Plot Analysis of Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart”

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ABSTRACT

This research is a plot analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Poe. This research purpose is to analyze the types of plots and analyze the plot structure in "The Tell-Tale Heart" short story. Research data is extracted from Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart". The method used in data collection is the qualitative method. This study also used theories proposed by Kenney. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is taken because the event in the story begins with the event in the present time, to the next event which is a flashback that supports the first event. Then, proceed back again from the flash-back to the present time. The plot structure has some parts, namely: 1. beginning, 2. middle, 3. end. The beginning of a story is an initial stage that shows the characters in the story, the setting of time and places as well as what the story is about. The middle part contains conflict, complications, and climax.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is generically defined as anybody of written works referring to all accounts. Specifically, defined as written works usually by expert authors that are superior and lasting merit like published book and periodicals. The word literature came from Latin word “litaritura/litteratura” defined as a literal acquaintance. It is a
collection of literary works, either verbal, written, or visual, and contains imaginative expressions that realistically reflect the ideas, tendencies, reactions, and involvement of human attitudes towards life.

Literature is an object of one's thoughts that is present based on environmental influences such as one's way of life. In other words, many reflect that literature can be described as a mirror of human life. It arises from what humans see, feel and experience in social life (Haslinda et al., 2017; Meiliana, 2020).

It can be integrated into many scientific fields without any boundaries such as history, philosophy, sociology and psychology which have scientific disciplines as a media for interpreting human personality, existence and culture (Aras, 2015; Yimer, 2019).

One of the three literary works is prose, which, according to Merriam-Webster, is the common language individuals use while speaking or writing. Prose, by definition, is a type of language that lacks a formal metrical framework. It uses a natural conversational flow and standard grammatical structure. Fiction and nonfiction are two types of prose. Fiction can be assumed as a non-scientific Someone's imagination which is creatively expressed into creations such as novels, short stories, fairy tales. while nonfiction is a fact or reality that has occurred which is contained in biography and history (Hollis, 2021; Surfaifel & Wirza, 2021).

A short story is a prose fictional literary work with unique characteristics such as being shorter than a novel. Short stories can be read at once and take 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Plot is a series of action compiled, planned and delivered by the author of the story in their work. In regard to Kenney (1966), plot gives us a clearer definition of the events found. It is not only a collection of aspects in a temporal series but also the presence of complex cause and effect. This thing called Plot is then a good point to analyze in literature study. Kenny (1966) said in a fiction plot, we mean not just the events told in the story, but the placement of the authors of those events according to their causality. And these arrangement is what eventually become the structure of plot. The structure of the plot consists of a start, an intermediate, and an end. The middle part is then divided to conflict, complication and climax.

According to Mahendra (2017) the type of plot is a series of stories that are arranged from beginning to end until those can become a good storyline. As plot structure, the types of plot is also interesting to analyze as it is show how the part of plot structure is being presented. There are 3 types of plot according to Brooks & Warren (1975) they are namely: Flashback Plot, Successive Plot, Mixed Plot. Meanwhile, According to Ryan (2008) the interactive plots are divided into three types, namely dramatic plots, epistemic plots and epic plots (Ryan, 2008).

The purpose of this research is to study the types of plots used in Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Tell-Tale Heart" and to study the plot structure in the story Edgar Allan Poe’s story “The Tell-Tale Heart”.
2. METHODS

The data source is the source that contains data to increase the value of legality in this research. The data for this research is reachable through the story "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. This story was chosen among them, because it is a famous work from Poe and that it has a quite exemplary plot.

