

Writing as Healing Process of Virginia Woolf's Mental Illness in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini difokuskan terhadap analisis menulis sebagai proses penyembuhan pada tokoh Virginia Woolf dalam novel *The Hours* karya Michael Cunningham. Menulis sebagai proses penyembuhan adalah kegiatan yang menciptakan kesenangan dan ketenangan dalam pikiran dan bisa mengobati gejala-gejala seperti depresi, stres dan gangguan psikis yang mana menulis dijadikan sebagai pengganti pengobatan dengan obat-obatan yang mana orang harus mengeluarkan banyak uang dan pastinya selalu ada efek sampingnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan gambaran menulis sebagai proses penyembuhan dalam karakter Virginia Woolf dan untuk mengetahui bagaimana Virginia Woolf menggunakan menulis sebagai proses penyembuhan untuk gangguan psikisnya. Metode kualitatif di gunakan dalam penelitian ini. Teori gangguan psikis di gunakan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana gangguan psikis itu bisa terkena pada Virginia. Kemudian teori menulis sebagai pengobatan juga di gunakan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana Virginia menggunakan menulis sebagai penyembuhan terhadap dirinya. Novel ini menceritakan tentang Virginia yang menderita bipolar disorder dan bagaimana dia menghadapi hidup dengan gangguan psikisnya itu. Dia mempunyai konflik dengan dirinya sendiri yang mana Virginia tidak bisa melaksanakan tugasnya sebagai istri dalam sebuah rumah tangga. Ketika dia tidak bisa menjadi perempuan yang pantas dalam rumah tangga, dia tidak bisa mendapat rasa hormat dari pembantunya sendiri, Nelly. Disisi lain, dia sangat beruntung mempunyai suami seorang Leonard yang sangat sabar dan pengertian terhadap kondisi Virginia. Setiap hari Virginia dia selalu menulis di dalam kondisi depresinya. Di dalam rumah dia tidak pernah melakukan kegiatan apapun selain hanya menulis. Dengan menulis bisa memunculkan kebahagiaan tersendiri bagi Virginia dan bisa lebih melupakan segala masalah-masalahnya sementara dan dia melakukan kegiatan ini setiap hari sebagai terapi diri sendiri untuk mengurangi beban pikiran. Virginia menggunakan menulis sebagai proses penyembuhan karena dia menemukan bahwa menulis itu layaknya sebuah pil yang bisa menyembuhkan penyakit.

Kata kunci : gangguan psikis, bipolar disorder, depresi, menulis sebagai proses penyembuhan.

ABSTRACT

This study focus on analyzing writing as healing process in Virginia Woolf character in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*. Writing as healing process is the activity of writing that can make an enjoyment and calmness in mind so it will be healing of symptoms like depression, stress, and mental illness as the exchange of pill medicine which people should pay much money and there is side effect of those pills. This study is aimed to describe the depiction of Writing as healing process depicted in Virginia Woolf's character and to know how Virginia Woolf uses writing as healing for her mental illness. Qualitative study is used in this study. Theory of mental illness is used to describe how this illness attacks Virginia. Thus, the theory of writing as healing also is used to describe how Virginia uses writing as healing process. This novel tells about Virginia that suffers bipolar disorder and how she faces life with her mental illness. She has conflict with herself which Virginia cannot do her duty as a wife household. When she cannot be a good woman in a house hold. She does not has respect with her maid Nelly. In other hand, she is really lucky to have Leonard as husband who always patient and understanding with Virginia's condition. In her daily life she always writes in her depression condition. She never does anything in home expect writing. She finds it as a happiness side and by writing she can forget her problems for a moment and she do it every day as self therapy to reduce her load. Virginia uses writing as healing because she finds it as like pill to heal disease.

Keywords: mental illness, bipolar disorder, depression, writing as healing process.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is part of human life for years because when people go to school since childhood till they have adult, the activity of writing always exist. It shows that writing is important thing in development of human. Not only in education but also writing benefit in healing of human stress. Symptoms like depression, sadness, mental illness and stress can be changed in to better condition in writing. In other hand, this therapy still has process and need be done routinely. Based on Pannebacker and Beal state that "writing in the beginning of traumatic experiences has the function to increase psychological health and decrease some psychical problems. (Pennebacker & Beal, 1986). Based on experts show that writing can be another choice of pill consumption to make psychical and psychological health.

