

DUALISM OF IDENTITY IN JEN WANG'S "THE PRINCE AND THE DRESSMAKER"

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ABSTRACT

Exercising freedom of choice must always be accompanied by responsibility. However, freedom is never absolute, as it is bounded by facticity arising from social conditions, relationships with others, and existing norms. This research examines Jen Wang's *The Prince and the Dressmaker*, which depicts Prince Sebastian's dual identity as both a royal heir and his alter ego, Lady Crystallia. As the sole heir to the throne, Prince Sebastian is expected to uphold traditional norms, social expectations, and royal duties imposed by society. Despite these constraints, he chooses to express himself as Lady Crystallia at night, wandering the city and exploring fashion as a form of self-expression. This choice reflects his freedom while simultaneously revealing the limitations imposed by his social position and responsibilities. The study demonstrates that morals, norms, and rules are not intended to eliminate individual freedom but to emphasize that one person's freedom is shaped and limited by the freedom of others. Drawing on Sartre's existentialist concepts—such as absurdity, the look, authenticity, meaning, and bad faith—this research reveals Prince Sebastian's divided existence. Ultimately, he embodies two identities: one constrained by societal norms and another representing his pursuit of authenticity and meaning in life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human life unfolds within a network of social interactions and shared realities that shape how individuals understand themselves and the world around them. For some, existence appears to lack inherent meaning, while for others, meaning emerges through lived experience and personal interpretation of life events. These differing perspectives raise a fundamental philosophical concern regarding freedom: the extent to which individuals can determine their own lives. Although human beings possess the ability to make choices, this freedom does not exist in isolation. It is continually shaped by moral considerations, social conventions, and collective expectations. Far from diminishing freedom, such limitations help define its scope, as unrestrained freedom may result in consequences that affect others negatively.

This view resonates strongly with Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy, particularly his reflections on ethical and political life. Sartre (2007) views human existence as an ongoing process shaped by the interaction between subjective experience and objective conditions. Within this framework, freedom cannot be separated from limitation; the two operate together as defining features of existence. Human choice, Sartre maintains, is always exercised within facticity and within a world shared with others, whose freedoms also influence and restrict one's own. Facticity encompasses the concrete circumstances that cannot be undone, such as one's historical and social situation, inherited language and cultural context, the enduring impact of past decisions, and the inevitability of mortality.

Previous studies on dualism have not examined dualism as an issue of identity formation within literary narratives. Grankvist et al. (2016) focus on mind–body dualism from a psychological perspective, analyzing its correlation with personal values through quantitative methods. While their study contributes empirical insight into dualistic belief systems, it does not address how dualism operates as a lived experience shaped by social norms, moral expectations, and individual choice. In particular, this study does not explore dualism as a conflict between public identity and personal authenticity. Similarly, Duncan's (2000) analysis of Cartesian dualism concentrates on philosophical and medical discourse, reassessing Descartes' views on the relationship between body and soul within the biopsychosocial model of pain. Although this study challenges the assumption that Descartes strictly separated mind and body, it remains limited to historical and theoretical interpretation. It does not engage with literary texts, nor does it address how dualism is represented through characters who negotiate freedom, responsibility, and social constraint. More importantly, neither of these studies employs Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist framework to analyze dualism. Concepts central to Sartre's philosophy—such as absurdity, the look, bad faith, authenticity, and meaning—are absent from previous discussions of dualism. As a result, the role of existential freedom and responsibility in shaping divided identities remains underexplored.

These existential concerns are vividly explored in Jen Wang's graphic novel *The Prince and the Dressmaker* (2018), which addresses issues of identity, self-expression, and social constraint. The narrative centers on Prince Sebastian, a royal heir who privately adopts the persona of Lady Crystallia. While his public role subjects him to rigid traditions and social expectations, his private acts of self-expression create a space for authenticity, revealing a tension between personal freedom and social obligation. Where discussions of dualism have often remained at the level of abstract theory or psychological interpretation, this study turns to a literary narrative to examine how such tensions are lived and negotiated. It seeks to investigate how this tension produces identity dualism in Prince Sebastian and how he negotiates freedom, responsibility, and authenticity within the limits imposed by social norms and moral expectations. Accordingly, this research, entitled *Dualism of Identity in Jen Wang's The Prince and the Dressmaker*, applies Sartre's existential framework—particularly the concepts of absurdity, the look, authenticity, meaning, and bad faith—to analyze the protagonist's divided identity.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative research approach. Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research is concerned with understanding meanings, concepts, and descriptive representations of phenomena. Such an approach is particularly appropriate for literary studies, as it allows the researcher to interpret texts in depth and to explore underlying meanings conveyed through language and narrative. In this research, the qualitative method is applied by focusing on four existentialist concepts as the main analytical framework. The primary data consist of textual elements—such as words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues—drawn from Jen Wang's graphic novel *The Prince and the Dressmaker* (2018). These textual data are selected due to their relevance to issues of identity, freedom, and dualism.

