

Syed Maqsood Alam*

Amir Jamil†

Abdul Khaliq ‡

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A Snare in the Narrative Structure: An Exploration of Hermeneutic Code in "The Kite Runner"

Abstract:

The present paper studies the novel The Kite Runner by Khalid Hosseini through the lens of Barthes' narrative code theory. The paper primarily focuses on the Hermeneutic code works underlyingly to the narrative. The researchers in the present chapter analyze the mysterious and puzzling elements in the novel, which help in the formation of the text: the current study, the novel The Kite Runner through the Hermeneutic code of Barthes. Barthes gives the five codes theory in his book S/Z. The codes are Hermeneutic code, Proairetic code, Symbolic code, Cultural code and Semantic code. The Hermeneutic code is also termed as jamming, snare and delay or enigma code. The present study is important in the field of narratology because it minutely focusses on the one thread of the narrative to understand the role played by Hermeneutic code in the formation of the narrative structure.

Key Words:

Hermeneutic, Barthes, Proairetic, Symbolic, Cultural and Semantic code.

Introduction

Tyson (2006) states "Structuralism is a human science that tries to understand, in a systematic way, the fundamental structures that underlie all human experience and, therefore, all human behavior and production". Literature is the product of culture, which is one of the human experiences that structuralism seeks to comprehend. The researcher studies and explores the underlying structure of a literary text. He discovers the hidden codes/rules/ principals that shape a particular text. The researcher chooses The Kite Runner for structural analysis. The Kite Runner is a bestselling novel written by Khaled Hosseini. The researcher focusses on the narrative structure of the novel. Five codes theory of Roland Barthes has been taken for data analysis. Roland Barthes presents his five codes theory in his seminal work, S/Z (1970). The paper primarily centres on the role of the hermeneutic code. It is an effort to explore the hermeneutic code and its role in maintaining the suspense of the reader. The present researcher paper studies the hermeneutic code, which works the narrative structure underlyingly. It is a focused study on the single thread of narrative structure. It studies how hermeneutic code plays a vital role in capturing the attention of the reader. It is the main quality of a well-constructed work that it engages and holds the reader to complete the reading. The present work explores the narrative structure of the kite runner to understand the workings of the hermeneutic code. The present chapter finds

out that hermeneutic code is a crucial code which prompts and engage the reader to complete the reading of the novel. The research finds that the suspense in the text is maintained through the relationships and betrayal. The study deals with the code of enigma in Hosseini's The Kite Runner.

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory research. The single text has been selected for detailed analysis. According to data, it is qualitative in nature. To conduct the study, textual evidence is collected to explore the five codes working underlying the narrative of *The Kite Runner*. This research is deductive because it applies a theory to

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan.

† Lecturer, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

‡ Assistant professor, Department of Social & Allied Sciences, Cholistan University of Veterinary and animal Sciences (CUVAS), Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: abdulkhaliq_bwp@yahoo.com

understand a text. For the analysis of the text, the guiding principles have been taken from Roland Barthes' theory of *Five Codes*. The researcher divides the analysis into five subparts. The narrative will be analyzed from five dimensions. The study does not follow a straight line of analysis; rather, it follows a multi-layered, process that continually builds upon itself until a meaningful and verifiable explanation is attained. In short, it is exploratory, descriptive, research. Deductive reasoning has been applied. It is a qualitative analysis.

Research Question

1. How does the enigmatic code play an important role in the formation of suspense in the narrative of *The Kite Runner*?

Roland Barthes' Hermeneutic Code (HER)

It is also called the code of enigmas and The code of puzzles. It is The voice of the truth. It creates curiosity to know the secret or to find the answer of the enigma. Sometimes misleading answers are given to deceive the reader. The narrative tries to postpone reaching to the answers as long as it can by the use of elements such as Snares (thoughtful avoidances of the truth), Equivocations (mixtures of actuality and snare), Partial answers, suspended answers, and jamming (acknowledgements of mystery). As Barthes writes, "Under the hermeneutic code, we list the various (formal) terms by which an enigma can be distinguished, suggested, formulated, held in suspense, and finally disclosed" (P.19). a well-constructed work always has underlyingly the hermeneutic code to capture the attention and then hold that attention by suspense and desire to complete the action once started.

