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External Conflict and Manipulation Strategy of Ardyn Izunia in Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konflik eksternal serta strategi manipulasi yang dilakukan oleh Ardyn Izunia dalam film Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV (2016). Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana Ardyn membangun, mengendalikan, dan memperluas konflik melalui tindakan, dialog, serta interaksinya dengan tokoh-tokoh lain dalam cerita. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga mengkaji bagaimana karakterisasi Ardyn membentuk perannya sebagai tokoh antagonis yang mampu memengaruhi jalannya konflik politik dan militer di dalam film. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan desain penelitian kepustakaan (library research). Data penelitian diperoleh dari dialog, adegan, tindakan, serta narasi yang berkaitan dengan karakter Ardyn Izunia dalam film. Data dianalisis menggunakan konsep konflik eksternal dan teori karakterisasi untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk konflik yang muncul serta strategi manipulasi yang digunakan oleh Ardyn dalam mencapai tujuannya. Proses analisis dilakukan melalui tahapan pengumpulan data, klasifikasi, interpretasi, dan penarikan kesimpulan berdasarkan bukti-bukti yang ditemukan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ardyn menjadi sumber utama konflik politik dan militer antara Kerajaan Lucis dan Kekaisaran Niflheim. Ia memanfaatkan manipulasi, diplomasi, tipu daya, serta pengaruh psikologis sebagai strategi utama untuk mengendalikan situasi dan mendorong eskalasi konflik. Melalui kecerdasan, kemampuan membaca kelemahan lawan, dan perencanaan yang matang, Ardyn berhasil mengarahkan jalannya peristiwa sesuai kepentingannya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Ardyn merupakan penggerak utama konflik eksternal dalam film, yang merepresentasikan bentuk kekuasaan yang dijalankan melalui kecerdasan strategis, manipulasi politik, dan pengaruh psikologis, bukan semata-mata melalui kekuatan fisik.

Kata Kunci: Ardyn Izunia, Konflik Eksternal, Manipulasi, Karakterisasi, Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV.

Abstract

Conflict is a fundamental element in literary works and films because it drives the plot, shapes character development, and reveals the motivations behind the actions of each character. This study aims to analyze the external conflicts and manipulation strategies

employed by Ardyn Izunia in the film Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV (2016). It specifically examines how Ardyn creates, controls, and escalates conflicts through his interactions, decisions, and political influence throughout the narrative. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a library research design. The data were collected from the film's dialogues, scenes, character actions, and narrative events related to Ardyn Izunia. The analysis applies the concepts of external conflict and characterization theory to identify the forms of conflict experienced by the characters and to explain how Ardyn's personality and behavior contribute to the development of those conflicts. The findings reveal that Ardyn serves as the primary source of political and military conflict between the Kingdom of Lucis and the Niflheim Empire. He employs manipulation, diplomacy, deception, and psychological influence as his principal strategies to achieve his objectives and maintain control over the course of events. Through careful planning, strategic intelligence, and the exploitation of his opponents' weaknesses, Ardyn successfully intensifies the conflict. This study concludes that Ardyn is the central driving force behind the escalation of external conflict, representing a form of power exercised through strategic intelligence, political manipulation, and psychological influence rather than physical strength alone.

Keywords : Ardyn Izunia, External Conflict, Manipulation, Characterization, Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV

INTRODUCTION

In Conflict is one of the most fundamental elements in narrative works because it shapes the plot, drives character development, and maintains audience engagement. Without conflict, a story would lack tension, purpose, and progression. Every major event in a narrative is generally motivated by the presence of a conflict that challenges the characters to make decisions, adapt to changing circumstances, and pursue their goals. Consequently, conflict functions not only as a source of dramatic tension but also as a medium through which themes, values, and ideologies are communicated to the audience. In literary and film studies, conflict is commonly categorized into two broad types: internal conflict and external conflict. According to Timbayo (2023), internal conflict refers to psychological struggles that occur within an individual's mind, such as fear, guilt, doubt, or moral dilemmas. External conflict, on the other hand, occurs when a character confronts forces outside themselves, including other individuals, society, political institutions, nature, or supernatural powers. Both forms of conflict contribute significantly to narrative development, although external conflict often serves as the primary catalyst for major plot events in action-oriented stories.

