English Fairy Tales' Usage of Irony

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Abstract
This article looks at how irony is used in different English fairy tales. The author also offers a number of ideas about the subject.
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A literary narrative, it was created only in the Victorian era in England, although it emerged as an autonomous genre in other European literatures much earlier (in the middle of the 18th century in France, at the beginning of the 19th century in Germany). Naturally, this does not imply that children's literature did not exist in England until the middle of the 1800s. Simultaneously, the writing that was enlightening and moral in nature predominated and was typically fairly didactic. In line with the demands of rigorous Puritan morality, its primary objective was to inculcate in the kid a number of ethical standards and facts, such as the notions that hard effort invariably results in financial well-being and that the idle and lazy will burn in hell. The writers took great care to address the young reader who is the intended audience for this kind of writing. These instructive lessons were far from lighthearted or humorous in tone. Regarding enjoyable reading, it was mostly offered in the shape of inexpensive folktale, ballad, or retellings of roving, exciting narratives that were wholly free of didactics.

Through the use of irony, the Victorian romantics were able to synthesize the two ideas of entertainment and education, making children's reading delightful and beneficial.

Since it actively draws elements of a folk story, such as myth, epic, tradition, and legend, in addition to literary genres itself, the English literary narrative was first presented in quite a variety of genre alterations. In the 40s and 60s of the 1800s, notable writers including Charles Dickens, W.M. Thackeray, and J. Raskin penned the story. The tales of the famous "Oxfords" appeared in the same period: C. Kingsley, J. MacDonald, Lewis Carroll. In its direction a literary tale already at an early stage covers a wide range of topics: from serious moral-ethical and religious-philosophical aspects to frankly parodic and absurd, continuing the tradition of "nonsense literature". However, irony is invariably presented in one form or another in almost any English fairy tale and because of this it constitutes is one of the most permanent style-forming features inherent in the genre as a whole. It should be noted that irony, which is absent in the "fairy tale" intonation of a folk tale, penetrates into the author's tale almost from the moment of its appearance. First of all, irony has a universal, "Socratic" (according to F. Schlegel) character in the tales of German romantics – L. Tieck and early Hoffmann, and "this external and traditional-conceptual world as a whole ... and in each of its components becomes the subject of ironic influence, ironic rethinking" [В.П. Федоров 2004: 48- 49].

Echoes of this universal romantic irony, greatly modified and reinterpreted, are felt in the English Victorian fairy tale - especially in Lewis Carroll. In addition, irony in most English fairy tales is also of a more specific, applied nature. It is necessary connecting element that helps to bring the alternative conventional-fairy worlds created by the writer's fantasy as close to reality as possible, to make them comfortable, recognizable, less frighteningly mysterious for children's perception, and at the same time more

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voluminous and polysemantic for the perception of an adult. It is no coincidence that most of the works of this genre in English literature have a "double addressee". They turn out to be equally interesting and attractive for both children and their parents' thanks largely to the same constant irony.

Let's try to consider with specific examples the most common ways of expressing the author's irony on the material of the most famous fairy tales of this period, belonging to the pen of the aforementioned writers. We will try to highlight and list those general techniques that can be observed (to a greater or lesser extent) in each of these authors with all their genre-style diversity and undoubted differences in the general tone and content.

The most common type of ironic expression is the author's commentary (especially characteristic of the style of the tales of Dickens, Thackeray, Kingsley and MacDonald). The pathos of such a comment can vary from a soft, slyly good-natured humorous tone to caustic sarcasm and sarcastic satire. At the same time, the authors willingly resort to techniques traditional for English prose (for example, an ironic litote (understatement)). When Princess Angelica in Thackeray's fairy tale "The Ring and the Rose" loses her senses, the king orders to pour on her from the teapot, "... and indeed, boiling water soon brought her highness to consciousness" [У.М. Теккерей 2003: 196]; or, conversely, to hyperbole (overstatement): "This proverb expresses the wisdom of our ancestors, and if my wicked language dared to change it, you would have the right to say that our country is heading for the

abyss" [Ч. Диккенс 2004: 113]. The author's comment can sometimes acquire a generalizing and aphoristic connotation. So, for example, when telling that the king forgot to invite someone to the christening of his daughter (of course, as it turns out later, an evil sorceress), the author remarks: mind and choice [Дж. Макдоналд 2003: 438].