Writing as healing process al Writing as healing process also can be found in *The Hours* novel written by Michael Cunningham in 1998. In this study will explore about Virginia Woolf character because she has psychologist disorder in other hand she also writes a novel for daily activity. *The Hours* tells about three women with different decades but about this study will focus just on one character Virginia Woolf. This story placed in Sussex, England in 1941 where Virginia always feels alone and frustration at that town. She wants to go London, her home town and as the escape she tries to suicide by entering river. Leonard as a very patient husband always care and never demand her to work as wife in household. In other hand, Nelly her servant often in opposite even Virginia fears with her. Writing is just her daily routine in house and never care surrounding because she does not know how to handle all the things in her life. She just can handle her favorite thing because in writing she finds the pleasant like traveling in holiday. Meanwhile, she also always fight her mental illness when the surrounding sometimes cannot accept her. Many kind of voices sometimes suddenly come to her and make Virginia confused with that event. Then, the headache also always haunt her, never care in midday, afternoon or night. Virginia's mental illness also lead her to does strange things and make her family is worry. It can be found in *The Hours* novel written by Michael Cunningham in 1998. In this study will explore about Virginia Woolf character because she has psychologist disorder in other hand she also writes a novel for daily activity. *The Hours* tells about three women with different decades but about this study will focus just on one character Virginia Woolf. This story placed in Sussex, England in 1941 where

Virginia always feels alone and frustration at that town. She wants to go London, her home town and as the escape she tries to suicide by entering river. Leonard as a very patient husband always care and never demand her to work as wife in household. In other hand, Nelly her servant often in opposite even Virginia fears with her. Writing is just her daily routine in house and never care surrounding because she does not know how to handle all the things in her life. She just can handle her favorite thing because in writing she finds the pleasant like traveling in holiday. Meanwhile, she also always fight her mental illness when the surrounding sometimes cannot accept her. Many kind of voices sometimes suddenly come to her and make Virginia confused with that event. Then, the headache also always haunt her, nsytever care in midday, afternoon or night. Virginia's mental illness also lead her to does strange things and make her family is worry.

This study writing as healing process of Virginia Woolf's character in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* to explore that writing also can be as healing , because in previous study the hours' novel does not talk about writing as healing in Virginia Woolf's character. For example, in thesis of Citra Dewi Saraswati from Indonesia Education University she researches *The Hours* entitled Being Cunnningham's women: The Portrayal Of Women In Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*. So the writing as healing process of depression may become the first research in *The Hours*' novel.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the background study above that will be discussed about the topic.

1. How is mental illness depicted in Virginia Woolf's character in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*?
2. How does Virginia Woolf use writing as healing process for her mental illness in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To describe the depiction of mental illness depicted in Virginia Woolf's character in Michael Cunnigham's *The Hours*?
2. To know Virginia Woolf uses writing as healing process for her mental illness in Michael Cunnigham's *The Hours*?

METHOD

Writing as Healing Process of Virginia Woolf's Mental Illness in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*

Method and technique it can be of the most crucial thing to analyze a literary work and use a literary research then will be mentioned as follow:

1.Data Source

The novel entitled *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham (publish in 1999 by Fourth Estate, Great Britain) is used as the main source. This literary study that uses a psychoanalytic approach in literature. The additional data uses some quotation, phrase, and description relate the concept. To be more specific this study uses the concept of mental illness by Michael Otto and Writing as healing process researched by James Pannebacker.

2.Data Collection

The data analysis is taken from quotation, phrase, and description of Writing as healing depicted in Virginia Woolf's mental illness in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*. Qualitative study becomes the method of data collection. The data is derived by intensive reading. All references about text books, pdf, and journal are taken by library, internet to expand the study. In analyzing the data the way to analyze for first is that intensive reading to catch the main points of novel.

3. Data Analysis

Data analysis is important thing to be done. There are some steps to analyze the data. Firstly the study will be done by intensive reading *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham.

