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**STYLISTIC ANALYSIS : AN EFFECTIVE NARRATION  
AND SYMBOLISM IN A SHORT STORY “THE GIFT OF MAGI”**

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**Introduction**

A short story is a literary work that is shorter than a novel. It consists two elements; extrinsic and Extrinsic. Extrinsic Elements includes anything that is related to the author; its background and values. On the other hand, Intrinsic Elements consist of the Character, plot, Symbolism, theme, and the Point of view, In which we basically called it as Elements of a short story.

*“Symbolism is the language of the mysteries. By symbols men have ever sought to communicate to each other those thoughts which transcends the limitation of language.”*

*-Manly Hall*

Symbolism is a literary device that uses symbols to symbolize anything other than the literal meaning, such as words, persons, markings, locations, or abstract concepts. Symbolism is not limited to works of literature; it may be found in every aspect of our everyday lives.

*“A literary work can be only received through symbols, through concepts- for that is what words are; but cinema, like music it allows for utterly direct, emotional, sensuous perception of the work”*

*-Andrei Tarkovsky*

The creative and effective use of the language shows how an author gives symbolism into a literary work.

The story of “The Gift of Magi” is much explicit symbolism and the way the language is used through the narration of the story makes the literariness of the story. The way it is narrated is effective in presenting the symbolism in the story.

This paper aims show how language is effectively use in the narration of the story which helps to reveals its symbolisms. The story is analyzed through the its Intrinsic Elements and how the Language is used by stylistically analyzing the story.

## Discussion

The subject that is analyzed in this paper is a short story titled "The gift of Magi" written by O. Henry. The story started the day before Christmas, in the modest and impoverished flat of James (Jim) and Della Dillingham Young. Della has just completed paying her bills and discovers that she only has \$1.87 left over to spend on a present for Jim. She bemoans her predicament at first, while the narrator observes the broken glass. The little pier glass mirror, the mail chute and doorbell, and the "grey cat walking across the grey fence in the grey backyard"

### "The Gift of Magi"

O. Henry

#### Elements of a Short Story

A. **SETTING**- is the time and location in which a story happens:

- Place-  
The story happens at the rented apartment of Della and Jim. Which was vividly describe as furnished room : "*Furnished Flat at a cost of \$8 a week. There is little more to say about it.*" (p.1)
- Time- It was clear that the story happens during Christmas holidays specifically Christmas eve, as the narrator states in the first part of the story the lines:  
"*...and the next day would be Christmas.*"(p.1);
- Weather conditions- given that its Christmas season, the weather is cold, which makes the character always wear a coat and hat as their defense in the cold weather.  
"*She put on her old brown coat. She put on her old brown hat.*"  
"*He needed a new coat and he had nothing to cover his cold hands.*"(p.4)
- Social conditions- Jim and Della is facing financial problem.

*"ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS.*

*That was all. She had put it aside, one cent and then another and then another, in her careful buying of meat and other food. Della counted it three times. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.*" (p.1)

This reveals that they only have money for their needs. They do not have money to buy gifts for their loved ones.

- Mood or atmosphere- The story displays a sad atmosphere where Jim and Della need to sacrifice and sells their prized possession.

## B. CHARACTER

There are two main characters in the story of magi, both are static characters and Protagonist,

### **The Protagonist:**

Della- She is the wife of Jim, she has a beautiful hair that was being described in the lines:

*“Della would have washed and dried her hair where the queen could see it. Della knew her hair was more beautiful than any queen’s jewels and gifts...” (p.2)*

*“So now Della’s beautiful hair fell about her, shining like a falling stream of brown water. It reached below her knee. It almost made itself into a dress for her”(p.3)*

She is selfless and willingly sacrifice for Jim.

*“Will you buy my hair?” asked Della.*

*“I buy hair,” said Mrs. Sofronie. “Take your hat off and let me look at it.”*

*Down fell the brown waterfall.*

*“Twenty dollars,” said Mrs. Sofronie, lifting the hair to feel its weight.*

*“Give it to me quick,” said Della.*

*Oh, and the next two hours seemed to fly. She was going from one shop to another, to find a gift for Jim. (p.1)*

She is a Dynamic character as she changes her hair.

*“With her short hair, she looked wonderfully like a schoolboy. She stood at the looking-glass for a long time.”*

Jim- Husband of Della, his full name was James Dillingham Young.

He’s only twenty-two years old and he is the breadwinner in the family. He was vividly described in the lines.

*“He looked very thin and he was not smiling. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and with a family to take care of! He needed a new coat and he had nothing to cover his cold hands” (p.4)*

He truly loves Della even if Della cut her hair.

