

SELF-DIRECTED IRONY IN THE NARRATIVE OF MARK TWAIN'S SHORT STORY "A MYSTERIOUS VISIT"

Maryna LUCHYTSKA (Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine)

У статті досліджуються форми наративу як способи розкриття самоіронії героя в оповіданні Марка Твена "A Mysterious Visit". Контрастність між способами подання подій в художньому світі твору та значимістю цих подій становлять основу іронічності повісткування. Опріявлення іронії також приховується в деталях ретроспективної репрезентації дійсного стану речей інтрадієгетичним наратором.

***Ключові слова:** наратив, дієгезис, іронія, ретроспективне наратування, першоособова нарація, третьоособова нарація.*

В статье исследуются формы нарратива как способы раскрытия самоиронии героя в рассказе Марка Твена "A Mysterious Visit". Контрастность способов подачи событий в художественном мире произведения и значительностью этих событий составляет основу ироничности повествования. Проявление иронии также замаскировано в деталях ретроспективной репрезентации интрадиэстетическим нарратором истинного положения дел.

***Ключевые слова:** нарратив, диэгезис, ирония, ретроспективное повествование, повествование от первого лица, повествование от третьего лица.*

The forms of narration as the means of the character's self-directed irony revealing in the short-story "A Mysterious Visit" by Mark Twain are being investigated in the given article. The contrast between the ways of

events' representation and the true value of these events is considered to be the basis of the ironical air of the narration. The manifestation of the irony is also hidden in the details of the intradiegetic narrator's retrospective representation of the true state of things. All constituent parts of the literary work under consideration as well as its title are interconnected and bear a slight ironical air, which manifests itself in the hidden details, repetitions, retrospective representations of conversations. Self-directed irony of the character-narrator accentuates his personal tragedy, which arises from his personal judgments and those quite "acceptable" things, which can give him some "true social spotlessness". The hidden author's message can be traced in the ways he reveals a contrast between the character's true nature and those "acceptable" patterns of behavior, which could provide the true prosperity once he follows them.

Key Words: *narrative, diegesis, irony, retrospective narration, the first-person narration, the third-person narration.*

Fiction has always been one of the brightest ways of communication between recipients and authors, whereas the text of a literary work – verbal materialization of thoughts and ideas. Being revealed through the events, a course of events, ideas and thoughts create a vivid diegesis [6, c. 20], built up by the author via subjects, forms, and means of narration.

Narratology as the theory of narrative [6, c. 66] firmly established itself in the field of philological analyses in the second half of the XX century. It has always been related to the structuralists' perception of a literary work, where all the components of a story/ novel under consideration make up a unity, which helps to reveal the true author's message and build up a wholesome and complete sample of fiction. Taking into the account the subjects of narration, its forms and means [1], it is possible to fully perceive all components of a literary work alongside with some crucial contextual peculiarities, building up an image of the fiction as a way of communication between the author/ authors and a recipient/ recipients.

The subject of our investigation is the forms of narration as well as its subjects and means, as a way of revealing the self-directed irony in a literary work by Mark Twain.

The object of the analyses is a bright sample of fiction, a short-story "A Mysterious Visit", the author of which is well-known for his specific subtle irony, sarcastic air, vivid humor, often hidden in the course of some ordinary day-to-day life events, but always having some wise messages, hidden between lines, philosophic value.

The aim of the investigation is to analyze the forms of narration and the ways they are materialized in the short-story under consideration in order to reveal the ways of self-directed irony's manifestation. The contrast between the ways the events are represented in the literary work and the true value of these events is the basis of the ironical air of the author's narration.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, known as Mark Twain in the world of fiction, an extraordinary person, having a really complicated poor childhood, tried his hand at lots of different spheres of life. The writer admired lots of bright and world-wide known authors, such as Ch. Dickens, E. Poe, W. Scott, and many others. The most he was impressed by Shakespearian tragedies. His favorite character had always been Don Quixote, as he greatly appreciated the prose by M. Cervantes.

Mark Twain's first short-story was printed in 1863, and that was the very first time he used his pseudonym, which originated from his experience of being a river pilot [3, c. 588]. The fact that he tried his hand at lots of different jobs and occupations, including journalism, gave him an opportunity to get acquainted with lots of different people, having bright and vivid fates, colorful life experiences and points of view.

