

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPARISONS BETWEEN PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST TO AFFECT THE PLOT OF CHRISTIE'S NOVEL "CURTAIN"

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Abstract:

Penelitian ini berjudul The Psychological Comparisons between Protagonist and Antagonist to Affect the Plot of Christie's Novel "Curtain". Permasalahan dalam penelitian ini adalah membahas tentang perbedaan secara psikologi antara tokoh protagonis dan antagonis dan bagaimana hal tersebut mempengaruhi alur cerita dari novel tersebut.

Metode penelitian yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data adalah metode dokumentasi yang berarti data dikumpulkan melalui membaca dan mencatat data yang akan dianalisis. Metode ini terdiri dari beberapa teknik, diantaranya adalah membaca novel secara keseluruhan, kemudian mengumpulkan data yang termasuk dalam aspek secara psikologis, lalu mencatatnya, setelah itu data yang terkumpul digolongkan sesuai dengan jenis-jenisnya. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori dari Allport (1921) yang mengklasifikasikan sifat menjadi tiga jenis yaitu cardinal, central dan secondary. Sifat Cardinal disini adalah sifat yang dianggap paling mendominasi kepribadian seseorang, sifat central adalah sifat yang membentuk kepribadian seseorang secara umum, sifat secondary adalah sifat yang dapat mengikuti atau beradaptasi dengan pengaruh lingkungan dan situasi sekeliling. Selain teori Allport, teori dari Stanton (1965), Ephron (2012) dan Rusell dan Winterbottom (2008) juga digunakan dalam menganalisa pengaruh terhadap alur cerita. Stanton menyatakan bahwa alur cerita merupakan rangkaian dari beberapa kejadian. Kejadian-kejadian tersebut tidak hanya melibatkan fisik namun juga perubahan perilaku tokoh dan keputusan mereka. Ephron menjelaskan bahwa plot selalu terdiri atas tiga unsur penting, yaitu tujuan, rintangan dan jalan keluar. Sedangkan Rusell dan Winterbottom menjelaskan tentang alur cerita yang terbalik dan mengejutkan pada bagian akhir.

Kata kunci: *Phsycology, trait, protagonist, antagonist, plot.*

1. Background

As one of the most popular literary works, novel successfully gets a special place in people's hearts. Those whose like to read, enjoy and learn the value of life refelcted in this literary works. From many of the novel genres, romance and mysteri novel have a high rank in readers eyes.

Known as the queen of mystery, Dame Agatha Christie successfully created Hercule Poirot as the well-known detective. Unlike the other detectives, Christie wants to show

that sometimes more psychological needed in order to reveal a case rather than a physical act.

Poirot is a person who will prefer to sit down and think about all the facts he knows rather than moving around in undercover and looking for clues. And in the real life, police and detectives do know that they also need the psychological aspect in their job. The criminal nowadays do improve their ability, doing the crime calmly, try not to leave any clues and prints and sometimes, they one step ahead from the officers. In the last case of Poirot, *Curtain*, Christie gave our little belgian detective a very equally rival. Why he is an equally rival for Poirot for he is also a person who know how to use psychology in right way, especially in manipulating people. That is why it is very suitable to choose this title to be discussed.

2. Problems

The research problems can be formulated as follows:

1. What the differences and similarities appear between the protagonist and antagonist characters in Christie's novel "Curtain" from psychological point of view?
2. How does these comparissons affect the plot of the story?

3. Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are:

1. To find out what differences and similarities appear between the protagonist and antagonist characters in the Christie's novel "Curtain" in term of psychological aspect.
2. To analyze how the comparissons between the protagonist and antagonist characters does affect the plot of the story.

4. Method

The method used in this study was qualitative analysis method; it means the data collected were analyzed descriptively. Four steps of analyzing the novel, first the novel was read several times, five times minimum, in order to help understand. Second, the sentences relevant with the title of this study were noted down. The data which were

used to analyze and to answer the problems were classified. The last to drawn conclusion.

5. Analysis

5.1 Protagonist and Antagonist Character

Hercule Poirot is the protagonist character in this novel because just like another protagonist character, Poirot is the hero who would save the day. Surely, as the protagonist character, he is always right and will always win.

