

THE CONFLICTS OF THE PROTAGONIST IN HWEЕ HWEЕ TAN’S *MAMMON INC.*

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ABSTRACT

This study analysed the conflicts of Hwee Hwee Tan’s novel entitled *Mammon Inc.* Hwee Hwee Tan discussed about the psychological conflicts and the social conflicts that were experienced by the protagonist. The research used qualitative method and intrinsic approach which portrayed the life of the protagonist. The protagonist faced the inner and social conflicts, but the inner conflicts are more dominant than the social conflicts. The protagonist faced a dilemma in her life because she had two choices and this compelled her to choose one and give up the other. The causes of the conflicts are the pressure from the protagonist’s family and her culture.

Keywords: Novel, Psychological conflicts, Social conflicts

ABSTRAK

Studi ini menganalisis konflik dari novel Hwee Hwee Tan berjudul Mammon Inc. Hwee Hwee Tan membahas tentang konflik psikologis dan konflik sosial yang dialami oleh protagonis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan intrinsik yang menggambarkan kehidupan protagonis. Protagonis menghadapi konflik sosial dan batin, tetapi konflik batin lebih dominan daripada konflik sosial. Sang protagonis menghadapi dilema dalam hidupnya karena dia punya dua pilihan dan ini memaksanya untuk memilih satu dan melepaskan yang lain. Penyebab konflik adalah tekanan dari keluarga protagonis dan budayanya.

Kata kunci: Novel, Konflik psikologis, Konflik sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the imagination of the writers which contains the writers’ expression, experiences and feelings. Therefore, the writers express their emotion by writing their literature works. We can also see the writers’ background condition described indirectly on the literature work. Some examples of the

literature work are drama, poem, short story and novel.

The researcher decided to analyse a novel because the researcher likes to imagine what will happen in the story and the writer is always curious to know how the story ends. In addition, novels are more interesting and easy to understand and are very fun to read compared to a

drama or poetry. Novel is ‘a long work with great amount of detail on every page. They thus present all the complicating facts that need to be taken into account before we can reach any sort of judgement.’ (Peck and Coyle, 1984; 103)

The researcher is interested in the work of Hwee Hwee Tan because she is a young novelist from Singapore who describes modern life and the consequences of modernization through a person's life in a novel. The researcher also wants to introduce Hwee Hwee Tan as one of the most successful literary novelists from Singapore. The researcher is very fond of how the novelist tells her novel in everyday language so that the novel is easy to read. Hwee Hwee Tan also added several aspects of Chinese culture to her novel so that the novel was more interesting.

After reading a novel by Hwee Hwee Tan entitled *Mammon Inc.*, the researcher analyses this novel. In this novel, it tells of a woman who wanted to convert from Taoist to Christianity and she compared good work with a large salary and ordinary work with low salary. In this case, the main character is very confused in deciding choices.

The researcher analysed the conflicts in the novel, which include inner and social conflicts. Conflicts are inherent parts in a novel; they are the material from which a plot is constructed. According to Harry Shaw in Dictionary of Literary Terms, conflicts are ‘the opposition of persons or forces upon which the action depends in drama and fiction.’ (Shaw, 1972:92). There are three kinds of conflicts: “elemental or physical conflict, social conflict and internal or psychological conflict.” (Shaw, 1972:91-92). Elemental or physical conflict is a struggle between man and the physical world. Social conflict is a struggle between man and man or between man and society. Inner or psychological conflict is a struggle between desires within man himself.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher will provide a statement of the problem as below:

1. What conflicts are faced by the main character?
2. What are the causes of main character conflicts?

METHOD

a. Research Method

The research uses qualitative method. It also applies descriptive method in this research. In descriptive research, the researcher does the library research to gain the theory and she uses the references to support the analysis.

b. The technique of Data Collecting

The researcher conducted research through the library. She began by reading a novel by Hwee Hwee Tan titled *Mammon Inc.* After that, to support the topic of discussion she also conducted research through the internet and reference material. Finally, the researcher draws conclusions based on the research made.

