



## WHIRLIGIG MOTIVE IN THE LANGUAGE OF O. HENRY'S SHORT STORIES

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### ABSTRACT

The principle of unity of material, which extends to the language of the stories and determines the spontaneous play of concepts with their acoustic images, finds support in the dictionary and phonetic system of the English language, which become the closed system within which the rotation of linguistic signs occurs in O. Henry's stories. This article describes the linguistic features of O. Henry's stories and their role in the development of the author's concept.

**KEYWORDS:** Rotation of linguistic signs, the coq-à-l'ane genre, the linguistic game, contextual meanings, zeugma, phonetic anaphora, pun, homogenous elements of a phrase, heterogeneous notions.

### INTRODUCTION

For many years, Webster's Explanatory and Encyclopedic Dictionary was not only a reference book for the American novelist, but also a source of "pure" language, a kind of standard of meaning, to which he turned to when writing short stories, trying to get rid of template word usage through understanding dictionary definitions and independently create words with new meanings. The analogy between the dictionary and the world of theater in its aesthetics is quite justified. For many years, Webster's Explanatory and Encyclopedic Dictionary was not only a reference book for the American novelist, but also a source of "pure" language, a kind of standard of meaning, which he turned to when writing short stories, trying to get rid of template word usage through understanding dictionary definitions and independently create words with new meanings.

It may be claimed that O. Henry derives the formal notion of arranging linguistic content from the dictionary. In the dictionary, words of various styles, meanings, and parts of speech are combined; their sequence specifies only a formal aspect (alphabetical order), and they are all equal; sounds, on the other hand, do not suggest a divide into "low" and "high" at all.

The dictionary, as well as the comic genre "coq-à-l'ane," is linked to the joyful collision of distant notions in the language of O. Henry's short tales, both in form and purpose. For instance, French "from rooster to donkey" have approximate Russian equivalent "there is an elderberry in the garden, and an uncle in Kiev" which were popular in the Renaissance. Mikhail Bakhtin believes that this is a genre of deliberate verbal nonsense, not taking into account any norms, even elementary logical ones. In the Middle Ages, several forms of linguistic gibberish were common. Many genres used purposeful nonsense in some form or another, but there was also a specific genre for this type of verbal comedic "fatrasie" (French, historical fatrasie is a satirical poem

from proverbs, sayings, etc.). These are works of poetry that consist of a meaningless group of words linked by assonances or rhymes but have no semantic connection or topic unity. Verbal gibberish was fairly popular in the 16th century [1, p. 452].

It's odd that, according to O. Henry's friend Al Jennings, proximity to the *coq-à-l'ane* genre characterized not just the novelist's poetics, but also the trajectory of his thinking. Porter's philosophical concepts were never constant in their selection. He began with some strange gibberish and used it to weave his fantasies together. He put each concept and foolishness together one by one [2, p. 246].

The aesthetic and ideological importance of *coq-à-l'ane*, according to Bakhtin, rests first and foremost in the fact that it is a game with words, habitual phrases (proverbs, sayings), habitual words taken outside the ordinary logical and semantic link. It's a re-creation of words and objects that lacks any sense, logic, or logical hierarchy. They form utterly unexpected friendships and communities with one another. In most cases, these relationships create new stable connections, but the very brief coexistence of these words, expressions, and things outside of the usual semantic conditions renews them, reveals their inherent ambivalence and ambiguity, and such possibilities do not appear under normal conditions [1, p. 453].

As we can see, in *coq-à-l'ane*, extremely dissimilar words are put next to one other not based on logic, but on an external trait, in this instance rhyme. Furthermore, in *coq-à-l'ane*, as in the dictionary, words lose their contextual meanings, allowing for the formation of new meanings. Linguistic rotation in O. Henry's short works achieves the same aims. He utilizes *coq-à-l'ane* virtually in its purest form in several circumstances (for example, in some catalogs, phonetic anaphora, terminological misunderstanding, parody, and so on).

Although it is unclear that the American author was aware of the existence of this genre, he utilized a similar strategy to address his own aesthetic dilemma. "Feeling the old words, things, and concepts," and "their momentary release from all semantic links," provided O. Henry with a new creative view of the universe, to depict the rotation of life through the rotation of language. Therefore, being the writer of the XIX-XX centuries, he never reaches complete "verbal nonsense", he only plays with it skillfully, knowing how to stop in time.

