ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER

IN THE NOVEL THE ALCHEMIST BY PAULO COELHO

Boma Yuliadi Yanuar¹, Elfiondri², Femmy Dahlan²
¹Student of English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bung Hatta University
Email: bomayuliadi8646@gmail.com
²Lecturer of English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bung Hatta University

Abstract
This study is aimed to identify the character traits and find the relation to the setting of the novel. Besides that, the writer also describes how the main character’s conflict depicted in the novel. In explaining the aim of the study, the writer applies the structuralism theory by Edgar V. Roberts which emphasizes to find the relation and connection among the elements of literature. From the analysis, the writer finds that the main character’s traits are related to the setting and the conflicts that run in the plot of the novel. The main character faces two conflicts; they are external conflicts and internal conflicts. The external conflicts occur between the main character and the other characters in the novel. Meanwhile, the internal conflicts occur within the main character itself.

Keywords: character traits, setting, conflicts of the characters

Introduction
Human being faces many problems in their life. The problem can be in form of love, problem in the work place, inside or between families, or problem within the character itself or with other characters. Some people called those problems as conflicts. Conflicts also can be found in a literary work. And just like an imitation and representation of human being, characters in literary work may suffer in a conflict that can affect their life.

The conflicts can appear in several forms; such the conflict with other people, conflict with the environment, and conflict that appear in one character only and so on. Further, Roberts states that there are two kinds of conflicts; they are external conflicts and internal conflicts.

After reading the whole of the novel, the writer chooses to analyze this novel because the writer finds that the main character of the novel is encountered several conflicts that change his life from a common shepherd into an alchemist that can turn himself to a wind. The writer believes that the conflicts that appear in the main character journey is become an interesting point to discuss.

Methods of the research
In collecting the data for this research, the writer applies library research method by reading several related book to support his analysis. The primary data is the novel itself, The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho. The writer reads the novel with fully comprehension to understand the problem in
the novel and then the writer analyzes it by using the structuralism theory.

The secondary data are obtained by reading and understanding several books, article, journal, or essay which supporting the research and also data browsed from the internet to find other sources. In analyzing the data, the writer starts from the analysis of the intrinsic elements of the novel that enables the writer in finding out and analyzing the wanted data. Then, after collecting the data from the intrinsic aspect that is the character and relating it to the other elements like setting, plot, theme and point of view, the writer can get the information clearly about the relationship between the main character’s traits, the setting and plot on the novel.

Result and Discussion

Characters of the Novel

The character that will be discussed in this chapter are those who having conflict with Santiago as the main character. The traits of the character will be discussed based on their speech, action and comment from other character.

Santiago

Curious

Curious is the first dominant trait of Santiago. According to Merriam-Webster dictionaries curious is “having a desire to learn or know more about something or someone”. Santiago’s curiosity is reflected in his commitment as a shepherd. He likes being a shepherd because he likes to travel and meet new people in a new place. When his father sent him to the church to become a priest, his heart refuses the condition. As it is described, “But ever since he had been a child, he had wanted to know the world, and this was much more important to him than knowing God and learning about man’s sins (8)”.

The curious trait of Santiago is obviously described when he expressed his desire to visit other place in other town. The dialogues below show his curious personality.

“Well, I’d like to see their land, and see how they live,” said his son. […] “But I’d like to see the castle in the towns where they live,” the boy explained. (9)

From the dialogues above, it can be seen Santiago’s curiosity and desire about the condition of the people from other place. He insists to become a wanderer and sees the lives in another town. The following dialogues show how Santiago keeps insisting to become a traveler. The dialogues above also imply that he repeats his statement to visit the other land as he said before. In the other hand, his father, who disagree about his opinion, explains that there is no different between their land and the other’s land and
said that it is only shepherd who travels a lot amongst them.

**Clever**

The second trait of Santiago that can be found in the story is clever. According to Cambridge dictionaries, clever stands for “having or showing the ability to learn and understand things quickly and easily”. Santiago’s cleverness is reflected through the story when he arrived at the Africa. After being robbed, he realized that his language is different to the local people so he began to observe his surroundings. He found a solution to his problem when he saw an Arabian spoke with Spanish. Both of them are trying to erecting a stall. Even though they language are different, the stall assemble perfectly.

