



PLOT ELEMENTS ANALYSIS IN *THE BEST OF ME* NOVEL BY NICHOLAS SPARKS

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Abstract

The Best of Me tells about a young man named Dawson Cole with a background from a criminal family who falls in love with a woman from a noble and well-known family called Amanda Collier. Because there are some problem in it, their relationship ended tragically after they choose their own paths in life. The writer in this study analyzed the plot elements that contains in the novel and uses a structuralism approach based on plot theory from Richard Gill in a book entitled *Mastering English Literature* (1995). The objective in this research are to describe and identify the elements of plot contains in the novel entitled *The Best of Me*. The writer also apply a qualitative descriptive method because the data collection obtained through narration and dialogue in the novel. Gill (1995) explains that a complete and good plot has 5 important elements namely : the situation, disjunction, trajectory, proleptic events, and the last is reversal and discovery

Keywords: plot, structuralism approach, *The Best of Me*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is an expression of someone that is poured through a work both orally and in writing. However, there are many definitions of literature, one of which according to (Siswanto, 2008) literature can be interpreted as an inspiration of life that aims as a form of entertainment that has beauty in it. As also explained by (Nurmaily and Mustantifa, 2022) besides being seen from the beauty in it, literature is also can be seen in terms of aspects of the human life. In the world of literature, there are various kinds of literary works such as films, novels, poetry, dramas, etc. with each having a different genre.

Novel is an example of a literary work in written form, it could be a depiction of reality with a realistic mindset (Gulö and Amelia, 2022). Usually novels are kind of a category of fiction genre, because the storyline in a novel is based on the imagination of the author, but there are also novels based on the experience or true story of the author itself. (Samanik, 2018) also stated that a fictional literary work is the result of the creative process of the authors as a medium for expressing their expression. This is very important to know in understanding various literary works especially novel, because in a novel there are various important elements that make the reader feel and understand the content of the story. As an efficient and effective medium, novels can also help improve reading skills for reader (Sari and Sasalia, 2020). Therefore (Yusril and Amelia, 2020) can conclude that literature has a strength, and the moral values contained in it are one of the important elements in a literary work. Important elements in literary works, especially novels, are divided into two element, namely; intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

According to (Zainuddin, 2020) the intrinsic element itself is an element that builds a story from the inside of the story itself. Such as characters and characterizations, point of view, setting, plot, and style. Meanwhile (Djuana and Jaya, 2021) explained that the extrinsic element can be defined as a literary work factor that can be found outside the work but can affect its structure. Such as the background of the author, social and cultural conditions, etc. Based on the previous explanation, The writer in this study analyzed a literary work in the form of a novel with the title *The Best of Me* by Nicholas Sparks whose objective focus was to analyze the structure of the plot in the novel. *The Best of Me* is an american best-selling novel that was published in 2011 written by an American romance novelist, Nicholas Sparks. This novel consists of 254 pages and is divided into 23 chapters. It is known that , the novel is a romance fiction genre. From the explanation before, a work of fiction is a medium of expression from the author which is poured freely and creatively, so that's why Nicholas Sparks presents a storyline that attracts reader's attention to continue reading the novel from beginning to end. Beside that, genre is the main point in a literary work, for the audience and readers the main thing to know is what genre within the

literary work. This statement was emphasized by (William, 2014) that genre has many values, codes, and a structure that is used to build a story so that it can create various effects for the audience, reader, and writer.

The Best of Me tells about a young man named Dawson Cole with a background from a criminal family who falls in love with a woman from a noble and well-known family. Dawson feels and tries to survive within the scope of his family where he always feels pressured, hostiled and mistreated by his father and cousins. In contrast to Amanda, where she tried to cover up her relationship with Dawson secretly so her family wouldn't know about it. However, their relationship ended tragically after they choose their own paths in life.

The writer in this study focuses on the plot in the novel entitled *The Best of Me* which is one of the most popular novels. From this explanation, the structural analysis used in the structuralism approach is seen from its intrinsic elements namely the plot. The writer also choose this novel to be analyzed because of the interesting plot contains in the novel. As explained by (Herson and Patrian, 2017) in their research about a novel entitled *Surga Yang di Rindukan 2*, the function of a literary work in order to touch the emotional aspect of the reader, it must be entertaining and has an interesting plot. Meanwhile, the plot used in the novel are the *Chronological plot* and *Reverse Chronology*, this novel also has the theme of crime and love. So that, it makes it unique even though it is a little difficult for readers to understand the contents of the story. In addition to entertaining, literature can also provide a certain insight to the reader or audience (Rizal and Kasih, 2021). As explained also by (Kuhn and Boshoff, 2021) the role of a plot in the passage of a story in a novel or other literary work is useful for evoking emotions from the reader. The writer in this research uses a structuralism approach based on plot theory from **Richard Gill** in a book entitled *Mastering English Literature* (1995). Through this research, the plot analysis in the novel entitled *The Best of Me* also was chosen because this topic has never been studied and analyzed by other researchers. The research entitled *Plot Analysis in The Best of Me novel by Nicholas Sparks* is the focus of research in this study.