*"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less."*

His sacrifice also reveals how he love Della, he sells the watch that was given by his father which originally from his grandfather.

*"I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs"*

### **The antagonist:**

The antagonist in the story is basically not human or another character, hence is Lack of money or poverty, therefore they sacrifice their most valuable possession to have a gift for Christmas to their loved ones. Della cut and sell her beloved hair to buy a gold chain for her husband, Jim. On the other, Jim sells his watch that was given by his father; which also reveals that the watch was originally from his father's father. The first line of the story was also in bold letters;

*"ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS."*

That gives emphasis to the financial status of the characters in the story.

### **C. POINT-OF-VIEW**

The story is told in the third person limited omniscient point-of-view, in the story, what Jim did during the story was not narrated, it only follows Della. The use of pronouns "he," "she," "it," "they," "him," "her," "his," and "them." Shows how the narrator refer and addressed someone in the story.

### **D. PLOT**

The story was being narrated in chronological order.

- i. Introduction: The story directly told us the financial problem that Della and Jim Facing. Wherein Della only has \$1.87 left for the Christmas present for Jim.
- ii. Rising Action: Della's hair was valuable for her and his husband, Jim. She thinks of cutting and selling her hair to have a money to buy a present for Jim. By selling her Hair she was able to buy a gold chain for Jim's watch.
- iii. Climax: Jim bought Della a comb but Della cut and sell her hair, and Della bought a gold chain for Jim however Jim sell hir watch to buy Della a comb. Della thinks that Jim's love would fade if he saw her.
- iv. Falling Action: Della realizes that Jim's love did not change even if he saw him with her new haircut. They also realize that their gifts to one another is not essential since the Jim sells his watch and Della cut and sell her hair.

- v. Resolution: they still love each other even if there were changes because of their sacrifices for them to be able to buy a gift to one another.

## E. CONFLICT

The conflict in the story includes both the internal and external;

- Internal conflict: where both Della and Jim struggle to buy a gift to one another, they decided to sacrifice their valuable possession which is Della's Hair and Jim's watch.
- External Conflict: poverty that Jim and Della are experiencing and they were not able to buy a gift so that they need to sacrifice and sell the hair of Della and the watch of Jim.

## F. IRONY

- Verbal Irony  
When Della said that,  
*"I could not have lived through Christmas without giving you a present"*  
It is an example of Verbal Irony, she gave the gift to Jim however it is useless since Jim does not have his watch anymore, she is still happy and able to continue their love to one another.
- Situational Irony  
When a story has an unexpected ending, situational irony occurs. Consider Jim's reaction when he sees Della's short hair when he gets home from work. He didn't anticipate Della to sell her hair, based on the fact that he bought hair combs for her. Della's predicament is additionally hilarious because she had hoped to get a pair of tortoise shell combs as a present, but she didn't anticipate them. Another example of situational irony is when Jim receives the fob that Della gave him for his watch unexpectedly, but Della was unaware that he had sold it.
- Dramatic  
The dramatic Irony present in the story is that when Della opens the gift from Jim but her hair was not long enough to use the comb just like before. Dramatic Irony may know about Jim selling his watch to buy the comb for Della.
- Cosmic  
Even they sacrifice to buy the gift for their loved ones, they were not able to use the gifts given to them. It was expected that they would become happy because of the gifts, yet what made them happy is that they proved that they truly love each other.

## G. Tone

The tone of the story in the first part of the story is sad, it can be seen on how the story narrated while Della cries when she came home. Another tone is affectionate given that the main characters, in the story it was shown how they really care for each other and even sacrifice their prized possession to buy a gift to one another. The story tone is bittersweet which can be felt in the following lines:

*“There was nothing to do but fall on the bed and cry. So Della did it.”*

*“Della finished her crying and cleaned the marks of it from her face. “*

*“ And then a cry of joy; and then a change to tears”*

## H. Theme

**Devotion, sacrifices, the characters' intrinsic desire to contribute to make each other happy**, and the sense of appreciation that they both shared throughout their lives together were all portrayed in the novel. **Relationships and true happiness** were also featured in the story, and while Della and Jim thought that the essence of gift giving was their way of expressing their wisdom in loving each other, they eventually came to the conclusion that sincere feelings of love for each other are the best way of expressing how grateful they are to have each other over any expensive gifts. **Generosity and appreciation** drive to Della and Jim to give meaningful gifts to one another. The **Love** for each other is also significant, both were willing to sacrifice their priced possession in order to provide a gift to one another.