Santiago applied what he had just seen when he found a shop with a dirty window. The following dialogue shows that Santiago is initiating to clean the window with his jacket. But he found the man did not understand to what he had just done.

“I can clean up those glasses in the window, if you want,” said the boy. […]
The man looked at him without responding.

“In exchange, you could give me something to eat.”
The man still said nothing, […] (48)

The dialogue indicates that Santiago has found a resolution to solve his problem after being robbed at tangier. Before being robbed, he met a young man who speaks and understands Spanish. The young man agreed to become Santiago’s guidance to the pyramid if he gave his money before they leave the place. But Santiago lost the boy in the middle of a crowded Tangier market. The robbery then leads him to work for a crystal merchant who lives on a hill of Tangier.

**Persistent**

The next trait of Santiago is persistent. Based on the Merriam-Webster dictionary, persistent is “continuing to do something or to try to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop”. Santiago’s persistent is obviously shows since he decides to leave his home town in Andalusia. But before leaving Andalusia, he decides to become a shepherd. He got confronting by his father who wanted him to become a priest. His father explains that the people from other world are basically the same with them. Those who came to their town think that their town is beautiful and they would like to live there forever. He keeps persist that he wanted to see the other land and see how they live. The following dialogue shows Santiago’s answer;

“[…] amongst us, the only ones who travel are the shepherds.”

Well, then I’ll be a shepherd!”
His father said no more […]

(9)

A shepherd is the one who wander all over the country with their sheep folks. A shepherd sees many things and meets many people. To become a shepherd means that he can travel to the other town and making a lot of friend. The quotation indicates that his father had no choice except accepting Santiago’s choice. Even though he had explained everything, Santiago keeps insist to become a shepherd.

The Crystal Merchant

Pessimist

The crystal merchant shop keeper is described as a pessimist person. According to Merriam Webster dictionaries, pessimist is “an inclination to emphasize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities or to expect the worst possible outcome”. The condition that shown the pessimist personality of the crystal merchant is described when he was told has been working as a crystal seller for almost thirty years. He felt too late to change anything and was also too afraid to take a risk for his crystal business.

[…] He had been in the same place for thirty years; a shop at the top of a hilly street where few customers passed. Now it was too late to change anything—[…] (46)

The part of paragraph above implies that the crystal merchant doesn’t want to try anything else except selling and buying crystal pieces. Since he knows that the business is falling down at Tangier, he should move to the nearby city which grown faster than Tangier. But he chooses to stay because he was afraid to start a new business and because the only thing he had ever learned to do was to buy and sell crystal glassware.

Grateful

The next personality trait of the crystal merchant is grateful person. According to Oxford dictionaries, grateful is “the feeling or showing an appreciation for something done or received”. The merchant is described as a figure who obey and having great respect to the Muslim culture. He had worked in the crystal business for almost thirty years and he never regrets it (49).

The story continues with the improvement of the crystal business when he meets Santiago. The boy had asked him for some adjustments in the shop, but he feels he had enough and no need to risk the business for more.

“I’m doing much better, and soon you’ll be able to return to your sheep. Why ask more out of life?” (54)

The quotation that contains the speech of the merchant above shows that the crystal merchant had satisfied with the business he had made. He thinks that there is no need to make an improvement to the shop.
He just wants the boy to be as satisfied as he feels at that moment, so that they wouldn’t make any mistakes in running out their crystal business. However, several days later, he accepts the boy ideas in making some improvement to the shop.

**The Alchemist**

**Wise**

The first characterization of the alchemist that can be found in the novel is wise. According to Oxford dictionaries, wise is the feeling of “having or showing experience, knowledge, and good judgment”. He is described as a figure that seldom makes a wrong option in deciding something. Later in the story, the alchemist is said had lived for two hundred years and is able to transform any metal into gold (69). A character that has been living for a long period should have lots of experiences and knowledge.

