

**WEIRD BEHAVIOUR OF PETTER: AN EXISTENTIALIST STUDY ON  
JOSTEIN GAARDER'S *THE RINGMASTER'S DAUGHTER* NOVEL (2001)**



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

by:

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## **APPROVAL**

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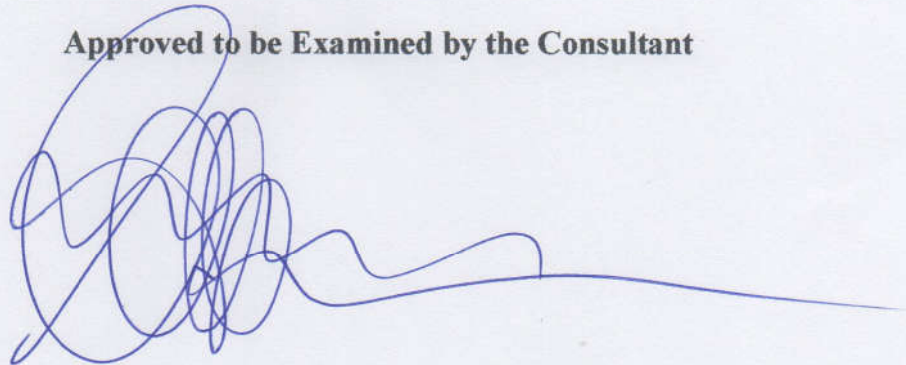
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**Dr. Abdillah Nugroho, M.Hum.**

**589**

## ACCEPTANCE

WEIRD BEHAVIOUR OF PETTER: AN EXISTENTIALIST STUDY ON  
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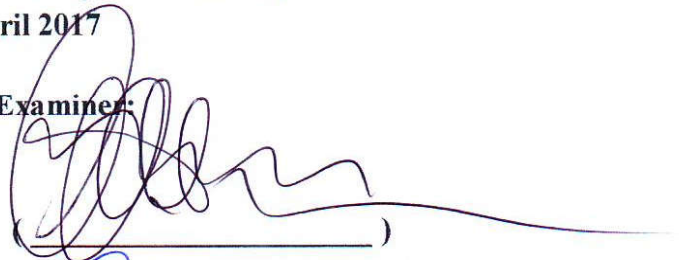
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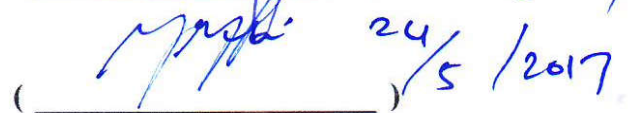
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## TESTIMONY

In this chance, the researcher emphasizes that in this research paper, there is no study which is similar before this research to get bachelor degree in this university, nor there are opinions or master-pieces which have been written or published by other, except referred written in this research paper and mentioned in the bibliography.

If there are some untrue statements in this research, the researcher will be responsible.

