



Being Henry David

Cal Armistead

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Seventeen-year-old "Hank" has found himself at Penn Station in New York City with no memory of anything --who he is, where he came from, why he's running away. His only possession is a worn copy of *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. And so he becomes Henry David-or "Hank" and takes first to the streets, and then to the only destination he can think of--Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. Cal Armistead's remarkable debut novel is about a teen in search of himself. Hank begins to piece together recollections from his past. The only way Hank can discover his present is to face up to the realities of his grievous memories. He must come to terms with the tragedy of his past, to stop running, and to find his way home.

Being Henry David Details

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Author : Cal Armistead

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From Reader Review Being Henry David for online ebook

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

I'm sorry to say that this book didn't work for me.

It didn't start out that way, actually. I thought the concept of this book was really interesting. A guy wakes up in Penn Station with no memory of any time before that moment, and his only possession is a worn "Walden". He has a huge lump on his head and with only \$10 in his pocket, he is forced to find some way to survive and figure out where he came from. From author's blurb and from this promising beginning, I was hoping for a gritty survival book with pieces of his traumatic former life artfully revealed at pivotal moments. I was ready with my big girl pants to read about some heartbreaking young adult drama, and I was dying to learn what kinds of secrets the main character's mysterious past held. Unfortunately, I put on my big girl pants for nothing.

It didn't take long for the plot to take a turn to the ridiculous. I just have to say one phrase to show how far this book veered from my original expectations. **Battle of the bands.** Ugh. I didn't need the silly romantic drama that worked its way into the book, nor did I need the melodramatic relationship that the main character had with the librarian/historian. Yeah... I felt very led astray by this book. Maybe some readers will enjoy the fluff but didn't dig it.

****This book was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review****

Erika says

What a page-turner!

From the moment I picked up Being Henry David to the moment I finished, I could not put it down. I did sleep, but it was very begrudgedly that I did so.

I fell in love with "Hank" almost immediately. I find that so often in young adult books when we get the story from a male perspective, there is often so much hate or cursing. That is the last thing I want to read! So when I find characters like Hank, I really treasure them.

Being Henry David is the story of a seventeen year old kid who wakes up one day in New York City with no idea who he is or how he got there. He's afraid to go to the police because of the feeling he has in his gut just by looking at them. So Hank is taken in by another street kid but bad things happen to him and he ends up running away.

The story is filled with so a big giant web-of-lies and I had trouble remembering what Hank told to who. I was so impressed by how the author held this part of the story together. I don't know how she wrote such a long book and managed to not get anything mixed up herself.

I found this book very familiar to Dead to You by Lisa McMann in that the mystery of finding out who the main character was in his past life - really grabbed me and made me want to keep reading. There is so much that maybe Hank could know about if he'd just let himself remember but it's too hard for him to think about

and nearly falls apart many times when he does. Several times he has breakdowns and it was just...incredibly moving.

I can't imagine being in Hank's situation. It's no wonder he finds comfort in Henry David Thoreau, the only thing he has left of his former life.

One of the best things about this book is finding out about such a classic author from a character like this, and in a story like this. Not only about his life, but so many of the words from his books, and the little things that maybe not everybody knows about.

I would have liked to see a little more happening with "Hank's" family at the end of the story. Everything came together a little bit too quickly for me there, but overall a definite recommendation from me. If you like stories about runaways, amnesia, and classics, then you should pick up this book!

** As reviewed on One A Day Y.A.

karen says

i don't know why i am even bothering to write this, since the best thoreau-related book review has already been written, but i will try.

this book is not about thoreau. not directly.

it is about a boy who wakes up in penn station with no memory of who he is or where he has come from. all he has is ten dollars and a copy of *walden*, which one of new york's more colorful homeless individuals immediately tries to eat.

not a great day.

so, he doesn't know who he is, but he's got a strange feeling that he is on the run, since when he comes near some police officers, his body has a strange reaction. so instead of trying to figure anything out right away, he joins up with a teenage runaway named jack and his sister nessa, calling himself "henry david" (like the author of the book!!which is a better name than "ten dollars") until he can make a better plan.