c. Data Source

The source of the data is taken from the novel of Hwee Hwee Tan entitled *Mammon Inc.* The researcher also took the additional source from the dictionary, the referency books and the internet.

d. Technique of the Data Analysis

The data is analyzed based on descriptive qualitative. The analysis does not use numeric or number, but it is one by explaining the entire sentences that are formulated systematically. The steps of

technique of the data analysis can be seen as follows:

- Classifying and verifying the data. It means collect and chose the data from the *Mammon Inc.* novel by Hwee Hwee Tan.
- Noting the data that has relationship with the topic on the note book or computer.
- Interpreting the data based on psychoanalytic the anxiety of the major character in *Mammon Inc.* novel.
- Drawing conclusion.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher analysed the conflict in the Hwee Hwee Tan novel titled *Mammon Inc.* through the protagonist or main character because the protagonist experienced a dilemma in his life. This happened because the protagonist experienced many conflicts, she became very confused. There were two conflicts faced, namely psychological conflict and social conflict.

This conflict began when the protagonist accepted a job offer from Mammon Inc. and Prof. Ad-oy, hers mentor at Oxford University. The protagonist's conflict begins to develop when she is confused and doubtful about

her decision. This is due to pressure from her family. On the one side, she wants to make her wish come true. On the other hand, she must consider her family, which makes it difficult to make decisions. Then there is the social conflict faced by the protagonist. This social conflict was around a conflict with her sister, her friend, Steve and Prof. Ad-oy that greatly affects the life of the protagonist.

1. Psychological Conflicts

The protagonist's first conflict can be seen when Chiah Deng has to choose between living in England or in Singapore. Chiah Deng has been living with Steve for 3 years so he is used to Steve's lifestyle, Steve's habits and the British environment. Chiah Deng has considered her habits and activities in England to be a part of her life. If he had to go back to Singapore and leave Steve and England, he would miss Steve and leave all his habits and activities in England. On the other hand, if Chiah Deng works in England, then she will miss her sister in Singapore because she has not seen her sister for a long time. It can be seen from Chai Deng's confusion from the the following quotation:

In the past three years, I'd developed the perfect slacker lifestyle with Steve. If I left England, there would

be no more sleeping in on Bank Holidays ... And nobody in Singapore understands the benefits of tea as a cure-all-there would be no more tea ... If I went back to Singapore, there would be too little tea in my life.

'I don't know what I'm going to do,' I said. 'If I get a job here, I'll never get to see my sister. But if I go back to Singapore, we won't be able to hang out any more.' (Tan, 2001:7).

A second conflict arises when Chiah Deng feels she is not in two worlds; east and west - east and west. Living in two worlds made him suffer because she did not know where to go. These two worlds are contradictory because Chiah Deng wants to live in Singapore and in England. "East world" refers to the place where Chiah Deng was born and her family came from. "West world" refers to the place where she lives with Steve and the place where she studied. Chiah Deng actually wanted to live with her family in Singapore but she also wanted to live with her friend, Steve. She wants to stay in England. She could not separate the two worlds in her life because both were equally important to Chiah Deng, so she was trapped between the two worlds. We can see the quotation below:

Sometimes it feels like the East is in one mountain, and the West another, and I'm falling into the valley between both, spiralling in the gap between both bodies. I'm trapped in Limbo, in the black hole between Heaven and Hell.

Mind the Gap.

If I crossed the line, it wouldn't make that much difference. I was born in the gap and would always stay there. I had always felt as lost and disconnected as the voice that floated above me. In a way, drifting between here and there, I was the gap. (Tan, 2001:44-45)

