



BARTHIAN CODES IN YEATS' "THE SECOND COMING" AND GLUCK'S "THE WILD IRIS"

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ABSTRACT



The human race has been drastically evolved given its existence and has been trying to make life easier. To fulfil these utilitarian requirements, man has explored different paths, at different times, changing the face of society entirely to what it is today. However, the man has found himself often lost in the labyrinth of pleasures. And, whenever it comes to selecting the right path to come around, there's always has been the same way to it and that is to evoke the faith within. This theme has been expressed by poets for centuries, especially in the modern era, by using a variety of symbols in exceptional settings, multiple signs, and enigmatic words. This paper seeks to analyse the poems of two Nobel Laureates using Five Narrative Codes of Barthes. The poems, The Second Coming by Yeats and The Wild Iris by Gluck, are written almost a septuagenary apart using lyrical elements very different from each other. This paper intends to examine the semantic codes like Hermeneutic codes, Proairetic codes, Symbolic codes, Referential codes, and Connotative codes used in the instance of the expression in the poem by poets belonging to separate generations.

Keywords: Action code, Enigma code, Semantic code, Spiritual Awakening, Symbolic.

**INTRODUCTION**

"We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time" (Eliot T. , 1942)

Humanity today is dealing with a year that brought all the destructive for human destruction together, but it has certainly taught a few things. Perhaps, the year 2020 was a warning from the earth to evoke the transcendent values, as to gain all kinds of pleasures the human race has broken all boundaries. Its consumption has crossed all the limits causing him to eat himself unconsciously. May be this nudge was important to help us, departed souls, to see again. The same is being promoted, now and then, in the instance of a couple of centuries by writers like Eliot, Joyce, etc. One such creation is *The second coming* by W. B. Yeats. Yeats was intrigued by representation in the eastern religious texts and tried leading his life following them. Additionally, he tried incorporating them reinforces similar sentiments in most of his works (for instance *Sailing to Byzantium, Death, and more*) as his life has been a great example of awakening. The aftermath of world war one, 1919, was the inspiration behind the poem. It was published in the volume entitled *Michael Roberts and The Dancer* in 1921 after being published in *The Dial* (an American Magazine), in 1920. Disclose the aftermath Yeats was perplexed by the exposed brutality that he was seeing lately, in the name of events like the Easter rebellion of 1916 (which has more than 2000 people dead or injured by it) and the World War I of 1914 to 1918. After being a spectator of the extreme violence around him, he believed that humanity has reached its peak, and now there can only be a downfall. The world is about to witness the end of it and a new age is about to begin. The wheel of the human race has come to where it started. According to him a load of a useless necessity in which humanity is stuck, only the one the Almighty can pull humans through.

The second work in this paper is taken from the poet for whom this year might have been a gift, even though it has been remotely a warning to most

of us that are Loise Gluck. She won the Nobel Prize in literature for *"her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal"*. It was published in the collection with the same name, published in 1992, won the Pulitzer prize in 1993. In this work, she delves into the theme's spiritual awakening/rebirth and commonalities between all forms of life. She wrote the work after being stuck in writer's block for almost two years with the line *"At the end of my suffering there was a door"* (Gluck1993). And later she commences writing this poem using this.

Both works standing generation apart are going to be examined in this paper using Barthian codes. In 1970, Barth wrote a postmodern experiment *S/Z*, in which he broke Balzac's novel *Sarrasine* into fragments. He categorized each section, after deconstructing the novel in 561 pieces, based on its function. He classifies them as hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, representative, and social codes. It might be said, he "coded" the novel, isolating out various subjects and figures of speech, stamping them as elaborately or emblematically discrete units making a maze out of the once viewed as straight account. His codes allude to the limitless prospects and stages of accessible readings, a maze made conceivable by a solitary content, and this appears to be like actually a for Phillips shrouded exhibition hall living in a solitary novel here. Barthes creates the words "lexias" for his venture, alluding to each piece of the content, and this term is currently in often cases used to depict the different pieces of a hypertext archive. Barthes took a conventional content and stripped it of its fanciful cognizance, making a hypertext for his peruse, with all the unforeseen tension and disappointment of how one peruses such a thing.