External conflict is particularly dominant in narratives centered on war, politics, and power struggles. Such conflicts frequently involve competing ideologies, territorial disputes, military confrontations, and struggles for political dominance. These narratives illustrate how individuals negotiate power, manipulate others, and pursue strategic objectives within complex social and political systems. Rather than relying solely on physical combat, external conflict often develops through diplomacy, deception, psychological influence, and political maneuvering, making it a rich subject for literary and cinematic analysis.

One film that effectively portrays this type of external conflict is Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV (2016), directed by Takeshi Nozue. Serving as a prequel to the video game Final Fantasy XV, the film explores the prolonged political and military confrontation between the Kingdom of Lucis and the Empire of Niflheim. The narrative presents a world in which warfare extends beyond the battlefield into diplomatic negotiations, strategic alliances, and political manipulation. As a result, conflict becomes the central force driving the film's narrative and character interactions.

The central conflict in the film revolves around Niflheim's ambition to seize the magical Crystal possessed by the Kingdom of Lucis. This objective motivates the empire to employ a combination of military aggression and political negotiation in pursuit of its goals. Throughout the story, peace treaties, diplomatic discussions, and military operations become interconnected instruments of political strategy. These events demonstrate that external conflict in the film is not merely a sequence of battles but also a struggle for authority, legitimacy, and control over an entire kingdom. Another significant characteristic of the film is its depiction of political power as being predominantly exercised by male leaders. King Regis Lucis Caelum represents Lucis, while Emperor Iedolas Aldercapt and Chancellor Ardyn Izunia hold influential positions within Niflheim. These characters determine military policies, negotiate political agreements, and make decisions that directly influence the fate of thousands of people. Their actions highlight how leadership and political authority become central factors in escalating or resolving external conflict.

Among these influential figures, Ardyn Izunia stands out as one of the film's most intriguing characters. Unlike conventional antagonists who rely primarily on physical strength or direct combat, Ardyn employs intelligence, persuasion, and psychological manipulation to achieve his objectives. As Chancellor of Niflheim, he frequently appears calm, charismatic, and diplomatic, concealing his true intentions beneath a composed and sophisticated demeanor. His ability to manipulate conversations and influence decision-making distinguishes him from other political figures within the narrative.

Ardyn's approach to conflict demonstrates that manipulation can be more powerful than physical violence. He carefully constructs situations in which other characters unknowingly advance his plans while believing they are acting independently. Through persuasive language, calculated deception, and strategic exploitation of trust, Ardyn successfully shapes the behavior of allies and enemies alike. His methods illustrate that external conflict may be sustained and intensified not only through military force but also through psychological influence and political strategy. This complexity makes him an ideal subject for examining manipulation as a mechanism of conflict management. Despite the growing body of research on Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV, previous studies have primarily focused on heroic figures, themes of loyalty, sacrifice, nationalism, or the representation of female characters. Comparatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to the antagonist's role in constructing, directing, and manipulating external conflict. More specifically, there remains limited analysis of Ardyn Izunia's strategic communication, political influence, and manipulation techniques within the broader context of narrative conflict. This gap indicates the need for a more focused examination of the character from the perspective of conflict and manipulation studies.

Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the forms of external conflict involving Ardyn Izunia and to examine the manipulation strategies he employs to influence, control, and dominate those conflicts throughout the film Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV (2016). By exploring Ardyn's actions through the framework of external conflict and manipulation theory, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how antagonistic characters shape narrative progression and political dynamics. Furthermore, it is expected to contribute to literary and film studies by expanding discussions on the strategic role of antagonists in constructing conflict within contemporary cinematic narratives.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is built upon the concept that conflict is the central element in narrative structure because it drives the plot, character development, and thematic meaning. According to Robert Stanton (1965), external conflict occurs when a character struggles against forces outside themselves, including other individuals, institutions, society, or political systems. In Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV, the external conflict emerges through the political confrontation between the Kingdom of Lucis and the Empire of Niflheim. Rather than focusing solely on physical battles, this research emphasizes how conflict develops through political negotiation, military pressure, and interpersonal confrontation initiated by Ardyn Izunia.

The second concept concerns characterization, which explains how a character's personality, motivation, and role in the narrative are revealed. According to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2008), characterization in film can be analyzed through dialogue, actions, facial expressions, decisions, and interactions with other characters. Ardyn Izunia is portrayed as an intelligent strategist rather than a conventional warrior. His calm speech, calculated behavior, and persuasive communication reveal his manipulative nature, making characterization an important theoretical lens for understanding how he influences other characters and directs the development of conflict. The third concept is manipulation strategy, which refers to deliberate efforts to influence the perceptions, emotions, and decisions of others for personal or political advantage. In this study, manipulation is understood through Ardyn's use of diplomacy, deception, persuasion, and psychological control. Instead of relying primarily on military strength, Ardyn exploits language and trust to weaken his opponents before direct confrontation occurs. His diplomatic statements conceal hidden intentions, demonstrating that manipulation functions as a strategic instrument for controlling conflict and achieving domination.