Chiah's confusion grew when she received two job offers from Mammon Inc. and from Prof. Ad-oy. At the Mammon Inc. company, Chiah Deng will work as a new "adapter" and will get a salary. However, if Chiah Deng works for Prof. Ad-oy, she will be his assistant and receive a small salary. Chiah Deng was not too interested in work at Mammon Inc. but her family suggested taking the job because of her bigger salary. Therefore, she headed to Mammon Inc. and met with Dr. Draco Sidius. Dr. Draco Sidius said that in order to get a job at Mammon Inc, she must be able to pass three tests. The test involved herself, her friend Steve and her sister. Hearing the information and all that Chiah Deng had to do, she felt confused because she did not want to sacrifice her sister and her friend to get the job. When Dr. Draco told her about the rewards she would get after graduating from the tests, Chiah Deng became very interested in the reward. This is shown through the quotation below:

'I can't do your Tests. I can't sacrifice that much for a job ... Steve and my sister are too important to me,' I said. 'I don't want to have to force them to do

the Tests, just to get a job. Even if they did want to do the Tests, I don't know how it might affect our relationship once we went through with it.' (Tan, 2001:69)

Chiah Deng had a problem with herself because she wanted to convert from Taoism to Christianity. Two years earlier when Chiah Deng studied at the University of Oxford, Prof. Ad-oy was one of his professors there and he introduced Chiah Deng to a mystic. Prof. Ad-oy has written a book called "The Fire of Love: the Mystics" which contains Christian mysticism. Chiah Deng was greatly affected by Prof.'s explanation. Ad-oy about "The mystics". Reason Chiah Deng wanted to be a Christian because inside he felt empty and bored to do the rules according to Daoist religion which he thought were superstitious and unreasonable. Chiah Deng wants to pray so that she can give peace in her soul like praying to God, not praying for "silent glass". He wants to try something that can make his life more meaningful, namely by becoming a Christian. But on the other hand, if Chiah Deng becomes a Christian, her family will not regard her as her family and separate her from her family. Chiah Deng did not want that to happen so she experienced a dilemma. We can see the following quotation below:

All my life, my parents had taught me to light joss sticks and ghost money,

but whenever I knelt to my ancestors' idols, I felt nothing but emptiness and boredom. I was tired of praying to silent glass. I wanted to experience the Christian God ... But if I became a Christian, my soul would have to fly without my family. I would be a bright star, but in a cold, dark, lonely heaven. So I decide to stay on Earth, and be among my family, worshippers of porcelain statues, gold chains and jade Mercedes. (Tan, 2001:25)

After careful consideration, finally Chiah Deng decided to follow Prof. Ad-oy and she converted from Taoism to Christianity. Chiah Deng told this news to her friends Steve and Steve were very surprised to hear the news. Steve does not agree with Chiah Deng's decision because there are many things she must learn to become a Christian. After Steve explained everything about the things Chiah Deng had to learn, she began to doubt because being a Christian Chiah Deng would sacrifice her previous habits and lifestyle. Chiah Deng's changes did not make her life easier, instead making her even more confused because she did not want to experience what Steve told her.

2 Social Conflicts

2.1 The Conflicts between the protagonist and her sister

Chiah Deng has an older sister named Chiah Chen. They are very close and they always connect by telephone.

One day, Chiah Deng told her sister that she had two job offers from Mammon Inc. and from Prof. Ad-oy. Chiah Deng prefers to work with Prof. Ad-oy and become his assistant. However, her brother told him to accept a job at Mammon Inc. because her salary was bigger and could support her family, also her brother forbade her to work with Prof. Ad-oy. Chiah Deng was confused by her decision because she had to do something that was not in her favor. We can see the quotation below:

‘You can’t be his assistant.’

‘You need to make a lot of money to give us, so Buddha will see that you’re very filial. When you die, you don’t need to go to Hell, but just can walk across the gold bridge to Heaven.’

