

Bordieuan Reading on O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer"

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Abstract:

This study employs a Bordieuan framework to conduct a sociological analysis of O. Henry's short story, "Mammon and the Archer." By applying this theoretical lens, the emphasis is on the complex interplay of cultural, social, and economic capitals, contextualizing the socioeconomic context of the Gilded Age. Through this sociological examination, the present study unravels the motivations that drive the characters, exposes the underlying social hierarchies, and elucidates the pervasive influence of wealth on their actions. This analysis provides valuable insights into the era's power dynamics and class distinctions, portraying how the pursuit of material wealth shaped the lives of individuals during this pivotal period in American history. "Mammon and the Archer" by O. Henry, analyzed through Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework, unravels the intricate relationships between cultural, social, and economic capitals. Consequently, this analysis contributes to a richer understanding of the narrative's multifaceted dimensions and relevance in a historical context.

Keywords: American Literature, Bordieuan Analysis, Habitus, O. Henry

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, materialism and consumerism have become defining features of contemporary society, profoundly impacting daily life and societal values. Materialism, characterized by the pursuit of material possessions and wealth, and consumerism, the continuous desire for goods and services, exert significant influence over our lifestyles, choices, and identities (Morris, 2001). These phenomena extend beyond national borders, shaping societies globally. Extensive academic research highlights the pervasive nature of materialism and consumerism, revealing their interconnectedness and detrimental effects on individuals and communities (BurGroughs et al., 2013; Eagles, 2019; Seyfi et al., 2022).

The relentless pursuit of material wealth and a culture driven by consumption has been linked to rising debt, diminished overall well-being, and heightened unhappiness and social isolation. These trends underscore the pressing need for a critical examination of the societal forces that promote materialism and consumerism, their consequences on individuals and communities, and potential pathways toward a more balanced and fulfilling way of life.

Modern consumerism and materialism often prioritize acquiring possessions for immediate gratification. The allure of material wealth, fueled by advertising and societal pressures, has led to a paradigm shift in how individuals perceive success and happiness. As Twenge and Kasser posits,

"People who prioritize materialistic values are also relatively unlikely to engage in prosocial, cooperative behaviors; more likely to espouse prejudicial attitudes and a social dominance orientation; and more likely to behave in antisocial, competitive ways (Twenge & Kasser, 2013, p. 884)."

In the United States, this transformation dates back to the early 20th century, marked by the Roaring Twenties—a period of economic growth and widespread prosperity. Pursuing material wealth and consumer goods took center stage during this era, influencing societal values and redefining the American Dream (Bukowczyk, 2016; Rauchway, 2009). The impact of materialism and consumerism on American society has enduring consequences, affecting everything from personal well-being to socioeconomic disparities.

"By the second decade of the twentieth century, the United States had become the most powerful industrialized nation in the world, outstripping Britain and Germany in industrial production. By 1920, most Americans lived in towns and cities, and all Americans had new forms of mobility and access to the national culture opened up to them by the spread of car ownership and mass communication (Gray, 2011, p. 159)."

The surge in consumer culture, fueled by mass production and relentless advertising, not only reshaped American lifestyles but also reflected a profound shift in societal values as people were driven by a desire for the luxuries and conveniences of consumer goods (Reeves, 2000; Spellings, 2005). Understanding this dynamic is crucial to comprehending the broader context in which many American narratives, including literature, unfold.

The early 1900s in America were marked by dynamic and transformative cultural, societal, and literary shifts. The body of literature produced during this time profoundly reflected the era's trends, spirits, and societal evolution (Ramadani, 2022). During this period, they witnessed growing urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, leading to a more diverse and cosmopolitan society. American literature of the time reflected these changes and significantly shaped society's culture, illustrating the two-way influence between literature and culture (Krause, 2019). Prominent authors like Mark Twain, Henry

James, and Edith Wharton delved into the complexities of human nature and the evolving American identity, contributing to the evolving *zeitgeist*. The early 1900s in America represented a multifaceted era of societal and literary transformation, capturing a nation's spirit amid profound change, motivated by an increasing trend toward materialism and capitalistic society. Literature, as a cultural product, conveys the *zeitgeist* of its author, an artistic production closely related to the spirit of the period (Indriyanto, 2020a; Maisaroh, 2017).