Based on these theories, this research assumes that external conflict and manipulation strategy are closely interconnected. The emergence and escalation of external conflict are influenced by the antagonist's ability to manipulate political situations and interpersonal relationships. Ardyn's characterization as a highly intelligent and strategic leader explains why conflict in the film develops beyond physical warfare into psychological and ideological confrontation. Therefore, characterization serves as the bridge that connects Ardyn's personality with the manipulation strategies he employs throughout the narrative.

Accordingly, the conceptual framework of this research illustrates that Ardyn Izunia's characterization influences his manipulation strategies, including diplomacy, deception, and

psychological persuasion. These strategies subsequently generate and intensify external conflict between Ardyn, King Regis, the Kingdom of Lucis, and the Empire of Niflheim. Ultimately, the interaction between characterization, manipulation strategy, and external conflict shapes the overall narrative of Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV and supports the study's objective of explaining Ardyn's dominant role in creating and controlling conflict throughout the film.

METHODOLOGY

This inquiry utilizes a study employs a qualitative descriptive approach combined with a library research method to examine the forms of external conflict and manipulation strategies performed by Ardyn Izunia in Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV (2016). A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate because the study aims to interpret meanings, behaviors, and interactions portrayed in the film rather than to measure numerical data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), qualitative research seeks to explore and understand social phenomena by interpreting participants, events, and texts within their natural contexts. Through this approach, the researcher is able to provide an in-depth description of Ardyn Izunia's role in constructing and managing external conflict throughout the narrative.

The library research method was selected because the data analyzed in this study are obtained from documentary sources rather than field observations or interviews. According to Jaya et al. (2023), library research is a systematic method of collecting and analyzing information from various written and audiovisual sources relevant to the research topic. These sources include books, scholarly journal articles, film scripts, audiovisual materials, and previous studies that provide theoretical and contextual support. By utilizing library research, the researcher is able to compare theoretical concepts with the narrative representation presented in the film and develop a comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

The primary source of data is the film Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV, directed by Takeshi Nozue and released in 2016. The film serves as the principal object of analysis because it presents numerous scenes depicting political conflict, military confrontation, and strategic manipulation involving Ardyn Izunia. To obtain reliable data, the researcher watched the film repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, characters, and sequence of events. Dialogues, visual scenes, character interactions, facial expressions, and significant actions involving Ardyn Izunia were carefully observed, transcribed, and documented. Each relevant scene was also recorded according to its timestamp to facilitate accurate data retrieval and analysis. The collected data were subsequently classified and organized according to the research objectives. Dialogues and scenes illustrating external conflict were separated from those demonstrating manipulation strategies. The researcher then categorized the data into themes based on the forms of conflict, the parties involved, the causes of conflict, and the strategies employed by Ardyn Izunia to influence or control other characters. This process enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns of manipulation and examine how these strategies contributed to the development of external conflict throughout the narrative.

The data were analyzed using two complementary theoretical frameworks. First, the concept of external conflict proposed by Stanton (1965) was applied to identify conflicts occurring between a character and external forces, including other characters, political institutions, and social circumstances. Second, the characterization theory developed by Bordwell and Thompson (2008) was employed to examine how Ardyn Izunia's personality and manipulation strategies are revealed through his dialogue, actions, behavior, and interactions with other characters. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of how Ardyn Izunia constructs, maintains, and dominates external conflict within the narrative structure of Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

External Conflict Involving Ardyn Izunia

External conflict is defined as struggle between a character and other characters, institutions, or environment. Ardyn creates and faces the following conflicts: Political Conflict with King Regis This conflict arises from opposing interests: Regis wants to protect Lucis, while Ardyn wants to conquer it. Dialogue : “And we require but a singular compliance. Save your grand Insomnia here, Lucis must forfeit all territories to Niflheim rule.” Scene : Meeting in the throne room offering peace terms Time : 00:12:45 – 00:13:02 Analysis : Ardyn initiates the conflict by presenting unfair conditions disguised as peace. He speaks with absolute authority, positioning himself as a representative of a superior power that has the right to dictate terms to the weaker nation. He puts King Regis in a difficult dilemma: accept surrender and lose all lands, or refuse and face total war.