while with them, something violent occurs, so henry (now "hank"), now seriously *injured* follows jack to what is supposed to be a safe haven, but is, if anything, worse than what has happened so far. so, escape part two is necessary.

ugh. the days are getting worse.

and hank still doesn't have his memory back, although he has discovered that he *does* have a photographic memory, which is nice. and ironic.

with the photographic part of his memory, he is able to memorize pretty much all of *walden*, and that's where he goes when he makes his grand escape from new york, leaving jack and nessa behind.

once in concord (don't worry, i am not going to do too much more plot-regurgitation), he meets a girl named hailey and a tattooed biker-librarian named thomas, and tries to piece together the bits of his past, while both hallucinating the presence of the *real* henry david, and trying to emulate him in ways.

i am pretty keen on amnesia-fiction, so i liked this one, even though its secrets aren't too hard to guess. i also like photographic-memory stories, and am jealous every time a character has one. cam jansen anyone? "click?" never worked for me.

this is part mystery novel, part healing novel. as hank slowly starts to remember his past, he also has to deal with what he finds there, and that is a stronger storyline than the actual mystery-part. i enjoyed the story of a character trying to escape, trying to start over, and eventually, trying to accept.

all through good old thoreau.

oh, which is another thing i like: books that might lead young readers to other books. learning!

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

NetGalley ARC. Thank you, NetGalley!

2.5 Stars

A 17-year old boy wakes up at Penn Station with no memory. All he knows is he has \$10 in his pocket, along with a copy of Thoreau's *Walden*. Rather than confessing his bizarre story, he chooses to introduce himself as Henry David when he meets a kid named Jack who seems to know his way around the train station. Venturing out to the mean streets, he is nicknamed "Hank" by Jack and his sister, Nessa. The three soon run into trouble and "Hank" decides to leave the city and go to Walden Pond. He can think of no reason for him to be carrying the book unless that was his initial destination and the way to find an answer that will cure his amnesia.

The idea behind this novel is decent and original. Something horrible has happened and "Hank" is suffering from amnesia. The journey to Walden Pond is good, the piecing back together of his memories is interesting. Unfortunately, it's just reeeaaaaaally far-fetched in that "Hank's" memories return, but luckily he has been taken in by an ultra cool hipster who is more than willing to let him continue to hang for a few days before figuring out how to get him back to his real life. Really, brother? That would be called **kidnapping**. There's also a girl storyline (of course there's a girl, right?) which is fine, but then we add in a random talent show and it all gets a bit convoluted. You can definitely do worse when it comes to YA novels, but you can do a lot better too.

Oh, if by chance you're wondering the answer to "What Would Henry David Do?" – apparently he would sing "Blackbird" at a talent show rather than deal with reality.

"Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly
All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these sunken eyes and learn to see
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to be free.

Blackbird fly Blackbird fly
Into the light of the dark black night.”

Rachel Sharpe says

Summary: A boy wakes up at Penn Station without his memory. His only clue is a copy of *Walden*, which a crazy man just tried to eat. In the absence of a name, the boy calls himself “Henry David” and sets off on a quest to discover his past.

Along the way, he meets the runaway twins caught up with a drug lord, a former convict turned reference librarian and Thoreau enthusiast, and a diabetic girl with a beautiful voice turned love interest. (Yup, that’s right. A guy with no memory gets a girlfriend before he even knows his own name. Cuz that’s smart.)

But despite Henry’s quest for answers, he can’t stop running away. Will he ever face the past?

Review: One of the best parts about memory loss books is that the reader can discover the character as the character is rediscovering him/herself. Armistead never gave me that chance. She focused so much on adrenaline-packed scenes (knife fights, drug dealers, near-death-situations) that I never got to discover Henry as a fully fleshed out character. He’s totally flat.

Not to mention, after reading a lot of romance-y books, I was kind of excited for a dark and gritty tale about lost memories and the past. Unfortunately, what follows is a high school love triangle, complete with a Battle of the Bands and the boy next door. Obviously.

