



The application of narrative codes in the short stories of O. Henry

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze symbols, connotations, and cultures in two selected short stories *The Caliph, Cupid, and the Clock*, and *Mammon and the Archer* using five narrative codes. Those five narrative codes are; hermeneutic code, proairetic code, cultural code, connotative code, and symbolic code. This study applies qualitative research design to analyze the source of data. The result of this research shows that the five narrative codes appeared in these analyzed short stories of O. Henry. The hermeneutic codes are found in the titles of the short stories, and from fugitive expectations from the reader. The proairetic codes are found in five sequences of the plot; exposition, complication, climax, falling action, and resolution and flashback or flash forward structures. The cultural codes are found in the stereotypes regarding New York City cultures. The connotative codes are found through the characters of short stories, and the places mentioned in them. And the last, the symbolic codes are found in the binary opposition of whether time is powerful in the former story and whether money is a decisive object in the latter story.

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O. Genrining qisqa hikoyalarida hikoya kodlarining qo'llanilishi

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

germenevtik kod,

proairetik kod,

madaniy kod,

konnotativ kod,

ramziy kod.

Ushbu tadqiqot ikkita tanlangan "The Caliph, Cupid, and the Clock", "Mammon and the Archer" qisqa hikoyalarida beshta hikoya kodlari yordamida ramz, ma'no va madaniyatni tahlil qilishga qaratilgan. Mazkur beshta hikoya kodlari: germenevtik kod, proairetik kod, madaniy kod, konnotativ kod va ramziy koddan iborat. Tadqiqotda ma'lumotlar manbasini tahlil qilish uchun sifatli tadqiqot dizaynidan foydalanilgan.

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Применение нарративных кодов в рассказах О. Генри

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

герменевтический код,
проаретический код,
культурный код,
коннотативный код,
символический код.

Целью данного исследования является анализ символов, коннотаций и культур в двух избранных рассказах “The Caliph, Cupid, and the Clock” и “Mammon and the Archer” с использованием пяти повествовательных кодов. Вот эти пять повествовательных кодов; герменевтический код, проаретический код, культурный код, коннотативный код и символический код. В этом исследовании применяется качественный дизайн исследования для анализа источника данных. Результат данного исследования показывает, что в проанализированных рассказах О. Генри появляются пять нарративных кодов. Герменевтические коды обнаруживаются в названиях рассказов и в беглых ожиданиях читателя. Проаретические коды встречаются в пяти последовательностях сюжета; экспозиция, завязка, кульминация, падающее действие, разрешение, а также структуры флэшбэка или флэшфорварда. Культурные коды содержатся в стереотипах, касающихся культуры города Нью-Йорка. Коннотативные коды обнаруживаются через персонажей рассказов и упомянутые в них места. И наконец, символические коды находятся в бинарной оппозиции того, имеет ли время силу в первой истории, а деньги являются решающим объектом во второй истории.

INTRODUCTION

O. Henry (1862–19010), whose real name is William Sydney Porter, was born in America. Although he wrote numerous novels and nonfiction, he is today best known for his short stories with witty narration. One of his most analyzed short stories is Gift of Magi (1905), and one of his most successful novels is Cabbage and Kings (1904). His life was interesting too; he was born during the American Civil War (1860–1865) and lost his mother at the age of three. When he was younger, he learned languages such as Spanish and German. He was a musically gifted man too, playing guitar and mandolin and singing in choirs.

Afterwards, he fell in love with Athol Estes, who was suffering from tuberculosis, so they eloped and got married due to the opposition of their parents. Athol gave birth to a son who unfortunately died right after coming into this world in 1880. Later, they had a daughter who died in the long run in 1927, in her late twenties, owing to the illness that ran in the family. To his luck, he was offered a position in an authoritative body by his friend Richard Hall, who was a land commissioner for the state of Texas. During his post, he used to have a salary equal to \$100 a month. However, he was charged with embezzlement, and on the day of court, he fled to Honduras, where he spent 6 months and sent Athol and their daughter to live with their own parents in safety. When he heard that Athol was dying in desperation, he returned and surrendered to the police. He was found guilty and sentenced in 1898. Even if he was sentenced to imprisonment, he didn't spend any days in cells, as he was a licensed pharmacist and worked as a druggist and jail chemist.

