

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie, known as Agatha Christie, is one of the greatest mystery writers. She was also known as a noted playwright. Most of her works have also been turned into movies and are viewed many times. She is considered as one of the world's top-selling authors who have sold billions of copies of her works. Agatha Christie was a prolific writer as she has written more than 70 detective novels as well as short fictions, which have been widely translated into 55 languages around the world. Christie's success as an author of detective stories has earned her titles as a "Queen of Crime" or a "Queen of Mystery" ("Agatha Christie Biography"). Christie was also famous as the creator of two well-known detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. Both of them always make her readers fascinated because they have their own ways to solve every case unexpectedly. Miss Marple has been featured in novels like *The Moving Finger* (1942) and *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953). However, Hercule Poirot has made more appearances in Christie's novels, which include *The Murder of*

Roger Ackroyd (1926), *Death in the Clouds* (1935), and *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928).

From all of her works, I decide to analyze *The Mystery of The Blue Train* in my thesis. Published in 1928, the novel tells a story about Ruth Kettering, an American heiress who dies in a luxurious blue train on her way to Nice after she has received a set of valuable ruby necklace called “Heart of Fire”. It is a gift from her father, Rufus Van Aldin, a millionaire. She is found dead in her compartment and the case containing the ruby has disappeared. Then, the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot, who happens to be on the train, starts to investigate the case and helps Ruth’s father to find the murderer.

As *The Mystery of The Blue Train* is a murder mystery novel, elements of plot is the most prominent element in the novel to be analyzed. The elements of plot consist of suspense, surprise, and artistic unity. Suspense is “a quality in a work of fiction that arouses excited expectation or uncertainty about what may happen; in more literary forms of fiction the suspense involves the question “Why?”” (“Introduction to Plot and Structure”). While, surprise is “whatever happens in a story that the reader did not expect; is proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens.” (“Introduction to Plot and Structure”). The last one, artistic unity means,

... the condition of a successful literary work where by all its elements work together for the achievement of its central purpose. In an artistically unified work nothing is included that is irrelevant to the central, nothing is

omitted that is essential to it, and the parts are arranged in the most effective order for the achievement of the purpose. (“Artistic Unity”)

In analyzing the novel, I choose to use formalism. This approach ... regards literature as a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms. All the elements necessary for understanding the work are contained within the work itself. . . . a primary goal for formalist critics is to determine how such elements work together with the text’s content to shape its effects upon readers. (“Critical Approaches to Literature”).

I believe the use of formalism is appropriate to help me in my analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What is the suspense in the novel?
2. What is the surprise in the novel?
3. What is the artistic unity in the novel?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show the suspenses in the novel.
2. To show the surprises in the novel.
3. To show how the artistic unity is presented in the novel.

Method of Research

I use library research in writing my thesis. First, I read *The Mystery of the Blue Train* by Agatha Christie as a primary text. Then, I take some data from the Internet sites and sources to support my analysis of the elements of plot in *The Mystery of the Blue Train*. Last, I draw some conclusions from my analysis.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into three chapters, which are preceded by the Table of Contents and the Abstract. Chapter One contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the analysis of the elements of plot in *The Mystery of the Blue Train*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.