Besides being an extraordinary character, the character of the alchemist also has mission to tutor Santiago in pursuing and realizing his destiny. The alchemist accompanies him to cross the desert because he had memorized the detail of the desert. He also knows how to deal with the desert. The following dialogue in the story below reveals the wise of the alchemist.

[…] that’s the point at which most people give up. It’s the point at which, as we say in the language of the desert, one ‘dies of thirst just when the palm trees have appeared on the horizon.” (139).

The dialogue above indicates that the alchemist had shown many people surrender in pursuing their dreams. He tries to convince Santiago to keep believing in his dream and chasing it with all of his heart. He explains that if the boy given up to pursue his dream, he analogized it as same as a person who given up after he sees a place to rest at a desert.

**Cultural Setting**

According to Oxford dictionary culture is, “the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society”. So, it can be said that, cultural setting is the reflection of beliefs, opinions, and religious aspects of a certain location. The writer finds that the main character has to face another culture in the novel The Alchemist.

**African Culture Society**

According to Cambridge dictionary, the word society stands for, “a large group of people who lived together in an organized way, making decision about how to do things and sharing the work that needs to be done. All the people in a country or in several similar countries can be referred to as a society”. Meanwhile, according to Merriam Webster, the word community defines for “a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together
within a larger society”. There are several communities that the writer found within the larger society of African. They are the people that make the journey with the caravan, the people that live at the oasis and the tribesmen. They stand with their obligation as the most important thing above the individual right which is so contrast to the European people who appreciate their freedom.

In the novel, Santiago has to face the condition of living in a small group of people when he decides to leave Tangier and move to the oasis of Al-Fayoum. He had to ride with a caravan which contain almost hundreds people and animals (74).

The travelers adopted the practice of arranging the animals in circle at night, sleeping together in the center as protection against the nocturnal cold. And the leader posted armed sentinels at the fringers of the group. (81)

The condition above indicates that Santiago is involved in a small group of travelers. He and the other travelers have to adapt with the condition of the Sahara desert. They were instructed by the leader of the caravan and protected by some soldiers. The story continues and the caravan approaches at the oasis. The oasis is described as a large town which surrounded by thousand trees. It is said the oasis has it chieftain who control the life in the oasis (112-113).

**Religious**

African people are considered basically religious. Jenkins wrote that, “In the African world God is understood as creator, though he is far away. In the African view of reality, everything is related, thus it is basically a “religious” worldview” (Jenkins: 1991). This condition was proved by the main character of the novel. In the part of paragraph below shows that Santiago is experiencing adapted to the African culture.

“There is no wine in this country,” the young man said.

“The religion here forbids it.”

(37)

It can be seen that Santiago is trying to order wine at the bar. It also implies that he used to drink wine in his previous country where it is legal in Europe. He feels that he needs to make a adjustment to the condition at the time where he was given a cup of tea by the bartender. But then, he meets a young man who warns him that he can’t order a wine because it is forbidden.

In another part of paragraph shows that Santiago is having some conversation with the crystal merchant. The crystal merchant seems to introduce “Maktub” to Santiago. He learns it when he was having a difficult decision to leave or to continue his journey to the pyramids. As he continue his quest, he began familiar with the words and
use it when he thinks that his fate is cooperates with him or someone who is in the middle of his journey to pursue his own Personal Legend. The paragraph below shows that Santiago is adapted to the concept of “Maktub”.

The boy was beginning to understand that intuition is really a sudden immersion of the soul into the universal current life, where the historical of all people are connected, and we are able to know everything, because it’s all written there. (77)

The quotation shows that Santiago is about to understand the concept of “Maktub” that the crystal merchant teach him. And also in another part of paragraph shows that Fatima is trying to make Santiago understand that she won’t go anywhere and as a woman of the desert it is important to convince their man to pursue their dream because they know that their man will be come back one day. As the woman said, “Maktub,” she said. “If I am really a part of your dream, you’ll come back one day.” (102)

**Plot of the Novel**

**Exposition**

Exposition is the introductory material that creates the tone, gives the setting, introduces the characters, and supplies other facts necessary to understanding. In the novel, the condition that described the exposition can be shown in the part of narration below;

[…] His purpose in life was to travel, and after two years of walking the Andalusia terrain, he knew all the cities of the region. (8)

The narration above is a paragraph which contains the introduction of the main character and his condition before he chooses to start a journey. The narration implies that the reason of the main character chooses to become a traveler is because he had already known every part of his birth town. Then, in another part of paragraph, the author introduces other character who takes part in building the conflict in the story.

