

## THE DELUSIONAL MAIN CHARACTER DURING THE WAR IN RUTA SEPETYS' SALT TO THE SEA

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### ABSTRACT

*This thesis analyzes the delusion within the main character in Ruta Sepetys' Salt to the Sea. Ritunanno and Bortolotti's (2021) theory of delusion is meaningful is used to analyze the delusion within the main character. It's analyzed the beginning and the process of the delusion which lead to the results. The beginning of the delusion occurs in his environments. It's interpreted how his parents and friends treat him in certain ways that he doesn't like. While, the process of the delusion occurs when he's on duty during the war. It's interpreted how he goes through such underestimation toward colleagues and strangers being rude to him. Eventually, the results make the significant change toward the main character. All in all, this thesis shows the worst that the delusion could create to the main character is the tragic event as the death of the main character.*

**Keywords:** *Delusion, Main Character, Positive Results, Negative Results.*

### INTRODUCTION

Life dwells people to do activities every day. It continues on daily days in order to survive. All those activities are a part of the history. Dealing with history, it will usually come to the term of war. As Scranton (2015) argued that war is a special kind of experience that offers a special kind of truth, a truth that gives those who have been there a special kind of authority. It gives the insight of war happens to emphasize humanity. Therefore, it can affect people in positive and negative effects.

Beside the history, human's life won't be far away from the work of literature. Literature plays a great role in it. According to Chamber (2006), literature has a role as an important function for humanity whether our lives should be live like this or that based on the circumstances. Therefore, the very beginning phase of life deals with literature. It contains with many different variety of stories which could be obtain by novels, poetry, plays, and among other forms. And it's created based on reality that humans experience in their lives.

Through novel, the main character is created, it shows that anyone could deal with something in their lives like delusion. Delusion was known as "the basic characteristic of madness" (Jasper, 1963). It's also assumed that delusions are characterised as similar as how the mood can occur. In addition, Arthur (1964) stated that delusion can still claim to be the most outstanding and baffling behaviour symptom of mental illness.

How the delusions can occur in one's mind is proven by Dudley et. al (2016) review. It shows that people with delusions required significantly less information than people with psychosis who did not have delusions, but the difference was small and the estimate is imprecise. Thus, it's related to a higher probability of having delusions.

In similar to Victoria's (2020) research, it shows that the novelist technique of writing conveys the meaning of the subject (main character) in the story. It's investigated for the nature of self, the word of illusions, and the absolute reality (p. 93). As a result, the main character in the novel is approved that he experienced delusion-like in life which the cause of it is the immediate guilty conscience (p. 94). Hence, the delusion is shown to be established within the main character.

The delusional main character during the war is found in *Salt to the Sea* novel. It is written by Ruta Sepetys, a Lithuanian-American writer of historical fiction. Her books mostly become New York Times and international bestseller. *Salt to the Sea* is one of her work rewarded by Carnegie medal in 2017 after a year of publication.

The main character is Alfred Frick who suffers delusion. He's told in the novel that he has somekind of mental illness dealing with Adolf Hitler propoganda. His thought processes and secrets are revealed via letters he mentally composes to Hannelore, a Jewish girl back in his hometown.

As the main character having a delusion, it means everything can happen because of the war. War happens as a complex social phenomenon which result in so many sources and causes that not a single theory or cause can explain its nature. One cannot find a single essential condition to determine the war but one can only try to find sources, factors, or conditions leading to the occurrence of war (Williams, 1972). Therefore, the occurrence of war can't be related into a single reason but it can vary.

The objective of this research is to describe the delusion portrayed by the main character during the war in *Salt to the Sea* novel by Ruta Sepetys. The writer focuses on analyzing the delusion of the main character in the *Salt to the Sea* novel which leads to the positive and negative results throughout his life until the ending. This research is expected to be one of the sources in delusion within the main character.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Novel is written based on our society daily lives. It has complex story since the narrative is written for more than 40,000 words. Novel is usually written in fiction. Laughlin stated that fiction reminds us about the complexity of the world. How different people can have different way of life depending on their value system. It also forces people to get out from their own perspective about life. (Laughlin, 1989, p. 314)

One of the elements which creates the novel is the intrinsic element. Intrinsic elements are the ones that build up the story inside directly, including the theme, plot, character, setting, point of views, language, or figure of speech, etc. According to Abrams (1999, p. 136), instrinsic value is one of theory used for analyzing the literuary work based on the intrinsic value of literary work or the elements of literary work.

Character is one of the intrinsic elements in the novel. Abrams (2011, p. 46) stated that characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are explained by the reader related to intellectual, moral, and emotional qualities on what the persons say through conversation which it's called by dialogue and how they do something in some ways, the action.

Koesmobroto (1988, p. 67) distinguished two types of character, main or major character and minor character. Main character is the most important character in the story. This type is basically needed other characters to make the story more convincing and lifelike. Accordingly, minor characters are less important than the main which usually support the main characters along in the story.