The primary unit of analysis consists of verbal and visual narrative elements that represent the protagonist's dual identity, including character dialogues, narrative descriptions of internal conflict, and symbolic scenes such as dress-wearing moments, public appearances, and interactions with parents or close companions. Relevant passages and

scenes are systematically identified and analyzed through Sartrean existentialist concepts—authenticity, bad faith, freedom, and the look—to reveal how dual identity is constructed and negotiated within the narrative. The analysis is supported by secondary sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reputable online materials related to existentialism, identity, and graphic narratives, which serve as theoretical references for interpretation.

3. RESULT

3.1 Prince Sebastian's Existential Constraint as a Prince

A person's identity is constructed through the actions taken and the decisions repeatedly made, as these choices ultimately shape the meaning of existence. From the perspective of absurdity, this condition arises from the persistent tension between human expectations and a reality that remains indifferent. This view aligns with Sartre's assertion that human beings are compelled to exist in a world that does not accommodate their desire for meaning. Rather than providing inherent purpose, the universe remains silent toward human aspirations. As Sartre (2007) asserts, "we are our choices" (p. 78), indicating that individual decisions expose the absurd nature of humanity's search for meaning. Although it is commonly assumed that a higher purpose must justify existence, the concept of absurdity fundamentally challenges this assumption. This condition is further illustrated in the graphic novel through the character of Prince Sebastian, whose role as the heir to the throne is predetermined and unalterable from birth. Despite this fixed social position, the narrative emphasizes how personal choices continue to shape identity and interpersonal relationships. By employing the concept of absurdity and foregrounding human agency within relational contexts, this research aims to explore the central issue addressed in the analysis.

3.1.1. Limited Choices within Facticity

The self can function as a prison, a trap, and a source of doubt. Existentialism maintains that human beings do not possess a fixed nature in the way other creatures do; rather, humans can create their own nature through the choices they make. Choice is inescapable, as every individual is fundamentally free to determine their own path. This freedom entails a clear yet demanding obligation: individuals must accept the risks involved and take full responsibility for the commitments that follow. In life, regardless of how limited the available options may appear, there is no possibility of opting out of choice; even the refusal to choose constitutes a choice. As Sartre (2018) argues, "Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be," emphasizing that human identity is shaped through conscious acts of willing (p. 22). The human spirit demonstrates a remarkable capacity for action and transformation. Nevertheless, there are moments when individuals are confronted with the decision either to surrender or to persist. In such circumstances, existentialism emphasizes the necessity of self-reliance and autonomous decision-making. Frequently, the most significant limitations individuals experience are self-imposed.

This graphic novel illustrates how Prince Sebastian's capacity for choice is constrained by parental authority and societal expectations. In this context, he must act as both judge and master of himself, bearing responsibility for determining how to live and who to become. At the same time, his facticity as the sole heir to the throne restricts the realization of his personal desires. As Sartre argues, one of the facticities that cannot be transcended by human beings is interpersonal relationships (as cited in Sari, 2017, p. 5). Social norms and rules, therefore, are not intended to eliminate human freedom but to provide order within society and to enable

mutual understanding of individual actions. Sartre further elaborates on the pervasive influence of others through the concept of *being-for-others*: Better yet, if I tremble at the slightest noise, if each creak announces to me a look, this is because I am already in the state of being-looked-at. (Sartre, 2018, p. 277)

Prince Sebastian encounters difficulty in exercising his own choices. On one hand, he recognizes his responsibility as the sole heir to the throne; on the other, he seeks to pursue his personal happiness. The tension between Prince Sebastian's desires and the expectations imposed by those around him significantly influences the way he makes decisions. As Sartre (2020) argues, "Existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him" (p. 5). This assertion reflects the absence of predetermined structures in society, a condition that often generates conflict when individuals attempt to construct personal values within restrictive social expectations. Sartre describes this tension as part of the absurdity of human existence.

