

THE ANALYSIS OF THE FRIENDSHIP IN JOHN LE CARRÉ'S *AGENT RUNNING IN THE FIELD*

Muhammad Taufiq Gani Putra^{*1}, Adeline Grace M.Litaay²

Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This research discusses the types of friendship that are shown in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field* and how the friendships impacting the lives of the main characters, Nat and Ed. The research analysis uses the theory of friendship by Aristotles discussed in Lorraine Smith Pangle's *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* as the theoretical review, with thematic approach as the analysis model, exstrinsic research approach using moral approach, and qualitative research design. According to the research's findings, there are two types of friendships in *Agent Running in the Field* that fits Lorraine Smith Pangle's interperatation of Aristotles's theory of friendship: friendship of pleasure and friendship of virtue. As for the impact of Nat and Ed's friendships to their lives, Nat starts to have doubts over his government who he has served for years, and he got interrogated and scapegoated after MI6 finds Ed handing over intellegence to a Russian spy, before being coerced to either turn Ed in to prison or make him a double agent who serves Britain more. For Ed, he become less guarded, he meet Florence through Nat, who eventually become his fiance, and he is able to unknowingly escape from his fate of being imprisoned or becoming a double agent. The research's limitation is that of the potrayal of friendship in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field* and the impacts of friendship between Nat and Ed in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field* on their lives. The research concludes in what are the types of friendship depicted in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field*, and how it affecting the lives of the two friends.

Article history:

Keyword:

Espionage, Friendship, Loyalty, Marriage, Politics, Patriotism.

INTRODUCTION

Friendship is a relationship of mutual affection between people that is above "acquaintance" or an "association", which, according to Lydia Denworth (2020), is not only important to a person's spirit and mental health, but even critical to their physical and emotional well-being. Friendship has also been discussed in many topics like psychology, sociology and more, as exemplified in *The Friendship Analysis in the Novel "The Kite Runner"* by Khaled Hosseini by Arifuddin (2010), *Friendship Between George and Lennie in Steinbeck's of Mice and Men* by Yulianti Intrin (2009), *Friendship, Not Freedom: Dependent Friends in the Late Eighteenth-Century Novel* by Renée Bryzik (2022), and *Beyond "Obligatory Camaraderie": Girls' Friendship in Zadie Smith's NW and Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's Skim* by Judith Taylor (2022). It has also been discussed and shown in many literary works.

*CONTACT: m.taufiqganiputra@gmail.com

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One of the things these studies haven't done is using a novel titled *Agent Running in the Field* by John le Carré as the main source, where the friendships are between two adult men, with their secret occupation leading them into trouble. Meanwhile, the friendship depicted in *The Kite Runner* are between a rich kid and the son of his housekeeper, the friendship in *Of Mice and Men* are between two young teenage boys in unequal standing due to one of them being intellectually impaired looking for a job together during America's Great Depression, the friendship in *Skim* are between three teenage girls - one is the protagonist's earlier friend who has slowly drifted apart, while the other is a popular girl who becomes the protagonist's new friend, and the friendship in *Belinda* is between two women in the 1800s, until one of them mistakenly thought the other was wanting to wed her husband when she died from her breast cancer.

Agent Running in the Field is a 2019 novel by a British writer John le Carré, who was well known for his writings, fiction and non-fiction, about espionage. The novel follows Nathaniel - shortened to Nat, a 47-year-old British intelligence agent, who is approaching the end of his career with MI6. One day, a man named Ed visits a badminton club Nat is a regular in looking for a challenge, which Nat reciprocates, and eventually become friends with each other. However, Ed's actions put Nat in hot water, and now he must choose to turn Ed in or turn him into a spy.

This research is focusing on the impact of the friendship has on the two main characters' lives, from the shifting of opinions from a friend's influence to the decision to choose between friend or other things like job security or family, and it is shown through solving the research's problem statements; what are the types of friendship shown in *Agent Running in the Field* according to Lorraine Smith Pangle's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of friendship, and how said friendships affecting Nat and Ed's lives.