I do have to give Armistead some credit, though. I really appreciated her characterization of Henry’s memories as a “black beast” and the physical pain he felt while trying to access them. But even that characterization can’t save a lackluster book.

Final Verdict: The book promises what it can’t deliver, which is an unforgivable sin in the book world. And that’s what frustrates me about the book. It promised me a gripping tale of reclaiming lost memories, but all I got was a diluted romance with some far-fetched action.

Side Note: Why did the publisher categorize this as a children's book on Netgalley? It's not even close.

Thanks to Netgalley for the copy.

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

I will now tell you bad, bad things about this book. If you're uncomfortable with me telling you such things, you'd best look away 'cause it's about to start. Consider yourselves warned.

Being Henry David is a very ambitious project. I believe it was supposed to be a deep, cathartic experience, a heart-wrenching story about a young man unable to face the consequences of his actions. At least I think that's what Cal Armistead set out to write. What she actually wrote, in my humble opinion, is an aimless novel with no real emotion or depth.

I always try to balance things out in my negative reviews and I don't particularly enjoy being this harsh, especially when writing about a debut author's work, but after careful consideration, I've decided it's best to be painfully honest and let you come to your own conclusions.

A boy wakes up at the New York Penn Station with no memories and no possessions whatsoever. The only thing he has on him is a book, *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, and he decides it's some kind of a clue. He names himself Henry David, Hank, and starts hanging out with two street kids, Jack and Nessa. After an incident that could put them all in jail, Hank leaves New York to go to Concord, Massachusetts where he wants to explore Walden Pond and Thoreau's way of life.

I consider telling the cops that I'm lost, and can't remember who I am. Maybe they can help me. But there's that thing in my chest like a brick wall that says this would be a terrible idea. Some fuzzy instinct me it's not safe to go to the police. Fuzzy instinct isn't much to go on, but it's all I have. I decide to trust it.

Apparently, it has become very popular to write novels that lean heavily on another novel or author, usually a classic. (How very postmodern of you, Ms. Armistead!) In this case, Henry David Thoreau was on every page, both through his work and his life. Hank dreamed about him, hallucinated him, followed his movements, and thanks to his photographic memory, he quoted him at every turn. There were, at times, more H.D. Thoreau quotes than actual text and they swallowed this story whole and suffocated it in the process.

The romance, slight as it was, felt almost like an afterthought, added somewhere along the line because some editor said so. I could be wrong, of course, but I don't think it was there from the start. That entire subplot was this book's weakest link, unnecessary, unconvincing and maybe even a bit silly. I've seen this so many times, almost every time a female author writes from a male perspective about a female love interest. It just doesn't click.

Being Henry David offers no closure, no real resolution. Quite a few secondary characters are left right in the middle of a very dire situation, without so much as a hint about their fate. Instead of a proper ending, a strange, dream-like scene concludes the book, all wrapped up in far too many Thoreau quotes, of course. It's a pity, really, because Cal Armistead is not an untalented author. She has a wonderful understanding of her characters, but she mostly just lets them wander around aimlessly.

Better luck next time, I guess. For all of us.

Hana Bilqisthi says

Jadi meskipun hidupmu berantakan, kau akan mempertahankannya hanya karena ini bukan hal yang asing bagimu?

Being Henry David adalah buku yang membuatmu merenung tentang kehidupan. Saat membaca kalimat di atas, aku merasa tersindir dan mengakui ada kebenaran dalam kalimat tersebut mengingat aku termasuk tipe yang nyaman dengan rutinitas dan seringkali memilih bertahan hanya karena hal tersebut familiar bagiku. Membaca Being Henry David mengajarkanku untuk berani pergi dan berubah dari hal yang tidak baik bagiku, meskipun perubahan adalah sesuatu yang asing dan cukup menakutkan.

