

АКТУАЛЬНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ ЛІНГВІСТИКИ ТА ЛІНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГІЇ

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Ya. ZGUROVSKA,
Graduate of Philology
Alfred Nobel University, Dnipropetrovsk

V. KALINICHENKO,
Lecturer of English Philology and Translation Department
Alfred Nobel University, Dnipropetrovsk

ALLUSIONS FUNCTIONING IN OSCAR WILDE'S SHORT STORIES

The article deals with the notion of allusion as a linguistic phenomenon, investigates into the differentiation between allusion-reference-intertextuality. The approaches to this phenomenon study have been defined. The functioning of the allusions in the short stories of Oscar Wilde has been analyzed.

Key words: allusion, stylistic device, linguistic phenomenon, reference, intertextuality, short story, Oscar Wilde.

While reading literary works it is not a rare case when we come across with the hidden meanings of the described phenomena. Frequently authors try to invent something new in terms of transmitting it indirectly, thus, the real sense can be concealed by the reference or allusion. The more allusions text contains, the more complicated it is. The main complexity lies in decoding and commenting on the hidden idea substituted by an allusion. But the main question is connected with the proper definition of allusion.

The current topicality of allusion can be easily explained by featuring the well-known fact that virtually every work of art is abound with allusions. Literary criticism, art history, linguistics are dealing with solving the complex task of allusion where it hides the major idea of the literary work, pictorial masterpiece or speech performed on the stage. That is why there are researches made by W. Irvin [3, 6], A. Evseev [4] and M. Tukharelli [1, 5, 10] that are focused on the allusion as a complicated stylistic device to communicate the thought of the encoder to the receiver. So, allusion plays the role of the bridge which unites the author, speaker and the reader or listener by eradicating the gap between them. In terms of this research we are to state that it has both theoretical and practical value since the subject of this paper is the allusion as phenomenon, but the object is Oscar Wilde's short stories. So, the objective of the work is to investigate into the nature and functioning of this linguistic phenomenon on the basic of a minor genre analysis.

In terms of the research we have selected the notion of the term which we find the most adequate and neutral. The word "allusion" originated from the Latin word meaning a joke or a hint. With a reference to the linguistic encyclopedia, from the point of view of stylistics, allusion is a figure of speech based on the comparison which is used to make a reference to a place, person, or something that happened in the past. This can be real or imaginary and may refer to practically anything, including paintings, opera, folklore, literature, mythical figures, or religious manuscripts. The reference can be direct or may be inferred, and can broaden the reader's understanding [1, p. 25]. According to O. Mashkova, allusion is a reference to "some poetic text,

topic, image or historical event counting on the erudition of the reader who will decode the hidden content broadens the understanding of this term" [2, p. 25-33]. The scholar also adheres to the idea that allusion provokes a complicated and multidimensional interplay between two texts. However, she does not distinguish allusion and reference, because she believes that allusion is the reference proper to the concrete text or even several texts.

But allusion should not be confused with the reference. According to the British linguist William Irvin who managed to accomplish the task in distinguishing these notions in the work "What is allusion?" one has to realize that if the description is detailed and the reader or listener can easily draw any parallels with the real object or subject, it will be considered as a reference. While allusion is a stylistic device which works best if the author or speaker alludes to something which the readership or audience can be familiar with, but without giving any profound commentaries, for instance:

- Famous people;
- Historical events and personalities;
- Greek (Roman, Germanic, Scandinavian, etc.) mythology;
- Literary works;
- The Bible [3, p. 297].

Apart from W. Irvin, researcher A. Evseev also points out that allusion always contains the intention of the author. This intention helps to differentiate allusion from such phenomena as accidental coincidence, predetermined coincidence or accidental borrowing. Though Evseev considers that the most important thing about allusions is a feedback from the audience or readership [4, p. 7].

That is why the allusion is regarded as an intellectual stylistic device, because the speaker has to take into account the level of the audience he/she is speaking to. According to M. Tukharelli, "while depicting some characters and events the author gives only few details for the reader to finish the picture. The text is characterized by the intermittence of the content. This feature is very close to the allusion as the text is always full of special images and hints that can help the reader to amplify it using his or her memory and associations" [5, p. 110].

If the allusion is so obscure that it appears to be impossible to decode it, the author or speaker takes the risk to retreat to the personal language. In either way the allusions serve to be understood. The authors prefer to use it because it helps not only to communicate the hidden sense or idea but also to give more diversified and advance description of the object or character. To sum up, for better understanding of the literary work or someone's speech one has to have at least strong educational background not even resorting to the additional cultural self-cultivation.

