

Paradoxes in O. Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray"

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Any piece of literary art is a piece of aesthetics. This is obviously one of the essential missions that a literary text may carry out, which may be viewed from different angles of linguistics for different aims.

Our interest in imaginative literature is focused on the stylistic use of paradoxes. A literary text, irrespective of its genre, is a result of author's imagination, which aims at leaving an aesthetic impact on the reader by different stylistic means which serves to identify emotiveness of the literary work.

Our special interest is focused on paradoxes often discussed in the sphere of aesthetics. The aim of paradox is to point out the truth through statements which contradict each other.

Paradox is a self-contradictory statement as it often contains two statements - both true and untrue at the same time. The appeal of paradoxes lies in the fact that, however, contradictory it seems to be, it contains a certain grain of truth which makes it an excellent vehicle for expressing irony.

Paradoxical expressions are communicative units represented by a wide range of tropes and figures of speech. The main characteristic features of paradoxical expression are characterized by the following three phenomena:

- Contradiction
- Grammatical correctness
- Unity of the object to be characterized.

Paradoxicality is an inherent feature in a statement defined by the term "paradox" as far as is formulated differently by different authors.

Another important character of paradox is its grammatical correctness, since not all contradictions can be viewed as paradoxes. The third criterion of creating the picture of paradox is a unity of characterized objects. Paradoxes can be *objective* and *subjective* while paradoxical expressions can be subdivided into five empiric classes: *actual*, *logical*, *semantic*, which refers to objective ones, *rhetorical* and *poetic*, subjective and pragmatic, which occupy intermediate place between the two main groups.

W.V. Quine (Quine 1962:36) distinguished between three classes of paradoxes:

- A *veridical paradox* produces a result that appears absurd but is demonstrated to be true nevertheless.
- A *false paradox* establishes a result that not only *appears* false but actually *is* false, due to a fallacy in the demonstration. A paradox that is in neither class may be an *antinomy*, which reaches a self-contradictory result by properly applying accepted ways of reasoning.
- A paradox that is both true and false at the same time and in the same sense despite the fact that the statement is to be exclusively proven or disproved.

Our interest of paradox focused on the literary work of one of the most prominent Irish writers of XIX century O. Wilde whose technique of writing varies in diversity of

tropes and figures of speech with the help of which statements acquire certain paradoxical overtones.

Wilde was a follower of Aestheticism, Philosophy which touted that art should be appreciated only for its beauty: "Art for art's sake". The notion that art should have any moral or didactic value was rejected. Wilde's work, his own art, defies simple classification as purely aesthetic. Wilde showed a very clear purpose beyond simply to entertain or to create beauty, he was rebelling against the restrictive and often hypocritical Victorian society in which he found himself. For Wilde, Aestheticism was a convenience.

Much of Wilde's impact comes from his ability to turn a common saying. His capacity to come up consistently with the unexpected statements leads his audience first to laughter, then - to a great deal of thought.

Wilde may be viewed to be "the prince of paradoxes". His mission was to avoid the banal sights of life, trying to illuminate every idea of his own by quoting a phrase which would become a proverb turning inside out as a glove.

People say "Marriages are made in heavens", Wilde would say "Divorces are made in heavens". People say "Time is money", Wilde would say "Time is loss of time".

The author often touches upon the main peculiarities of triangle of art where "lie is the truth of other people" and "the debt is the thing which we demand from others, but don't do it ourselves".

Echoing strongly to the opposition of the surrounding reality, Wilde himself declares a range of oppositions. He often depicts a sensitive cynic or an immoral moralist, or a dreamy skeptic. He challenges everyone to figure out something comic in tragic and feel tragic in comic. The state of acting neutrally is not common to him. He is sure that idleness is the hardest work in the world, the mask is more interesting than face, theatre is more real than life. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is itself a critique of the ideals put forth by Aestheticism. "Dorian Gray" is in its heart a story of a man who tries to lead a totally aesthetic life. One of the aesthetic movement's basic tenets is that only art, not life, can be perfect. As such, life should seek to imitate art. In Dorian Gray's image Wilde constructs the embodiment of this principle. Dorian is enticed by Lord Henry Wotton to fall into the aesthetic lifestyle, which Lord Henry describes as a new Hedonism. "Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. "Be afraid of nothing"- this is a new Hedonism - that what our century seeks (Wilde 1891:34). Dorian does become not only a symbol, but also a living avatar of Aestheticism itself. Dorian Gray, like the aesthetic conception of art, needs no morals and remains ever beautiful. Dorian, guided by Lord Henry, falls rather fantastically into sin. His first brush with love turns sour as Dorian finds himself incapable of loving Sybil Vane for more than her stage art, "He had dreamed of her as a great stage artist, had given his love to her because he had thought her great, Then she had disappointed him" (Wilde 1891:88). The expression of love causes Sybil to be incapable of acting. And Dorian becomes responsible for the destruction both of great art and life.

Dorian is killed at the end of the novel, undone by his own conscience, while the painting survives. The natural order is restored. The painting becomes "a splendid por-

trait of Dorian as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty,” in spite of Dorian’s attack on it (Wilde 1891:210). And Dorian becomes the picture of his picture, “withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage”.