Initially, Prince Sebastian's persistent desire to wear dresses leads him to act in secrecy, hiding his actions from his parents and attempting to maintain two separate identities. He believes that this division allows him to preserve a sense of certainty and control while avoiding social scrutiny. This situation is illustrated in the sentence "Leory, that's my dress! The dress that's been missing all these years!" (Wang, 2018, p. 214). The quotation illustrates that Prince Sebastian secretly takes his mother's dresses for his own use. The primary issue in this situation is his mother's lack of awareness that her son is responsible for the disappearance of the dresses over many years. This circumstance indicates that Prince Sebastian's parents tend to view him mainly through the lens of social expectations and established norms, rather than recognizing him as an individual with the freedom to make choices and define his own way of living. Sartre argues that "the look creates assumption, definition, and perspective that develop a point of view toward an individual as an object" (as cited in Sari, 2017, p. 6). From this perspective, social relations can become a source of constraint and emotional distress, as conflict is an inherent part of human existence. Such social pressures affect individuals across all stages of life and constitute an unavoidable aspect of social reality.

The way individuals react to particular circumstances is what ultimately creates distinction. While some may submit to expectations imposed by others, others choose to pursue paths that diverge from social norms. Even so, personal decisions are rarely free from external pressure, as social influences continue to shape and constrain individual choices. Sartre (2018) conceptualizes this condition through *being-for-others*, arguing that individuals remain continuously aware of how they may be perceived by others:

"I do not cease to experience my being-for-others; my possibilities do not cease to 'die,' nor do the distances cease to unfold toward me in terms of the stairway where somebody 'could' be, in terms of this dark corner where a human presence 'could' hide" (p. 277).

This notion can be observed in Prince Sebastian's experience. Although he derives personal happiness from embodying Lady Crystallia, his parents persistently impose expectations upon him as the future king, remaining unaware of his internal struggle. Consequently, Prince Sebastian suppresses crucial aspects of his identity and avoids fully confronting his authentic self. In public, he presents himself as a compliant heir, while in private, he secretly wears his mother's dresses. This tension reflects Sartre's claim that existence is constituted through action and that individuals bear responsibility for the choices they make.

Sartre maintains that human beings are radically free and that existence lacks an inherent or predetermined purpose (Sartre, 2018). Nevertheless, many individuals attempt to escape this freedom by rejecting their genuine desires, fearing social disapproval, or clinging to familiar roles. Such avoidance exemplifies *bad faith*, a form of self-deception in which individuals deny their responsibility for self-definition. According to Sartre (2018), this refusal to confront freedom obstructs personal growth, as individuals allow imagined threats and uncertainties to govern their actions, thereby limiting the possibilities available to them (p. 109). In this analysis, Prince Sebastian comes to realize that the only way to confront the reality of existence is to resist it continuously throughout his life. This resistance does not take the form of merely acting in accordance with what society expects, nor does it involve clinging to comforting illusions or surrendering completely to an overwhelming reality. Instead, it lies in acknowledging this harsh truth while actively rebelling against it. Although such a choice may be disturbing to his parents, Prince Sebastian has likely grown weary of living under these conditions. He feels isolated and different, burdened by the absence of anyone with whom he can openly share his experience.

3.1.2. Societal Pressure and the Burden of Expectation

In life, every individual is influenced by others. Sometimes, these influences shape the characteristics of an entire society, and people may feel compelled or pressured to act in ways they do not truly wish. External expectations and societal beliefs can lead individuals to compromise their integrity and act dishonestly. Sartre (2018) argues that humans are fundamentally free, yet simultaneously constrained by their circumstances. He stated:

Society demands that he limit himself to his function... There are indeed many precautions to imprison a man in what he is as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition.

At the same time, humans possess the capacity to make choices, as exemplified by Prince Sebastian, who is free to embrace his identity as Lady Crystallia, even parading through town in magnificent dresses. However, social pressure is a powerful force that can be damaging when misapplied. In many situations, such pressure can make individuals feel that conformity to the majority is their only viable option.