Apart from this, it is vital to mention that allusion differs from the similar concept of intertextuality as well. The famous scholar who succeeded in differentiation of these two notions was also William Irvin. In his work "Allusion against intertextuality" the author outlines the main distinction between these definitions. According to the scientist, the main difference between these two notions is that allusion is used intentionally by the author and it is for author to decide which one to apply in order to bring the necessary colours to the text. While intertextuality is unintentionally and even subconsciously created by the author notwithstanding his desire [6, p. 528]. It is quite easy to find the explanation for such a mystery. Due to the modern development, possibility of well-rounded education and access to every needed piece of information, the intertextuality is mostly the product of the author's level of cultural literacy.

However, American scholar John Marincola considers that intertextuality has brighter application then it seems to have at the first sight. Actually, he examines the role of intertextuality in the historical discourse. On this basis he comes to a conclusion that intertextuality is a so-called "echo" in original text of another text, prominent historical figure or historical event [7, p. 259]. Judging by this, we may assume that intertextuality can be the same thing as reference.

So our work is based on the ideas suggested by William Irvin, as it seems to be the most reasonable and precise.

Despite the complexity of allusion as a stylistic device it is used rather frequently. Due to this fact we can come across with idioms which contain allusions to the historical events, Greek mythology or the Bible. For instance: *to meet one's Waterloo*, *to wash one's hands of it*, *to guard something with Argus's eyes*. Apparently, one can observe that they are not allusions but

through the frequent use and their involvement in the word combination, inseparable part of the whole, they transmit another restricted meaning without any hidden mystery or philosophical idea. However, such idioms make the speech or written work more emphatic and attractive.

There exist different classifications of the given phenomenon. For example, A. Evseev distinguishes the allusions according to the structural approach: simple and complex or extended [4, p. 9]. Moreover, they can be subdivided into nominations and citations. Although the content of citations approaches to the reference, citations are supposed to be general, not detailed.

In addition, we are to mention the classification made by O. Mamaeva. The scholar proposed to distinguish allusions owing to the relation to the social culture of certain society or mass culture [8, p. 113].

Literature of different periods is ample in allusions. Probably, there is no other source which can boast about such a fertility of various allusions. So talking about literature is impossible without talking about such an outstanding personality in the British literature as Oscar Wilde. Everything he had been doing was absolutely iconoclastic. He went beyond the Victorian bourgeois society and an epoch itself. It was he whose literary works were notable for the aesthetic and finished style, modern and just-to-the-point language, sarcastic narration and the human being as a central figure of his literary works. His presence in the British and world literature is revolutionary. In spite of being treated as the representative of decadence, he was modern. The triumph of individualism was the main feature of Wilde's outlook implied in his literature.

Besides, his literary works contain such a magnificent affluence of allusions. In order to prove this idea, short stories are worth being taken into account, not even mentioning the novels.

The short stories written by Oscar Wilde contain different allusions starting from the illustrious historical personalities and finalizing with the great mythical creatures or biblical characters. We have studied the following short stories: «Lord Arthur Savile's Crime», «The Sphinx without a Secret», «The Model Millionaire», «The Selfish Giant», «The Remarkable Rocket», «The Devoted Friend», «The Happy Prince» and «The Nightingale and the Rose» in terms of allusion analysis.

In order to clarify the functions of the studied phenomenon we should resort to the abstracts from the text.

"He felt that to marry her, with the doom of murder hanging over his head, would be a betrayal like that of Judas, a sin worse than any the Borgia had ever dreamed of" [13].

This fragment has been taken from «Lord Arthur Savile's Crime» short story which represents two allusions. One of them is connected with the Old Testament. In fact, Judas was one of the 12 apostles who betrayed Christ to the Jewish authorities in return for thirty pieces of silver. Nowadays, when the author alludes to Judas, he intends to describe the **cruel betrayal** of the friend or comrade. And Borgia was an Italian statesman, cardinal and general who later became Pope Alexander VI. This personality is considered to be the cruelest pope of all times. So, the meaning is quite clear - **outrageous cruelty**. Under this hypothesis, we may conjecture that these powerful allusions increase the poetic value of the literary work. They provoke the imagination as well as give us a deeper description of the situation.

"Herr Winckelkopf shrugged his shoulders, and left the room, returning in a few minutes with a round cake of dynamite about the size of a penny, and a pretty little French clock, surmounted by an ormolu figure of Liberty trampling on the hydra of Despotism" [13].