The main character is created during the war. According to Shaw, war is the implication of a severe and continuing exposure to trauma- related events with prominent disturbance in such circumstances and social relations within one lives. War always links bad effects in any region of the world. The damage will be severely destructed some important places or country and kill many people. Indirectly, a war can create mental illness like delusion. The result of violence during the war can get people out from the essence of humanity. These effects can lead to mental illness if it's continuing (Shaw, 2003, p. 244). As said by Thurschwell (2000, p. 30), trauma is a wound that is not only about physical injuries but also mental injuries.

The term of psychology of literature comes to the surface. It is an analyzed text by considering the relevance and role of human beings behavior within the psychological studies. Psychology also plays a crucial role in analysing a literary work by focusing on the point of the psychology of literature through many elements, such as from the author, the characters, and readers, by concentrating on the characteristics and inner conflicts contained in literature that is going to be analyzed. According to Endraswara (2003, p. 97), psychology literature is a study that focused on the literature as a mental activity. In addition, the literature cannot be separated from life reflected in vast variety of human behaviour.

The etymology of the word 'delusion' comes originally from Latin 'delusio'. Then the English word "delude" which implies playing or mocking, defrauding, or cheating. Since time immemorial, delusion has been taken as the basic characteristic of madness. The most well-known pioneer in delusion was Karl Theodor Jaspers. In the first paragraph of his account: "To say simply that a delusion is a mistaken idea which is firmly held by the patient, and which cannot be corrected gives only a superficial and incorrect answer to the problem" (Jasper, 1963). This shows that delusion has the implication of a false belief of the mind. Since the brain might have some disruption of how mind should have worked in certain ways.

More recent research develops the delusion can be in monothematic or polythematic term. Those two terms are proposed by Davies et al. (2001), they said that monothematic delusions are delusions dealing with only one subject matter, meanwhile, polythematic delusions deals with more distinct variety of delusions. The distinction within limited and complex delusions is at one term: they are more limited if the delusional state does not expand to the other subject to form other intentional conditions which have the content of the delusion. And it becomes more complex if the subject draws consequences of what's occurred or might occur to the mind which can form other intentional conditions.

Bradley and Gibson (2021) describe how polythematic can occur on the significant term of the subject. The example given in their research is when somebody is writing a poem, it shows how the mind creates a phrase or image which feels appropriate, though one still might struggle to say why. The matter is one's performances are grounded in features of one's psychology that one lacks understanding of. The distinction is between the literal and figurative meanings. The delusional subject appears to be lack of its literal meaning on the way of thinking. As a result, there does not seem to be any a priori connection between the mind's generating a response and its understanding that response.

A new understanding is found by Ritunnano and Bortolotti's (2021) research claims that delusions are meaningful, despite being described as irrational and implausible beliefs and some delusions can also enhance the sense that one's life is meaningful, supporting agency and creativity in some circumstances. The delusional experiences are experienced by people in the past after getting into certain phase where they manage their mental health more successfully. Then it's believed that delusional beliefs are interconnected with the person's emotions, perceptions, and other beliefs (p. 3).

They have also shown that, in some circumstances, adopting the delusion contributes to the person's life having meaning and purpose. From the subjective point of view, the formation of a delusion can also gives the sense of re- establishing coherence, directedness, and belonging from previous tormented life events. Meanwhile, from objective point of view, people can attain superlative intellectual and creative achievements through transformative power of delusional experiences (p. 17). Eventually, they come to a conclusion that acknowledging that delusions have meaning and can also give meaning to people's lives where the person often feels superior, exceptional, and closer to the truth.

All of the research from many experts dealing with delusion explain much about the delusion itself. They are all have the relation of interdependence to one another. On one side, it provides such

negatives impact. On the other side, it comes up with the new understanding that it gives such positive impact.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This research uses a qualitative method. This method is adequate for analyzing the delusion within the main character in Salt to the Sea novel.

### Source of Data

The source of the data is from Salt to the Sea novel by Ruta Sepetys. It was published in 2016. The novel has 393 pages. The data will be taken from dialogues between the main character with other characters and the author's narrations.

### Technique of Collecting Data

1. Reading the novel.
2. Identifying the dialogues being done by the main character dealing with the delusion.
3. Classifying the dialogues into the beginning, the process, and the result of the delusion within the main character.

### Technique of Analyzing Data

1. Interpreting the beginning, the process, and the result of the delusion within the main character of the novel using the theory of Ritunnano and Bortolotti.
2. Drawing conclusion.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The delusion within Alfred Frick begins through his childhood environments including his family and friends. His ways of thinking toward the environments is especially included as well. The beginning of the delusion begins as his mother laments his lack of friends. The excerpts can be seen as follows:

*My Mutter always lamented my lack of friends in Heidelberg.*  
(pg. 123, par. 2)

He does so much efforts until finally he gets the job as a sailor. It's not merely a job but a proud achievement for him. He also wanted to prove himself worth living a life with his very own efforts.

*Alas, I'm no longer the dreamy boy you'd wave to at the edge of the school yard. I am a man in uniform now.*  
(pg. 266, par. 6)

Besides his proudness, he still senses fear within himself. He thinks fear is a hunter which leads him to the pit of anxiety surround him.