Theory of Mental Illness

➤ Virginia Woolf's mental illness depicted in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*

Mental disorder or mental illness is not really famous than physical illness because many people still think that just physical illness is important problem. People suffer mental illness will be looked different and make others keep distant with them. It makes stigma in society is bad because they cannot walk together. Often society treats them as worthless people and mental illness people will be alienated. A mental illness is more dangerous than physical illness. The reason is that mental illness cannot be seen like physical illness so many people think that there is no problem in people. Some factors such as environment and genetic are causes of this problem. Person who has traumatic experience also can make mental illness. Based on Marie L. Thomson states that. Mental illness is about health condition such as

different of thinking, behavior and mood because there is impaired function in brain (Thomson. 2007: 4).

The definition of mental illness is described in Virginia Woolf activity such as.

She rises from her bed and goes into the bathroom. Leonard is already up; he may already be at work (p.30).

The statement above states that when Virginia wakes up in the morning and her husband has ready to go work. This is the strange thing which is in society as common before a husband goes to work a wife should already prepare the breakfast menu to family. Even tough, Virginia has a servant named Nelly to cook the meals in the kitchen, something is not proper she often wakes up late in the morning because she does not want to prepare the need to his husband before going to work. Virginia is like a child that does not know the responsibility in family. She just thinks herself and does not have a want to be as usual wife. Sure, this is there is relation with the way Virginia's think. The strange think in her thought and attitude are indicates she is not in good psychic.

Another work can be indicated that Virginia suffers mental illness is that.

Why is it so difficult dealing with servants? Virginia's mother managed beautifully. Vanessa manages beautifully. Why is it so difficult to be firm and kind with Nelly; to command her respect and her love? Virginia knows just how she should enter the kitchen, how her shoulders should be set, how her voice should be motherly but not familiar, something like that of a governess speaking to a beloved child (p.87).

The quotation above shows her difficulty how to manage people around her life. She feels so different with her family member like her mom and Vanessa to manage others. She cannot imitate them to act motherhood, wise and give command kindly in order to get respect with maid. It also make additional load to Virginia's mind and worsen her illness. As a boss in house she should know how to be a leader in her own power. It is unusual thing because she is an educated woman who knows how to act and get respect from a person beneath her.

The other difficulties of Virginia's life that she is so hard to manage everything around her. She also has difficulty of support from people around her include Nelly, her servant. This fact is so important because give influence of the cure of Virginia.

Luciano L'Abate states that people with mental illness have advantage of this illness which many people will think the patient is as usual people and it is so different people with physical illness that can be seen as an sick person and for the treatment social and community support is better than giving treatment hospitalization (L'Abate.2011 : 5).

A support and understanding from other people cannot be gotten from Virginia and it will increase her illness.

She goes back upstairs stealthily, so as not to attract Nelly (why does she always feel so secretive around servants, so guilty of crimes?). She gets to her study, quietly closes the door. Safe. She opens the curtains. Outside, beyond the glass, Richmond continues in its decent, peaceful dream of itself (p.34).

Virginia is afraid with her own maid and often keeps distant with her if there is no important thing to talk. The way Nelly's treat to Virginia actually has the reason till her boss is so afraid when facing Nelly. Nelly hates Virginia because of her irresponsibly in duties. She ignores everything that she should do as a married woman. In other hand, Nelly does know well why does Virginia those actions without thinking deeply that she has mental illness. It is clear that Nelly does not understand with Virginia condition and it will be dangerous thing because mental illness person for the treatment is about family support that always understanding anytime. Other people treat with patient in a bad way also can increase the illness. After going upstairs Virginia fight t not has interact with Nelly and then she opens the curtain in order to can see the view of Richmond. She needs more air and view to calm her mind. She wants there is entertaining thing after fighting with Nelly. Nelly is like a Gosh that can disturb or change mood anytime. She continues writing and find out the nice place near door.

➤ **Virginia Woolf's bipolar disorder depicted in Michael Cunningham's The Hours**

Bipolar disorder has the main role in the story of Virginia Woolf which along her activities is influenced with illness bipolar disorder. This is very crucial thing that her illness also makes impact to people around her. Psychology disorder is different with physical disorder because mental illness is like bipolar attack the abstract thing which cannot be seen by eyes. Otto et al. said that "Bipolar disorder is mood disorder such as mood change in some episodes

at the same time'' (Michael,et all. 2008). Just the impact of bipolar disorder can be felt of person such as mood change immediately.