One clear example of this conflict between personal freedom and societal expectation can be found in the experiences of Prince Sebastian. This graphic novel illustrates that, as the heir to the throne, it is expected for him to marry and continue the family's legacy. Sebastian experiences a significant burden when his parents pressure him to marry, knowing that no prince would accept his choice to wear dresses. Despite this, he consistently demonstrates virtues such as love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, humility, patience, and faithfulness, enduring all challenges. He carefully navigates his dual identity—as both Prince Sebastian and Lady Crystallia—so as not to cause pain to either his parents or his people. Sartre (2007, p. 25) stated:

"Existentialists like to say that man is in anguish. This is what they mean: a man who commits himself, a man who realizes that he is not only the individual that he chooses to be, but also a legislator choosing at the same time what humanity as a whole should be, cannot help but be aware of his own full and profound responsibility."

When his parents expect him to marry, he feels unable to refuse and must comply with their wishes. At the same time, he presents himself to his parents and the world as the man everyone hopes he will be as the next king. Yet, inwardly, he feels ashamed for not being the person that society expects him to be. This inner conflict is clearly reflected in the quotation "Sebastian, you're the crown prince. Your most important role in life is preserving our family legacy. The sooner we figure out your future, the sooner we prepare for it" (Wang, 2018, p. 71).

The quotation "Your most important role in life is preserving our family legacy" shows that Prince Sebastian's freedom to choose is limited, as he is expected to follow what he is told. Rather than becoming angry or refusing his parents' request, he remains calm and complies. Instead of reacting negatively, he chooses to respond positively by doing his best to fulfill their expectations. This also reflects how difficult it is for society to accept that their prince wears dresses. Social beliefs strongly influence Prince Sebastian's existence, to the point that he is perceived more as an object than as a subject.

Social pressure towards Prince Sebastian leads to feelings of shame, as the expectations placed upon him by others are overwhelming. This can be seen in the following quotation "Did you know my father is a military leader? And his father? And his father's father? How am I supposed to live up to that? How can someone like me marry a princess?" (Wang, 2018, p. 73). The quotation, "How am I supposed to live up to that? How can someone like me marry a princess?" illustrates how, as the next king in line, Sebastian is expected to follow societal norms and embody the model of masculinity, where strength is the measure of dominance. Everyone hopes that their future king will be a leader in war, riding gallantly on his horse, or a ruler guided by logic and a strong will. With all these expectations, Prince Sebastian feels increasingly burdened and ashamed when he compares himself to his father, realizing that his choices are limited. Recognizing that humans are products of the choices that have been made can sometimes be difficult to accept. Often, it is easier to blame others or external circumstances for the way things have turned out.

Since one's existence coexists with the existence of others, an individual can cause either positive or negative outcomes for others. One of these negative outcomes is shame. According to Sartre (2016, p. 214):

"Shame is an essential structure of human existence. In short, this argument posits that shame is not merely a painful awareness of one's flaws or transgressions in relation to societal norms and others, but rather reflects a deeper dimension of our relationships with one another."

Prince Sebastian realizes that he is different from his father and his grandfather. In life, humans experience shame, and the experience of shame requires the presence of another conscious being to observe, which amplifies how the existence of Prince Sebastian's father also shapes his son's situation. Sartre (2004, p. 58) stated:

"All I want is' and he uttered the final words through clenched teeth and with a sort of shame - 'to retain my freedom.' I should myself have thought,' said Jacques, 'that freedom consisted in frankly confronting situations into which one had deliberately entered, and accepting all one's responsibilities. But that, no doubt, is not your view."

At times, opening up and sharing personal thoughts with others can be deeply challenging. It often feels safer to keep things to oneself—whether to avoid hurting others, to escape discomfort, or to prevent being viewed with pity. This reluctance usually stems from a sense of unreadiness and from the shame that may accompany self-disclosure. As human beings, people tend to resist vulnerability and frequently choose to keep the most intimate aspects of their lives private. This tendency is reflected in the quotation "How could I do that to someone's daughter? How could I do that to my parents?" (Wang, 2018 p.74).