The objective in this study are to describe and identify the elements of plot contains in the novel entitled *The Best of Me*. The writer in this study also hopes that this research can provide benefits to the reader and the surrounding society, the writer also hopes that the reader understands regarding the plot structure that exist in the novel so that it can be a reference for further research.

METHOD

The writer uses a qualitative descriptive method because the data collection obtained can be from of textual analysis in a literary work and it is type of research that collect data by interpreting the meaning in the form of non-numeric data (Puspita and Setiawan, 2022). The data source in this research can be taken from the narration and dialogue in the novel with the analyzing step such as : 1). The first, The writer find the clues or keyword from the data that has been collected, 2). Second, The writer classify based on theory, 3). Third, The writer describe the data into paragraph in order to find the reason why the data is categorized into each plot element.

- **Structuralism**

This research applied a structuralism approach. A literary work includes several important elements in it which can be said as the first foundation in making a literary work. According to (Kasih, 2018) Literary work can be understood as a totality with a combination of internal and external structures in it, therefore the function of the structural approach itself is very important because structuralism influences both reader and writers in analyzing literary elements (Samanik & Wardani, 2022). If a literary work has the two elements unclearly, it will be difficult for readers and other art connoisseurs to understand the meaning and content that is contained in the literary work. Structuralism also contains challenges and many beliefs in it which are appreciated by both critics and readers (Carter, 2006). In addition, structuralism can reveal the thoughts and personality of the author (Carter, 2006).

A careful analysis of the structure in literary works includes all of the elements, namely intrinsic and extrinsic as described by the writer before, so that the structuralism approach to the elements that build literary texts will be considered to the readers' knowledge regarding the literary system itself. (Maiboy, et al 2021) added, Structuration is a process in which a work in literary is influenced by the social structure of society because it can be based on the experience that was experienced by the author so that it affects his/her works. Based on the opinion above, it can be said as a quality literary work if it is good in all its aspects, therefore the structural analysis of literature is used as a reference to analyze the intrinsic elements in it, such as; theme, plot, character and characterizations, point of view, setting, etc. According to (Jhonson and Arp, 2018) The intrinsic elements of fiction are divided into several parts, as will be explained below:

- a. Theme
Theme is an underlying idea of a story, especially in literary works. In a general context, the theme is a unifying thing about all of life that is expressed through stories with the main goal of what view of life is expressed.
- b. Plot
Plot is a sequence of events that was experienced by the characters in the story. The author of a story must be more careful in making the plot in a significant order. The plot is told in greater or lesser detail and also includes the thoughts of the characters, the things the characters do, etc.
- c. Characterization
Characterization is the author-determined description of the essence of a story's characters. The characterizations are also designed to make it simple for the reader to determine whether the story's characters are good or evil. Typically, the author demonstrates his characters directly or indirectly and falls into the protagonist or antagonist categories (Masyhur, et al, 2023).
- d. Point of View
Point of view can also be said about who is telling the story and how it is conveyed, so that the writer can make a story more alive as well as clearly and well. There are four basic points of view, such as; Omniscient, Third-person limited (divided into major and minor), first person (divided into major and minor too), and the last is objective (Mahendran and Amelia, 2020).

- **Plot**

In literary works there are elements that can be identified and described, one of which can be through a structuralism approach, namely intrinsic elements. *Plot* is one of the intrinsic elements which is a series or sequence of events in a story. (Johnson and Arp, 2018) stated that a plot also contains a series of thoughts and behaviors of the characters. The author composes a plot with the aim of managing all the actions of the characters in a story so that it leads to a specific ending. Meanwhile (Hafizhoh, 2020) stated that the plot makes the reader want to continue reading the story and want to know what will happen next. The best way for the writer to create a story is, how to unite a plot with other elements (Gill, 1985) because the plot is very influential in the course of a story. *Richard Gill* explain that there are five of plot elements, which are :

