

## STYLISTIC STRATEGIES OF IRONY GROUNDED IN MIXED REGISTERS OF COMMUNICATION IN DAVID LODGE'S *SMALL WORLD*

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### Abstract

Critics have agreed that irony is the unifying key of David Lodge's *Small World*. As the result of a contradiction between what is expected, according to human mentality, habits within a socio-linguistic context, and the sudden denial of it by certain inadequate linguistic or social manifestation, irony is a way of expressing the author's belief that the reader will laugh at the absurdities of life, either social, or emotional, at common places and platitudes. Considering the linguistic aspects of style as common instruments of irony, the article focuses on the stylistic strategies of rendering it in the campus novel: paraphrases, paradoxes, clichés with revised structures, barbarisms, hyperboles, allusions, litotes, repetitions etc. The investigation will demonstrate that the ironic value is derived mainly from the blending or the abrupt shifts in registers of communication, employed in the literary text to illustrate clashes of conceptions and visions of life, whether plainly academic or simply hinting at it.

**Keywords:** *activation of meaning, antiphrasis, barbarism, colloquial register, communicative transparency, connotative reading, cultural analogies, formal register, humorous sources, incongruous semantic associations, informal register, intralingual equivalences, ironic communication, ironic value, irony, misreading of meaning, paraphrase, polysemantism, process of decoding, register-shifting, revised cliché, stylistic analysis, stylistic sources, stylistic strategies.*

The approaches from different theoretical perspectives have brought forward the multiple understandings of irony and the necessity of an integrator modality of defining it. We will limit ourselves to the approaches that are predominant within the stylistics linguistics field and deliberately ignore the vast literature on the pragmatic and philosophical uses of irony. Irony is defined by tradition as an antiphrasis, a statement that expresses, in a certain context, the opposite of its literal meaning. The ironic communication presupposes a semantic inversion between the literal meaning (primary) and the non-literal (implicit). As a cognitive linguistic phenomenon, irony forces the reader to participate actively in the process of decoding.

Geoffrey Leech remarks that "The basis of irony as applied to language is the human disposition to adopt a pose, or to put on a mask."<sup>1</sup> The mask does not hide the truth completely, it just shades it in such a way the audience is always aware of the true state of affairs. So, in order for irony to work, the audience should act as an accomplice with the clear purpose of revealing the hidden affective meaning of the linguistic expression. In this way the responsibility of ironic value is left to the interlocutor as well, who can interpret it according to his own values and communicative intentions.

Irony, in all its forms, originates in the same communicational fundament trenchantly forwarded by Muecke: "irony is the art of being clear without being obvious."<sup>2</sup> Clarity does not mean here communicative transparency, but it involves that an ironic comment can be decoded with linguistic and stylistic means by appealing to lexical, morphological, syntactical and style analyses. Nevertheless, the communicative sense stays opaque because of its semantic indeterminacy. In this sense irony is neither "obvious," nor transparent.<sup>3</sup>

David Lodge's *Small World* is chiefly concerned with an enduring human illusion – the dream of a simple, fulfilling life set ironically against the huge and intricate background of globalization. The novel is the ironic reiteration of the classical myth of the quest, but deprived of any grandeur as the object of the quest is not precisely known by its subject. It is, in fact, another form of the drama of the modern man, lost in this overwhelming universe of signs to which he looks for an integrator sense, an indication which should ensure the control over any possibility of communication.

Critics<sup>4</sup> have agreed that irony is the unifying key of the novel. The strategies and sources of

irony submitted to our analysis, paraphrases, paradoxes, clichés with revised structures, barbarisms, hyperboles, allusions, litotes, repetitions, are grounded in a blending of registers with abrupt, unexpected shifts illustrating clashes of conceptions.

Thus, common presences in Lodge's novel are the paraphrases, as restatement of ideas:

"Fine pair of knockers there, wouldn't you say?" Dempsey remarked.

Persse turned on him fiercely. "Knockers? *Knockers?* Why in the name of God call them that?"

Dempsey backed away slightly. "Steady on. What would you call them, then?"

"I would call them ... I would call them ... twin domes of her body's temple," said Persse. (*Small World* 8-9) (the author's emphasis)

The feeling of admiration aroused by feminine beauty is expressed with contrastive choice of linguistic images from different stylistic registers. On the one hand, in a vulgar colloquial register, Robin Dempsey trivializes the concept of "breasts" through the slang *knockers: Fine pair of knockers there*. On the other hand, in a formal style, Persse McGarrigle, uses the paraphrase, with metaphoric sources, *twin domes of her body's temple*. Although both instances of paraphrases have the same reference in common, they are artificially set in opposition by the choice of registers in the descriptive communication.