This quotation illustrates Prince Sebastian's effort to cope with his circumstances and inner conflicts on his own. Like most people, he experiences moments of vulnerability—feeling hurt, humiliated, threatened, angry, or sad. When an individual becomes aware that they are constantly seen and judged by others, their sense of identity can easily be unsettled by external opinions. In this situation, Prince Sebastian is no longer acting freely but is instead positioned as an object shaped by his circumstances and by the gaze of others. Sartre (2020, p. 24) stated: "It answers the question that was tormenting you: my love, you are not 'one thing in my life'—not even the most important—because my life no longer belongs to me." This illustrates the vulnerability that comes from being subject to someone else's perception.

When people prefer not to express themselves, they often put on a fake smile and hide their true feelings. Similarly, whenever Prince Sebastian senses that he is being observed, he acts as if he is unburdened and ready to be the next king. He begins to hide his feelings, particularly when concerned about how others perceive him. Sartre (as cited in Sari, 2017, p. 6) stated "The look creates assumption, definition, and perspective that develop a point of view toward an individual as object. If the object is aware that he is being observed, he will be contaminated and absorbed." Prince Sebastian is also aware that society operates according to its own rules and values. As a prince, he feels compelled to present himself as strong, controlled, and composed, not only for his parents but also for the people he represents. This expectation places a heavy burden on him, which becomes visible in the dilemmas he faces and the constant pressure to conform to social norms. Society often teaches individuals to accept and depend on pre-established frameworks that dictate how they should behave and who they should become. What is frequently overlooked, however, is the importance of developing the awareness to question and move beyond these imposed structures. As a result, many individuals remain confined within deeply ingrained social expectations, rarely allowing themselves the freedom to choose their own way of being.

3.2 Prince Sebastian's Existential Liberation through Lady Crystallia

From a philosophical standpoint, enjoyment can be defined as living a good life rather than merely an emotional response to external stimuli. Another important aspect of enjoyment is its highly subjective nature, as reflected in the saying "one man's food is another man's poison." What one individual may regard as most enjoyable, others may find extremely odd. In relation to the concept of authenticity and meaning, authenticity is understood as the ability to be true to oneself. Living an authentic life requires the capacity to remain faithful to one's own wants, needs, and desires, rather than living according to the opinions of others. Being authentic involves making self-honoring choices and standing firmly in who individuals truly are at their core. Being true to ourselves provides insight and compassion to see others for who they are, not who we expect them to be. It also frees individuals from self-judgment and the judgment of others, while allowing others the freedom to be themselves as well. This graphic novel also portrays Prince Sebastian's hidden desires and the choices he makes in pursuit of joy and contentment. By employing the concepts of authenticity, meaning, and bad

faith—which underline the importance of taking full responsibility for one's life, choices, and actions—this study seeks to examine Prince Sebastian's pursuit of an authentic existence.

3.2.1. Achieving Authenticity through Existential Freedom

Most people present themselves differently in public and in private because they feel unable to express their authentic selves without fear of judgment. By wearing dresses, Prince Sebastian expresses self-acceptance and affirms his identity, allowing himself to exist authentically regardless of social expectations. This choice reflects Sartre's notion that human beings are fundamentally responsible for determining the authority over their own lives. Such responsibility cannot be avoided; to deny it is to live in bad faith, where individuals surrender their freedom by conforming to externally imposed roles.

Sartre also emphasizes anguish as an inevitable consequence of freedom, arising from one's awareness of responsibility not only for oneself but also for others affected by one's actions. As Sartre (2016) explains, anguish emerges from an individual's recognition of their freedom and the weight of choice that accompanies it (p. 179). In this context, wearing dresses provides Prince Sebastian with a sense of security rather than insecurity, as he demonstrates confidence in his chosen mode of existence and affirms his capacity for self-love despite potential social judgment.

Furthermore, Sartre (2018) argues that freedom consists in the ability of individuals to determine themselves through their choices, asserting that success or failure is secondary to the act of choosing itself (p. 483). Prince Sebastian's decision to embrace his identity as Lady Crystallia exemplifies this existential freedom, as his actions prioritize authenticity over social validation. This perspective is illustrated in the following quotation

Someday I look at myself in the mirror and think, "That's me, Prince Sebastian! I wear boy clothes and look like my father." Other days it doesn't feel right at all. Those days I feel like I'm actually... a princess (Wang, 2018, p. 44).