After being released in 1901, he reunited with his daughter. He remarried in 1907 to a childhood sweetheart who was also a writer. He was a heavy drinker with diagnosed cirrhosis of the liver and enlarged heart, which led to his death. In his masterpieces, we can see his obvious affection for New York City; he called Bagdad on the subways (The Trimmed Lamp). Most of his stories are set in this city in the early twentieth century. The characters are chiefly working people. The characters are buried with descriptions of moral values such as tolerance, kind-heartedness, belief, honesty, and responsibility (Eripuddin, Rahayu, 2020). Today, there is an award named after him. The O. Henry Award is a prestigious annual prize named after Porter and given to outstanding short stories.

DISCUSSION

Roland Barthes (1915–1980) is a French essayist, literary theorist, philosopher, critic, and semiotician (Caves, 2004). Roland Barthes argues that literary text requires re-reading since when we read again and again, different meanings and messages appear. In his book “S/Z” (1970), Roland Barthes argued signifiers could be grouped into five narrative codes that “weave” together to form the story. The hermeneutic and proairetic codes provide the internal chronology of the narrative, while the semantic, symbolic and cultural codes work on a connotative level and add depth to stories (Barthes, 1974). In a simpler note, good texts should not be restrictive in meanings, the more a story is read, different messages should be explored each time, interpreted differently by the eyes of various readers. Reading stories through keeping these five codes in mind is like looking at an image with differently colored lenses each time, the image stays the same, but our impressions change.

The *hermeneutic* code is the code of puzzles and enigmas in which the “questions are raised” (Scholes, 1985). This code is the voice of truth behind the story. Hermeneutic code is of huge importance in the emotiveness of a short story as details are kept secret to increase the effectiveness of revelations of all diegetic truths in the end. Readers feel satisfied when all loose explanations are tied. Intentional evasions of truth are called “snares” by Roland Barthes. The *proairetic* code is called a code of action (Hawkes, 2003). According to this code, any initiated action must be completed till the end of a story. The cumulative actions constitute the plot events of the text. Each action of the major character can be compiled into five sequences of the plot in flashback and flash-forward structure. This code is the voice of empirics. Hawkes (2003) in his book states that the *cultural code* (Reference code) is the code that ‘everyone knows’ what the author means by established and authoritative cultural forms. Therefore, the cultural code is the code that is taken from the authoritative cultures which are known by everyone. This code is the voice of science or knowledge. *Connotative code* is the voice of the person. Connotations are accumulated around characters. Semes, sequential thoughts, traits, and actions constitute character. In other words, connotative code is the proper noun surrounded by connotations. *Symbolic code* is the voice of the symbol. This code is typical with the feature of binary oppositions or themes.

The Caliph, Cupid, and the Clock. This story is one of the twenty-five stories in the collection “The Four Million” published in 1906.

Hermeneutic code. The hermeneutic code is expressed in the title of the story. Readers may question why the story is called in this way. This enigma is not revealed till the very end of the story. The answer is hardly given in words. The whole plot and other five codes together may aid readers to discover the answer to this “raised question”.

Readers may have initial guessworks based on denotative meanings of words in the title. In a Muslim country, the caliph is the religious and civil authority. The term caliph is derived from the Arabic word khalafa, which means "successor" or "next in line." It was adopted as a title by Abu Bakr, the first Islamic leader following the death of Mohammed, the prophet who founded Islam. The title of caliph is held by all major Islamic leaders. Because caliph is an Anglicised form of an Arabic term written in a foreign alphabet, there are several spelling variations, including calif, kalif, kaliph, khalif, and khalifah. Cupid is the ancient Roman god of love, depicted as a nude infant boy with wings who throws arrows at people to make them fall in love. A clock is a device that measures and displays time. The clock is one of the oldest human inventions, created to address the requirement to measure time intervals shorter than natural units such as the day, lunar month, and year.



***Illustration 1: Visual representation of concepts in the title
(The Caliph, Cupid, and the Clock)***

Readers may generate several questions based on the title itself.

What is a caliph doing in the story?

Why a caliph, not a king or a pope?

How are cupid and caliph related?

What are they going to do with a clock?

Is the story set in Arabic caliphate in medieval era?

This enigma attempts to raise the interests of readers to read the story till the end to find out whether their fugitive expectations are met. Furthermore, we can see a literary device of alliteration in the title. Alliteration is a very useful literary tool. Alliteration is simply defined as the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words and also the repetition of an initial consonant sound (Lorenz, 2013). The three "C"s is for even more fortification of interest. Incorporating alliteration into story title can help readers remember the work and it will stick out in people's minds.

