

THE WAY JACOB FACE HIS ABSURD LIFE IN *MISS PEREGRINE'S*

***HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN* BY RANSOM RIGGS**

A THESIS

**Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Sarjana
Degree of English Department Faculty of Arts and Humanities State Islamic
University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya**



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Surabaya, January 24th 2017



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is a tool to pour someone's idea. According to Wellek and Warren, the relation between literature and ideas can be conceived in very diverse ways. Frequently literature is thought of as a form of philosophy, as "ideas" wrapped in form; and it is analyzed to yield "leading ideas." (107). It means that literature is a form of philosophy and through analyzing literature, the idea of someone about philosophy can be found.

Literature and philosophy are human's work which contain the author's ideas. Both of them talk about human's life. Philosophy contains the fact of human's life that evaluated its identity and essence, while literature contains human's life that is processed through author's imagination. This imagination is stated on the human's creativity that further is poured in written words (Sutrisno qtd in Nevada 27). Thus, philosophy and literature can run together, due everyone can do philosophy through literature. In line with Thomson, literature is not only a form of philosophy or idea, it is also a form of imagination from the author's thought (5). Therefore, literature contains not only philosophy about human life but also imaginative thought from the author to make the reader happy.

Literature is classified into three genre; epic, drama, and poetry. Because the epic was widely replaced by the new prose form of the novel in the eighteenth century, recent classifications prefer the terms fiction, drama, and poetry as designations of the three major literary genres (Klarer 9). Fiction is divided into

two kind; fiction and non-fiction. Fiction is a general term for an imaginative work, usually in prose. It is usually written with the author's imagination. Fiction is now used in general of the novel, the short story, the *novella* and related genres (Cuddon 279). Nevertheless, non-fiction can be form of novel or documentary fiction based on real events and people that largely draws on documentary evidence such as newspaper articles, official papers, personal letters, and interviews. Elements of the story's narrative, in particular, the conversations and thoughts of the protagonists are the author's invention (Cuddon 474).

One of the forms of fiction is novel. As a literature work novel is a long prose fiction, presenting characters and displays a series of events and a structured background (Sudjiman 55). Fiction novel usually comes from author imagination. Imagination of the author can contain human desire, human existence and human life which portrayed by using a certain character inside the storyline of the novel. The appearance of literary works which is related to human life is a part of existential novel (Putri 24). *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs is one of the novels which portrays about human existence using an imaginative genre and specifies it through fantasy storyline.

Ransom Riggs is a writer from USA. His first novel is *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, born out of his love for vintage photography and bizarre stories in June 2011 (<http://www.ransomriggs.com/about.php>). The presences of vintage photographs in his novel serve not only as decorative elements, but also interwoven with the narrative. From this, the author's imagination can be seen; how he developed the story based on a collection of

vintage photos that look odd. His novel is also interesting because the presence of the main character, Jacob Portman, who experiences a major change in his life.

Jacob Portman, 16 years old boy, wishes to free himself from his grandfather's past that made him fidgety. He looks for the truth of his grandfather's past by going to Wales, there was an orphanage where his grandfather lived, in order to restore his peaceful and normal life. However, after he found out about his grandfather's past and world inside the loop, contrary his life is in danger because he knows that he is not an ordinary boy. He has supernatural power; it is called peculiar like his grandfather. As a peculiar, Jacob's life will be more dangerous in normal world, there are hollowgast that is ready to eat peculiar's soul. He is also trapped by a wight that incognito as his psychiatrist, Dr. Golan, this condition makes him in very awry situation. His hope for a peaceful life as before has been shattered. He realizes that his life has changed. He faces unexpected condition. His life is confronted with the choice that must be immediately decided; back to normal world or stay in a world inside the loop. No one helps him to face it and no one understands his unrest at the time. It makes him feel hopelessness.

Jacob does not give up with his unexpected condition. Finally, he continues his life and faces it by choosing stay in a world inside the loop, leaving his parent behind. His choice is purely of himself according to what he wants. He helps his new peculiar friends to rescue their self from wights and hollowgast rather than come back to the normal world like giving up his life to death without any effort.