Oh, let's have something more than pears, Nelly, Mr. Woolf is in a mood today and I'm afraid pears won't do nearly enough to sweeten his disposition. It should be so simple (p.87).

The statement above shows Nelly is very careful to act toward Virginia, because if she does not correctly, the simple thing will disturb situation. Virginia seems so sensitive of the things around her. She can change any time if another people do not know how to treat her. Such as about pears, Nelly does not want change her mood just about this little thing. The way her servant act indicates that Virginia often in mood change with the situation around her. So when she is in a good mood other people do not want to change it. It is so easy she change with another mood in the same time. Thus when someone has good activities like eating ice cream and earning money they will in happiness. In other hand, when someone is lacking of money and losing their lover they will so in bad feeling or angry. This different feeling is common in life. But the unusual feeling happen when the mood is changing immediately for just little problem or mood is changing without any reason.

➤ **Events in Bipolar Disorder of Virginia Woolf depicted in Michael Cunningham's The Hours**

1. Suicidal event

People who attempt suicide certainly has the problem that never be solved in their own mind. A hopeless to solve the problem of bipolar disorder is dangerous thing. This illness may attack the mind, feeling, mood, prejudice, perceive etc. If those things are attacked people cannot naturally think what the right thing to face problems is. Otto states "symptoms of bipolar disorder make person feels hopeless and does not worth in living. So doing some harmful thing or commit suicide is the last choice" (Michael,et all. 2008). It can be related with Virginia Woolf because she wants to suicide to ends her problem.

Leonard goes upstairs to the sitting room to listen to the news. He finds a blue envelope, addressed to him, on the table. Inside is a letter.

Dearest,

I feel certain that I am going

mad again: I feel we can't go

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through another of these terrible times.

And I shan't recover this time. I begin

to hear voices, and can't concentrate.

So I am doing what seems the best thing to do.

You have given me (p.6).

After Leonard from the garden his maid says that Virginia is gone. Then he looks for her and finds a letter for him. Writing a message on paper may unconsciously being a culture of Virginia. Writing being an essential part of her life so anything such as talking with person can be replaced with by writing. Then, Virginia feels so awkward and hopeless can live with Leonard happily. She always thinks terrible times always happen and cannot change. She thinks cannot solve all her strange things in her mind and cannot focus with everything. She thinks she cannot be a normal person. She is hopeless and cannot think clearly. Suicide may being the best thing to do and she feels so granted cannot reply with what all her husband done to her then may end her life can less Leonard load in his life.

2. Irritability

People of bipolar disorder will be easy to be touched because the problem in her mind that they cannot recognize well. Then feeling irritability and anger both kind of a fight in explanation of emotion tones (Michael, et all. 2008: 83). The symptoms of bipolar have many kinds while in mania or high to depressive or low. Irritability and impatience in explained feeling of some periods are kinds of low or depressive in change mood of bipolar disorder (Caponiogro, at all.2012 :7).

Virginia's mental illness also defines her irritability and impatience while waiting the train to go London. Virginia thinks all about what she suffers and feels so bored with this situation. Suddenly, with the confused mind she goes to rail station. London is her purpose, she also wants to be an ordinary one that can go to London easily like Nelly and her errand about a half hour. Going to Richmond station and the train to London will come not almost about twenty five minutes. She is impatiently waiting the train to take her in London. London is her aim to rest her mind and want live more meaning than in Richmond.

She checks the clock, sees that a train has just pulled away and the next will not leave for almost twenty-five minutes. She stiffens. She

had imagined (foolish!) stepping straight onto a train or, at most, waiting five or ten minutes. She stands impatiently before the clock, then walks a few slow paces down the platform. If she does this, if she gets on the train that leaves in, what now, twenty-three minutes and goes to London, and walks in London, and catches the last train back (that will get her home to Richmond at ten minutes past eleven), Leonard will be insane with worry (p.168).

