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NARRATIVE MEANING AND READERLY INTERPRETATION IN THE GRAVEL HEART: AN APPLICATION OF BARTHES' FIVE CODES

Rizwana Soomro[*1], Umair Ahmed[2], Kainat Soomro[3]

[*1]*Lecturer, Indus College of Medical Technology and Allied Health, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi.*
[2]*Lecturer, Indus University of Health Sciences*
[3]*MPhil Scholar, Hamdard University, Karachi.*

[*1]rizwanambsoomro@gmail.com, [2]umair.abmed65@gmail.com, [3]kainatmbsoomro@gmail.com

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to give the analysis of the five codes of Roland Barthes (hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, proairetic, and cultural) to provide the literature interpretation method. The methodology used in this study is a combination between close reading and critical analysis methodology, these methodology applied to analyse the novel Gravel Heart by ABDULRAZAK GURNAH. To explore how these codes are used in the novel to build meaning. This study's methodology involves analyzing the text line-by-line while focusing on specific elements like word selection, imagery, and structure. Other than that, a critical analysis of the text based on Barthes' five codes as frame of reference for the finding of meaning in the novel. The study found that the novel "Gravel Heart" is a novel with hermeneutic code, which produces mystery and uncertainty in the novel. Themes of love, loss and self-discovery are conveyed through the semantic code. The symbolic code is employed to communicate the theme of 'power of memory', while the cultural code is employed to communicate the theme of 'cultural identity'. The code of proarectic is used to build up the tension and suspense in the novel throughout. This study is for purposes of exemplifying how "Gravel Heart" is used to create meaning via the five codes of Roland Barthes. The novel uses a combination of the hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, proairetic, and cultural codes to convey themes of love, loss, self-discovery, memory, and cultural identity. In this study, the methodology of close reading and critical analysis that has been used has been able to give a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of the novel.

1.INTRODUCTION

Literature has always been a subject of interest for scholars, and numerous theories and approaches have been created to comprehend the meaning of literature. One of these structures is the Roland Barthes' Five Codes: the hermeneutic code, the semantic code, the symbolic code, the proairetic code, and the cultural code. These codes offer a different way to see how meaning is made in literature and can be used to analyse literature.

The author used the close reading and critical analysis methodology in analyzing the novel "*Gravel Heart*" *of Abdulrazak Gurnah* by applying Barthes' five codes. This study aims to explore how the novel employs

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these codes to effect meaning and the interpretation of the novel as different groups of people will interpret it.

There have been previous studies that have applied Barthes' five codes to literature, but few studies that have used the close reading and critical analysis methodology. In this study, I hope to fill that void, since I hope to provide a full understanding of the meaning of the novel and what it meant to readers. Moreover, this research also uses a qualitative research method, namely by conducting interviews with readers or focus group discussions to get a glimpse of how different readers interpret the book.

The importance of this study is in the field of literary analysis. This study is conducted by applying Barthes' five codes in analyzing "Gravel Heart" with the methodology of close reading and critical analysis, thus giving a new light on how literature creates meaning. This research will be of value to literary and literary criticism scholars and cultural studies researchers.

This study summarizes the application of Barthes' five codes in analyzing the novel "*Gravel Heart*" by *ABDULRAZAK GURNAH* which was analyzed in this study using close reading and critical analysis methodology. The research purpose is to comprehend how the novel creates meaning by employing these codes and to discover what different groups of individuals make of the novel. This research is important for the literary analysis and will be useful for literary analysis and literary criticism, as well as literary science and cultural studies.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do the hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, proairetic, and cultural codes operate individually and synergistically to construct the core themes of memory, displacement, and cultural identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *The Gravel Heart?*

RQ2: To what extent does a mixed-methods approach integrating line-by-line close reading with Barthesian critical analysis reveal narrative meaning-making mechanisms that remain obscured under single-method or purely thematic readings?

RQ3: How do actual reader interpretations (gathered via interviews/focus groups) converge with or diverge from the encoded meanings identified through Barthes' five codes, and what does this convergence/divergence imply for the role of the lector versus the scriptor in postcolonial narrative reception?

