

The Rhetorical Phenomenon in "The Chaser": Employing Metaphor to Dissect the Text and Exploring the Art of Love

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Abstract: Based on a short story "The Chaser" written by John Collier, the essay focuses on analysis of how the rhetorical devices applied in the text play their role to reach the theme appropriately. Even if you are a writing novice, you can find it accessible to appreciate the magic metaphors and feel the values of love following the plume of the writer.

Keywords: Rhetorical devices; The Chaser; Love; Literature

1. Introduction

Rhetoric of language is what distinguishes literature from other kinds of genres. Metaphor, which stands in the foundation to the whole issue of literary analysis and the characteristic of literary diction, is one of such figures in texts. As Paul de Man remarks, tropes are not 'a derived, marginal, or aberrant form of language but the linguistic paradigm par excellence': figurative language 'characterizes language as such' (de Man 1979, 105). The short story "The Chaser" by British short story writer John Collier reveals the profound art behind love through dialogues between characters with a great deal of metaphors. The essay will emphasize how metaphors work and what they convey by which the text illustrates the truth that for there to be no shortcuts to love, the instant pleasure from love you obtain with money will eventually become a burden of life, which will take a huge price to heal.

The term "chaser," as used by drinkers, is getting to be somewhat outdated. It means a drink of something bland or sweet to follow-up a straight shot of something like whiskey, gin, rum, or tequila. It is called a chaser because it is drunk quickly after the initial strong shot.

John Collier (1901-1980) is best known for his short stories, many of which are constructed as fantastic parables of modern day life. He also wrote poetry and screenplays, and was a developer for the television show "The Twilight Zone." "The Chaser" first appeared in his short story collection *Fancies and Goodnights*, which won the 1952 Edgar Award and the 1952 International Fantasy Award. It is a cautionary parable of love, capitalism, and the wisdom of older generations. This summary refers to the reprint by the New York Review of Books Press, published in 2004.

On the advice of an unseen advisor, a young man named Alan Austen walks into a nondescript shop. Inside, he finds unidentified bottles on dusty shelves and an unnamed proprietor sitting on a rocking chair. The old man knows young Austen's name, and invites him to sit down on the chair opposite him. The young man asks coyly about "a certain mixture." The old man explains that he has several mixtures of an extraordinary nature. Before Alan can state his intentions, the proprietor describes an invisible mixture which can be mixed into a beverage, and which is "imperceptible to any known method of autopsy" (415). Euphemistically, he calls this mixture a cleaning agent and declares that its purchase price is \$5,000. Alan reacts with horror at both the price and the murderous purpose of the mixture.

The older man is satisfied with the younger man's reaction, referring obscurely to Alan's youth, and to the possibility of repeat business. Alan has come to the older man for a love potion but wants assurances that the potion is not merely an aphrodisiac. The man clarifies that the potion is a true love potion, imitating every outward sign of love with every complication imaginable, including lust, domesticity, jealousy, and possessiveness. The old man illustrates each of these qualities with a short example.

Alan is enthusiastic, remarking with incredulity at the stated effectiveness of the drug. Diana, the woman who is the object of Alan's unrequited affection, possesses none of the heartsick gloominess

described by the older man—instead, she is fond of parties. Alan concludes that the drug must be a wonderful solution to his problem. The man suggests that marriage is an inevitable result of the potion's effects. "She will never divorce you," offers the older man (417). Alan inquires after the price of the love potion. The older man carefully repeats the price of the poison mentioned earlier: \$5,000. Then, pointing to the love potion, he almost dismissively states the price as being one dollar.

Alan enthusiastically purchases the love potion. As he leaves, the proprietor suggests to Alan that he'll be seeing him again.

2. The Plot

In John Colliers, "The Chaser," we encounter a young man named Alan Austen, who has a problem, one that is all too common. He's fallen truly, madly and deeply in love with a young lady named Diana. But he has a problem, which is two-fold, she isn't aware of his feelings towards her, and as a consequence, she's not in the slightest bit interested in him, the core of the story surrounds Alan's struggles to deal with his unrequited love. Alan pursues a new solution to his problem. This comes from an old man who lives in his neighborhood.