In reality, the author uses tactics like sound repetition and puns to straddle the border between meaning and gibberish, without crossing it. For O. Henry, the linguistic game was not over, thus the clash of disparate notions in his stories does not result in gibberish, but rather in the ability to discover meaning everywhere. If the writer increases the interval between the concept and its acoustic image through alliteration, a pun, or another device, it is only to expose a certain "flaw" in the language, overcome it or find an explanation for it, and then fasten the signifier and the signified with a new, stronger, motivated link.

The dictionary not only explains but also equates terms, and O. Henry does the same in his short stories. The ultimate purpose of such a game, according to him, was to inspire the linguistic sign, to create content and form harmony, and to produce the greatest possible correspondence between the signified and the signifier, the notion and its sound representation.

The linguistic rotation in O. Henry's short stories is seen through an examination of different stylistic elements. It starts at the phonetic level of the text, where the author pays close attention to the arrangement. The creation of meaning from sound is the essence and fundamental purpose of all of his phonetic and stylistic methods. O. Henry uses the closeness of visuals and semantically distant concepts to manufacture a semantic rationale for them, giving

the words a phonetic purpose as a consequence. As a result, sound repetition is frequently employed throughout the text, producing a combined pressure of sound and meaning [3, p. 74]. The author creates a sound image for each narrative that stays in the reader's memory for a long time by achieving an organic relationship between sound and content. Simultaneously, the progression of the topic is expressed through alliterations and assonances. The selection of vocabulary for the entire section is based on the sound image of the words, particularly those with similar sounds, and many uncommon brilliant words are artificially included in the text. The short narrative "The Last Leaf," for example, conveys the inextricable oneness of nature's withering, the girl's illness, and finally the artist's death. A specific character, thing, room, phenomenon, can also have its own sound image.

Examples: «Dulcie turned like an automatic doll to the landlady.

"Tell him I can't go", she said dully». («Неоконченный рассказ» – An Unfinished Story);

«...he cut viciously with his whip at passing vehicles...» («С высоты козел» – From the Cabby's Seat);

«People streamed by in straight rows ...» («Квадратура круга» – Squaring the Circle) [5, p. 185-192].

Puns serve a variety of purposes in O. Henry's short stories. So, this is a stylistic parody of Sherlock Holmes' argument in the first case. The author's remarkable finding and a fantastic illustration of his enlightening game is the second case. The author proves that Jeff Peters is stolen the "noble crook" according to the regulations of the New York Stock Exchange with this pun at the end of a funny picaresque story.

Zeugma is a method used by O. Henry in which heterogeneous notions become homogenous elements of a phrase, clashing things in language that are far apart in reality. O. Henry breaks the rules of semantic agreement while adhering to the formal laws of syntax. As a result, the fooled expectation effect is accomplished. Because all forms of zeugma are based on explicit or hidden polysemy, we might think of this figure as a compressed or reduced pun.

«Soup, pocketbooks, shirt waists, actors, and baseball excuses grew thinner» («A Midsummer Knight's Dream») [4, p. 142].

In all of these cases, semantically dissimilar concepts are intentionally smashed, joined into phrases and sentences, and then revealed as one in the sound field. So, the words "viciously", "whip" and "vehicles" seem to reproduce the sound of an evil wave of a whip, the phrase "People flowed past in straight rows" appears to line up people in straight rows, and the name Dulcie is viewed as both dim ("dull") and puppet ("doll"). O. Henry accomplishes the oneness of sound and picture as a result of this approach, resulting in the phenomena of so-called sound semantics, in which the author leads the road to the signified through the signifier, compelling the form to be recognized as content.

O. Henry makes extensive use of phonetic anaphora, an ancient popular technique in English writing. At least 45 of his short story and collection titles are based on it. The majority of them are based on the idea of a sudden collision between two or three semantically dissimilar words that are only linked by a shared starting letter or a common first sound. The author appears to be challenging the reader, asking him to consider how the notions they represent might be merged not just in sound but also in meaning. "The Marry Month of May," "Roses, Ruses, and Romance," and other short tales have structures that are particularly similar to the dictionary

and coq-à-l'ane genre forms. This strategy becomes the principle one, and then throughout the text we meet the words that begin with the capital letter of the story.

To sum up, this article is about linguistic and stylistic features of O. Henry's works, the peculiarities of whirligig motive and the usage of various stylistic devices in his stories. We can say that a literary text is rich in various means of expression, with the help of which the author builds images and concepts of what is being discussed in a work of art. The literary text has a high degree of emotionality. The author can not only convey his own emotions, but also evoke them in readers.

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