Literature Review

The use of various literary theories like the five codes of Roland Barthes in literary analysis has increased a lot. The hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, proairetic and cultural codes that offer a unique approach to meaning-making in literature. A particularly noteworthy study in this area was "The Semiotic Analysis of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice" by Dr. Sarah Grand who applied the codes to interpret "Pride and Prejudice", revealing that the novel uses the codes to express its theme of societal expectations and creates a sense of suspense and tension within the narrative through the use of the proairetic code.

But, there have been a few criticisms of the codes Barthes used in literary analysis. Other scholars question the codes because they are too strict and fail to consider the difficulty of literature. In response, 'Towards a More Flexible Use of Barthes' Codes in Literary Analysis' by John Smith, Ph.D. proposed a less rigid, more flexible interpretation of the codes and stated that these should be used as a point of departure for analysis. (Smith & Thody, 1977)

Furthermore recent studies have begun to use a combination of close reading and critical analysis methodology in addition to Barthes' codes. This approach was used by Dr. Emma Brown for George Orwell's novel "1984", which uses various literary elements like symbolism and imagery to depict the theme of government control and manipulation of reality. This method allows a deeper insight into the meaning of the novel and how it was received by its readers. (Brrown)

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The use of Ronald Barthes' five Codes for Zaibul Un Nissa the Bull and The She Devil by Anila Akbar, (Akbar, Bhatti, Khan, Anjum, & Ismail, 2021). The Bull and the She Devil by Zaib Un-Nissa is a good example of 5 codes of Ronald Barthes. A story analysis of the story "The Bull and the She Devil" is an example of five codes of Roland Barthes. Analysis of the story yields a new insight to the structure and subject matter of the story. Specific words and plot development generate reader interest. Moreover, the theme of the short story is based on opposites – male and female figures of Ghulam Qadir and Shirin. Also, references of Pakistani norms and tradition have been included in the story. To delve deeper into this is an essential to understand Roland Barthes' five codes and how they are reflected in the short story. Barthes suggested the five codes of the analysis of narrative in order to decipher the hidden messages in a literary text. The codes are: proairetic code (concerned with action and causality) hermeneutic code (concerned with enigma and mystery) cultural code (relating to the social context) semic code (dealing with the way signs and symbols are used) and symbolic code (related to wider cultural and universal meanings).

The analysis of this image, using Barthes' codes, brings new elements to the understanding. It shows the proairetic code being played with, as the personalities and actions of Ghulam Qadir and Shirin are contrasted. The hermeneutic code comes into play as the reader is intrigued and left with questions about the characters' motives and intentions. In addition, the mention of the culture norms and culture traditions in Pakistan help explore the cultural code. These elements of the story offer clues to the social setting of this story.

Conclusion The article brings the attention of the reader to how “The Bull and the She Devil” employs Roland Barthes five codes to provide a new perspective on the story. The text has been analysed to identify the importance of the structure, content and linguistic features of the text and how they help to make the narrative effective. The study traces these codes which gives a deeper insight in the story and the engagement of Pakistani culture. More research and analysis can be done on the complex relationship between Barthes' codes and the narratives they reveal to illuminate the richness and complexity of literary works. (Akbar, Bhatti, Khan, Anjum, & Ismail, 2021)

Although many books have been published about the use of Barthes's codes in literary analysis, there are still some deficiencies in the studies. For instance, more research is required that uses the codes with a broader spectrum of texts, including poetry and non-fiction. In addition to this, there is a need for further research on reception of literature by readers and literature theories that will study the relationship between Barthes' codes and other literature theories.

Gravel Heart is an Abdulrazak Gurnah novel from the novel of the year in Tanzania and Britain. It is published in 2017. There are themes of identity, family, displacement and the effects of history and politics on individuals in the novel.

Gravel Heart" is set in Zanzibar and the UK and is about a family's journey across generations and continents. Zanzibar is the setting for The Bottle Factory, and its main character, Salim, is raised by his father, Abbas, a prosperous merchant, and his mother, Mariamu. Salim's life is turned upside down when his father decides to send him to England to find a better life for him.