Proairetic code. The proairetic codes may be found in the plot's five sequences: exposition, complexity, climax, falling action, conclusion, and flashback or flashforward structures. Exposition is the part of the tale in which the author introduces the primary characters. The difficulty that the protagonist of the tale must confront and resolve until the end of the story is referred to as complication. The climax of a narrative is the point at which the protagonist realises he or she must act based on prior information to solve the problem. The falling action wraps up or settles any small loose ends in the tale.

The narrative concludes with the resolution. Traditionally, the author begins the narrative in the park with the presentation of protagonist Prince Michael of Valleluna.

The author then goes on to describe the weather, atmosphere, moon, children, and road. The author tells readers where the clock in the title is located. Following that, the look is detailed, describing old, ripped clothing as well as a beard that has been growing for two weeks. Even if he appears to be a desperate guy without a home, he is self-assured enough to acquire luxury if he so desires. He could enjoy art, pleasure, beautiful ladies, and land if he so desired. He enjoys observing and assisting other males. Looking at the clock afterwards, he feels melancholy since everything is governed by time. Following then, a man dressed in evening attire entered and sat next to the protagonist. Here the stage of complication starts. He observed and found out that the man has a problem, and it is related to that big clock. Climax proceeds with the actions of a young man trying to leave after the agreed time with Marian to hang a white cloth from the window as a badge to forgive him for wrongdoing. Then the author accelerates the idea generation of the protagonist when he understands that he should keep the guy waiting a little bit, saying to him that maybe Marian hasn't got clocks at home. Even he suggests paying the man \$100,000. Then falling actions happened when the young man saw white cloth hung on the windows of his girlfriend. It turns out that girl promised to hang in at half past eight; she did it, but the time was wrong at the big clock. Resolution is the twist of the author that the prince is, as a matter of fact, homeless and stays in the park at night for twenty years. Seemingly, the young man left fifty dollars in his hands.

Flashback is an account of a conversation or action that happened before the beginning of a story, or at an earlier point, flashbacks interrupt the chronological order of events. It focuses more on why things happen, rather than on what happens.

And now, as he looked at the shining face of the great clock, his smile changed. The Prince always thought big thoughts. When he thought of time, he always felt a touch of sadness. Time controlled the world. People had to do what time commanded. Their comings and goings were always controlled by a clock. They were always in a hurry, and always afraid, because of time. It made him sad.

Here this extract helps readers understand why the caliph is uncomfortable with clocks.

Prince Michael sat down at the young man's side. People often said no to him, but they always said it pleasantly.

Here, the flashback is related with refusals of people to prince to help them. Regardless of being always refused, he sat next to him to aid. On the other hand, a flash-forward is the presentation of a future event before its proper time (Cristina, Olga, 2015). An example of flashforward is Charles Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol*, in which the protagonist Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come" who shows him his future. Scrooge sees himself dead, and people finding comfort and happiness in his death (Ryan, 2014).

After a little while, a young man in evening clothes came and sat upon a seat near the Prince. For half an hour he sat there nervously. Then he began watching the face of the lighted clock above the trees.

Here, the author gives a part of the clue of the problem. The rest will be explained later in the story.

Cultural code. Cultural codes are mostly manifested through stereotypes. Stereotypes are a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing (Oxford Dictionary). O. Henry tries to refuse the stereotype of princes always having smart clothes and the homeless always being uneducated and rude. According to commonly held stereotypes, princes are always good-looking, smart, tall, clean, charming, and have a lot of money. They have to fight against something terrible to prove their bravery or worth. There are several stereotypes about homeless people, too. People choose to be homeless themselves; they are lazy and addicted to something. Homelessness and unemployment are the problems that appeared in the 20th century due to the large, unsettled population migrating from all over the world. The protagonist of the story, Prince Michael of Valleluna (Moon Valley, the name of Mexican chain restaurants in New York City), regards himself as a prince. The reason why the author selected this very place may be explained by the ruling period of Prince Michael at nights when there are only the moon and stars.

In the exposition part, readers can deduce that the caliph refers to Michael the prince. The stereotype that homeless people are useless and hopeless at anything will not be justified at the end of the story. This very “prince” helped the young man to wait and reach his goal.

