

## Love and Desire in Little Mermaid Movie through Psychoanalysis Perspective

Anastasya Fitri Aisyah<sup>1</sup>, Unpris Yastanti<sup>2</sup>, Wiruma Titian Adi<sup>3</sup>, Bobby Octavia Yuskar<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>[anastasya76140@gmail.com](mailto:anastasya76140@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[unpris.uys@bsi.ac.id](mailto:unpris.uys@bsi.ac.id), <sup>3</sup>[wiruma.wmt@bsi.ac.id](mailto:wiruma.wmt@bsi.ac.id),

<sup>4</sup>[bobby.boy@bsi.ac.id](mailto:bobby.boy@bsi.ac.id)

**Abstract.** The purposes of this research are to identify kind of love, the desire of main character, and how love and desire through psychoanalysis perspective in the Little Mermaid Movie directed by Rob Marshall. This research used the descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. The data are the scenes and the dialogs of the main character that contains love and desire. The result of this study reveal that: (1) There are 4 types of love in Ariel's main character, namely; eros, agape, philautia and storge. Ariel clearly shows Eros love when Ariel falls in love with Eric, while Agape displays Ariel's extraordinary sacrifice, Philautia when Ariel makes decisions, and Storge's love for her family. (2) The desires of the main character are very clear, Ariel has stubbornness, and she has principle, also, she is bravery in declaring love and negotiating with the evil witch, Urshula. (3) Sigmund Freud's id, ego, and superego theory can be seen in Ariel's main character, Ariel's will persue her love, she follows her father's words, and also she solves her problems.

**Keyword:** Desire; Little Mermaid Movie; Love; Psychoanalysis

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Corresponding Author: [Unpris.Yastanti@bsi.ac.id](mailto:Unpris.Yastanti@bsi.ac.id)



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### INTRODUCTION

Literary works are the products of human thought that portray life, encompassing feelings, ideas, and issues. Literature and psychology are closely connected, both in terms of subject matter and function. Papalia (1985), as cited by Fauziyah (2008), argues that literature and psychology cannot be separated because psychology can be applied to analyze literary works. In other words, psychology offers a deeper understanding of characters, motivations, and themes in literature, and helps explain how literary works can influence or reflect the thoughts and feelings of humans in general.

According to Wellek & Warren (1949), as cited in Artika (2020), literature is an art product of creative activity. Literary works are not limited to poems, novels, short stories, and dramas, but can also include films. Film, as part of mass communication media, is often used to depict social life in society. With its audiovisual quality, film becomes a very effective medium for influencing public mindset (Swastiwi et al., 2022).

In a film, the plot consists of an introduction, the protagonist's journey, a climax, and a resolution. Every film features a central character who plays a crucial role in resolving the story. The main character is central to the events and conflicts that influence the development of the plot (Fardhany, 2021). The main character in the film *The Little Mermaid*, directed by Rob Marshall, is Ariel, a mermaid with a strong desire to live in the human world and pursue the love of a prince.

In psychoanalysis, love is a complex phenomenon often explored in relationships, both romantic and non-romantic. Love involves affection, struggle, and complementing one another. According to Yastanti et al. (2022), love is a virtue that represents all goodness, compassion, loyalty, and care for others. Lacan further argues that the ideal of love is never fully satisfied, as the other person cannot perfectly meet one's desires (Ettehadhi & Sistani, 2017). Thus, desire and love are intricately linked, often playing out in the dynamics between individuals.

According to Lee (in Nurohma, 2018), there are six types of love relationships: 1) **Eros** is romantic, passionate love. In this type of relationship, love is considered the most important thing in life. Lee suggests that the search for physical beauty or an ideal type typifies this kind of love. It occurs when love becomes the most important thing above all else. 2) **Ludus** is playful or uncommitted love. Lying is part of the game in this type of love. Someone pursuing ludic love may have many conquests but remain uncommitted. There is no seriousness in this type of love. 3) **Storge** is slow-developing, friendship-based love. People with this type of relationship enjoy engaging in activities together. Often, storge results in long-term relationships in which sex may not be intense or passionate. This love takes time to develop, so it is built to endure. 4) **Pragma** is pragmatic, practical, mutually beneficial love. It may be somewhat unromantic. A person leaning toward this type of relationship might look for a partner at work or in places where they spend time. Sex is likely seen as a functional act, mainly for procreation, and this type of relationship is based on mutual benefit. 5) **Mania** is obsessive, possessive love with extreme jealousy. A person in this type of love is likely to engage in irrational behaviors, such as stalking. This type of love is driven by obsession and lacks rationality. 6) **Agape** is gentle, caring, giving love—brotherly love that is not concerned with the self. It is relatively rare and is often considered unconditional love.

