

In The House of Tom Bombadil: A Traumatic Healing Therapy at Home

Reynaldi Christian Yapto, Juanda*

Departement of English Literature, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia

*Correspondent author: juanda@email.unikom.ac.id

Abstract. A trauma can be healed with several methods, which one of the simplest method to be done with patients who suffers such condition is a psychological healing treatment at home. This treatment, although its very simple to be done, can positively impact the traumatic person's behaviour in a future ahead. A fictional example of healing treatment at home can be found in Tom Bombadil's actions against the Hobbits found in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of The Ring*. There, Tom Bombadil executed a healing treatment at his house towards the hobbits to heal them from their traumatic events that they experienced in the past. The crucial part of this treatment at the Tom Bombadil's house would change these hobbits characters and behaviour in the following events. This essay will try to describe one of the psychological therapies to apply to people with traumatic symptoms by learning through the actions of Tom Bombadil. The results of this study will show how Tom Bombadil's healing therapy for hobbits represent the simplest yet propitious psychological treatment to applied.

1. Introduction

Trauma is roughly identified by people as a reminiscence of an awful events experienced in the past. Those unpleasant events feel undeletable from their core memory which eventually would affects their future behaviour and point of view regarding how they see their environments. Trauma itself is a condition named by Freud and Breuer as a physical trauma; as acts of hallucinating the events happened in the past which formed some hysterical behaviour such as murmuring, screaming, or physical offensiveness (Breuer & Freud, 3). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5) published in 2013 explained the trauma as a psychological symptom developed trough certain events related with fatal threatened, serious injury, sexual abusive, or the fear to lost the loved ones. These horrible events may cause some hysterical actions done by the persons with traumatic symptom. Well known common behaviour developed by such people could be seen through their psychological emotional spontaneity such as anxiety, fright, or the acts of shame (Breuer, & Freud, 4-5). However, as Breuer and Freud explained in their essay *Study in Hysteria* mentioned that certain psychological hysterics are healable under the right treatment. One of the simplest and most effective healing treatment could be done over traumatic patients is the a practice of healing in home. The traumatic patient needs to be treated passionately, gently, and sweetly at home to make them adapt with their situations and change. The theory behind this therapy is simply because house or home is the place of shelter, where one protected

themselves from the harsh and cruel world outside. The place where one should feel safe and received hostility as a security and self control (Gram-Hanssen et al. 3).

This practical healing can be found in the actions done by Tom Bombadil against the traumatized hobbits in the book *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. During the hobbits journey as The One Ring barrier begun, lots of discoveries and horrific adventure are following to show up. Start from their meeting against the Nine Riders of Sauron, meet a tricky Gollum, experiencing betrayal of the fellowship member, and fighting against an ancient demon Balrog. These events are considered as the obstacles that the hobbits need to face throughout their journey to Mordor to destroy the One Ring. Among those horrible battles, there is one event that considered to be one of the most everlasting, blessed positive events experienced by the Hobbits. The events known as their encounter with Tom Bombadil. As the hobbits arrived at the eerie nuance of Old Forest and fought against an evil old willow tree and almost die because of it, Tom Bombadil along with his cheerful ballad appeared. He saved these hobbits from the willow tree and over them a shelter from the hideous darkness of old forest at his house. Later, what the hobbits experienced at the house of Tom Bombadil would become their moment of recall. A one lifetime memory that will help these little, weak terrified hobbits into what the readers known for decades as the hero of the saga. Speaking of the hobbits itself, it is also clear that certain traumatized events are occur among the hobbit companionship. Tom Bombadil, furthermore, is indeed an enigmatic character whose existence, in fact, acted as an anti-plot in the whole story. The mystery of his identity have been questioned by readers since the first time *The Lord of The Ring: The Fellowship of The Ring* published back in 1954. Scholars and study have been debated Tom Bombadil with many interpretations. One said that Tom Bombadil is an angel itself, or a god who dwell on earth (Hargrove, 22), while Tolkien himself reveal the idea of Tom Bombadil begun as his physical dutch-doll toy (Carpenter, 162) added to the story as an enigmatic being (Tolkien, Letters, 193). The uncertain persona of Tom Bombadil had been described by Tolkien as he said:

“And even in a mythical Age there must be some enigmas, as there always are. Tom Bombadil is one (intentionally)” (Tolkien, Letters, 193)

