

## Analysis of Plot of Synge's Play "Rider to the Sea"

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### Abstract

*The research offers a plot analysis in Synge's play "Rider to the Sea". This play is written in 1902 describing a complex family life story. This play will be analyzed by using the structure method focusing on the plot development of the play. The story of the play "Rider to the Sea" is interesting since it portrays the different side of family where the family life is still dependent on the men's efforts in their family. Roles of the men in the story are very important because the family life cannot run well without men's contribution. The Riders to the Sea has a unique place in dramatic history. The essence of its uniqueness lies in the creation of a true tragedy within its boundaries of a one act play. At first sight, the plot would seem too trivial and the characterization too faintly sketched to enable the playwright to build up and communicate the typical momentum of a high tragedy. To reach the aim of the analysis, the writer uses the qualitative research. The result is expected to give the reader a better understanding of the description of the plot of the play "Rider to the Sea."*

**Keywords :** plot, simple plot, complex plot

### INTRODUCTION

With the massive popularity of media and other technologies literary text, as a piece of art, has developed stupendously. Now it is easily in the reach of the common man, in the form of play, poetry, novel or fiction because of internet and different media of publication. Even people in remote areas enjoy reading their favorite literature and because of this advancement more and more people are taking interest in the evaluation and interpretation of literature and other forms of discourse.

Fiction is the most popular literary genre. One of the branches of literature is play. Play can be called as an imitation of an action. In a play, every event is part of a carefully designed pattern and process. And that is what everyone call plot. According to Iwuchukwu (2008), plot is the arrangement of incidents in the play. Like all other elements of fiction, it has interdependence with character. It helps to give the play an organic unity and coherence that

makes the play easy to understand. In the view of this increasing attention given to play reading the focus of this study is the analysis of the plot of the play "Rider to the Sea" to show how the specific plot of the play conveys the message of the writer to the reader.

## **Review of Related Theories**

### **Plot**

Plot is often listed as one of the fundamental elements of fiction. It is the rendering and ordering of the events and actions of a story. Usually, plot has a beginning, middle, and an ending. Plot starts with a situation depicting the characters' inter-personal relationships and they are usually in conflict with each other or with an outside force. As the story progresses, the conflicts deepen, intensify and are heightened and lead to a complication of action and it rises to a climax and moves down to a resolution. According to Abrams (1993) in his definition states that "the plot in a narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered towards achieving particular emotional and artistic effects". There are two basic types of plot: simple and complex plots.

#### **1) Simple Plot**

In simple plots, as the name implies, the incidents are presented in a simple straight forward manner. In this type of plot, the incidents or events are closely knit and are strung together in a linear sequence. This means that events and incidents are presented in a chronological order as one event leads to the other and the subsequent event is dependent on the preceding one. A simple plot, in most cases, presents the adventure of one character, usually the hero, from the beginning to the end.

#### **2) Complex Plot**

Complex plot as the name implies is more complicated than the simple plot. The story here does not run chronologically from the beginning to the end. In many cases, the story is presented in a disjointed manner and the reader will have to rearrange it to form a logical sequence. In this case, the story starts from the last incident and the story starts to unfold after that. Consequently, at the end of the story, the reader has to recast the plot as presented so as to piece the different parts together.

Meanwhile, according to Ali (2014) the most important part of the play is the plot. It covers the overall story, conflict is introduced in it and it is logically sequenced. A plot consists of five basic parts:

- a. **Introduction:** It is the beginning of the story where the characters are introduced. It shows the type of characters, their goals and motives. It reveals the most important feature that the audience gets to know, the main character and the main character gets to know his aims and goals.
- b. **Rising Action:** Here the things get complicated by the death of a character or by presenting the conflict.
- c. **Climax:** It is the highest turning point in the story. Here the character makes a decision that decides the further course of the story and the fate of the characters. It shows a continuous struggle.
- d. **Falling Action:** This part contains greatest tension. Here, it mostly looks like that the evil will triumph over good. The audience tries to understand what will happen next and that whether the conflict will come to an end or not. However, the complications begin to resolve slowly.
- e. **Resolution:** This is the final part. It shows the outcome of all the events.

## METHODOLOGY

The research design is all processes which are needed in planning and doing a research. The research designs differ according to the research purposes. To analyze the data found in this play, the writer uses qualitative method. The object of this analysis is the plot of the play entitled "*Rider to the Sea*" written by Synge. Qualitative method here gives a portrayal of the plot of the play as a part of the intrinsic element of the play.

## RESULTS

The plot of the play "Riders to the sea" is simple and complex and there is no sub-plot of any kind. It can be seen in the play that from the beginning to end, the play is just about one family's tragedy because of the death of one of their male family members. The play does not include any unnecessary sub-plots which do not have any relation to the main plot. The plot flows smoothly and clearly from the beginning to the end. The play begins with a conversation between Cathleen and Nora about telling their mother that they have a bundle of Michael's

things given by a young priest. They are also talking about Bartley's plan to go to the main land. The play then goes forward seriously since Maurya does not agree on Bartley's leaving. She believes that Bartley will die too and she will have no son anymore. But Bartley insists on his leaving to the main land.

Finally, Maurya and her two daughters have to face the reality that what Maurya has predicted really happened. There are some of their neighbors come to their house bringing Bartley's dead body. Thus, it is very clear that this play does not have any sub-plots because the play flows from the beginning to the end without inserting any unrelated plot. The play does not tell about any other families. It just talks about one family, Maurya's family. The plot can also be analyzed based on its progress. The whole plot can be divided into six sections.

1. The First Section. It is about the conversation between Cathleen and Nora. They talk about their mother, whether they have to tell Maurya about Michael's things given by a young priest and about telling their mother that Bartley is going to the mainland. It can be seen in the following dialogue:

Cathleen : How would they be Michael's, Nora? How would he go to the length of that way to the far North?

Nora : The young priest says he's know the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are", she says he, "You can tell herself he's got a clean burial, by the grace of God; and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death", say he , "with crying and lamenting".

Cathleen :( Looking out anxiously ) Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

Nora : "I won't stop him", says he ; but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, an the Almighty God won't leave her destitute, says he, "with no son living".

Maurya :( looking up at Cathleen and Nora and speaking querulously ) Isn't it turn enough you have for this day and evening?

Cathleen : There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space ( throwing down the turf ) and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

Maurya :( sitting down on a stool at the fire ) He won't go this day with the ind rising from the south and west. He

won't go this day for the young priest will stop him surely.

**(Synge, 1911; 18-21)**

2. The Second Section. In the second section, Bartley is coming to the house and giving some instructions to his two sisters. Here, Bartley decides to leave the house and goes to the mainland. But, the mother and sisters do not know how to take care of everything. So, before going to the mainland, Bartley instructs his two sisters to handle everything in their home during his leaving. The following dialogue will show us:

Cathleen : I hear some one passing the big stones.  
 Nora : ( Looking out ) He's coming now and he in a hurry.  
 Bartley : ( Comes in and looks around the room ; speaking sadly and quietly ) Where is the bit of new rope ; Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?  
 Bartley :( Working at the halter, to Cathleen ) Let you go down watch day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.  
 Maurya :How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?  
 Bartley :( to Cathleen ) If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be form this day with no one in it but one man to work.  
 Maurya :It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're downed with the rest. What way will I live and the girl with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?  
 Bartley :( to Nora ) Is she coming to the pier?  
 Nora :( looking Out ) She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

**(Synge, 1911; 22-25)**

3. The Third Section. In the third section, Maurya complains on Bartley's leaving. She does not want Bartley to go to Mainland. It is clearly pointed out in the following dialogue:

Bartley : (getting his purse and tobacco ) I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.  
 Maurya : ( Turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head ) isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

Cathleen : It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?  
Bartley : ( taking the halter ) I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the grey pony I'll run behind me .... The blessing of God on you.  
Maurya : ( Crying out as. He is in the door) He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

**(Synge, 1911; 25-26)**

4. The Forth Section. The forth section tells about the delivery of bread at the spring well. As Cathleen has forgotten to hand over the cake to Bartley. She then urges her mother to carry a portion of the bread from the cake to a place called the spring well, and wait there for Bartley to pass on horse-back. See the following dialogue:

Nora : ( turning towards her ) You're taking away the turf from the cake.  
Cathleen : ( Crying out ) The son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread.  
Nora : And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.  
Cathleen : (Turning the cake out of the oven ) It's destroyed he'll be surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking forever.  
Cathleen : (Cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth, to Maurya ). Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark world will be broken, and you can say God speed you; the way he'll be easy in his mind.  
Maurya : ( Taking the bread ) will I be in it as soon as himself?  
Cathleen : If you go now quickly.

