

Chapter 3

Conflicts and Themes in *Prodigal Son*

Prodigal son tells about a boy named Peter as the main character. In this novel it is told that he has a twin brother named Michael. Although they are twins, but their attitude is contradictory. If little Peter is always considered a troublemaker by parents and people around him because he often got into a fight with his twin brother or with his friends, Michael was always considered a good boy. Peter does not want his parents and people around him to live in the city of Ware, so, after graduating school Peter decided to go far away from them all to achieve success in his own way. After a dozen years away from the city of Ware and no word about him, Peter returned to his hometown. Peter's return to Ware is because he has nothing, he has no job, no home, and the household he has built with his wife is in a bad state and is in danger of ending.

Referring to question in the statement of the problem, the writer will discuss the development of conflicts in the main character. Based on the related theories that conflict can be divided into two types in the story, the writer finds that there are two conflicts, external conflict and internal conflict.

3.1 Conflicts in *Prodigal Son* Novel

3.1.1 External Conflicts

In *Prodigal Son*, the external conflict happened between Peter with his classmates, conflicts between Peter with Michael, conflict between Peter with his wife Alana, conflicts between Peter with his father, conflict between Peter with

realtor, conflict between Peter with a man. Most of the external conflicts occur in *Prodigal Son* conflicts is man vs man.

a. Peter's conflict with his classmate

The first conflict in this novel occurred when Peter was a child and still lived in his hometown of Ware. As a child he was often regarded as a problem maker because of frequent fights with his friends. As in the following quote:

He punished the boys who made fun of him, with his fists. It was common for him to come home from school with a torn shirt and a black eye, and having delivered worse, while in the lower grades (10).

The quarrel between Peter and his classmates was in physical form. Because, Peter often fights with his friend, until it becomes a common thing that he came home from school with messy conditions.

Another quote described the cause of the fight that occurred between Peter and his friends. As in the following quote:

Peter had been regarded as a bully at school, particularly when the other children teased him about not being able to read until he was nearly twelve years old, and awkwardly even after that. Anyone who dared mention it to him was sure to get a black eye or bloody nose. (43)

The above quote describes the cause of the fight between Peter and his friends because he was ridiculed as a fool for being unable to read. Even up to the age of twelve Peter could not yet read, while at that age a child should have been fluent in reading. Peter who was annoyed and angry because he was constantly ridiculed for his shortcomings finally beat his friends.

The clash between Peter and Alana about where he lives is getting heated up when his wife still strongly wants to move to L.A., and started using their children as an excuse to move from New York. However, the reason his wife used was unacceptable to Peter, causing her to be angry. As in the following quote:

“Or yourself. Is that what you’re saying?” He was starting to look angry, as defeat and frustration welled up in him.....(20)

The above quote shows Peter's anger against Alana that can be known when he snapped at his wife and from the expression on his face that showed anger. Peter is angry to shout at his wife because in his thinking who really does not want to live poor is Alana. But he uses their child as his reason.

Although Alana's desire to move to L.A. is rejected by Peter, it still did not dampen her desire to move. Alana remained in his position to move to L.A., she even honestly admitted if she did not want to stay in New York with Peter in the event that her husband did not have anything. Alana's confession caused Peter to be angry with her. As in the following quote:

“What are you saying?” Peter asked her harsly..... (21)

Peter's anger against Alana was appointed by snapping at his wife. His anger was because Peter was offended by the words of his wife who at least hurt her pride as a man, husband and head of the family. However, In order to avoid the constant quarrels and debates between them regarding where to live, Peter finally let his wife move to L.A. by bringing their children, but he remains on his decision to stay in New York.

to New York.it was more than Peter could cope with, and too hurtful,..... (11)

The quote above indicates if Peter's parents have no belief in Peter's abilities. This kind of parental attitudes caused Peter's pain in them to make the connection between Peter and his parents distance and the distance Peter moved to New York. In venting this pain, after graduating college and his career on Wall Street became a success, Peter deliberately ignored his parents and decided to rarely go home to visit them.

Conflict between Peter and his parents as already described above is also due to the attitude of favoritism made by his parents As happened in the following quote:

It was always Michael who was protected and never Peter. Their father had always had a soft spot for Michael and talked about what a “good boy” he was, with the implication that Peter was the “bad boy”, and often enough he was (38)

The quote above shows the favoritism their dad makes to his twin sons. Their father in giving his unfortunate love by putting more of Michael than Peter. Like, the attitude of their father who preferred to talk about Michael rather than Peter. His father's attitude caused Peter to become angry and resentful with his father.

In addition, the conflict between Peter and his parents is also clearly stated by Peter in the following quotation:

was sick and only once visited him. Peter's deep feelings of regret deepened now that his mother had died.