The following paraphrase exemplifies incongruous association of registers with ironic intent as valid attitudes and visions in the academic life:

"Of course – look at that title: '*The English School of Criticism*.' He should have called it '*The English School of Genteel Crap*.'" (199)

The syntagm paraphrased is the title of a review article on two books, Professor Zapp's and Professor Swallow's. The author of the review is Rudyard Parkinson who pushes his own claim to the UNESCO chair by detracting his likely competitor's book, Morris Zapp's, under the cover of praising "Philip Swallow's pathetic little book on Hazlitt" (199). Morris

Zapp understands his move and explains the purpose of the article through the paraphrase *The English School of Genteel Crap*, in which the vulgar *crap*, with the plain meaning of "feces," predetermined by *genteel* stands for "rubbish, nonsense marked by false prudery." The vulgar note of the paraphrase suggests bitter irony at the academic who resorts to such dishonest strategy in order to get promoted and at the system that supports such cheap strategies.

As Lodge himself convincingly states "*Small World*, of course, is a novel, a comic novel."<sup>5</sup> The label of comic writing is closely connected to irony. In speaking about irony as a source of comic one should always bear in mind its immediate effect upon the reader: laughter as an effect of humour. Some of the richest sources of humour have always been the misunderstandings resulted from enticed linguistic expectations and / or the insufficient knowledge of a foreign language as in the following excerpts in which the emphases in italics have been made by the author:

(i) "Another, smaller advertisement urging the passer-by to '*Have a Fling with Faggots Tonight*' is not, Morris knows from his previous sojourn in the region, a manifesto issued by Rummidge Gay Liberation, but an allusion to some local delicacy based on offal." (97)

(ii) *Dear Mr Frobisher,*  
*I am now nearly halfway through my translating of "Could Try Harder". I am sorry to bother you so soon with further questions, but I would be very grateful if you would help me with the following points. Page references are the second impression of 1970, as before. (...)*  
*p. 107, 3 down. "Bugger me, but I feel like some faggots tonight." Does Ernie mean that he feels a sudden desire for homosexual intercourse? If so, why does he mention that to his wife?"* (104-105)

(iii) "No, really, it's fascinating. Listen. "Page 86, 7 up. '*And a bit of spare on the back seat.*' *Is it a spare tyre that Enoch keeps on the back seat of his car?*" (...)  
"I mean, you can see the problem," says

Ronald. It's a perfectly natural mistake. I mean, why does 'a bit of spare' mean sex?" (...)

"Page 93, 2 down. 'Enoch, 'e went spare.' Does this mean Enoch went to get a spare part for his car? You've got to feel sorry for the bloke." (108)

In (i) Lodge mocks at expectations, starting from the polysemantism of the word *faggot*. Meanings are sensitive to contexts. The meaning of a word in a sentence depends partly on its lexical reading as part, and partly on its interaction with the other elements in the sentence. Still, when dealing with polysemy, there are cases of misreading of meaning owed to linguistic interaction within the context. Thus, in *Have a Fling with Faggots Tonight* the first meaning activated in the mind of the reader is that of "male homosexual." The activation of meaning is triggered by background knowledge and by the presence of the noun *fling* which has also sexual connotations, "a casual or brief love affair." Therefore, one may assume that its presence in the text of an advertisement is an invitation to try new erotic experiences with people of the same sex. Lodge smiles at our credulity and presently paraphrases the advertisement: *Have a Fling with Faggots Tonight is not (...) a manifesto issued by Rummidge Gay Liberation, but an allusion to some local delicacy based on offal*. He is perfectly aware of his readers' misreading as he starts by denying initial impressions and expectations through the use of the negation, then he adds an incidental clause, *Morris knows from his previous sojourn in the region*, which comes right before the main information, thus enhancing the suspense, just like in a good joke: *Have a Fling with Faggots Tonight" is not, Morris knows from his previous sojourn in the region, a manifesto issued by Rummidge Gay Liberation, but an allusion to some local delicacy based on offal*.