‘I have being Chinese,’ I said. ‘I want my own life. Why do I have to sacrifice everything for the older generation?’ (Tan, 2001:37)

Chiah Deng also experienced conflicts with her sister when Chiah Deng converted from Taoism to Christianity. She told her sister about the news and her sister became very angry. Her brother strongly disagreed with Chiah Deng's decision because she had never told him about this before. Her brother said that Chiah Deng could not be a Christian because she was Chinese and she could only worship his ancestors, not Jesus. Chiah Deng is obliged to obey her family and culture, but she is very bored because she must always obey and do things for

her family while her family never thinks about her wishes. This can be seen from the quotation below:

‘You’re Chinese, you can’t be a Christian. You have to worship your ancestors, not Jesus. You have to be xiao xun.’.....‘Asian values are all about sacrificing the life of the child for the parents, and I don’t want any part of that any more,’ I said. ‘I’m sick of being the host for my parents, just standing there and watching them suck the blood out of me while my life passes by.’ (Tan,2001:213-215)

2.2 The Conflicts between the protagonist and Steve

This social conflict occurred when Chiah Deng and Steve clashed about an interview at *Mammon Inc.* Chiah Deng doesn't want to go interview at Mammon Inc. because she thought she would not graduate in the interview, but Steve encouraged Chiang Deng to continue to take part in the interview. Chiah Deng is not confident and afraid of not being able to adapt to society in Oxford, also considered as inferior. Steve suggested Chiah Deng to develop her trust and have a positive self-image. Also according to Steve, Chiah Deng must not be pessimistic. Nevertheless, Chiah Deng still did not care about his friend's advice and he did not go to the interview. This is shown from the quotation below:

‘So are you going for the interview?’ Steve asked me. No,’ I said ... ‘I’m never going to be able to pass the test,’ I said. ‘They want someone who knows how to make people fit in, and you know how useless I am at that ... ‘God, you really need to work on your self-esteem,’ Steve said. ‘Develop a more positive self-image.’ (Tan, 2001:9-10)

2.3 The Conflicts between the protagonist and Prof. Ad-oy

Prof. Ad-oy is Chiah Deng's mentor at Oxford University. Prof. Ad-oy offered a job to Chiah Deng as his assistant. Prof. Ad-oy also learned that Chiah Deng had a job offer from Mammon Inc. Prof. Ad-oy told Chiah Deng that the Mammon Inc. logo is a symbol of Satan. He said that the logo refers to a dragon and its symbol is contrary to Christianity. The dragon symbol is identified as the serpent Satan who will deceive the whole world. However, according to Chiah Deng, he saw a red dragon in the Mammon Inc. logo. Harmless and he is very familiar with the symbol of the dragon. In Chinese culture, dragons are mystical creatures and mean strength and dignity. In addition, the Red Dragon is said to be an extraordinary creature that can bestow blessings from heaven. Therefore, Chiah Deng was confused. This can be seen from the quotation below:

‘Notice the sign of Satan.’ ... ‘The red dragon,’ he said, looking at the Mammon Inc. Logo.

‘Why is that satanic?’ I asked. I grew up surrounded by dragons ...

‘The dragon was cast out into the earth, that old serpent, called Satan, who deceiveth the whole world. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you.’ Prof Ad-oy placed his finger on the logo... ‘But maybe the dragon isn’t necessarily a demonic sign,’ I said. ‘My best memory from childhood was the dragon boat races.’ (Tan, 2001: 30-31)

CONCLUSION

After analysing the conflict in Hwee Hwee Tan's work, *Mammon Inc.*, the novel uses two types of conflicts, namely psychological conflict and social conflict. In analysing the conflict, the psychological conflict is more dominant than social conflict. The protagonist's psychological conflict that is very important in this story is the confusion of the protagonist in making decisions in his life. She experienced two choices and she had to decide one of them. However, the two choices are contradictory to each other. In making decisions, she must consider her family. Her family greatly interfered in making decisions. In addition, the protagonist also experiences social conflict. The conflict was a conflict between Chiah Deng and her sister, a conflict with her friend Steve and a conflict with Prof. Ad-oy. Social conflict

occurs due to differences of thought between the protagonist and her older sister, her friend Steve and Prof. Ad-oy. There are also cultural differences that occur in this social conflict. The cultural difference was the difference in the cultural background of his older sister, his friend Steve and Prof. Ad-oy. The conflicts forced Chiah Deng to consider what others had said which was clearly very contrary to Chiah Deng's wishes.

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