The concept of desire plays a crucial role in psychoanalytic theory. Freud's theory of desire explains that human behavior is driven by unconscious desires, and the fulfillment of these desires contributes to one's happiness, irrespective of the pleasure or displeasure derived (Seligman & Royzman, 2003). It means that happiness is considered a result of the alignment between what one desires and what one achieves or obtains in life. When one's desires are fulfilled, it increases feelings of contentment, control over life, and overall life satisfaction. The pleasure of obtaining one's object of desire is always postponed in the chain of human relationships (Ettehadhi & Sistani, 2017). This implies that enjoyment is not actually in possessing the object of desire itself, but in the process of desire itself, with desire and imagination tied to the object.

Love and desire are two concepts often interlinked. Desire describes a state of attachment to something or someone, along with the cloud of possibilities created by the gap between an object's specificity and the needs and promises projected onto it. In contrast, love is deeper, more intense, and includes a strong desire for physical intimacy and contact. People who are "in like" enjoy each other's company, whereas those who are "in love" care just as much about the other person's needs as their own. In this sense, a strong desire to love often involves accumulated drive energy and an inappropriate object that one should leave behind but cannot. Unconscious desire then surfaces into consciousness as transference love (Cherry, 2024).

Every individual realizes they cannot have or possess everything they want, so desire arises from the feeling of dissatisfaction that comes from not having these things. The desire to achieve one's wants preserves a sense of wholeness, with completeness being the goal of existence. In this sense, our desires can take any form because we seek to achieve them, whether in the form of love or appreciation. Love itself makes the subject feel desirable, as it involves the other party giving attention, affection, and care. Thus, the desire to love is vital to the subject, because when their desire for love is fulfilled, it brings a sense of closeness. The desire to love is also accompanied by the desire for recognition as individuals fight for what they want. These desires can be for something to have, to become, or to experience. In psychoanalysis, these desires are considered part of the unconscious psychological structures that influence a person's actions and decisions.

Psychoanalysis, based on the work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, continues to offer insight into the unconscious processes underlying identity formation. Freud examined the symbolic manifestations of unconscious desires and conflicts and explained how individuals construct their identities through dreams and fantasies (Jung, 2012). Psychoanalytic theory refers to human mental functioning and development and is a significant branch of psychology that has contributed greatly to the understanding of human behavior. In applying the psychoanalytic approach to film, the writer utilizes key concepts from psychoanalytic theory such as the id, ego, and superego. The identification of the main character is based on how these concepts are reflected in their behavior and actions.

This study aims to examine how love, desire, and psychological mechanisms manifest in the character of Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*, using Freudian psychoanalytic theory. By analyzing Ariel's behaviors and desires, this research seeks to uncover how psychoanalytic concepts such as desire and love contribute to the psychological portrayal of the character, as well as how they impact the overall narrative structure.

While psychoanalytic approaches have been widely used to analyze characters in literature and film, there is a noticeable gap in studies that specifically focus on how psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freudian concepts, can be applied to modern cinematic representations of love and desire. This research aims to bridge that gap by offering a psychoanalytic reading of *The Little Mermaid* (2023), a film that has not yet been extensively analyzed from this perspective.

This study, it allows for a more comprehensive analysis of both visual and narrative elements of the film. Film, as a combination of visual, auditory, and textual modes, provides a rich text that cannot be fully analyzed using a single approach. By combining psychoanalytic theory with a multimodal analysis, this study offers a deeper understanding of how the character's internal psychological struggles are represented not just through dialogue and plot, but also through visual cues, music, and cinematographic techniques.