In the novel “The Picture of Dorian Gray”, Oscar Wilde uses symbolism and the depiction of character’s inner thoughts to enhance the meaning of the relationship between beauty and sins. The beautiful hanging represents the appearance of the beauty and youth; however, the painting itself represents his sins and old age. Oscar Wilde uses the individual’s inner thoughts to put emphasis on the conflict between beauty and sins. In Dorian’s thoughts, he is at first fighting against crimes and sins but afterwards, he totally succumbs to all the “infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins” (Wilde 1891:77). The author uses a lot of depiction of the transformation in one’s character to portray his inner conflict and also to explore the idea around beauty and sins.

The conclusion suggests that art is perfectly capable of existing without morals but human life is not. Wilde kills Dorian Gray, aestheticism itself, on the altar of his own fallacy, believing he could live as art. Although art needs no morality affixed to it, ultimately humans are corruptible.

The novel touches upon different linked categories – principles of mankind, love, friendship, devotion, betrayal. Each of these categories are illustrated picturesquely which need to be elucidated through the light of paradoxes. Paradox is a central tactic used in the novel. Lord Henry’s speeches are paradox-based. Paradox is one of the most significant elements in the novel, found Lord Henry’s speech is expressed by different tropes and figures of speech. Wilde’s style of writing is full of charm and wit. In the famous novel Lord Henry comments on friendship which is a realization of a paradox through anaphora:

I choose my friends for their good looks, my acquaintances for their good characters and my enemies for their good intellects. A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies. (Wilde 1958:28)

Another realization of a paradox through antithesis in Lord Henry’s comment on friendship may evoke different feelings and motivations with different ranks of people:

Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship and it is far the best ending for one. (Wilde 1958:21)

In the following example he vividly depicts his attitude to the whole mankind and implicitly shows his negligence towards the people living in the same society. This example is realized through anaphora:

I like persons better than principles and I like persons with no principles better than anything else in the world. (Wilde 1958:17)

The following example shows a strategy of a universal truth which many people follow without realizing it. The idea of paradox is realized through antithesis:

We do not realize that we live in an age when unnecessary things are our only necessity. (Wilde 1958:30)

In the following example Lord Henry assures that in order to reach his full capabilities, Dorian should not have to adjust to the lives of others (by marrying Sybil Vane) and suggests the idea that selfishness is beneficial for growth. This idea is realized through antithesis which may be viewed as chiasmus as well.

When we are happy we are always good, but when we are good we are not always happy. (Wilde 1958:57)

Dorian accepts the idea that will and attraction of love will be lost, and love will become bothersome and dull. This is later proved when Sybil Vane is the adorer of Dorian Gray and yet Dorian feels no attraction to her anymore. This thought of women hindering men to do great things indirectly persuades Dorian that marriage is not beneficial in life. The following statement is realized through antithesis:

Women...inspire us with the desire to do masterpieces, and always prevent us from carrying them out." (Wilde 1958:58)

The following witticism seems true but it actually puts people down and degrades them. This paradox is realized by means of anticlimax.

"Men marry because they are tired, and women- because they are curious: both are disappointed." (Wilde 1958:34)

In the following statement the author again uses anticlimax to create a paradox:

There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about. (Wilde 1958:59)

Wilde's paradoxes are full of aesthetics and charm and the following example of paradox is expressed by antithesis:

The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield it. (Wilde 1958:67)

In the following example Lord Henry shows his attitude towards women through chiasmus:

Women have no appreciation of good looks: at least good women have not. (Wilde 1958:45)

According to Lord Henry the whole mankind is divided into two parts. The following statement of paradox is realized by means of antithesis.

There are only two kind of people who are really fascinating: people who know absolutely everything, and people who know absolutely nothing.
(Wilde 1958:36)

Thus we can conclude that our analysis shows that paradoxes used in O. Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" are full of charm and wit. They are expressed mainly by antithesis, repetition (anaphora), chiasmus, anticlimax which serve a profound basis for making the author's individual style distinguishable and recognizable.

References:

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Պարադոքսները Օսկար Ուայլդի «Գորիան Գրեյի դիմանկարը» ստեղծագործության մեջ

Գրական ստեղծագործության հիմնական գործառնություններից է գեղագիտական ներգործությունը ընթերցողի վրա: Օ. Ուայլդի «Գորիան Գրեյի դիմանկարը» ստեղծագործությունը իր գեղագիտական ներգործության առաքելությունը կատարելապես իրագործել է դեռևս XIX-րդ դարից ի վեր: Գրական երկի գաղափարական հենքը կազմում են պարադոքսները, որոնք է՛լ ավելի տպավորիչ են դարձնում հեղինակի խոսքը և նրա վերաբերմունքը արտաքին աշխարհին ու նրա մեջ տիրող բարքերին:

Պարադոքսը նաև գեղագիտական կատեգորիա է, որը տվյալ ստեղծագործության մեջ արտահայված է հակադրության, խաչաձևման, նույնասկիզբ կրկնության, իջնող աստիճանավորման միջոցներով: Երբեմն միևնույն ասույթը կարելի է դիտարկել՝ ելնելով մի քանի արտահայտչամիջոցների դիտանկյունից: