Abstract

Gender in literature includes psychological duality. Gender dysphoria as stated by Anna Laws is experience of discomfort caused by mismatch between gender identity and sex assigned at birth. FUCKMYLIFE666 is a song by Against Me! released in 2014. That American punk rock song depicts the vocalist's experience in having gender dysphoria before totally changed his gender into woman in 2012. She totally underlines her discomfort between being man and woman in her body. Then, how is gender dysphoria interpreted on Against Me!'s FUCKMYLIFE666? Through qualitative method on cultural studies, this paper analyzes uneasy condition of being a woman inside a body of a man in that song. Tensions between nature and nurture is underlined as being original and being in process are always conflictual. The lyrics of the song shows identity as a multifaceted concept that could be different over childhood and adolescence as supported by statements of Laws. In conclusion, the song asserts radical awareness of being a flexible gender inside a static body. Gender is shown as non-conforming matter since human is always androgynous in its existence.

Keywords: Against Me!; Anna Laws; FUCKMYLIFE666; gender dysphoria

A. Introduction

Literature illustrates human life in individual and social matters. Today, gender is widely improved through literature (Wiyatmi, 2012). Lyrics of the song as poems somehow underline idea of gender through matter of individual experience. The song writers are the poets who explore the world through certain perspectives. Gender is so particular that could only relate to

how someone accentuates such circumstances through bodily perceptions (Barker, 2012; Wiyatmi, 2012). That case presupposes flexibility and fluidity of gender. Its unstable matter is not fixed, but surrounds meanings of body and mind. Therefore, unfixed situation of gender may bring in discomfort as result of awaken awareness of self among condition of otherness.

FUCKMYLIFE666 is a song by Against Me! in 2014. That American punk rock band underlines the idea of the vocalist, as well as the lyric writer, that comes out to be transsexual from a man to a woman. The lyric asserts inconvenience of having soul of a woman inside body of a man (GeniusMedia, 2020). Tensions between nature and nurture is underlined here as being original and being in process are always conflictual. The vocalist, Laura Jane Grace, felt such crucial differences of sexual identity as she grew up. Indeed, this condition affected her mind as her anxiety always haunted her to choose one from another choice. Then, how is gender dysphoria interpreted on Against Me!'s *FUCKMYLIFE666*? This study accentuates uneasy condition of being a woman inside a body of a man. The lyrics share that the discomfort is real alongside with abundant anxiety that a transsexual feels every single time. Moreover, the song depicts radical awareness of being a flexible gender inside a static body. While sex is biologically so static in the sense of modern idea,

gender is flexible in which its condition never gets in line with monolithic modern understanding (Barker, 2012). Gender is shown as non-conforming matter since human is androgynous in its existence.

B. Research Method

By using qualitative method, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between Against Me!'s *FUCKMYLIFE666* and matter of gender dysphoria by Anna Laws alongside with literary concepts and gender ideas. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The following analyses then include how the lyrics indicate inconvenience of having different soul in a same body.

C. Results and Discussions

Contradictive Gender and Its Discomfort in Against Me!'s song

FUCKMYLIFE666 is a punk rock song by Against Me! from the album *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* released in 2014. The song has a strong beat yet desperate lyrics. It

shows deep meaning as it expresses Laura Jane Grace's experience as the vocalist and the songwriter, who identifies herself as a transgender since she embraces more woman roles afterwards. She is also a transsexual due to her transition from male to female physically. She spent most of her life as a man named Tom Gabel. Yet, she experienced gender dysphoria most of that time so that she decided to come out as transgender to her friends, wife, and her daughter in early 2012.

This song tends to explain Laura's feelings when she experienced discomfort from being a woman inside the body of a man. Her feelings also affect her family including her wife and daughter. Those all might cause anxiety, discomfort, distress, and even suicidal thought either. All of those are well-explored in that song. The full lyric of the song is the following;

Verse One

The ease of your pose,
the grace of your silhouette
The way that your shoulders
meet your slender neck
Where would we be without all
the distance?

You know I'm already just a
skeleton

Chorus One

I don't have the heart to match,
the one pricked into your finger
Of things made to be destroyed
All moments meant to pass

Verse Two

Don't wanna live without teeth
Don't wanna die without bite
I never wanna say that I regret it
Never wanna say that we grew
apart
I never wanna say that the
feelings changed

Chorus One

Verse Three

Chipped nail polish and a
barbed wire dress
Is your mother proud of your
eyelashes,
Silicone chest, and collagen lips,
How would you even recognize
me?

