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Annotation

The article examines the history of the study of irony in Russian literature, provides a historical digression necessary to understand the existing definitions covering the manifestations of irony in literary and artistic discourse. Irony as an aesthetic category was understood differently in different epochs, having undergone significant and significant changes.

Keywords: *irony, excursus, aesthetic category, parodies, ironic comparisons, sarcasm, Aesopian language, allegory.*

Without claiming to be a complete overview of how irony has manifested itself in the works of Russian literature throughout its history, which can be the subject of special study in order to identify trends and traditions of irony expression in it, let us turn in this regard to the key works of Russian classics. In them, the ideas of irony are very diverse and are mainly realized in satirical texts.

The techniques of expressing irony were widely used in the literature of Ancient Russia, in particular, in the works of Ivan the Terrible, in which expressive satirical portraits of opponents were created.

Further, analyzing the meaning of irony in the works of I.A. Krylov, D.I. Fonvizin and A.S. Griboyedov, the researchers note that in them, along with ridicule of human vices, the diseases of society are exposed. Thus, in the fables of I.A. Krylov, irony helps to express the truth in an aesopian language distantly, directing the reader to an allegorical perception of the content of the works, when images of animals, birds, fish are seen as images of unrighteous representatives of the state. In this regard, the Russian fabulist, picking up the folk poetic tradition, passed it to M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, mainly using the technique of ironic-parody word usage.

At the same time, as M.A. Gordin correctly noted: "The innovation of the mature Krylov was not limited to the willingness to allow a simple, peasant, vulgarly sober view of things into poetry <...>. There is a constant and clearly perceptible intellectual distance between Krylov, the author, and Krylov, the naive narrator of fables, thanks to which Krylov's fables, despite their emphatically didactic form, receive the appearance of ironic, mocking teaching"¹.

In A.S. Griboyedov's witty comedy "Woe from Wit", irony performs various functions, but is mainly aimed at exposing stupidity and vice. Tragic irony is already heard in the very title of the work. In the mouth of Chatsky as an offended citizen, it varies from a secular joke to caustic sarcasm, and other forms of irony are equally diverse: these are talking names, elements of parody, ironic comparisons.

A.S. Pushkin is rightfully considered a master of irony. The poet's objects of irony were love and death, society and enlightenment, monarchs and friends. The most diverse forms of irony expression are found in his works.

In the novel in verse "Eugene Onegin", irony becomes the most important plot-forming and stylistic element, distinguishing first of all the creative position of the author himself, demonstrating the ability to both travest "high" plots and images, and to depict the "irony of fate", which is presented, for example, in the story "The Stationmaster". In it, A.S. Pushkin ironically plays the biblical parable of the prodigal son. In general, as the researchers note, irony expresses the poet's critical attitude to various systems of artistic thinking and ideological concepts².

¹ Gordin M.A. I.A. Krylov // Russian writers. 1800–1917. Biographical Dictionary. – M., 1994. – Vol. 3.– p. 181.

² See, for example: Markovich V.M. Humor and satire in "Eugene Onegin" // Questions of Literature. – 1969. – № 1. – C. 67-88.

M.Y. Lermontov is equally ironically reflexive. According to L.Ya. Ginzburg, "Lermontov's characteristic irony of the mind has passed into the sphere of poetic consciousness"³. This can be seen in the transition of the poet and writer from genre forms that are "between life and literature" (early humorous messages, parodies and epigrams) to the novel "Hero of Our Time". In his "Preface" to it, the author is consistently ironic: "Our audience is still so young and simple-minded that they do not understand the fable if they do not find a moral at the end of it. She doesn't guess jokes, doesn't feel irony; she's just ill-mannered. She does not yet know that in a decent society and in a decent book, explicit abuse cannot take place; that modern education has invented a sharper tool, almost invisible, and yet deadly, which, under the guise of flattery, strikes an irresistible and sure blow. Our public is like a provincial who, having overheard a conversation between two diplomats belonging to hostile courts, would remain convinced that each of them is deceiving his government in favor of mutual, tender friendship."⁴.

Classical forms and techniques of expressing irony are indicative of the works of N.V. Gogol. Such a technique as an ironic association is used, for example, in the story "Nevsky Prospekt": two Germans receive the names of Schiller and Hoffmann: "Schiller was sitting in front of him, but not the Schiller who wrote "William Tell" and "The History of the Thirty Years' War", but the famous Schiller, a tinsmith in Meshchanskaya Street. Hoffman was standing next to Schiller—not the writer Hoffman, but a pretty good shoemaker from Officer Street, a great friend of Schiller"⁵.

In "The Story of how Ivan Ivanovich quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich", the technique of ironic comparison in the form of perversion is used: "Ivan Ivanovich's head looks like a radish with its tail down, Ivan Nikiforovich's head looks like a radish with its tail up"⁶. No less remarkable for the work of N. V. Gogol is another example using sarcastic irony: "Ivan Ivanovich is very angry if a fly gets into his borscht: he then loses his temper – and throws a plate, and the owner will get"⁷.

Personified, irony acts as an "avenger" and "comforter" in A.I. Herzen, "mocking criticism" in M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, and in N.G. Chernyshevsky's novel "What to do?" she is personified in the image of an "astute reader".

Russian realistic art of the word acquired the ironic mode of fundamental importance. A.I. Herzen saw one of the "properties of the Russian spirit" in the ability to treat himself and his past ironically: "... in Russia in general, both the novel, and comedies, and even fables from the very beginning of the literature of the European type, that is, from the middle of the XVIII century, had a clearly expressed, restrained only by censorship, character of bitter irony and mocking criticism"⁸.