In the face of life, human suffering can be lived with full awareness and hope even though he knows that death is a sure thing. This spirit to keep living the life is rated as a revolt against the absurdity of human life. As Camus said revolt, not suicide, is the right protest against the absurd (Lewis 14).

Based on the background above, the issue of this study is about Jacob Portman's life which was not as he expects hence his life being absurd. It made him felt hopelessness but he did not give up on his condition. He continued and faced it. Camus' attitude toward absurdity is revolt (*La ravelte*) since revolt is the existence of subjectivity and freedom. Therefore, Albert Camus' concept about Absurdism can be applied in this study. This study also applies New Criticism as the supporting theory to describe about the character of Jacob Portman.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of this study will be formulated in three following questions:

1. How is Jacob Portman described in the novel?
2. How is the absurdity in Jacob's life described in the novel?
3. In what way does Jacob face absurdity in his life in the novel?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In the connection with the problems of statement above, this study aim to:

1. describe the characterization of Jacob Portman in the novel.
2. describe absurdity in Jacob's life in the novel.

1.6 Method of Study

In conducting this study, there are some methods which are used. Those are research design, research data, data collecting and data analysis.

1.6.1 Research Design

To answer the statements of problem above, this study uses library research by using some books and other references like articles, journals, and websites relate to the subject that will be analyzed. This study also employs qualitative research design. Conforming to Vanderstoep and Johnston, qualitative research produces a narrative or textual description of the phenomena under study (7). The findings of qualitative research will not be in the form of statistic (quantitative). The methods of this study solve an actual problem by collecting, classifying, analyzing, and interpreting data. This study only describes or explains the phenomena found in the objects of study without manipulating the data. The data are used to identify the phenomena of absurdist existentialism in *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar children*.

1.6.2 Source of Data

There are two sources of data, the primary and the secondary. The primary data of this study is *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar children*, written by Ransom Riggs, Published in 2011 by Quirk. Whereas, the secondary data come from books, articles, journals, and websites that relate with the novel and the theory which are used in this study.

1.6.3 Method of Collecting Data

Since the data becomes the most important part for conducting a research, so it must be collected effectively and completely. Method of data collection is one of the research methods parts that will explain how the data are collected to support the research. In collecting data for the research which based on the qualitative research method, the steps of data collection are:

- a. Preparing the novel *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* as the main data.
- b. Collecting the data from the novel by reading comprehensively and repeatedly to get a valid data.
- c. Selecting the reference that is related to novel that can support.

1.6.4 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected will be analyzed related to the literary theory. This study is taken based on some references from a library. To analyze it, this study uses qualitative research methods. The data analysis will involve several steps:

- a. Collecting and selecting the narration and conversation in the novel that are related to the problems of study.
- b. Classifying the data based on the objectives of study.
- c. Analyzing the collected data based on the theory and concept in theoretical framework.
- d. Drawing conclusion based on the result of data analysis.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY REVIEW

This chapter discusses some theories that are going to be used as the guidance for analyzing this study. Those are Albert Camus' Absurdism as the main theory and new criticism theory which focuses on characterization as the supporting theory. Absurdism theory is needed to describe to reveal the absurdity of main character's life and how the main character faces it, while characterization is needed to describe the characterization of main character, Jacob Portman. Furthermore, this chapter also attaches some previous studies to support this study completely in understanding both the novel and the theory.

2.1 Absurdism

Absurdism concept has its root from the philosophy of existentialism where people ask about their meaning of life. It appeared at the time of Second World War. The World War has brought the Europeans to a bitter reality. Poverty, death and uncertainty brought them to misery. The end of World War I relieved European's heart and gave a new glimmer of hope but the outbreak of World War II brought them back to deeper wounds. After World War II, European was in a very bad situation. It leaved material losses, innocent people die; children and deep sorrow (Solomon & Higgins 527)

For intellectuals, at that time the world lost its meaning, they no longer believed the world, they could not be optimistic anymore when looking at the world. Afterwards they were aware that what they face in this world was

incomprehensible. They were starting to question about the purpose of their existence in the world. They felt that their rights as a human being was not respected anymore, which can be seen through the huge number of innocent people who were tortured and killed by other humans. The values of humanity that have already existed became meaningless. It created a feeling that their lives were purposeless, meaningless, and senseless (Kostelanetz qtd in Kurniawan 10). In addition, they begin to feel the futility of their efforts in maintaining a life that leads only to death. That awareness brings philosophers and writers to think more about human condition. It inspires the emergence of new ideas such as absurdism and Albert Camus became the originator.

Albert Camus is a writer who was born and grew up in Constantin, Algeria. The bitter experience of war influenced all his works. At the time of World War II, he published his novel *The Stranger* (1942) and an essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). With both of these works Camus is judged as the originator of Absurdism (Solomon & Higgins 552). Camus' whole life (1913-1960) is a passionate struggle to seize the meaning of human existence, because Camus believes that human life is meaningless. Human whole being is absurd, as the suffering of innocent people. Because suffering is absurd, Camus refuses the existence of God. He thinks if God does not help them in their suffering, it is better if he assumes that God does not exist. He believes in one's self to face human suffering (Prasetyo 8).

Camus' philosophical ideas; the concept of the Absurd and the notion of Revolt made him called as existentialist but disavowed the label:

moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain” (Camus 76).

As Sisyphus condition, human seek meaning and clarity towards the world but in the end man will realize that this world will never give the answer. His search for meaning in the world is futile. At the interval of time when Sisyphus was at the top of the mountain, seeing the stone fumbling down, he had to go back down to push the stone again, Sisyphus realized that what he was doing was in vain. This consciousness brings him to an absurd feeling. Therefore, Camus concludes that Sisyphus’ life is absurd and without hope. Sisyphus’ plight, a snap of philosophical reflection on life endeavor would reveal that human existence is no less futile, no less absurd than that of Sisyphus (Lewis 13).

Camus also describes human life before facing an absurdity: “Before encountering the absurd, the everyday man lives with aims, a concern for the future or for justification but after the absurd, everything is upset” (38). Absurd situation led to despair, dissapointed, frustrated and other bad feelings because what human expects doesn’t match with the reality. Conforming to Camus, the depressing existential problems of man, namely anguish, suffering, sickness, disease, death, anxiety, fear, uncertainty; all of which conspire to render human existence meaningless and opaque. Living the absurd means a total lack of hope, a permanent rejection and a conscious dissatisfaction (Lewis 13). Therefore, human existence become meaningless because absurd condition.

Knowing that “life without meaning is intolerable”, the existentialists seek to find the real meaning behind man’s existence (Solomon qtd in Neimneh & Madi 119). As what Albert Camus did, for him, the truly philosophical problem is

Through an odd reasoning, starting out from the absurd over the ruins of reason, in a closed universe limited to the human, they deify what crushes them and find reason to hope in what impoverishes them. That forced hope is religious in all of them (22).

Camus argued that human should keep the absurd alive rather than attempt to suppress it through philosophical suicide, or destroy it through physical suicide (Foley 9). Keep the absurd alive means solution to the problem of the absurd.

Camus rejected suicide because he believes it amounts to consenting to absurdity as well as to a finality, which cancels conscious revolt and silence the voice that protests against injustice and senselessness. He insists that since the absurd is unavoidable and is a defining characteristic of the human condition, the proper response to it is its full, unflinching and courageous acceptance. The idea that the absurd should be courageously embraced is the springboard of Camus' philosophy of revolt. To Camus, revolt, not suicide, is the right protest against the absurd. It is the real, authentic value and morally accepted solution to the problem of absurdity and life's meaninglessness (Lewis 14). Humans can find their meaning and values in life through revolt. As Camus stated:

It may be thought that suicide follows revolt – but wrongly. For it does not represent the logical outcome of revolt... Revolt gives life its value (36).

