

DETECTIVE PATTERNS IN *THE PALE BLUE EYES* (2022) FILM

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Abstract

This study explores the application of John G. Cawelti's classic detective formula in the film *The Pale Blue Eye* (2022), which is an adaptation of Louis Bayard's 2003 novel. As part of popular literature, the film represents the enduring appeal of the mystery-detective genre through recognizable narrative patterns and conventions. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and narrative analysis techniques, this study identifies how the six main elements of the classic detective formula (1) mysterious crime situation, (2) introduction of the detective character, (3) investigation process, (4) announcement of the solution, (5) explanation of the solution, and (6) final resolution, are implemented in the film's story structure. The results of the analysis show that the film not only follows the conventional structure of the detective genre, but also enriches the narrative through additional elements such as a Watsonian-style narrator (Edgar Allan Poe) and the existence of a two-layer solution that deviates from the role of the classic detective as a neutral and detached figure. Thus, *The Pale Blue Eye* proves the flexibility and cultural relevance of the detective story formula in contemporary popular media, as Cawelti's theory suggests that genre conventions serve as both structural guides and mirrors of cultural meanings.

Keywords: Film, Popular Literature, Detective Formula, *The Pale Blue Eye*, Mystery

INTRODUCTION

Films are literary works that are deeply embedded in human life. They are popular among children, adults, and even the elderly. Through cinematic techniques and visual effects, films enhance both the real and emotional impressions found in literary texts. As Corrigan (2012) states, "As an art form, movies involve literature, the pictorial and plastic arts, music, dance, theatre, and even architecture." This perspective emphasizes that films do not stand alone as a purely visual medium, but rather integrate literary elements that make them worthy of critical reading, similar to traditional literary works.

One significant form of literature adopted in films is fiction, which demonstrates the interplay between imagination and narrative. A concrete example is *The Pale Blue Eye* (2022), a film that embodies the detective fiction genre. By weaving imagination, human understanding, and narrative structure, films enrich cultural expression and contribute to the advancement of human civilization. They utilize the potential of reason through actions, images, words, and re-imaginings of human life, showing how cinema functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium of intellectual and artistic development.

Film as a visual and narrative art form has become a powerful medium in representing various genres and story structures, one of which is the mystery-detective



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genre. Detective is one of the popular literary genres that began to develop in the 19th century and remains popular with readers today. Detective stories have special characteristics, where every event that occurs always leads to the disclosure of a crime mystery. It also viewed to have similarities to the scientific research process, from problem to the answer at the end.

The detective story formula has been successfully applied in various media, such as literature and video games, proving its flexibility and relevance in modern narratives (Ramos, 2021). Popular narratives are shaped through a synthesis of cultural conventions and universal story structures or archetypes. Viewed this way, narrative formulas are not static or bound by space and time. Instead, they possess cross-cultural and cross-historical reach, demonstrating broad appeal across diverse social contexts (Cawelti, 1977).

The mystery genre is considered one of the main forms of popular narrative, with the detective story as an important subgenre. This type of story focuses on investigating criminal acts and uncovering hidden secrets. Formula, as a popular story type, can serve as a marker that determines whether a work belongs to a particular genre (Cawelti, 1977). Among the most prominent forms is the mystery genre, which includes detective stories. These narratives may take the shape of adventures or melodramas, but what stands out is how they portray the cultural mythology of detectives, criminals, police, and suspects as archetypal figures. At its core, the mystery story formula rests on the principle of investigation and the discovery of hidden truths.

This structure usually includes important elements such as a puzzling crime, a pattern of investigative action, the presence of distinctive characters (detective, perpetrator, victim), and a setting that supports a mysterious atmosphere. According to Cawelti, the mystery formula is rooted in the reader's moral fantasy, namely the belief that every conflict can be resolved logically and justice will be upheld. Cawelti states that popular literature is the body of formulas and conventions that shape genres such as mystery, adventure, romance, and melodrama, which circulate widely and have mass appeal (Cawelti, 1977). This approach allows researchers to examine widely recognized narrative patterns and how these patterns interact with a society's expectations, moral fantasies, and culture.

In Cawelti's (2004) view, the early popularity of detective stories, particularly through the huge success of Sherlock Holmes, reflected social values and ideologies that tended to be conservative. These stories emphasized the restoration of social order and stability through the logical resolution of evil, in line with the dominant views of society at the time.