Data Analysis

The researcher explores the function of the hermeneutic code in the structure of the novel *The Kite Runner*. This code deals with the suspense, queries and mysterious elements which arouses enigma in the mind of the audience. This code helps in the formation of suspense and continuity in the story—the code pacts with such mysterious elements which arise a question in the mind of the reader. "Let us designate as hermeneutic code (HER) all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution" (Barthes, p. 17).

The title of the novel, *The Kite Runner*, raises questions, e.g. what it means by the kite runner? Who the kiter is?. The Hermeneutic code is involved in the title and also from the start of the book. The story takes its start since 2001, and The storyteller is absorbed in the past memories of 1975 with the narrator remembering something that happened in 1975, getting him in the street responsible for his current status "made him who he is today" (Hosseini, p. 01). The memories influenced him and continue to hangout Amir for years in spite of his efforts to avoid and escape it. Amir clarifies that was called by Rahim Khan, his friend from Pakistan. This Rahim Khan call gives a symbolic impression in the form of voice Amir's own past "unatoned sins." Rahim Khan asks Amir to come to see him in Pakistan and tells Amir "there is a way to be good again" (Hosseini, P.02). Rahim Khan calls Amir and asks him to come to Pakistan. He does not only invite Amir but also gives him some pieces of advice. This line creates the suspense in the story. The readers are forced to think about the advice which Rahim gives to Amir. The question arises in the mind of readers that why does Rahim Khan advise Amir to be good again? Did he do anything wrong? These questions develop in the reader's mind. The readers are compelled to think, why should Amir be good again? These questions compel to know the reason behind this advice.

The hermeneutic code generates curiosity and creates a desire to resolve it. The mystery is developed when Amir narrates about Hassan and his mother. The relationship between Hassan and his mother is mysterious. Amir says, "Hassan never talked about his mother as if she'd never existed" (Hosseini, P. 6). This

line elucidates that Hassan does not talk about his mother. He never discusses his feelings about his mother to anyone. He lives without his mother as she does not exist. This strangeness in Hassan develops furtiveness in the story, which is needed to be resolved. The mystery behind the nil feelings of Hassan for his mother pushes the readers to read the story with more interest.

The hermeneutic code is also called the enigmatic code. The enigma of hatred against Ali is created. Questions are raised to find the cause of the insult and hatred for Ali. "Ali's face and his walk frightened some of the younger children in the neighbourhood. But the real trouble was with the older kids. They chased him on the street and mocked him when he hobbled by. Some had taken to calling him Babalu, or Boogeyman" (Hosseini, P. 8). In these lines, Ali is treated very badly by the kids. The insult develops puzzle in the text that why does Ali face inappropriate comments? Ali is scorned by children. These insulting comments compel readers to dig out the reason. The curiosity to know about the truth fabricates the interest of readers in the novel. Some of the children mock Ali's appearance and limp and call him *Babalu* or Boogeyman. After some delay, the enigma of hatred against Ali and Hassan is exposed. Ali and Hassan are Hazaras, an ethnic minority in Afghanistan that is looked down on by the Pashtun larger part. The Hazaras have progressively Asian highlights, while the Pashtuns show up increasingly Arabic. Another division between them is that the Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims, while the Pashtuns are Sunni. Amir once read a history book about a Hazara uprising in the nineteenth century, and how the Pashtuns put down the insubordination with "unspeakable violence" (Hosseini p.09). The enigmatic code also creates interest to unveil the truth. In the novel, the reason behind the insulting comments is resolved when the narrator narrates about their Hazara background. Hazaras are ugly and flat-nosed. "They called him "flat-nosed" because of Ali and Hassan's characteristic Hazara Mongoloid features" (Hosseini, p. 8). The ugly features of Ali are associated with Hazara sect. Hazaras are insulted because of the sect, they belong. The narrator holds the answer of the puzzle, which is created in the reader through the help of Hermeneutic code. The answer to hatred for Hazara people is delayed by the narrator to make more interest in the novel. The hermeneutic code refers to the riddles in the novel. In the fifth chapter of the novel, the mystery is urbanized through the viciousness of Assef with Hassan and Amir. This incident creates mystery in the novel.