Alan goes to meet the old man to ask for his help. The old man understands the problem having encountered it many times before, and he has just the answer to Alan's questions. He possesses a love potion, that he promises will turn Diana into a loving and devoted wife. He explains that once he administers the potion, Diana will be able to think of nothing else but him.

Alan is so delighted with the prospect of Diana becoming infatuated with him, the idea of having her all to himself overpowers any rational thoughts. He completely ignores the old man's warning that all that glitters is not gold. He tries to explain to Alan that complete and utter devotion can lead to obsession and jealousy. He further explains that Diana will need to know how he spends every minute of every day. Alan is so wrapped up in his own fantasy that he takes no heed of the warnings and carries on regardless. Even the old man only asks for \$1, this still doesn't raise on the alarm bells with Alan.

The old man is fully aware that this is not the last time you will miss her. Years of experience have let him do understand that his love potions create more problems than they are worth. He knows that the young men will come running back to him looking for another solution, one he described as a life cleaner, this is a poison that men used to rid themselves of troublesome girlfriends and wives.

The old man is fully aware this the vast majority of men cannot deal with being the center of their wives and girlfriends universes. I feel trapped and find that they have completely lost their independence. Fully confident that the but they will return to his in the room typical resolution trip album they called themselves. Put this solution cost a lot more than \$1, he charges up to \$5,000 a shot. The old man is absolutely confident of getting a return on his investment. I'm experiencing knows that young men like Island what do anything together enough money the Rhythm says the problem once and for all.

3. Critical Analysis of Metaphors Used in "The Chaser"

In the text, the old man, featured with sophisticated discourses and cunning business schemes employed professional scientific terms and metaphors to delude Alan Austen with a solemn and gentle language. These appearances agree with his identity of inexorability reflected in the whole text. What manifests most apparently is when facing Alan who is a man "as nervous as a kitten", the businessman substituted "poison" with a metaphor using "glove-cleaner" and "life-cleaner" to imply taboo items implicitly such as death, which greatly demonstrates his being crafty.

Before promoting "the love potion", the old man grandly introduced his "life-cleaner" with imperceptible appearances and extraordinary effect to Alan. But Alan suspected it poison and asked obtrusively "Do you mean it is a poison?" Then followed an indifferent answer by the old man, "Call it a glove-cleaner if you like. Maybe it will clean gloves..." From this conversation especially the words that "Lives need cleaning sometimes", it is not hard to see that the magic cleaner actually is the replacement of death which can ease the burden and sweep your life. Under the spell of the old man, Alan spent just one dollar acquiring the love potion by which he would attain his desire to win the permanent and bountiful love from Diana with a naive assumption. However, the illusion of maintaining love and marriage only by certain love potion is doomed to be fleeting; there must be some day when Alan feeds up with the love requiring constant external force and it is terribly likely for him to find the old man again to demand the "death potion" in order to get rid of the abnormal love.

A. Richards who is a critic from the first part of the 20th century said that every metaphor consists of two components: a vehicle and a tenor. The vehicle is literally something used to transport the tenor you put inside the vehicle in order to convey to somewhere else. Metaphor at its best helps us to think about things we thought we understood in new ways. In the short story "The Chaser", the representative metaphor is that the glove-cleaner or the life-cleaner would be the vehicle while death is the tenor. The intrinsic connotation of death is packed into "cleaner" which is in charge of delivering to the readers. We might regard the life cleaner as one of the ordinarily daily necessities while in this text it is considered as an essential approach to dispensing love. Actually "life cleaner" is the "chaser" of the love potion, in other words death is the end of love. How tragedy love it is that has been accompanied by the shadow of death, and whoever falls into this trap always cannot escape suffering the tragic reincarnation of love and death. So the creed of love is never compelling others. It is the art of love, while the endless abyss of love.

