THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS OF HARRY ANGSTROM
IN JOHN UPDIKE’S RABBIT, RUN:
AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

RESEARCH PAPER
Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Getting Bachelor Degree of Education
in English Department

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2009
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Jimmy sets aside his smile and guitar and says straight out through the glass,
“Know Thyself, a wise old Greek once said. Know Thyself. Now what does this mean, boys and girls? It means, be what you are. Don’t try to be Sally or Johnny or Fred next door; be yourself. God doesn’t want a tree to be waterfall or a flower to be a stone. God gives to each one of us a special talent.” (RR: 9)

This is one of narration in the novel of Rabbit, Run. Rabbit, Run is a 1960 novel by John Updike published in November 12, 1960 which has 320 pages and by Alfred A. Knopf. John Updike was born in Shillington, Pennsylvania. He is an American novelist, poet, short story writer and critics. Rabbit, Run is most famous of John Updike novel. Also he writes another novel which is used the same character; Rabbit Redux, Rabbit Is Rich and Rabbit at Rest.

The researcher focused on Rabbit, Run novel in her research. It tells about a 26 years old former high school basketball player named Harry ‘Rabbit’ Angstrom, the major character, has attempts to escape the constraints of his life. Harry has nickname Rabbit because his body like a rabbit. Rabbit has a pregnant wife Janice and has a son Nelson. Rabbit has a job selling kitchen gadget and live in Mount Judge, a suburb of Brewer, Pennsylvania. One day, he believes that his marriage is a failure and that something missing from his life. Having been a basketball star in high school, Rabbit finds that
middle-class family unsatisfying. One moment, he decides to drive south in an attempt to escape. He soon returns home, where he visits his old basketball coach, Marty Torthero, to ask his advice.

Also, it tells about love affair between Rabbit and Ruth Leonard when he escapes for the second time. During the time, Janice moves back into her parent’s house. Rabbit is jealous of the relationship between Ruth and a local man, and on the same night Janice goes into labor. Rabbit leaves Ruth and rushes to the hospital.

Janice gives birth to a baby girl whom she and Rabbit name Rebecca June. Rabbit returns to live with his wife and accepts a job at his father in law’s car dealership. Rabbit attends church one morning to accept an ambiguous invitation to Rabbit to come to the Lucy Eccles’ home, minister’s wife. When he refused, he slams the door on him. Rabbit returns to his apartment and pressure Janice, unfortunately, into having sex. Then, Rabbit leaves and goes looking for Ruth.

The next morning Janice, while drunk and felt afraid that Rabbit has left for good, accidentally drowns her daughter in the bath. When Rabbit returns for funeral, he refuses to take a blame for the baby’s death, ultimately running away once more. He returns to Ruth and finds her pregnant. She puts an ultimatum: file for divorce or she will get an abortion. Unable to make a decision, Rabbit runs away once more.

The novel of Rabbit, Run was a controversy novel in that time. Many readers agree or disagree, like or dislike the novel. Most of readers like
with the novel because it examines the experience of American people. Rabbit is symbolic of American people and his search for meaning and purpose in his life reflects a uniquely twentieth century. And also the first novel used the present time in its narration. “……an arresting, disturbing novel about life an America……” Bestseller in Rabbit, Run. Some readers felt disgust with Updike’s descriptions of sex of this work as a whole. Newsweek in Rabbit, Run stated that “Rabbit, Run is a shocking novel, not only because of its sexual condor but because it challenges an image of life still cherish in America”.

Besides the explicit descriptions of sexual scenes, a moral issues of Rabbit also becomes deliberation for the readers and literary circle. The readers have asserted that Updike’s unwilling or unable to deal with serious moral issues, that his books are self-indulgent rambling and has nothing substantial to say (http://www.answer.com/topic/rabbit-run-novel-6). The readers believe Rabbit is a terrible father, an adequate husband (http://www.answer.com/topic/rabbit-run-2). In the novel, Rabbit makes decision to leave his family because he can not control his alcoholic wife. He feels confused with his life so he always runs away from his problem.

Rabbit, Run is most recognized book title and favorite books of the twentieth century. TIME magazine included Rabbit, Run novel in TIME 100 BEST ENGLISH LANGUAGE NOVELS from 1923 to 2005 (http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/rabbit,-run). His work is worth reading to enjoy the frequent phrase, the lyric vision, the fluent rhetoric. He used the
English language in its narration so well (http://www.answer.com/topic/rabbit-run-novel-6).

In literary circle, many critics shock with Updike’s descriptions of sex in *Rabbit, Run* novel. Despite this, some critics have found depth meaning in the novel. Critics agree that he has great command of English language (http://www.answer.com/topic/rabbit-run-novel-6). It takes common American people experience and human’s psychologist that sometimes felt like Rabbit in a life.

Rabbit series get a number of awards. The third volume in the series, *Rabbit is Rich*, received The Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. The final volume, *Rabbit at Rest*, received a Pulitzer and a National Book Critics Award. For *Rabbit, Run* itself, it is the most famous novel and regarded Updike as one of America’s great novelists (http://www.answer.com/topic/rabbit-run-2). Although *Rabbit, Run* does not receive any awards, it does not mean that the novel is not good. This is the beginning of Rabbit series that become the famous work of Updike and Rabbit as the most recognized character.