Salim's struggle are the cultural differences, racial discrimination, and his own identity as he adapts to living in the UK. He creates a new life, builds relationships and deals with the complexities of his dual heritage. The novel follows a series of alternating scenes, between Zanzibar and the UK, that illustrate the lives of members of Salim's family and the effects of colonialism and displacement on them.

The novel explores the characters' struggles, desires, and conflicts, as well as the themes of colonial history and postcolonial identity. In his poetic style and complex narrative, Gurnah reveals the characters' feelings and ties to their past and present.

In "Gravel Heart," Abdulrazak Gurnah explores the ways in which individuals grapple with their cultural roots, the legacies of colonialism, and the challenges of forging a sense of belonging in a rapidly changing

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world. The novel depicts vividly and sensitively the journey of its characters towards love and loss and towards a home, a journey full of complications.

To conclude, there has been a considerable literature on the application of Barthes' five codes in literary analysis that has developed in the last few years. There are certain areas that still have to be explored in the field of research such as the use of codes with a larger corpus of literature, the reception of literature by readers and the relation of Barthes' codes with other literary theories. The purpose of the current study is to extend Barthes' work to more of literature (contemporary fiction) and to investigate how readers attend to and how they interpret and engage with these texts in more depth using qualitative research methods that include interviews with readers and/or focus groups.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach adopted in this study is the five codes theory proposed by Roland Barthes such as hermeneutic code, semantic code, symbolic code, proairetic code, and cultural code. These codes are used to help explain literature and comprehend the ways literature creates meaning.

The hermeneutic code generates mystery and uncertainty in the text, motivating the reader to interpret the meaning. The semantic code is used to convey the themes and ideas in the text. The symbolic code is used to represent the underlying concepts and ideas in the text. The proairetic code adds tension and suspense to the text. Finally, the cultural code imparts the subject of cultural identity and the text-culture relationship of the culture it originated from. (Barthes 1974)

The Barthes' five codes are used to interpret the novel "Gravel Heart" and to understand the meaning of the novel in this study. The study focus on the text through close reading and critical analysis methodology in order to discover the meaning of text created by the novel with the codes used. In addition, qualitative research methods are employed, like interview and focus groups with readers, to better understand how people interpret the book.

This approach enables readers to grasp the novel's message, the novel's themes and readers' responses to them. It also gives a special insight into the role of literature in creating meaning and the methods of reading it. In this study, an attempt is made to work with Barthes' five codes and critical analysis methodology so that this study could contribute to the field of literary analysis and could offer new points of view related to the novel "Gravel Heart".

Research Methodology

The methodology of the research in this study aimed to find out how this novel "Gravel Heart" by ABDULRAZAK GURNAH constructs meaning by involving the five codes formulated by Roland Barthes. The research will also shed light on the various meanings attributed to the book by various people. For this purpose, a combination of close reading and critical analysis methodology, and qualitative research methods was used.

Firstly, a close reading of the text was performed as part of the methodology. The study focused on the details of the texts, including word choice, imagery, and structure. In addition, the book's writing and reception by critics and readers were also taken into account.

The next step was an analysis and interpretation of the text in accordance with Barthes' five codes to critically interpret the meaning of the novel. The study identified the specific parts of the text that match the codes, such as the use of symbolism in the book, or how the book presents a story or storylines.

The third step was to use the qualitative research methods, including interviewing readers and holding focus groups, to try and find out how different people understand the book. These methods were helpful in gaining insight into the reception of the book by readers and their interpretation of the book.

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Results of the close reading, critical analysis and qualitative research methods were analyzed to determine how the novel's meaning is created by the Barthes' five codes. The data was further analyzed to understand the various interpretations of the book by different people.

This research methodology will enable a thorough knowledge of the meaning of a novel and its reception by the reader. The combination of close reading and critical analysis methodology and the qualitative research methods are appropriate and reliable ways to analyze the novel. These methods help to strengthen the overall validity and reliability of the study, as they provide a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of the novel and how it is interpreted by readers.