In this article the researcher is going to explore the formula of detective story, also interested in the difference between mystery and detective as a formula in popular literary works. One of famous novel from the famous literary writer, Louis Bayard, titled *The Pale Blue Eyes* which originally published in 2003 adapted into a film with the same title and directed by Scott Cooper in 2022. The method used is qualitative-descriptive analysis with narrative analysis techniques. This technique is used to identify and describe structural elements in a narrative, such as plot patterns, detective character development, mystery construction, and resolution mechanisms. This analysis also looks at how symbols, scenes, and dialogue function to support the mystery formula.

As Fiske (1987) stated, *"a narrative analysis allows for the detailed examination of how genre conventions and formulas function within the text to produce meaning and engage audiences."* Therefore, through this technique, researchers can understand how

films such as *The Pale Blue Eye* operate on popular genre conventions and shape narrative experiences that suit the expectations of modern audiences.

These previous things give the researcher a new idea to be a research topic. As a result, the researcher is motivated to connect this study with previous research that also explores detective story. First come from journal article that related to the theory titled *The Classic Detective Formula in the Novel A Good Girl's Guide to Murder: A study of John G. Cawelti's formula* (2025) written by Purnami, Matradewi, and Indrawati. This study aims to examine how John G. Cawelti's classic detective formula is implemented in Holly Jackson's *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this research explores the narrative structure of the novel. The research focuses on how the elements of the formula constructively shape the events that are narrated. This study found that the novel successfully blends traditional genre standards with modern storytelling methods, providing a fresh detective experience while maintaining the core structure of classic mystery fiction.

Next come from the research titled *Representation of Character in Edgar Allan Poe's Works and Biographical Dissimilarities in Scott Cooper's The Pale Blue Eye* (2022) Film written by Ellyana and Latifah Dwi Ariyani (2024) discusses the representation of Edgar Allan Poe in the film *The Pale Blue Eye* (2022) by comparing elements of Poe's literary works and his original biography. The researchers used Linda Hutcheon's Adaptation and Transformation theory in analyzing the data. The study showed two main findings. First, the film *The Pale Blue Eye* represents a number of Edgar Allan Poe's works. The works play a significant role in shaping the film's main characters, Augustus Landor, Edgar Allan Poe, and Lea Marquis, and enrich the depiction of their personalities, motivations, and relationships. Second, there are a number of similarities between the character of Poe in the film and Poe in the real world, such as an interest in poetry, ability to speak French, educational background at West Point Military Academy, and habit of consuming alcohol. However, significant differences were also found, including involvement in murder investigations, military discipline, financial conditions, family relations, and recognition in the literary world. Meanwhile, in this study, the researcher examined the detective formula in that film.

The study entitled *Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Structural Analysis of Personality using Borromean Model in the film 'The Pale Blue Eye'* written by Sarah, Nabila Akbar, and Amina Bashir (2023) applies Lacanian psychoanalysis using a qualitative approach, they explore how the actions of the Augustus Landor influence the mental structures of other characters in Lacan's three realms (Imaginary, Symbolic, Real). The results show Landor's dominance which "drowns" the personalities of other characters, while also confirming the absence of the superego function as per Lacan's concept. This study is relevant because it highlights the construction of the character's personality through a psychoanalytic lens, but it has not touched on the aspect of the literary text, thus opening up space for this study to examine the dimensions of formula in literature.

Next there are previous studies based on the same topic. This thesis is entitled *Hard-Boiled Detective Formula in The Movie Knives Out* (2019) by Arti Maraya (2024). This study uses the theory of John G. Cawelti. This study identifies the main elements in the detective formula, such as the role of the detective, the victim, the perpetrator, and the parties involved in the crime. In addition, action patterns such as detective as hero, suspense, modern city setting, women's roles, and changes in meaning are also found in the film. The results show that all elements of Cawelti's theory are fully applied in *Knives Out*.

The study entitled *The Formula of Agatha Christie's Detective Story The Third-Floor Flat* by Yustin Sartika (2022). Using John G. Cawelti's theory, this study found that the four main elements in the detective formula, such situation, action patterns, characters and their relationships, and setting are present in full in the text. The storyline follows a typical pattern, starting with the introduction, initial incident, misdirection, the occurrence of the crime, investigative efforts by various parties, until finally the detective reveals the facts and evidence. This study also shows that techniques such as whodunit, foreshadowing, metaphors, and false devices are used to maintain suspense.