This clearly shows the external conflict between two leaders with different goals, where Ardyn uses diplomatic pressure to force his will and weaken Lucis’s position. The phrase “save your grand Insomnia here” contains a hidden threat, implying that safety is only possible if they obey the Empire’s will. This proves that Ardyn is the main source of tension and that he uses diplomacy as a weapon to weaken the opponent before actual war begins Dialogue: “Insomnia alone remains safe, but at what cost? Power without movement is merely decay.”

Scene : Responding to Regis’s doubt Time : 00:13:30 – 00:13:42

Analysis : Through this statement, Ardyn shifts the conflict from a physical and territorial dispute into an ideological and intellectual battle. He challenges Regis’s authority and belief, creating tension that leads to distrust and further conflict. Ardyn tries to make Regis feel that his policy of defending the city is actually a weakness, not a strength. The question “but at what cost?” is rhetorical and manipulative, designed to plant doubt and guilt in Regis’s mind. He wants the King to feel that by keeping his people safe inside the walled city, he is actually limiting their freedom and failing as a ruler. The phrase “Power without movement is merely decay” represents Ardyn’s own philosophy that power must be expanded to be real, directly contradicting Regis’s belief that power is meant to protect. This clash of ideologies creates a deep and lasting conflict about what it means to rule and be strong.

Strategic Conflict with the Whole Kingdom of Lucis Ardyn acts as the main force behind the escalation of the war. Dialogue: “What a marvelous city. Such a pity it will soon

belong to us." Scene: Watching Insomnia from the airship Time: 01:22:15 – 01:22:25 Analysis : This dialogue clearly reveals Ardyn's true intention and his attitude toward the conflict. He looks at the beautiful city of Insomnia not as a place where people live, but as a prize or object that he is about to take. He views Lucis as an object to be owned and controlled, placing himself in conflict against the entire nation and its people. The admiration in his voice is not admiration for the people or the culture, but admiration for the value and beauty of something he is about to take for himself.

The phrase "Such a pity it will soon belong to us" is spoken with absolute certainty, showing that for Ardyn, the outcome of the conflict is already decided. He does not seek peace or compromise; he seeks complete domination. This mindset makes the conflict unavoidable, because Ardyn will not stop until he achieves total control over the land and its people.

Manipulation Strategy Used by Ardyn Izunia

To dominate the conflict, Ardyn uses several strategies as his main weapon: Diplomacy and Deception He hides his true purpose behind polite words. Dialogue : "Peace is but a gesture of imperial goodwill." Scene: Introducing himself as peace envoy Time: 00:12:10 – 00:12:20 Analysis: According to characterization theory, Ardyn uses charm and politeness to lower others' guard. He manipulates the definition of "peace" to mean submission, showing his ability to control perception. When Ardyn says the word "Peace", everyone hears a positive, hopeful concept, but for Ardyn, peace is not a goal or a right; it is something that Niflheim gives or takes away according to their own will. By using the word "goodwill", Ardyn presents the Empire as a kind and generous power that wants to end suffering, while in reality he is preparing for conquest.This strategy is extremely effective because it disarms the opponent psychologically; if they reject the offer, they will look like they oppose peace. This proves that Ardyn's greatest weapon is not armies, but his ability to twist the meaning of words and concepts to suit his own purpose.

Playing with Trust and Expectation He makes others believe his words while planning the opposite. Dialogue: "The treaty is signed, the war ends. Or so they believe."

Scene: Speaking alone before the betrayal Time : 01:15:40 – 01:15:50 Analysis : This dialogue reveals Ardyn's true nature as a master manipulator. The phrase "Or so they believe" shows that everything he did before — the negotiation, the signing ceremony, the promise of peace was nothing but a lie and a performance. Ardyn shows his intelligence and calculation. He creates false hope so that the enemy lowers their defense completely.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that Ardyn Izunia is the central figure behind the external conflict in Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV (2016). He manipulates political tensions between the Kingdom of Lucis and the Empire of Niflheim, transforming diplomacy into open war. Ardyn employs three primary strategies: diplomacy as a disguise, deception to manipulate trust, and careful planning to control events. Rather than relying on physical strength, he achieves dominance through intelligence, psychological manipulation, and strategic calculation. Consequently, Ardyn functions as both the creator and controller of the external conflict,

demonstrating how political manipulation and calculated strategy shape the narrative and drive the film's overall development.

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