

# O. Henry-Style Ending and Its Influence

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The writer O. Henry was famous for surprising endings, which is a common feature of his short stories. They have original plots and usually end in a way that you can never imagine. Because of his humorous language, his unique narrative skills, and his unexpected and reasonable ending, O. Henry got a high reputation. His excellent technique of writing is more obvious for the irony of reality and the return of human nature. The O. Henry-style ending opened up the pluralistic development of later realistic literature. The highly critical ending of its turning point also promotes the practical significance of the reaction of world literature to society.

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There is a similar point in O. Henry's works, that is, the humorous narrative language and gentle narrative plot are used to promote the development of the story, so that when the reader reads, he will subconsciously infer the ending of the whole story. However, the fact is often different from the ending predicted by the reader, which makes people feel surprised. However, looking back on it, the author thinks this ending is reasonable, which can better highlight the theme of the novel, and this is the O. Henry type ending. Many readers will find this ending way too difficult to understand, but the profound truth contained in it will be very thoughtful if you think carefully. This kind of ending, in fact, can be called turning point more often, or rather, turning point ending. The turning-point ending technique appeared at the end of the 19th century. Its appearance and prosperity reflected the thoughts and thoughts of the British and American people in the society at that time. People look forward to a happy ending based on the text story, but hope to see different results from the critical turning-point ending.

## The Features of O. Henry-Style Endings

Since the birth of O. Henry-style endings, they have received much attention from later generations of literature. At the same time, there are not a few people who use O. Henry-style endings to create themselves. This is because the birth of the O. Henry-style ending was not written on a whim after ordinary literary creation. But O. Henry himself, through his legendary life, created by his insights into life experiences and his perception of the society at that time. With his unique way of thinking and writing skills, he finally created this O. Henry-style ending that will be passed down to later generations.

This surprising ending is always unexpected to the readers, but it is reasonable, which has triggered people's thinking about society and even life. It has also formed the unique style of O. Henry's works, became the unique European ending style of O. Henry's works, and laid the foundation for him to become a world master of short stories. (Gao, 2014, p. 2)

The first is humorous language.

In novels, O. Henry usually uses humorous language to make the whole work vivid, and at the same time allows readers to be guided by his language in the process of reading to make seemingly ending speculation. However, this is not the case, which makes the whole work more dramatic. (Cai, 2018, p. 1)

For example, in the novel *Police and Hymn*, Soapy did many bad things in order to survive the severe winter in prison. However, the story line described by O. Henry in his humorous language is that Soapy evaded capture by coincidence. This kind of story is completely contrary to what the reader hopes. Repeated stories will make the reader think that Soapy cannot be arrested and imprisoned in the end no matter what bad things he does, but Soapy was arrested and imprisoned in the end. In Soapy's cognition, the law is serious, and the police officers and adults are impartial. Therefore, he thinks that if he is willing to make mistakes, he can enter the long-awaited prison. However, this is not the case. Although Soapy tried to make mistakes to get himself arrested, he was never arrested by police officers who Soapy felt impartial. After that, Soapy heard the praise from the church and felt that he should not be so depraved. When he made up his mind to be a decent person, it happened that at the same time, the police arrested him and put him in prison. The story is full of humor and the process makes people laugh, but it also reflects a fact from the side of the story—the law is not as serious as Soapy thought, and the police officer is not as impartial as he thought. The story is full of O. Henry's "black" humor. For example, Soapy began to want to use the way of overlord meal to achieve his goal of being arrested and imprisoned. His first thought was to go to a high-class, exquisite, and luxurious restaurant, but he was ridiculed and refused to eat because he was not dressed properly. Finally, he had to go to a restaurant that looked very low-end for overlord meal. Unexpectedly, the waiters here not only did not call the police when Soapy was not ready to pay for the overlord's meal, but also threw him out rudely and the prison plan failed. After that, Soapy made many attempts to make mistakes. Each time he felt that he was going to succeed, but he was ignored by the police for various funny reasons. However, Soapy was finally arrested just when readers thought Soapy would not be arrested. In this way, using humorous language to guide readers and giving different endings at the end is the effect of the O. Henry ending.

Second, unique narrative skills.

