

CONFLICT IN JOHN RONALD REUEL TOLKIEN'S NOVEL *LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING*

El Nitari Daeli, M. Manugeran

Faculty of Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara
Medan, Indonesia
E-mail: nitaridaeli@gmail.com

Received: 2024-02-28

Accepted: 2024-04-16

Published: 2024-05-15

Abstract

This study explores the intricate conflicts experienced by the protagonist in J. R. R. Tolkien's epic masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Focused primarily on internal and external conflicts, the narrative follows a fellowship of nine individuals united by their quest to destroy the malevolent Ring, possessed by the dark lord Sauron, in the fiery depths of Mount Doom. Throughout their journey, the protagonist grapples with multifaceted challenges, providing rich material for analysis. Employing a literary psychological approach, this study draws upon Kenney's theory of conflict typologies to explore the protagonist's inner turmoil and the adversities encountered externally. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method, the research meticulously examines these conflicts to unveil their profound significance within the narrative. The findings of the study underscore the protagonist's dual struggle, comprising internal and external conflicts. Internally, the protagonist contends with the classic conflict of man versus himself, navigating doubts, fears, and moral dilemmas. Externally, a complex web of conflicts unfolds, encompassing interpersonal clashes (man versus man), societal discord (man versus society), and the formidable forces of nature (man versus nature). By dissecting these conflicts, the study illuminates the psychological and narrative depths of Tolkien's work, revealing the protagonist's arduous journey as a reflection of universal human struggles against both inner demons and external adversities.

Keywords: conflict; conflict typologies; external conflict; internal conflict

1. Introduction

One of the most popular literary works of the 20th century is the fictional novel written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien or J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973). When he was young, little Tolkien was very fond of Red Indians as well as fantasy novels by George MacDonald, and Andrew Lang's Fairy Books which later influenced his work. Tolkien was fond of creating fantasy stories to entertain his children. He wrote the annual Christmas letters from Mr. Christmas to them. He constructed a series of short stories, the latter of which was collected and published as *The Father Christmas Letters*.

Tolkien originally intended *The Lord of the Rings* as a children's story like *The Hobbit*, but his story was soon made more and more bleak and more serious so that a new work was created, namely the novel *The Lord of the Rings* consisting of three novels, *The Fellowship of The Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *Return the King*, released in 1954-1955. *The Fellowship of The Ring* is the first book that talks about the beginning of a friendship consisting of nine people who have the same goal of destroying the ring owned by the king of darkness, Sauron on the Mount Doom. The second book, *The Two Towers*, tells the story of the journey of the nine ring bearers to Mordor; and the third book entitled *Return the King* talks about the struggle and success of the characters in carrying and destroying the ring belonging to the dark king at Mount Doom. On the way to destroy the ring, the protagonist goes through various forms of conflicts.

In this study, the researchers raise one of the novels of *The Lord of The Ring: The Fellowship of The Ring* as a research object that specifically analyzes the protagonist's conflicts because the novel provides moral values to the readers to stay afloat and never give up in the face of problems or conflicts. In real life, conflict is something that cannot be avoided and we have to face it because every problem requires survival; just like what Tolkien describes in the novel *The Fellowship of The Ring*, where the protagonist faces many problems in completing the tasks assigned to him. The conflicts he faces does not make him give up. He continues to fight until he finally manages to complete the task, which is to destroy the ring belonging to the dark king at Mount Doom.

This study is conducted by using literary psychology approach. Literary psychology is inseparable from literary works because literary work in general is a product of thought. There is a close correlation between literature and psychology, both are concerned with the treatment of people and their reactions, experiences, perceptions of the world, desires, fears, and their conflicts. Literary psychology is a literary study that focuses on the psychological activities of characters in a literary work, the author and even the readers as connoisseurs of literary works.

The objectives of the study are to identify the types of conflict experienced by the protagonist in the novel *The Fellowship of The Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien and to analyze how the types of conflict experienced by the protagonist are revealed in the novel.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Psychology of Literature

The focus of the study is concerned with conflicts and a conflict is a part of personality process; therefore the approach used to conduct the analysis is psychology of literature. The psychological approach leads most directly to the substantial amplification of the meaning of literary works. Discussing psychology and its place in literary works, is studying the author's imagination. Since all literary works are based on some kind of experience, and since all writers are human, we need to be caught up in a wide spectrum of emotional problems caused by experience.