Mark Twain traveled a lot. And that was not just a number of different states and parts of the USA. He visited lots of European countries as well. His first book, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Stories" (1867), included great many short-stories, based on his personal experience of living in the Far West. His traveler's experiences were included into the book, based on his letters, sent to the newspapers of California and New York, – "Innocents Abroad" [3, c. 588–589]. This very book showed the world a sincere narrator, who expressed the true freedom of ideas and thoughts, at the same time being a real man of character, having lots of true common sense.

Marriage contributed really much to Mark Twain's social status. That gave him an opportunity to discuss such wide-spread problems and vices of that new different world, as corruption, cases of social and political fraud in his literary works. A bright sample of such prose is his novel "The Gilded Age" (1874) [3, c. 590]. His wife Olivia and his close friends had always

been the first listeners of the newly written works. Mark Twain appreciated their sincere feedback and first impressions.

A special “hymn in the form of the prose” [3, c. 591], as the author defined it, is the book which has a nostalgic air of the writer’s lost childhood – “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” (1876). Here the writer created the atmosphere that didn’t match the one, which defined the didactic American children’s literature of those days. There Mark Twain underlined the contrast between two antagonistic worlds – the pragmatic world of an adult and the mysterious and brave world of a child. The book is overwhelmed with some special lyrical air. “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”, on the contrary, bears a special tragic air, as here more crucial and serious problems of those days’ world are shown in the life of people, full of dignity, common sense, and strong will.

Mark Twain’s works of fiction reveal lots of vivid and typical characters, true-to-life heroes, having their own view points, attitudes, likes and dislikes. Very often the author suggests a kind of some specific sarcastic air, lively humor, subtle irony, depicting some ordinary, even day-to-day events. The writer’s irony helps the recipient in the process of revealing some very important ideas, thoughts, messages, hidden between the lines. Irony itself, being “a form of humour in which you use words to express the opposite of what the words really mean” [4, c. 760], suggests an idea of a special suspense in each situation. Being “the amusing or strange aspect of a situation that is very different from what you expect” [5, c. 824], it helps the recipient in the process of grasping the slightest hints of the true author’s message. In the course of the ordinary events a reader gets some vivid lessons of great philosophic value.

The manifestation of irony in the forms and via the subjects of narration is vividly exposed in the short-story “A Mysterious Visit” by Mark Twain. A recipient can trace the first hints of ironic air even being at the pre-text stage of the story perception – reading its title. The adjective “mysterious” makes us think we are dealing either with some supernatural course of events or some secret arrangements.

Neither supernatural nor secret things can be traced further on. Even the very first lines of the short-story under consideration reveal some retrospective dialogues, represented by the predominating first-person narration of the homodiegetic intradiegetic narrator [1]. The narrator represents himself as the main character in the diegesis and gives a retrospective vision of a simple, day-to-day conversation with a stranger, whom he mistakenly takes for an ordinary businessman. Despite the fact that the stranger announces himself as “an assessor, and connected with the U. S. Internal Revenue Department” [2, c. 49], the narrator still doesn’t completely understand the essence of his occupation: “I said I had never heard of his branch of business before, but I was very glad to see him all the same ...” [2, c. 49]. That very fatal mistake (the unwillingness to understand the real situation and lack of information about the stranger’s occupation) leads to some new fatal mistakes, which are exposed by the author via his specific ironical air of narration.

The main character’s delusion is vividly exposed in his retrospective narration, which reveals the true nature of their conversation that day: “we talked and talked, and talked – at least I did; and we laughed, and laughed, and laughed – at least he did” [2, c. 50]. Being sure of his own ingenuity, the character-narrator doesn’t want to realize the real state of things: “I was determined to find out all about his business in spite of his obscure answers – and I was determined I would have it out of him without suspecting what I was at [...] I would tell him all about my own business, and he would naturally be so warm to me during this seductive burst of confidence that he would forget himself, and tell me about his affairs before he suspected what I was about” [2, c. 50]. The character doesn’t pay any attention to the fact that his interlocutor’s answers are “obscure”. The author’s irony is hidden in the details like that at this stage of story-telling.