The quotation shows that by wearing dresses, Prince Sebastian is able to express himself and explore the possibilities within his identity. He is able to accept himself with all his flaws and strengths and to take pride in himself in a considerate manner. In a world that constantly tells people what to do, how to act, and what to be, knowing how to remain true to oneself and live according to that truth is a powerful depiction of authentic selfhood. By making this choice, Prince Sebastian avoids falling into bad faith. As Sartre argues, "to exist in bad faith is not the purpose of a human being's life, but rather to live authentically" (Sari, 2017, p. 12). Recognizing that human beings always possess freedom of choice can be difficult for many to acknowledge. By doing this, Prince Sebastian is not trying to please anyone; he chooses to be whatever his heart desires. He is being true and honest with himself and with others, thereby becoming an authentic individual. Each person has their own way of being human, and consequently, what counts as authenticity differs for each individual.

3.2.2. Recognizing Self-Worth through Existential Choice

According to Sartre (2016), *existence precedes essence*, which means that human beings first exist and then continually define themselves through their actions, rather than being born with a predetermined nature. In general, humans possess the freedom to assign meaning and value to themselves. With this freedom, individuals also have the right to determine and take responsibility for their own lives in a considered manner. This sense of self-value functions as the right to speak and act freely, as long as it does not infringe upon

the rights and freedoms of others. When combined with freedom, self-value becomes a way of understanding the world, and each individual interprets it differently. Prince Sebastian demonstrates self-value through his choice to wear dresses, as he asserts his freedom to decide who he wants to be without allowing others to dictate his identity. This is evident in the following quotation “My whole life is other people deciding what’s acceptable. When I put on a dress, I get to decide what’s silly” (Wang, 2018, p. 47). The quotation illustrates the sense of freedom Prince Sebastian experiences when he wears dresses. As a prince, his freedom is often constrained by social expectations and royal obligations that dictate how he should behave and present himself. Yet freedom remains an inherent human right, one that exists regardless of social status. Even a prince is born with the capacity to choose and define himself. Nothing should negate or diminish this fundamental freedom. Moreover, Prince Sebastian’s choice to express himself through clothing does not cause harm to others, either directly or indirectly. If he were not bound by royal identity, his actions would likely attract little attention or resistance. By embracing his identity as Lady Crystallia, Prince Sebastian gains the agency to choose for himself and to experience a more genuine sense of freedom in his life.

People should respect the freedom of others, as freedom is fundamental and belongs to every human being as an individual, regardless of social status or position. By acquiescing to a bad-faith value system that suggests someone is unworthy of making their own choices, individuals are forced to deny their freedom. When a person accepts a false value system or refuses to confront the truth about oneself, that person fails to value the self. Bad faith occurs when an individual gives up recognizing the tension between *being-for-itself* and *being-for-others*. According to Sartre (2018, p.35), “It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are.” This emphasizes that identity is shaped through self-definition rather than external determination. While others’ perceptions contribute to identity, authentic existence requires individuals to actively choose and affirm their own being.

4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that dual identity is a tangible and significant phenomenon in contemporary society. Individuals often act apathetically, denying their own struggles and choosing to live not according to their conscience, but to satisfy others, which hinders them from becoming the best version of themselves. True freedom, balanced with consideration for others, is the essence of human existence. Prince Sebastian’s experience illustrates the consequences of living with a dual identity: while he has the right to make his own choices, his royal title and societal expectations significantly limit his freedom. This demonstrates that everyone has a responsibility to be true to themselves. Meaning and purpose in life are not simply given; they require effort, reflection, and conscious action. Humans are the makers of their own histories, and freedom and responsibility are inseparable, as one cannot truly be free if determined solely by objective or subjective conditions. Freedom must be exercised wisely, always respecting the freedom of others, since every choice comes with responsibility. Neglecting one’s own conscience or the rights of others diminishes the value of life. Understanding, finding, and managing the meaning of life over time is crucial, and one’s freedom should never compromise the freedom of others. It is important to note, however, that this study relies primarily on literary analysis of a single graphic novel and is interpreted through an existentialist lens, which may limit its generalizability. Future research could explore dual identity across a wider range of texts, media, and real-life contexts, while

incorporating interdisciplinary approaches such as psychology, sociology, and cultural studies to examine how societal pressures shape individual identity and freedom in diverse settings.

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Authors' Contribution

Dian Eka Sari (#1) developed the project and main conceptual ideas and wrote the manuscript.

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