- a. *The Situation*
The situation is where a story starts from somewhere. The situation can also be called the *starting point* where the characters in the story have several things they want to achieve, so to get them they will go through certain problems and be associated with the order in which they are revealed to the reader.
- b. *Disjunction*
Disjunction is where an author starts a story by creating the situation first and then *starting to cause problems in it which related to upcoming events*. Disjunction usually refers to the main things such as thriller, mystery, fiction etc. will begin. For example the life of a character who is peaceful but there is something that disturbs him/her calm; it could be a murder, something untoward happened, etc. Thus, the reader begins to be captivated to know the next story.
- c. *Trajectory*
Trajectory is where a plot begins to move according to a certain time and direction. In other words, Trajectory is a description of how readers of a novel can think more critically about the unfolding of an event in the story. Beside that, *the various core problems of the characters are revealed in this element*. Usually a novel has cases that have contradictory trajectories, thus making the reader more interested and wondering how the author can straighten out the contradiction. Sometimes readers feel happy when reading a novel because the author diverts the trajectories with other unexpected events or truth.
- e. *Proleptic Events*
Proleptic event is how the reader has to wait for important things that actually happen from the events in the story, because *the reasons of problem experienced by the characters are revealed here*. Proleptic can also be seen when the reader understands the meaning of something that previously happened and can relate the relationship between events that occurred in the past and the future. After that, the reader feels amazed and can understand how significant the story is.
- f. *Reversal and Discovery*
Reverse and discovery is an author's explanation about the end of the story. This element is important part because the story can be satisfying?, sad?, or open ended. It depends on the kinds of the narrative, some writers use it but some don't. "*Reversal and discovery are stages related to proleptic events that cause radical changes to the characters*" (Suwastini, et al, 2020) , usually found in thriller, mystery, romance and detective novels, sometimes the readers are more familiar with a plot twist. Usually the author puts it in the last few pages, and sometimes the expectations are not what the reader wants or even

surprises the reader. An example of this plot element can be found in the novel entitled *The Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, etc.

- **Wind-up** means that, the ending of the story must end clearly, so that the reader after reading the novel immediately understands the ending of the story.
- **Resolution** means that, when the issues or problems in the story have been completed and an author's understanding of the character's life is clear.
- **Denouement** means that, sometimes the plot works like "a knot" where the loose ends have to be tied. Therefore, the questions of reader can be answered, and a sense of resolution is reached (Gill, 1995).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The writer presents the data and analysis of the plot structure from the beginning to the end of the story which described by the author in the novel entitled *The Best of Me*. In conducting the analysis, the writer in this study used the theory described by Richard Gill (1995). As explained by the writer in this study in the literature review above, Gill (1995) explains that a complete and good plot has 5 important elements namely : *The situation, Disjunction, Trajectory, Proleptic Events*, and the last is *Reversal and Discovery*.

- **The Situation**

The plot can start anywhere and under any circumstances. The characters in a story have various things and goals that they want to achieve, and when they want to achieve it, of course they encounter various kinds of problems or conflicts in it. *The Situation or starting point* is the first plot element of the novel which is closely related to the point about the plot in general which the characters revealed to the reader.

When Dawson become a victim in his family

His father would beat him until Dawson's back and chest were black and blue, then return an hour later, turning his attention to the boy's face and legs.
(Sparks, 2011)

...Dawson reared up and ripped it from his father's grasp. He told his father if he ever touched him again, he'd kill him. (Sparks, 2011)

The explanation from the two narration above, it is known that Dawson has always been a victim of violence in his family, even Dawson's body was frequently beaten until he was blue and bruised. Because he was often tortured by his father, Dawson became strong against his father's word and after that he decided to leave his house.

- **Disjunction**

The author also starts the story by creating the situation first *to know the cause problems from it, which related to upcoming events*. And disjunction here leads to the events that are the main concern in the novel. Disjunction also usually refers to the main things such as fiction, thriller, mystery, will begin. For example the life of a character who is peaceful but there is something that disturb him/her calm; it could be murder, something untoward happened, etc. thus, the reader begins to be captivated to know the next story. The importance of disjunction also is not just the unusual lives that the characters experienced, but the main events that make those lives destroyed or disrupted.

When Amanda Collier and Dawson meet at the first time but their relationship had to end because there was no approval from Amanda's parents

Until the day Amanda Collier entered his world. (Sparks, 2011)
He was a Cole and she was a Collier, and that was more than enough cause for dismay.
(Sparks, 2011)

From the narration above, it can be concluded that at the beginning Dawson met Amanda that made they love each other even though there were significant differences between their family backgrounds which led to various events related to their relationship, Amanda from Collier family or well-known family, while Dawson from Coles family.

Dawson and Amanda got a call from Tuck Hostetler's lawyer after a long time

The call had come from Morgan Tanner, an attorney in Oriental, North Carolina, who informed him that Tuck Hostetler had **passed away**. (*Sparks, 2011*)

From the narration explanation above, it can be seen that after many years Dawson and Amanda never met again and one day when Dawson was 42 years old he received a call from Tuck Hostetler's lawyer who said that Tuck or his adoptive father had died, and Dawson was asked to return to North Carolina because there was a message or mandate from Tuck that Dawson had to do there. This narration is related to subsequent story events or the beginning of an event and conflict will occur.