The film *The Little Mermaid* was specifically chosen for its complex portrayal of the protagonist's psychological journey. Ariel's desire to belong to the human world and her internal conflicts regarding love, desire, and sacrifice offer a unique opportunity to explore psychoanalytic concepts such as unconscious desire, and the interplay of the id, ego, and superego. This research is distinctive because it brings together contemporary film analysis with classic psychoanalytic theory, offering new insights into the way love and desire are depicted in popular culture.

## METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to conduct a thorough and detailed analysis of the themes of love and desire in *The Little Mermaid* directed by Rob Marshall from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. This approach was selected because it

enables the researcher to explore the experiences of the main characters, examine the psychological factors that influence their perspectives, and investigate how elements such as love and desire interact throughout the story.

As stated by Turale (2020), qualitative description is a research methodology that focuses on providing a clear and direct account of the details of a phenomenon, event, or experience. It is a practical and straightforward method that prioritizes uncovering the "who, what, or where" of the subject being studied. Although it is less theoretical than other qualitative approaches, it can still incorporate conceptual frameworks or interpretive theories to guide the research.

### Data Collection and Analysis

In this research, data will be collected through an extensive analysis of the film's plot, dialogues, actions, and character interactions. The researcher will engage in processes such as transcribing dialogue, documenting symbolic elements, and identifying recurring themes. This qualitative data will be analyzed contextually using a descriptive approach, which will focus on illustrating the dynamics of love and desire in the film, while also explaining how psychoanalytic theories, particularly those of Freud and Lacan, offer insights into character development and psychological conflicts.

Furthermore, this methodology will involve a comprehensive review of relevant literature on love, desire, and psychoanalytic theories to provide a deeper and more contextual understanding of the research subject.

In conclusion, this descriptive qualitative method is anticipated to yield valuable insights into how *The Little Mermaid* portrays the relationships of love and desire between its characters, as well as how psychoanalysis can be used to interpret the psychological dynamics within the film's narrative.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Types of Love in The Little Mermaid Movie

#### a. Eros

The movie depicts Ariel's eros love at the moment she falls in love with Prince Eric. This can be seen from some scenes taken below.



**Figure 1. Ariel walked around the palace into the Prince's room.**

(The Prince's room,01:12:41-01:13:04)

In this scene, Ariel falls in love with Prince Eric, she feels the love of eros. Eros is passionate love and physical attraction, often known as romantic love. Ariel who has changed her golden voice into human's legs, as require being with Prince Eric. When she has met the prince but does not have a voice to speak to Eric. Ariel's inability to speak, it makes her to find other ways to express her feelings to Prince Eric other than by speaking. Ariel who is fascinated with prince Eric collects Ocean-themed objects, just asshe does with human-related objects. Astatue of a little blue mermaid catches Ariel's eyesas she explores prince Eric'sroom anda treasure trove of artefacts related to his journey. Although Ariel is unable to speak to him, the Prince remains polite toAriel, showing her around the island and castle while patiently waiting for her to respond with only facial expressions.

#### b. Agape

The remarkable sacrifice Ariel made to learn how to become human in order to win Prince Eric's affection is a clear example of how Agape is portrayed in the movie as a kind of unconditional love.



**Figure 1. Aril see the stars and moon together**  
(On board thes hip, 01.26.37-01.27.14)

In this scene, the viewer can see the great sacrifice Ariel made to find away to be come human for Prince Eric's love. She is willing to face risks and sacrifice her identity as a mermaid in order to achieve happiness with the person she loves. Which means Ariel's agape love for Eric is not only a reflection of great sacrifice, but also selfless ness and deep affection. When Ariel was on the ship with Eric after becoming human, she went out of her way to attract Eric's attention and show him her kindness eventhough she cannot speak. The moon and stars are seen as symbols of love and eternity. When Ariel and Eric look at the moon together, they feel deep feelings for each other and Ariel points to the constellation Aries in the sky and moulds Eric'slips so that he can guess her name. Ariel also shows her feelings with her loving facial expressions and gaze and Eric begins to be attracted to Ariel. Ariel thought she had found her true love in Eric.

c. Philautia

When Ariel made the decision to abandon her life beneath the water in order to pursue her own goals and happiness, she exhibited philautia. She feels that she deserves to seek her happiness, even if it means taking significant risks, and this is a wonderful gesture of self-love.