Hassan retreated behind me as the three older boys closed in. they stood before us, three tallboys dressed in jeans and T-shirts. Towering over us all, Assef crossed his thick arms on his chest, a savage sort of grin on his lips. Not for the first time, it occurred to me how lucky I was to have baba as my father, the sole reason, I believe, Assef had mostly refrained from harassing me too much (Hosseini, p. 36-37).

These lines elaborate that Assef and his group of boys threat Hassan. Hassan recoils behind Amir. Hassan is much frightened from Assef. Assef has a smirk smile when he sees Hassan. But he does not do anything just because of the presence of Amir. Assef feels hatred for Hassan. Assef controls himself in the presence of Amir because their fathers are friends. This hatred of Assef for Hassan forms the question to be resolved.

Amir feels that baba hates him for killing his mother in childbirth. Baba does not like Amir's pursuits of reading and writing literature. Amir is a terrible player in baba's favourite sport. Once Amir goes with baba to watch Buzkashi game, but he badly cries when a rider gets trampled. Amir faces Baba scorn for the incident. Rahim Khan seems to understand Amir better than his father. Once baba says to Rahim Khan that Amir is unable to stand for himself. On the other hand, Hassan is liked by baba. He also likes stories of Amir. Amir often reads to him. In the trunk of the tree, Amir had carved the words "Amir and Hassan, the sultans of Kabul" (Hosseini, P. 27). The boy's favourite story "Rostam and Sohrab," (Hosseini, P. 28) is about the warrior Rostam who kills his enemy in a battle and finally discovers that it is his long lost son Sohrab. It is a tragic story, but Amir feels that all fathers have a secret desire to kill their sons (Hosseini, P. 28). One day Amir pretends to read a story while making up his own story. Hassan says that it is one of the best stories Amir has ever read. Encouraged by the compliments, Amir writes his first-ever story of a man who tears turn into pearls. He makes himself painful so he can keep crying and become richer. The story ends with a mountain of pearls, weeping over the wife he has killed. Amir tries to impress the Baba but Baba does not take any interest.

However, Rahim Khan encouraged Amir Later that night Rahim Khan leaves Amir a note that says he has a “special talent,” (Hosseini, P. 32). Amir is encouraged to keep writing.

Hermeneutic code denotes to the term “Snare”. Snare deals with the “deliberate evasion of truth”. In the novel, Agha Sahab loves Hassan equally to his son Amir. He treats both equally. He does not love Amir more than Hassan, although Hassan is a servant. This thing plays a role of the snare in which suspense is created by avoiding the truth. “If changed my mind and asked for a bigger and fancier kite. Baba would buy it for me, but then he’d buy it for Hassan too, Sometimes I wished he wouldn’t do that. Wished he’d let me be the favourite” (Hosseini, p. 48). These lines reflect the love of Agha for Hassan. If Amir wants a bigger kite, Agha buys two one for Amir and one for Hassan. This shows the deep love of Agha for Hassan too. Agha treats Hassan as his son. This unusual love works as a snare. The truth behind love is avoided in the initial part of the novel. This snare is untied in the last part of the novel.

On the birthday of Hassan, Baba gives a special gift which creates tension in the mind of Aamir about Baba’s abnormal favors to Hassan. Baba arranges a surgeon to fix the cleft lip of Hassan. The researcher finds enigma in the behavior of Baba for Hassan. Amir is jealous that baba would do so much for Hassan. The surgery is a success, and by the next winter, Hassan’s cleft lip is just a faint scar.

Winter is considered the best time for Kabul because everyone takes part in kite flying tournaments. There is a war among boy about kites. Everyone prepares special strings to cut the kites of their opponents. Amir knows that Hassan is the best kite runner in the whole of Kabul. Baba wishes Amir to win the kite-fighting tournament. Amir is excited to make baba happy by winning the tournament. Hassan tells Amir about his last night dream and their swimming in the Ghargha Lake. They rename the lake “Lake of Amir and Hassan, Sultans of Kabul” (Hosseini, P. 87). Amir is so nervous that he almost wants to quit the tournament, but Hassan reminds him that “there’s no monster,” and Amir is again amazed at Hassan’s intuition” (Hosseini, P. 60). After a long battle of the kite, Amir manages to cut the last blue kite. Amir and Hassan are happy. Hassan promises to run the kite for Amir, he says “for you a thousand times over!” (Hosseini P. 67).