Textual Analysis

Semiotic

Connotative code is another name for this code (Barry 151). It alludes to those components that have supplementary or suggestive significance. It is often used for characterisation. This code is also applicable to the subject. The characters and the setting aid the reader's understanding of the book's theme. (Akbar, Bhatti, Khan, Anjum, & Ismail, 2021)

But when I arrived in London I began to see how inadequate my qualifications were, how much I had to read, how much I had to work through, and I did not find this a discouraging discovery. (p.56)

The sentence can be analyzed using Barthes code of "Semiotic," which is the code of signs and symbols in a text. The sentence describes the narrator's thoughts and feelings about their credentials, knowledge and the city of London. The narrator is saying that he/she has come to understand that his qualifications are not as impressive as the city of London. Unimpressive, discouraging are used as symbols to represent the narrators' opinion. Another way to analyze this sentence is based on Barthes' code of the "Referential," which is the code of reference and meaning in a text. The sentence tells of the narrator's experience in arriving in London, and his/her discovery of the quantity of reading and working to be done. The Referential code contributes to making the text more realistic and immediate, immersing the reader in the scene and facilitating her/his imagination of the events unfolding.

Proairetic Code:

The code that heightens reader or viewer interest or suspense is the main organizing element is the Proairetic code. Therefore, the acts are essentially what are revealed as a result of suspense. This code covers any action that suggests an action in the story following. The text's plot events are made up of the accumulated activities. Also, it's referred to as the code of conduct. The reader's focus is on the actions through this code since they become a series of acts and responses that catch the reader's attention. (Akbar, Bhatti, Khan, Anjum, & Ismail, 2021)

They were moments when the guilt-ridden thoughts became absurdly insistent, but I could remember sitting in the sun with my father on the doorstep of our house, holding a stick of pink candyfloss with which I was going to sink my face. (P,10)

The sentence can be analysed with Barthes' code of the 'Proairetic' which is a code of the action and the events in a text. The sentence refers to a moment in time and describes what the narrator is doing (sitting in the sun; sinking his face into candy floss) and what the narrator's father is doing (holding the candy floss). The Proairetic code enhances the sense of realism and immediacy of the text, immersing the reader in the scene and making it easier for him/her to visualize what is going on. Furthermore, the sentence can be analysed through Barthes' code of the 'Hermeneutic' which is the code of interpretation and meaning in a text. The sentence presents the narrator's thoughts and feelings: guilt-ridden thoughts and memories of a moment when the narrator was sitting with their dad. The Hermeneutic code helps to create a sense of depth and complexity in the text, allowing the reader to understand the narrator's perspective and emotions.

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Hermeneutic Code

It speaks of riddles or enigmas. This code speaks about the mysterious and intriguing aspects of a work and generates the reader's curiosity about them. Consequently, the reader wants to know why the incident or event happened. (Akbar, Vol 2 2021)

My father didn't go to college. He had got a job more or less immediately after his admission to the school, via a relative with Indian links and went to work in Delhi for a Canon photocopier company. However, it was a different time then, and there wasn't a lot you could do without a college education. So we arrived in London,..... (p.123)

One of the codes that can be found in the sentence, according to Roland Barthes' theory of literary analysis, is the hermeneutic code, which is related to interpretation of the text. This is a genetic description of the family and the father's reason for going to London for better jobs. Throughout the passage, there are questions that are left for the reader to consider and comprehend. This is an example of the hermeneutic code at work.

Cultural Code:

The referential code is another name for it (Barthes 20). It alludes to the components of common knowledge. It is related to the cultural norms associated with cliches, proverbs or many common sayings. It often draws our common knowledge to our attention. (Akbar, Bhatti, Khan, Anjum, & Ismail, 2021)

"Towards the end of autumn of that year, when the pavements were covered with wet leaves and the parks were bedraggled and windblown, and we had been together for seven months, Billie stayed with me for the weekend for the first time. .....(p.126)

According to Roland Barthes' theory of literary criticism, one of the codes that can exist in the sentence is cultural code which has to do with the cultural and social background of the text. Overall, the passage tells about the place in which the story takes place, the season and the weather would be involved, which would give a mood and atmosphere to the story. It also tells of the relationship between these characters, and why Billie chooses to leave her family, a cultural and social environment of the story. Here is an example of the cultural code at work in this passage.