O. Henry, the pen name of William Sydney Porter, is one prominent example of a 20th-century American writer renowned for his distinctive narrative style, marked by keen naturalistic observations, clever and engaging storytelling, and his trademark surprise endings. Born on September 11, 1862, in Greensboro, North Carolina, O. Henry's life experiences significantly influenced his writings. His short stories often delve into the lives of ordinary individuals, providing readers with a window into the complexities of human nature and society. While diverse in themes, these narratives were frequently set against the backdrop of New York City, where O. Henry resided and drew inspiration from. O. Henry has entered American folklore as a model of the self-made man, both as a writer with no formal education and a hero who struggled back after unjust imprisonment to become the voice of "The Four Million," the vast mass of ordinary people with no other chronicler to record their lives so sympathetically (Lense, 1994, p. 652). One of his most celebrated works, "The Gift of the Magi," showcases his masterful use of irony, a literary device that he skillfully employed to craft poignant and memorable tales (Barton, 1996, p. 26). This story, in particular, tells the touching tale of a young couple's sacrifices for one another, leaving readers with a profound sense of empathy. O. Henry's enduring impact on American literature is attributed to his skill in capturing urban life the human condition, and his ability to create relatable characters and lasting narrative techniques, cementing his status as a beloved figure in short fiction.

In O. Henry's 'Mammon and the Archer,' originally published in 1906, the story revolves around a wealthy businessman named Anthony Rockwall and his son Richard. Richard is in love with Miss Lantry, who is set to depart for Europe shortly. Despite Richard's belief that money can't buy time, the story reveals that, in this case, money indeed extends time. Anthony orchestrates a traffic delay to allow Richard and Miss Lantry to spend more time together, ultimately leading to a successful proposal. O. Henry, known for his stories' ironic twists and surprise endings, explores the theme of money's power to influence events, even matters of the heart. This narrative highlights the issue of consumerism and materialism, where the pursuit of wealth can shape and manipulate personal relationships, ultimately uniting two lovers through financial intervention.

This study employs Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework to conduct a comprehensive analysis of O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer," a short story set in the Gilded Age. It delves into the intricate interplay of cultural, social, and economic capitals within the narrative. Cultural capital is examined through the lens of Anthony Rockwall's relentless pursuit of wealth, encompassing both embodied and institutionalized forms of

knowledge and disposition. The influence of social capital is evident in character interactions, particularly in how Richard benefits from his father's social connections. Additionally, economic capital, epitomized by Anthony's success as a soap manufacturer, serves as a driving force behind character motivations and actions. This sociological examination enhances our comprehension of the narrative while shedding light on the socioeconomic milieu of the Gilded Age. By exploring the various forms of capital at play, this analysis extrapolates both the literary and sociological dimensions of the story. It underscores the enduring relevance of Bourdieu's framework in unraveling the complexities of human behavior and societal structures within the context of literature and history.

This study differs from prior research in several aspects. While analysis of Henry's short stories has been conducted before, few have explored *Mammon and the Archer*. Aulia and Suyudi (2019) delved into finite verb phrases in O. Henry's short stories "The Gift of the Magi" and "Cosmopolite in a Café," Ash-shiddiqy et al (2020) concentrated on character portrayals across O. Henry's complete works, and Ummah et al. (2016) explored moral values in "The Last Leaf. Unlike prior analysis, the present study employs a Bordieuan framework to analyze O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer." In contrast to previous studies primarily centered on linguistic elements, moral themes, and character depictions, this paper provides a sociological lens, allowing us to unravel the story's underlying social structures and the intricate interplay of cultural, social, and economic capitals. Consequently, this analysis contributes to understanding the narrative's multifaceted dimensions and relevance in a historical context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bordieuan framework in literary analysis delves into the social, cultural, and symbolic intricacies within literary works (Barry, 2002; Tyson, 2011). It begins by scrutinizing the author's societal background and cultural influences, underlying their impact on the text's form and content. Furthermore, it examines the dynamics of the literary field, uncovering power structures among authors, critics, and publishers and the role of symbolic capital in shaping the reception of literary creations. This framework also allows for identifying instances of symbolic violence within the text, illuminating the marginalization of particular social groups or ideologies (Tyson, 2006). By employing the Bordieuan outline, this analysis contextualizes literature's intricate relationship with the broader sociocultural context, enriching the theoretical foundation of literary exploration.

In Pierre Bourdieu's framework, several vital concepts shape the analysis of social phenomena. Firstly, there's the notion of *Habitus*, which represents an individual's social predisposition to think and act in specific ways. It's acquired through repeated engagement in specific social relations, providing a framework of understanding and motivation while organizing their actions. *Habitus* is a system composed of dispositions that endure over time, serving as underlying structures that unconsciously guide social actions, as further stated:

"habitus as an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted, the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions, and no others (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 95)."