She waits the next train to take her in London. A place that always haunt her, a place that being symbol of freedom and happiness in Virginia's mind. She does not care what will be happening next if she is in London without get permission to Leonard. Her brain is full the mind of London, she waits impatiently. Impatience shows an angry to go London soon. Waiting for not almost thirty minutes is such as very long time

3. Depression

Depression always has the influence why people suffer this. While meet somebody who get depression but without any reason or just because of little bit problem it will be indicated bipolar disorder. Lynn Hodges states that "The mania is accompanied with one or more depressive episodes. The depressive episodes seen in bipolar, in contrast to those seen typically in a major depression, tend to come on fairly acutely, over perhaps a few weeks, and often occur without any significant precipitating factors".(Hodges.2012 : 20).

Based on Virginia's attitude she also indicates suffer depressive episode which can influence her surroundings. Hanging up the mantel and going to the kitchen to speak with Nelly. She accosts Nelly and asks about lunch and Pie lamb, the cress soup yellow pears for pudding are the menu. Actually Nelly in Virginia thought is a big one, cruel and independent. Then she talks to Nelly to remind that Vanessa and children will come in four in the afternoon. They talk about what is the menu in the afternoon when Vanessa and their children coming.

Oh, let's have something more than pears, Nelly, Mr. Woolf is in a mood today and I'm afraid pears won't do nearly enough to sweeten his disposition. It should be so simple (p.87).

Based on the quotation above Nelly afraid to make Virginia angry, so she is very careful to face Virginia when she is in good mood. She knows well Virginia can immediately change her mood just because the

little problem. This is one of Nelly's experiences to face her habit so she can recognize while she is in certain mood and can keep and do not disturb it. In normal people the opinion of dishes menu when a guest will arrive at home is ordinary thing. In other hand, in Virginia is not same because there is impaired function of brain so the way of thinking, behave, perceive of bipolar disorder person is different. (Marie. 2007:4).

➤ **Virginia Woolf uses writing as healing process for her mental illness**

All pain always has the cure, it depends how people choose where the best cure is. Writing as solution of therapy of mental disorder which has many advantages besides easy to do. Writing is very easy way to do for all ages can choose this therapy. Doing writing is a cheap therapy and do not has negative effect. This is so different the cure with some pills to reduce stress or depression because much consumption of pill someday will make an addiction.

➤ **Process of writing as healing**

When people there are disturbance in their body or mind, exactly they look for the cure or treatment. In other hand, people will get the appropriate cure or not is just a lucky. The explanation here will give the treatment in simple way called writing. Not all people like write or can do this activity kindly. But for all the reasons are do not matter because it just depending on a will to break up the laziness to write. In the morning while in fresh mind, Virginia wants to write something for hours ahead. In other hand, she does not know what she will write first, Virginia confused. This problem will be a healing if people force to write down in the first line because Kren Cangialosi states "many people do not know how to put the word first in writing. Just trying to write it will be successful because writing will flow based on unconscious. Healing will begin in processing while writing can be stated" (Cangialosi.2002: 69)

The quotation above is be proven by work below.

She may pick up her pen and follow it with her hand as it moves across the paper; she may pick up her pen and find that she's merely herself, a woman in a housecoat holding a pen, afraid and uncertain, only mildly competent, with no idea about where to begin or what to write. She picks up her pen.

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. (p.36).

The quotation above shows the confidence of Virginia to start writing. She confused between write or not, Virginia just see the pen and paper and thus she attacks her confuse until can hold her pen in hand. Then, she defeats her fear with pick up the pen without any idea in mind. Unconsciously she writes about Mrs. Dalloway buys a flower. This idea comes in an unconscious and this memory comes in her dream tonight. The solution writing as healing at first just write and open the mind because it is impossible there is no anything in mind. In writing as therapy people does not necessary to write in good way like writing has in good sentences and good grammar. Virginia as the example, she pushes her self then has an idea Mrs. Dalloway buys a flowers herself after waking up about dreaming in a park.

➤ **Virginia Woolf uses writing as healing process**

The purpose of life for everybody is pursuit happiness. People doing anything without love is never having spirit and they may will not work totally. A comfortable is effect of satisfaction toward something. Like in Virginia she spent all the time with writing because she feels happy with this activity. The conflicts around her mind can be channeled into writing, so she feels better when writing hours along day. "Negative events can be analysis in writing and makes better health. Satisfaction also can be found in writing because while writing negative events experiences may be released" (Pennebaker & Chung.2007 : 9).