In O. Henry's novels, the plot of the story is mostly very smooth and there are few direct and fierce contradictions. With the development of time, the gentle story moves step by step towards a seemingly doomed ending without any waves. However, at the end of the story, O. Henry turns his pen to a completely different ending, which surprises the readers. (Yuan, 2016, p. 1)

For example, in the short story *The Prodigal Son*, Jimmy was originally a lawless person and often did things like breaking into other people's safes. Until one day Jimmy met Annabel, the banker's daughter, and fell in love with her. After that, Jimmy decided not to do these things, but to do some serious business on his own, and to be with Annabel as he thought. One day, the banker invited everyone to visit his insurance vault. However, his nine-year-old sister accidentally locked her sister in the safe. No one could open it. Everyone was in a hurry. Readers must have been wondering if Jimmy would open the safe. In fact, Jimmy finally helped open the safe and rescued his little sister. The plot of everything is so smooth, and there are no waves. However, it happened that at this very moment, a detective who solved his case and tracked him down was here. Jimmy recognized him and he also recognized Jimmy. Under normal circumstances, Jimmy would only be arrested, and readers would feel sorry for Jimmy's correction. At this time, the story changed. The detective said to Jimmy, "I think

you have the wrong person ... your carriage is waiting for you, isn't it?" Then he turned and left. This kind of story ending not only surprises readers, but also makes readers feel happy for the happy ending. Another example is in *Police and Hymn*, where tramp Soapy decides to make mistakes in order to survive the severe winter and then is arrested and jailed, and successfully passes the winter without landing in prison. You know, the prison should not only punish the wrongdoer, but also ensure the basic life of the wrongdoer, which is the best choice for Soapy, who has no place to return. So Soapy realized his plan. The whole story is a logical development. Later, the reader will feel that Soapy will not be arrested and that he will be reformed. At the same time, the plot was a big turn—Soapy was arrested, and he finally had to stay in prison for three months to survive the severe winter. Originally everything was natural according to the development, but in the end it was a big turn. This kind of misplaced ending made readers unexpected. This is the result of unique narrative techniques.

Third, the unexpected and reasonable ending.

O. Henry's novels use a large number of plots at the beginning and in the middle to pave the way, that is, to dig a few pits and put them there first, and then to carry out the seemingly normal development of the plot. At the end of the plot, the foreshadowing suddenly turns out in front of the plot, making the ending suddenly reverse, thus making readers feel surprised, but not unreasonable at all. This is the so-called unexpected and reasonable ending. (Cai, 2018, p. 1)

For example, in the novel *The Gift of Maggie*, Della sold her hair and bought a pocket watch chain in order to prepare a Christmas present for her husband. Readers will feel that Della loves her husband so much and even have guessed that he will be moved. However, in fact, everyone forgot the foreshadowing made by O. Henry at the beginning, that is, the husband will also prepare gifts for Della, but how can the husband who has no money prepare gifts? The answer is—the husband sold his precious watch and prepared a comb for Della's hair. When her husband saw Della's hair cut off, Della learned that her husband had sold his watch and bought a comb for himself. At this time, the story had changed completely and the ending was different from the normal development. Although all the gifts they bought lost their practical value, they got the most precious gift, that is love. Although this ending surprised the readers and unexpected things happened when the readers were unprepared, the impression left by the readers after reading it was the deepest. Unexpected ending is considered to be the most prominent feature of O. Henry. His popularity stems from a magic-story with surprises or a magical ending. The impact of art should be put at the end, especially in short stories. Therefore, "O. Henry prefers to use this technique to move and shock readers and arouse their sympathy. This also helps to reveal the truth. If there is no unexpected ending, the power of the story will be weakened" (Yu, 2018, p. 1).

### **The Functions of O. Henry-Style Endings**

One of the most important functions of the O. Henry ending is to contrast the theme. It is this special ending way to explain the author's central idea, which is very demanding for the design of the ending, while the O. Henry ending just has such a function. Take *The Gift of the Magi* as an example. Della and her husband were both the bottom citizens in the society at that time and had been suffering from the pressure of life. Their life is very poor, and the corresponding is also very poor. Usually, people seldom improve their food and clothing, let alone asking for gifts. But even in this difficult living environment, they still remember their love for each other. When Christmas was coming, Della even sold her precious hair in order to give her husband a chain for his precious watch. However, when Della appeared in front of her husband to give out the gift she had given her beautiful hair, the husband felt somewhat disappointed to see Della cut off her hair. It turned out that the gift

her husband had prepared for Della was just a delicate comb, which was used to comb Della's beautiful hair. Of course, the price was the pocket watch she had treasured. The result of this change surprised the readers; at the same time, it deeply showed the ordinary couple's deep love for each other and made people sigh with emotion. This is exactly what O. Henry wants to express—the yearning and praise for this pure and beautiful love in the present society. They are willing to give what they cherish most for each other. Such beauty was so rare and fascinating to the society that valued material life at that time. Secondly, in many of O. Henry's novels,

the ending plays a better role in portraying the characters. Through the dramatic setting of the ending, the virtues and qualities of the main characters in the novels are displayed, and their noble sentiment of giving up oneself for others and selflessness is praised. (Li, 2015, p. 2)

