A DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF BILBO, THE MAIN
CHARACTER IN TOLKIEN'S THE HOBBIT

Betsy Ayu Intan Devany

Abstract

The contrasting portrayal of Bilbo, the protagonist of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's The Hobbit, before and after his decision to join the dwarfs' struggle to reclaim their wealth is an interesting phenomenon which motivated this study as well as the borrowing of deconstruction strategy in which concepts such as paradoxes, floating signifiers, binary oppositions, différance, and logo-centric are applied. Deconstruction was selected to interpret the data because it "reads the text against itself so as to expose what might be thought of as the 'textual subconscious', where meanings may be expressed directly contrary to the surface meaning". Since Bilbo is described as an ordinary person coincidentally turns to be a hero although his characteristics do not meet the stereotypical ones of a hero, this study addressed the question how his representation affects the concept of heroes raised in subsequent literary works. It seems that the portrayal of the hero acts as a sign which is caught up in a chain of signifiers that never rests on a definite signified. Besides, it challenged the general understanding of a hero. As a result, the general ideas of a hero cannot be used as a benchmark to assess a hero’s attitudes.

Keyword: paradox; floating signifiers; binary oppositions; différance; logocentric; hero