## I. SYMBOL

**Gold Chain:** Gift of Della to Jim for his watch

Conventional Symbol: accessory

Private Symbol: Appearance

Original Symbol: wealth, success, eternity, love

Jim Young's gold watch is a sign of achievement and fortune. Many men wore gold watches in the past to demonstrate they were affluent, much as many people now wear Rolexes and other costly watches as a mark of their success. These gold watches, like Jim's watch, were passed down the generations as valuable artifacts to be loved and proudly worn. Jim got his watch from his grandfather, who gave it to his father, who gave it to him. Jim felt pretentious about possessing such a good object, according to the narrator, and was prone to checking the time merely to show it off. The possession of such a desirable thing seemed to imply that the person shared the object's attributes.

### **Comb**

Conventional Symbol: use for hair.

Private Symbol: appearance, selfcare

Original Symbol: Love, sacrifice

Jim willingly sacrifices his watch in order to buy a gift for Della, it reveals his selfless love to his wife.

### **Gift**

Conventional Symbol: Present

Private Symbol: Appreciation

Original Symbol: Appreciation, love and Generosity

The story happens during Christmas, and during Christmas, giving gifts is desirable. Giving gifts during Christmas also symbolize the three wise men who is also known as Magi, who visited Baby Jesus and gave their gifts.

### **Christmas**

Conventional Symbol: occasions

Private Symbol: Tradition

Original Symbol: Giving gifts ,Baby Jesus Birth , sacrifice and Love

The story takes place during Christmas holidays, giving gifts is one of the traditions during Christmas in which it was also happen in the story. In the bible, the Three wise men; magi were ones who gave a gift to baby Jesus, hence in the story it was titled as “The gift of Magi” as symbolism. It was said in the bible that God also sacrifice his begotten son because of his selfless love to the world which is also corresponds as a symbolism of sacrifice of Jim and Della as they are selflessly love each other.

## **J. MORAL OF THE STORY**

The Characters in the story possess a deep and inevitable love to one another as they are willing to sacrifice their prized possession with no regrets. The story shows that there are no material things that true matters, both the comb and the gold chain does not matter in the end, what truly matters is that the love and the sacrifices that you are willing to do for the one that you love. Even if they both sell their prized possession, they are still happy which also depicts that happiness does not depend on money and material things

## **K. STORY ENDING**

O. Henry is known for the “twist ending” or “surprise ending” , which is also present in the story The gift of Magi.

*Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She held it out to him in*

*her open hand. The gold seemed to shine softly as if with her own warm and loving spirit.*

*“Isn’t it perfect, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You’ll have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how they look together.”*

*Jim sat down and smiled.*

*“Della,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They’re too nice to use now. I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs. And now I think we should have our dinner.”*

Della cut and sells her hair so that she could buy Jim a gift, a gold chain for his watch. However, Jim sells his watch to buy a gift for Della, a Comb. The gifts that they bought to each other we’re not be useful since Jim sells his watch and cannot use the gold chain anymore, same thing with the comb and Della’s hair.

## L. STYLE

### STYLISTIC ANALYSIS: THE GIFT OF MAGI

Sentence Structure	<p>The story composes both short and long sentences, however there were sentences that are not really sentences:  <i>"One dollar and eighty-seven cents" (p.1).</i>          The first line in the story, it is not a sentence, it has no verb, it is just a sum of money.          It follows another sentence;  <i>"That was all" (p.1)</i>          Which is not also a complete sentence, it does have a verb however, the subject is unspecified which makes it incomplete.          The story has a lot of short sentences that depends on the other sentences in order to be understood.          it has 2163 words and can be considered as a "short story"</p>
Pace	<p>The story focus in the action and in the plot, where Della and Jim use to sell ;sacrificed, the prized possession so that they can buy a gift to one another. Setting was also given focus, it was Christmas eve, and it was also given emphasis because it is one of the reasons why Della and Jim sacrificed in the first place. The pacing of the events is the story was fast, it all stated the important details that is needed, it</p>

	was straightforward and there was no beating around the bush.
Expansive/Economical Diction	The story was being narrated elaborately, the sentences were short hence it is needed to be read since one sentence may depend to another.
Vocabulary	<p>Even the story is straight forward about the happenings or the action of the characters in the story the use of words is fancy, this can be seen in the lines such as:</p> <p><i>“One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one’s cheeks burned with the silent <b>imputation of parsimony</b> that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating. While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished <b>flat</b> at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the <b>mendicancy squad.</b>”</i></p> <p>These excerpt from the story contains fancy words.</p>
Figures of Speech	<p>There were Figures of Speech present in the story such as irony, simile, allusion.</p> <p><b>Irony:</b> Irony is a literary device that is used to raise the worth of a piece of work. Irony is when you say one thing but mean something another. In literature, there are various types of irony. This narrative, on the other hand, is about situational irony. The situational Irony occurs when their gifts become useless to them.</p> <p><i>“I could not have lived through Christmas without giving you a present”</i></p>

