



The art of surprise and simplicity: Ruskin Bond and O'Henry in comparison

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to compare and contrast two recognized short story writers O' Henry and Ruskin Bond. Readers of different cultural or historical backgrounds often find unexpected similarities in the themes, narrative forms, and character portrayals of their short story authors. They may also find believable elements or a similar literary tone in O' Henry and Ruskin Bond. In attempting to compare and contrast O' Henry and Bond, we are made aware that they come from two very different literary traditions and two distinct countries: Ruskin Bond from India and O' Henry from the Americas. There is no shortage of similarities in their respective short stories, including irony, compassion for the human condition, surprising endings, and a more realistic depiction of everyday life. Given that the short story is the only specific genre in which O' Henry and Bond concentrated and contributed to in their writing, the short stories we will use as examples will allow us to reveal themes and examine similarities and differences. The brevity and directness associated with short stories create opportunities for writers to crystallize their creative imagination, narrative persona, and attitude to the environment. The current thesis will therefore compare and contrast two well-known stories in the genre of short fiction that were written by Ruskin Bond and O' Henry. Bond is entitled to his own right as an original writer due to the manner of storytelling, cultural viewpoint and the emotional insight he brings with him.

Keywords: O' henry, american short stories, twist endings, irony, humour in literature, urban life, human nature

Introduction

One prominent Indian author of British influence is Ruskin Bond, who has lived in Mussoorie for several decades. He has written over 500 articles, novels, and short stories. He has published two memoirs called *Scenes from a Writer's Life* and *The Lamp is Lit*, as well as children's books and stories. Both *Susanna's Seven Husbands* and his book *The Blue Umbrella* were award-winning films that both received the highest awards of the year. He received the Sahitya Academy Award for his 1992 book *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*. He received the Padma Shri award in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan Award in 2004. *The Eyes Have It: The Flight of Pigeon* by Ruskin Bond is used by the researcher in this compare and contrast study. In this study, O' Henry's *After Twenty Years* and *Romance of Busy Broker* are compared and contrasted to the stories of *The Eyes Have It* and *The Flight of Pigeon*.

American writer William Sydney Porter referred to himself as O' Henry. O' Henry is famously known for his unexpected endings. Ruskin Bond, like O' Henry, makes for satisfying reading. As Ruskin Bond stated, he became inspired by the short story writer O' Henry because as he was growing up, he was reading Guy De Maupassant and O' Henry. But it's more than just comparable styles; each writer has their own structure and ingenuity. The cardinal objective of this study is to explore both the similarities and differences between the two writers. The main assertion of this study is that there are some similarities between O' Henry's stories and the Ruskin Bond stories. The researcher analysed the language, style-structure, techniques, characters, setting, narration, and themes to support this contention. These are the major factors to examine in comparison and contrast of the two Writers. The climax of two writers has a rather sudden ending. It is important to

examine the synopsis and critical analysis of their stories in order to compare and contrast. The four stories are;

1. It's in the eyes
2. The Story of the Thief
3. The Busy Broker's Romance and
4. Twenty years later.

The stories of O' Henry became famous for their surprise ending often referred to as the "Henry twist". Here, researchers are looking to show that there are some similarities and issues in their stories.

It's in the eyes

In this story by Ruskin Bond, it is about two unknowns meeting (making a journey) on a train. The story has a blind narrator making the journey by rail to Dehradun, and he meets a little girl and they embark on a chat, to which we can see they are pretending to send good vibes, thinking they can see each other. The narrator tries to hide his inability and impress her. The narrator is hit with the reality from another passenger. The story will resonate with readers, as Author Bond goes to great lengths, particularly in the encounter between the two unknowns, when the little girl asks a clever question, and the narrator tries to evade it. The journey commences in Rohana and terminates in Saharanpur. The girl climbed aboard the train in Rohana where the Male was already inside. The girl's parents provided instructions on what she was to do and told her not to talk to strangers. First of all, she did not even see the narrator's deceptive appearance. Then we see how he gets to talking with the girl. He learns from the girl that she will be meeting her in Saharanpur, and she asks him about his family. He goes on to tell her about his journey to Dehradun and Mussoorie. She tells the narrator that she really likes to

hike a lot of the steep trails in Mussoorie in October. The narrator talked about how beautiful Mussoorie hills and flowers and rain showers are. He describes the setting to carry on the conversation. He keeps pretending to view the landscape outside and is asking the female to allow me to see it. "He should see for himself," she said. To wit, he says to girl, "Your face is interesting," then he adds compliment. She gives him a smile, and tells him that she is happy her station is coming up soon, as she does not care for long train rides at the present.