Revolt is defined as a refusal to accept the loss of human lives and an insistence on viewing death as a scandal (Raskin 159). Revolt is a happy acceptance of suffering and destructive behavior, against meaninglessness (Neimneh & Madi 118). Thus, by doing revolt man has appreciated his life by staying and not committing suicide despite realizing that his life is absurd, experiencing and enjoying the suffering as human life. He also believes in one's self if he is doing revolt because it does not imply his hope in religious believe

happy to serve his punishment. He does his punishment passionately. For Camus, this happy acceptance of destiny can be categorized as revolt.

To live in absurd condition, human should revolt with his own strength rather than take a stand on something outside himself. It shows the value of humanism that rejects supernatural authority; God or religion. Camus emphasis on the ability of the man himself how he gives the impression and the value on his absurd life. Humans should focus on his own abilities like Sisyphus who is stronger than the stone (Paramitha 25). For Camus, the most important about human existence is enables humanity to find happiness and peace of mind in an absurd universe (Childs & Fowler 79). Even though man is afraid of death, but he must live his life totality because the most important things for Camus is life, as he said "the point is to live" (43).

Doing revolt means accepts the challenge, revolt leads man to take both his freedom, but also its own contradictions by deciding to live with passion and with only what he knows <https://www.the-philosophy.com/sartre-vs-camus>. Thus, Camus defines three consequences from the absurd, those are; revolt, freedom, and passion (Camus 42). It means that, when human is revolting towards the absurdity in his life, he gets his freedom then does it with his passion. Human faces the absurd life by accepting his fate without letting go. This means human appreciate his life by living his life passionately. Human are also looking for the quality and quantity of the experience. Because revolt gives value to life so that revolt restores the freedom of existence (Camus qtd in Paramitha 27).

2.2 New Criticism

The term of New Criticism derives from the title of John Crowe Ransom's book *The New Criticism* in 1941. It came to be applied to a theory and practice that was prominent in American literary criticism until late in the 1960s.

Originally it was a movement in the UK. The movement derived in considerable part from elements in I. A Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Practical Criticism* (1929) and the critical essays of T. S. Eliot (Abrams 180). New Criticism focuses on the meaning of literary texts. Practical criticism (the United Kingdom) and New Criticism (the United States) first of all provide interpretations, with the New Critics paying particular attention to the formal aspects of literature, which contribute to its meaning (Bertens 27).

New Criticism insisted on the intrinsic value of a work of art and focused attention on the individual work alone as an independent unit of meaning. It was opposed to the critical practice of bringing historical or biographical data to bear on the interpretation of a work (www.britannica.com). In keeping with Qomariyah, New Criticism is a literary critic that focuses on literary text and it tries to evaluate literary work based on the text (qtd.in Nevada 17). Therefore, New Criticism focuses only on the intrinsic elements of the text such as; theme, setting, plot, character and etc. It ignores the extrinsic elements of text such as; history, politics, the author's life or society of the time.

Based on the explanations above, the new criticism is applied to analyze literary work on its intrinsic elements. One of the intrinsic elements is character and characterization. This study attempts to analyze the character Jacob Portman. Thus, this study will focus on his character and characterization.

2.2.1 Character

Character is part of the literary life. From the character a curiosity, fascination, likes and dislikes reader on a literary work appeared (Bennett & Royale 60). Characters play an important role in a story, as they help the reader to participate vicariously in the experience or the story by sharing imaginatively the feeling or the activities of the characters in the story (Rohrberger & Woods 19). Conforming to Abrams, the characters are the people that represented in a dramatic or narrative work, which interpreted by the reader as someone who is endowed with moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities. Those characters make a story alive, interesting and meaningful (32). As an important part in literary work, character can show how interesting a story is. If there is no character, the story will not live.

Characters also refer to the people who are created by authors to inhabit reviews their stories (Mason qtd in Nevada 22). Characters as the person that are presented in the literary work, where reviews their appearance is interpreted by the reader as a character with desires, motivations, and emotional qualities are expressed through in their words and action in the story. Therefore, character can be called as fictions human being who is created by the author to present the story or plot through words. Hence, all the characters in literary works are fictitious. Although they are not real in fiction work, sometimes author created them as representative of personal character from real word (Holman qtd in Nevada 24).