Connotative code. This code is attached to the characters and places mentioned in the story. The main characters are a young man who loves a girl and a homeless and unemployed man. The story is set in a park. There are several toponyms mentioned in the story (East, Valleluna, Park, Hudson River).

Prince Michael sat on the seat he liked best, and he smiled. It was a happy thought to him that he had enough money to buy every house he could see near the park, if he wished. He had as much gold as any rich man in this proud city of New York. He had as many jewels, and houses, and land. He could have sat at table with kings and queens. All the best things in the world could be his – art, pleasure, beautiful women, honor. All the sweeter things in life were waiting for Prince Michael of Valleluna whenever he might choose to take them. But instead, he was choosing to sit in torn clothes on a seat in a park.

We might conclude from this that the character picked himself to be in that situation; he fantasizes about the possibilities.

“I am a stranger, and I shouldn’t speak to you,” he said. “But I can see that you are troubled. I am Prince Michael of Valleluna.

Based on this excerpt, we may conclude that the man is courteous while addressing others. He has good communication skills because even if the young guy declined to help, he extracted a lot of information so he could aid.

“Clocks,” said the Prince, “are tied to the feet of all men and women. I have seen you watching that clock. That face commands us to act, whether or not we wish to act. Let me tell you not to trust the numbers on that face. They will destroy you if they can. Stop looking at that clock. What does it know about living men and women?”

We may build another meaning using this extract. The protagonist has a clear judgement to figure out what the young guy's problem is and is tenacious enough to keep attempting to approach the man. Furthermore, we can observe that the protagonist is self-assured enough to claim that he is smarter and wealthier than other guys.

Symbolic code. The theme code is symbolic code. The symbolic code addresses the subject based on anything that contradicts itself. The premise of this narrative is the binary

conflict between individuals who meticulously keep track of time and people who care less about time, such as Prince of Valleluna. The young man and his mistress are said to be punctual, appreciating every second or minute. While Michael, the prince of Valleluna, is careless about time, he spends the entire twenty years walking around the park. He notices other folks hurrying about with their businesses. Time, too, makes mistakes from time to time. And, using the homeless and unemployed protagonist as a trigger, the young guy waited until 9 p.m., only to discover that the time displayed on the face of the clock was incorrect. In this situation, if he was timely and left on time without overstaying, he would be permanently separated from his mistress.

Mammon and the Archer. This story is also one of the twenty-five stories in the collection "The Four Million" published in 1906.

Hermeneutic code. Mammon in the New Testament of the Bible is commonly thought to mean money, material wealth, or any entity that promises wealth, and is associated with the greedy pursuit of gain. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke both quote Jesus using the word in a phrase often rendered in English as "You cannot serve both God and mammon." According to the oxford dictionary, an archer is a person who shoots with a bow and arrows, especially at a target as a sport. Furthermore, this word can be used interchangeably with Sagittarius as the zodiac sign or constellation. In the Cambridge online dictionary, an archer is a person who shoots arrows from a bow for sport or as a weapon.

Naturally, some questions are raised before reading the story from the very beginning till the end.

What is Mammon doing in the story?

Is it about money or obtaining a large amount of money?

What is the archer doing in the story?

Is it about a person who wants lots of money?



***Illustration 2: Visual representation of the concepts in the title
(Mammon and the Archer)***

Proairetic code. Mammon and Archer begin with classic exposition, describing a protagonist, Anthony Rockwall, who owns a soap company and has made millions of dollars selling soap. G. Van Schuylicht Suffolk-Jones regards his neighbor as a proud

member of a proud old New York family. Then he summons the servant, calling "Mike" to summon his son when he returns home. Richard, his son, graduated from college six months ago and now lives with his father. When he arrives, he inquires of his son how much he spends on clothing and soap. They then had a disagreement about how money can buy anything. Afterwards, the description of the *complication* is proceeded. Richard explains the problem: he loves a wealthy woman and claims that he has never had the opportunity to propose to her on a stroll or in any other way. He lacked the guts to approach the girl and ask for her hand in marriage, but money couldn't help; if he had offered sooner, she would have accepted. Then Rockwall offers him his wife's ring, which she begs him to give to Richard when he finds a girl to marry. He placed the ring on his little finger, which was rather little. Then, the writer lets the lines of *climax* start. Miss Landry and Richard wanted to theatre and watch a play, but they were caught in traffic jam after losing the small ring and finding and returning back to cab again. But after that the cab couldn't run further (*Falling action*). They didn't want to wait, he proposed and she agreed to marry him (*Resolution*). The sister (Ellen) of Rockwall informed him about that event. And Rockwall's apparent business partner appears and informs him that he invested \$300 more than he planned and received \$1,000 plus another \$300. Rockwall covered all of his expenses from yesterday's traffic jam and asked if he spotted a naked baby with a bow and arrow, referring to cupid.