The crystal merchant awoke with the day, and felt the same anxiety that he felt every morning. He had been in the same place for thirty years: a shop at the top of a hilly street where few customers passed. […] (46)

In this case, the crystal merchant is the next character that being introduced with the background of his condition that had lived in the same place for a long time. The narration above also implied that he worked in the business of crystal trading which is described that the business is in a bad condition. The next character that exposed by
the author in the story is the alchemist. As the following narration described;

The times rush past, and so do the caravan, thought the alchemist, as he watched the hundreds of people and animals arriving at the oasis. 

[...] (90)

The condition above is the introduction of the alchemist. It also contains the next setting of the story. It can be seen that the alchemist is always watching the caravan arrive which can be said that he is waiting for someone. The narration also include oasis as the place that will be visits by the main character.

Rising Action

Rising action is the second stage of plot where characters engage in conflicts. The rising action of the novel is depicted when the main character arrive at Africa. He found the first problem that he should solve is the different between his language and the local language. He also has to face the culture differentiation.

[...] in just a few hours he had seen men walking hand in hand, women with their faces covered and priest that climbed to the tops of towers and chanted—as everyone about him went to their knees and placed their foreheads on the ground. (35)

The part of narration above implies that the main character is surprised when he arrive at the Africa for the first time. In his country, he would never find man walking hand to hand with other man or women covered with veil or even few people having pray with an unusual gesture.

Climax

The next stage of plot is climax. Climax occurs when Santiago and the alchemist are being seized by the desert tribesmen. They refused the assumption as the spies from other tribes. The alchemist offer their lives if the boy couldn’t turn himself into the wind in three days.

The men laughed. They were used to ravages of war, and knew that the wind could not deliver them a fatal blow. Yet each felt his heart beat a bit faster. They were men of the desert, and they were fearful of sorcerers. (147)

The quotation that contains the opinion of the tribesmen above is an implication of the untrusting feeling to the alchemist statement that claimed the boy could turn himself into the wind. It is said that it is only them who used to be soldier in war that could destroy something. In the other hand, the wind can’t do the same thing.

Then in a part of paragraph, it is said the boy proved his word after three days and turned himself into the wind;
So the wind blew with all its strength, and the sky was filled with sand. [...] Their horses cried out, and all their weapons were filled with sand. (156)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the boy is succeed to fulfill the chief of tribesmen demands by turning himself into the wind. The situation is proven by the horsemen and their horses which are showing fear of the wind. And also because they already know the kind of wind that they had met before. They usually called it with the *simum*.

**Falling Action**

The fourth stage of plot is falling action. Falling action is the events after the climax which closes the story. In the novel of the alchemist, falling action happens right after the boy turning himself into wind. The falling action ends with the farewell of the alchemist and the boy after rode for the entire day and they arrive at a Coptic monastery.

“From here on, you will be alone,” the alchemist said.

“You are only three hours from the pyramids.” (162)

From the conversation of the alchemist and the main character above, it can be seen that the alchemist decides to end his journey with the boy. It is implies that the alchemist mission is accomplished. He had accompanied Santiago to the pyramids, so he decided to leave the boy and says farewell.

**Resolution**

Resolution is the events following the climax and falling action. Resolution is also the events when the rounds out and the action is conclude.

The resolution is told in the part of speech below.

[...]In my dream, there was a sycamore growing out of the ruins of the sacristy, and I was told that, if I dug at the roots of the sycamore, I would find a hidden treasure. But I’m not so stupid as to cross an entire desert just because of a recurrent dream. “ (172)

The dialogue above indicates that the treasure is cannot be found in the pyramids. The speaker tries to tell to the boy that he had a dream which refers to the boy action while finding his treasure. The ruined church of the shepherds and the sycamore growing out of the ruins sacristy is the first place that is being described as the first place where Santiago having his dream and also the place where he usually sleep at night.