Peter's feelings got mixed up after he found his mother's diary and read the content inside. As in the following quote:

Peter was haunted by his mother's diaries for the rest of the weekend and for several days after. Reading them was troubling but deeply touching. (98)

After reading the contents of his mother's diary, Peter's heart became uneasy for days because his feelings were now jumbled between deeply touched and also disturbed if remembered in them.

Peter finds it hard to believe his nephew Bill's story about his father (twin brother Peter) trying to kill his mother. As in the following quote:

He couldn't imagine anything worse than believing that your father was trying to kill your mother, but he could see that Bill was sincere. (116)

Peter could not believe his story about his father who wanted to kill his mother, but on the other hand he could also see the honesty of Bill. Peter also had a dilemma between trusting Bill and not.

While Peter had not fully believed Bill's story before, his nephew had just added his story to the other side of his father. What Bill did was actually make Peter more confused about the actual figure of Michael. As in the following quote:

....He had been certain his brother was the devil incarnate then, but now he seemed like a gentle, loving man. Michael had been demonstrating that since Peter move to the lake. But listening to

Bill now, Peter was confused. Which vision of Michael was true? Was what he had experienced with his brother recently just pure manipulation or sincere? Was Michael devil or saint? (117)

Peter felt confused about the true figure of Michael he could trust. Peter had to believe in Michael as good an angel as he had recently, or to believe in the evil, godlike figure of Michael as he once believed.

Peter did not believe in Bill's opinion if his mother had been poisoned with an insecticide poison. Because of his conviction, Peter refused Bill's request to take his mother's hair sample for examination. However, Bill's next words were able to make Peter a dilemma. As in the following quote:

Bill was right, at worst he'd look like a fool taking three hairs to a lab in Boston to find out what kind of hair spray she used. And if what Bill said was true?... But it couldn't be. (130)

Peter felt the mixed feeling of thinking that he would do a crazy thing to take a sample of Maggie's hair for examination because he did not believe if Maggie was poisoned, but on the other hand she was also wondering what if there was a chance that Bill might be right.

Peter feels anxious that he should leave Maggie alone with only Michael. As in the following quote:

Peter knew it seemed insane, but even though he didn't believe a word of Bill's theory about the weed killer, he was nervous now about leaving Maggie alone with Michael. (133)

Peter's worry when on the one hand he was still trying to deny the words of Bill about his father who tried to kill his mother, but on the other hand, he was

not sure to leave Maggie alone with only Michael because he also began to believe a little bit of Bill.

Peter was confused to believe him or not about his father poisoned his mother.

He was beginning to believe it. His trip to the laboratory in Boston had given serious weight to the theory. He knew it couldn't be true, but his mind was in a whirl now. (134)

Peter mind the mess between trust him or not. In another side, he began to trust the words of Bill, especially after his departure to the laboratory in Boston add to the seriousness of the theory of the Bill. But in other side, he knew it could not be true.

Peter has set up his home to greet his childrens. However, after the arrest of his brother, he became confused will welcome his childrens in where.

.....and he had gotten the house ready for the boys, who were due in a week, but he still had mixed feelings about having them come here, since Michael's arrest. A pall had been cast it now for Peter, but he couldn't think of where else to take them. (182)

He has set up his home to greet his two sons who will be up for another week, but now he felt mixed feelings about their arrival there, since the arrest of Michael. Peter felt the atmosphere there has been damaged, but he did not know where to take them anywhere.

Peter hesitated to accept or reject a job offer from a company in London.

He just didn't know if he wanted to live in London. He really wanted to go back to New York. He was ready for Wall Street

Peter and Michael's parents always compare Peter with his brother who is considered as a smart kid. Peter and Michael's parental attitudes like this caused competition among them. As in the following quote:

More than anything, Peter had wanted to impress his parents and win all the approval that had belonged only to his brother for so many years.and Michael had been threatened by Peter's new-found skills and quick to point out that all his success in college did was confirm how lazy Peter had been for all the years before. (11)

The quote above shows that the rivalry between Peter and Michael is caused by each other wanting not to lose in getting recognition from their parents as a smart kid. Peter wanted to show his ability that is now able to read to be recognized also by his parents who had only acknowledged the ability of Michael. But, Michael feels threatened by Peter's ability to read now, because he does not want his parents who only acknowledged his ability also recognize the ability of the new Peter can be overcome. To counteract Peter's recognition of his ability from their parents, Michael tells his parents to influence them by saying that his new twin sister's ability to read shows his laziness all along.

In competing there are always winners and losers. Likewise with the competition that occurred between Peter and Michael in the fight for the attention of their parents. As in the following quote:

Peter had never been able to win them back after the failures in his youth. His mother had been upset by him, and his father had never tried to understand him. Sharing a career in medicine with Michael, they had so much in common, and Peter had never succeeded in