Regarding the comedy of D.I. Fonvizin "Nedorosl", the author of "Bygone and Doom", for example, wrote: "In this irony, in this flagellation, which does not spare even the personality of the author himself, we find some kind of joy of revenge, a malicious consolation; with this laughter we break with the community that exists between us and these amphibians, who, unable either to preserve their barbaric state or to assimilate civilization, are the only ones who stay on the surface Russian society"⁹.

³ Ginzburg L.Ya. About psychological prose. – L.: Artist. literature, 1977. – p. 26.

⁴ Lermontov M.Y. Works in 4 volumes. – M.-L., 1961-1962. – Vol. 4. – p. 276.

⁵ Gogol N.V. Novellas, dramatic works. – L.: Fiction, 1983. – p. 27.

⁶ Gogol N.V. Collected works: in 7 vols. Vol. 2. – Moscow: Fiction, 1967. – p. 212.

⁷ Gogol N.V. Decree. op. – p. 212

⁸ For more information about this, see: Kroychik L.E. The Poetics of the Comic in the works of A.P. Chekhov. – Voronezh: Publishing House of the Voronezh State University, 1986. – 276 p.

⁹ Herzen A.I. Collected works: in 30 vol. t. 7. – Moscow: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1956. – p. 189.

A number of studies are devoted to the irony of F.M. Dostoevsky¹⁰, who was able, along with "great sadness", to feel the great power of humor. This feature of the writer's creative individuality was pointed out by V.V. Rozanov at the time: "... reading through the whole series of his works, we see how constantly he sets up his favorite ideas with light irony at the beginning and at the end..."¹¹.

R.G. Nazirov also noted the characteristic combination of irony and sarcasm in the works of F.M. Dostoevsky: "His narrative is always serious, but mockery can hide behind this seriousness. This is the description of two fist gentlemen from Rogozhin's retinue in the first part of *The Idiot*: one of them "sometimes put forward one completely national thing – a huge fist, wiry, knobby, overgrown with some kind of red fluff..."¹².

Irony manifests itself even in the forms of religious tension of F.M. Dostoevsky's thought: "And in Europe there is no such force of atheistic objections and there has never been. Therefore, it is not as a boy that I believe in Christ and confess him, but my hosanna went through a big crucible of doubts, as the devil says in my novel"¹³. Не случайно, как пишет В. В. Борисова, самые оригинальные примеры выражения иронии в последнем романе писателя связаны именно с перверсией формулы «Бог vs черт»¹⁴. So, all the Karamazovs are tormented by the question of the existence of God: "Is there a God or not?". Ivan, with ferocious persistence, asks this question even to the devil. Fyodor Pavlovich, fooling around in the cell of Elder Zosima, says: "I believe, I believe in God",¹⁵ immediately adding, although "the unclean spirit is in me." The devil, talking to Ivan, repeatedly, though in vain, mentions the name of God ("by God; my God; God is with him; God knows where; God, save me, etc.).

Irony manifests itself in a variety of forms in the works of N.A. Nekrasov, F.I. Tyutchev, L.N. Tolstoy, V.V. Mayakovsky, M.M. Zoshchenko, M.A. Bulgakov, Yu.K. Olesha, V.P. Kataev, L.M. Leonov and other writers, in which, according to modern researchers, it acquires status of the ontological category¹⁶. "The ontological content of irony is a contradiction between subjective ideas and the objective development of history, between personal intentions and the result of <...> activity, between the ideal and the real"¹⁷.

With the advent of the postmodernism era in Russian literature of the late X-first quarter of the XXI century. irony undergoes a significant transformation. A number of scientists define postmodern irony as a parodic interpretation of what was denied in previous periods¹⁸.

¹⁰ See, for example, the generalizing work of S.A. Mukhina: *The Comic beginning in the work of F.M. Dostoevsky in the evaluation of Russian literary criticism* // *Bulletin of the Moscow State Regional University*. – Series: Russian Philology. - 2011. – No. 5. – pp. 138-143.

¹¹ Rozanov V.V. *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor F.M. Dostoevsky (Experience of critical commentary)* // *About the Grand Inquisitor. Dostoevsky and the following*. – M., 1991. – p. 89.

¹² Nazirov R.G. *Dostoevsky's Humor* // *Russian literature 1870-1890 – Sverdlovsk*, 1977. – Issue 10. – p. 176.

¹³ Dostoevsky F.M. *Full collection of works: In 30 vols.* – Vol. 27. – L.: Nauka, 1984. – p. 86.

¹⁴ See about this: Borisova V.V. *God versus the devil in F.M. Dostoevsky's novel "The Brothers Karamazov"* // *Borisova V.V. Actual Dostoevsky: Texts and Contexts*. – Monograph. – Ufa, 2021. – pp. 88-93.

¹⁵ Dostoevsky F. M. *Complete collection of works: In 30 vols.* – Vol. 14. – L.: Nauka, 1976. – p. 39.

¹⁶ See, for example: Khabibyarova E.M. *Irony in the works of M. Bulgakov: abstract. dis. ... Candidate of Philology. sciences.* – Birk, 2011. – 24 p.; her: *Irony as a way of artistic thinking* // *Styles and genres of Russian literature of the XIX–XX centuries: collection of scientific articles* – Issue 5. – Birk, 2006. – pp. 54-69.

¹⁷ Khrulev V.I. *The Art of Irony in Leonid Leonov's Prose*. – Ufa: Bashkir State University, 2005. – pp. 19-20.

¹⁸ See: Mankovskaya N.B. *Aesthetics of postmodernism*. – St. Petersburg: Aletya, 2000. – pp. 15-55; Konovalova O.A. *Irony as an attribute of Postmodern culture*. AKD – Kemerovo, 2005. – 18 p.

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