Review lengkap dan mengandung spoiler bisa baca di blog <https://hanabilqisthi.wordpress.com/2...>

Matilda says

GIVEAWAY on our blog: ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A COPY OF BEING HENRY DAVID
- <http://characterized.blogspot.com/201...>

What I Liked:

If you've ever had that one person you can always confide in, that one place you can go to clear your head of all the hectic thoughts flying around your mind or even that one action you can perform that makes everything seem ... not worth all the hassle; then you're like Henry David - or in this case, Hank. Being Henry David was about a teenage guy named Hank. One day, Hank wakes up in Penn Station around midnight with little to no memory of who he is, where he is, or how he got there; the only thing he's able to truly claim as his is a copy of Walden by Henry David. Throughout the novel, Hank struggles with his identity, as well as, memories and feelings that arise pertaining to his past. These feelings and memories lead him closer to who he used to be. But when you can't look back, or look left or right for help, the only way to move, is forward. And who better to help him on his journey than Henry David?

I loved the frustration and eagerness that Armistead was able to portray in Hank's character. He was so close to the truth, yet so far. Each time he conjured up something from his past, he'd evidently hit this brick wall. The fact that his frustration was able to be felt by me, was proof of the amazing job Armistead did in developing Hank. Although Being Henry David was a contemporary novel, I found it oddly thrilling. In a way, Hank lives his life on the edge! Normal people start off their day where they left off yesterday, but for Hank, it was a clean slate every day. Not knowing where he was going, and who he'd be going with was an aspect that I grew to love about Being Henry David. What I loved about Armistead's writing was the perspective in which the reader (ME) is given. Hank was cautious, yet confident, lonely, but strong. As he builds new relationships, and establishes trust, Hank's thoughts are shown to be hilariously analytic and a bit judgmental.

What I Didn't Like

I didn't dislike this aspect of the plot, but I wasn't sure what to think of the fact that Hank was having conversations with the dead author of *Walden*, Henry David.

To read or not to read? (Sum-up)

Being Henry David was a thought-provoking, contemporary YA novel that will thrust you into the life of Hank, a far-from-average teenage guy, working a little harder to work toward remembering who he is. This tale of rediscovery sprinkled with a whole lot of spontaneity will make readers question what it really means to live.

Graham says

I admit to a certain amount of trepidation at reading *Being Henry David*, by Cal Armistead. I am not a fan of Thoreau; I like the political attitude of civil disobedience he espoused, and his natural descriptions are compelling, but his "wouldn't it all be nicer if we just lived more simply" philosophy frankly irritates me. Sure, let's try that if we're not a relatively well-off white man in good health and see how it works out. Another cause for nervousness is that I really like YA books, and have read mostly award winning, excellent authors -- Dianne Wynne Jones, Susan Cooper, John Christopher. If I was a novelist I wouldn't want my first book to be read by me.

Bottom line: BHD won me over. Thoreau is there -- indeed he permeates the book -- but philosophy is not the order of the day. The protagonist, Hank, is not content to abandon life's complexities; indeed part of his journey is to accept that you have a duty to society, to the people that love you -- that life is complex and that makes it good. Maybe it's my bias, but I see Thoreau as a temptation that he needs to resist. It's hard to be clearer without heavy spoiler alerts, but I feel the resolution at the end of the book makes that plain to the reader. And, after all, isn't the amnesia he starts with the ultimate in simplicity? Not only no physical baggage, but no mental luggage either? And that is what he fights against and struggles with -- the driving force in the book.

On the other hand, the aspects of Thoreau I do appreciate stand out in the book: Cal writes cleanly and evocatively, with descriptions that are natural and relevant -- no forced metaphors here that will make you wince. Aptly, the natural descriptions are particularly good; "leaves and pine needles and pebbles crunch in a cadence under my sneakers, lulling me into a comfortable trance". The p's and c's direct the rhythm, with the initial l's join the two thoughts. The long syllables of "comfortable" and the single long one of "trance" support the text, slowing the reader into their own comfortable contemplation. Good stuff.

Dream sequences are hard to pull off and so, again, it is apt as well as refreshing to see them used so well here. They are written with a definite oddity to them, but the style of writing does not change, so the reader feels some of the confusion of the dreamer, who does not know his dreams are not real. The dreams also serve dramatic purpose, often driving Hank forward, even by the mere fact that people can tell his dreams are troubled. They are not parenthetical, which is refreshing.