The method use in this research is the qualitative method while using the note-taking techniques. Data collection is done in several steps. Read the short story first to understand and know the story. Then write down the major events related to Kenny's plot structure. In analyzing the data, this research utilizes the theory of Plot Structure proposed by Kenney and Plot Types proposed by Brooks and Warren (1975)

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Synopsis of The Story

"The Tell-Tale Heart" is a narrative from a person that has not been publicized. He explained that he was very nervous, but not crazy. To verify that he isn't crazy, he shared a time in his past. He told the story of an old man, besides the terrible eyes, he still loved her. He hated the old man's eyes so much that he finally had a dark desire to kill it. The narrator walked in the dark for seven consecutive days before the narrator killed the old man. Every night he opened the bedroom door and placed a lantern near the door. The narrator couldn't open his eyes, so he couldn't kill the old man for seven nights. The old man was killed because he opened his eyes on the eighth day. The sun is shining on the lantern before the narrator kills the old man. Then, he dragged him out of bed, and he could only be killed by screaming once. Then, the narrator cuts the body apart and hides it underground in the same room, thus hiding all evidence of the crime. When he had just finished eating, three police officers arrived because a nearby person called them after hearing a scream, and the narrator confidently stated that he was screaming in a nightmare. He further claimed that the old man was outside the town. The police were persuaded, so the narrator told them to sit down in the victim's room. As they spoke, the guilty narrator began to hear, tick, horribly, and grow louder and louder until he couldn't bear it anymore. Frightened, he confessed his crime and asked the police to find the body hidden underground.

I. Types of Plots used in the Story

Depending on the tense used in the story and the perspective of the story, you will usually find that the plot of the story is a mixed plot. That was because the event within the story is begins with the event within the times, and therefore the next event may be a quite flashback that support the primary event. Then, subsequent event is back again from the flash-back event to this time, consistent with the story. The last event within the story such a sort of the continuation of the event within the beginning of this story.
II. Plot Structure in the Story

According to the idea proposed by Kenney (1966), the plot structure is divided into three sections: start, middle, and end. According to Kenny, the plot is an arrangement of the author's events based on causality. There are five phases to plot structures: introduction, conflict, complication, climax, and conclusion (Kenney, 1966: 14-19). The narrator tries to show his sanity by telling the story of the past in the first half. This section consists of 8 nights, of which 7 nights look into the old man's room where the narrator is sleeping. The second act of the plot is about killing, hacking, and hiding the old man's body. The third part is about the arrival of police and the narrator confessing his crimes to them.

The introduction stems from the narrator's attempt to demonstrate and establish his sanity by recounting a story. The conflict in the story is shown when the old man's room is routinely visited by the narrator at midnight for seven days "to carry out dirty intentions". The narrator has eye problems, not the old man, so he can't kill the old man while he's sleeping. The complexity of the plot is that if the old man doesn't wake up, he won't be killed for months. The murder of an old man is the end of the story. The cool and calm attitude of the narrator when the police arrive adds to the plot. As he takes them home, tensions increase and he confidently leads them to the bedroom of the murdered old man, where they hear the noise. The scenario conclusion begins when the narrator hears too much noise to tolerate. He tells the police about his crime, hoping to ease himself and stop the turmoil. The story ends when the narrator identifies the source as "the beating of a horrible heart!" (2017, Plot Analysis)

The plot structure analysis is as follows:

1. The Beginning

1.1 Introduction

“You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded — with what caution — with what foresight — with what dissimulation I went to work!”

The narrator wants to point out that he is not a madman and provide a story to prove it. In the story, the first situation is that the narrator decides to kill the old man to prevent his eyes from seeing the narrator.

“One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold;”
It is malformed, according to the narrator, and looks like a vulture's eye with a film covering it. As mentioned above.

"And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night."

The narrator shares a building with an elderly man with an unsettling gaze. It is also evident that he and the old man had never shared a feud before.

“I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this!”

In this introductory part as explained earlier in this section. The focus of the narrator is one where he is not mad- madmen as he refers. And two where he tells us a story of a murderous acts in order to prove his sanity.

2. Middle
2.1 Conflict

The narrator speaks directly to the reader again, defending his sanity by recounting his meticulous preparation, This included fixing the lantern so that the light couldn't escape, running seven nights in the middle of the night, and slipping into the man's room.

“And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it — oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly — very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man’s sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed.”

He can't kill the old guy, though, because he wants to eliminate his "Evil Eye," not the old man. This is the main conflict the narrator is experiencing. Also showing his indeed meticulous mind prior doing his evil deed.
2.2. Complication

On the night of the eighth day, when the narrator sneaks in, the old man sits in bed, yells out and asks who is there.