Aras (2015:251-253) states that there are several definitions of literary psychology based on the subject of research:

1. Psychology of literature studies the psychology of the author as an individual. It means that a writer is a human being who cannot be separated from the nature of desire and emotion. Based on his passion and emotional background he can create a literary works.
2. Psychology of literature studies the creative process. It means that this study looks

at how the process of a work can be made into a whole literary work.

3. Psychology of literature studies the types and principles of psychology applied to literary works. It means that this study looks at how topics and cases in psychology are applied in the character of literary works.
4. Psychology of literature studies the influence of literary works on the reader. It means that this study sees the influence of literary work on the reader, whether it affects the way of thinking and the way of life of the reader or not.

Therefore, psychology is a science that investigates and studies behavior or activities as manifestations of mental life. Literary psychology is a result of the author's psyche which is expressed in the form of literary works. Literary psychology is a branch of literary science that approaches literary works from the point of view of psychology. According to Endraswara (2013:96) literary psychology is a literary study that views literary works as psychiatric activities. Psychology and literature are sciences that both study about human beings. Therefore, psychology and literature are related to humans and society. Attention can be directed to the author, reader, and viewer or to literary texts (Miller, et al, 2018: 669–680).

From the brief note above, it is seen that literary psychology approach can be interpreted as a way of analysis based on a psychological point of view departing from the assumption that literary works always discuss the events of human life. The function of psychology is to carry out the inner and soul deepening carried out on the characters, especially the main character and to know more about the ins and outs of human actions and their responses. Literary psychology is also to study and understand the psychiatric aspects that exist in a literary work; however, it does not mean that literary analysis is independent of public relations. At its core, literary works provide an indirect understanding of psychology through the study of the characters.

By means of literary psychology approach, the types of conflicts are to be revealed and analyzed in the novel are: internal and external conflict. Internal conflict consists of the conflict between man vs himself; external conflict consists of conflict between man vs. man, man vs. society and man vs. nature.

2.2 Conflict

Everyone can face various conflicts for very different reasons. As a human being one must be able to get rid of numerous conflicts. The concept of conflict, because of its ubiquity and pervasive nature, has acquired a multitude of meanings and connotations, presenting us with nothing short of semantic jungle. (Omisore and Abiodun, 2014:118; Endaswara, 2013). Wherever one falls on this continuum of viewpoints concerning conflict, seldom would one expect to be in a continual state of conflict as the basis for employment (Soekanto, 2017; Melati, 2019). Conflict also can happen in one individual against himself, and this conflict is when the character experiences some kind of inner conflict (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 122; Emre, 2019: 56).

2.2.1 Type of Conflict

Kenney (1966: 5) states that there are two types of conflicts, internal and external conflicts. Internal conflict occurs within one person or conflict between an idea; while external conflict occurs between man and man, man and nature, and man and society.

2.2.1.1 Internal Conflict

One type of conflict is known as an internal conflict. The conflicts of each person are also reflected in the story. The story is also about one man's conflict. According to Kenney (2019: 19) conflicts that arise within an individual are called internal conflicts.

2.2.1.1.1 Man vs. Self

Man vs. Self is an internal conflict, a conflict between a character and his own mind. Internal conflict exists inside the character; struggles with morality, fate, desire and belief. Internal conflict happens when a person has his or her own dilemma and he or she does not know what to do. The significant internal conflicts cover anxiety and desire. Anxiety is considered a part of everyday life. Anxiety is a feeling that is general in nature, where a person feels fear or loss of self-confidence that is not clear (Sutardjo, 2005: 66). Anxiety is a response to certain situation that threatens and is a normal thing to happen accompanying developments, changes, new experiences or that have never been done, and in finding self-identity and meaning of life. Desire in general is something related to impulses that encourage us to tend or feel attracted to people, objects, activities or it can be an effective experience stimulated by the activity itself (Abror, 1993; Antonius, 2002). Desire is also a continuous attitude that promotes a person's attention, thus making himself selective about the object of interest.

2.2.1.2 External Conflict

According to Kenney (1966:5), an external conflict is a form of fight, argument, disagreement, or only opposition in which two sides are present. In addition to internal conflict, conflicts between men, conflicts between society and men, men and nature are also reflected in a work of literature. The tragic vision presented is man in conflict with other forces greater than himself.

External conflict is a struggle between a character and an outside force. Example of external conflict is characters may face several types of outside forces. Types of external conflict are such as: man versus man, man versus nature, man versus society, and so on.