The protagonist is a boy -- a man, really, and it isn't easy writing inner monologue against gender. This makes little difference to the book, as although this is a story of self-discovery, it's not a journey that is about becoming a man, but becoming a person. There is romance and it is handled well, but for an eighteen year old boy, I might have expected a little more evidence of his gender in his internal thoughts.

Honestly, apart from this and a few clichés early on (of the "heart-pounding" and "clenched jaws" variety)

the style is very assured, compelling and readable. I am happy to add this to the YA shelf in my library, where it will find the company quite companionable, I should think.

Aya Murning says

Saat terbangun di Stasiun Penn, ‘Hank’ tidak bisa mengingat siapa dirinya, siapa namanya, bagaimana wajahnya, dari mana asalnya, di mana rumahnya, dan mengapa dia ada di sana? Ia sama sekali tidak ingat apa-apa. Yang ia punya hanya pakaian yang dikenakannya, uang sejumlah \$10 di kantungnya, dan sebuah buku berjudul ‘Walden’ yang tergeletak di dekat bangkunya.

“Orang lain mungkin akan menyerah, melangkah pergi dan membeli buku. Tapi, orang lain tidak muncul begitu saja di sebuah stasiun kereta tanpa kartu identitas dan barang bawaan. Tanpa ingatan, bahkan tanpa sebuah nama. Hanya ada sebuah buku. Buku yang mungkin mengandung petunjuk...” – hlm. 8

Ia mengasumsikan buku itu adalah miliknya karena sedang berada di dekatnya. Hank mengira bahwa mungkin di buku itu bisa ditemukan petunjuk tentang dirinya. Meski sempat bergulat untuk merebut buku itu dari orang gila di Stasiun Penn, Hank berhasil mendapatkannya lagi.

“Bagaimana jika ingatanmu tidak pernah kembali? Kurasa aku punya dua pilihan: Menciptakan hidup tanpa masa lalu, memulainya di sini dan sekarang. Atau pergi ke Departemen Polisi Concord dan menyerahkan diri.” – hlm. 151

Apa saja yang ia lalui selama ia lupa ingatan? Akankah ia berhasil mengingat kembali jati dirinya?

Sejak kalimat pertama, aku bisa langsung merasakan diriku ikut masuk sebagai lelaki amnesia ini yang awalnya menamai dirinya sebagai Henry David—nama itu ia ambil dari nama pengarang buku ‘Walden’ yang sejak tadi dipegangnya. Penggunaan POV 1 di mana penulis sebagai ‘aku’ memang sangat tepat untuk novel ini.

Sebuah perjalanan yang sangat unikmatu bagaimana Hank melewati masa-masanya sebagai orang tanpa identitas. Lebih dipersulit keadaannya ketika ia tak bisa mengingat apa pun tentang dirinya. Sebagai remaja yang rawan dengan rasa bimbang dan niat kabur sebagai pelarian, aku juga mampu merasakan itu semua.

Ending yang cukup menyentuh, menurutku. Hanya saja terasa begitu cepat terselesaikan. Tadinya aku mengharapkan ada scene yang lebih dramatis, tapi ya tidak apa-apa. Tetap ada kesan khusus yang melekat di benakku melalui jalan ceritanya. Melalui kisah ini aku seperti berkaca tentang diriku pada 6 atau 7 tahun yang lalu. Suddenly I shed my tears when I remember all those hard times.

Thank you, Hank, for your memorable story!

Review selengkapnya bisa dibaca di sini
<https://murniaya.wordpress.com/2016/1...>

Jessica says

What an amazing work of art, especially for a debut novel! This book had me sucked in for every single page right up until the end. I can't remember a protagonist I've so closely related to, even though our life experiences have been very different. I felt like I was in his head, thinking his thoughts and feelings his feelings. I do wish the ending provided more answers, especially as far as Nessa and Jack.

Carmen says

This was a good book. It reminded me of the movie DANNY DECKCHAIR, because, in this book as well as in that movie, a man lands into a life that he creates for himself, falls in love, and defends his love from a jealous rival.