Later on, Amir runs to find the Hassan. He searches everywhere and finally finds him in an alley, holding the blue kite which Amir thinks of as the “key to Baba’s heart” (Hosseini P.71). Assef offers Hassan freedom on dropping of the blue kite, but Hassan is not ready for this. Assef reminds him that he is only a servant of Amir. Assef and company forces Hassan for rape. Amir watching from the corner and the words of Ali are echoing in his ears, “there is a brotherhood between people who’ve fed from the same breast” (Hosseini P.73). Amir watches cowardly when Hassen is raped by Assef in the alley. Amir sacrifices Hassan for the blue kite to make baba happy.

This code also refers as Delay. In this code, things are delayed to make the reader more curious about the situation. In chapter 7, Hassan is raped, and Amir sees all the incident. Although Amir knows the reality, he pretends that he knows nothing. He acts as he is very concerned with Hassan. As Amir says “Where were you? I looked for you,” I said. Speaking those words was like chewing on a rock” (Hosseini, p. 73). In this line, Amir interrogates Hassan about his absence although he knows about the inhumane happening. He pretends to be fretful about Hassan by saying that he searches for him. Amir also elaborates that the utterance of these words seems to like to chew stones and rocks. The behavior of Amir generates the query, why does Amir hide the reality and act fake in front of Hassan? Why does he not take stand for Hassan? Why does Amir not console Hassan? These questions generate in the mind of a reader, but answers are delayed to make the reader more interested in the novel.

After that, their friendship, their smooth and happy relations turns into guilt and bad memories. When Amir turns thirteen baba decides to throw him a huge party. Baba invites around 400 people. Assef also arrives and gives Amir a gift, a biography of Hitler. From the story of Rahim Khan, Amir gets the idea to get rid of Hassan. Amir designs a plan; he hides some of the money and his watch under Hassan’s mattress. And then he told baba about the theft. Baba calls everyone and tries to settle the matter. Baba asks Hassan bout the theft and Hassan says he did.

Delay is also a technique which is used in the Hermeneutic code of Barthes. This term suspends the answers to particular questions which build in the mind of the reader. In the novel when Amir accuses Hassan of the theft because theft is only one sin which is unforgivable by Agha Jan. The reader is in the suspense when this sin is forgiven by Agha Jan. "Except Baba stunned me by saying, "I forgive you." *Forgive?* But theft was the one unforgivable sin, the common denominator of all sins" (Hosseini, p. 98). "Then how could he just forgive Hassan? And if baba could forgive that, then why couldn't he forgive me for not being the son he'd always wanted? (Hosseini, p. 98)". These lines express that Agha Jan forgives Hassan on the sin of theft. This forgiveness is shocking for Amir. The narrator himself raises the questions which are taken place in the mind of the reader. The answers are delayed deliberately by Hosseini to maintain the interest of the reader. The questions take place, why does Agha Jan forgive Hassan's sin? Why cannot Agha Jan forgive Amir on not being a son as he like? These suspended answers create inclination of the reader to resolve.

The narrative jumps to March of 1981. Baba with Amir leaves Afghanistan to Pakistan and from thence to America. Afghanistan is under the control of Russian soldiers. Everyone is suspicious of everyone around. Anybody can inform for money. Karim first takes them to Jalalabad, then in a fuel tanker to Peshawar. Every check post has some danger for them because the Russian soldier is everywhere. At one post, a Russian soldier demands a young woman as a price to pass them. Baba stands for them, and soldier threatens to shoot him. Just before the Russian soldier decides another soldier interrupts him.

The narrative skips in time, and Baba and Amir live in Fremont, California for almost two years. Baba is facing a hard time to adjust to the new environment. Amir graduates from high school at the age of twenty and baba feels pride at the success of Amir. Next Sunday Amir sets a booth at a flea market and sells for a profit. Amir is introduced to General Taheri and his beautiful daughter, Soraya. Amir falls in love with Soraya. But there are rumors about her past loss of honor. A full year passes to collect the nerve to talk to her. But baba understands what is going on inside his son. Amir often manages to talk to her when her father is away. Sorry reveals that she wants to be a teacher. When Amir gives Soraya his story to read, the General throws the story in the trash. Another obstacle to Amir's love story comes when baba gets the sickness. The doctors want to give chemotherapy, but baba denies. Baba grows weaker day by day. He loses a lot of weight. One day he even collapsed on the ground. Cancer spreads to the brain of baba. After getting better, baba asks General Taheri for the marriage of Amir and Soraya, and he approves. Before marriage, Soraya tells her past story of elopement and exposes her troubled past to Amir. Amir envies her because he has no courage to reveal his troubled past.