2.2.1.2.1 Man vs. Man

Man versus man is the most fundamental type of external conflict. This form of external conflict occurs when a character struggles against another character. These struggles may be born from moral, religious or social differences, and may be emotional, verbal or physical conflicts (Kenny, 1966; Chandra, 1992).

2.2.1.2.2 Man vs. Nature

Man versus nature occurs when a character or other characters find themselves at odds with forces of nature. This conflict can be about when a character faces resistance from a specific element of nature in achieving their goals. This can mean the weather, the wilderness, or a natural disaster (Kenny, 1966; Alfarizi, 2022: 21).

2.2.1.2.3 Man vs. Society

This external conflict exists when a character stand up to support his beliefs and struggle against the social forces. Man versus society is the form of conflict often represented by a person who is an outcast and tries to break the normal rules of the

society established (Kenny, 1966; Afina, 2005).

3. Research Method

The research is conducted by means of descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals of groups that describe a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009:232). The data source in this research is the novel *The Fellowship of The Ring* novel by J.R.R. Tolkien and the data are taken from the text in the novel that describe the conflicts experienced by the protagonist. The secondary data sources are also taken from various references that reflect either internal or external conflict.

The technique for collecting data is documentary technique. Documentation is the act of looking for data which concerns with matters such as note, book, newspaper, magazine, transcript, and agenda (Arikunto, 2002:206). The steps of data collection procedures are as follows: finding the data concerning conflicts in *The Fellowship of The Ring* novel, identifying the protagonist's conflicts in the novel and selecting the data related to the aims of the study. The next step is data analysis procedures. Data analysis is the process whereby the researchers systematically search and arrange the data in order to increase their understanding of the data and to enable them to present what they learn (Ary, et al, 2005:465). Therefore, there are steps to be conducted by the researchers to analyze the data: reading *The Fellowship of The Ring* novel, analyzing the data based on the internal and external conflict, describing the data descriptively and making conclusions.

4. Discussion

4.1 Internal Conflict

A conflict happening within a single man is called 'internal conflict'. Internal conflict is a conflict that occurs in the heart, soul of a character.

4.1.1 Man vs Self

Man Vs Self conflict is a conflict that starts from within a person. In this novel, a man vs self-conflict occurs in the protagonist, Frodo Baggins. The trouble in him is caused by the ring left by his uncle Bilbo. The ring belongs to the dark lord, Sauron, at Mount Doom. The conflict that arises in him is anxiety and there is a strong desire in him to destroy the ring.

4.1.1.1 Anxiety

The anxiety experienced by the protagonist, Frodo Baggins, begins when Gandalf says that the ring belongs to the long-lost king of darkness that has been found and brought into a dark cave by Gollum.

'But this is terrible!' cried Frodo. 'Far worse than the worst that I imagined from your hints and warnings. O Gandalf, best of friends, what am I to do? For now, I am really afraid. What am I to do? What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!' (Tolkien, 1954:80).

Here we can see that Frodo is anxious about something that will happen to him as a result of Bilbo's actions to steal the ring from Gollum. Gollum is a disgusting creature who discovers the ring before being taken by Bilbo Baggins. At that moment Bilbo gets lost in the cave which makes him meet Gollum who wants to help him get

out of the cave by answering the challenge of the puzzle from Gollum.

The puzzle is won by Bilbo and Gollum occupies his promise to lead Bilbo out of the cave which turns out that Bilbo has taken the ring found by Gollum. Gollum also realizes that his valuable thing is lost. He also leads Bilbo with a cry of hatred and despair of his enemies: *thieves, thieves! Baggins! We hate you guys forever!*. This incident makes Frodo Baggins worried about Gollum's revenge against the Baggins.

'There are hobbits in Bree,' said Merry, 'as well as Big Folk. I dare say it will be homelike enough. The Pony is a good inn by all accounts. My people ride out there now and again. It may be all we could wish,' said Frodo; 'but it is outside the Shire all the same. Don't make yourselves too much at home! Please remember -all of you – that the name of Baggins must NOT be mentioned. I am Mr. Underhill, if any name must be given.

(Tolkien, 1954: 182).

He reminds his friends not to mention Baggins by name if anyone asks his name and calls him by the call of Mr. Underhill. Hiding his real name is one of his ways to remove his traces of Sauron's right-hand men and also removes his traces of Gollum who is also hunting for the ring as well as Hobbit Baggins. Hobbit is supposed to take the ring.