### **The Significance of O. Henry-Style Endings**

O. Henry's life was legendary and experienced a lot. After twists and turns in his life, he therefore knows well the hardships and hardships of the people's life. Therefore, in his works, he often uses simple and humorous language to describe those stories that reveal realistic meanings, and uses unexpected turning-point endings to arouse readers' thinking on human nature, thus forming the famous O. Henry-style endings which bring unexpected results to the plots, but are reasonable and accord with the reality of life, thus creating unique charm. Its influence on later literature can be said to be quite profound.

In terms of writing skills, O. Henry-style ending literary works can be said to have influenced a large number of British and American literary creations of later generations. Especially around the time of the Second Industrial Revolution, this kind of works, which ended in a reversal and criticized the highly profitable nature of society, produced a large number of works, sublimating the thoughts of realistic critical works to humanism and philosophy. However, the writing skills of O. Henry's ending also have great influence on modern literature. For example, Keigo Higashino's "Out of Control Calculation" and "White Night Journey" are typical works influenced by O. Henry's ending writing. In terms of the significance of the times, the Christmas at the end of O. Henry's style is naturally intended to criticize to a certain extent the nature of the society at that time, which valued profits. O. Henry himself felt deeply about the social situation at that time, which was also an important condition for the birth of the O. Henry-style ending. Its critical irony is self-evident. However, the O. Henry-style ending is quite different from the general British and American critical literary works. It should be noted that in that era, there were not a few literary works focusing on satire and criticism, and even some of them were classic works handed down to later generations. However, this type of creation with O. Henry-style ending can stand out from it, which naturally has its reason. At that time, the general British and American critical literature was very fierce. They would attack the society at that time with direct and fierce words. Their critical words did not hide, hoping to express their criticism of social injustice. However, this kind of literature is not conducive to the development of literature and will only stir up more conflicts. At the same time, those works are more just criticism, but they have not expressed what should be done. The O. Henry-style turning-point style ending works are different, not only criticizing, but also revealing the human rights doctrine in criticizing and satirizing. For example, the novel *The Gift of the Magi* is, of course, an attempt to express his bitter satire and criticism of such a society through Della and Jim and their sacrifices. However, the novel is also full of love and praise for beautiful and pure love.

The O. Henry style ending has always been highly praised in the literary world and has been learned by many literary writers. Its position in the literary world can be said to be unique, thus becoming a classic way of

short story creation. The uniqueness of the “O. Henry ending” is not only reflected in its writing skills, but also has the ideological significance contained in its works.

The O. Henry-style ending is called “one of the artistic contents of life in a specific society”. It can greatly attract readers, enhance the interest and philosophy of the novel through the ending, make the whole novel have unique charm, and arouse and inspire readers to reposition and think deeply about their life. (Cai, 2018, p. 1)

Of course, the influence brought about by the O. Henry ending is not only these, but also many. It is difficult to list clearly at the moment. This article first understands here.

### Conclusion

The O. Henry-style ending is unique in terms of birth, construction, and function, even in terms of its contribution to later literature. Its unexpected and reasonable ending can not only set off the theme of the whole article, but also resonate with readers. There is also the O. Henry-style ending, which shows its unique artistic characteristics through the characterization of characters and realistic satire, and has a far-reaching impact and positive promotion on subsequent literary creation. At the same time, through the study of O. Henry’s works and the literature influenced by them, we can find that O. Henry’s unique ending expression has important value in literature and society. British and American literature represented by O. Henry has gradually improved in depth and level from modern times to modern times. The turning point in the text is also more obvious for the irony of reality and the return of human nature. The O. Henry-style ending opened up the pluralistic development of later realistic literature. The highly critical ending of its turning point also promotes the practical significance of the reaction of world literature to society. In a word, the O. Henry-style ending is very unique in terms of its birth, construction, and function. Its influence on later literature is worth exploring. The literary value of the O. Henry-style ending is very high, and there are still many connotations that we have not studied and studied.

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