After Lodge has mocked at his readers' credulity, he altruistically gives them the opportunity to laugh at somebody else's expenses. And they do in fragment (ii), in which the polysemous word *faggots* is met again. As having previously been warned, the readers already know the meaning activated in the text

of the novel. With the information in mind, they feel entitled to laugh at somebody else's mistake. Thus, Akira Sakazaki translates in Japanese Ronald Frobisher's novel, *Could Try Harder*. During the translation process he comes across some linguistic problems caused by insufficient knowledge of English as a foreign language or, simply, by cultural differences. In order to remedy the problems he writes to Frobisher asking for clarifications: *p. 107, 3 down. "Bugger me, but I feel like some faggots tonight." Does Ernie mean that he feels a sudden desire for homosexual intercourse? If so, why does he mention that to his wife?"* The first reaction to Sakazaki's paraphrases is laughter, but his earnest mistake is explainable in linguistic terms. The meaning that sprang to his mind is the one he knows. Moreover, the vulgar connotation of *faggot* is activated by the presence in the context of the word *bugger*, which has also the meaning of "sodomite."<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, irrespective of the linguistic circumstances, the readers laugh indulgently, omitting the fact that the irony was aimed at them first.

In (iii) we have the same situation as in (ii), in which the activation of a meaning is triggered by the presence in the context of other words belonging to the same semantic sphere as one of the meanings of the polysemous word: 'And a bit of spare on the back seat.' Is it a spare tyre that Enoch keeps on the back seat of his car?' Akira Sakazaki, not knowing that *a bit of a spare* means sexual intercourse, makes the best use of the context and starting from the presence in the context of the words *the back seat*, semantically marked  $\text{\$+ Car components\text{\$}}$ , he activates the same meaning in *spare*, that is "something extra that is kept to be used if it is needed, especially spare tyre"<sup>7</sup>, also marked as  $\text{\$+ Car components\text{\$}}$ . The same meaning is activated in *Page 93, 2 down. 'Enoch, 'e went spare.'* Does this mean Enoch went to get a spare part for his car? In this case the source of humour is the insufficient knowledge of the English language as Sakazaki is not aware that the idiom *to go spare* means "to get very upset or angry."<sup>8</sup>

In the following fragment the paraphrase is an analogy in which irony is achieved through

the disproportion of the semantic areas to be compared:

"Albert resents this regular early morning errand, and complains about it frequently. He complains about now. Michel urges him to look upon the chore in the light of modern narrative theory. "It is a quest, cheri, a story of departure and return: you venture out, and you come back, loaded with treasure. You are a hero." (112)

Albert, Professor Tardieu's assistant and lover resents his regular morning errand, the purchase of croissants and rolls, together with a copy of *Le Matin*. Professor Tardieu paraphrases his chore as a knightly quest: *It is a quest, cheri, a story of departure and return: you venture out, and you come back, loaded with treasure. You are a hero*. The disproportion of the association is humorous: a simple chore is *a story of departure and return*, going out is hyperbolically identified as *venturing out*, displaying  $\xi+$  Adventure $\tau$  features and the bag of croissants and rolls is conceived of as *treasure*. The conclusion, highly exaggerated, is that Albert turns from a mere errand boy into *a hero*.

The following paraphrases are instances that language, in its linguistic representations, semantic and grammatical, is an inherent part of culture. On his quest for the girl she loves, Persse arrives in Tokyo and meets a group of Japanese translators. While involved in polite conversation on literary issues, Persse finds out that one of them saw a play by Shakespeare, entitled *The Strange Affair of The Flesh and The Bosom*. He is puzzled as he is not aware of the existence of this play, but Akira Sakazaki explains that it is the old translation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Persse gets amused and solicits to be told other "funny ones" (294) which we listed below:

"The Merchant of Venice" – *The Strange Affair of the Flesh and the Bosom* (294)

"Romeo and Juliet" – *Lust and Dream of the Transitory World* (294)

"Julius Cesar" – *Swords of Freedom* (294)

"Pericles" – *The Mirror of Sincerity* (295)

"All's Well That Ends Well" – *The Oar Well-Accustomed to the Water* (295)

"The Comedy of Errors" – *The Flower in the Mirror and the Moon on the Water* (295)

According to Roman Jakobson's triad classification of translation from a semiotic perspective (intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation), we have here cases of an interlingual translation, between different languages, as opposed to the previous fragments where we had examples of intralingual translations, inside the same language, when something was explained, using paraphrases or analogies etc<sup>9</sup>. The interlingual translations from English to Japanese are instances that "languages are also deeply rooted in the cultures they stand for and whose values they enshrine."<sup>10</sup> The translations of the titles were not done by focus on the word and sentence levels, but through the examination of texts in connection to the whole communicative socio-cultural contexts in which the texts are to be received.

From a stylistic point of view, David Lodge's paraphrases are humorous and elicit laughter through the abrupt shift of register, the unexpected or erroneous semantic associations, incongruous cultural analogies and striking interlingual equivalences. The irony is aimed at linguistic and cultural intricacies of the messages and the process of decoding.

Another stylistic strategy intended to illicit humorous effects is the use of clichés in forms revised either from a lexical or syntactic perspective. Using as a starting point Constanța Avădanei's definition of cliché as fixed group of words of short (*blue blood*) or long dimensions (*sic transit gloria mundi*), with invariable word-order and meaning derived from the overall group of words and phrases,<sup>11</sup> we have selected a number of aphorisms and famous sayings Lodge has revised in a creative original manner in the text of the novel. From a stylistic point of view the revised clichés are devices employed to amplify statements by endowing them with new shades of meaning and potential for irony.

Thus, in the following fragment the revise technique is explained by the author himself:

"Each section has at its head a well-known proverb or aphorism about women in which the

key-word has been replaced by “man” or “men.” She has already written, “Frailty Thy Name Is Man,” “No Fury Like A Man Scorned” and “Wicked Men Bother One. Good Men Bore One. This Is The Only Difference Between Them.” Presently she is working on the inversion of Freud’s celebrated cry of bafflement: “What Does A Man Want?” the answer, according to Desiree is, “Everything – and then some.” (87)

After having divorced her husband because she felt enchained by his dominating behaviour, Desiree Zapp becomes a famous feminist writer who fights so that women grasp the power men enjoy in our patriarchal society. Her second book on the subject is expected to be another success and as such the writer makes use of some unusual linguistic and stylistic strategies, such as replacing the key-words with *man* or *men* in well-known aphorisms and quotations. Her first choice is Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In his first of his great soliloquies, Hamlet recalls scenes of tenderness between his mother, Queen Gertrude, and her deceased husband. Within a month of his death she marries her brother-in-law, and Hamlet breaks into an impassionate contrasting of his splendid father with this uncle whom he despises. As a consequence, his mother’s inconsistency makes him exclaim: “(...) frailty, thy name is woman!”<sup>12</sup> By replacing *woman* with *man*, Desiree stripes the quotation of its misogynistic association and turns it into a linguistic weapon against men: *Frailty Thy Name Is Man*.

Desiree’s second choice uses as starting point William Congreve’s *The Mourning Bride* with “Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, / Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned,” usually paraphrased as “Hell has no fury like a woman scorned.” At first reading, the revised cliché seems to empower man with hyperbolized destructive forces, but, in fact, it degrades man by attributing him the inability of any sustained rational process: *No Fury Like A Man Scorned*. On the other hand, *Fury*, capitalized as in the text, may make reference to any of the avenging deities in the Greek mythology that would torment criminals and inflict plagues. The comparison of the man to such a deity is not at

all flattering, either from an ethical or aesthetical point of view.

Desiree’s third choice of cliché to revise is one of Oscar Wilde’s famous paradoxes: “Oh! Wicked women bother one. Good women bore one. That is the difference between them.”<sup>13</sup> Using the same technique of replacement, she comes up with *Wicked Men Bother One. Good Men Bore One. This Is The Only Difference Between Them*. The fourth revise is “What does a woman want?”, the great question that has never been answered, as Sigmund Freud himself admits in a letter to a friend<sup>14</sup>. Desiree Zapp changes the referent from *woman* to *man* and provides the so-long-awaited-for answer: *What Does A Man Want? Everything – and then some*.

Desiree’s revised clichés are expressions of outpourings of feminine frustration that led to an attack on man with comical effects. They are also excellent illustrations of (ludic) intertextuality, as allusions to other texts and, at the same time, appeals to the readers’ awareness of those texts. Cultures have produced works of art like novels, poems, plays and songs which become popular to their members. They also generate numerous linguistic expressions, equally well-established in formulaic language such as sayings or proverbs. Lodge taps such cultural resources and gracefully converts them into sources of mild irony.

“What she was doing she was pulling off his undershorts. “I think your wife exaggerated just a *leetle*, Morris,” she said, kneeling over him, her long cool fingers busy.