The mysterious enigmatic presence of Tom Bombadil could scientifically be interpreted. By only focus on the actions done to the hobbits by Tom Bombadil in his house, and seeing the long terms effect among the Hobbits after they left Tom Bombadil’s nursing in his house to become a stronger and more confident personas, it obvious to stated that therapies happened at the house of Tom Bombadil What they got at the Tom Bombadil’s house gave them a significant mental heal and change their soul even for the future events to become a stronger hobbits, both physically and mentally. The example of this treatment can be seen at the CRITI program. The Chattanooga Room in the Inn (CRITI) is a program of sheltering and evaluating homeless woman done in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The goal of this program is serving homeless women and their children a shelter to provide them an emotional and physical safety where they can learn to compete, grow their skills, and financially independent to provide themselves for avoiding homelessness (Coffman & G. Beatrice, 6). Women who graduate from this program were living in stable housing and the rate of successful candidates were 100% per 2019, as it stated in the paper. Another program that prove home as a healing tool could be seen inside the veteran house project done by Barris in Santa Clarita (2015). Barris argue that the war veteran soldiers mostly lived they post-war life with Post Traumatic Disorder episodes as a result of their combat days, which those conditions, he believed, are healable if they stay in a safe, cozy, and gentle housing environment (Barris, 1-4). One of the project

that Barris done is a housing complex which pay detail attention about the psychological healing theme, for the residences of this houses would be veteran soldiers, as Barris state :

This project offers a model for similar future interior design projects to incorporate healing design concepts and the environmental psychology design principles of meaning of place/sense of community, personal space, and privacy into the creation of restorative housing environments and the successful role they can play in the healing and recovery process from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Barris, 81)

The methods that Barris use to apply the healing design theme surrounding the environment houses are planting a community garden, add energy save window in every houses, built communal outdoor spaces for veteran daily activities, create a rich plants and trees road line, install an open floor plans for buffer space, and add high insulated walls in every bedroom to perform a relaxing solitarily quite house (Barris, 25-28). In the house of Tom Bombadil, the hobbits received a gentle treatment and made them feel like they were rest in their own house. Suppers, good bed, warm blankets, fine meals, gentle whisper of songs, and some wise advices given from Tom Bombadil heal their mental episodes after their encounter with the evil willow tree. For the hobbits, their mental healing which happened in the house of Tom Bombadil successfully turned them to become stronger and brave hobbits who's after the following events, possess warrior spirits to participate in huge battles and war. Tom Bombadil have done something to them at his house. The traumatic healing therapy done in home or house in literary fictions also could be tracked back on Toni Morrison's novel Home (2012). Visser, on his statement regarding positives mental growth after traumatic experiences found in Morrison's Home described:

"Home depicts the siblings' traumatic memories of childhood abuse, also drawing into play the wider history of slavery and racist persecution and lynchings, as well as Frank's trauma as a veteran of the Korean war, and his many symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite these ineradicable scars of past and recent wounding, the final pages of Home speak unreservedly of healing, rejuvenation, and personal growth. Its final page presents the image of a green bay tree that is damaged at the core, but at the same time alive and growing: It looked so strong So beautiful." (Visser, 2015)

The fictional healing technique found inside Tom Bombadil's house are applicable to done in the real-life traumatic patients. It was a medical allegory, a fictional example that can applied in our societies to heal traumatic symptoms. That by building a safe and comfortable environment in house were an effective therapy to apply against person with traumatized episode. By learning from Tom Bombadil's hostility, we can note examples of how such method are simple yet extremely prominent in healing a traumatic episodes among the hobbits. This essay will elaborate and describe what methods Tom Bombadil use to heal hobbits in his house, and how it affect the hobbits persona and changed them into a completely different individuals.

2. Research Method

Research method used in this paper is qualitative research where writers collect data from various papers and cited them in order to support the original idea. Quoted from Creswell, "

“Qualitative research relies on data obtained by the researcher from first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires (on which participants write descriptively), focus groups, participant-observation, recordings made in natural settings, documents, case studies, and artifacts. The data are generally nonnumerical. Qualitative methods include ethnography, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and interpretative phenomenological analysis.” (Creswell & J.W, 29)

The paper use in this essay are psychological research that discussing traumatic healing over a patient with related episode. Other literature books based on Tolkien’s saga about The Lord of The Rings are also concluded. The combinations of Tolkien’s literature works and traumatic psychological understanding are what this paper trying serve to the readers.

Therefore, in order to achieve the goals of this papers, the record keeping qualitative approach would going to be the used qualitative method done in this paper. The method is similar as the writer went into the library to collect data found in various books then put them into the paper. The data collected in this paper are digital journals found through internet. Psychological journals found in the internet and related Tolkien’s works would become the main sources of this paper. In order to identifying Tom Bombadil’s cure against the hobbits, this paper would give a clear insight of the changes through the hobbits, separated into three parts; Pre-encounter against Tom Bombadil which would described hobbits traumatic experiences before they met Tom Bombadil; Encounter of Tom Bombadil which include the healing treatment done in Tom Bombadil’s house; and Post-encounter of Tom Bombadil which describing the mental changes experienced by the hobbits after the event of The House of Tom Bombadil.

