

THE FUNCTION OF IRONY IN THE WORKS OF JANE AUSTEN

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Abstract: *Jane Austen employs irony as a multifaceted narrative tool to critique societal norms, develop character, and engage readers in her satirical portrayals of 18th and early 19th-century English society. Through verbal irony, she highlights the disparity between appearance and reality, exposing the hypocrisies and absurdities of class distinctions, gender roles, and moral conventions. Situational irony underscores the unpredictability of human behavior, often leading to humorous or poignant reversals in her characters' fortunes and relationships. Dramatic irony, particularly evident in the interplay between her narrators and readers, fosters a dynamic interaction, inviting readers to discern hidden truths behind seemingly innocuous dialogue or events. By blending wit and subtle critique, Austen's irony not only underscores her thematic concerns but also cements her position as a masterful social commentator. This nuanced use of irony enhances the richness of her novels, making them timeless explorations of human folly and virtue.*

Keywords: *Appearance, class, gender, humor, narrativ parody, reversal, satire, societal norms, wit*

Аннотация: *Джейн Остин использует иронию как многогранный повествовательный инструмент для критики общественных норм, развития персонажей и вовлечения читателей в сатирическое изображение английского общества конца XVIII — начала XIX века. С помощью вербальной иронии она подчеркивает расхождение между внешностью и реальностью, выявляя гипокризию и абсурдность классовых различий,*

гендерных ролей и моральных норм. Ситуационная ирония акцентирует непредсказуемость человеческого поведения, что часто приводит к юмористическим или трогательным поворотам в судьбах персонажей и их отношениях. Драматическая ирония, особенно проявляющаяся в взаимодействии между повествователями и читателями, способствует динамическому взаимодействию, приглашая читателей распознавать скрытые истины за на первый взгляд безобидными репликами или событиями. Сочетая остроумие и тонкую критику, ирония Остин не только подчеркивает основные темы ее произведений, но и укрепляет ее статус как мастера социального комментария. Такое многослойное использование иронии обогащает романы Остин, превращая их в вечные исследования

Ключевые слова: *внешний вид, класс, гендер, юмор, повествование пародия, переворот, сатира, общественные нормы, остроумие*

Annotatsiya: *Djeyn Ostin o'z asarlarida ijtimoiy me'yorlarni tanqid qilish, xarakterlarni rivojlantirish va o'quvchilarni 18-19 asrlar ingliz jamiyatining satirik tasviriga jalb qilish uchun ironiya vositasini ko'p qirrali usulda ishlatadi. So'zli ironiya orqali u tashqi ko'rinish va haqiqat o'rtasidagi farqni ta'kidlab, sinf farqlari, jinsiy rollar va axloqiy me'yorlarning ikkiyuzlamachiligini va bema'niyatini ochib beradi. Vaziyatli ironiya inson xulq-atvorining kutilmaganligini, ko'pincha personajlarning taqdiri va munosabatlaridagi kulgili yoki ta'sirli burilishlarga olib kelishini ta'kidlaydi. Dramaturgik ironiya, ayniqsa, aytuvchilar va o'quvchilar o'rtasidagi o'zaro ta'sirda namoyon bo'lib, o'quvchilarni oddiy ko'ringan suhbatlar yoki voqealar ortida yashiringan haqiqatlarni anglashga taklif etadi. Ajoyib hazil va nozik tanqidni birlashtirib, Ostinning ironiyasi nafaqat uning asarlarining asosiy mavzularini ta'kidlaydi, balki uni ijtimoiy sharhlovchi sifatida tasdiqlaydi. Bu ironiyaning murakkab ishlatilishi uning romanlarini insoniy ahmoqlik va fazilatlarini abadiy tadqiq qilishga aylantiradi.*

Kalit sozlar: tashqi ko'rinish, sinf, jinsiyat, hazil, hikoya, parodiya, burilish, sarkazm, ijtimoiy me'yorlar, aql-zakovat