In those cases when the events of a fairy tale fully unfold within a conventional fairytale space, as close as possible to the topos and atmosphere of a folk tale ("in a certain kingdom, in a certain state"). The introduction of an emphatically realistic everyday detail becomes a characteristic ironic device. We already meet this phenomenon in the tales of German romantics, Tieck and Hoffmann, and the Victorians. For example, the king in Dickens's fairy tale "The Magic Bone" receives a salary, which, however, is not enough to support the queen and their nineteen children; in the morning he goes to work, to his office, and on the way he may well go to the fish store to buy a pound and a half of salmon at the request of the queen ("a piece not too close to the tail").

At the same time, every detail, intruding into a fairy tale, does not destroy it. On the contrary, it organizes the action and is plot-forming. There is a "magic remedy" (according to Propp), which turns out to be an ordinary fish bone that fulfills a wish if it is made on time. The lack of salary, as it turns out, is the main "shortage" that is successfully eliminated with this magical remedy. Thackeray's style is characterized by frequent mention in the conventionally fabulous art space

of the kingdoms of Paphlagonia and Pontia products of famous and popular brands, as well as realities familiar to any Englishman of that era: Warren's waxes, Astley's circus, Wombwell's menagerie or company of light beer Bass's Charrington. Sometimes the real detail is "woven" into the list of fabulous fictional images and is listed alongside them: for example, in the list of awards that the court painter is awarded, along with the Order of the Pumpkin of the Sixth Class and the Order of the Cucumber (a rather transparent allusion to the English orders of the Garter and Thistle), the real-life regalia is also mentioned: the Order of St. Patrick, which, of course, enhances the ironic and parodic effect.

Another frequently encountered technique is the use of speaking names, which may contain an ironic characterization of the character: Countess Gruffanuff from Thackeray's tale "The Ring and the Rose", chimney sweep Grimes (grime - ingrained dirt) from the tale of Charles Kingsley "Children of the Waters", or Princess Yashwamdam (princess Makemnoit) from McDonald's fairy tale "Weightless Princess", - or give all the same everyday flavor to the fabulous story. Most often, a household detail in a name is adjacent to a fairytale, and the ironic effect is based on a contrasting sound: for example, in Raskin's fairy tale "King of the Golden River" a magical creature that personifies a natural element - the Southwest Wind - is signed with the title (South West Wind, esquire), and the king from Dickens's fairy tale "The Magic Bone" has not only a traditional serial number, but also a surname: king

Watkins the First. Sometimes the names have an emphatically foreign (most often Italian or German) sounding, which is especially characteristic of Dickens and Thackeray, in whose tales there is a strong parody element: king Valoroso XXIV (King Brave XXIV) and general Hedzoff (Рубиголофф) from Thackeray or Prince Certainpersoniom (Одинчеловеккио) by Dickens. Sometimes part of a phraseological unit or a saying is used during the process of creating names. For example, in the case of the Hatter or the Cheshire Cat in Lewis Carroll's tale "Alice in Wonderland"; the second component of such a phraseological unit is not called, but it is implied, since the stable connotation that arises in the mind of a reading native speaker (the Hatter is madness, the Cheshire Cat is a smile) is fully justified in the course of the development of the action and becomes a completely exhaustive characteristic of the character - the owner of such name.

Irony can also be manifested in the speech characteristics of the characters, since dialogues and monologues almost always play an important functional role in a literary fairy tale and, as a rule, occupy a rather significant volume in the text of the work. The speech of this or that fairytale hero is often parody either in relation to certain literary clichés, or in relation to stable patterns of behavior. For example, King Brave from the already mentioned Thackeray tale from time to time begins to get lost in his monologues on a pretentious blank verse, which is immediately noted in the author's ironic commentary: His

Majesty continued to convince himself (although, of course, the blank verse is not yet an argument) [У.М. Теккерей 2003: 138]. Prince Lillio's speech also changes at the moment when he opens his incognito to friends and enters into an open "fight for the throne", and his transition from prose to blank verse with the use of special vocabulary and flowery rhetorical turns (according to the author, it is due to his awareness of his mission: Now he did not express himself otherwise. He was not just some ordinary mortal! [У.М. Теккерей 2003: 225].