3. Results and Discussion

The house of Tom Bombadil create the feeling of safety and comfort. These peaceful ambiances heal the hobbits inside out, which acts to comfort his feelings and help them forgetting the horror of the dark forest. Marshall remind us that the owner of the house act like a nurse to its guess as a guidance and mental supports that lead it’s patient to positive state of emotions (Marshall, 2008). Here are the discussion of how the Hobbits behaviour turn from a traumatic coward into the brave little hobbits as the results of therapy done in the house of Tom Bombadil. the discussion would be separated into three parts. First would be the hobbit’s pre-encounter condition before met Tom Bombadil that would explain and elaborate the traumatic feeling possess by the hobbits, second is the encounter of the Tom Bombadil part which would explain the therapy of Tom Bombadil done into the hobbits, and the final part is a post-encounter with Tom Bombadil which would describe the later bravery of the hobbits who dare to fought things greater than them as the result of Tom Bombadil’s therapy.

3.1 Pre-encounter of Tom Bombadil

Certain events that lead into traumatized behaviour among the hobbits could be seen before their encounter against Tom Bombadil in The Old Forest. First, the fear to lost the loved one was experienced by Frodo Baggins. The DSM-5 stated that the experience of being left by the loved ones is one of the major elements that could trigger the traumatic persona. Frodo’s uneasiness for being left by his only family, Bilbo Baggins trigger his traumatic experience. His sorrow could be seen as he described his feeling against the left of Bilbo Baggins:

“I wish – I mean, I hoped until this evening that it was only a joke,” said Frodo. ‘But I knew in my heart that he really meant to go. He always used to joke about serious things. I wish I had come back sooner, just to see him off.’ (Tolkien, FoTR, 47)

His later behaviour later found to be so quiet and silence while his smiling was not described as joy yet as a face from tired and worried person and replied his peers questions regarding Bilbo Baggins as concise as possible (Tolkien, 48). Another expression are feeling of regret and lodging for the presence of Bilbo, the murmur and little talking, then his actions to wonder among the fields of Shire alone with no presence of friends (Tolkien, 56). His cowardly and fear against dangerous things beyond his knowledge were also described during his reactions while he discover the true evil identity of the One Ring inherited from Bilbo, written:

“Frodo sat silent and motionless. Fear seemed to stretch out a vast hand, like a dark cloud rising in the East and looming up to engulf him. ‘This ring!’ he stammered. ‘How, how on earth did it come to me?’” (Tolkien, FoTR, 67)

On the other hand, Merry and Pippin’s traumatic experience could be seen while they beg for his life at the Old Forest against Old Man Willow. They were trapped inside the old willow tree and as Frodo trying to help them by hitting the willow, the evil tree threatened Frodo to crush them to death. This is also known as the first near death experienced of Merry and Pippin. The result of this horrible event haunt them even more as they dreamt about the willow branch while they slept at Tom Bombadil’s house. The horrific dream of Merry and Pippin were described as:

“At his side Pippin lay dreaming pleasantly; but a change came over his dreams and he turned and groaned. He woke, or thought he had waked, and yet still heard in the darkness the sound that had disturbed his dream: tip-tap, squeak: the noise was like branches fretting in the wind, twig-fingers scraping wall and window: creak, creak, creak. He wondered if there were willow-trees close to the house;” (Tolkien, FoTR, 167)

3.2 Encounter With Tom Bombadil

The encounter of Tom Bombadil is the beginning of the healing treatment done against the hobbits. Tom Bombadil took the hobbits to shelter inside his house. his comfortable house is what heal these hobbits. Marshall, described house as the therapy of healing, where soul, body, and mind are taken care well and would erased all bad events that happening by small steps (Marshall, 2008). As the hobbits enter the roof of Tom Bombadil, many comfort and joy happen. Delicious supper, warm welcome from Goldberry whose described to be look like an angel cover in gold, floor that feels like a green grass, walls decoration that curing their visions after witness certain horrible events, and beds that heal their body and their mind while sleeping. The hospitality shown by Tom Bombadil can be separated into two main actions; his acts to singing, and how he gave them comfort bed.