An article written by Fadhila and Adi (2021) entitled *Women Detectives in Detective Fiction: A Formula Analysis on Tana French's Dublin Murder Squad Series*. This study uses Cawelti's (1976) formula analysis to show how Tana French transforms the hard-boiled detective formula through issues of gender, race, resistance to patriarchy, and a more "feminine" approach to justice. This innovation is a continuation of the tradition of feminist revision, but also reflects a post-feminist outlook that distinguishes French's detective from previous feminist works.

The study entitled *The Infidelity of Using Detective Story Formula in Enola Holmes Film Adaptation* written by Irbatun Sabani and Imas Istiani (2024) discusses the adaptation of the Enola Holmes novel into a film using Cawelti's detective story formula theory. The results of the study indicate the existence of formula infidelity, where novels follow classical patterns, while films tend towards hard-boiled formulas. These changes include story focus, setting, and women's roles, which are adjusted to commercial interests and audience satisfaction. This study is important because it shows how the detective formula can be changed in the process of film adaptation, relevant to the analysis of *The Pale Blue Eye* which is also an adaptation with a different visual and narrative approach from the original source.

Next come from journal article titled *The Classical Detective Story Formula from Literature to Videogames* written by Elisa Silva Ramos (2021) discusses how Cawelti's classic detective story formula was adapted from literature to the video game *Return of the Obra Dinn*. This study starts from Cawelti's theory and analyzes Poe's short story "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and the game by Lucas Pope. Ramos emphasizes that interactivity changes the role of the detective and the goals of the genre, while maintaining basic patterns such as situation, action, character, and setting.

Journal article titled *Hard-Boiled Fiction: A Fusion of Noir and Detective Fiction* written by Sachin Subrav Gadhire and Samadhan Subhash Mane (2022) is about hard-boiled fiction as a subgenre of American detective fiction that combines elements of noir and detective styles within a distinctive narrative framework. Its characteristics include rough and fast language, violence, explicit sexuality, and a dark big city setting. This study is important because it clarifies a hard-boiled framework that differs from the classic detective formula that is the topic of this research.

Representation of Hard-Boiled Detective Formula in The Batman (2022) By Matt Reeves written by Jidan Mustopa and Yoga Sudarisman (2022) using John G. Cawelti's theory. They highlight typical action patterns such as the detective as hero, threat and suspense, the modern city setting, the role of women, and changing moral meanings. Through a qualitative-descriptive approach that includes narrative and visuals, this study shows how these elements influence the development of the main character in a corrupt and crime-ridden city environment. This study is relevant as a comparison in the research of *The Pale Blue Eye*, which also features a detective as the center of the narrative, but in a 19th century context and with a classic-gothic feel, not a hard-boiled modern one.

Thesis entitled *The Thriller and Mystery Formula in Screen Life The Film Missing (2023)* written by Putri Devi Tasari (2024) focuses on the application of thriller and mystery formulas in screen life format, using formula theory from Cawelti (1976) and Saricks (2009). Through the literary criticism method, this study identifies six main aspects; pacing, plot, characterization, digital setting, atmosphere, and style as well as plot elements such as foreshadowing, suspense, and surprise. The results show that the use of digital settings strengthens the tension and resolution of the mystery by the main female character. This study is relevant as a comparison in *The Pale Blue Eye* research which uses the detective formula.

The Formula of Romance in The Redeeming Love (2022) Movie written by Jusrianti, Rasiah, and Arman (2024) uses John G. Cawelti's formula theory to analyse conventions and inventions in romance films. The results show that the film maintains the basic structure of the romance formula (meeting, conflict, happy ending), but also displays inventions such as mixed narrative structures (Cinderella, Pamela, and contemporary patterns), as well as characterizations that do not completely follow classical stereotypes. It is relevant to this research which applies the formula theory but to the detective genre in *The Pale Blue Eye*.

Thesis *Adventure formula in Roar Uthaug's Tomb Raider (2018) movie* by Jovi Ramanda Putra (2024) combines the concept of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey; the stages of departure, initiation, and return, with John G. Cawelti's adventure formula theory, then analyses 50 scene clips (22 for Hero's Journey and 28 for the adventure formula). The results show that the film narrative is composed of four main stages of the hero's journey, complete with a typical adventure pattern of dangerous obstacles, individual/group hero roles, and final victory.