Expressing the traumatic events in the past through writing can be a healing because the increasing of health is healthier and appear the satisfaction feeling. It also happens in Virginia who makes writing as joyful because she finds a satisfaction.

Writing in that state is the most profound satisfaction she knows, but her access to it comes and goes without warning. (p.35).

According to the quotation Virginia sees writing as the most happiness activity and she does not find yet other activity that can make influence like writing. She can do without obstacles around her. So she always fill her days just for writing and writing with all problems that she has. Trough writing she can explore her ideas or all everything around her whether bad events or good events. Virginia is lucky because this activity not only part of her intellectuality but she

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can fully put all the hardest things in life into many words on paper.

Virginia Woolf, a woman lives in suburb of London. She is a writer , in other hand she also got mental illness. Leonard, her husband is very patient person that he always takes care her and without complains Virginia's duties as wife. In other hand Nelly Boxal, a servant in home is contrast with him. As servant she does not respect and often getting angry to Virginia. The responsibility is one reason of Nelly has conflict with Virginia. The activity in Virginia for every day is always writing because she feels there is a joyful while writing. Bipolar disorder makes her be not as usual woman, she never be a good wife and never care with surrounding. The illness attacks her thinking so it seems always confusing and made her being so sensitive person. Virginia also never gets the support of her mental illness in family because this illness is so abstract and at that time not really popular. At the end of her life, she decides to suicide because she feels has already being load of her family and cannot be a good wife. She chooses to sink the river near home.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf, a woman lives in suburb of London. She is a writer , in other hand she also got mental illness. Leonard, her husband is very patient person that he always takes care her and without complains Virginia's duties as wife. In other hand Nelly Boxal, a servant in home is contrast with him. As servant she does not respect and often getting angry to Virginia. The responsibility is one reason of Nelly has conflict with Virginia. The activity in Virginia for every day is always writing because she feels there is a joyful while writing. Bipolar disorder makes her be not as usual woman, she never be a good wife and never care with surrounding. The illness attacks her thinking so it seems always confusing and made her being so sensitive person. Virginia also never gets the support of her mental illness in family because this illness is so abstract and at that time not really popular. At the end of her life, she decides to suicide because she feels has already being load of her family and cannot be a good wife. She chooses to sink the river near home.

Bipolar disorder is one of type of mental illness, the characteristic of this symptom is mood change at the same time. In Virginia case, she is really sensitive and so easy angry when there is little problem happens. Symptoms of bipolar disorder there are three parts suicidal desire, irritability and depression. Virginia

ever thinks to do suicide to end her problem. She can not think clearly and confuse how to manage problems. She puts a blue envelope on the table to give information that she can not stand with everything and then Virginia goes to the river near home to sink herself in to it. Irritability also attacks Virginia, she becomes sensitive and often everything is not fee. She is very lucky to have Leonard on her arm. He never angry and always takes care her. Going to London by train and no one knows is the fact that she cannot act as like an adult as a wife. Another symptom of bipolar disorder is that depression. Depression can easier attacks when the support well. The little thing also can motives this symptom, this is also one reason why bipolar disorder person do suicidal act because of very often got depression.

Process writing as healing of Virginia starts from her want to write but does not know how to write first. Then she fights to brave herself to write and writing can happens automatically. She writes about Mrs. Dalloway, her novel about this character is reflection of her own self. Writing is her hobby to put all her sadness, depression and problems. She has problems with Nelly, because her irresponsibility in house. All house works she does not care at all so she never does anything. It makes her maid, nelly never respect to her because Virginia also cannot respect with herself. In other hand, by writing she always has spirit and never bored to do it. She feels there is pleasure by writing. There is a satisfied while writing so for hours even she often forget. People can write anything it can be talked about uncertainly, experience in the past or present and ideas in the future because have some benefits such as psychological well-being, physical health, increasing of cognitive and work performance. It is proven that writing can make psychological health better. Then Virginia uses writing as process to heal her illness. She feels if does not write is same as she died.

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