“*Ars longa*, in life shorter,” Morris murmured.” (137) (the author’s emphases)

Fulvia Morgana has an affair with Morris Zapp. Her sexual interest in her colleague is the result of her having read his ex-wife’s best-selling feminist novel, *Difficult Days*, which presents hyperbolized images of the Zapps’ marriage, among which their sexual practices. As a consequence, Fulvia is anxious to know if Morris’ fictional depiction measures the real one. At the remark that Desiree exaggerated a little when it came to his sexual organ, Morris replied reformulating the Latin translation of a Greek

aphorism *Ars longa, vita brevis*, commonly translated in English as *Art is long, life is short* and presently revised as *Ars longa, in life shorter*. The humorous effect is achieved through a technique of deception. The Latin opening entices the reader into expecting the rest of the aphorism to be delivered in the same language, but Morris switches to English and intervenes in the structure of the aphorism through the insertion of the preposition *in* and the suffix *-er*, specific to the comparative degree. Moreover, the area of reference is absolutely unexpected, the length of a penis. The immediate effect is laughter.

"Ah, shrugged Tardieu, removing his hand. "*C'est la vie, c'est la narration*. Each of us is a subject in search of an object. Have you by any chance seen a young man a blank velvet suit?" (200) (the author's emphasis)

The passage contains in repeated syntactic structure, with a change of subject from a different semantic field, the French aphorism *C'est la vie*. Employed most of the times as a barbarism, it is sometimes translated in English as "such is life" and is used to say that life is harsh, but one must accept it as such. Professor Michel Tardieu, in reply to Persse's statement that he is looking for a girl, revises the aphorism by expanding it to the level of literary theory, completing its meaning with an explanation: *C'est la vie, c'est la narration. Each of us is a subject in search of an object*.

"Well," says Persse. "*It's a small world*. Do you have the saying in Japan?"

"Narrow world," says Akira. "We say, '*It's a narrow world*.'" (295)

Another revised cliché is the paradoxical aphorism *It's a small world*. This time the revise is not the expression of an intention, but the result of linguistic differences. Thus, the western aphorism has as equivalent in Japanese *It's a narrow world*. In terms of referential area, both adjectives, *small* and *narrow*, aim at the same reference: in spite of the large dimensions of the world, one may always encounter an acquaintance in any place from the earth.

"I thought deconstructionists didn't

believe in the individual."

"They don't. But death is the one concept you can't deconstruct. Work back from there and you end up with the old idea of an autonomous self. *I can die, therefore I am*. I realized that when those radicals threatened to deconstruct *me*." (328)

In this fragment the humorous suggestion is realized against a morbid background. Any belief resulted from great theories seems hollow pretence when it comes to the most important critic of life, death. Morris Zapp admits this truth after having been kidnapped and threatened with death. As a consequence of this unpleasant experience he admits the flaws of deconstruction, the literary theory in which he has believed so far. In order to sustain his point of view, he ironically reformulates Rene Descartes' Latin philosophical statement *Cogito, ergo sum*, commonly translated in English as *I think, therefore I am* as *I can die, therefore I am* with the undebatable meaning that death resides in each individual and its possibility of occurrence is an intrinsic feature of life. The humorous effect is achieved with the blunt, grounded into the unavoidable reality of death, reformulation of the popular philosophical statement and with the use of the litotes *to deconstruct* for *to kill* in the end of the paragraph: *those radicals threatened to deconstruct me*.

The following revised cliché points at absurdity and irony at the language which loses its quality of transparent medium for the expression of ideas:

(i) He bent forward to read Persse's lapel badge. "University College, Limerick, eh?" he said, with a leer. "*There was a young lecturer from Limerick ... I suppose everyone says that to you*."

"Nearly everyone," Persse admitted. "But you know, they very seldom get further than the first line. There aren't many rhymes to 'Limerick'."

"What about '*dip his wick*'?" said Dempsey, after a moment's reflection. "That should have possibilities."

"What does it mean?"

Dempsey looked surprised. "Well, it

means, you know, having it off. Screwing.” Persse blushed. “The metre’s all wrong,” he said. ‘Limerick’ is a dactyl.”

“Oh? What’s ‘dip his wick’, then?”

“I’d say it was a catalectic trochee.” (7)

- (ii) Dempsey’s frown momentarily dissolved into a leer. “I’ve been working on that limerick,” he said. “What about this for a start:

*There was a young fellow from Limerick*

*Who tried to have sex with a candlestick ...”*

“It scans better than your last effort,” said Persse. “That’s about all I can say in its favour.” (37)