Character is distinguished into two kinds; round character and flat character. Round character is a character that experienced a change in attitude due to several factors that give a different character at the beginning and at the end of

the story. Meanwhile the flat character is a character that does not experience a change of attitude from the beginning until the end of the story (Abrams 33).

Besides flat and round character, there are major and minor characters build inside the story (DiYanni). The major character plays the biggest role inside the story. The major character is the most dominant told in the story and emerges from the beginning to the end of the story. While minor character has a part as supporting role in the story. Major character usually has a round character means that his character can be change as the story progresses while minor character has a flat character means that his character stills the same from beginning to the end of story.

2.2.2 Characterization

Characterization is the way how the author describes the character and makes the character becomes more alive in the story. Characterization describes about character's physical attributes as well as the character's personality. It can be said that the way that characters act, think, and speak also adds to their characterization. In line with Tomlinson characterization refers to the way an author helps the reader to know a character. By this characterization the authors try to describe the physical appearance and personality of characters in their works (Tomlinson qtd in El-Jihan 16).

There are two different way of characterization to reveal the character; direct characterization and indirect characterization (Holman 138). Direct characterization refers to what speaker or narrator directly says or thinks about character, the reader is told what the character is like directly. For instance the narrator directly state that the character is beautiful, intelligent and kind person or

the narrator's description about the personality of the character through narrator's comment, thoughts and etc. Meanwhile, indirect characterization refers to what the character says or does. It means that to get the depiction of the character's personality, readers should interpret from the way the character's act, think, or say.

To sum up, there are four ways to know the character's characterization in the novel; the first is through the speech and thought of the characters, the second is through what the characters do or act, the third is through other characters' point of view, and the fourth is through the author as the narrator of the story (Holman 139).

2.3 Review of Related Study

There are two previous studies which have been written in same object but different issue and theory. First, the thesis entitled "*Jacob Motivation for Finding Miss Peregrine's Home in Ransom Riggs' Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*". The thesis is written by Brigitta Dian Mariska, student of Sanata Dharma University majoring English Language Education Study Program, Department of Language and Arts education. Her thesis is about Jacob's motivation to find out Miss Peregrine's home for his safety need. Psychological approach is employed to solve Jacob motivation for finding Miss Peregrine's home. She also used new criticism theory character and characterization to answer her problem formulation, how Jacob's character is portrayed in the novel. The result reveals that Jacob is curious, persistent, tricky, adventurous, brave, rebellious, paranoid, and insane boy.

Second, “*Holocaust Postmemory in Young Adult Literature: The Gothic and Vintage Photography in Ransom Rigg's Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children and Hollow City*”, master thesis written by C.G.J.A.M. Mulders from Utrecht University. His master thesis discussed the ways in which postmemory and the narrative of the Holocaust are literally and metaphorically present within the novels. Secondly, the relationship between the Gothic and postmemory was explained. Thereafter, the question was posed in what ways the Gothic features in the novels and how this could be brought into connection with postmemory. Thirdly, the relationship between photography and postmemory was investigated, as well as the significance of the use of vintage photographs in the two novels.

This study similar to the previous studies above by the object, novel by Ransom Riggs entitled *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. The differences between this study and the previous study above is this study concerns in the life of Jacob Portman as the main character and how Jacob Portman lives his miserable life in his own. While the previous study above is focusing on the psychological side of Jacob Portman and the Gothic elements in the novel.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the analysis of the data that is used to answer the statement of the problems which rise in this study. For answering the statement of problems, this chapter divides the discussion into 3 parts. The first part is about the characterization of Jacob Portman describes in the novel. The second part is about Jacob Portman's life; start from his ordinary life to his extraordinary life then connect it with the concept of absurdism by Albert Camus. The last part is about how Jacob Portman confronts his unexpected life then connects it with Albert Camus' consequence of absurd life.

3.1 Jacob's Characterization

This part explains about the character and characterization of Jacob Portman. He is a major character in the novel, considering his domination and emergence in the story starts from the beginning, middle and in the end of the story. Additionally, Jacob Portman influences the whole plot of the story.