**Conflicts of the Novel**

In literature, conflict is the central issue and makes the story move. The conflicts of the characters happen through the plot of the story. It develops tension and interest to the audience. In other words,
without conflict a literary work will be boring and bring no interest to the audience.

The writer found several types of conflict in the novel *The Alchemist*. The conflicts happen among the characters in the novel and also happen inside the character itself.

**External Conflicts**

**Santiago versus the Crystal Merchant**

Even though the boy is working for the merchant at the crystal shop, the relationship between them is not always running well. Santiago has to work carefully because the merchant is always being a fussy person. Nevertheless, he stays at the job because the merchant gives him good commission and treated him fairly. The conflict starts when the boy suggests some new ideas to the merchant shop. The first idea is to build a display case for the crystal.

“I’ve never had one before,” the merchant answered.

“People will pass by and bump into it, and pieces will be broken.”

“Well, when I took my sheep through the fields some of them might have died if we had come upon a snake. But that’s the way life is with the sheep and with shepherds.”

(55)

From the conversation between the boy and the crystal merchant above, it can be seen that the crystal merchant doesn’t want to take a risk to his crystal shop. He is afraid that the display will become a waste thing if it breaks. The merchant thinks that if the crystal is broke, it will affect the daily income of his shop. Santiago then confronts him and gives him an analogy with his life as a shepherd. He assumes the crystal as his sheep and the merchant and him as the shepherds. The risk is something that everyone must face in the life.

**Santiago versus the Alchemist**

The alchemist is the next character that having conflicts with Santiago. The conflict between Santiago and the alchemist starts when the boy arrived at the oasis of Al-Fayoum. He asked him who is daring to read the omen in the desert.

“It is I who dared to do so,” he repeated, and he lowered his head to receive a blow from the sword. [...] “The sword didn’t fall. Instead, the stranger lowered it slowly, until the point touched the boy’s forehead. It drew a droplet of blood. (115)

The quotation above contains the action where the alchemist is trying to kill the boy in their first meeting. He feels irriate when he found that there is another person in the middle of the desert who also has the same ability like him. He tries to intimidate the boy so that he would have the
information about who is dared to read the omen.

**Santiago versus Society**

As a foreign person in a new country, Santiago tries to find a new friend when he just arrived at Africa. He meets a young man on a bar and the first treat he got is being deceived by the local people.

All around him was the market, with people coming and going, shouting and buying, and the aroma of strange foods… but nowhere could he find his new companion. (40)

From the narration above, it is obvious that the young man disappeared after Santiago was distracted by something that he saw around the market and he desired to have it. He wanted to believe that the boy just gone for a moment, so he decided to wait there.

When Santiago arrived at the pyramids, he began to dig around the place he had chosen. He digs until his hands abraded and exhausted. Suddenly, a few men approach him and attack him. They are the refugees of the tribal wars and they ask the boy for money.

[...] And, although his mouth was bleeding and swollen, he told his attackers that he had twice dreamed of a treasure hidden near the pyramids of Egypt. (171)

From the dialogue of Santiago above, it is obvious that he didn’t expect to be attacked while he was digging his treasure. The refugees came and attacked him as he wanted the money that boy hiding.

**Internal conflicts**

**Struggle to have the sheep flocks back**

The journey of Santiago starts by selling his sheep flocks. Before he starts the journey, he had the same dream about a treasure that hides under the pyramids in Egypt. The dream leads him into a complicated internal conflict within his heart.

While standing at the ticket window, the boy had remembered his flock, and decided he should go back to being a shepherd. [...] He knew all the fields and pastures of Andalusia. And he knew what was the fair price for every one of his animals. (27)

Based on the quotation above, it is implies that Santiago is afraid to leave the land of Andalusia because he always thinks about his animals. Everything he knows is only about being shepherd referring to the reason that he admitted. On the other case, Santiago was being robbed when he just arrived at Tarifa. He feels so ashamed that made him need to find a job. Everything that
he remembered at that time is just his sheep flock.