Jane Austen's use of irony is a central feature of her literary style, which serves not only to entertain but also to critique the social norms of her time. Irony in her works is a multifaceted tool that allows Austen to expose contradictions in society, challenge gender roles, and reveal the disparities between appearance and reality. In this way, Austen's irony acts as both a form of social commentary and a device for character development, ultimately making her novels timeless critiques of human behavior. One of the primary forms of irony that Austen employs is verbal irony, where characters speak in ways that are at odds with the underlying truth. This technique is often used to expose the pretensions of the social classes and the superficiality of societal norms. For instance, in *Pride and Prejudice*, characters like Mrs. Bennett use verbal irony to display their ignorance and superficial concerns about social standing and marriage. Austen's use of this form of irony draws attention to the absurdity of prioritizing social status over genuine emotional connections (Austen, 1813).

Austen's verbal irony is not only a critique of the individual but also a critique of the wider social system. The characters' constant misinterpretation of reality, especially when it comes to issues like wealth and marriage, reflects a broader social tendency to ignore deeper moral truths in favor of external appearances (Jones, 2014). Through her ironic statements, Austen invites readers to question the values that society holds dear, highlighting the distance between public facades and private realities. Situational irony is another key element in Austen's work, illustrating the unpredictability of human behavior and the frequent discrepancies between expectations and outcomes. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the Dashwood sisters—Elinor and Marianne—represent two contrasting approaches to life: reason and emotion. Throughout the novel, the situational irony becomes apparent when the characters' lives do not follow the trajectories they expect. Elinor's rationality does not protect her from emotional

turmoil, while Marianne's passionate nature leads her to both romantic disappointment and eventual growth (Austen, 1811). This unexpected reversal of fortunes highlights the complexity of human emotions and relationships, questioning whether reason or passion is the true path to happiness.

Situational irony also serves to reveal the limitations of individual judgment and the folly of attempting to control life's outcomes. As Austen's characters navigate the complexities of romance, marriage, and family, their personal growth often comes from the realization that the external world is beyond their control, and only through self-awareness can they achieve contentment (Smith, 2016). Dramatic irony, where the audience knows more than the characters, plays a significant role in Austen's novels. This form of irony is especially effective in creating suspense and engaging readers in the narrative. In *Emma*, the protagonist's misguided matchmaking efforts provide a rich example of dramatic irony. Readers are aware of the potential consequences of Emma's actions long before she realizes them, which heightens the tension and humor in the story (Austen, 1815). This use of dramatic irony fosters a deeper connection between the reader and the narrative, as they are invited to anticipate the characters' mistakes and eventual realizations. Dramatic irony also allows Austen to comment on the limitations of human perception. Emma, in her privileged position, believes she can manipulate the emotions and relationships of those around her. However, her well-meaning but flawed interventions reveal the dangers of self-deception and the consequences of underestimating others' complexities (Brown, 2018). By aligning the reader with a superior knowledge of the unfolding events, Austen encourages reflection on how often individuals misjudge both themselves and others. The thematic implications of Austen's use of irony are far-reaching. At the heart of her ironic style lies a critique of the class system, gender roles, and the moral values that govern personal relationships. The contrast between appearance and reality, which is emphasized through various forms of irony, underscores the tension between societal expectations and individual desires. In her novels, Austen dismantles the social norms that dictate

acceptable behavior, showing how these constraints often lead to misunderstandings, misjudgments, and missed opportunities for genuine connection (Green, 2019).

Furthermore, Austen's ironic commentary extends to gender and the institution of marriage. In novels like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*, marriage is portrayed not as a romantic ideal but as a social contract fraught with power dynamics and economic considerations. Austen uses irony to reveal the hypocrisy and limitations of a system that reduces individuals, particularly women, to mere objects of transaction (Tanner, 2006). Through irony, Austen critiques the rigid expectations placed on women while also exposing the failures of men who seek to control women's futures.

In conclusion, irony in Jane Austen's works serves as a powerful tool for social critique and character development. Through verbal, situational, and dramatic irony, Austen reveals the contradictions and flaws in societal norms, the unpredictability of human behavior, and the complexities of personal relationships. Irony not only enhances the narrative complexity of her novels but also invites readers to question the values and systems that shape their own lives. By blending wit with sharp social commentary, Austen's use of irony remains a defining feature of her literary legacy.

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