	<p>Even their gifts were not useful, it contrasts to the statement above, they were able to live and continue to be happy and still love each other. Its ending is also an Irony, even if they sell their prized possession they did not get upset and regret about the sacrifices that they made yet they just accept the situation, and realize the love to each other.</p> <p><b>Simile:</b> A figure of speech that can be found in both prose and poetry. The terms 'like' or 'as' are usually used in similes. The writer employs the analogy of cascade to describe Della's hair's beauty.  <i>"Della's beautiful hair fell like a cascade of brown water."</i>  After cutting her hair, Della was looks like a schoolboy.  <i>"That made her looks like a truant schoolboy."</i></p> <p><b>Allusion:</b> Allusion is a reference to the past. The major goal of using allusion is to connect current events and characters to historical actions and people in order to increase the readers' fascination understanding.  <i>"Had the question of Sheba lived in the flat across the Airshaft?"</i>  <i>"Had King Solomon been the Janitor?"</i></p> <p><i>"The Magi – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger."</i></p> <p><b>Foreshadowing:</b> is about giving hints or clues about the future happenings in the story. All throughout the story it was given emphasis about the Della's Hair and Jim's watch.  <i>"Jim was never late"</i> is a foreshadowing in the story, which later reveals the reason why Jim was late, that is because he sells his watch.</p>
Use of Dialogue	The conversation between the characters in the story seems natural, it shows how they care and love each other. The story was able to show the whole conversation if the characters. Hence the used of third person limited limits the

	reader about what is Jim doing throughout the story.
Point of view	The story was narrated in the third person limited omniscient. The unnamed narrator was able to narrate only Della's actions, Jim's doings during the story was not narrated.
Character Development	In the story, Characters were directly introduced having a financial problem. Della is a Dynamic character as she changes her appearance from having a long beautiful hair into a schoolboy look.
Tone	The tone of the story in the first part of the story is sad, it can be seen on how the story narrated while Della cries when she came home. Another tone is affectionate given that the main characters, in the story it was shown how they really care for each other and even sacrifice their prized possession to buy a gift to one another. The story tone is bittersweet.
Word Color, Word sound	There is alliteration present in the story that is present in the line <i>"sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating."</i>
Paragraph/Chapter structure	The paragraphs in the story are short. The sentences were also incomplete, sentences meanings depend to the other sentences.
Time sequencing/Chronology	it was chronologically narrated that leads to have a chronological sequences of events
Allusions	In the "Gift of Magi", O. Henry uses Allusion: <i>"Had the question of Sheba lived in the flat across the Airshaft?"</i> <i>"Had King Solomon been the Janitor?"</i>  <i>"The Magi – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger."</i>
Experimentation in the language	O. Henry wrote "The Gift of Magi" with short sentences. Some of the sentences were incomplete that makes these sentences become dependent to other sentences to be able to understand the meaning. In the first part of the sentence, <i>"One dollar and eighty-seven cents."</i> Has no verb. which actually means a sum of money, While sentence that follows is <i>"That was all"</i> , that has no concrete depiction of what is it

	referring to, but when it was combined the actual meaning reveals
Meta Fiction techniques	The narrator's role is to focus on what Della is doing in the story, it does not give information of what Jim did, hence this gives a role where the plot twist in the ending gave an impact in the story telling.

## Conclusion

The Gift of Magi is one of the examples of effective use of language as it narrates the story as helps in giving the symbolism. Thru narration, in the Third Person limited Omniscient, it narrates what Della did throughout the story hence it gives a Blindspot to Jim's point of view which gives a surprise ending.

The symbolisms were revealed in the story based on how language is used. and completes the literariness of the story. It shows how Della and Jim love each other. The Four Symbolism mentioned above; Comb, Gold, gift, and Christmas, have a similarity which is Love. The comb that Jim's bought for Della as a gift where he used to sacrifice his watch to buy it. Gold which Della bought by sacrificing her beautiful hair to buy a gold chain for Jim's watch. A gift where it shows the love and appreciation of the two towards each other. lastly, Christmas, aside from being the place setting of the story as it also symbolizes love and sacrifices. Christmas is the birth of baby Jesus, moreover, in the bible, it was said that God sacrifice his son because of his love for the world which parallels also to Della and Jim's sacrifices because of their love for one another.

Some words that are used in the story are fancy and unfamiliar, sentences were written as short and dependent on other sentences, uses figures of speech and literary devices yet it not ambiguous in a way that a reader may understand what its symbolism, lesson, and theme.

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