Chorus One

Chorus Two

I don't have the heart to match,
the one pricked into your finger
No more troubled sleep,
there's a brave new world,
that's raging inside of me

Chorus Three

I don't have the heart to match,
the one pricked into your finger
This, too, will soon slip out of
reach
This, too, will soon come to an
end (GeniusMedia, 2020)

The first verse punctuates
symbolic condition of a woman with

her pose and grace of the silhouette. The slender of the neck is also the reflection of woman's body. The distance means things that Grace has to walk on to be a woman. The discomfort of her body is also explained in "*I'm already just a skeleton*" indicating that her identity is going out and there is nothing left but anxiety (GeniusMedia, 2020). The first chorus then accentuates such sadness and anger in which Grace blames her own self. By saying that she does not have the heart to match, she knows that the discomfort has spread to all of her wider relationship. She also struggled with her family especially her wife. She already knew that her transition would ruin the whole family and hurt her wife's feelings. She and her wife wore wedding rings yet she knew that it meant nothing. The marriage will be destroyed and it has to pass soon.

Verse two indicates her denial to her own life. She wanted to be different and regretted nothing (GeniusMedia, 2020). The feelings for the persons whom she loved never changed even if she

transitioned into a woman. This is her promise as all she wanted was just the acceptance, whereas there was struggle to deny feeling of being disowned. Verse three underlines matter of being a woman. She started to wear girly things. She even injected more estrogenic hormones to her body. Moreover, she tried to be recognized differently by her relatives (GeniusMedia, 2020). She hated being different but she had to since that was what she really felt at that time. She was afraid that her family, her audience, and her band partner will lose 'Tom Gabel' and refuse 'Laura Jane Grace'.

Chorus two is interesting as she includes her own belief despite discomfort that she experienced. She had new world waiting for her and her sleep would never be disturbed again (GeniusMedia, 2020). Those are such opposites from all the discomfort. It is only a process of suffering where there is a bright light waiting at the end of the line. Chorus three is such convincement for her confidence. She believes everything that she experienced will be gone someday. She would not hold any

pain again as the suffering ends. She knew that she had to let go many things including her own love. She had to stand up for being a person who performs onstage for a living and already undergoes such a mental or physiological distress, with the lack of support from the social around. It is detrimental process of mental health issue indicated as gender dysphoria.

Gender Dysphoria and Its Following Tensions

Gender dysphoria is defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as a disorder that caused by a mismatch between the perceived or experienced gender and the gender assigned at birth or natal sex (Elaut & Heylens, 2020; Laws, 2019). The feeling of discomfort affects them in various way, such as behavior and the way they dress. Some people with gender dysphoria do cross-dressing, some want to transform in social life such as changing names, yet others want to change their gender with the help of medical procedures (Furlong & Janca, 2022; Garcia et al., 2021).

Numerous people discover that parts of their physical body are the only source that obtained of their gender dysphoria, considering that they experience them as terribly wrong, not theirs, or that something awfully missing, or is there when it should not be (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2015; Laws, 2019).

Gender dysphoria might start in childhood and continue into adolescence to adulthood. It might also start experience gender dysphoria around the time of puberty or much later in life. But as children, people are never figuring out what is gender and how to behave as the sex of assigned birth until parents or society taught them how to be (Elaut & Heylens, 2020; Gupta et al., 2020). Interestingly, childhood actually reflects such androgynous situation in which there is no particular identity to be embraced. Non-conforming gender behavior is so natural in children that they should explore their bodies by themselves. Gender should be seen as a process in which individuals and societies should not easily nod to given gender

structural roles (Furlong & Janca, 2022; Toufighi, 2017).

People who face symptom of gender dysphoria involve individuals feeling as if their body does not represent their true gender. There is an accompanying desire to be rid of the sex-related somatic features associated with the natal sex and the desire to change one's body to match that of the desired gender (Apeiranthitou et al., 2019; Zucker, 2014). There are such feelings of unease or disgust toward their genitalia or bodily representations of their sex assigned at birth. Moreover, societal perceptions to force such static gender based on sex eventually worsen their cases. Individuals with gender dysphoria often struggle socially due to being bullied, harassed, assaulted, and ostracized (Atkinson & Russell, 2015; Laws, 2019). This is something that they do not really know well at first. Then, by listening to the uneasiness, gender is the source of the problem. It relates to not only regarding to what society wants, but also to what the body needs (Apeiranthitou et al., 2019; Garcia et al., 2021). It first

comes as discomfort, but the tensions come along with anxiety, then defense mechanism could not defend them all along. Symptoms of gender dysphoria could even become apparent or reach clinical significance for the first time in adulthood (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2015; Toufighi, 2017).