**Figure 2. Prince and Ariel love each other**  
(The Palace,01.45.47-01.45.57)

In this scene, Ariel demonstrates her confidence and ability to adapt and succeed in the human world. This self-confidence is part of philautia. Philautia is a love based on building a very deep connection with one'sown well-being and love for oneself as a strong foundation, a centred who leness to give too ther sand the world. Although Ariel makes a great sacrifice by leaving her family, this also reflect shows he values her own happiness. This courage is a form of self-love as she trusts her instincts and dreams. In her journey, Ariel experienced many challenges that helped her grow and develop as an independent person. She learned from her experience and persevere through obstacles shows that she has love and respect for herself. After a long journey and many obstacles, Ariel is finally reunited with Eric, at which point she is able to open up and express her true feelings.

d. Storge

Storge is familial or affectionate love, which is reflected in Ariel's relationship with her father, King Triton, despite their initial disagreement regarding their

views on humans and the sea world.



**Figure 3. Ariel apologises for missing the family gathering.**  
(In the kingdom, 14.42-14.51)

In this scene, Ariel expresses regret to King Triton for not attending an important family event for her. Ariel tends to open up to her father. Although they often have different views. In her opinion, her father does not want to know more about the human world. It makes her think so. Ariel in Storge, however, feels secure in the family relationship and faces challenges together. As parents and children, there are many differences of opinion and views. However, Ariel knows how to respect their parents as a child. She tries not to interfere or argue in front of her father. Ariel decides to keep her distance when her father speaks and warns her.

## 2. Desire in The Little Mermaid Movie

### a. Stubbornness



**Figure 4. King Triton talks with Ariel.**  
(Under the sea, 15.01-15.10)

In this scene, Ariel is driven by great passion and desire to find herself beyond the ocean. She feels oppressed by life under the sea and the norms that limit her desire for freedom. Ariel feels confined by the rules of life under the sea. Ariel wants to go against those restrictions to pursue what she wants. The desire to explore the human world is a form of courage to seek freedom. Ariel has the urge to know more about human life because she believes that there is a part of her that has not been fully explored. Her curiosity about the human world stems from her desire to be free to adventure and pursue her love. However, King Triton feared and worried about the threats Ariel might face in the human world. He goes to great lengths to keep the princess safe from harm and preserve the customs and security of their underwater kingdom.

### b. Ariel's Principle



**Figure 5. King Triton asks to Ariel.**

(The Kingdom of Atlantica, 47.50-47.58)

In this scene, Ariel argues with her father about her desire and love for the human world. Her father advises her that no one should explore the human world, including his daughter. Ariel feels frustrated when asked to promise not to explore human life. Ariel wants to be understood and allowed to pursue her dreams and curiosity. However, understanding her father's perspective and considering her father's concerns is also important in this situation. Ariel cannot make a promise to her father because of the strong drive within her to pursue the life she dreams of and to pursue her first love. Although she respects and loves her father, her drive and desire to explore the human world form an integral part of her identity and feelings. But Ariel remains determined to discover human life.

c. Ariel's Bravery



**Figure 6 Ariel negotiate with an evil, Ursula**

(Cave in the Sea,53.45-56.52)

In this scene, Ariel bravely meets the evil witch to make a deal to exchange her voice for a leg. This deal shows that she is willing to sacrifice in order to get the freedom she wants. Ariel makes the decision to pursue her desires despite the very dangerous consequences including risking her voice, identity, and her relationship with her beloved family and father. Despite her initial disbelief in sea witches, she eventually chooses the latter option to achieve her goal. Ariel embodies the spirit in her courage to defy convention and pursue her dreams. This move is a form of bravery and rebellion against her father and the rules.

### 3. Love and Desire through Psychoanalysis Perspective

a. Ariel's Id

Freud described the term 'id' as a representation of the primitive thoughts and instincts that exist within humans. According to him, these desires can influence love and desire. For example, a person may feel emotionally attached to another person because it fulfils their deepest basic needs, such as security.