When I had my sheep, I was happy, and I made those around me happy. [...] But now I’m sad and alone. (41)

The quotation above shows that Santiago feels regretful. He thinks he had made a wrong choice to come to Africa in order to pursue his dream. He feels sorry of his self because he had none of sheep right at that moment.

Santiago keeps thinking about his sheep while he crosses the desert. The quotation below shows how Santiago learns from his sheep.

“They’re not my sheep anymore, “he said to himself, (77)

The quotation above means that Santiago tries to realize that there is no need to regret for the decision that he had made. He analogies himself as the sheep, and decides that he needs to move forward and pursue his dream.

Against his desire not to leave Fatima

The second internal conflict within the main character is his dilemma to leave a girl that he met at the oasis of Al-Fayoum. Their meeting began when Santiago and another character named the Englishman tries to find the alchemist. Fatima is surprised when Santiago tells her that he loves her and wants her to be his wife. Instead of making the boy stay at the oasis, Fatima supports him to continue his journey to the pyramids.

“That’s why I want you to continue toward your goal. If you have to wait until the war is over, then wait. But if you have to go before then, go on in pursuit of your dream. The dunes are changed by the wind, but the desert never changes. That’s the way it will be with our love for each other. (102)

Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Fatima tries to encouraging Santiago to pursue his dream. Even though they love each other and just met in a few days but Fatima doesn’t want to be an obstacle for the boy. She knows that as a desert woman, she has to wait for his man to wonder and becomes a part of the world. His dilemma starts when he decides to find the alchemist’s tent in the south side of the oasis. The alchemist about finding one’s personal legend and fulfill his dream. But the boy assumes that it is useless to follow his dream because he thinks he already found it in the oasis.

“I also have Fatima. She is a treasure greater than anything else I have won.” (121)

Through the quotation above, it is obvious that Santiago used Fatima as his excuse to stay at the oasis. According to him,
he had already found his greater treasure of all that he won’t find in any other part of the world. However, his doubtless leads him to his dilemma about leaving Fatima as he stated, “to continue his search for the treasure meant that he had to abandon Fatima.” (124)

“I want to stay at the oasis,” the boy answered. I’ve found Fatima, and, as far as I’m concerned, she’s worth more than treasure.” (124)

From the quotation above, it is obvious that Santiago is refusing the alchemist suggestion to leave the oasis and Fatima behind. He chooses to stay at the oasis because he thinks that Fatima is the treasure that he wanted to find along his journey. In other hand, it can be said that he feels useless to continue to his trip to the pyramids.

**Conclusion**

*The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho is a novel that depicted about the conflicts. The conflicts happen within the main character or among the characters in the novel itself. In the other hand, it can be said that the story of *The Alchemist* contains two conflicts which is the external conflicts and the internal conflicts. The writer analyze that external conflicts in the story happen between Santiago, the crystal merchant and the alchemist.

Santiago is the central character of the alchemist story. He is characterized as a curious boy who decides to leave the church and prefer to be a shepherd. Besides that, he is also a clever boy who always sees an opportunity to improve himself and charge the crystal merchant to make some new adjustments in the crystal store. Santiago also described as a persistent man who keeps insist to pursue his destiny and to find the treasure in his dream.

The external conflict between Santiago and the crystal merchant happen because they having a different idea. The crystal merchant disagrees with the way of the adjustment that Santiago’s makes to his crystal store. He feels the adjustment is useless because the economic is falling down at Tarifa. He was too afraid if had to risk his crystal business. The next external conflict is happen between Santiago and the alchemist. Their conflict appears when Santiago decides to stay at the oasis because of some reasons. Santiago thinks that he had found his true love and afraid to leave the oasis. The tribe’s war and the unknown form of the treasure become his consideration to fulfill his dream. The alchemist teaches him to face the obstacles and leave him when he had realized his destiny.

The internal conflicts of Santiago’s happen when he always think about having his sheep flock back. He regretted the time when he got robbed and the time when he had had enough money to comes back to his
hometown and buys the sheep back. His dilemma rise when he had found Fatima in the oasis and fall in love with her. He insists to stay at the oasis so he can marry her and forget about pursuing his dream. At the end, he decides to continue his journey to the Pyramids.

Bibliography