- **Trajectory**

Trajectory also where a plot begins to move according to certain time and direction so that *the various core problems of the characters are revealed in this element*.

Dawson was shocked when he saw that Amanda was also at Tuck's house to fulfill Tuck's request

They embraced **for a long time**, holding each other close in the waning sunlight, and for an instant he thought he felt her tremble. When they finally pulled apart, she could sense his unspoken emotion. (*Sparks, 2011*)

From the narration above, it is explained that after decades the two main characters in this story, namely Amanda and Dawson have never met before, they are finally reunited in a historical place for their relationship, a place where they feel comfortable, and a place where become a witness of their love. Amanda and Dawson meet, because each of them turns out got a call from Morgan Tanner (Tuck's lawyer) where they have to fulfill Tuck's request before he passed away. Since the day, Amanda and Dawson have seen each other frequently without anyone knowing, and they seem to reminisce about their past.

From the event, the plot will affect further events because as we know one of them, Amanda Collier was married and has children.

- **Proleptic Events**

Proleptic can also be seen when the reader know the reason of problem experienced by the characters and understands the meaning of something that previously happened and can relate the relationship between events that occurred in the past and the future.

When Dawson fight with his cousin and he died

Summoning his last reserves of strength, Ted lunged toward the gun, feeling its satisfying weight as he tightened his grip. He swiveled the gun toward the door, toward Dawson. He had no idea whether any rounds were left, but he knew this was his last chance. (*Sparks, 2011*)

He zeroed in, taking aim. And then he pulled the trigger. (*Sparks, 2011*)

The narration above is when Ted was almost defeated by Dawson, and he saw that Dawson was going to leave the bar. But Ted still has a little energy to shoot Dawson or Alan, until the bullet finally hits Dawson.

- **Reversal and Discovery**

Reverse and discovery is an author's explanation about the end of a story. This element is important part for readers, because the story can be satisfying?, sad?, or open ended.

The situation switches to 2 years later after Dawson dies, and finds out that Dawson is Jared's donor

"I want to send a letter to the family. Just to thank them, you know? If it wasn't for the donor, I wouldn't be here." (*sparks, 2011*)

"All they told me was that he was forty-two when he died. I just wanted... to find out more about what kind of person he was." (*Sparks, 2011*)

The dialogue above is Jared's words to Amanda, where he wanted to find out information about his donor 2 years ago to say a lot of thanks to the donor's family, because without the donor he might not be able to live as he is today. Finally Jared found information from the hospital that the donor was a 42 year old man when he died.

Dawson, she knew, had saved Alan's life – but in the end, he'd saved Jared's as well. And for that mean... everything. *I gave you the best of me*, he told her once. And with every beat of her son's heart, she knew he'd done exactly that. (*sparks, 2011*)

From the narration above, Amanda previously knew who was the heart donor for her son. 2 years ago, Morgan Tanner apparently told Amanda that Dawson's heart was match for Jared and saved his life. At that time Amanda also remembered Dawson's words when they met to fulfill Tuck Hostetler's wishes, Dawson had said to Amanda that Dawson would give whatever was best for Amanda's life, and that made Amanda believe that Dawson had done it even though he was no longer beside her.

CONCLUSION

In this part, the writer provides an overview or summary of all the previous explanation. Particularly, about the identification of the types of plot elements contained in a novel entitled *The Best of Me* (2011) written by Nicholas Sparks. This part also provides suggestions for further analysis or research that is relevant and can provide benefits to readers regarding an analysis using a structuralism approach, the theory used in this study, the storyline contains in the novel, even the readers can also find out what types are contained in the plot elements analyzed in this study, etc. As explained also by the writer in this study before, the theory used by the writer and related to plot elements in a story is using the theory from Richard Gill (1995) which is explained in detail in a book entitled *Mastering English Literature*, so that this research can be proven clearly. The writer analyzes the structure of a literary work, which can be seen from the intrinsic elements contained in it which include; *Theme, character and characterization, plot, setting, point of view*, etc., and the writer chooses **plot** as the focus analysis in her research.

In theory explained by Gill (1995), a complete plot or story line must fulfill 5 important main elements, so that it makes it easier for the reader to understand the story in it from the beginning to the end of the story. The elements described by Gill namely; *The Situation, Disjunction, Trajectory, Proleptic Events, and Reversal and Discovery*. After reading this research, especially about the plot analysis in a novel entitled *The Best of Me* written by Nicholas Sparks in 2011, the writer recommends for readers to read this novel because there are many moral values that can be taken from the story in it. The writer also hopes that by reading this research the readers can find out more details about the storyline they read, so that they know and understand that the plot can be categorized into the types of elements as described in the theory above.

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