The dialogues in the two fragments are absurd. During a conference held at Rummidge, Persse meets Robyn Dempsey who, starting from his identification lapel badge, “*University College, Limerick,*” makes an allusion to an extremely popular clichéd opening line of limericks, usually resumed and parodied in fairly subtle ways: *There was a Young man named Mallory* or *There was an old man of St. Bees* or *There was an old man of Tobago* etc<sup>15</sup>. Here *Limerick* is a homonymic pun with a double meaning: 1) the name of a town in Ireland and 2) a popular form of short, humorous verse that is often nonsensical and frequently ribald<sup>16</sup>. As there are few rhymes to *Limerick*, Dempsey comes up with the taboo-idiom *dip his wick* as a successful rhyme. Persse ignores the meaning and feels embarrassed when Dempsey provides direct, vulgar synonyms: *having it off*, *screwing*. The sensation of bewilderment at the unexpected shift of register is prolonged with the debate on the rhythmic movement as *Limerick* is a dactyl, while *dip his wick* is a catalectic trochee.

The suggestion rendered is of smouldered conflict. Nothing that happened previously in the novel announces the mutual hostility between the two academics, except this exchange of “scientific” information on the versification technique. However, as the action unfolds, readers realize that the fragment was a strategy of anticipation used by the author to foretell the rivalry between the two men who become romantically interested in the same young woman. So, this absurd dialogue

announces that the positions of the opponents have been established and the two are expected to continue to attack each other, and they will in the second excerpt presented above, in which the vulgarity of register is preserved on the lexical level: *There was a young fellow from Limerick / Who tried to have sex with a candlestick...* At first reading it may be argued that the lines correspond to the tradition of the limerick as a nonsensical and ribald poetic genre, but on a deeper level the limerick is paper war unfolded, ironically, on the front of poetic technicality pertinence.

From a stylistic point of view, the impact of the revised clichés, as results of personal experiences, resides in the humorous remaking of already structured linguistic facts that are familiar, hence logical to the reader.

Barbarisms are inevitable linguistic presences in the academic universe. The academics are people with solid knowledge in their fields of expertise. This knowledge is openly exposed in formal academic activities such as conferences, lectures or in informal discussions. The purpose of the barbarisms in the literary discourse is to give the full measure to the academics’ cultural knowledge. Their use in the novel achieves irony through the unexpected association of registers: formal blended with informal, or colloquial. Mention should be made that all the barbarisms in the text of the novel are emphasized in italics by the author himself.

“There was a great stone on this site called the *omphalos*. The navel of the earth. I suppose that great cleft between the mountains was the vagina.” (244)

The presence of the barbarism, the Greek *omphalos*, explained in the text of the novel as “the navel of the earth” seems appropriate to the context, a trip on a site in Delphi. However, the formality of register brought about by the barbarism is shifted abruptly to colloquial through the comparison of a *great cleft between the mountains* with *vagina*. The annulment of the aesthetic of the imagery rendered emphatically by the Greek barbarism is doubled by a suggestion of sexual connotative reading in which *omphalos* becomes *phallus* due to

phonological similarity and *vagina* is identified by means of the definite article as intrinsic to the picture as a whole. In terms of stylistic analysis the choice of language is not vulgar, but the image suggested is, all the more that one can not escape the sensation of inappropriateness.

"Excuse me, mademoiselle," I said, "but this is the seventh lecture of mine that you have attended and your notebooks remains blank. Have I not uttered a single word that was worth recording?" Do you know what she said? "Professor Tardieu, it is not what you say that impresses me most, it is what you are silent about: ideas, morality, love, death, things ... this notebook" – she fluttered its vacant pages – "it is the record of your profound silences. *Vos silences profonds.*" §.‡ I went away glowing with pride. Later I wondered whether she was mocking me. What do you think?" (265)

The fragment is one of the best ironical illustrations of vanity in the academic circles. Professor Tardieu is puzzled that one of his students, Miss Angelica Pabst, has not written down any of the information he delivered during his lectures. The young lady is very diplomatic in her answer and claims that the notebook is a record of the information he kept silent about, enumerated as *ideas, morality, love, death, things*. The paradoxical image of the blank notebook as the record of profound silences is reinforced by the French barbarism *Vos silences profonds*, much more "glittering," stylistically speaking, hence more efficient when it comes to flattering.