3.2.1 Tom Bombadil’s Sing

Tom Bombadil is a man of music. He was described as a man who joyfully sing a lot of ballads as he speaking. His voice was soft, and he nodded slowly as he whispering his words in a form of a song just like a man who were trying to sleep. In 2015, a study about the *Music-Supported Therapy* (MST) against 20 chronic stroke patients shows that the MST programs done into those patients with stroke experienced a significant motoric sensor improvement. By using the a digital keyboard and an electronic drum set, the patient’s motoric sensor improvements were began to develop as their fingers able to tickle more shortly after the therapy was finished (Rodriguez, et al, 2-3). During the first supper in the house of Tom Bombadil, the hobbits were described to experienced a merry meal, which later known that they were

happily singing, as it were easily to be done than speak with flat conversational words. Moreover, the MST similarity found in the house of Tom Bombadil could be found in Goldberry, whose footsteps were described as a stream that falling gently over cool stones in the quiet of night (Tolkien, 164). Many soft sounds were found in the house of Tom Bombadil, started from the air described as a little sound of night breath, the cracking calm of trees that gently knocking the glass windows, or a soft swift wound of a wool. Moreover, In the study of music and its therapy effect among the infants, the so called as *Creative music therapy* (CMT) play a role as a humming melody directed to the infant for sending them in the state of positive calmness while they are sleeping (Haslbeck, et al, 9). The effect of Tom Bombadil's musical healing could be seen in one of Frodo's dream during his second night sleeping at Tom Bombadil's house. He was mentioned to dream a future of his faith, as written,

Frodo heard a sweet singing running in his mind: a song that seemed to come like a pale light behind a grey rain-curtain, and growing stronger to turn the veil all to glass and silver, until at last it was rolled back, and a far green country opened before him under a swift sunrise. (Tolkien, FoTR: 176)

This dream of Frodo was actually a *deja-vu*, a vision of his merry future faith after the journey to bear the One Ring ended in the *Lord of The Ring: The Return of The King*, where he sees The Undying-land described as a green far beyond the swift sunrise over the sea (Tolkien, *The Lord of The Ring: The Return of The King*, 1067). Moreover, as he awoken from that future vision, the voice of Tom Bombadil could be heard as he whistling softly alongside Frodo and awoken him as described that *the vision melted into waking; and there was Tom whistling like a tree-full of birds; and the sun was already slanting down the hill* (Tolkien, *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of The Ring*, 176). The friendly musical atmosphere also accompanied Merry and Pippin through their nightmare. As they slept, the trauma for being trapped inside the belly of a willow tree reappeared in the vision of their dream. The dreadful trauma of Pippin's willow-dreaming was described:

“the sound that had disturbed his dream: tip-tap, squeak: the noise was like branches fretting in the wind, twig-fingers scraping wall and window: creak, creak, creak. He wondered if there were willow-trees close to the house; and then suddenly he had a dreadful feeling that he was not in an ordinary house at all, but inside the willow and listening to that horrible dry creaking voice” (Tolkien, FoTR: 166-167)

Here, the enchanting role of Tom Bombadil's house play a role in saving Pippin from having a dreadful nightmare about his trauma. Like a mother whispering a soft whistling voice into the ear of her baby, the magical voice of Tom Bombadil whisper into the ear of Pippin while he slept. “fear nothing. Have peace until morning” was what the enchanting voice said, as he slept again into another dream and sleep until the sun arise.

3.2.2 Tom Bombadil's Bedroom

Tom Bombadil's bedroom indeed gave the hobbits a comfortable place to sleep. Along the journey to leave shire, before arriving at Rivendell and meet Lord Elrond and Gandalf, those hobbits never found a proper place to stay, not even for sleep. Tom Bombadil's house was known to be the first safety place for them to stay. One of the safest nuances in his house is his bedroom that served to the hobbits. Many protections and the symbolism of a safety feeling happens here. Start from its room which act like a dream catcher to counter nightmare and send its dweller into the state of peaceful sleep, and its extreme comfort offered for them who slept there which even lead them to saw their future self and experiencing *deja-vu*

during sleep. These are happening because the feeling of safety is very personal and spiritual in psychological therapy (Marshall, 261-262). The bed itself described with mattresses and pillow soft as down where the covered white blankets was having a soft touch of wool. This pillow saved Pippin from his traumatic dream of the willow tree appearances that presence in his dream. Then, as *he felt the soft pillows yield to his hands, and he lay down again relieved* (Tolkien, 167). Frodo Baggins on the other hand experienced terrible dream as well. His trauma regarding the presence of the Black Rider that following him through his journey reappeared in his dream. The hoofing sounds of horses galloping in his dream, while the thought of the stone walls of Tom Bombadil's home gave him comfort to slept back into unremembered peaceful dream. The dreaming of drowning in the deep water that foreshadowing his trauma while battling the willow tree were also appear in Merry's dream (Tolkien, 167). However, the dream stop as he recall that he was in the bedroom of Tom Bombadil, then he slept again with a little breath of sweet air from the curtain following his breath as sleep. Meanwhile, Sam Gamgee were able to sleep steadily still like a log of a tree.