Equally those who face gender dysphoria may face a multitude of social restrictions based on real or feared resistance from others (Laws, 2019; Singh & Zucker, 2017). Indeed, there is matter of anxiety that keeps going on and worsens every time they breathe. This is closely explained as matter of singular experience in which it could not be easily embraced by common people (Singh & Zucker, 2017). In advance, even many people who feel gender dysphoria could have different particular experience according to their bodies. This dysphoria could lead to mental health problems such as depression, substance misuse, anxiety, sexual risk behaviors, self-neglect, and self-harm (Laws, 2019; Turban et al., 2018). At a point, it gradually affects matter of sexual

condition after the symptom takes effect on gender. Gender as social matter is seen as being suited to society, and the symptom bearers could not cope with that expectation. It is like a circle in which an affecting aspect is caused by another as well. Therefore, this dysphoria needs a way out and the body and the feeling are the main way points to understand asserted problem (Turban et al., 2018).

The mental illness experienced by people who have this dysphoria might be resolved by social and medical transition to live in ways which are gender affirming (Havar & Stoet, 2022; Laws, 2019). In this case, it is needed to follow what the body desires through its whispering to the feeling. Social construction must be changed by accentuating one particular gender through physical treatment. Indeed, by going into medical is one aspect that could not erase discrepancies from other human beings. However, since the main reason of gender dysphoria is the body, then it should be amended at first to bring in comfort to own feeling. Physical treatment involves

the introduction of gender-affirming hormones or surgical procedures designed to produce the desired physical changes (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2015; Havar & Stoet, 2022). Suppression of the old and introduction of the new hormone of testosterone or estrogen should be done to support matter of masculinization or feminization. Desires regarding physical changes are highly individualized, with some individuals with gender dysphoria wanting little to no changes to their bodies and others wanting to undergo extensive gender-affirming surgical procedures (Atkinson & Russell, 2015; Gupta et al., 2020).

“I Am Not Myself” and Its Impacts to Identity of Gender

The impression of the song could never be separated from how a person had to go through such discomfort to live the life. Those who have gender dysphoria must conform themselves to points in which they never agree with (Sarin, 2017; Zucker, 2014). While others may easily refuse any anxiety to come, they have to bear it all the

time. It has to be hidden somewhere but the body never intends to do so. They could hide but the body always wants to come to surface. The song explores gender dysphoria to more than just the body as cause and effect. It brings in social discomfort alongside with that dysphoria.

In gender dysphoria, there are three elements that are well written in the lyrics of the song. Those are physical, social, and mental dysphoria (Sarin, 2017; Zucker, 2014). Three of them are embraced tightly by Laura Jane Grace. She feels crucial changing in her physical body as listed in verse one of the song. The pose, the slender neck, and even her skeletal frames are varying. Socially, she is afraid if her changing will shift others' recognition to her. Verse two and three show how any transition she does will bring distress of her thoughts about how her surroundings would think about her. Both physical and social aspects then affect the mental as well including troubled sleep, urgency to shape womanly body, and needs to end that discomfort sooner (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2015; Sarin, 2017). People will

never look at her as the same person again as this widens the dysphoria to merely bodily symptom.

Impressively, the writer of the lyrics of the song believes that the transition must be done whatever the impacts that may come. He was not himself at all then she strongly holds to hope that brave new world awaits her. It may not be easy at all, but at least she has made peace with her own body and feeling (GeniusMedia, 2020). She only has to show to the world who she really is. Her bluntness is as pure as gold since it is her own experience that embraces her former past though follows her latter future. Her next works are clear; bringing back confidence to herself by being present in front of others' acceptance and affirmation of her valuable experience.

Gender dysphoria is hard since it affects matter of hormone that gradually worsens any discomfort that the bearer feels (Zucker, 2014). Hence, her love for others never changed at all. She wants to be who she really is but she will stay the same person who loves everyone. She has done transition and she does

not feel sorry for it. Her feelings of love and affection for the closest people such as for her daughter and family have never changed a bit. She still loves them very much and she wants to grow with them. The identity of sex has changed inside of her but it does not eradicate her gender roles (GeniusMedia, 2020). She does not have the same appearance as before, but her position in society remains the same. She could be a good mother, a nice performer, and even a good friend for the band. It is so heart-warming to think how good she is, even though Laura Jane Grace has to face mental issues she has been through. Therefore, she can make such a remarkable song and profoundly written one that inspire many people in the future.

D. Conclusion

In the lyrics of *FUCKMYLIFE666*, it can be concluded that the discomfort of being in a wrong body can be potentially fatal as what Laura Jane experienced. The discomfort she felt might cause very serious thing such

as suicide attempt since Laura had to deal with her anxiety, depression, and any other mental disorder which she had to go through with. Besides, constant pressure from society and her own family play such a big role in cause of her gender dysphoria. Apparently, she managed to survive this far because she finally found a way to deal with this dysphoria that is doing the transition. Concentrating on therapy is also a way to accompany medical treatment she had done. She needs mental treatment either since body and mind is intertwined with one another.

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