Richard had finished college six months before, and he had come home to live. He had not yet learned to understand his father. He was always being surprised.

This is a flashback to why Richard is still uncomfortable with his father in terms of communication.

"Oh, Anthony," said Ellen, "I wish you wouldn't think so much of money. Money is no help for love. Love is all powerful. If he had only spoken to her earlier! She could never say no to our Richard. But now I fear it is too late. All your gold cannot buy happiness for your son."

It serves also to flash back as Richard took his time and didn't approach to his mistress so long time to propose to marry him.

Cultural code. Stereotyping is a folkloristic process which permits people to reduce the complexities of the real world into simplified, abstract terms (Ostrofskiy, 1982). We can regard money in this story as a cultural value. There are lots of myths about money (Bichang'a, Umbima, 2023).

It takes money to make money

Money doesn't buy happiness

These sayings correspond to the messages conveyed by O. Henry in the present short tale. The first saying is designed to urge individuals to preserve a portion of their wages in case of a rainy day. When one thinks in terms of pennies, rainy days, or tiny quantities, one develops a scarcity mindset, which devalues one's thoughts. In the present narrative, the protagonist believes that saving pennies is important. It can be seen him urging his son to use less expensive soaps and clothing. Clason (1926) says, a part of all I earn is mine to keep. No matter how little you make, it should never be less than a tenth. First and foremost, pay yourself. Money cannot purchase pleasure. In the context of the current short story, the phrase is correct. Not all wealthy individuals are content since they are always striving for more. Hart (2015) observes that the world is replete of sad millionaires who should not be emulated. According to Clason (1926), wealth equals power, and with riches, many things are possible. Money cannot buy precious things like

love, serenity, and happiness, yet it is vital in life. For example, money enables one to afford the good things of life such as holidaying in palatial coastal beaches, travelling round the world, establishing a foundation for the needy, buying posh cars, expensive residential apartments among other passionate desires.

Connotative code. We can recognize New York City with hustle and bustle life with traffic jams that may last up to 2 hours during which millionaire's son and his love lady got engaged from the descriptions, themes, and actions of the characters. Anthony Rockwall's characteristics demonstrate his commercial acumen. We might also conclude that New York City is a romantic and adventurous city. We may infer Miss Lantry's cosmopolitan way of life from her way of life as he travels about Europe. There are multiple locations, including 42nd Street, Broadway, and 34th Street. O. Henry uses the aristocracy's polished dignity and the vulgarity of the nouveaux wealthy to give glamour and humorous contrast to his works. Rockwall is one such example. The inclusion of a Dutch surname in an O. Henry narrative, indicating lineage from the founding families of New York City, inevitably defines the character as a member of the old nobility.

Symbolic code. The narrative depicts the binary antagonism between money and love. Smith (1996) defines binary opposition as "a system of language or thought in which two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set against one another." Anthony Rockwell thinks that money can fix every problem, and in his business, this is true. However, in the case of Richard, his son, money is a powerless role.

Conclusion. William Sydney Porter has an extraordinary talent to build short stories. It is worthwhile to read more than one. And each time a person reads, he or she discovers something fresh and unusual. This raises the worth of his creations. His short tales may be examined from a variety of perspectives, and we have looked at five of them above (Hermeneutic, Proairetic, Cultural, Connotative, and Symbolic codes). We worked on two stories that were both published in a single book in 1906. Hermeneutic codes are buried in the unique names of the stories, the words of which never appear in the short story text. Proairetic codes have been studied in accordance with five elements of narratives along with flashback and flashforward tricks. The author's booth stories are organized having all elements in due course with logical connection. In terms of cultural codes, whenever we read stories, we may vividly imagine the mindset of American people, lifestyle, infrastructure of them vividly. This is owing to the story's expertly embedded cultural features. Similarly, connotative signals are observable through characters' sentiments, acts, words, and conversations. O. Henry also excelled in demonstrating antithesis by contrasting opposing notions such as punctuality and leisure; the power of money and love.

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