Another important concept is Capital, encompassing four distinct forms (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993a). The various forms of capitals are: economic capital, which includes wealth and assets, cultural capital, involving familiarity with and ease in utilizing institutionalized cultural forms, such as educational knowledge. Social capital comprises valuable social relations, including networks and societal connections, while symbolic capital derives from one's honor and prestige. The possession of these four types of capital profoundly influences an individual's Habitus. Yet, their placement within specific social arenas must be carefully adapted since an individual's position depends on their capital's relative quantity and weight.

In Bourdieu's sociological framework, the concept of arenas plays a pivotal role in understanding how distinct social domains operate independently, each governed by its unique set of rules and dynamics. These arenas encompass various facets of society, including politics, arts, religion, and more. Among these arenas, Bourdieu emphasizes the political arena due to its influential role in structuring power relationships that can extend their impact to other arenas. Therefore, analyzing an arena involves a multi-faceted approach aimed at unraveling its intricate workings.

The first step in this analytical process entails tracing the connections that exist between specific arenas and the overarching political one. This step is crucial as it unveils the interplay between different social domains and the political sphere, demonstrating how actions and decisions in one arena can reverberate and influence the political landscape. Following this, the analysis proceeds to map the objective structure of relationships within the chosen arena. This mapping exercise elucidates the power dynamics, hierarchies, and interactions that define the arena's social structure. Finally, understanding the nature of the "Habitus" of agents occupying various positions within the arena becomes paramount. The concept of Habitus refers to the internalized dispositions, values, and behaviors of individuals, and comprehending how these manifest in different roles within the arena provides valuable insights into the agents' motivations and actions (Bourdieu, 1991; Karnanta, 2013)

Bourdieu's concept of Social Practice is integral to his sociological framework, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between internalized external factors (arenas) and externalized internal factors (Habitus and capital). Social practices, the tangible outcomes of this interplay, result from the dialectical interaction between these elements. Individual behavior is not autonomous; rather, it's shaped by the interconnectedness of social actors and structures. Habitus, influenced by the social arenas individuals engage with and the capital they possess, in turn, impacts how they navigate and participate within these arenas. This reciprocal relationship illustrates that social practices reflect the constant interplay of

an individual's dispositions, resources, and the social contexts they engage with, highlighting the intricate connection between individual agency and structural forces in shaping society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative framework for literary analysis, focusing on textual data in quotations, sentences, dialogues, and monologues extracted from the short story "Mammon and the Archer," written by O. Henry in 1906. As defined by Creswell and Poth, qualitative research is primarily aimed at "exploring and understanding how individuals or groups interpret and make sense of a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 1998, p. 97). In this context, the qualitative approach is utilized to delve deeply into the nuances of the text and extract meaning. The data is in written words and sentences instead of numerical calculations (Indriyanto, 2022, p. 160).

The analysis examines and interprets text quotations and passages, employing the Bordieuan framework as an analytical lens. The emphasis is on underlying quotes, phrases, and utterances from the text (Indriyanto, 2020b, p. 26). Bourdieu's sociological framework is instrumental in unpacking the literary work's social, cultural, and symbolic elements. It facilitates an exploration of the author's societal background, cultural influences, and the impact of these factors on the text's form and content. Additionally, this study seeks to provide a contextual understanding of the prevalent themes of consumerism and materialism that pervaded American society during the historical period depicted in the novel. By incorporating the Bordieuan framework, the analysis aims to underline how these sociocultural phenomena are represented and addressed within the text.

FINDINGS

In O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer," the Bordieuan framework provides a profound lens through which we can analyze the intricate social dynamics and the influence of wealth on the characters' lives. The story delves into wealth, social structure, cultural capital, social capital, economic capital, Habitus, doxa, and struggle. Through the characters of Anthony, Richard, and Aunt Ellen, the narrative challenges prevailing beliefs about the power of money and highlights the enduring significance of genuine human connections. The Bordieuan analysis underlines a deeper appreciation of the character's motivations, the social structures at play, and the timeless themes that continue to resonate in contemporary society. "Mammon and the Archer" serves as a compelling exploration of the human condition, reminding us that, ultimately, our relationships' authenticity defines our lives.

Social Structure

Social Structure is a fundamental concept in Pierre Bourdieu's framework, and it plays a significant role in understanding the dynamics of O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer." This concept revolves around the organization of individuals within society based

on objective relations among different positions. In the story, the social structure is depicted through the stark contrast between high-class and low-class characters, primarily exemplified by the characters Anthony Rockwall and Suffolk Jones (Henry, 1906).