HERMENEUTIC, ENIGMA CODE

Barth defined Hermeneutic Code, as well known as "enigma" code, refers to (as the name suggests) the element of enigma and discrepancy in a text. This is inquired by the reader whether there is a question left unanswered by the narrator. These codes are also known as Enigma code and are of three types- Snare, Equivocation, and Jamming. The deliberate



avoidance of truth is Snares in a text. Whereas, Incomplete or partial answers to a question in a text are identified as Equivocation. On the other hand, Jamming is an open acknowledgment of the fact that there aren't any answers.

At the beginning of the *Second Coming*, a reader has already surrendered his/her attention to the title of the poem. Later in the poem, the reader is made aware that the poet is professing the second coming in '*Surely the Second Coming is at hand*' (Yeats1919). However, towards the termination of the poem, the reader is again left with a query. "*Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*" (Yeats1919). Therefore, the enigma is resolving the use of equivocation partially.

The Wild Iris starts with the line *at the end of my suffering there was a door*" (Gluck1993) through which the reader has made aware of her escape from the suffering. However, the question left unanswered was about suffering. To know what the suffering was reader dwells into the poem and here he/she knows about how she, Gluck or the flower Iris, was dead and now the power from above has woke her soul with the truth and strength. However, the reader is still searching to find clues about the reasons for the suffering. This indicates the use of Snares by Gluck in the poem. "*I do not think that more information always makes a richer poem,*" says Gluck. "*I am attracted to ellipsis, to the unsaid, to suggestion, to eloquent, deliberate silence. The unsaid, for me, exerts great power*". Therefore, Gluck has accepted here that she likes readers to think and try searching for the answers.

PROAIRETIC, ACTION CODES

This code is also termed "Narrative Code" or "Action Code". This code is in the matter of how the narration of action, which is creating tension, takes place. The initial two codes are co-dependent. These components of suspension first indication that something will occur, which makes a reader receptive and mindful to determine the strain and he/she attempts to get a bit of cutting-edge information about the activities by questioning. '*What will be the response of a specific activity?*' By the use of this

code, the writer enforces the specific reaction using some specific actions.

Anticipating answers to the title, when the reader begins with *The Second Coming*, the depiction of the overwhelming power in terms of chaos in the world in lines given below doesn't solve the query yet and make the reader keeps on reading. "*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*" (Yeats1919). Then, in the next paragraph, after putting his obnoxious feeling at rest, the poet professed that this much chaos is going to cause the destruction and later to begin again the earth or mankind. However, the reader was made aware of the state of the answer being incomplete when towards the finish of the poem Yeats enquires if the world's prosperity is possible without spiritual awakening.

On the other hand, the reader begins with *The Wild Iris* desiring to know the reasons for the suffering Gluck has gone through and dwells into the poem. Later, in the poem reader obtains the knowledge that how her lack of spiritual awareness buried her and later she bloomed like a flower being spiritually awake. However, the reader is still wondering about the answer.

SEMANTIC CODES

These codes are also called connotative codes, alludes to the suggestive parts of a text, implicating connotating meanings. Barthes says that the narrative of a text goes through some specific "*characters, places, and objects*" that symbolically denotes its themes to a reader.

The connotation of the poem *The Second Coming* is employed by different semantic features like metaphor, allusion, and imagery. It starts with Yeats creating a spiral-like image and describing the loss of control in the line "*Falcon cannot hear the falconer*" (Yeats1919). And when the reader digs deep he finds other metaphors like "*the center cannot hold*" (Yeats1919) and "*And everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned*" (Yeats1919) symbolizing the socio-religious theme in terms of the lost order, faith in God, and the uncivilized and deemed value of life. Overall, Yeats is calling for the requirement for religious awakening and salvation in



human life, and denoting the insufficiency of it gave rise to the mayhem the world is surrounded by.

The reader can find out the dominating theme of destruction and rebirth using the semantic code in *The Wild Iris* as well. The line "that which you call death, I remember" denotes that she has passed the demise and is not dead at present, which can denote her teenaged illness, anorexia nervosa, which made her feel that she was going to die. Due to her illness, she had to take the help of psychoanalytic treatment and she had to leave school in the instance of rehabilitation. Besides, it can denote her writer's block through which she had the first line of the poem but couldn't write more for a few years. She was previously "buried in the dark earth" (Gluck1993) but the religious awakening helped her and now she can "speak again" (Gluck1993), these two lines give reference to the dominating theme of life and death.