**Figure 7. Ariel talk to Eric about herself**

(The castle,01.46.02-01.04.08)

In the scene, Ariel wanted to express what happened and her feelings of love. Ariel expresses her sincere desire to live in the human world with Prince Eric. Her Id shows a desire to achieve personal fulfillment and happiness without worrying about reality or its impact on Ariel. Ariel always makes decisions based on her own wants and needs. Ariel may mention the consequences, but she doesn't dwell on them. Ariel is so driven by passion and love for Prince Eric that it represents her own drives.

b. Ariel's Ego

In addition, Freud also discussed the concepts of 'ego' and 'superego'. According to Freud, the ego develops from the id and ensures that the impulses

of the id can be expressed in a way that is acceptable in the real world. In this scene, Ariel experiences in decision in weighing her desire to live in the human world with the love she feels for Eric, and the consequences of the decisions she will make. Here go plays a role in finding a balance between the seurges. Ariel does not simply follow her personal impulses without regard to the consequences, but also does not blindly submit to his expectations without considering his desires and pursuing his love. She will also take responsibility for her choices, and consider the perspectives of others such as her family under the sea.



**Figure 8. Ariel was unsure of her choice**  
(Cave in the Sea, 57.00-57.14)

c. Ariel's Superego

The ego is the part of the mind that tries to mediate between the lustful desires of the id and the demands of superego reality, which includes social and moral rules. In the context of love and desire, the ego can play a role in adjusting our desires to reality and social norms.



**Figure9. Ariel apologises to her father**  
(Under the sea,01.55.24-01.55.30)

In the scene, Ariel expresses her guilt for choosing to fulfill her desire and seek true love with Prince Eric without telling her father and family. This shows that Ariel has a strong moral consciousness called the superego phenomenon. The superego phenomenon is part of the personality structure that represents moral and social values. Ariel feels responsible for her father and family and feels guilty that her actions have disappointed them. Although her decision is motivated by love and strong personal desire, Ariel remains aware of the moral consequences of her actions. In addition, Ariel also cooperates with Prince Eric in fighting the sea witch, Urshula. This shows that Ariel not only considers her own desires, but also acts for the greater good and protects the ocean where she and her loved ones live.

In short, Ariel's character undergoes an emotional and moral journey as she strives to fulfill her true desires and love while considering the ethical dilemmas and consequences of her actions. Ariel in psychology shows that she faces inner conflicts that can be identified and understood in Freud's psychoanalysis.

## CONCLUSION

The writers find four types of love from the Little Mermaid film, namely Eros, Agape, Philautia and Storge. Eros is shown through Ariel's attraction to Prince Eric and their romantic relationship. Agape is shown through her great sacrifice to turn into a human in order to gain Eric's affection. Philautia is shown when Ariel makes the decision to

leave her underwater life to pursue her dreams and happiness. This symbolises strong love and confidence. Furthermore, storge is shown as the relationship between Ariel and her father shows deep affection and demonstrates not only the emotional bonds inherent in family, but also the ability to grow and overcome obstacles to create deep and meaningful family relationships.

Ariel's traits and behaviors in achieving her desires include her stubbornness in pursuing love, her principle in declaring love, and her bravery in negotiating with the evil witch, Ursula. Ariel has an insatiable curiosity about the human world and explores beyond the boundaries of the ocean. As well as her courage in making decisions and facing tough challenges, Ariel not only has an insatiable curiosity about the human world and dares to explore beyond the limits of the ocean, but also shows determination in making decisions and facing difficult challenges. Evidently, the writer found several scenes that support this desire based on the theory, namely: Ariel's Stubbornness, Ariel's Principles, and Ariel's Bravery.

Psychoanalysis is also a good way to analyze personality actions related to character psychology in movie. The writer found three scenes that relate to Freud's statement about the components of consciousness: Id, Ego and Superego. Ariel's Id is about emphasizing her instinctive desire for personal happiness and love, especially her strong attraction to Prince Eric and her desire to stay with him in the human world. The drive is reflected in her desire, without thinking about how difficult it might be or the various risks involved. Meanwhile, Ariel's Ego is the determination between the id-driven desire for personal happiness and love, but on the other hand facing the reality and responsibility she has to face. Furthermore, Superego is the moral principle. Ariel's Superego shows that she is responsible for her actions and realizes the emotional impact of her decisions on her family. Ariel's superego is also not only focused on her own desires, but also willing to face the challenges or dangers she faces with her loved ones.

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