Surakarta, April 2017

The Researcher  
  
Nurjanah

## **WEIRD BEHAVIOUR OF PETTER: AN EXISTENTIALIST STUDY ON JOSTEIN GAARDER'S THE RINGMASTER'S DAUGHTER NOVEL (2001)**

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis novel berdasarkan struktur elemen dan menganalisis tingkah laku aneh dari Petter dalam novel *The Ringmaster's Daughter* (2001) karya Jostein Gaarder menggunakan teori eksistensi. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dari penelitian ini adalah penelitian kepustakaan dan teknik analisis data adalah menjelaskan data dengan menyeleksi data penting dan menganalisis data berdasarkan teori eksistensi dari Sartre. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan: 1) Indikator dari tingkah laku aneh Petter adalah: a) Dia tidak dapat memberikan respon atau reaksi secara normal; b) Dia takut terpengaruh dengan kondisi emosional; c) Dia berinteraksi dengan teman khayalannya; d) Dia tidak bisa fokus menyelesaikan ceritanya, dan menjual semua ceritanya kepada penulis lainnya; 2) Penyebab dari tingkah laku aneh ini adalah trauma masa kecilnya; 3) Dampak dari tingkah laku aneh ini adalah: a) Dia menjadi orang yang anti-sosial; b) Dia memiliki teman khayalan; c) Dia tidak pernah menyelesaikan cerita; d) Dia tidak suka ketenaran, tidak suka menjadi novelis, dan terpengaruh dengan orang lain; 4) Penulis dari novel ini memasukkan beberapa isu yang berhubungan dengan eksistensi manusia agar yang siapapun dari kalangan usia manapun dapat membacanya. Novel ini menunjukkan bahwa manusia adalah pembuat dampak bagi manusia lainnya, dan manusia bebas untuk mengkreasikan dirinya karena kebebasan adalah esensi dari manusia.

**Kata kunci:** pengalaman trauma, tingkah laku aneh, kebebasan, eksistensi

### **ABSTRACT**

The study is aimed at analysing weird behaviour of Petter on Jostein Gaarder's *The Ringmaster's Daughter* novel (2001) by existentialist theory. This study belongs to qualitative research. The technique of the data collection of this research is library research and technique of data analysis of this research are clarifying the obtained data by selecting the necessary one and analyzing data based on existentialist theory by Sartre. The results of this analysis show: 1) The indicators of Petter's weird behaviour are: a) He cannot give response or reacts normally; b) He was afraid to affect with emotional condition; c) He interacts with his imaginary; d) He cannot focus to finish his story, and sells his plots to other writers; 2) The cause of weird behaviour is his childhood trauma; 3) The impacts of weird behaviour are: a) He becomes an unsociable man; b) He has an imaginary friend; c) He never finished his stories; d) He does not like to be famous, a novelist, and get influence with the other; 4) The author of this novel addresses some issues related to human existence that people at any level of age can read this. This novel shows that man is

an effect maker for others and man is free creating himself because freedom is the essence of human being.

**Keyword:** traumatic experience, weird behaviour, freedom, existentialist

## 1. Introduction

Susanti (in Dayanara's paper, 2016: 7), she explains childhood trauma is a kind of soul damage happening because of trauma case. When trauma is aimed to pasca trauma stress molest, maybe the damage will involve the physical changing in brain and in brain chemistry destroy the ability to face the stress condition. According to Bufka and Barlow (in Dayanara's paper, 2016: 11), childhood trauma trauma has possibility to get PTSD because people cannot forget trauma event happened when they was child. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD is mental disorder happened in people after experienced by traumatic event. PTSD is an extreme respond of huge stressor, includes the increase of anxiety, avoidance of stimulate which associated with trauma, and decrease of emotional response. PTSD causes the change of people mind, feeling, and behaviour, such as mind change, feel change, and behaviour change (Jeffrey, Spencer, and Beverly, 2009:174). One of the character, Petter, was experienced with trauma when he was child. He saw his parents quarrel when he was three years old. He grew up in the broken house and he lived with his mother. His father leaved them since Petter was three years. He is a genius boy and has a unique ability to create stories from anything. He also got bullying from his friends because his appearance. He ever locked in bathroom by his mother because he wrote a fairy tale in wall of his mother's room.

The research focuses on Petter's weird behaviour in *The Ringmaster's Daughter* novel. Petter saw his parents quarrel on three years old or when he was locked in bathroom by his mother, he was quiet, and does not cry or gives feedback. Generally, human always gives thousand response to anything that happened to him but, he choosed to be quiet. Petter has active thinking to create some stories or plots but never finished it. He sells his story eventhough he knows that his story is able to make him famous. He chooses to become a ghostwriter to the other writers. He acts normally to the others eventhough he does not like to more affected from people. He is aware of interacting with his imaginary friend, a metre man. Petter chooses to sell

his idea than finishing his idea. He said that became well-known is embarrassing. Being a writer will make him mad. He infected crisis sense of possessing to his own idea. He also tried to help the other by his plots to become a novel that can sell in store.

