

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the concept of communication in the works of Raymond Carver. The initial focus will be on *Cathedral*, which is the most famous collection of short stories among his writings. Carver's contribution to the concept of minimalism has been a dominant and central critical concern. Some studies about narrative in Carver's works say human relationships are collapsed and the atmosphere of his stories is dark. Indeed the notion few works show an emotional connection between characters does appear to be defensible. Therefore, in this paper, the works are analyzed using the viewpoint of connection, and the value of his works in current world is discussed.

At first we analyze 'Where I'm Calling From' and 'Fever' as works which do not show construction of human relationships. The reason why characters in these two stories can't build human relationships is that they use a telephone in their communications. As they communicate by telephone, they do not, of course, communicate face to face. They can use only language in telephone communication and this leads to regular misunderstandings between the speakers. Furthermore it is clear through analyzing 'Feathers', 'Vitamins' and 'The Compartment' that a preconceived idea of another person obstructs the construction of human relationships.

Reversedly, analysis of 'Preservation', reveals depiction of human relationships in the dining scene. Therefore human relationships in 'A Small, Good Thing' are analyzed through reference to its dining scene. The result clearly shows that human relationships are constructed when characters have meals together.

Next 'Careful' and 'Chef's House' are analyzed to search for other processes within which human relationships are constructed. As a result, human relationships which are constructed through physical contact – touch in these stories, are highlighted and analyzed. Relevant here is the belief that when people touch somebody else, one chemical substance which is called Oxytocin is secreted (Moberg; 2008). This chemical substance works effectively to build human relationships.

'The Bridle' and 'The Train' are also focuses of analysis. Here the importance of imagination in communication is central. The suggestion within this section of the study is that when people build a human relationship with someone, they have to dismiss preconceived ideas and imagine the feelings of the other person. Through this process, mutual empathy becomes possible.

Finally, 'Cathedral', which is the title story of the collection of short stories, *Cathedral*, is analyzed. This involves approaching all of the key discussion points –

meals, touch, indirect communication, preconceived ideas and imagination, that have been the focus of this paper. At first the narrator of 'Cathedral' displays a prejudice against a blind man. He feels uncomfortable that the blind man, who is an old friend of his wife, comes to his house. They drink alcohol and have a meal together. In this story the narrator has to explain the figure of a cathedral which is on the television. He explains this to a blind man, hence he can use only language. This situation resembles 'Fever'. They are similar in that they both use only language in their communication. The narrator and the blind man can't build a relationship at this stage. Next they draw the figure of the cathedral together. The blind man places his hand on top of the narrator's hand. This is an example of touch communication. Through this process, the narrator can dismiss a preconceived idea which he has against the blind man and empathize with him. Finally they can build a human relationship. In this and in the other stories discussed here Carver highlights the importance of empathy.

It is said that the building of human relationships has been rendered more difficult in modern times in Japan by the social conditions active (Umeda; 2014, Kanno; 2008). If people can read Carver's stories empathically and use the power of imagination when engaging with the characters, they can collect insights into how to build human relationships with others. This is the value which his stories have in the current world.