Anthony Rockwall embodies the high-class social structure. He is portrayed as a wealthy soap manufacturer who owns the prosperous Eureka soap company. His economic capital, accumulated through successful business ventures, places him in a position of dominance within the social hierarchy. This economic power allows Anthony to influence and control various aspects of his life, including his son Richard's romantic pursuits. His unwavering belief that money can overcome any obstacle, such as securing Richard's marriage to Miss Lantry, underscores his high-class status and the supremacy of economic capital in shaping his worldview. Conversely, Suffolk Jones represents the low-class social structure within the story. While he shares the same social arena as Anthony, he occupies a less privileged position due to his comparatively lower economic capital. Suffolk's economic circumstances position him at a disadvantage compared to Anthony, evident in their interactions throughout the narrative. This contrast highlights the hierarchical nature of the social structure depicted in "Mammon and the Archer."

This social structure is further contextualized by the historical backdrop of the Gilded Age, a period marked by stark income inequality and the emergence of powerful industrialists like Anthony Rockwall. In the early 20th century, class distinctions and social hierarchies were particularly pronounced in American society, reflected in the story's portrayal of high-class and low-class characters (Susman, 1984). The Gilded Age's influence on societal structures and economic disparities underscores the relevance of economic capital and class divisions in shaping the characters' roles and interactions in "Mammon and the Archer."

Field

Bourdieu's concept of "field" refers to distinct social domains, each governed by its rules and dynamics. "Mammon and the Archer" unfolds in several key fields, each contributing to the narrative's complexity. The story commences in Anthony Rockwall's mansion, particularly in his library room. This setting establishes the backdrop for the interactions between Anthony, Richard, and Kelly, an important character who plays a pivotal role in the story. Anthony's mansion represents a space where economic capital wields significant influence. Another critical field in the story is Grand Central Station, where Richard meets Miss Lantry. This field symbolizes the intersection of different social classes and sets the stage for Richard's pursuit of love. The station's bustling atmosphere and the presence of various characters from different social backgrounds create a dynamic field where social connections are essential. The third field of significance is the cab, where Richard and Miss Lantry find themselves stranded due to a traffic jam. This unexpected delay becomes a turning point in the story, enabling Richard to propose to Miss Lantry. The cab symbolizes life's unpredictability and chance's role in shaping human relationships.

Capitals

In Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework, capitals serve as a lens through understanding the dynamics of O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer." This framework identifies three fundamental forms of capital - cultural, social, and economic - each pivotal in unraveling the characters' motivations and the narrative's social fabric.

Cultural capital embodies familiarity with and the ease of employing institutionalized cultural forms. In "Mammon and the Archer," two distinct facets of cultural capital come to light. Anthony Rockwall relentlessly pursues wealth, exemplifying the embodied state. His journey from a soap manufacturer to the owner of Eureka soap reflects the accumulation of cultural capital rooted in his background and life experiences. In contrast, Richard, Anthony's son, personifies the institutionalized state of cultural capital. Richard wields a different form of cultural capital as an educated college student. This contrast in cultural capital between father and son shapes their perceptions and actions throughout the narrative.

As defined by Bourdieu, social capital comprises one's network of actual or potential resources legitimized by family, group, or class membership. In "Mammon and the Archer," social capital is pivotal in influencing the characters' interactions and opportunities. Richard benefits from his father's social capital, which grants him access to an exclusive social circle. This social capital becomes instrumental when Anthony leverages it by enlisting Kelly, a character with valuable connections, to orchestrate the street blockade. Richard's limited reference to Kelly demonstrates the intricate web of social relations within the story, underscoring the significance of social capital in shaping their actions.

Economic capital, another cornerstone of Bourdieu's framework, is prominently featured throughout the narrative. Economic capital comprises resources immediately convertible to money and potentially institutionalized as property rights. Anthony Rockwall, a wealthy soap magnate, is a prime exemplar of substantial economic capital. His vast financial resources grant him the power to manipulate the field to achieve his objectives. Anthony's unwavering belief that money can buy love is a testament to the influence of economic capital, as he orchestrates a roadblock to facilitate Richard's proposal to Miss Lantry. Phrases such as "I could lay my hands on eleven million within twenty-four hours" underscore the extent of Anthony's economic capital and its potential for manipulation. His economic prowess extends to indirect influence over Richard's decisions, as he enlists Kelly to coordinate the blockade, effectively shaping Richard's actions and desires.