The researcher analyzes *The Ringmaster's Daughter* novel by applying the existentialist approach that proposed by Sartre. Petter acts weird behaviour to show his existence to his environment. He as a human is free to create himself. He helps the other writer by his plots and gives ten tips to be good writer. His behaviours reflected to Sartre principles. Man is responsible for all men. Man is commended to be free. Humans are always free to create him-self. Humans are free to organize, select and can give meaning to reality. That is why, the researcher concludes it is important analyze Petter's existence through his weird behaviour. The researcher aims to find (1) the indicators of Petter's weird behaviour, (2) causes of weird behaviour, (3) impacts of weird behaviour, and (4) why the author, Jostein Gaarder, addresses this. It becomes the main reason of choosing this research as entitled: **WEIRD BEHAVIOUR OF PETTER: AN EXISTENTIALIST STUDY ON JOSTEIN GAARDER'S *THE RINGMASTER'S DAUGHTER* NOVEL (2001)**

## **2. Research Method**

The research belongs to qualitative research. The material object of this study is *The Ringmaster's Daughter* novel written by Jostein Gaarder. The formal object of this study is the weird behaviour of Petter analyzed by using existentialist study. This research focuses on discussing the indicators and the causes of weird behaviour of Petter, the impacts of that weird behaviour to Petter's life, and the reason of the author of this novel, Gaarder, addresses the existence of human in his novel. There are two sources of data in this study, primary data are *The Ringmaster's Daughter* novel written by Jostein Gaarder and secondary data are taken from other resources related to the research. They are websites, journals, biography of the author and research paper related with the research. Technique of data collection is the library research. The steps in this library research are the researcher reads the novel repeatedly, takes notes of important information, clarifies and makes conclusion the

data into several part based on its clarification. The first step in analyzing the data in this study is analyzed and interpreted descriptively the data by selecting the necessary one. The second step is analyzed, interpreted, identified and classified the Petter's behaviour by applying Sartre's theory.

### **3. Research Finding and Discussion**

#### **Existentialist Analysis**

##### **3.1 Analysis on Petter's Existence**

Petter was born with an imaginable brain. He must write his thousand of new ideas that always talk in his mind to relieve his mind. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Once more my head is full of voices. I feel haunted by an excitable swarm of souls who use my brain cells to talk to one another. I haven't the equanimity to harbour them all, some must be racked off. I have a considerable intellectual surplus and I constantly need to unburden it. At regular intervals I have to sit down with pencil and paper and relieve myself of ideas ...”. (TRD:9)

In that quotation, Petter feels haunted by an excitable swarm of souls who use his brain cells to talk to one another. He feels like his brain cells talks in his head and forces him to write more and more. As soon as possible, he falls into writing activity but not finish it.

From his brain activity, he decides what profession he takes. He makes his living by selling his stories and ideas to another writer and becomes wealthy:

“At last I've decided what I want to be. I shall continue doing what I've always done, but from now on I'll make a living out of it. I don't feel the need to be famous, that's an important consideration, but I could still become extremely rich.” (TRD:9)

That quotations shows us what Petter will choose to do in his future. He chooses to become a ghostwriter to another by selling his plot or story. But, each decision that has been taken will give effect in future. Petter also gets the effect from his choice. It shows in this quote “It wasn't an unlawful trade from my customers' point of view either just dishonourable” (TRD:13). This quote means his job is illegal, dishonourable and will give him an impact at the end.

Back to the past, when Petter was young, he lived with his mother because his parents were separated. According to his mother, Petter has an unsociable



behaviour. He just sat all morning to watch the other children play. He had amused to see how intensively the other children lived. It likes that Petter was controlling them, he was the one deciding everything they did or said. He also creates plots of many stories and his favorite plot is about Panina Manina, a daughter of great ringmaster. He has ability of creating many plots and skill of persuasion the other. In school, he was the smartest student but he did not show it. He makes himself in second or third position because he did not like to be famous.