Stephen Norton is the antagonist characters in this novel because he is the troublemaker and the one who against Poirot as the protagonist. Like what Dunne said: this antagonist character actually represents the protagonist's greatest fear because the protagonist sees so much of himself in the antagonist and it scare and weakens him. (Dunne, 20017:29).

5.1.1 Hercule Poirot as the Protagonist Character

In *Curtain* Christie Poirot is described as a thin little man in a wheelchair, his face is lined and wrinkled, his moustache and hair are black and he suffered from arthritis.

“Now to convey to you the difference. Crippled with arthritis, he propelled himself about in a wheelchair. His once plump frmae had fallen in. He was a thin man now. His face was lined and wrinkled. His moustache and hair, it is true, were still of a jet-black colour...” (Curtain, 1998:5)

Though he is weak physically, he is confident enough that his mind is still in the same power as before.

“But certainly I mean it. For what other reason did I urge you to join me? My limbs, they are no longer active, but my brains, as i told you, is unimpaired.” (Curtain, 1998: 7)

Below listed the traits of our protagonist character:

1. Confidence
2. Egoist
3. Arrogance
4. Humane
5. Good in influencing people

6. Calm
7. Superiority
8. Optimistic
9. Self-sacrifices
10. Fair

5.1.2 Stephen Norton as the Antagonist Character

Stephen Norton is a grey-haired man, slightly build, and had a boyish, eager face.

“In the doorway we encountered a grey-haired man, slightly built, who was hurrying out with a pair of field glasses. He limped and had a boyish, eager face.” (Curtain, 1998 : 4).

He appeared to people around him to be a pleasant fellow and he loves birds.

“He appeared to be a pleasant fellow, rather ineffective and lacking in vitality....But there was his fondness for birds. I have believed that a love of nature was essentially a health sign in a man.” (Curtain, 1998 : 16)

Below listed the traits of our antagonist character:

1. Confidence
2. Sympathy
3. Shy, modest
4. Sadist
5. Nice
6. Manipulative
7. Sensitive
8. Inferiority
9. Addict
10. Love birds

5.1.3 Psychological Comparisons Between Poirot and Norton

The psychological differences between Poirot and Norton are listed as follow:

Hercule Poirot (Protagonist)		Stephen Norton (Antagonist)	
Characteristic	Traits	Characteristic	Traits
Confidence	Central trait	Confidence	Central trait
Egoist	Central trait	Sympathy	Secondary trait
Arrogance	Cardinal trait	Sadist	Cardinal trait
Humane	Central trait	Shy, modest	Central trait
Influencing	Central trait	Manipulative	Central trait
Calm	Central trait	Nice	Central trait
Superiority	Central trait	Inferiority	Central trait
Optimistic	Central trait	Sensitive	Central trait
Self sacrifice	Secondary trait	Addict	Central trait
Fair	Central trait	Love birds	Central trait

Based on the Traits theory of Allport's, the data was selected then be analyzed.

Cardinal trait: Traits that dominate an individual's whole life, often to the point that the person becomes known specifically for these traits. People with such personalities often become so known for these traits that their names are often synonymous with these qualities. Allport suggested that cardinal traits are rare and tend to develop later in life. The example for this trait such as: womanizer, sadism.

Central trait: These general characteristics form the foundations of personality. These central traits, while not as dominating as cardinal traits, are the major characteristics you

might use to describe another person. Terms such as intelligent, honest, shy and anxious are considered as central traits.

Secondary trait: These traits are sometimes related to attitudes or preferences and often appear only in certain situations or under specific circumstances. Some examples would be getting anxious when speaking to a group or impatient while waiting in line.

Secondary trait are less important, more difficult to detect traits, “aroused by a narrower range of equivalent stimuli and they issue into a narrower range of equivalent responses” (Allport, 1937:338).

5.2 The Effects on the Plot

Those traits above shaped the character and the way of thinking of Poirot and Norton. With the comparisons appeared, they showed the different response when they faced the problems.