SYMBOLIC CODES

This code is similar to semantic code, due to which it is difficult for a reader to make a transparent distinction between both. However, there is one way to do so and that is by depicting the connotative meaning or the themes of the text, with the help of a more profound underlying rule that segregates semantic implications, via interventions and intercessions between contradictory terms. In other words, using the elucidation of the symbols used in the text to signify the dominating theme of the text, that is to symbolic codes are used to prove the previous (semantic) code.

To demonstrate the use of the theme of destruction and rebirth in *The Second Coming*, the first example is the title itself, which signifies the notion of being born again. Keeping that in mind when the reader begins with the poem, she/he finds the symbolism of the Gyre, turning and widening like a tornado, and the line "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold" (Yeats1919) establishes the tone of destruction in the stanza. Later in the same stanza, the sign of "blood-dimmed" (Yeats1919) tide is used by Yeats drawing the image of downing innocence and destruction of hope of humanity. However, as soon as the reader enters into the second stanza, the symbolism has been reversed and now the poet is

repeatedly granting the sign of rebirth. The same is stretched with the symbolism of The Sphinx through which the Irish poet Yeats established the notion of salvation as the only hope for humanity. The Symbolism is once more reversed to the upcoming destruction with the introduction of the "rough beast" (Yeats1919) and then the poet leaves the rest on the reader.

Gluck is using the entire collection as a gardener depicting each flower from their garden, and in this poem, she is portraying the life, death, and rebirth of the flower iris. The symbolism of life and death in *The Wild Iris* begins with the "door" (Gluck1993) of hope that is present at the end of her 'suffering', later the reader is able to find the reversal of imagery. "It is terrible to survive as, Consciousness buried in the dark earth" (Gluck1993). This symbolism of death is repetitive in this poem as well is changed and Gluck ends the poem on the note that the voice "from oblivion" (Gluck1993) helped her (flower) blossom again.

CULTURAL CODES

Cultural code also referred to as Gnostic Code involves either religion or science including tenants like fantasy, history, psychology, and magic. These are also known as referential codes and were used by Barthes to observe their significance in order to construct a thematic sense in a text. It can further be used by a reader to differentiate between and transform from, readerly to writerly text. Barthes has defined both readerly and writerly text, as a traditional text, which the reader has to passively accept, and as a modern text, which the reader can use to derive all the different types of meanings.

The Second Coming is full of cultural codes, as the name suggests, the poem is based on the biblical theme of the rejuvenation the Christ. Yeats is denoting the scenario of the return of Christ to the earth. Where he destroys the earth with its offenders, horrifically, after joining the rest. And lays the foundation of an improved world. After the title of the poem, the most easily relatable or understandable thing for a Christian reader is the presence of sphinx, a mythical being, and the rocking cradle. Sphinx signals the upcoming devastation



whereas the cradle signals the birth of Christ. Furthermore, there are two symbols for Irish readers. The first symbol is of the 'falconer', that is the British domination, which is capable of holding the 'falcon', that is the Irish nation, anymore. Ireland is getting away from it. The second mention is of "real shadow", which is an Irish folklore dance, cheering the still-living culture of his country.

Jewish poet, Gluck, the use of few codes in *The Wild Iris* makes her religious belief evident. The collection is all about a gardener picturing each flower from their garden and Iris, in Greek mythology, is the goddess of the rainbow. At the end of the poem, she draws the image of a horizon adding the fountain and oblivion together, suggesting her spiritual emotion of recovery. Her use of 'pine' trees also symbolizes upcoming rebirth in lines "branches of the pine shifting" (Gluck1993). Referring to the 'soul' speaker urges us to not be voiceless and fearful, it further demonstrates her belief regarding the immortality of the soul.

CONCLUSION

After analysing both the poems using Barthian codes, it is evident as Barth claimed that the narrative elements of a text can be divided into these five codes. Both poems contain the first code that is the hermeneutic code in them, on one hand, Gluck's poems begin with it, on another hand, Yeats' poem ends with it. The two monologues are explaining a situation using the second code that is proairetic code and there are several cultural and symbolic references in both the works. Though the poems are set in different eras and their settings are also poles apart still spiritual awakening is the only golden string that is tiding them together. On one hand, Yeats is warning us to cease the chaos around and commence awaking our human soul, and on the other hand, Gluck is sharing her experience of being cable of coming out alive of the mental chaos only via holding on to the spiritual awakening.

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