Little Petter has childhood trauma. He threated his brain to shut off that traumatic when he saw his parents quarrel in front of him when he was three years. His trauma looks like a nightmare for him that shadows him since he was child until he grew up. His trauma can be seen in this quote:

“It is possible to remember the atmosphere of a dream without actually being able to break the dream itself. I knew there was something cold and hard that I was trying to repress, and so well did I consign it to oblivion that I could no longer remember what it was I was trying to forget.” (TRD:30)

In this quote explain his trauma always follow him until he grows up. He always repress it for long time until he forget what he was trying to forget. He just remembers he has to forget it. His second trauma also changes Petter behaviour too. His second trauma happened when he locked in bathroom by his mother.

“She was livid. She was absolutely livid. She was beside herself even before she'd read what I'd written on the wall. She yanked me off the bed and threw me on the floor, she slapped me hard on both cheeks, then she dragged me out into the corridor and locked me in the bathroom. I didn't cry. I didn't say a word. I heard her ring my father, and heard how she was angry with him too. She said he had to come to the flat and hang some new wallpaper. And several days later, he did. The smell of glue hung about for weeks. It was humiliating. It was a long time before my mother let me out of the bathroom.” (TRD:177)

In this quote describes how Petter get his trauma. His mother yanked, threw and slapped him in to the floor like he was not his mother's son. His mother reacts in unrestrain condition. But in that time, Petter cannot react normally. He cannot cry or say a word to defend himself. The effect of his trauma is he has a figurative man that comes from his mind. The figurative man is called Metre Man. Only Petter can see Metre Man. “A man who was exactly my height, but who was nevertheless a real, grown-up man

with a hat and a stick.” The quote describes characteristic of Metre Man who nevertheless a real and use a hat and a stick.

Another years passed away, Petter was much alone. The older he got, the loneliness he became, but he loved and enjoyed it. Gradually, as he grew up, he concentrated more and more on working out various plots for books, film, and theatre. But Petter did not choose to be a novelist although he had mastered at it.

“Novelists have a special talent for slogging away at the same story for long periods, often for several years. For me this is too inactive, too distracted and preoccupied. Even if I'd mastered the mental inertia for writing a novel, I wouldn't have bothered to do it.”

(TRD:53)

Petter thinks novelist is a long period of writing activity. He is not able to sit in the chair and finish his story. For him, this activity is inactive, distraught, preoccupied and bothersome. The other reason of why Petter did not choose to be a novelist is writing activity far too affected. It declares with this quote “I've been as scared of being affected.” He is afraid to get affected with emotional condition. Then, in the next sentence, it stresses again that he thinks it is unnatural “I found it unnatural” and he replies if he get this condition, he said “I didn't know how to respond to such advances”. It means he do not know how to react and cannot give response normally.

After his mother died, Petter lived alone in his mother's flat. Then he met Maria, a woman that he deeply crushed. They live together for a while. Petter told some stories to Maria in every night. One night, Maria told that she wants have a baby with Petter but not to a marriage. Petter was happy to heard it. Maria will leave Petter after she has a baby and never lets Petter be close to his daughter. It show on this quote:

“She said we had to promise not to try to find one another after she'd moved to Stockholm. We would never be able to meet again. I wasn't even to have her address. And, most importantly, we were to swear that even the child's paternity was to be a secret between the two of us. All I was to be told was whether it was a boy or a girl.” (TRD:90)

This quote means Maria and Petter have a promise after they have a baby. Their promise is Petter would not to find Maria and her baby after they separated. Petter did not have a chance to get closer with his baby and not know about baby's identity. Twenty –six years after Maria left. Petter decides to begin his job, selling

his idea, plots for books, film and theatre. But his job has a rule “I couldn't sell the same notes more than once”. This means he could not sell a story more than once. If he sells a story more than twice, there will be some clients who attack him. On the other side, Petter did not feel worried selling his plots. He felt proud about it. He gets money from selling plots and takes royalty for each book's future royalties. It reflected in this quote “I began negotiating for part of the book's future royalties”. It means that after a story sold more than five or ten copies, he will get between ten or thirty percent of the author's royalty.