In the summer of 1988, Amir's first novel is published, and he becomes a celebrity in the Afghan community. Ultimately he achieves his dream of becoming the writer.

Amir and Soraya try to have a baby but fails. They are thinking to adopt a child. In June of 2001, Amir receives a call from Rahim Khan, who wants Amir to come and see him. He suggests that there is still a way to be good again. It is also exposed that Rahim Khan knows about the alley incident. Amir visits Pakistan and then from there he goes to Afghanistan. Everything reminds him of the past.

Rahim Khan tells Amir about the past incidents, and accidents happened in Afghanistan. After Soviets left, different groups took over different parts of Kabul. And violence becomes a daily routine. Bab's orphanage had been destroyed. He further tells about Hassan and his wife, Farzana. He tells that Ali had been killed by a land mine. Hassan names his son after Sohrab, a character from Rosam and Sohrab story. In 1996 however, the Taliban took over the country, and they banned kit fighting. Taliban massacred the Hazara community of Mazar e Sharif. One day Taliban enter into the house of baba, and they capture Hassan as a Hazarah. They made Hassan kneel before them and finally shot him in the back of his head. Farzana is also killed by the Taliban. Then they capture the baba's house, and they sent Sohrab to an orphanage.

Rahim Khan tells Amir that the main purpose of his return is to save Sohrab. Rahim Khan reminds Amir about his need to face the difficulties. It is also disclosed that Hassan is actually his real brother. Rahim Khan shows him a way to end the cycle of betrayals and lies. Amir wears a fake beard which reaches to his chest because a requirement in the Taliban occupied areas. In Kabul, Amir does not recognize the alleys and houses

as everything has been turned into rubbles. Even teachers are turned into beggars. He is told that Sohrab is taken by a Taliban in an orphanage. That Taliban official turns out Assef, an old enemy of Amir. Assef says that he is on a mission to clean Afghanistan from all types of garbage. Assef wears his old brass knuckles and beat Amir badly. He bleeds. Assef then throws him against the wall and strikes him hard. But Amir starts laughing. He suddenly feels peace and calmness in his heart. He feels healed, not broken. Sohrab loads his slingshot and hit at the Assef's eye. Assef screams and rolls around on the floor. Amir and Sohrab run and escape to Peshawar.

Sohrab barely speaks to anybody. They paly panjpar in silence. Amir decides to take Sohrab to Islamabad. Amir promise to Sohrab that he will not send Sohrab to an orphanage then Sohrab agrees to go to America. Then the problem of no death certificate of Sohrab's parents. Next day they meet Faisal, the lawyer, who says that it is difficult but not impossible. Faisal opines that they have to put Sohrab in an orphanage for two years at least. Sohrab out of distress, tries to commit suicide. Amir turns to God for help and realizes that there is no hope except God. With the help of Soraya relatives, they manage to migrate to America with Sohrab.

The hermeneutic code deals with mystery and suspense. In the novel, the residence in America is suspense for the readers. The suspense is originated that whether they will live here forever or leave the place. "For me, America was a place to bury my memories. For Baba, a place to mourn his" (Hosseini, p. 120). This line elucidates the paradoxical feelings of Amir and Agha Jan. Amir finds solace in America whereas Agha Jan mourns there. These contradictory feelings generate the question that will they live in America or leave it one day? The mystery is resolved by the readers in further episodes.

The puzzle is created when Rahim Khan tells about Hassan. "You know all those years I lived in your father's house after you left? "I wasn't alone for all of them. Hassan lived there with me"(Hosseini, p. 186). In these lines, Rahim Khan tells Amir that he and Hassan live in their house for many years. This develops the puzzle in the novel that why does Hassan return to the house? This is shocking for Amir and the readers. This unexpected and mysterious element maintains the uncertainty in the novel.