*Fear is a hunter.*  
(pg. 7, par. 1)

*You see, fear is a hunter. It encircles us when we are unarmed and least expect it. And then we are forced to make decisions.*

(pg. 353, par. 4)

Alfred always repeats the “fear is a hunter” statement. Fear seems to change him into somebody who is different from the way he looks at himself in the past. Fears is described as a hunter since he thinks that it tries to come after him no matter how much struggles that he might face. Fear is everywhere as long as he lives.

*I shall prove to all of Germany. There is indeed a hero inside of me.*

(pg. 8, par. 1)

Both the honor and heroism of Alfred, it won't be far away from the way his thoughts bring him to. He doesn't hesitate to approve his ability of observing the surroundings which is not a part of his duty. Since he thinks that his strength of attention to detail can uplift him.

*I am enjoying a bit of quietude in my private toilet right now to strategize for the next undertaking.*

(pg. 199, par. 1)

The thoughts that Alfred meant to be a power is occurred when he has the comfortable place to think. It's inside the toilet. Toilet considers as a filthy place to be lingered around. Since he has a delusion then it's not a problem to him as long as he can't be bothered by other people. He assumes that his power is located wholly in his thoughts.

*I had known boys like him in school—desperate to be a man, yet trapped in his own mind.*

(pg. 258, par 6)

From all of the symptoms of delusion that Alfred deals with, some characters is given some clues toward how peculiar is the self of Alfred. One of the characters are Joana. As she observes Alfred at the first encounter, she assumes that he's one of those boys who still can't comprehend what things he's been doing. He has no idea about the results or consequences by doing this or that thing.

*Was there really a desperate hero inside of him ... ?*

(pg. 193, par. 1)

The suspicion of delusion continues on the dialogue within Florian and Alfred. Through their conversation, it can be seen that Alfred approves his self as a 'thinker'. Alfred is so eager to praise the Führer that he almost forgets to think for the sake of himself. But he confirms that he also thinks about himself which is equaled to the wisdom of the Führer.

### **Positive Results**

After going through the beginning and the process of the delusion within the main character, the result of the delusion can be categorized into positive term. It can be shown that he can remember the details of the ship. Alfred is not only remembered while the ship is cruising to the ocean. Suddenly,

the chaos occurs as the ship is shot by torpedoes from Russian submarine. He can control himself then remembering or memorizing the details of what's happening during the destruction of the ship.

*I am a thinker. I am thinking.*

*Torpedo strike: Approximately 9:15 p.m. Ship's capacity: 1,463*

*Passengers on board: 10,573*

*Lifeboats: 22*

*But then I remembered.*

*Ten of the lifeboats were missing.*

(pg. 328, par. 6-12)

The awareness of Alfred isn't always about him, but he still remembers his mom. He dislikes his mom but the compassion love of mom can't be disappear. So, sometimes he can remember how his mom takes a good care of him. Even though he has a delusion but a genuine feeling will not out of his grasp.

*As a child my Mutter would shield my eyes from sickness and deformity. She was quite right to do so. There is so much ugliness and imperfection in the world. We know it exists but we create further trauma by being forced to look at it. Some things are better ignored.*

(pg. 159, par. 3)

Moreover, when Alfred is aware that he's just a lower-class worker cleaning and checking stocks in the ship. So he has that numbers on his clothes or anywhere. He has no authority to command people around and not following the obligations in the ship. His delusion won't make him feel down being in a lower-class worker.

*I am 42089.*

(pg. 136, par. 1)

He realizes the position of himself at one time. But he chooses to let it go as if he does no mistakes as long as he's doing things just for himself.

### **Negative Results**

Beside the positive results, the delusion within Alfred Frick can also be categorized into negative term. It can be shown that he wishes others to die. Since everybody's existence is not important as himself.

*..., yet somehow quietly satisfying to think of them in the cold ground.*

(pg. 222, par. 1)

Death is one of the usual topics as a person having a delusion. It happens to Alfred. He neglects everybody's existence since they are not important as himself. Moreover, if the people look down on him. If death can happen to those people then he assumes it as something so satisfying to witness directly.

*His torso swayed. He was gravely injured. I reached to steady him but he jerked away, violently recoiling from my touch.  
He lost his balance and fell backward into the water.  
There was brief splashing. The freezing water quickly strangled his screams. And then it fell quiet. I waited, listening for a long while. The sailor, self-professed hero, he was dead.*  
(pg. 362, par. 6-9)

The delusion can give the negative impact on Alfred's life. He neglects the help from Emilia. The assumption of all people are bad to him is still kept inside his mind. So, he chooses to be dead rather than being helped by somebody. Eventually, the most fatal impact of the delusion is happened that he ends up himself by his own clumsiness.

## CONCLUSION

The delusion within the main character can be seen through the changes throughout his life from the beginning until the end of his life. All changes affect how he views the world around him. How hatred and misery surround himself thoroughly. And the disbelief of people who seem love him but not sincerely love him so. Therefore, the delusion happens to the main character is mostly resulted in negative terms. It leads to the tragic ending, which is the death of the main character, Alfred Frick. Since the negative effect of delusion can give significant change to the main character.

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