This research uses Lorraine Smith Pangle's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of friendship based on her book, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (2002), due to the categories different types of friendships in that theory made it easy to define within a narrative text.

This research is conducted to showcase how a friendship can be categorized based on how it started, how a friendship can change a person, and how it affects a person's life based on the other person's identities and actions, like occupation and criminal record.

METHOD

This research uses Aristotle's theory of friendship as described by Lorraine Smith Pangle's *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (2002) as the theoretical review, where there are three types of friendships: friendship of utility, where the bonds of friendships are formed out of each other's necessity, friendship of pleasure, where the friendship is formed because the two or more people are having fun with one another, and friendship of virtue, where the friendship are made because the companions find a significant similarities with one another, such as cultural identities, political beliefs, and moral values.

This research uses Moral & Humanistic extrinsic approach, which, according to T.M. Scanlon's *What We Owe to Each Other* (1998), is about discovering and using extrinsic elements in a literature by viewing it as a means to explore human nature and moral values, and

Qualitative research design, where the data used are non-numerical, as mentioned by Robert Bogdan (1998).

The data source for this research is the *Agent Running in The Field* novel, with the data in question being the quoted paragraphs within the novel, which then collected using a personal laptop.

The data is first collected by reading the novel to identify and select it for the analysis, where the data then being interpreted using the Moral & Humanistic approach, as described by to draw the correct conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Portrayal of Friendship in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field*

Using Lorraine Smith Pangle's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of friendship, there are two types of friendship depicted in the *Agent Running in The Field* novel, the friendship of pleasure and the friendship of virtue.

Friendship of Pleasure in John le Carré's Agent Running in the Field

For the friendship of pleasure, Nat's friendship with Ed begins with Ed challenging him for a badminton match. When they play for the first time, Nat realizes how evenly matched he is with Ed, something he hasn't experienced in a long while (Carré, 2019: 57). The two then spends their time drinking ale at the badminton club's bar to get to know each other.

Friendship of Virtue in John le Carré's Agent Running in the Field

There are two depictions for the friendship of virtue in the novel.

On one side, Ed is a very guarded and closed off individual due to his passion and zealotry over the current day politics, rendering him friendless before meeting Nat, due to how people often get exhausted or dismissive in such topics. It gets to the point that he warn Nat by telling him his opinion of Brexit and Donald Trump, and that if Nat disagrees with it, Ed will cut his losses and leaves. It was only after Ed discovers Nat's opinion over the political topics he is passionate about did he starts to open up to Nat, as shown in the following sentence:

"My point being that I would *not* wish to be sitting here with you under false pretense, given that I have admired your play, and you personally. Brexit is the most important decision facing Britain since 1939, in my opinion. People say 1945 but I'm not at all sure why, frankly. So all I'm asking is, do you agree with me? I know I'm over-earnest. I've been told. Plus a lot of people don't like me because I'm outspoken, which I am (Carré, 2019:66-67)".

On the other side, Nat's friendship of pleasure slowly turns into friendship of virtue as he gets to know Ed as a person, as shown in the following retrospective quotation:

Then to add another ingredient to the mix, one that only now I am willing to admit to, although I believe it was present in me from our first improbable exchange. I am speaking of an awareness on my part that I was in presence of something rare in the life I had so far led, and particularly in such a young man: namely true conviction, driven not by motives of gain or envy or revenge or self-aggrandizement, but the real thing, take it or leave it (Carré, 2019:65).

Nat even sees parallels between Steff, his daughter, and Ed in personality, way of seeing life, and how, later in the novel, their behavior changes as they end up in a relationship and engaged with their respective partners, as shown in the following internal monologue:

Sometimes it was as if someone else was talking out of him. His voice, which was a good one when it was just being itself, would go up an octave, hit a level and a stick there on one didactic note, not for long, but long enough for me to think: hullo, I know this register, and Steff's got one too. It's the one you can't argue with because it just rolls on as if you're not there, so best nod him along and wait till it's runs its course (Carré, 2019:69).