The models of behavior are often ridiculed in the fairy tale. First of all, it is necessary to mention the manner of adults in handling and talking with children. For example, in the speech of the White Queen from Lewis Carroll's fairy tale, the intonations of a strict governess or a classy bonna are clearly audible: Pronounce the words clearly and do not touch your fingers ... You can make a reverance not after answering, but before - while you are thinking. It will save you time. [L. Carroll 1967: 142- 143]. The ironic effect is sometimes enhanced by a kind of inversion, when the object of such mentoring instructions is not children, but adults themselves - especially if they are not mere mortals, but – kings. Of course, only creatures occupying an even higher rank in the hierarchy of children's consciousness (namely wizards or fairies) can afford to speak in such a tone and read lectures to the royals. This is how the Fairy Grandmarine treats King Watkins the First in Dickens's fairy tale "The Magic Bone": Be patient a little, sir, the Fairy Grandmarine sternly told him. - Do not interrupt others until they have finished speaking. And what is this habit you adults have - you are always interrupting everyone." The fairy's reaction to the king's timid questions, trying to figure out the meaning of her instructions, is most like the irritation of a parent tired of endless childish questions: "Are you going to be good or not, sir ?! She cried, stamping her foot. - Why and why! You always want to know why ... Because! There you are! Got? I'm tired of your grown-up "why"!" [Ч. Диккенс 2004: 14].

Quite often used techniques in a Victorian fairy tale are also ironic-parody quotations or imitation of someone else's manner. As noted by N.M. Demurov, "in terms of irony, the tales of Dickens and Thackeray are focused on second-rate examples of melodramatic and adventure literature as well as on their own works (in both cases, we find in them ironic models of our own themes, characters, plots). The irony here is primarily parody or self-parody" [Н.М. Демурова 1991: 299]. The use of parodied texts and ironic imitation of the manner of one or another author can be both hidden (without mentioning the cited source), and explicit: "If I had the gift of James, I would describe in paints the mental torment of Hrabus, his sparkling gaze and flared nostrils, as well as his robe, handkerchief and shoes. But since I do not have such a talent, I can only say that Hrabus was left alone with himself" [У.М. Теккерей 2003: 137]. It is also worth noting that in the texts of Thackeray's tales, one can find hidden and explicit reminiscences and quotations not only from second-rate literary specimens, but also, for

example, from Byron or Shakespeare, used in an invariably ironic context. Hidden ironic paraphrases of other people's prose and poetic texts are found (although much less often in MacDonald and Kingsley), and, of course, represent a special sphere for travesty-comic interpretation in Lewis Carroll's tales.

Despite the fact that the animalistic literary tale "in its pure form" appears in English literature a little later, already among the early Victorians (first of all, with Lewis Carroll) - the ironic and comic effect is sometimes based on the likening of representatives of the animal world to people with their habits, manners, clothes, talk, ambition and eccentricities (Frog, White Rabbit, Caterpillar, etc.). This tradition will be picked up and continued in the works of authors who will later turn to the genre variety of animalistic fairy tales: Kenneth Graham, Beatrice Potter, Rudyard Kipling, etc.

Word play, which includes ironic playing with all kinds of tropes and stable phrases, the use of polysemy words, especially on the basis of homonymy or paronymy, funny etymological hypotheses, the invention of neologisms, etc. constitutes a special lexico-semantic element that reigns in English literary fairy tale. It is a subject that deserves a separate painstaking study. Here are just some examples that are far from exhaustive of the whole variety of methods of ironic word use and word play in the works of the period under consideration.

Irony arises very often during the process of rethinking stereotypical phrases and cliches, when the metaphorical or allegorical meaning contained in them is discarded and the words are understood in their direct, original meaning - or in some other way - but always unexpected, different from the usual. For example, in the fairy tales of Lewis Carroll, the fabulous inhabitants of Wonderland now and then use words of Alice in literally interpreting. For example, "kill time", "sit down for a minute", etc. (as a rule, the object part of such a phrase is personified and written with a capital letter). In turn, Alice, with her childish perception, sometimes understands some speech patterns not in their usual, clichéd meaning, but puts into them the meaning that seems to her more appropriate to the given situation: for example, to the Caterpillar's proposal ("explain yourself"), Alice replies that she cannot explain who she is and who she is at the moment.

Another characteristic way of ironically playing with stable linguistic associations is playing with the ambiguity of words. The polysemy factor can even be plot-forming, as in MacDonald's fairy tale "The Weightless Princess", where the fact that the word gravity has two meanings: "gravity" and "seriousness" leads to the fact that when the princess loses it, "Looses gravity", she loses it in all the senses that are contained in this expression - that is, she loses not only weight, but also the ability to be serious.

This tendency in the English literary tale was preserved at all stages of its further development and became an integral and necessary stylistic component, its kind of "visiting card", manifested to a greater or lesser extent

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among the majority of English writers
who continued this genre tradition.

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