4. Analysis of Literal Implication

"The Chaser" penned by John Collier is a modern commentary on the patriarchal system of the current day society, where men are parallel to animals while women a simple object to win over. Through the third person narrative where a man named Alan Austen is centralized in his pursue of buying a love potion to win the heart of a woman named Diane, Collier uses a very direct and conversational structure of writing, the same structure usually found in twentieth century writings. Because of this, readers are quick to comprehend the theme that Collier sculpts throughout the story.

The characterization of Alan Austen is immediately presented, as Collier uses a simile to describe Austen's sense of apprehension at what he was about to do 'as nervous as a kitten'. The alignment of Alan with that of a kitten presents Alan's docility where he lacks the ability of the powerful man who knows what he wants and gets it. Austen is tenuous in his behaviour, where he 'peered about for a long time', presenting his inability to concentrate properly – showing symptoms of anxiety and also hinting at Alan's powerlessness. As he designs Austen's character, Collier also identifies the setting which is 'dark' and 'creaky' – giving off an ominous tone to the story which grabs readers' attention and creates suspense. Austen's lack of power is presented again when he pushes open the door which does show signs of the aggressive nature found in males but this idea is contradicted when Collier mentions that this sudden movement of Austen's was something he was told to do, 'doing as he was told'. Austen has no personality of his own, but a man who requires power and can't have it. His character conflicts with the traditional macho man that is highlighted as the ultimate portrayal of man, where the character of Stanley in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' is dominating and gives a universal idea of what a man ought to be like in this modern day and age where the patriarchal system has a prominent influence.

The room in which Alan enters is then brought to focus as the darkness present a sense of danger while the room which only has two chairs and a kitchen table highlights a cheap professionalism where there's two chairs situated in a position for a meeting between a client and a dealer to take place, only with a kitchen table instead of actual business tables. Collier then focuses on the old man reading a newspaper, where his name is never announced, presenting an animosity which reflects on the dark and cheap setting as readers come to know the character as a dealer of potions, suspecting whether Austen's purchase truly is reliable. The man being old and reading a newspaper, however, portrays him as a character of wisdom, reinforcing the image of an apothecary. But the traditional image of an apothecary is modernized in this story where the man is only thinking of money and economics, identifying the systems of purchase while also being indifferent to murder. He terms murderer as a 'glove-cleaner', making it almost mundane and presenting to readers the lengths one would go to earn profit. This man also mirrors the image of the proud man, who kills and takes pride in it and is commanding in nature, where his first dialogue is an order, 'Sit down, Mr. Austen.' He is power hungry and can easily take a life and no one could blame him, again referring to the character of Stanley who takes the life out of his wife's sister and no one dares to blame him. As the plot progresses, readers can find an underlying reason as to why Austen chose to purchase from this man, aside from the actual reason of needing a love potion, as Austen requires a manly figure to accustom himself with the man that society has such high regards for. Austen's character slowly boosts with this man and when he leaves, readers can see him destroying the life of Diane for whom he had purchases this love potion to use on, and being proud of it.

Collier also uses feminist ideals in how the men portray women as someone who needs to take care of a man and abide by him and love him even if he hurts her. They objectify the women into a caretaker but then again Collier uses irony in which the old man describes how the girl influenced under the love potion would treat the man, where she is to care for him almost as one cares for a pet, 'She will never

allow you to be tired, to sit in a draught, to neglect your food.' But then again, the woman is nothing more than a thing to win over and have them work for you. Women are mere items of consummation while love is no more an emotion but rather a way to get what you want. This feminist ideal also hints at a theme of social realism where capitalization has turned men into animals where they exploit love and create a thing out of it to make money.

