CRIMINOLOGY IN LITERATURE: THE TELL TALE HEART
BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Andi Tenri Abeng¹, Kiki Islawati Anasti Putri², Dahlia D. Moelier³
¹,²,³English Department, Faculty of Letters, Bosowa University, Makassar 90231, Indonesia
Email: anditenri.abeng@universitasbosowa.ac.id

ABSTRACT
This study aims to analyse the criminology aspects, types of crime found in The Tell Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe and the motives that drives the criminal in committing such crime. The methodology used in this research is qualitative descriptive method and used theory from Wilson and Durkheim about aspects and types of crime. The result shows that there are four aspects of criminology found in the short story: the lens, the theorization, the historicization and the comparison applied in how crime and justice have similarities and differences in criminology as compared to literature. The type of criminal is personal or violent crime and the motive behind the crime is the vulture eye owned by an old man that create uneasiness in the criminal mind along with his disease resulting in him murdering the old man.

Keywords: Criminology; Criminology in literature; Short story

INTRODUCTION
Criminology is the scientific study of crime as a part of social phenomenon occurs in society, of criminals, and of penal treatment applied for evident in committing the crime. It includes the study to all aspects of crime and their law enforcement, criminal in relation to psychology, social setting surrounding the crime, the prohibition to certain aspects, acts of prevention, criminal investigation, detecting crime or identification, and the capture along with its punishment (Merriam and Webster, 2023). The social phenomenon surrounding the crime all are presented narratively by the author in a literary works as a portrayal or reflection of reality

Studying criminology in literature means studying the scientific study of crime, criminals, law of criminal and criminal justice within the scope of literary works as human’s creative and artistic creation and as a product of their imaginative works that presented in written words. (Wilson, 2021: 1). Criminology provides a scientific analysis of crime based on accurate evidence conveyed in an expressed or implicit way in literary works, a detail explanation of the character’s characterization, the motives, and the point of view from the one who committed the crime and even the description of its crime scenes. This was the way of literary work works, it is so vivid, beautifully described as expressed in their detail portrayal of scenes that it could evoke reader’s emotion as if they were present, witness, as they engage and immersed themselves in the stories being told in literary works (Sandberg, 2021: 2).
Literature represents both art and science. It is art as it is the expression of author’s thoughts, feeling and imagination conveyed creatively in their works picturing the human life in society in pursuit of reader’s enjoyment, pleasure, and author’s idealistic views, arguments, and experiences according to the author’s characteristics, writing style, preference, inspiration, educational background, imagination and creativity. It is science as it contains characteristics of scientific aspects, based on real experiences, historical events, objectives explanation with theoretical method and gained from methodological ways (Rizal, 2018: 5).

Literature covers many aspects of writing forms as a result of varieties in human’s work of art. Literature only covering the art in which human speaks and writes their work. In the beginning of time, spoken arts included in this aspect since it is also parts of human’s ways in communicate and one of the form of human’s way before they learn to write. The major three forms of literary works are poetry, prose and drama. Poetry covering the literature in the form of lines and stanza, while prose are works of art in which it has conflict, character and in the forms of paragraph or chapters and drama is a work of art in which it is consist of mainly monologue or dialogue between characters and divided into scenes or acts.

Short story is one of the forms of literary works that belong to prose category, it contains less character, setting, conflict development and not so intrigue plot as compared to the more extended version of prose, novel. Sometimes short story also focusing only to one conflict throughout the story, it has less amount of pages and people could have finish reading it in one sit. It was more famous than novel as they are easier to read in a short time, novel needs more time and quite heavy and arduous to bring everywhere people go. With this advantage, sometimes some author with wider perspective used this method to easily affected their reader or convey their message shortly of some topic circled in society that probably needs more attention from people in general, groups, the government, and even the police department, or in this case, criminology.

In understanding the criminology in literature, this research analysed the criminology aspects, types and its motives using Wilson and Durkheim’s theory by studying the characters utterances, acts and intentions in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story *The Tell Tale Heart*, a story that carry dark theme in *The Compilation of Complete Series of Edgar Allan Poe’s Works*.

**METHOD**

In this research the writer used descriptive qualitative method. Through descriptive research, the writer tried to describe the aspects, types and motives of crime in *The Tell Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe an American writer, *Tell Tale Heart* is a short story published in 1843. This short story adapted later to movie in 2009. There were a few steps in obtaining the data they were: reads the short story of *The Tell Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe and then identified the data regarding the aspects, types and motives that drives the character in committing the crime. In identifying the data the researcher used Wilson and Durkheim’s theory. The data that has been identified then classified based on their respective categories found in the *The Tell Tale Heart* a short story by Edgar Allan Poe.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on the objectives of this study, the writer divided the data into three parts as follows:

Aspects of Crime

The Lens

The short story fulfill the first forms of aspects in criminology and literature which is the lens, here the *The Tell Tale Heart* uses the term and theories drawn from criminology to interpret literary text. The narrator confess to having killed an old man and even tell it in a precise manner as narrated in page 39 to 40 where narrator thought he should act quickly to stop the beating heart, he leap into the room and after the old man shriek signing the last response from him, the narrator then drag the man to the floor and top the body with the bed and waited until the heart stop beating and confirm that the old man is dead (Poe, 2009, p. 39-40). Though the story does not directly use the word murder in this part, instead it used the word killing afterward and it also vaguely explain the murder act and the result describing the dead of the old man.

The Theorization

The use of example and of ideas that related to crime and justice in the short story could be seen through the method of mutilation of the dead body to erase or hide the trace of the dead body or the killing evidence (Poe, 2009: 42-43) and the justice served in this case dealing with the controversy of the insanity of the defense in the 1840s. The guilt sensed by the criminal giving away their crime and serve as their confession to the crime, this is also based on the illusion of transparency in social psychology where the one who committed the crime seems to be under illusion that others could see right through them and can actually sense their guilt and anxiety over a crime the person has committed (Mandelbaum, 2014: 5).

The Historicization

In this historicization, the writing of literary text influenced by the criminal justice system and academic criminology and how the literature has influenced the criminologist. In *The Tell Tale Heart*, Poe reveals the madness of the character served as a narrator in the short story. This is an example of psychopathology, a classic study in psychology in relation to criminal psychology. Psychopathology is a study that studying the wills, thoughts, intentions and reactions of criminals (Cline, 2016, p.1). The mental illness of a criminal then become controversial whether it could be used against a person who committed the crime or even release him from the accusation as a result of the lack of insanity in his actions.

The character in the short story reveals his own thoughts about his own sanity and believes himself that he is not a mad man. He begins by claiming that he is not a mad man and even assure the reader that he is not. He has a disease that did not destroy his senses, he claimed that it even made his sense of hearing
sharper. Something that does not fit to the logic thinking was when he claimed he could hear things from hell and heaven (Poe, 2009, p.31).

Then on he describe how he actually not sure how the idea come to his mind. He later explained that once the idea in his mind, it then haunted him day and night (Poe, 2009, p.31) He admitted that it was the old man’s eye that made his blood ran cold whenever the old man stare at him. He then compares it to an eye of a vulture with a pale blue colour and had a film over it, possibly referring to a prosthetic eye. The gaze from the eye made him decides to kill the old man and get rid of the eye (Poe, 2009, p. 32). This is the intention of the character that becomes the main focus of the short story.

The mad man proceeds to explain the plan he had in mind of how to get rid of the old man. The plan was done carefully with him making sure that in every step, the old man would not suspect anything. He was kinder to him the whole week before he kill him. He greet the old man, asking every morning if he was slept well the night before, asking if the old man enjoying the sunshine when he takes his tea in the afternoon, and even say good night and wishes him with pleasant dream before the old man went to bed every night. The criminal who proceeds carefully, slowly reveals his wills in killing the old man (Poe, 2009, p. 32-33).

The reaction of the criminal then shows how the psychopathic disease clearly affecting his actions. He was not believed that the police-who later come because a neighbour calls-could not hear the beating heart from the already-dead old man, the policeman only smiled and chatted pleasantly. He was sure that the police already suspected him, even mocking him, that was what his thoughts was (Poe, 2009, p. 46-47).