### **3.2 Responsibility of Petter to the Other Men**

When Petter decides to do something, he also gives effect maker to the other people. His choice was selling all his plots to the other writers or novelists. He built Writer's Aid to help the other and took payment. He thinks that he is responsible to change and grow of literature in his town or country around his country. It shows in this quote:

“...that the real symbiosis between authors and Writers' Aid lay. I gave birth to the plots in my imagination in a totally natural way, when I was out walking for instance, and then the literary artists could painstakingly colour them in.” (TRD:132)

This quote means a symbiosis between authors and Writer's Aid. Petter gives story and the author develops that story into a book or novel. This is how Petter develops the literary artists and especially literary era in that town. Petter thinks other authors are far better than him in rebuilding and finishing his story into a novel.

Petter thinks his essence in this world is to help others by utilizing his imaginative brain and skilled of psychology. This shows in this quote:

“The shortage is in having something to write about, and that can't be taught in schools. There is no course in finding something to write about. But I was there, and this want became my niche. The shortage is in having something to write about, and that can't be taught in schools. There is no course in finding something to write about. But I was there, and this want became my niche.” (TRD:134)

From this quote, Petter feels like a teacher who gives a special psychology lecture to his clients. The lesson of this lecturing activity is how to be a good writer. Then he secretly gives some instructions to each beginner when they buy his plots.

It stresses with this sentence “I once put together some instructions which I called 'Ten tips for the aspiring author.’” His instructions are given to beginners and aspiring authors. This tips consists of clearly understood tips. Some clients of this consultation activity gives feedback of that activity.

Then, The web of Writer’s Aid and client had begun denser and denser and more and more dangerous because one next day, the skeins will open and hurts everyone around it.

“The web had begun to alter in character. From now on its skeins were spun from client to client as well. And so it got denser and denser and more and more dangerous. Gradually, the symptoms of decay manifested themselves in four distinct groups.” (TRD:150)

This quote means the web will hurt everyone around this web. It shows that everything we choose or act will give effect for the others. The effect or this web denser, and dangerous to everyone. The next after it, the existence of The Spider almost disclosed because there is a news of The Spider in Corriere della Sera’s newspaper.

“Was there something about The Spider in the Corriere della Sera?”

He nodded. I don't think he noticed the start I gave. I tried to regain my composure.

'It's probably the first time anything has found its way into print,' I commented. 'What did they say?'

'I know the author of the article well,' he said. 'He also writes for L'Espresso, and he's now reportedly working on a longer feature.'

This quote means the identity of Spider. Spider is Petter. He felt irritated through this news. Only Luigi can capture who Spider is. He thinks Spider is Petter. But Petter did not tell to Luigi the truth about Spider. After having conversation with Luigi, Petter felt his cheeks begin to burn. He thinks that Maria had struck him again. He thinks like that because “The only person who'd had any sort of privileged position was Maria”. He makes sure that the author who struck him is Maria because she is the only one know all of Petter’s story.

### **3.3 Freedom of Petter**

As a human, Petter is free to create himself. It means he is free to organize,select, act or decide anything in his life. Petter is blessed of imaginative

brain. He creates some creative stories. But he decides to be unscociable child when he was child. It is because of his traumatic childhood and he threatad his brain to shut off it. It can be seen on this qoute:

“I had certain vague, almost dreamlike impressions of things that had happened in the flat before my father left. It is possible to remember the atmosphere of a dream without actually being able to break the dream itself. I knew there was something cold and hard that I was trying to repress, and so well did I consign it to oblivion that I could no longer remember what it was I was trying to forget.” (TRD:30)