The Impact of Friendship in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field*

From the story of *Agent Running in the field*, the friendship between Nat and Ed has left an impact on their lives, for better or worse.

On Nat's end, while his political opinion are almost the same as Ed, he didn't like to openly support it due to being an MI6 agent, but it has slowly eroded from exposure to Ed's passionate opinion over Brexit.

Later on, when Nat is surveilling a Russian agent with his MI6 team, they find that Ed is handing over secret intelligence to them. This causes Nat to be interrogated by MI6 and MI, who turns out to be Ed's true boss, over his friendship with Ed and who Ed is as a person, as someone who is close to him, as shown in this quoted dialogue:

Brammel is the first to recover from the power of speech. "We need to hear it from you one more time, Nat", he announces.

"Hear *what*?" I demand.

"Shannon's world view. A précis of his motivation. All the shit he spouted at you about Trump, Europe, and the universe, which you appear to have swallowed wholesale (Carré, 2019:236-237)."

This culminates in them giving Nat ultimatum – find Ed and either apprehend him for treason, or turn him into a double agent who is loyal to Britain, something Nat is good at, as shown in the following conversation between Bryn, Nat's old friend and now superior in MI6, and Nat:

"Oh my dear boy, You and I together, who else?"

"Doing *what*, if I may ask?"

"What you've *always* done best! You befriend your man all ways up. You're halfway there already. Judge your moment and go the other half. Tell him who you are, show him the error of his ways, calmly, undramatically, and *turn* him. The moment he says "Yes I will, Nat", put a halter round his neck and lead him gently into the paddock."

"And when I've led him gently in?"

"We play him back. Keep him beavering away at his day job, feed him carefully concocted disinformation which he passes up the pipeline to Moscow. We run him for as long as he lasts, and once we've done with him we let our sister Service wrap up the Gamma network to the sound of trumpets. *You* get a commendation from the Chief, *we* cheer you on your way and you've done the best you can for your young pal. Bravo. Any less would be disloyal, more would be culpable (Carré, 2019:256-257)".

On Ed's side, having a friend in Nat has manages to have Ed loosen up and becoming less tense in life. He also met Florence, Nat's junior, during one of their badminton session when he asks Nat to have that session be Double as he's bringing his sister because she want to play with him, who eventually becomes his fiancée, as shown in Nat's inner bfflement over the turn of events, and Ed's retelling of introducing Florence to his family, in the following paragraphs:

As we grasp hands, I grapple with two more irreconcilable pieces of intellegence. Florence has stuck to her Office vows, at least so far as I'm concerned. And Ed, an identified Russian spy, proposes to marry a recently employed member of my service, thereby multiplying to infinity the opportunity for national scandal. But these are just scattered thoughts wafting through my head as he lays out his plans for "a quick Register Office job, no bullshit."

"I called Mum and she was *magic*", he confides, leaning forward over his beer and grabbing my forearm in his enthusiasm. "She's into Jesus in a pretty big way, Mum is, same as Laura, always have been. And I *thought* she'd say, you know, if Jesus isn't going to be at the wedding it's a washout (Carré, 2019:282). "

This happiness is also what lead to Nat to doubt if Ed really is a double agent. However, seeing how he asks him to be his best man in his wedding, and how similar it is to how Steff, his daughter, mellows out after being engaged her boyfriend, is what convinces him that Ed is not a spy, and that there must be other motives in him giving a Russian spy classified documents, as shown in the following internal monologue of Nat's as he, Ed, Prue and Florence having a dinner party at a chinese restaurant.

Their wedding chatter and inability to leave each other alone awaken echoes of Steff and Juno over Sunday lunch. I tell them Steff is engaged to be married and they dissolve in symbiotic merriment. I give them the benefit of what is by now my party piece about giant bats on Barro Colorado. My one problem is that each time Ed joins the conversation, I find

myself comparing the cheery love-smitten voice I'm hearing with the grudging version of it that Valentina aka Anette aka Gamma had to put up with three nights previously (Carré, 2019:287).