“I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out — “Who’s there?”

The narrator is silent. He notices that an elderly gentleman listens to him and sits in bed. The narrator eventually hears the old man moaning in fear.

This technically show where the complication ended. The initial complication to the conflict before was how to eliminate the “Evil eye” and not the old men. In the quotation above, the old men finally woken up, thus, showing his eye to the narrator. This ended the complication the narrator experiencing as if he were to keep coming to the old men’s room every night to see the “eye” then it will take months.

2.3. Climax

The narrator waits for a long time. He hasn't heard the older man fall asleep.

“I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; — just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.”

The narrator then hears a stifling moan, he know that it was a horrified moan and he chooses to open the lantern a crack anyhow. When he does so, a small ray of light illuminates the old man's horribly blue eyes directly, revealing only that.

“It was open — wide, wide open — and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness — all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man’s face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.”
The narrator then begins to hear the old man’s heart pounding. It helps him feel more courageous. He hears the heart of an older man beating harder, faster, and louder until the narrator is convinced that his neighbor is big enough to hear. He rushes enters the room after opening the lantern. The old man is crying, but the narrator is already with him, putting him on the floor and pushing the bed over him.

“In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead.”

The narrator describes the lengths to which he tried to cover up his crime as more proof of his sanity. The narrator dismantles the old man's body by cutting off his head, limbs, and feet, collecting blood in a bowl, and carefully pulling up the floorboard and burying it underneath. He is proud to leave no trace of his actions.

“First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs. I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye — not even his — could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out — no stain of any kind — no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all — ha! ha!”

After 4.a.m there was a knock on the door signaling the arrival of the police to respond to the concerns neighbors were having over the screaming. The police asked to search the place. He took the police around then prepared chairs for them to have a conversation

“When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o ‘clock — still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, — for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.”

The narrator positions his chair just above the well-hidden dismembered body. He seemed to be at ease during their conversation at first. The policemen' presence
however eventually makes his ears ring, and he wishes they would leave. He finally
notices that his ears aren't ringing. The old man's heartbeat is audible to him. The
police officers don't seem to notice as the noise grows louder.

“But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head
ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted.
The ringing became more distinct: — it continued and became more distinct:
I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained
definitiveness — until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my
ears.”

The narrator tries to distract the police by arguing with them, making noise by
moving chairs and raising his voice which makes his heart beat faster. He becomes
frantic,

“I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the
boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder —
louder — louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled.”

He explains how they can smile at him when it doesn't make him any better, as
the heartbeat feels like it's running so fast.

"Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard! — they
suspected! — they knew! — they were making a mockery of my horror! —
this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony!
Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those
hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! — and now —
again! — hark! louder! louder! louder! louder! louder! —“

3. The End
3.1 Conclusion
The narrator finally loses it. He screams guilty and tells the policeman where
his body is.

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed! — tear up the
planks! — here, here! — it is the beating of his hideous heart!”
The narrator hasn't yet identified the sound. It's described as "a ringing," then as "a low, dull, rapid sound - similar to that of a watch when wrapped in cotton". The narrator only concludes that the noise was "the beating of [the man's] terrible heart!" in the very final paragraph.

4. CONCLUSION

Edgar Allan Poe's Tell-Tale Heart was written in a mixed plot type. This is because the event in the story starts now and moves on to the next event. This is a flashback that supports the primary event. Subsequent events then return from flashback to the present, in line with the story.

The structure of the action is divided into start, middle, and end. The story begins with the narrator convincing the reader that he is insane. The middle part is divided into three parts: conflict, complications and climax. The moment he went to the old man's house, a dispute arose in which the narrator planned to kill the "evil eye" from the old man's complexion. The old man's "evil eye" is a narrator's problem, not the old man himself, so he can't kill him while he's sleeping. The complex part of the plot is that the narrator cannot kill the old man for months. The man does not wake up. The climax of this story is the tragedy of the murder of an old man.

5. REFERENCES


