THE ROLE OF IRONY IN TEXT INTERPRETATION

LALI TAVADZE

European Studies Department, Shota Rustaveli State University, Batumi, Georgia
E-mail: lali.tavadze@gmail.com

Abstract - Writers use different stylistic devices to express the idea and lead the reader to the answer. The style that writers use varies from author to author that makes reading enjoyable and exciting. While analyzing the text, readers think about the hidden meaning, implied idea, thus trying to read between the lines. The topic of our discussion is irony. Irony can be used by the writer in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes. It finds its expression in the use of words conveying the opposite of their literal meaning. Irony is an implied discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. There are different types of irony: verbal irony, irony of situation, dramatic irony and tragic irony, each having their value and importance. Using irony by the writer may create different effects on the reader. To begin with, it can be used to show folly in an amusing way. On the other hand, it can take the form of wounding criticism causing anger and hatred. Finally, it can be used to depict the situation showing all tragedy and sadness it involves. Thus, effects created by irony make the reader see through the surface meaning to the true purpose of writing.

Keywords - Irony, Types, Implied Meaning, Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

Writers use different stylistic devices to express the idea and lead the reader to the answer. The style that writers use varies from author to author that makes reading enjoyable and exciting. While analyzing the text, readers think about the hidden meaning, implied idea, thus trying to read between the lines. In order to make a story appealing to the reader, authors have to apply to the techniques drawing their attention. The story with predictable events and characters, with the expected end might sound like the most boring story ever. Literature needs unexpected. Stylistic devices tend to spice up the texts and their role is of great value. Some stylistic devices appear when inanimate objects are provided with human qualities or when things are compared, others for exaggeration to create an effect or when there is a conflict between the reality and appearance. In fact, the latest one mentioned is the topic of our discussion, i.e. irony. Irony can be used by the writer in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.

It finds its expression in the use of words conveying the opposite of their literal meaning. Irony is an implied discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. There are different types of irony: verbal irony, irony of situation, dramatic irony and tragic irony, each having their value and importance. Using irony by the writer may create different effects on the reader. To begin with, it can be used to show folly in an amusing way. On the other hand, it can take the form of wounding criticism causing anger and hatred. Finally, it can be used to depict the situation showing all tragedy and sadness it involves. Thus, effects created by irony make the reader see through the surface meaning to the true purpose of writing.

II. METHOD, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A method used in this research is mainly descriptive and analytical. The Analysis are based on the examples used in the article and mainly on two basic stories: “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin and “The Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl. The stories contain different types of irony that emphasize the situation and add more vivid hues to the comprehension and analysis, filling the readers with the emotions and suspense. This stylistic device is used a variety of purposes by the author and as the reader understands the implied meaning created by the irony, it can be said that the author’s goal is achieved.

There are different reasons for using irony in literary texts as it is a tool that may be used for many different purposes. This stylistic device may create specific relationship between the reader and the speaker, between the characters in the story or just between us and the reality around us. The communicative roles of the irony vary from slight criticism to humour, from folly to anger. On the other hand, irony may serve as a tool of implication in the text. The utterance containing the ironic expression may draw the world indirectly, giving implicit assertions about the reality, thus teaching something to the reader. Irony is the device authors use to create excitement and interest. Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words; it may also depict the situation ending up in a way that was not expected at all. Irony is showing a discrepancy between the reality and what appears to be true. There are different types of irony: verbal irony, irony of situation, dramatic and tragic irony. The mentioned types have their specific

purposes and are used by authors to create intended atmosphere thus reaching the goal of impressing and influencing the reader.

2.1. Verbal Irony

To begin with, to identify verbal irony, it must be said that this type of irony occurs when a person says one thing but means another. Jane Austen opens "Pride and Prejudice" with this ironic sentence:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (Literature a close study, C.J. Burns; m. G. McNamara)

The mothers of unmarried daughters would like to think that this is "a truth universally acknowledged", but in fact it is not true at all – particularly from the point of view of the "single man in possession of a good fortune". Austen presents this idea only to entertain us with the enormity of the misconception.

Verbal irony sometimes takes the form of overstatement or understatement rather than of statement of the true opposite of what is meant. In "Pride and Prejudice" Jane Austen describes Mr. and Mrs. Bennet:

"Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts… that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop."

Since Mrs. Bennet's foolish character is quite easily understood, Austen's irony is established through understatement. (Literature a close study, C.J. Burns; m. G. McNamara)

2.2. Irony of Situation

The type of irony in which the difference is between what one might expect or what would seem appropriate, and what actually happens is called irony of situation. In Chopin's "The story of an hour", the following situation is described:

"When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" the vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body".

So, this happens after Mrs. Mallard is told the news about the death of her husband, Brently Mallard. In the beginning of the story the reader witnesses how other characters, Richard and Josephine try to take care of Luis and deliver that sad news as gently as possible. The reader supposes that the death of a beloved person might be very painful and devastating. The development of the story leads the reader to this supposition. But what do these lines imply? Mrs. Mallard appears happy to lose her husband as she finds herself free, free from all the pressure and burden she suffered from during the years of marriage. Irony of situation surprises the reader but makes the scene vivid and comprehensible.

And another paragraph: "But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome". This is another example of situational irony, making the reader realize that married life was a symbol of prison for Luise and her husband's death was the end of her sentence. She could not believe that was happening to her, and wanted to drink the whole elixir of this happiness. Readers' expectations are violated, instead of the wife weeping because of that great loss we get the woman enjoying freedom.