Being sure of himself as a master of the situation, the narrator concludes: “I thought to myself: “My son, you little know what an old fox you are dealing with” ” [2, c. 50]. Self-directed irony of the character-narrator brightly exposes itself in his readiness to tell about the facts, which give the complete information about his recent income to the stranger. Actually he mentions every single action and occupation, including lecturing and his book “The Innocents Abroad” (Mark Twain’s piece of prose, by the way) and so on, revealing the exact sum of money he usually earns. The true irony of the situation is hidden in the common trait of any successful person – willingness to boast about all details of his success, a particular kind of vanity, as it might be called.

The character's false "victory" is underlined in the retrospective situation: "[...] at the last moment the gentleman handed me a large envelope, and said it contained his advertisement; and that I would find out all about his business in it; and that he would be happy to have my custom – would in fact, be proud to have the custom of a man of such prodigious income" [2, c. 52]. The narrator's euphoria is consolidated in his sentimental description of his own total triumph: "This so pleased me that I did not try to resist, but allowed this simple-hearted stranger to throw his arms about me and weep a few tranquilizing tears down the back of my neck" [2, c. 52].

That "simple-heartedness" of the stranger leads to a sad discovery of the character-narrator: "Ah, what a miscreant he was! His "advertisement" nothing in the world but a wicked taxreturn – a string of impertinent questions about my private affairs, occupying the best part of four foolscap pages of fine print [...]. I looked for a loophole, but there did not appear to be any [...]. It was plain that that stranger had enabled me to make a goose of myself" [2, c. 52–53]. An awful disappointment in himself, coming up soon after the euphoria and an imaginary triumph, underlines the traits of a dreamer, and an open-hearted, even naïve to some extent, personality.

Sympathizing with the character's naïve self-confidence, Mark Twain exposes one of the most wide-spread social vices of those days: "I am acquainted with a very opulent man, whose house is a palace, whose table is regal, whose outlays are enormous, yet a man, who has no income, as I have often noticed by the revenue returns; and to him I went for advice, in my distress. He took my dreadful exhibition of receipts, he put on his glasses, he took his pen, and presto! – I was a pauper!" [2, c. 53]. The first-person narration of the character-narrator generalizes the eternal problem – the dreadful social fraud, which enables such people, like the above-mentioned "gentleman", to avoid fair tax distribution in the society by means of a simple "deduction". The author's irony measures with the true sarcastic air: "This gentleman stands away up among the very best of the solid men of the city – the men of moral weight, of commercial integrity, of unimpeachable social spotlessness – and so I bowed to his example" [2, c. 54]. A mere contrast between the things that very "gentleman" does and his positive general characteristics accentuates the cynical and desperate inevitability of following his example by the character-narrator.

Self-directed irony of the narrator underlines his personal tragedy, which arises from his personal judgments and those quite "acceptable" things, which can give him some "true social spotlessness": "I went down to the revenue office, and under the accusing eyes of my old visitor I stood up and swore to lie after lie, fraud after fraud, villainy after villainy, till my soul was coated inches and inches thick with perjury, and my self-respect gone for ever and ever" [2, c. 54]. The metaphorical "coating" the narrator's soul with perjury and the remarks about his loss of self-respect accentuate his deep unwillingness to accept those "fair rules", which are alien to his true nature. The hidden author's message arises from the final passage of the short-story under analyses, which represents a mere contrast of the character's true nature and of those "acceptable" patterns of behavior, which could provide the true prosperity to anyone who follows them: "But what of it? It is nothing more than thousands of the richest and proudest, and most respected, honored, and courted men in America do every year. And so I don't care. I am not ashamed. I shall simply, for the present, talk little" [2, c. 54]. But is he really eager to accept that?

In conclusion, the forms of narration, the narrator, who takes the role of the main character and the ways his thoughts are materialized in the short-story under consideration reveal the ways of self-directed irony's manifestation. One can trace the cases of mere predomination of the first-person narration, presented by the intradiegetic, homodiegetic narrator. All passages of the literary work as well as its title are interconnected and bear a slight ironical air, which manifests itself in the hidden details, repetitions, retrospective representations of dialogues, hopes and guesses. The contrast between the ways the events are represented in the literary work and the true value of these events for the main character, his spontaneous psychological states and true feelings can build up the basis of the ironical air of the author's narration.

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ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

Марина Лучицька – кандидат філологічних наук, старший викладач кафедри практики германських мов Кіровоградського державного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Винниченка, м. Кропивницький.

Наукові інтереси: англійська філологія, наратологія, наратив художньої прози.