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of Habitus also extends to the social and cultural aspects of the characters in "Mammon and the Archer." The story unfolds within a society deeply influenced by economic disparities and social hierarchies, and this societal context molds

the habitus of its characters. Anthony Rockwall's Habitus is emblematic of the Gilded Age, marked by an obsession with material wealth and the belief that money equates to power and success. His actions, such as orchestrating a street blockade to facilitate his son's proposal, are driven by this habitus deeply rooted in the values of his time.

Conversely, Richard's Habitus reflects a more nuanced understanding of human relationships and genuine affection. His interactions with Miss Lantry and his ultimate decision to propose to her without using his father's wealth as leverage underscore his habitus, which prioritizes love over financial considerations. Aunt Ellen, another character in the story, presents an alternative habitus shaped by her beliefs in social values and the limitations of wealth. Her role in the narrative serves as a counterpoint to Anthony's obsession with economic capital, highlighting the diversity of habitus within the story and the clash of these dispositions as central to the plot's development. In this way, Bourdieu's concept of Habitus enriches the analysis of "Mammon and the Archer" by revealing how individual behaviors and values are products of their social backgrounds and experiences within the broader sociocultural context of the Gilded Age.

Doxa

Doxa in "Mammon and the Archer" is not only a theme but also a catalyst for the narrative's development. It highlights the clash between the entrenched societal beliefs and the countervailing viewpoints of the characters. This tension is vividly portrayed in the scene where Anthony challenges anyone to find something money cannot buy. His unwavering adherence to the doxa of wealth's supremacy serves as the initial conflict in the story, driving his attempts to prove his point through manipulation and grand gestures.

Conversely, Richard and Aunt Ellen's resistance to this prevailing doxa becomes a source of moral and emotional tension within the narrative. Their belief in the value of genuine affection and their rejection of money's power sets them on a collision course with Anthony's worldview. This clash of doxa ultimately leads to the central conflict and resolution of the story, where love triumphs over materialism. Bourdieu's concept of doxa thus enhances our understanding of the characters' motivations, values, and actions within the sociocultural context of the Gilded Age, where the omnipotence of money was a deeply ingrained belief

Struggle

Within the Bordieuan framework, struggle refers to individuals' conflicts and challenges as they navigate social fields. "Mammon and the Archer" presents two distinct struggles—the struggle of Anthony Rockwall and Richard Rockwall. Anthony's struggle centers on his determination to prove that money can buy anything, including love. To achieve this, he orchestrates the street blockade with Kelly's assistance, ensuring that Richard has an opportunity to confess his love to Miss Lantry. Anthony's meticulous planning and organization resemble the precision of an archer aiming for a target.

Importantly, Aunt Ellen and Richard remain unaware of Anthony's involvement in the blockade, adding a layer of complexity to the struggle.

On the other hand, Richard's struggle revolves around his pursuit of Miss Lantry's affection. This struggle is evident in his attempts to meet Miss Lantry at Grand Central Station, retrieve his lost ring on the way to the theater, and console Miss Lantry during their unexpected delay due to the traffic jam. Richard acknowledges that he must win Miss Lantry's heart, declaring, "I must have that girl, dad, or this town is a blackjack swamp forever more." He strives to overcome obstacles and establish a sincere emotional connection with the woman he loves.

CONCLUSION

Anthony and Richard Rockwall, as characters, vividly embody these capitals, offering profound insights into how they mold perceptions, decisions, and the prevailing social order. Anthony's relentless pursuit of economic capital and his unwavering belief in its power to manipulate social outcomes mirrors the Gilded Age's stark wealth disparities, providing historical context to the narrative. Furthermore, the narrative's exploration of social capital highlights the pivotal role of networks and connections in shaping characters' opportunities and actions. Richard's access to an exclusive social circle through his father's social capital vividly illustrates the pervasive influence of these affiliations. This analysis of "Mammon and the Archer" within Bourdieu's framework presents a compelling avenue for future studies in literature and sociology. Scholars can explore the dynamics of cultural, social, and economic capitals in other literary works, shedding light on how these resources influence character development and narrative progression. Moreover, examining how these capitals are depicted in literature across different historical periods, particularly during the Gilded Age, can reveal valuable insights into societal values and inequalities of those times. Additionally, extending this analysis to contemporary literature can unveil shifts and continuities in the role of capital in storytelling, reflecting the evolving nature of social structures and power dynamics. As a concluding remark, literature can illuminate the human experience within diverse societal contexts.

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