It is worth noting that the situational irony that appears at the end of this story is really shocking both for the reader and the characters.

"Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richard's quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife."

The picture that the reader faces in this part of the story is startling as it was less predicted and really unexpected. No one would expect the person who was announced dead in the very beginning of the story to come back home in the end. The effect influences the reader and leaves him speechless.

So, Chopin's art of using irony involves the reader making him think about something more complicated.

In Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" there was:

"Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink."

Ironically, there is water everywhere but they do not have a single drop of drinkable water. (Literature a close study, C.J. Burns; m. G. McNamara)

2.3. Dramatic Irony

As for dramatic irony, it appears when a character in a literary or dramatic work perceives a situation in a limited way while the reader or audience is aware of a

greater significance. So, dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that the characters do not.

To continue with Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour", it can be said that there are some interesting examples of dramatic irony. When Luis got the news of her husband's death she locked herself in her room, refusing to see anyone. In the examples of situational irony the reader sees that she is not suffering a lot, on the contrary, she enjoys her freedom. But her sister, Josephine, who is not aware of the whole situation is depicted in the following way: "Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Luis, open the door! I beg; open the door – you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Luise? For heaven's sake open the door". Josephine does not know that the news came as a relief for Mrs. Mallard and it is shown in the following sentence: "Go, away. I am not making myself ill." No. she was drinking in a very elixir of life through the open window." Josephine lacks the information that the reader is aware of thus leading her to misunderstanding of the situation. With the help of dramatic irony the author made everything comprehensible for us covering all in mystery for Luise's sister.
The way the author finishes the story is very interesting. The reader literally gasps at the last lines of the story as they contain tragic side of a person's life. The end of the story can be connected with both, dramatic and tragic irony as the reality breaks the main character's dreams and hopes and besides the reader understands that the doctor's were very much mistaken in announcing the reason of Mrs. Mallard's death.

"When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease – of the joy that kills."

Stylistic devices are the magic elixir that attract readers' attention, create suspense and interest. Dramatic irony is an effective tool making the reader think deeply, analyse and explain the characters' actions and lead to the unknown, hidden or mysterious, thus giving them the chance to see what is there behind the scenes. Since dramatic irony depicts the situation perceived by the audience with the characters who are not aware of episodes that unfold, it generates curiosity. Dramatic irony encourages readers to anticipate, hope, and fear the moment when a character would learn the truth behind events and situations of the story. Interesting examples of dramatic irony are found in Roald Dahl's story "The Lamb to the Slaughter". The excitement and curiosity are kept to the end with the author's interesting writing style. The moment in the story when the policemen are searching for the weapon is an example of a dramatic irony. "Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke at her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may have thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises."

The reader knows what happened, the reader witnessed the fact of a murder and knows who the murderer is. The policemen, who are looking for the weapon, inform Mrs. Maloney about the development of the investigation having no idea that in fact, she is the one who committed the crime.

The story unfolds and the reader is experiencing the mixture of feelings struggling to make a decision between right and wrong, lots of questions appear but the answers are not easy to find. In the following example, Mary Maloney who killed her husband is inviting the policemen to have dinner, to eat up the lamb that was in the oven. The question is, what are the policemen eating, a lamb or a weapon they are looking for?

"Well," she said. "Here you are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terribly hungry by now because it's long past your suppertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven? It'll be cooked just right by now."

A kind of mock feeling is derived from what the reader witnesses in the story and the effect of dramatic irony is crucial. It is striking to realize how ridiculous the end of the story is! While having dinner and discussing the idea of the weapon one of the policemen says:

"- Personally, I think it's right here on the premises.
- Probably right under our very noses. What do you think, Jack?"

And in the other room Mary Maloney began to giggle."

The scene of the policemen in the kitchen creates the effect of dark humour. The policemen speculating about the murder weapon unwittingly devour it. The most ridiculous part is that they help to destroy the murder weapon themselves.

2.4. Tragic Irony

Another interesting type of irony, so called tragic irony, presents the basic discrepancy between man's hopes and dreams and what a man can realistically accomplish. Most of this irony comes from the idea

that while we are young we never accept that we must grow and die. Man is doomed to failure and must live with frustration and death while longing for success and immortality.

Hamlet uses tragic irony by reminding us that even great man return to dust:
"Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust;"

"Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to turn the wind away."

III. CONCLUSIONS

So, effects and uses of irony vary from author to author making the reader think about the author's purpose. The following main effects may be singled out:

First: it can be used to show up pretence and folly in an amusing way.

Second: it can take the form of fierce or wounding criticism.

Third: it can be used to show the tragedy or sadness of a situation (all forms of irony may do this, not just the type referred to as tragic irony). (Literature a close study, C.J. Burns; m. G. McNamara)

Irony in all its forms provides extra dimensions of meaning. It suggests meaning without stating them, and thus promotes reader involvement. Readers should have it in mind that irony should not be read only on the surface level that may create misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Reading between the lines, ability to see through the surface meaning may lead the reader to the true purpose of the writing.

Like all other figures of speech, irony brings about some added meanings to a situation. Ironical statements and situations in literature develop readers' interest. It makes a work of literature more intriguing, and forces the readers to use their imaginations to comprehend the underlying meanings of the texts. Moreover, real life is full of ironical expressions and situations. Therefore, the use of irony brings a work of literature to the life.

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