3.3 Post-encounter of Tom Bombadil

The result of healing therapy in Tom Bombadil's house could be seen in the changing actions of the hobbits. the hobbits are no longer a coward who hide during danger. They are brave enough to fight for their life. The courage possess by the hobbits have been discussed in the paper written by Beal. Beal believe that shortly after Frodo left Tom Bombadil, he possess what Gandalf seen as a "*glass filled with a clear light*" that resemble Frodo's ultimate healing, while Sam Gamgee seen this light as his strong personal growth which he described the light inside Frodo to be "*even clearer and stronger*" (Beal, 1-5). This is the appearance of Frodo who after surpass a lot of suffering and painful torments turn him into a strong person, both physically and mentally. This is a clear foreshadowing of what a healed person would look like, for Marshall (Marshall, 260) explained that both physical or spiritual healing could only be achieved through a personal suffering which eventually would lead a patient to understanding their identity, purpose, and their personal meaning of life. The first courage of Frodo could be seen as he fought the ghost of the Barrow Wright. As the hobbits left the house of Tom Bombadil to continue their journey, they left in a forest where breeze of frost could suddenly fell. In a brief moment the darkness fall among them, and Frodo found himself laying on top of a stone hall, witnessing a white pale face of his fellow companions, along with dark figure as black as a shadow stand beside their death body. While the feeling of fear triggered his thought to run and leave his friends, another feeling enveloped him as well: a fire of brave. Then Frodo bravely fought the ghosts of the Barrow:

"He wavered, groping in his pocket, and then fought with himself again; and as he did so the arm crept nearer. Suddenly resolve hardened in him, and he seized a short sword that lay beside him, and kneeling he stooped low over the bodies of his companions. With what strength he had he hewed at the crawling arm near the wrist, and the hand broke off; but at the same moment the sword splintered up to the hilt. There was a shriek and the light vanished. In the dark there was a snarling noise." (Tolkien, FoTR, 185)

Another Frodo's bravery are personified during the desperate battle that involved him and the Nazguls. As Frodo Baggins wore The Ring, he saw the physical necromancer of those Black Riders, then he fought them with all power he had:

"Their eyes fell on him and pierced him, as they rushed towards him. Desperate, he drew his own sword, and it seemed to him that it flickered red, as if it was a firebrand. Two of the figures halted." (Tolkien, FoTR, 255)

Cornered, he tried to swing his blade into the Nazgul:

“At that moment Frodo threw himself forward on the ground, and he heard himself crying aloud: O Elbereth! Gilthoniel! At the same time he struck at the feet of his enemy. A shrill cry rang out in the night; and he felt a pain like a dart of poisoned ice pierce his left shoulder” (Tolkien, FoTR, 256)

On the other hand, the courage that burst from other hobbits companions that sheltered in Tom Bombadil’s house are well described in Samwise Gamgee character development. Long after the event of Tom Bombadil, as he and Frodo went into the Cirith Ungol, a horror offensiveness of Shelob the giant spider fell upon him. Shelob the dreadful spider kept attacking them, and kidnapped Frodo which eventually almost killed him. Samwise Gamgee, knowing that his master was in danger, fought the Shelob and leave Shelob wounded very badly, then came to Frodo neglecting all pain he felt:

“Sam shuddered and tried to force himself to move. There was plainly some devilry going on. Perhaps in spite of all orders the cruelty of the orcs had mastered them, and they were tormenting Frodo, or even savagely hacking him to pieces. He listened; and as he did a gleam of hope came to him. Faint as was the hope that his guess brought him, it was enough to rouse him. There might be just a chance. His love for Frodo rose above all other thoughts, and forgetting his peril he cried aloud: 'I'm coming, Mr. Frodo!'”

(Tolkien, RoTK, 1175)

4. Conclusion

House is the safeties place that human could ever possess. People usually be honest and off guard at their own house since it is a shelter, a place to cover them from infinite wild threat out there. House is a place to rest an exhausting soul, a place to breath freely with no fear of danger. It is a home. Moreover, the role of a house, or home could become more. It is also the medium to heal the wicked soul. Tom Bombadil, in his action of nursing the hobbits in his house prove a lot about the role of house as the healing treatment. How a safe, comfortable house could heal a traumatized persona, and turned them into a brave being.

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