4.1.1.2 Desire

Desiring is a state of mind that is generally associated with a number of different effects: a person with a desire tends to act in a certain way, feel in a certain way, and think in a certain way. In addition to anxiety, Frodo also has a conflict with himself which gives rise to his strong desire to destroy the ring after he hears that the ring is very dangerous.

'I do really wish to destroy it!' cried Frodo. 'Or, well, to have it destroyed. I am not made for perilous quests. I wish I had never seen the Ring! Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?

(Tolkien, 1954:83).

Frodo wants to destroy the ring that Bilbo has left him. Frodo is a very affectionate child towards people living in the Shire. He does not want the Shire residents to be in danger just because of the ring. He wants to save his family and everyone who lives in Shire by destroying the ring. He realizes that destroying the ring is not easy, there are many obstacles he has to face. But the longer he keeps it he will really be in danger.

...But in the mean while it seems that I am a danger, a danger to all that live near me. I cannot keep the Ring and stay here. I ought to leave Bag End, leave the Shire, leave everything and go away.' He sighed. I should like to save the Shire, if I could

– though there have been times when I thought the inhabitants too stupid and dull for words, and have felt that an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them. But I don't feel like that now. I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, ...uprooted, and well – desperate. The Enemy is so strong and terrible.

(Tolkien, 1954: 84).

Frodo's desire to destroy the ring grows stronger because he realizes that he will be a source of danger to those around him and where he lives, Shire. His fear grows because the strength of the enemy who chases the ring is very strong compared to himself who is a Hobbit and who does not have any strength. Having a desire to destroy the ring and wanting to save the people in the Shire, he decides to take the ring away from the Shire accompanied by three other Hobbits to the pony lodge in Bree as ordered by Gandalf.

4.2 External Conflict

External conflict is a struggle between a character and an outside force. External conflict manifests itself as man versus man, man versus nature, and man versus society.

4.2.1 Man Vs Man

In this novel, the conflict between Man Vs man is a conflict that occurs between Frodo Baggins and Boromir who is his friend in destroying the ring. Boromir is the son of Denethor, Lord of Minas Tirith, Land of Gondor who has lineage ties to Ilisildur the king who defeats Sauron in the middle of world war. Since the beginning of Frodo's meeting with Boromir, Boromir has shown his desire to own the ring in return for Ilisildur's success against Sauron when they are met at a meeting of the councilors at Master Elrond's house in Rivendell.

In Rivendell, Boromir asks them to keep the ring in Gondor but all those in the meeting agree to destroy the ring at Mount Doom, Mordor. Finally Frodo says that he is willing to carry the ring even though he does not know what would happen in the future and where he should go. To accompany Frodo on his journey, there are several Master Elrond messengers who will help Frodo, namely for the rest, they shall represent the other Free Peoples of the World: Elves, Dwarves, and Men. Legolas shall be for the Elves; and Gimli son of Glóin for the Dwarves. They are willing to go at least to pass the Mountain. On their way through Moria, there is a fight between Frodo and Boromir without the knowledge of the others and their quarrels are expressed below.

Why are you so unfriendly? said Boromir. I am a true man, neither thief nor tracker. I need your Ring: that you know now; but I give you my word that I do not desire to keep it. Will you not at least let me make trial of my plan? Lend me the Ring! '

'No! no! ' Cried Frodo. 'The Council laid it upon me to bear it.' It is by our own folly that the Enemy will defeat us,' cried Boromir. 'How it angers me! Fool! Obstinate fool! Running wilfully to death and ruining our cause. If any mortals have claim to the Ring, it is the men of Númenor, and not Halflings. It is not yours save by unhappy chance. It might have been mine. It should be mine. Give it to me!'
(Tolkien, 1954: 484).

We can see that the quarrel between Frodo and Boromir is indeed caused by Boromir's desire to take the ring. The quarrel between the two results in a split over the fraternity that has been formed by Master Eldrond.

4.2.2 Man Vs Nature

Frodo Baggins experiences problems when he passes through the Old Forest. Old forest is a forest that is not like an ordinary forest where the trees in the forest can move

around and catch those that enter the forest using their roots. The horror of the forest is expressed by Frodo below.

If there are no worse things ahead than the Old Forest, I shall be lucky,' said Frodo.
(Tolkien, 1954: 141)

There is a conflict between Frodo and nature, namely the forest; he will travel in his journey. Confusion ensues in Frodo's heart whether he should travel through the forest with his friends or find another way.