The Thief's Story

This is a story about two buddies; Deepak and Arun. The story is narrated by Deepak. The story talks about how learning and education is crucial. Education can be a wonderful thing because it can make it easy to think. People might even handle social issues or political issues with ease because of education, so education reinforces people to have positive social abilities. Deepak is an uneducated 15-year-old child. Stealing, in this instance, is a rather negative quality. Arun, on the other hand, and the educated person in his twenties, almost twenty-five, is a very responsible adult. Deepak is trying to next steal from Arun after they cross paths in a street brawl called Dungal. Deepak does not know how to cook, so he had a nice conversation with him, and he asked him if he would be a chef. Arun also teaches Deepak how to do some basic writing. Edwin cannot pay Deepak, because he cannot reach Deepak, and has no income. He could only feed Deepak, and teach him.

One night, Arun comes to Deepak with five rupees in cash. He goes to bed happy. For safekeeping, he put it under his pillow. This attempt Deepak to steal it. They trust each other and know each other well. And since stealing is the best thing that Deepak does, it is very easy to steal it without Arun knowing his money is missing from his place of safekeeping. Therefore, Deepak walks into Arun's room and takes his money without him knowing. He makes up in his mind that he is going to leave his home. Having guilt and shame with him, Deepak decides to run away to the train station. He doesn't have the courage to leave the in town. Although it is not his first choice, Deepak firmly decides to take the next train that comes.

At this time, Deepak feels bad and is thinking about Arun and believes that he is betraying the man who trusted him. Arun takes care of him and supports him, so he believes it is wrong. Deepak is now willing to admit he was wrong and take responsibility for it. So, Deepak goes back to Arun's house and puts the money back exactly where he took it from. The next day, Arun is all smiley while handing Deepak 5, Rs and telling him he is no longer hiding, because he hides as he is going to pay him and they can be better friends. Arun still loves Deepak and trusts him, which—for Deepak—is strange. Deepak is very disappointed related to this.

Deepak learns that day how to write his name, and learns to read on his own. The main theme of the story is friendship and the message is to treat someone respectfully while they do something awful due to a sticky situation. Identity, independence, honesty, and appearance are very large themes in the Ruskin Bond stories.

The Romance of the Busy Broker

O' Henery's beloved romance of the Busy Broker is an interesting story. From this account we learn that Harvey

Maxwell is a broker. Pitcher, who worked in the office with Maxwell, did not have the same emotions as Maxwell. When Maxwell came in one morning, he allowed an expression of surprise to be shown. Maxwell entered with a young lady from the office as a secretary at half past nine.

After having said good-morning to pitcher, he rushed off to his desk to get to work. There was off letters and other papers on his desk. The young lady had been Maxwell's secretary for a year. She was distinctive from the others, being exceptionally good looking. She wore a grey, plain dress which fit her well, her hair was plain and simple, and she never adorned any jewellery or chains. She wore a black hat with the gold-green wing of a bird.

She seemed to glimmer so gently this morning. She had bright eyes, dark and sparkling. She wore a laughing face. Pitcher had a question about her when he saw her. On this particular day, she was different. She did not go to her place of business; she went to Maxwell's table. She seemed surprised and confused Maxwell noticed her the instant she arrived. Henry used the word "machine" for "Maxwell" in this instance instead of "man." No longer was he a man he had buried himself in the work of a machine. He had a busy day in the city. He looked at her and said "what?" The table appeared to be stacked up with papers and letters and began to work again with her as just another machine. "Nothing," said the lady, and grinned at us as she walked away.

Pitcher told her that some person was coming today after nine but, just as she asked him if Maxwell had told him to get another secretary, nobody was there. The lady said that she would keep on working until someone came to take her place. She then went to her table. She took off her cap and went to work.

Maxwell was anxious to move very quick, thus, he was working like a machine. When dinnertime came, he was brought up to the point of stopping because of the fragrance of flowers it was Miss Leslie's. She was only twenty steps away from Maxwell in the next room, so he thought he would go and ask her out. When he did, Miss Leslie broke down and wept. She was completely amazed. She was totally shocked and didn't know what to do.

Maxwell asked her again and stated to her that he wanted to marry her, and that he was really in love with her. He told her that he could have said these things much sooner, and that he was trying to make it more convenient for her. Miss Leslie then told him that she first did not understand him, but that she now understood that Maxwell was busy, and had forgotten certain things. She then answered that they were married last night at eight o'clock.

Maxwell married Miss Leslie, but due to his business, he forgot everything, and that is where the story ends.

After Twenty Years

Further, he reasoned why he was waiting for his friend. He went on to ask why they would decide to meet on such a dreary day. He smokes him a cigar and tells him they may consider it pity to run questions through a criminal or burglar before he starts to ask him said questions. When the officer asked Bob why he was waiting for his friend, he told him about Big Joe, which is now a hardware store, for he and his friend had supper at it twenty years ago. The officer affirms the location of restaurant formerly there before it was torn down. They build this store; and Bob remembers telling the officer that he was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty when they sat down together for supper. They grew

up together and were the best of friends; but Bob was going to try and find his fortune in the west after supper, the next morning.