**(Synge, 1911; 27-28)**

5. The fifth section. In the fifth section, Cathleen and Nora examine the bundle given by the young priest. After Maurya has gone out of the house, the two sister open the bundle, examine the shirt and the stocking, and come to a conclusion that the clothes really belong to Michael and it is that, Michael's body, that had been found in Donegal and been given a proper burial. The following dialogue will point it out:

- Nora : Is she gone round by the bush?
- Cathleen : ( Looking out ) She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the lord knows when she'll be out of it again.
- Nora : ( Getting the bundle from the loft ) The young priest said he'd be passing tomorrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.
- Nora : I'll get shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. ( She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner?, It's not with them, Cathleen and were will it be?
- Cathleen : I'm thinking Bartley put in on him in the morning, for him own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. ( Pointing for the corner). There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.  
( Nora brings it to her and the compare the flannel )
- Cathleen : It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself, aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?
- Nora : (who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out) It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; god spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hear this story, and Bartley on the sea?

**(Synge, 1911; 29-32)**

6. The Sixth Section. In the sixth section, Maurya is coming back home and lamenting of the loss of family male members. Maurya returns to the house without having handed over the bread to Bartley. She is waiting and moaning. On being asked what is troubling her, she says that she had seen a must dreadful sight. She has seen Bartley riding the read mare and that she has Michael riding the grey pony behind him. It will clearly be pointed out in the following dialogue:

- Cathleen : ( after an instant ) tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.
- Nora : ( Looking out ) She is, Cathleen. She is coming up to the door.
- Cathleen : Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.
- Nora : ( Helping Cathleen to close the bundle ) We'll put them here in the corner.

Cathleen : ( after spinning for a moment ) You didn't give him bit of bread?

Cathleen : Did you see him riding down? (Maurya goes on keening)

Cathleen : ( a little impatient ) God forgive you; isn't a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you see, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done?, Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you?

Maurya : ( with a weak voice ) My heart's broken from this day.

Maurya : ( in a low voice, but clearly ) It's a little the like of him knows of the sea ..... Bartley will be lost now, and let you callin Eaman won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house – six fine men, through it was a had birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world – and some of them were not found, but they are gone now the lot of them ..... there were Stephen and Shawn were lost the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on one plank, and in by that door .....

Maurya : (Continue without hearing anything ) There was Sheamus and his father and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sea went up. There was a patch after was drowned out of a curragh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby lying on my two knees, and I seen two woman, and three woman, and four woman coming in, and they crossing themselves and not saying a word. I looked out then , and three were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it – it was a dry day, Nora and living a track to the door.

**(Synge, 1911; 33-39)**

7. The Seven Section. The seven section is the last section. In this section, the people come to Maurya's house with the body of Bartley. This section also shows Maurya's acceptance of tragic life. Just at this time, a number of old woman come to the house, all looking sad and mournful. They are followed by a group of men carrying something



covered with a piece of a sail. What they are carrying is the dead body of of Bartley who, while getting into to the boat, has been knocked down in the sea by his grey pony and has been carted away by the waves. Bartley's dead body has been recovered from the sea and has now been brought to Maurya house. Maurya's tragedy is now complete. Her last surviving seen is also gone forever. She says that all the male members of her family have left her and that the sea can do no further harm to her. Michael as has been told, has already received a clean burial in Donegal, while shewill give Bartley a proper burial. " what mare can wewant than that? . No man at all can living forever, and we must be satisfied", she says. It can be seen in the dialogue bellow:

Cathleen : ( in a whisper to the woman who have come in ) Is it  
Bartley, it is?

One of the woman : It is, surely, Gog rest his soul  
Two younger woman come in and pull out the table.  
Then men carry in the body of Bartley,  
laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over  
it, and lay it on the table).

....

Maurya : ( put the empty cup mouth down ward on the table  
and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet ) They're all  
together this time, and the end is come. Way the Almighty God,  
and on the souls of sheamusand patch, and Stephenand shawn(  
bending her head ); and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora  
and on the soul of every one islet living in the world.

(Synge, 1911; 41-44)

## DISCUSSION

The Riders to the Sea is a complex family life story. The story is interesting since it potrays the different side of family since the family life is still dependent on the men's efforts in their family. This is an old fashioned life of family when women cannot do anything for their family (like earning the money for eating and other family needs). Roles of the men in the story are very hard because in the story the family life can't run well without men's contribution. It's also very pity to say since some of the family members preference is the family life welfare rather than the safety of the family members (men). Even when the family loses their last son due to go sailing, they still think about their extended life than that will be pathetic without a man the one who is hoped to endure the family life. The family life should not so lame like

this. The feeling of affection and safety of one member to another should be in the first place and being woman in the family should be independent in every circumstances.

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