There are two cases of murder and two cases of attempting for murder where appeared in *Curtain*. The first was the death of Barbara Franklin and the second was the death of Stephen Norton. In Barbara Franklin case, Norton did not take any part in it for it is actually an accidental death. As for the second case, it was Poirot who decided to kill Norton by himself. Here we can see how the trait affected Poirot behaviours, his mind and his decision. He has arrogant as he cardinal trait and all people who know Poirot would describe him as an arrogant old man. And this trait of arrogant led him to think that the only one who could stop Norton is he. This arrogant trait caused him to be a murderer at the last, very unpleasant ending for a famous detective who appreciated humans life so much.

“I could do it – and I was probably the only person who could.” (Curtain, 1998 : 117)

“By taking Norton’s life, I have saved other lives – innocent lives.” (Curtain, 1998 : 120)

The modest, good listeners, and sympathetic personality of Norton made people liked him but without noticing him very much at the same time. This led him to believe that he would never been caught, for he was unguilty before the law. There were no proves to prove that he was guilty and responsible for the murders.

It is just like what stated by Stanton, that the events may include not only physical occurrence, but also a character’s change of attitude, a flash of insight, and a decision

(1965:14). In this case, the events of the plot show how Poirot change his attitude and how he made his decision. Norton also decided to meet and talk with Poirot personally. It is also like what Ephron has stated about the three key elements in plot.

- a. A goal: the goal of the story is to show the outstanding ability of Hercule Poirot for the last time before he died. To reach this goal, Christie show clearly the main trait or the cardinal trait of Poirot: his arrogancy.
- b. Obstacle to be overcome: there are many obstacles for Poirot to overcome in this story in order to catch Norton. In this part, the traits of the protagonist and antagonist also affected the level of the obstacle. If Norton is the type of person who is arrogant and take much attention, it would not that hard for Poirot to recognize that he is the murderer in a glance. But Norton is someone modest and shy, people would not give too much attention on him and it made people easily forget about Norton,
- c. An outcome: at the end he decided to meet and talked with Norton personally. The confidence traits that belong to both of this character make this event possible. If Norton has no such confidence, he would find a reason so he would not talk to Poirot personally. It is not that hard for Norton to avoid Poirot if he wants, but he is confident enough to face Poirot face to face in Poirot's room. If Poirot has no such confidence, he would not straightly point Norton as the murderer and invite him to have a private conversation with him.

It proves that it is true as Ephron said that in the mystery genre, the plot would take the main character from puzzle to solution, from confusion to knowledge (Ephron, 2012). At the beginning Poirot still puzzles about Norton. The motive, the method to select the target, the way he think, everything is still confusing. There are pieces that Poirot know already, but he has to put it in the right place, just like playing the puzzle; put the pieces in the right place to see the big picture. But at the end, all the things became clear and perfectly fit in it place. No more confusing things, all the hanging question been answered, the case was solved and the plot complete.

It is also a good example of how the recognition accompanied with peripeteia or twisted ending. Russell and Winterbottom stated that:

...for recognition accompanied by peripeteia in this way will involve either pity or fear, and tragedy is by definition a *mimesis* of action that rouse these emotion; it is moreover such recognition that lead to good or bad fortune. (Russell & Winterbottom, 2008: 65)

6. Conclusion

After analyzing the psychological comparison between Poirot and Norton, some of the statements below can be drawn as conclusion:

The cardinal traits is the most influencing traits in human life. Poirot ended his life and career as the murderer because his ego and arrogance did not allow him to believe that there is no one else but he himself could stop Norton. And Norton sadistic resulted him being addicted to keep influencing people for doing the things he wants them to do. The traits of the protagonist and antagonist affected the plot of the story because their traits affected their acts and their acts influence the whole plot in the story. The type of the mystery plot is always puzzling in the beginning and become clear at the end, no question left unanswered. Arrogant gives nothing good in life. Poirot is an honor and humane detective for all of his history, but his arrogance turns him into the creature he hates the most in his life, a murderer. This story showed how words can be dangerous enough , even because of words someone can kill another. It is more important to pay attention to how someone would end their lives rather than how they started it. Poirot started his life, his career in good way but ended it in tragedic way.

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