After supper that night, they both made a choice to come back here and meet each other twenty years later. They come to visit even they'd be on the exact opposite sides of the globe or engaged in the most unpleasant of activities.

The officer holds some curiosity, and asks why they hadn't communicated in the last 20 years. Bob gives a brief response, saying he had been busy with developing his wealth in the West. Bob has looked at his diamond encrusted watch. Today was a very successful day for his firm. When they plan to meet, it is about 10 o'clock. The officer hangs around Snowy a little while and then says goodbye and leaves, as it is now after 10 o'clock.

Bob waits another twenty minutes for Jimmy. When a second individual shows up, the mood changes. When the new guy calls him Bob, Jimmy Wells answers the phone. As Jimmy talks, he states that he did not do as well financially as Bob, and he is a government employee. He suggests they go to a place nearby that he is familiar with, a place to get out of the rain, and have a long encounter about the past.

Characters in Henry and Bond's Stories

Researchers have drawn some similarities between the characterizations by Ruskin Bond and O' Henry in some of their chosen works. They both are adept in characterizations. The similar ethos can also be noted in O' Henry's works. Ruskin Bond said, "I like to write about the people and place that I know and the life of those whom I have crossed" (Bond 9). Although Henry was an American writer, and Ruskin Bond is an Indian of British origin, some similarities in these areas exist. Here the researcher will compare and contrast some of these significant comparable characterizations of these two writers.

They are similar background and have simple characters

The researcher wants to clarify that their avatars had very simple backgrounds. According to Amita, one of the researchers in "The fictional World of Ruskin Bond," Bond is motivated to write about things that are exceptionally common to human nature. When we analyse the characters in "The Eyes Have it," we notice that the narrator is travels and that the girl that is depicted is an ordinary family. This has some resemblance to O' Henry's story when Miss Leslie, Maxwell's secretary is not as accessible. Researchers discover that the protagonists in their story, do not belong to rich families. The image of Maxwell's character shows him as a businessman who is not available to the viewer, but we perceive him as a middle-class character. They share a few similar characteristics; first is probably the nature of the characters' lifestyle which is simple,

In the second instance "After Twenty years" Bob initially is depicted as a simple fellow, whereas Jimmy Wells, is presented as simple police officer who actually enjoys doing his job and responsibility, sees dignity in the lives and lifestyles of people around him where he functions.

Depiction of Woman as a Transformative Figure

We see that they both portray women's characters equal to men. The central characters of the story of the eyes have it are Miss Leslie and a girl. In their story, feminine characters

are presented as graceful and compassionate, but never to be regarded as less than human.

O' Henry characterizes Miss Leslie with mystical qualities, tied to being magical, and then describes her as having a flowery fragrance, as we read in the story "Romance of the Busy Broker". Likewise, in "Eyes have It" the blind girl is described as beautiful, by a fellow commuter, who carries the narrator into her world and loses himself in her fragrance. Therefore, they both demonstrate women as being the real heroes who can transform lives.

Features of Autobiography

Ruskin Bond's characters are all rural characters. Bond uses characters from a personal life so that he gives his novel an authentic effect because he can naturally connect to all readers with these characters. Bond says in the preface for "The Night Train at Deoli and other stories", "Perhaps there is too much of myself in the story, and sometimes the book may read like an autobiography. I am the kind of writer." From his statements, we can determine that his story has elements which relate to his own life as is the same thing that researchers find in O' Henry's work Another thing is we do not know what Bob's crime was and when Henry got out in 1901 and he was asked about the crime he didn't know.

Writing Style

Even if both authors writings seem similar, they have too many differences between them. The first emographer discusses the fact that they both employ irony in similar use. In stories such as "After Twenty Years" and "The Eyes Have It," both authors use situational irony. Situational irony, is a story element that is put into novels and plays when the audience is not prepared for the conclusion of the story. O' Henry is famous for his unique use of situational irony.

Irony in Situations

Ruskin Bond's short story, "The Eyes Have it", is a wonderful example of situational irony. The author puts two blind people as heroes for this story, but neither knows the other is blind. The narrator does not know the girl who is sitting in front of him is also blind. As a matter of fact, he does not figure this out until her parents tell her to get ready to go home. He uses his memories to portray the outside world because he wants to hide this from the girl. He also compliments the girl on her beautiful looks. The audience will also see that he self-deceives himself at the end of the story.

Conclusion

Therefore, the researcher concludes that while Ruskin Bond and O' Henry's stories have some parallels, they are fundamentally different. In Bond's interview, Bond stated he read O' Henry and has been influenced by him, and Bond's readers can even see O' Henry's influence in Ruskin Bond's writings. According to this research, Ruskin Bond took the essence of O' Henry and revived it through his own writing technique. Even though Bond and O' Henry are from different parts of the country and come from different cultures, they have the same ideas they want to share with their audiences. After analysing four stories of Ruskin Bond as well as O' Henry, the researcher has proved in this study,

that there are some similarities between their reaction stories.

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