Frodo began to wonder if it were possible to find a way through, and if he had been right to make the others come into this abominable wood. Merry was looking from side to side, and seemed already uncertain which way to go. Pippin noticed it. 'It has not taken you long to lose us,' he said. But at that moment Merry gave a whistle of relief and pointed ahead. 'Well, well!' he said. 'These trees do shift. There is the Bonfire Glade in front of us (or I hope so), but the path to it seems to have moved away!
(Tolkien, 1954:143-144)

A glimpse of the horror of the old forest is revealed. The shadow of the old forest is already in front of the eyes of Frodo and his companions. When one of his friends whistles, they are surprised to see the trees in the forest change places. In addition to changing places, the tree can also hurt them.

4.2.3 Man Vs Society

Man versus society is the form of conflict often represented by a person who is an outcast and tries to break the normal rules of the society established. The conflict between man vs society in the novel is a conflict about the division of inheritance. The conflict about inheritance is an external conflict experienced by Frodo, an adopted son and heir of Bilbo.

'You'll live to regret it, young fellow! Why did you choose Bilbo? You don't belong here; you're no Baggins – you – you're a Brandybuck!' 'Did you hear that, Merry? That was an insult, if you like,' said Frodo as he shut the door on her. This is already the norm of our society. Bilbo is not the original descendant of the Baggins.
(Tolkien, 1954: 57-58)

As Frodo is the heir of Bilbo's estate, many people and extended families from Bilbo disagree because he is not the original descendant of the Baggins family while Sackville Baggins disagrees with Bilbo's decision to appoint Frodo as his heir. This is already the regulations that cannot be ignored.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it is represented that humans are sure to face conflicts, either internal or external. Internal conflict occurs between man and himself. This conflict can be caused by thoughts, desires, and fears or worries about something. External conflict happens when an individual faces problems without himself such as an individual with another individual or another party; individual with society and

individual with nature. The protagonist in this novel faces various problems internally and externally. In details, the conflict starts within himself in the forms of anxiety and desire; then followed by problems with other persons, nature and society. Overall all the problems faced by the protagonist provide valuable insight for the readers, at least giving guidelines to act in the circles of problems. No human being could be free from a conflict; however no one should give up towards any obstacle coming. To be wise in thinking and action in time of adversity will surely bring goodness in all lines of life.

References

- Abror, A. (1993). *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: Tiara WacanaYogya.
- Afina, M. (2005). *Analisis Pengaruh Konflik Keluarga*. Semarang: Universitas Diponegoro.
- Alfarizi, S. & Gustiraja. (2015). Konflik batin tokoh utama dalam novel temui aku di surga karya ella sofa: Sebuah pendekatan psikoanalisis freud. *Jurnal Bahasa dan Seni*, (1):10-17.
- Antonius. (2002). *Empowerment, Stress dan Conflict*. Jakarta: Ghalian Indonesia.
- Aras, G. (2015). Personality and individual differences: literature in psychology- psychology in literature. *Procedia – Social and BehavioralSciences*. Vol. 185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.452>.
- Arikunto, S. (2002). *Manajemen Penelitian*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta Press.
- Ary, D., et al. (2005). *Introduction to Research in Education*. Third Edition. New York: Holt, Rinerhart and Winston.
- Chandra, R. (1992). *Konflik dalam Kehidupan Sehari-Hari*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods Approach*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Emre, M. (2019). Post-disciplinary reading and literary sociology. *Modernist Studies Association*, 3 (4), <https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0089>.
- Endraswara, S. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Psikologi Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Med Press.
- Kenney, W. (1966). *How to Analyze Fiction*. New York. Monarch Press.
- Melati, T. S. et al. (2019). Analisis konflik tokoh dalam novel rindu karya tere liye berdasarkan pendekatan psikologi sastra. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 2 (2).
- Miller, M. J. et al. (2018). Practice recommendations for addressing racism: A content analysis of the counseling psychology literature. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 65(6), 669–680. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000306>.
- Nurgiyantoro, B. (2012). *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Omisore, B. & Abiodun, A. R. (2014). Organizational conflicts: causes, effects and remedies. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*. Vol. 3, No. 6. <https:// DOI:10.6007/IJAREMS/v3-i6/1351>.
- Soekanto, S. (2017). *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar*. Jakarta: Rajawali.
- Sutardjo, W. (2005). *Pengantar Psikologi Abnormal*. Bandung: Refika Aditama.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. (1954). *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of The Ring*. London: Harper Collins.