Romance Formula Research Portrayed in The Gift of The Magi Short Story by O. Henry written by Fanisa Zahrani Firsta, Nadira Salsabila, Wahyu Indah Mala Rohmana (2025) examines the storyline of *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry using the romance formula theory by John G. Cawelti. The results show four main stages in the plot: the life of the couple, the effort to find the gift, the conflict of sacrifice, and a meaningful ending. Although focusing on the romance genre in short stories, this study is relevant because it shows the application of narrative formulas structurally, in line methodologically with this study in analyzing the detective formula in the film *The Pale Blue Eye*.

Journal article *Deconstructing "The New Indian Woman": An Analysis of the Sleuth Heroines of Indian English Women's Detective Fiction* written by Somjeeta Pandey and Somdatta Bhattacharya (2023) analyzes the representation of female detective characters in the novels *Witness the Night* and *I Never Knew It Was You*, focusing on how these characters challenge traditional constructions of femininity through their roles as investigators. This study shows that the detection activity in these works is not only a tool for solving crimes, but also a form of resistance against the oppressive patriarchal system.

FINDING AND DISCUSION

Situation



*Figure 1 Landor see Fry's corpse
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps: 00.07.07)*

Cawelti (1977) stated that the classic detective story begins with an unsolved crime and moves toward the elucidation of its mystery. This element is seen at minute 07:07 when Landor and Dr. Marquis examine the body of cadet Fry who is hanging with his heart removed. This case is clearly unsolved and full of oddities, raising questions about the motive and the perpetrator. This is what makes the scene fit the concept of "unsolved crime" which is the beginning of the detective narrative structure according to Cawelti.

Pattern of action

Introduction of the Detective



*Figure 2 Opening scene shows Landor at a quiet valley.
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.01.33)*

Cawelti also stated the storyline of detective formula that sometimes, the story begins with the introduction of the detective through a minor episode that demonstrates his skill at deduction. The film begins with the appearance of Augustus Landor, a former detective who was once respected, now lives in seclusion amidst the silence and misty landscape of the Hudson Valley, as captured as figure 2. It is the main thing. A detective as a main character is the pattern of detective stories. It is a part of mystery.



*Figure 3 Hitchcock and Landor are going to West Point.
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.3.00)*

Augustus Landor is called to West Point Military Academy to investigate the death of a cadet named Leroy Fry. Through the medium of Captain Hitchcock, Landor's investigative abilities are introduced as being on par with the 'forensic experts' of the 1830s. At 3:00 minutes into the film, Captain Hitchcock introduces him by praising Landor's many accomplishments as a detective, confirming his undeniable reputation.

Crime and Clues



*Figure 4 Checking Fry's corpses
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 6.12)*

Next Cawelti (1977) said in his book *The Second Major Element In The Classical Detective Story's Pattern Of Action Is The Crime*. As captured in figure 4, Dr. Marquis says, "But getting to the heart, that's the tricky part," as Landor examines the body of Cadet Leroy Fry who was found hanging in the woods with his heart removed. An autopsy proved Fry was murdered. This ritualistic act shook the moral fabric of the Military Academy and sparked an investigation. In Cawelti's framework, this event is a form of disruption of order which is crime that demands restoration through the role of the detective.



*Figure 5 Landor finds a piece of paper from Fry's dead hand.
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 11.19)*

In the next scene, a mysterious note becomes the initial clue that paves the way for the investigation. The clue was a piece of paper that Landor found in the hands of the victim, Cadet Fry. This finding became the starting point of a series of puzzles that began to unravel as the investigation progressed.



*Figure 6 Livestock are killed with the same pattern of murder
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.18.36)*

Another clue found was the carcasses of livestock without hearts, which suggests occult practices. The animals were found hanging from trees, in a similar condition to that of Cadet Fry whose heart was mysteriously removed. This similarity in pattern strengthens the suspicion that the murders did not occur randomly, but were part of a series of planned actions.