This fragment represents an allusion taken from the Greek mythology where Hydra was 9-headed serpent that was sacred to Hera. Hercules killed him in one of the 12 labors. Now Hydra means something that has many centers or branches or **hard to bring under control**, or even something bad one cannot eradicate. So, it is Despotism that one had and has no chance to eradicate. Moreover, we easily associate it with Greek mythology and recall in our memory the image of the creature.

"She had a passion for secrecy, but she herself was merely a Sphinx without a secret" [14].

In fact, this fragment was taken from another Wilde's short story which is called «The Sphinx without a Secret». Talking about the etymology of the word 'Sphinx', it is significant to mention that Sphinx is a mythical figure from Greek mythology. So, it was a winged monster of Thebes who had a woman's head and a lion's body. It propounded a riddle about the three ages of man, killing those who failed to solve it, until Oedipus was successful, whereupon the Sphinx committed suicide. So it is necessary to appeal to its current sense which infers an enigmatic or

inscrutable person. On the basis of this, one may assume that Oscar Wilde decided to use it in order to portray the character in the most profound way highlighting his **mysterious and antagonistic nature** as well as to intensify the irony.

*"I felt it could not be modern scepticism, for Murchison was the stoutest of Tories, and believed in the **Pentateuch** as firmly as he believed in the House of Peers"* [14].

Another example of allusion to the Old Testament. Pentateuch is the name for first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). We can suppose that Wilde's intention was at least to intensify the expression given with a shade of irony which can be explained with the reference to the old times and out-of-dated beliefs.

*"She is the **Gioconda** in sables"*[14].

This extract portrays a perfect example of allusion to the painting. «Gioconda» is a masterpiece created by Leonardo da Vinci, another name for which is «Mona Lisa». This mysterious woman and her enigmatic smile became the most recognizable and famous images of European painting. Nowadays Gioconda embodies **a sublime femininity ideal**. No doubt, that such an image is used for the best illustration of womanhood.

*"I did not know what tears were, for I lived in **the Palace of Sans-Souci**, where sorrow is not allowed to enter"* [19].

This allusion represents us the reference to the famous, magnificent palace which is located in Potsdam, Berlin. 'Sans-souci' means 'without concern, anxiety', that is it is possible to state that the whole phrase represents not the stylistic one but still the play on words, where the name of the palace fulfills and unifies its purpose to describe the **calmest place ever** using the metaphorical name of the building.

*"To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on great granite throne sits **the God Memnon**. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent"* [19].

This fragment involves a mention of the prominent historical figure which through the long period of time was adapted as a mythical creature. According to the Greek mythology, Memnon was an Ethiopian king who went to Troy in order to help Priam, his uncle, and unfortunately, was killed. The king was famous for demonstrating strong affection for astrology. Surely, the use of the king name can be regarded as another reference to Egypt and its culture.

*"My companions are building a nest in **the Temple of Baalbec**, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other"* [19].

This excerpt outlines the allusion to the ancient construction which was located in a town in the eastern Lebanon, site of the ancient city of Heliopolis. Such mention was created as a reference to **remote, ancient and mysterious old world**.

*"You have rightly chosen," said God, "for in my **garden of Paradise** this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me"* [19].

Since the words were said by God, the garden of Paradise relates to the biblical allusion. Another name for the garden of paradise is the Garden of Eden. If it is used as an allusion, it obtains the meaning of the place or state of great happiness or co-called an unspoiled paradise. This allusion is used quite frequently when the author wants to describe **the place of the good fortune, fertility, beauty and the state of nirvana**. In order to prove the previous idea it is necessary to apply to the next passage which was exempted from «The Selfish Giant»: *"And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, "You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my **garden**, which is **Paradise**"* [16]

*"Any place you love is the world to you," exclaimed a pensive **Catherine Wheel**, who had been attached to an old deal box in early life, and prided herself on her broken heart"* [17].

This allusion is to the firework in the shape of a circle which spins round and round. It was called Catherin Wheel after St. Catherine who was a Christian martyr known as St. Catherine of Alexandria. According to tradition, she opposed the persecution of Christians under the emperor Maxentius and refused to recant or to marry the emperor. Here Catherine Wheel became a full-fledged character and carries a hidden sense of the enigmatic Christian personality. Probably, the author's intention was to create **a crystal-clear character with shade of self-sacrifice**.