However, there is a big age difference. Danny in DANNY DECKCHAIR is running away from a bad marriage. He doesn't have amnesia and he lands in a new town, falls for the woman who rescues him (a police officer) and stuns the town with his new and bold ideas. Danny in Being Henry David is running away from something...but he doesn't know what. His memory is being violently guarded by a black beast. He doesn't know his name, where he comes from, who his family is, or anything. He also starts over in a new town, joining a Battle of the Bands and dating a local girl. She has a jealous ex-boyfriend/childhood friend and Danny goes all "Is this guy bothering you, Hailey?" on the dude.

He's also homeless. He tries sleeping in the woods, sleeping in the library, etc. but finally gets caught because he has an infection from a knife wound he got on the mean streets of NYC.

I like that Danny has a close relationship with nature. He uses nature to clear his head and think about things.

This book is a LITTLE cheesy - but just a little. You know...tattooed ex-con librarian with a heart of gold, good-looking teenager who runs, quotes Thoreau from memory and plays a mean guitar. Girl who is shy about singing onstage even though she is amazing because she had a bad past experience.

Danny treats his girl right, and I like that. He's respectful and caring and listens to her even though he's got tons of problems of his own. He stands up for her, tries to protect her, and always has her back. He's not pushy and let's her make her own decisions.

I liked the way this book came together. Danny piecing together pieces of his past. Danny learning about the dirty, desperate world of the homeless. Danny struggling to remember who he really is. Everything comes together nicely in the end. It is a happy ending, but not one that's too sappy.

Shannon says

With the exception of a few notable authors (hey John Green!), I've grown increasingly frustrated with YA fiction over the past few years. Instead of highlighting different themes with the same depth as adult literature, the genre is regularly filled with haphazardly tossed together series hoping to cash in on this year's hot setting.

Now, I've always seen Henry David Thoreau as pretty hip, though I think I tend to be in the minority. Either way, he's probably not lighting fires in YA circles any time soon - but that's exactly what makes Cal Armistead's *Being Henry David* so refreshing. Rather than centering on a tale of mismatched love or some grand future, this is a story about finding yourself and forgiveness. The fact that it's told from a male perspective is even better, as it's much more difficult to find books that appeal to young male readers.

This will be one that deserves a place on high school and classroom library shelves, I hope that it's seen through the hundreds of other YA releases this year.

Cal Armistead says

Excellent book! But then again, I wrote it... (Hey, if I don't believe in my book 100%, how can I expect anyone else to?) :)

Sinta Nisfuanna says

“Sekalipun luka di bagian sampingku berdenyut setiap kali kakiku menginjak tanah, lari rasanya menyenangkan. Melarikan diri. Seakan aku sedang meloloskan diri dari sesuatu yang menyeramkan dan berlari kepada sesuatu yang lebih baik.” (h.49)

Terbangun dalam kondisi tidak mengenali diri sendiri, bukan sesuatu yang menyenangkan. ‘Aku’ tidak tahu apa yang terjadi hingga dirinya terdampar di Stasiun Penn, New York. Hanya sebuah buku *Walden* karya Henry David Thoreau yang berada di sampingnya dan uang senilai 10 dolar di kantong. Ingatan tentang dirinya sama sekali tidak ada, hanya kekosongan yang memenuhi benaknya. Harapannya bertumpu pada ‘harta’ satu-satunya, sebuah buku yang bisa mengungkap siapa dirinya.

‘Aku’ memutuskan menggunakan nama ‘Henry’ setiap kali melakukan pengenalan. Pertemuannya dengan Jack dan Nessa, hampir menjerumuskannya pada Magpie, seorang Bandar narkoba. Keputusan melarikan diri dari Magpie, mengarahkan pelariannya ke Concord, Massachusset, tempat Danau Walden berada. Buku Henry David ini sangat penting baginya, sepanjang perjalanan ‘Henry’ membaca dan mencoba mencari petunjuk.