The mystery is developed in chapter number 17 when there is a tussle between Rahim and Amir. Rahim wants Amir to help Sohrab, and Amir does not want to help Sohrab. "Children are fragile, Amir Jan. Kabul is already full of broken children, and I don't want Sohrab to become another one." "Rahim Khan, I don't want to go Kabul. I can't!" I said. "Sohrab is a gifted little boy. We can give him a new life here, new hope, with people who would love him" (Hosseini, p. 204). These lines indicate that Amir is not willing to help Sohrab. Rahim Khan tries to convince Amir to give Sohraba better life. Amir does not want to go Kabul as Kabul is a dangerous place. The scrimmage between Amir and Rahim on the subject of Sohrabendures the suspense. Will Amir help Sohrab or not? Will he give a new life to Sohrabor not?

The hermeneutic code also helps to unveil the mysterious elements in the novel. The mystery of the love of Agha for Hassan is resolved when Rahim Khan convinces Amir for the life of Sohrab. The mystery is revealed on Amir and on the readers as well.

"No, he wasn't. He and Sanaubar had Hassan, didn't they? They had Hassan.

No, they didn't, Rahim Khan said.

Yes, they did!

No, they didn't, Amir.

Then Who

I think you know who" (Hosseini, P. 205-206).

In these lines, the suspense of the real relationship between Amir, Hassan and Agha are disclosed as Amir says that Hassan is the son of Ali and Sanaubar. On the other hand, Rahim Khan indirectly exposes that Hassan is not the son of Ali, but he is a half-brother to Amir. The suspense is unveiled through readers.

The resolution of one suspense creates another suspense in the story. In the novel, the mystery of whether Amir helps Sohrab or nor is resolved but generates another mystery. "Then I told him I was going to Kabul.

Told him to call the Caldwells in the morning. "I'll pray for you, Amir Jan," he said" (Hosseini, p.210). These lines elucidate that Amir is agreed to help Sohrab. On this, another suspense is created that whether Amir will be successful in giving Sohraba new life or he will face failure. Hermeneutic code rises questions and unveils the suspense through these queries.

Amir finds an Afghan kite vendor and purchases a kite, and he takes it over to Sohrab. Amir checks the string and converses with Sohrab about Hassan and his ability at kite-flying and kite-running. Amir inquires as to whether Sohrabwants to fly a kite, yet there is no reaction. Amir begins running, the kite ascending behind him, and afterwards, he understands Sohrabis tailing him. Amir feels a surge of delight, as he hasn't flown a kite in decades. Amir offers once more, and Sohrabhesitantly takes the kite string. Amir wishes time would stop. At that point, a green kite approaches for a battle and Sohrab hands the spool back to Amir, yet he looks alert and alive, keen on the kites. Amir shows Sohrabwhat was Hassan's preferred stunt, and soon they have caught the green kite, with Amir flying and Sohrabholding the spool. Amir neglects himself into his recollections of Kabul, Hassan, Ali, and baba, and afterwards, he cuts the string of the green kite. Behind them, individuals cheer for their triumph, and the smallest grin shows up all over. Amir realizes it is just an easily overlooked detail, yet it is maybe an indication of better what might be on the horizon, a sign of trust later on. Amir inquires as to whether he should run the green kite for Sohrab, and Sohrabnods. Amir says "for you, a thousand times finished," and he sets off running with a grin all over

Conclusion

The present paper studies the Hermeneutic code of Barthes in Hosseini's masterpiece. Roland Barthes has claimed that every text can be analyzed through the lenses of five codes theory. The codes are followings "Hermeneutic code", "Proairetic code", "Symbolic code", "Cultural code" and "Semantic code". This research paper analyzes the text through the code of enigma. The Hermeneutic code also called the "voice of truth". It deals with mysterious elements in the text. The code argues that elements which create suspense formulate the plot of the novel. The paper finds out that the suspense among people, in conversations and in actions develops the interest of readers in the novel. Khalid Hosseini has skillfully and successfully entangled the minds of the readers into the workings of the narrative. Nobody could stop reading, once started. It is all due to the insertion of the hermeneutic code under the narrative. Sense of incompleteness prompts the reader to complete the reading of the text. The text formulates the suspense and maintains it throughout the narrative by presenting unanswered questions and exotic situations to enigmatize the readers. Readers also journey with the protagonist to solve the enigmas.

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