*Figure 7 An autopsy of another victim, cadet Randolph Ballinger
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 1.08.58)*

It is clue and crime again in the film. The next victim, Cadet Ballinger, was found hanging, with his heart removed and his body mutilated by castration. The autopsy results revealed that the method of murder was similar to the previous case, but castration was a new element that broadened the meaning of the clues. This clue initially appears to be

a form of excessive violence, but as the story progresses and the motive is revealed at the end of the film, this clue turns out to have an important meaning that is closely related to revenge and moral symbolism, in line with the clue element in the structure of a detective story according to Cawelti.



*Figure 8 News of cadet Stoddard's escape
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 1.25.51)*

In figure 8 the third victim, Cadet Stoddard, was initially reported missing and presumed to have run away because his belongings in the dormitory were also missing. However, as a close friend of Fry and Ballinger, Stoddard's disappearance raised suspicions. In one scene, Lander concludes that Stoddard likely felt he would be the next target. These clues strengthen the narrative tension and serve as clues that deepen the connection between the victims, as explained in the detective story pattern according to Cawelti's theory.



*Figure 9 Discovery of a pattern from sect rituals
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.35.5)*

Figure 9 captured the indications of the existence of occult practices or sects are also important clues in the investigation. Several findings, such as strange symbols, heart removal rituals, and hanging animal carcasses without organs, suggest that there were actions related to certain beliefs or cults. These clues not only create an atmosphere of mystery, but also broaden the spectrum of possible perpetrators and motives.

Investigation

Thus, the pattern investigation, Cawelti (1977) said that:

"...the detective story formula centers upon the detective's investigation and solution of the crime."



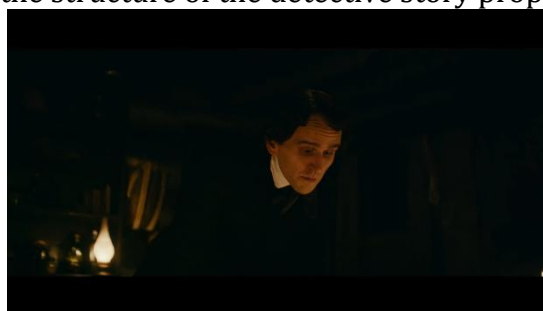
*Figure 10 Landor accepts the offer for investigation
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.07.35)*

In figure 10 superintendent Thayer asks Detective Landor to investigate an unsolved murder case that is considered to be tarnishing the good name of West Point Military Academy as the figure 10 captured. This request marks the beginning of an official investigation into a series of mysterious crimes, and also forms the initial basis for the detective situation in the narrative structure according to Cawelti's theory.



*Figure 11 Landor begins investigating the crime scene
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.07.56)*

As captured as figure 11. Landor begins his investigation by interrogating Cadet Huntoon, who was on guard duty the night Cadet Fry was found dead. This step is part of the important initial information gathering process, where Landor tries to trace the incident through key witnesses. The interrogation of Huntoon becomes one of the detective's efforts to unravel the possibility of involvement or neglect, in accordance with the investigative pattern in the structure of the detective story proposed by Cawelti.



*Figure 12 Poe's investigation
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 00.25.00)*

As part of the investigation, Poe helped Landor analyze the scrap of paper found in Cadet Fry's hand. This collaboration becomes an important part in revealing clues, where they together try to interpret the contents of the notes and relate them to motives or perpetrators. Poe's involvement strengthened the Watsonian assistant element in

Cawelti's detective story formula, namely a companion figure who plays an active role in helping the detective and providing the audience's point of view.

Announcement of the Solution

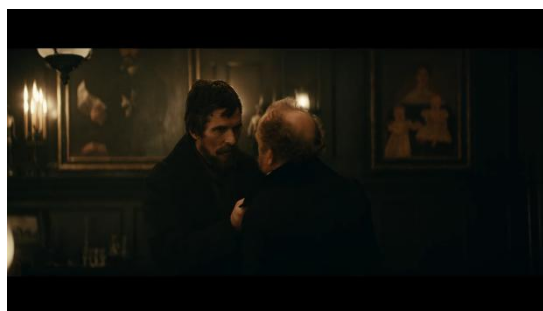
The film's use of the red herring of occult practices not only prolongs the puzzle, but also intentionally delays the momentum of resolution. The audience is taken through a series of false clues and alibis that are slowly dismantled, creating ongoing tension. In this case, Cawelti explains how the element of surprise in a detective story works to maintain interest until the end.