There are two different way of characterization to reveal the character; direct characterization and indirect characterization. Direct characterization refers to what speaker or narrator directly says or thinks about character, the reader is told what the character is like directly. Meanwhile, indirect characterization refers to what the character says or does. It means to get the depiction of the character's personality, readers should interpret from the way the character's act, think, or say. This novel delivered using first person point of view and that is Jacob

Jacob did his revolt passionately "We were quiet but excited. The children hadn't slept, but you wouldn't have known it to look at them (229). His friends and he are very eager to save Miss peregrine and fight for their future eventhough they do not know where to go to find the wight as Sisyphus who rocked the stone continuously and he remained happy doing it because he is superior than his rock. He also gets his freedom after facing the absurd "And yet my old life was as impossible to return to as the children's bombed house. The doors had been blown off our cages."(230). It means Jacob accepts his destiny and he feels free as a peculiar boy by living with his friends who are also peculiar. Therefore, Camus defines three consequences from the absurd, those are; revolt, freedom, and passion (Camus 42). It means that, when human is revolting towards the absurdity in his life, he gets his freedom then does it with his passion. Human faces the absurd life by accepting his fate without letting go. This means human appreciate his life by living his life passionately.

Jacob did not give up with his unexpected condition. He continued his life and faced it by choosing stay in a world inside the loop, leaving his parent behind to joining his friends to rescue Miss Peregrine and their future. His choice is purely of himself according to what he wants. He helps them rather than came back to the normal world like giving up his life to death without any effort. Jacob feels that his life is more meaningful by living with them even though all of these do not match with what he want as Camus said that revolt gives life its value (36). By doing revolt Jacob also gets his meaning of existence because the revolt gives life its value. Jacob feels that his existence is to alive; helping his friends and fighting for their future.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the conclusion from the analysis of this study in the previous chapter before. The first is about Jacob portman's characterization. He is 16 years old boy. Jacob Portman in the novel is described as an intelligent, brave, idealistic, responsible and rebellious boy. He is intelligent can be seen through his cleverness in academic, the way he thinks; he able to understand the condition quickly in a state of fear and panic and also he is not easy to be fooled. Jacob is brave can be seen through his actions; he dared to enter a destroyed house, away from the settlements and no one ever come over there. He enters the house alone. He also faced hollow and wight bravely and manage to kill them. Jacob is idealistic can be seen through his action which prioritizes common interests. He prefers to save his friends from wight and hollow instead save his own life. Jacob is responsible can be seen through his speech and action. He said to Emma that he will stay and help them to fight the monsters because before his present they were safe. Last, Jacob is rebellious boy. He break Miss Peregrine's rule and he does not want Miss Peregrine dominate him.

The second is about Jacob Portman's absurd life. His absurd life is described when Jacob wants to solve his problem with his grandpa past and story which is interrupting his ordinary and peaceful life. He gets nightmares everyday because he believe that his grandpa was killed by a monster but no one believed him, he's like a crazy boy because he's always scared and talk about the monster.

He wanted to get rid of his nightmare dream soon. He went to the psychiatrist to solve his problem. He also decides to solve the truth of his grandpa past and story by going to Wales. There was an orphanage where his grandfather lived. He plans to find information and then go home. He wants his ordinary and peaceful life come back. This decision is also strongly supported by Dr. Golan, his psychiatrist. However, after he found out about his grandfather's past and world inside the loop, his life even in irremediable life because he knows that he is not an ordinary boy. He also had been tricked by Dr. Golan. Therefore, all his efforts to restore his ordinary and peaceful life were vain. His present life is in danger. He lost his previous life. He realized that his life has changed. The absurd can be seen in this condition when his life did not go as what he planned. This absurd condition made him hopeless because he faced unexpected condition.

The third is about the consequence from his absurd life. The consequence drawn that the appropriate way to deal with absurdity is by doing a revolt. Jacob chooses to revolt. He is one of the people who appreciate life. He does not want to die nor commit suicide when facing his absurd life. Jacob continues his absurd life by joining his friends to rescue Miss Peregrine and their future. He will travel the world through time loops, face dangers and hollow which appear in their future.

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