The Comparison Applied in How Crime and Justice have Similarities and Differences in Criminology as Compared to Literature

The comparison between crime and justice in The Tell Tale Heart short story by Edgar Allan Poe is the mental condition of the man also the narrator that lead to crime. His sharper sense that conflicted to the old man’s gaze that made him uneasy resulting him in murdering the old man. Those senses also becomes the one that give him away to the policeman, he unexpectedly convinced to the policeman that the dead body was under the planks floor because his sensitive sense told him that the policeman is only mocking him, and already knows the truth but pretend that nothing happened.

The uneasiness that the mad man felt because of the gaze from the old man, the vulture eye, replaced by the uneasiness around the policeman in the old man’s room where the dead body of the old man is actually hidden.

Types of Crime

The types of crime in The Tell Tale Heart short story by Edgar Allan Poe is considered as a personal or a violent crime as it is a crime committed against a person with intention to take life of the victim/murder. Evidently the act of murder described in the story when the mad man/ the character also the narrator tell the tale of him murdering the old man. He jump into the old man’s room and the old
man shriek once, he then proceed to drag the old man to the floor and cover him with heavy bed. The old man muffled clearly the sign that he was still alive but then his heartbeat gradually stopped and he was dead. He then proceed to mutilate the body and hide it below the floor planks (Poe, 2009, p.39-42).

Motives
The motives of the crime committed by the character in the short story The Tell Tale Heart was because of the prosthetic eye owned by the old man. The mad man explained well that even though he did not sure when it was begin, but he was having the idea of killing the old man because whenever he felt the old man gaze toward him, his blood run cold. The idea of getting rid the old man’s eye by killing him first was haunting him day and night, creating uneasiness of him that built up day by day in him. The uneasiness formed at that time resulting in him deciding to get rid of the uneasiness he felt by murdering the old man and eventually get rid of the eye forever. It was the eye that bothering him, only the eye, because he first stated his reason that the old man indeed a kind man, and never done anything wrong to him before, the old man never insult him, he even did not interest in the old man’s riches. It was never a criminal act based on an idea of stealing something from other.

Discussion
Through the Wilson’s four key approaches in criminology and literature, all four aspects occur resulting in the existence of relation between criminology and the literary work of short story by Edgar Allan Poe The Tell Tale Heart. The first aspect The Lens uses the term and theories drawn from criminology in forming a literary text. The second aspects, the theorization from the use of example and of ideas that related to crime and justice in the short story, here the murdering plan and the way of getting rid of the body and hiding the evidence are related to crime. The third aspects of historicization in which the writing of literary text influenced by the criminal justice system and academic criminology and how the literature has influenced the criminologist also the fourth aspects of comparison between crime and justice in having similarities and differences between each other, all four aspects appear in the short story evidence of the existence of the criminology in literature.

The types of crime evidently showing a murder case resulting in it belong to the personal or violent crime in which a character took the life of other in a criminal act. While the motives also evidently showed from the intention shared by the character also narrator from the beginning of the short story that it was the old man’s eyes, not the wealth, bad behavior, insult or other hideous act, nothing but the prosthetic eye that made him shudder or scared.

Wilson’s approaches applied perfectly in analyzing this short story as a representation of literary work. Durkheim’s classification of the types of crime was also applicable here, though since it is a short story, only one type of crime that appears in the literary work of all 7 types.

CONCLUSION
The results of criminology in relation to literature are shown using Wilson’s four key approaches, all four aspects are occurred through the short story by Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Tell Tale Heart*. The types of crime was personal or violent crime and the motives is the vulture eye that triggering the mad man’s intention into committing murder. The research shows significant relation between criminology and literature, they correlated into one another and also influenced each other, written in scientific methodologies and based on social phenomena in society. The result of this research are limited to only this research, further research on the same field to other types of literary works are needed to get to general conclusion. Researches on pathological aspects are also needed especially on more multidiscipline field related to literary works and its effects.

REFERENCES