The desperate need for companionship and detachment in human connections is also a theme that Collier explores where devotion is earned through money and not mutual connection or relationships. Society is so transfixed on capitalization and consumerism that it has cut the lines with love and humanity, only considering physical lust to be the only source of love there is, where Austen can have relationships with other girls as well and Diane wouldn't mind much. However, the man's constant identification of the other potion which is valued at five thousand dollars gives readers a sense that this love potion will also have a drawback in which Austen will return to the man to poison Diane. This slight suggestion gives out a complete image of this decaying society where affection is bought and due to this, there will be horrible repercussions.

Collier's plot and themes are a calling to readers to change our ways in which we monetize everything for our own gain, removing ourselves from love and affection only to get an end where we need to commit murder and get back to where we started – alone and in need of human connection. Collier does not stylize his writing much which presents our present day society which has turned a back to beauty and stylization to become almost mechanic. His theme is profoundly created and evokes a sense of awareness in readers for how we generate in this society.

5. Theme

One could argue that the overall tone of the story is deeply misogynistic. Women are presented throughout "The Chaser" as a problem of one sort or another. Either they're coldly indifferent, as in the case of the object of Alan's unrequited affections, or they're annoyingly clingy and suffocating. This is how Alan's would-be lover will turn out if she imbibes the old man's love potion. And if Alan should grow tired of his future wife's endless, cloying devotion—and the old man is 100% certain that he will—then this "problem" can easily be removed by the chaser of the title, a deadly poison that allows men to get rid of troublesome wives and girlfriends without eliciting suspicion.

In terms of Collier's presentation of the relations between men and women, there are no shades of gray. The overall theme of the story is the fundamental incompatibility of men and women. As well as the generally misogynistic tone that we've just examined, Collier also expresses a deep cynicism concerning the ability of men to engage in fulfilling relationships. In the figure of Alan, men are portrayed as having unrealistic expectations of what relationships with woman actually involve, especially when it comes to marriage. It seems that men make unreasonable demands of the women in their lives. Paradoxically, they seek complete devotion from them while at the same time insisting on a measure of personal freedom. In short, when it comes to women, men want to have their cake and eat it, too.

6. The Message

The message is apparent, love is but a transition state, a temporary illusion. When people fall in love they think it's going to last forever, why did the people dissolution they're capable of doing anything to possess the object of their passion. In the pale light of day, once this illusion has dissipated, left with the dawning realization of what they have created, the young men begin to understand that the object of his desires is more trouble than they are worth. He has attached himself to someone who was a complete stranger and is ultimately incompatible with him.

Once the young man has reached this realization, he is left with two choices, to either continue with the pretense and live a miserable life, are he has to obtain his freedom at all costs.

7. The Style

Collier's work is exceptional, his technique is uniquely objective. After a brief introduction in the opening paragraphs, the entire story unfolds through their dialogue. Collier Siri doesn't want to spell out the message of his story. Instead, he wants to message to reveal as the conversation continues, letting his readers come to their own conclusions. While the entire story unfolds but a few minutes and is confined

to some simple settings, the shop contrast of two main characters makes it extremely easy to imagine and to visualize the setting uneven how their voices might sound. The difference between young and old, optimism, and pessimism. How the wisdom of old age has stemmed from years of experience has led the old man to become disillusioned with love. It is clear from the onset that the old man is only interested in profit why the young man is still caught in the idealism of love.

In this exceptionally short work, Collier uses a strictly objective technique. He briefly describes the two characters and the setting in the opening paragraphs, then lets his characters tell the story almost entirely through their dialogue. This technique is perfect for the author's purposes, because he wants his message to dawn on the reader without his having to spell it out. It is interesting to observe how Collier displays his technical virtuosity by suggesting the debilitating effects of long years of married life while respecting the classic Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action.

The entire story unfolds in only a few minutes and is confined to a simple setting. It contains only two characters, and these two are sharply contrasted so that it is easy to visualize both and to imagine how their voices sound. One is young, the other old. One is idealistic, the other realistic. The young man is governed by his passions; the old man has been disillusioned by long years of living and is governed by the cold light of reason. The young man is interested in love; the old man is only interested in money. The young man has his whole life ahead of him but acts as if he is pressed for time; the old man obviously is at the end of his life but acts as if he has all the time in the world.