"...the writer can make the moment of solution an extremely dramatic and surprising climax since we have no clear indication when it will arrive."(Cawelti, 1977)

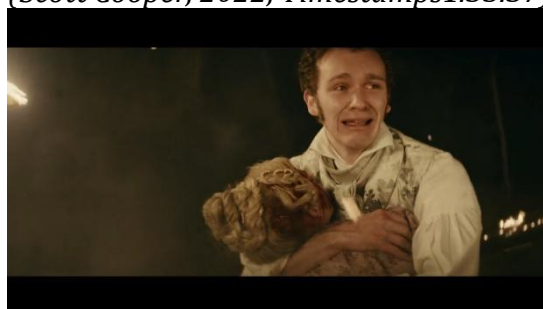


*Figure 13 The marquis family ritual to cure Lea's illness
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.34.31)*

Figure 13 shows the occult ritual performed by the Marquis family as a last resort to cure Lea of epilepsy. This scene becomes a red herring that leads the investigation into witchcraft. The film builds a classic detective plot through a series of witness interviews, alibi debunking, and puzzles that become increasingly complicated by these occult elements, prolonging the search for the truth in accordance with the narrative patterns in Cawelti's theory.



*Figure 14 The Marquis family is descended from an ancestral sect led by Henry Le Clerc
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.33.37)*



*Figure 15 Lea and Artemus Marquis died during the ritual practice of the sect and their family was made the perpetrators of all the problems in this film
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.38.27)*

From figures 14 and 15, it can be concluded that this is the first solution presented in the film which is institutional in nature and appears formally complete: after Poe almost becomes a victim in the ritual, Landor comes to save him. The deaths of Lea and Artemus were deemed to be their own doing, and the military quickly closed the case by declaring them the main perpetrators. This created a two-layered announcement. First, the official version from the institution blaming the Marquis brothers, forming a seemingly final resolution but leaving room for deeper layers of truth.

Explanation of the Solution



*Figure 16 Poe reveals that the evidence in Froy's hand is actually Landor's writing
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.44.17)*

The second solution is revealed when Poe matches the writing on the torn note with Landor's handwriting as in figure 16, and realizes that Landor himself was the perpetrator of the Fry and Ballinger murders. The motive was revenge for the rape that caused her daughter to commit suicide. In this scene, Landor admits his actions and tells Poe the entire incident.

This twist reverses the common expectation in detective stories: the detective is not just the solver of the case, but also the perpetrator. This deviates from the classic “*detached gentleman-amateur*” pattern which is usually neutral and objective. Cawelti explains that if the story uses the detective's point of view, it can be difficult to keep the mystery a secret without unnaturally limiting information:

“If he uses the detective's point of view, the writer has trouble keeping the mystery a secret without creating unnatural and arbitrary limits on what is shown to us of the detective's reasoning processes.” (Cawelti, 1977)

By making Poe a co-narrator, the film manages to hide Landor's motives and moves until the end of the story, without making the plot feel forced.

Denouement

According to Cawelti, resolving the case was not only about exposing the perpetrator, but also about restoring order and harmony that had been disturbed.

“The peaceful beginning in the detective's retreat establishes a point of departure and return for the story. ...It is something extraordinary that must be solved in order to restore the harmonious mood of that charming scene by the blazing fireplace.” (Cawelti, 1977)



Figure 17 Huntoon the first discoverer only found Fry's body hanging without any wounds.

(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.51.51)

Figure 17 shows the scene where Huntoon finds Fry's body hanging without any physical injuries, including no traces of the heart removal incision. This is in accordance with Lander's statement that he ran away after hearing someone approaching. Thus, Lander was not the perpetrator of the heart removal from the first victim, although the film does not explain who the real perpetrator was.



Figure 18 Lander admits everything and tells the story from his POV

(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.54.36)

In Figure 18, Lander admits all his actions. He stated that he only managed to kill Fry, while Stoddard managed to escape. However, his action was stopped because Fry's body was found first and his heart was gone, without knowing who took it. To strengthen the illusion of a ritual, Lander then killed livestock and Ballinger in a similar manner.