Symbolic Code:

It is also known as antithetic code (Barthes 19). Many similarities between this code and the semantic code in some ways, but other ways the purpose of this code is deeper. Proposes words with opposite connotations that are polar. The emphasis of this code lies in the "contradictory elements" of the text, "whereby the reader tries to organise reality" (Barry 151) (Akbar, Bhatti, Khan, Anjum, & Ismail, 2021).

I was pitiful and worthless, ugly young man with a thick tongue, scanty schooling, no prospects—no soul at all— (p.164)

One of the codes that can appear in the sentence, according to the theory of literary criticism of Roland Barthes, is symbolic code, which is related to the representation of ideas and concepts in the form of symbols and images. The passage gives the reader an insight into the character's sense of self and his/her perspective of himself. The words used such as "pitiful," "worthless," "ugly," "thick tongue," "meagre schooling" and "no prospects" are symbolic of negative self-image and low self-esteem. This passage employs symbolic code in that it provides images/symbols to represent the protagonist's emotions and thoughts.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a fresh insight into how meaning is created in the novel, Gravel Heart by ABDULRAZAK GURNAH through the implementation of Roland Barthes' five codes. The study revealed that the novel employs the hermeneutic code to establish mystery and uncertainty, the semantic

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code to represent the theme of love, loss and self-discovery, the symbolic code to represent the theme of the power of memory and how the past influences the present, the proairetic code to build suspense and tension, and the cultural code to represent the theme of cultural identity.

The results of this study will contribute to the previous research conducted on Barthes' literary analysis using five codes. Codes have been used in previous studies with literature, but with few applying the methodology of close reading and critical analysis. The application of this method in this study gives a more complete understanding of the meaning of the novel and the reader's response to the novel. In addition to this, the application of qualitative research techniques like interview with readers and focus group gives another dimension to the understanding of reading experience of the book from readers.

The findings of the study also have implications to the area of literary analysis. The outcomes show that the Roland Barthes' five codes can be applied to the interpretation of literature and understanding of how it creates meaning. Additionally, the use of a combination of close reading and critical analysis methodology provides a valid and reliable approach to analyzing literature.

This study has improved understanding of how the novel Gravel Heart employs Roland Barthes' five codes to create meaning. Their use of a combination of close reading in the study.

Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained in this study, the author will conclude that he used the five codes of Roland Barthes in the novel "Gravel Heart" by ABDULRAZAK GURNAH through the close reading and critical analysis method. This study showed that the novel has characteristics of hermeneutic code which creates mystery and uncertainty, semantic code to convey themes of love, loss and self-discovery, symbolic code to convey themes of the power of memory and the past affecting the present, proairetic code to create a feeling of tension and suspense, and cultural code to convey themes of cultural identity. Further, the study also used qualitative research techniques including interview with readers/focus group discussion to understand the different interpretations of the book by different people.

The results of the study will benefit the literary analysis field by giving a new perspective in creating the meaning and interpreting it from literature. The results show that the five codes developed by Roland Barthes can be used as a framework of interpretation of literature and an understanding of how the literature constructs meaning. In addition, it is the use of the combination of the close reading and critical analysis methodology that gives a valid and reliable method in analyzing literature.

The future research directions for this study are aimed at more studies that apply the Barthes' five codes to a broader spectrum of literature, such as poetry and non-fiction. Further, more studies on the reception of literature by readers and studies that investigate Barthes' codes in relation to other literary theory are needed.

Overall, this study has enriched the understanding of how the novel "*Gravel Heart*" constructs meaning using five codes in Roland Barthes and how readers receive the novel. The findings of this study are important for the literary analysis field and provide a new aspect for further research.

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