Collier often wrote unrealistic stories with realistic settings. He was noted for putting his genii, jinns, sibyls, demons, and ghosts in contemporary Manhattan and London apartments. The old man in "The Chaser" is a mystical character who belongs in a medieval folktale. What is he doing in twentieth century New York? Characteristically, Collier does not bother to explain how this sorcerer ended up here. Collier did not expect most of his stories to be taken seriously. This paradoxical element contributed to the quixotic humor to be found in most of his fiction.

Collier's style is light, witty, whimsical, playful. He plays with literary conventions, and his fiction is full of literary allusions, hints of connoisseurship, sophisticated dialogue, and French words and phrases. He invariably sounds cultured, worldly, and well educated. He was born in England and had the tastes and values of an English country gentleman. He often has been compared to writers such as Noël Coward, P. G. Wodehouse, and W. Somerset Maugham, all of whom wrote about upper-class people who were far more interested in manners and money than morals. The world they wrote about was at its zenith in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Great Depression and World War II had a sobering effect on the tastes of American and European readers, and Collier, along with many other sophisticated writers, experienced a sharp decline in popularity as a result.

8. The Main Characters

8.1 Alan

The main character is a young man named Alan. He finds himself desperately in love with the lady called Diana. This Love Has Gone completely unrequited, forcing a no desperate young man I'm looking for an alternative solution to his problem. Haven't heard of an old man who offers love potions, the Island is initially nervous. Still, his desperation to gain the love of Diana eventually overcomes any of these nerves. While he is initially horrified by the concept of using poison, when is the juice to the love potion, you so delighted that he doesn't even think about the consequences. Alan is young and naive, unable to see that the old man is dropping him into a vicious cycle. He actually believes Diana becoming obsessed with him is a good thing. Alan wants her to be jealous of him, to deny him associations with other women, to be the sole object of his attention. These feelings are so overpowering for him that he is unable to see the wood from the trees.

8.2 The old man

He is clearly a crafty salesman, and he uses his years of experience to lull the gullible Allen into a false sense of security. Offering his love potion cheaply, fully aware that his generosity will be returning to him in the not-too-distant future. His craftiness is clear for all to see when he explains to Allen that is love potion is priced so low simply because those in need of a love potion rarely have money to spend. But it's clear for everyone to see the love potion is a trap; experience tells the old man that young men will be back to him willing to spend vast amounts of money to correct the problem they created. Many

may view the old man as wrong or even evil, but he is just a reflection of the society we live in today. Most companies will explain the dangers of the products they peddle, cigarettes are addictive, a fast food meal contains 2000 calories. Consumers are well aware of the risks, but they choose to ignore the long term consequence of their actions, all in pursuit of short term gratification as Alan did in this story.

9. Conclusion

Chambers Dictionary defines a rhetorical figure as 'a deviation from the ordinary mode of expression', and trope as 'a figure of speech, properly one in which a word or expression is used in other than its literal sense'. Metaphors in "The Chaser", such as the life-cleaner, actually employ their connotation of easing the life instead of its basic meaning of cleaning the chores in order that they can make the text enough readable to attract readers to think over the words between the lines. Other proper and vivid metaphor like the poem by Robert Burns *My Love is like a Red, Red, Rose*, from which we can reach a conclusion that love is kind of like a rose in some ways that they are beautiful but temporary if you pick it and you might get hurt from it because it gets thorn. In this poem, it is not the appearance of a rose but its thorns matter. If we lack the notice for its character of thorns, we might not be able to discover the correlation between love and rose.

Simply put, rhetorical phenomenon is a beautiful landscape in literary texts, and metaphor can substantiate and conceal some items so as to enhance the effectiveness of the story and make the text thought-provoking as well as worthwhile to taste.

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