“Kesimpulanku---jika aku benar--- Thoreau lelah dengan peradaban dan bagaimana orang-orang menjadi budak terhadap rumah-rumah bodoh dan harta benda mereka sendiri. Guna membuktikan bahwa dia bisa menjadi lebih bahagia tanpa hal-hal itu, dia hidup sesederhana mungkin dan pergi untuk tinggal di hutan. Kedengarannya dia benar-benar bahagia dan damai ketika dia di hutan seperti itu, tinggal di tepi danau. Pasti menyenangkan.” (h.61)

‘Henry’ banyak berbicara dengan diri sendiri dan imajinasinya. Mengais-ngais isi kepala demi mendapatkan secercah ingatan, hingga imajinasi mempertemukannya dengan bayangan Henry David di bekas kabin tempat tinggal si penulis yang telah hancur. Henry David sendiri adalah tokoh yang sangat diagungkan di Concord, bahkan beberapa tempat mengabadikan namanya. *“Karya paling terkenal Thoreau berjudul Walden, or Life in the Woods adalah sebuah buku berdasarkan kisah hidupnya selama 2 tahun di Walden Pond di tanah Ralph Waldo Emerson. Dia membangun sebuah rumah kecil untuk dia tinggal pada tahun 1845-1847. Setelah pengalaman tersebut, dia menghabiskan waktu selama 9 tahun untuk menulis buku*

tersebut.” (Wikipedia)

Sisi romansa hadir dengan pertemuan ‘Henry’ dengan Hailey saat menuju Danau Walden di belakang sekolah Hailey. Rasa yang melenakan, terkadang membuatnya tak ingin mengetahui masa lalunya. Menghadirkan kebimbangan, menghiraukan masa lalu dan keinginan memulai hidup baru. *“Aku kembali ke Danau Walden keesokan pagi. Aku ditarik ke sana, seolah-olah mungkin inilah tempat aku bisa menemukan jawaban. Hal yang sulit, mengingat aku bahkan tidak yakin apa pertanyaannya.”* (h. 101) Namun, ingatan tentang darah dan adiknya yang terluka membuatnya bertahan untuk mencari ingatan dan menyelamatkan adiknya.

“Bagaimana jika ingatanmu tidak pernah kembali? Kurasa aku punya dua pilihan: Menciptakan hidup tanpa masa lalu, memulainya di sini dan sekarang. Atau pergi ke Departemen Polisi Concord dan menyerahkan diri. Mereka akan menghubungi media dan memasukkanku ke dalam berita, dan akhirnya seseorang akan melihatku dan mengenalku. Aku akan dibawa pulang kepada orangtua yang tak kuingat, kepada hidup yang sepertinya kujauhi. Hanya jika mereka menginginkanku kembali.” (h. 151)

Kekalutan terus membayangi, hingga ingatan pun akhirnya hadir membawa kesedihan. Pelarian diri terus menjadi pilihan yang tidak dapat dihiraukan. Pikiran ‘Henry’ kesakitan mengingat penderitaan adiknya, rasa bersalah yang begitu besar, ternyata menjadi penyebab ingatannya tertutup. Kenyataan yang ternyata memang ingin dia hapus selamanya. Usaha yang menggiringnya pada pertemuan dan pemikiran tentang hidup yang mendalam.

“Semuanya menjadikan pilihan nomor satu sebagai yang terbaik: menciptakan hidupku sendiri, sesuai keinginanku, seperti yang Thoreau lakukan.” (h. 151)

Saya suka bagian menjelang akhir cerita, saat ‘Henry’ memutuskan mendaki Gunung Katahdin dalam pelariannya. Akhir dimana dia mulai mencerna kembali ingatan dan perjalanan yang sudah ditempuhnya sejauh ini. Buku ini mengandung filsafat meski ringan dengan keseharian remaja dan saya suka bagaimana penulis konsisten mempertahankan karakter tokohnya dengan baik.

“Aku berlari sejauh mungkin. Berlari dari padang rumput di Illinois ke New York dan ke Concord, Massachusetts. Melarikan diri dari orangtuaku dan dari Magpie. Pada dasarnya, aku mencoba melarikan diri dari apa yang telah kulakukan. Tapi perbuatan mengikutiku ke mana pun aku pergi, bahkan mengikutiku hingga ke puncak gunung ini.” (h. 270)

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