The given examples can be distinguished in accordance with the classifications mentioned above. If we consider the structural approach (according to A. Evseev), Oscar Wilde uses:

- Simple allusions (*Hydra, Sphinx, Jupiter, Judas, Pentateuch, Gioconda and Borgia*);
- Complex or extended ones (*Aurora Borealis, God Memnon, Garden of Paradise, Catherine's Wheel, Cleopatra's Needle, Palace of Sans-Souci and Temple of Baalbec*).

The complexity of these allusions is caused by the structure, not the meaning. It is clear that this type is more frequently used due to the fact that it has more ways of realizing the ideas.

Structural approach is not sufficient for the investigation of allusions as it lacks the semantic vision of the phenomenon as well as its origin and should be used together with the others.

Cultural approach (used by O. Mamaeva) enables the differentiation on the basis of the principle recalled above:

- Social culture (*Cleopatra's Needle, Place of Sans-Souci and the Temple of Baalbec*).

Such relation of world-wide famous places to this category can be explained in accordance with the fact that they are implied in particular culture, society and country in the long run and serve as the checkpoints while their studying.

- Mass culture (*Judas, Borgia, Hydra, Sphinx, Pentateuch, Gioconda, Garden of Paradise, Aurora Borealis, God Memnon, Catherine Wheel and Jupiter*).

These allusions can be perceived as the elements of the mass culture due to their usage here and there. Basically, the allusions presented are quite extensive and give the hint for the further reader's stretch of imagination.

Nevertheless, the mentioned classifications give only a partial idea of the allusions study, so in order to have a whole picture of the phenomenon in the course of our investigation we offer the classification based on the nature of the allusions:

- Greek mythology (*Hydra, Sphinx, Jove or Jupiter, Aurora Borealis and God Memnon*);
- The Bible (*Judas or Judas kiss, Pentateuch, Garden of Paradise and Catherine's Wheel*);
- Famous places (*Cleopatra's Needle, Palace of Sans-Souci, Temple of Baalbec*);
- Pictorial art (*Gioconda or Mona Lisa*);
- Historical personalities (*Memnon, Gioconda, Borgia*).

This approach is more favorable as it discloses the objects of the author's interest and shows the scope of the background. Moreover, it contributes to the understanding the hidden ideas and provides, in case of Wilde, a new interpretation of the old truths.

Taking into account the said above, it is possible to draw a conclusion that allusions are the productive stylistic devices and can be met practically in every literary work, feature article, essay or speech. It is truly one of the most intricate and complex stylistic devices and it is clear that without a dictionary or encyclopedia sometimes it is absolutely impossible to solve the riddle made by the author.

Despite the previously considered ideas, it is worth analysing the contribution made by Oscar Wilde. The allusion he used while writing his marvelous literary works not only bring colours to the text, they make the narration emphatic, artistic, cryptic and curious for a reader. Various references to the masterpieces of art, literature, outstanding historical postures and personalities, mythical characters and sacred biblical manuscripts play a major role in writing as well as in speaking. It is evident that the listener or reader can not only broaden their minds by taking it in but also try to solve the so-called riddle, because not every art creations but most of them carry a second sense that very often cannot be read between the lines. In that case an allusion serves as the middleman between the reader and something secreted by the author. Oscar Wilde is a perfect example of the author who preferred to hide the truth from the reader's eyes. With every comparison he fulfilled the character personality in the deepest way one could imagine and described the situation as a more complicated one with a help of the intellectual stylistic devices. His literary works became obscure due to the allusions but he did not retreat to the language personally created. The reader is still able to understand the author's intention and whim to build the ground for one's fantasy, memory, associations.

Here we may only state that allusions became another prominent feature of the aesthetic Wilde's style mastered by the genius and skillful creator's pen. And as there are a lot of possible ways and approaches to the interpretation of the hidden meanings of the allusion and its

functioning in the literary texts, this phenomenon is an open question, thus, it requires further investigations.

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У статті розглядається поняття алюзії як лінгвістичного явища, проводиться паралель між алюзією, цитуванням та інтертекстуальністю. Виділено підходи до вивчення цього феномену та проаналізовано його функціонування в оповіданнях Оскара Уайльда.

Ключові слова: алюзія, стилістичний засіб, лінгвістичне явище, референт, інтертекстуальність, оповідання, Оскар Уайльд.

В статье рассматривается понятие аллюзии как лингвистического явления, проводится параллель между аллюзией, цитированием и интертекстуальностью. Выделяются подходы к изучению этого явления и анализируется его функционирование в рассказах Оскара Уайльда.

Ключевые слова: аллюзия, стилистическое средство, лингвистическое явление, референт, интертекстуальность, рассказ, Оскар Уайльд.

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