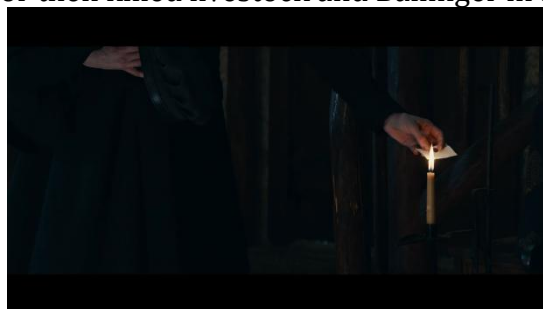


Figure 19 Poe burns the evidence

(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps1.57.47)

The scene in Figure 19 shows Poe burning evidence of Lander's crimes. This action is a form of moral decision, where Poe chooses to let Lander remain free. For him, the burden of guilt and mental suffering that Lander endured was already a fitting punishment.



*Figure 20 Lander flies away his daughter's ribbon
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps2.00.37)*

Figure 20 shows Lander removing his daughter's hair ribbon from a cliff. Although Lander's ultimate fate is not directly explained, this scene symbolizes the restoration of personal and social order. However, the ending still leaves a tragic impression and a moral dilemma, illustrating that not all endings bring complete relief.

Addition

Watsonian Character



*Figure 21 Lander invites Poe to cooperate.
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps22.43)*

Lander enlists young cadet Edgar Allan Poe as his co-investigator and Watsonian narrator, a companion who witnesses the investigation but does not fully understand what is in the detective's mind. This role helps keep the mystery hidden from the audience. As Cawelti explains:

"By narrating the story from a point of view that sees the detective's actions but does not participate in his perceptions or process of reasoning, the writer can more easily misdirect the reader's attention and thereby keep him from prematurely solving the crime."(Cawelti, 1977)

By using Poe's point of view, the film manages to distract attention and maintain the surprise until the end of the story.

Two-Layered Solution

This double layer between the apparent solution (the institutional version) and the real solution enriches the classic pattern of the detective story. The audience is initially relieved by the closure of the case through occult motifs, before finally being confronted with a deeper psychological twist. This strategy lengthens the transition from announcement to explanation, according to Cawelti's explanation:

"These parts do not always appear in sequence and are sometimes collapsed into each other, but it is difficult to conceive of a classical story without them." (Cawelti, 1977)

By constructing two phases of resolution, the film adds emotional depth and strengthens the moral tension within the detective narrative structure.

Classical Detective

In classic detective stories, the detective is portrayed as emotionally neutral and not personally involved in the case he is investigating:

"The classical detective usually has little real personal interest in the crime he is investigating. Instead, he is a detached, gentlemanly amateur." (Cawelti, 1977)

Landor initially appears to fit this description. He is assertive even toward Poe, his own investigative partner, when he feels he is not being given honest information. This attitude reflects the firmness and impartiality typical of a classic detective as figure 22 captured. However, at the end of the story it is revealed that Landor himself is the main perpetrator. This reverses the role of the detective from a neutral figure to a highly involved individual, thereby blurring the boundaries between investigator and perpetrator in the classic structure of the detective story. Landor was once that but only for a moment.



*Figure 22 Landor investigated Poe with tension
(Scott Cooper, 2022, Timestamps 1.15.33)*

CONCLUSION

Scott Cooper's *The Pale Blue Eye* successfully represents the narrative structure of a classic detective story as formulated by John G. Cawelti, but with a complex and layered approach. The main points such as unsolved crimes, introduction of detective characters, discovery, investigation, announcement, explanation of solutions, and successful verification of recovery are presented in a comprehensive and structured manner.

However, the film does not simply follow the classic formula in a linear fashion. The use of Poe's character as a Watsonian narrator allows space for the mystery to remain hidden until the end. Meanwhile, the two-layer solution structure, between the institutional version (occultism) and the real version (Landor's personal revenge) proves the emotional depth and moral tension that enrich the traditional pattern. The twist that places Landor, the detective, as the perpetrator, reverses expectations of the classic detective figure who is usually objective and neutral.

Thus, the film not only reconstructs the classic detective formula, but also reinterprets its elements in a darker and more human form. The tension between chaos and disorder, between morality and personal justice, is at the heart of a touching and dilemma-filled narrative. This overall narrative structure shows that *The Pale Blue Eye* is not just a problem-solving story, but also a reflection on the complexity of the human psyche in dealing with loss and justice.

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