Unlike in the previous examples, where the presence of the barbarisms does not require the reader to be familiar with these "pretentious" facts of language as they are explained in the context, in the following excerpts the explanation is not provided clearly, but suggested at the semantic level by different descriptive terms:

"Jogging, I believe they call it. It seems to be an epidemic psychological illness afflicting Americans these days. A form of masochism, like the *flagellantes* in the Middle Ages. (245)

In this fragment the barbarism *flagellantes*, of

Latin origin, is anticipated semantically by the NP *a form of masochism*, and denotes a religious Roman Catholic sect, in which people used to inflict pain upon themselves in order to achieve salvation. On a stylistic level, the presence of the barbarism in the text leads to humorous effects. Jogging is compared, in a climatic sequencing, first with a psychological illness with epidemic manifestations among the Americans, and then with a form of religious masochism in which the joggers are like the *flagellantes*, that is the fanatic religious people who used to whip themselves in order to redeem their sins. The humour resides in the plasticity of the imagery resulted from the association of two incongruous realities: jogging as leisure activity and soul redeeming as religious manifestation.

"Good Lord," said Philip, feeling himself turning pink with pleasure. "That must be Morris's influence. I'll have to write and thank him."

"I don't think so, darling," said Hillary, "because Parkinson was frightfully rude about Morris's book in the same review. He did you together."

"Oh, dear," said Philip, feeling an ignoble spasm of *Schadenfreude* at this news." (226)

*Schadenfreude* means "pleasure derived from the misfortunes of others." Although it exists as a loanword in English, it is used in the text as a barbarism because its capitalization, specific to German nouns, is preserved in order to emphasize the origin of the word. The barbarism, used as loanword in other languages as well, is presumed known, that is why Lodge renounces to explain it in the context. However, he anticipates it semantically by the evaluative adjective *ignoble*, which places them in the same notional sphere of §- Nobility of feeling‡.

Generally speaking, in any literary discourse, barbarisms are an attempt to broaden the basis of analogies. Their aim is to produce shocks of awareness through shifts in the cultural mood, but Lodge skilfully extends this aim to rendering irony at a specific universe from which barbarisms are naturally part of it.

Another source of irony in the text of the novel is the paradox as the association of



contradictory, absurd or opposite to common sense statements that finally prove to be valid and turn out to make good sense. As a form of ambiguity or indirectness, it is usually used to express irony or to convey humour.

Before proceeding with the analysis mention must be made that the paradoxes in *Small World* are contextual. The reader must pay attention to the linguistic as well as extra-linguistic circumstances in order to grasp the self-contradictory nuances.

"Running is sport. Jogging is punishment."

"You mean you don't enjoy it?"

"Enjoy it? Are you kidding? *I only do this for my health. It makes me feel so terrible, I figure it must be doing me good.*" (42)

The contextual irony is a clear source of humour. The excerpt opens with two simple declarative sentences meant to introduce some kind of truth based on personal experience: *Running is sport. Jogging is punishment.* Both running and jogging are forms of sport, but based on Morris Zapp's experience only running is sport, while jogging is perceived as *punishment*, term that activates instantly in the mind of the interlocutor (reader) other latent meanings: "pain," "aching," "physical discomfort." Nevertheless, Morris practices this form of physical exercise and admits he hates practicing it with the explanation that he does it only for his *health*, lexeme with opposite latent meanings activated, such as "well-being," "wellness," "robustness" etc. The paradox comes from the incongruity of the terms associated: jogging as physical punishment results into physical discomfort, which results into health beneficence. The interlocutor's bewilderment (equalled by the reader's) is best suggested by the annulment of the semantic reading of the verb *enjoy* first by a negation: *You mean you don't enjoy it?*, and then more complexly, by other two interrogative sentences in informal register, *Enjoying it? Are you kidding?*

"Why, hallo, Miss Maiden," he greeted her.

"I didn't know you were *interested in semiotics.*"

"I thought I should find out what is all about," she replied. "*One should never*

*dismiss what one does not understand.*"

"And what do you think so far?"

Miss Maiden, fluttered her fan: "I think it's *a lot of tosh,*" she declared. (196)

The fragment provides another contextual paradox resulted from the incongruity in the encoding-decoding process of language. Miss Maiden takes part in a conference on semiotics, a branch of linguistics she knows nothing about. Her purpose is to understand it. The intention is emphatically expressed through an aphorism: *One should never dismiss what one does not understand.* However, the wisdom with pedagogical nuances comprised in the aphorism is annulled suddenly through a shift of register: semiotics is *a lot of tosh*. The reader is prepared for the "shock" of the paradox by the unusual use of punctuation in the ante-positioned sentence, comma between the subject and the predicate: *Miss Maiden, fluttered her fan*, which ironically imitates the minimal action on a stage warning us that there is very little that will "happen" after the pretentious aphorism. The result is a clear contradiction between the expressed intention and its context of realization. The irony is achieved through the contrast between an ideal, boastfully emphasized by means of the aphorism and the actual situation, degraded by an infelicitous, from a linguistic register point of view, choice of lexis.