In this qoute explains how Petter begin to change his behaviour. He changes his behaviour because his trauma. This trauma likes a shadow for him. He describes his trauma as a something cold and hard. He always tries to repress his trauma. When he was be a man, he decided what he wanted. He sold his idea, plots to the other writers. He will get wealthy although he becomes unpopular man. It can be shown in this sentence “I don't feel the need to be famous, that's an important consideration, but I could still become extremely rich”. Each decision that has been taken will give effect in future. Petter also gets the effect from his choice. This is one of effect implies to him:

“The market has been limitless, and I've always had merchandise to sell. My business wasn't illegal, I even paid a certain amount of tax. I lived modestly, too, and can now afford to pay substantial tax arrears should the matter ever arise. It wasn't an unlawful trade from my customers' point of view either just dishonourable.” (TRD:13)

In that qoute, he explains how the effect from his decision is. His business is not illegal but dishonourable. He sells his story to others writer with his corporation, Writer's Aid. When the web of Spider had begun blow up to the public, Petter decided to close Writer's Aid with feel like coercion not liberation. He clarifies that just only two world in his life. “There had been only two spheres: the world and my brain.” Two world in his opinion is world and brain. His brain has more imagination than the world. At the last, he considers to confess his sins. In describes in this qoute:

“At one point he halted and inspected me with an authoritative air, thrusting his bamboo cane in my direction. 'Well, then! What now? Shall we confess our sins?' I unpacked my laptop, sat down at the desk and began to write the story of my life.” (TRD:181)

In this route, Metre man forces Petter to release his sins or trauma to himself. He must to write his trauma in writing activity and forgive his trauma. The last step is forgetting his trauma as an experience of Petter's life.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The existentialist analysis of major character shows that each classification of them gives an important element in building the major character's behaviour. This novel told us how major character, Petter, struggled to his existence in his life. This novel also shows us how human action gives the effect maker to the other people around that human to get their existence. Petter acts weird behaviour after he got trauma when since he was child. The reasons of his trauma are fracasing between mother and father in his face until they divorced, bullying from his friends because he is short and small. The last reason is he ever locked in bathroom by his mother because he wrote story in his mother's wall bedroom. Petter faces more conflict in his life. He has to shut off his trauma, manages an imaginable brain, and gets freedom by acting weird. He trapped in his web between client and spider. He was responsible to his client to change and to grow literature in his town. He used his imaginative brain to block his mind about trauma by creating plots of books, film, or theatre.

Petter is a precocious child and fantasist who grows up to be a storyteller of disturbing mischief. Petter gets his existence since he was child. He forced his brain to forget his trauma by creating stories. He saves himself by using his speaking ability to fight with his friend that hurt him. He never wants to be famous and gets affection from others people. He likes to live in his dream land than real world. He feels confident about it. He has stories from he was child until he grew up. Rather than be an author himself, Petter makes his living selling stories and ideas to professionals suffering from writers block. He copies all his transactions with dictafon. He also help the beginner writer with "Ten Tips to writer". He thinks that he is responsible to help and teach them to develop the story.

As he sits like a spider at the centre of his web, Petter finds himself in a trap of his own making. Slowly, the web that has spinned by Petter and his client became bigger, denser and denser, more dangerous and more dangerous. Until there are two stories from two different writers publish in different country but in same years. Petter thinks that it must be Maria that struck him, the only woman that known all his plots. Petter forces his business, Writer's Aid, and leaves his town to another town. In there, he met Beate, his daughter with Maria. Petter felt in love with Beate. But both of Beat and Petter did not know that they are father and daughter because Maria never told until she died. Beate is a writer that struck Petter and uses named "Wihelmine Whittman". After the secret cleared to Petter and Beate, Petter considers to confess his sins to the Beate and of course for himself. Petter admits to remember his reason of his trauma. That trauma is when his parents disputed in front of him. He forgives and releases his trauma to the air. He tries to live with Beate as father and daughter.

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