This conviction is what lead to Nat to trace back Ed's activity through Europe, finding evidences that Ed is acting on a impulse after reading a classified document regarding secret communication between Britain and America and tries to share it with other European countries' Intellegence departement to do something about it, with Russian Secret Intellegence, who found out about it, disguise their agents as Germans' to get the classified documents. This fact is what lead to Nat to choose neither of his superiors' ultimatum and, instead, secretly getting Ed out of Britain with the help of Florence and Prue to ensure that MI6 cannot tail him, albeit at the cost of revealing his true occupation as an MI6 agent to Ed, which puts a strain in their friendship,

Discussion

The Portrayal of Friendship in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field*

Friendship of Pleasure in John le Carré's Agent Running in the Field

The first match between Nat and Ed, and the subsequent bar visit is considered friendship of pleasure, as the narration, which is written in Nat's point of view, mentions how he find Ed an exciting individual to have around.

Friendship of Virtue in John le Carré's Agent Running in the Field

For Ed, he is a closed-off individual whose passion and opinions for politics has render him friendless due to being fed up with the topic, to the point that Nat is his first friend ever, and that is not before warning him of his strong political beliefs, which has driven people away from him before, and telling him that he's not afraid to pack up and leave if Nat is disagree with it. This point can be considered enforced case for friendship of virtue, because Ed tells Nat that he wont be his friend unless he supports his political opinions.

For Nat, he is drawn to Ed as he sees him as a young man who has traits he consider rare in recent generation – stubborn defiance of one's opinion regardless how others views them because of it, and that he shares many traits with Steff, Nat's daughter, who is just as strong-head and defiant as Ed, and later become much more relaxed and less tense after finding love in their respective fiancées.

The Impact of Friendship in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field*

For Nat, his friendship with Ed has resulted in a relatively negative net gain, as he got into trouble when MI6 watches Ed handing over secret intellegences to a Russian spy they keep surveillance on, questioning if Ed knows his secret identity as a MI6 agent and use their friendship to gain access of the classified informations, or even if Nat trained him to be a spy, as it is his specialty skill to train people to be double agent.

For Ed, his friendship with Nat has turn his life for the better, as not only he end up in a relationship with Florence, Nat's junior spy who he brings to their badminton session with Ed's sister under the guise of a co-worker, he also becomes less tense and guarded after having a friend in Nat. It is also thanks to Nat, Florence, and Nat's wife, Prue, did he manages to escape from MI6 by getting him and Florence off Britain.

CONCLUSION

In Agent Running in the Field, there are two types of friendships as defined by Aristotle's theory of friendship in Lorraine Smith Pangle's *Aristotle and the philosophy of friendship*, friendship of pleasure, as shown when Nat enjoying Ed's companionship as they plays badminton together and drinking ale in the bar as they talks about current politics, and friendship of virtue, where Nat befriend Ed because he sees him as a great person and resembles his daughter in personality and mindset, while Ed befriend Nat because he agrees with his political opinion, something that renders him hard to find friends before.

As for the impact of friendship, Nat's life gone quite worse from his friendship with Ed, as his political opinion shifts to be more radical than he previously does thanks to Ed's feverish opinions for topics like Brexit and Donald Trump, and that he is interrogated and accused as an accomplice by his MI6 superiors when his team caught Ed on video and audio recordings handing over classified papers to a Russian spy they keeping a track of.

Meanwhile, Ed's friendship with Nat has been good fr him, as not only Ed gradually becomes a much more optimistic person after he befriend Nat, but also after meeting and eventually in a relationship with Florence, who he meet during one of his badminton session with Nat.

This research is hoping to showcases what friendships could do to a person, as shown when Nat and Ed's personality and life changes thanks to their friendship with one another.

Author Information

Muhammad Taufiq Gani Putra, college student of Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, has interest in fiction literatures, and email: m.taufiqganiputra@gmail.com.

Adeline Grace Marianne Litaay, Assistant Professor and Dean of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya in Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, and e-mail: adelinegrace@untag-sby.ac.id .

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