"You imply, of course, that what matters in the field of critical practice is not truth but difference. If everybody were convinced by your arguments, they should have to do the same as you and then there would be no satisfaction in doing it. *To win is to lose the game.*" (319)

The paradox consists in the semantic opposition between *win* and *lose*. To define one notion in terms of its antonym seems illogic, however the explanatory sentences ante-positioned to the paradox provides this one the quality of academic truth: difference propels forward into development of knowledge.

Another stylistic device Lodge uses artfully to render irony is repetition. Thus, one of the characters in the novel, Ronald Frobisher, is a writer who is introduced as belonging to The Angry Young Men Movement. Dismissing the

overall perspective upon the cultural movement, the characters in the story focus on the linguistic aspect of the phrase coined for the group of intellectuals from the 1950's:

(i) Why are all your fans foreigners, these days? Don't they know that the *Angry Young Man thing* is all over?"

"It's got nothing to do with the *Angry Young Man thing!*" says Ronald Frobisher, *angrily*. He opens another envelope. (108-109)

(ii) "Really? You know Mr. Frobisher? But that is wonderful! You must tell me all about him. What kind of man is he?"

"Well," says Persse. "He's very nice. But rather *irascible*."

"*Irascible*? That is a new word to me."

"It means, easily *angered*."

"Oh yes, of course, he was *Angry Young Man*." (295)

(iii) "When Persse got back to his point of origin, he found Ronald Frobisher in *angry* confrontation with Rudyard Parkinson. "What would you know about literary creation anyway, Parkinson?" Frobisher demanded." (174)

In the three excerpts above Ronald Frobisher is described each time through the use of the adjective *angry* and its morphological and stylistic variants. Thus, in (i) in a discussion on the obsolescence the cultural movement fell into, the name of the movement, derisively described as *thing*, *Angry Young Man*, appears twice and Ronald Frobisher's utterances are described by the adverbial variant, *angrily*. In (ii) the Japanese academic translating one of Frobisher's novels is eager to find out more about him from Persse McGarrigle. This one cannot think of another word to describe the author, but one pertaining to the semantic field of *Angry*, *irascible*, explained in the context as *easily angered*. The conclusion is paradoxical: it is obvious that Mr. Frobisher should be *easily angered* as he was an *Angry Young Man*. In (iii) Lodge resumes the adjective *angry* in another depiction of Frobisher who is, ironically, but somehow expectedly, involved in an *angry confrontation* with an academic.

The repetitions of the adjective *angry* with the morphological variants *angered* and *angrily* and the stylistic variant *irascible* render irony at the categorization and the coined phrases the literati come up with and are so proud of. In fact, the irony is directed against the excessive use of theoretical aspects of literature, critic and language, which deny the thrill of discovery, of reinvention of the act of reading, turning it into toilsome labour with scholastic implications.

To sum up, the investigation has shown that the stylistic strategies used to render irony are not necessarily new, but are combined and reinterpreted creatively through the grounding in the mixture or the abrupt shifts in the registers of communication illustrated through unexpected or incongruous associations, either linguistic or socio-cultural.

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## Endnotes

1. Geoffrey N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (Longman Group Ltd., 1979) 171.
2. Apud Stana-Mada Grigoraș, *Ironia – restricții contextuale și oportunități comunicative*, in Gabriela Pană-Dindelegan (coord.), *Limba română. Structură și funcționare* (București: Editura Universității din București, 2005) 586.
3. Cf. Idem, *ibidem*.
4. We mention only a few of the critic studies appeared in print which make reference to irony in David Lodge's fictional work: Ian Carter (2011), Ronald Carter, John McRae (1998), Steven Connor (2001), Codrin Liviu Cutitaru (2007), Robert Morace (1989), Moseley Merrit, (1991), Virgil Stanciu (2001), Lidia Vianu (1999, 2004, 2009) etc.
5. David Lodge, *Fact and Fiction in the Novel: An Author's Note in The Practice of Writing* (Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1996) 24.
6. [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bugger](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bugger)
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9. Cf. Rodica Dimitriu, *Theories and Practice of Translation* (Iași: Institutul European, 2002) 12.
10. Idem, *ibidem*.
11. Cf. Constanța Avădanei, *Construcții idiomatice în limbile română și engleză* (Iași: Editura Universității "Al. I. Cuza", 2000) 29.
12. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (New York: Signet Classic Penguin Books, 1963) 45.
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