There are some appeals or interesting aspects of this novel. First, Updike used many cities. He takes places in United States for the setting. Also, he included the street of the cities so detail. It is easier for reader to imagine the places of the story. For example, “Running. At the end of this block of the Alley he turns up a street, Wilbur Streets in the town of Mt. Judge, suburb of the city of Brewer, fifth largest city in
Many critics said that Updike has great command of the English language. He used the present tense in its narration (http://www.answer.com/topic/rabbit-run-2). Besides that, he also used traditional language such like “thyself” in that novel, “So: Know Thyself. Learn to understand your talent, and then work to develop them. That’s the way to be happy.”(RR: 10).

Another interesting aspect of this novel is the story itself. It not only tells about Rabbit’s life, but also tells about religion or faith, friendship and love. It is stated that Rabbit is a Christians, both rabbit and Janice believe in God. He always prays when he faces problems. He loves his wife and his son so much but he can not control his feelings to run from his house when there is a problem. He decides to escape from his family, goes to trip and visit his old basketball coach to ask his advice.

The last interesting aspect of the novel is the psychological phenomena reflected in the novel especially reflected in the major character Harry ‘Rabbit’ Angstrom. Here, he has unconfident feeling to face his wife and also his problems. He tries to compensate his inferior feelings by escaping from his family and going to trip. His inferior feeling influences his personality in his life, his relationship with other people. The psychological phenomena reflected in Rabbit are interesting to observe to know the reason why he always escapes when he faces a problem.
Literary has a tight relationship to psychology since it is the exposition of man’s mental life. It is because literary and psychology has the same object of research that is human being. Furthermore, Jatman (in Endraswara, 2003: 97) confirms that there is a tight correlation between literary and psychology, indirectly as well as functionally. Indirectly psychology and literary has the same object that is human being. Functionally, psychology studies the real psyche while literary studies the imaginative psyche.

Wellek and Warren (1956: 90) states that the process of the author’s creation is legitimates objects of the psychologist investigate curiosity. They classify the poet according to psychological and psychological types: they describe his mental ills: they may even explore his subconscious mind. The evidence of the psychologist may come from unliterary documents or it is drawn from the work itself. Psychology is also helpful for us to observe the emotion of each character and their behavior psychology, individual psychology or psychoanalysis.

An inferiority complex, in the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis, is a feeling that one is inferior to other in some way. Such feelings can arise from an imagined or actual inferiority in the afflicted person. It is often subconscious and is thought to drive afflicted individuals to over compensate, resulting either in spectacular achievement or extreme behavior. Inferiority feelings originated with Adler’s studies. Adler states that each individual as having a feeling of inferiority. The feeling of inferiority
leads to a striving for superiority. The striving for superiority is innate and carries individuals from one stage to the next. This striving can manifest itself in many different ways and each person has his own way of attempting to achieve perfection.

The inferiority feeling is divided into two: primary and secondary inferiority feelings. A primary inferiority feelings when a young child’s experiences. The secondary inferiority feelings related to an adult’s experiences. Parental attitudes, physical defects, mental limitations, social disadvantages and discrimination are the cause of inferiority feelings.

From the description above, the researcher constructs the title “The Inferiority Feelings of Harry Angstrom in John Updike’s *Rabbit, Run*: an Individual Psychological Approach.”

**B. Literary Review**

*Rabbit, Run* is one of John Updike’s most known novels. But as long as the researcher knows, there is no research that has been conducted to study the novel *Rabbit, Run* before in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and another university such likes Sebelas Maret University, Diponegoro University, and Semarang University. Further, in this study, the researcher takes the individual psychology approach to analyze the major character in the novel.
C. **Problem Statement**

The major problem of this study is how inferiority feelings influences the major character, Harry ‘Rabbit’ Angstrom, in John Updike’s *Rabbit, Run*.

D. **Limitation of the Study**

The researcher limits the study on the inferiority feelings of Harry ‘Rabbit’ Angstrom as a main character of the novel based on an individual psychology approach proposed by Alfred Adler.

E. **Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To analyze the novel based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze the novel based on an individual psychology approach.

F. **Benefit of the Study**

The study is expected to give benefits as follows:

1. **Theoretical Benefits**

   To give some contribution to the development of large of knowledge, especially in individual psychology approach.

2. **Practical Benefits**

   To enrich the literary study, particularly, among the students of Muhammadiyah Surakarta and societies.
G. Research Method

1. Object of the Study

The object of the study is John Updike’s *Rabbit, Run* novel.

2. Type of the Data and the Data Source

The researcher uses qualitative type. This is a library research which takes the source of the data from words and other writing. Data sources are divided into two categories:

a. The primary data sources are taken from John Updike’s *Rabbit, Run* novel.

b. The secondary data sources are any information related to the study and other relevant information.

3. Type of the Study

The researcher uses descriptive qualitative method besides books and other related references to support the subject matter.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

In conducting the study, the writer uses the techniques of documentation and library research in collecting the data.

a. Reading the novel repeatedly

b. Taking notes of important part from primary and secondary data available.

c. Identifying data obtained for the analysis

d. Drawing the conclusion of analysis
5. Technique of the Data Analysis

In analyzing data, the writer uses descriptive qualitative analysis of content. The analysis began from the structural analysis of the work and finally the psychological analysis of the literary work.

H. Research Organization

This research paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter contains introduction, which consists of background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, benefits of the study, research method and research organization. The second chapter deals with underlying theory, including the notion of individual psychology and theoretical application. The third chapter is structural analysis of the novel. The fourth chapter deals with the analysis using individual psychology. The last chapter is conclusion and suggestion.