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П. Е. Мирошниченкоpolinamiroshnicenko06@gmail.comГосударственный социально-гуманитарный университет,
г. Коломна, Россия**СТИЛИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРИЕМЫ ИРОНИИ И САРКАЗМА В ТЕЛЕСЕРИАЛЕ «ШЕРЛОК» КАК СПОСОБ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ****Polina E. Miroshnichenko**polinamiroshnicenko06@gmail.comState University of Humanities and Social Studies,
Kolomna, Russia**STYLISTIC DEVICES OF IRONY AND SARCASM IN
TV-SHOW 'SHERLOCK' AS A WAY OF CHARACTERISATION**

The television series "Sherlock" (2010) created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, reimagines Arthur Conan Doyle's iconic detective stories for a contemporary audience. One of the most striking features of the show is its masterful use of stylistic devices, particularly irony and sarcasm, which serve not only as tools for humor but also as critical elements of characterisation. Through sharp wit and clever dialogue, the characters – especially Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson – are brought to life in ways that reveal their complexities, vulnerabilities, and interpersonal dynamics. This article explores how irony and sarcasm function within the narrative, enhancing our understanding of the characters while simultaneously reflecting broader themes of intelligence, friendship, and social critique. By dissecting key moments from the series, we will uncover how these stylistic devices contribute to the rich tapestry of character development in "Sherlock."

Irony and Sarcasm as Literary Devices

The word irony has several definitions, here are some of them:

- A. The use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning;
- B. A usually humorous or sardonic literary style or form characterized by irony;
- C. An ironic expression or utterance. [1]

Considerable thought is given to what events constitute "true" irony, and the dictionary is often called upon to supply an answer. Here are the facts about how the word irony is used.

Irony has two formal uses that are not as common in general prose as its more casual uses. One refers to Socratic irony – a method of revealing an opponent's ignorance by pretending to be ignorant yourself and asking probing questions. The other refers to dramatic irony or tragic irony – an incongruity between the situation in a drama and the words used by the characters that only the audience can

see. Socratic irony is a tool used in debating; dramatic irony is what happens when the audience realizes that Romeo and Juliet's plans will go awry.

The third, and debated, use of irony regards what's called situational irony. Situational irony involves a striking reversal of what is expected or intended: a person sidesteps a pothole to avoid injury and in doing so steps into another pothole and injures themselves. Critics claim the words irony and ironic as they are used in cases lacking a striking reversal, such as "Isn't it ironic that you called just as I was planning to call you?" are more properly called coincidence.

Sarcasm is a sharp and often satirical or ironic utterance designed to cut or give pain.

Sarcasm refers to the use of words that mean the opposite of what you really want to say, especially in order to insult someone, or to show irritation, or just to be funny. For example, saying "they're really on top of things" to describe a group of people who are very disorganized is using sarcasm. Most often, sarcasm is biting, and intended to cause pain. Irony can also refer to the use of words that mean the opposite of what you really want to say; the "they're really on top of things" statement about the very disorganized group of people can also be described as an ironic statement. But irony can also refer to a situation that is strange or funny because things happen in a way that seems to be the opposite of what you expected; for example, it is ironic if someone who was raised by professional musicians but who wanted a very different kind of life then fell in love with and married a professional musician. [1]

Ways of Characterization in Sherlock TV-Series Compared to the Original Story

Doctor John Watson, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, returns to London, where he meets Sherlock Holmes, an eccentric private detective. Together they investigate a series of mysterious deaths. The police consider these deaths suicides, but Holmes is convinced that he has encountered the work of a serial killer. [2]

The portrayal of Sherlock Holmes has evolved significantly from Arthur Conan Doyle's original character to the modern adaptation in the 2010 BBC series «Sherlock». Here are some of the key differences between these two representations:

- **Characterization**

The original Sherlock Holmes is depicted as a highly intelligent and somewhat eccentric detective, but he maintains a level of politeness and respect towards his clients and peers. While he can be aloof, the original Holmes possesses social skills that allow him to interact effectively with various individuals, including clients and law enforcement.

Cumberbatch's Sherlock presents a much more anti-social character. He is often rude, dismissive, and condescending towards others, which leads to conflicts with law enforcement and creates a sense of alienation from society. This adaptation introduces a more emotionally vulnerable side to Sherlock, showcasing his relationships and mental health, particularly in his interactions with John Watson.

- **Methods of Deduction**

Doyle's Holmes relies on keen observation and logical reasoning to solve cases. His methods are often described through Watson's narration, emphasizing the mystery behind his deductions.

The series introduces the concept of a «Mind Palace», where Sherlock organizes his thoughts and memories. This visual representation of his thought process is a model twist provides viewers with insight into how he deduces information.

- **Storytelling Style**

The original stories are narrated by Dr. Watson, which allows readers to experience the mystery alongside him as he learns from Holmes. This creates a sense of discovery for both Watson and the reader.

The BBC series employs modern cinematic techniques to engage viewers. It often shows what Sherlock sees in real-time, allowing audiences to follow along with his thought process rather than waiting for an explanation after the fact. This approach creates a more dynamic viewing experience.

- **Setting and Context**

Doyle's stories are set in Victorian England, reflecting the social norms, values, and technologies of that time.

The series updates the setting to contemporary London, incorporating modern technology such as smartphones and social media into the narrative. This shift not only makes the stories more relatable to today's audience but also influences how crimes are investigated.

While both versions of Sherlock Holmes share core traits such as exceptional intelligence and deductive reasoning, Cumberbatch's portrayal diverges significantly in terms of personality, relationships, methods of deduction, storytelling style, and context. These changes reflect contemporary themes and sensibilities, making "Sherlock" a unique adaptation that resonates with modern audiences while still paying homage to Conan Doyle's classic character. [3]

Irony and Sarcasm as a Way to Illustrate Relationships

The relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson is characterized by a unique blend of camaraderie, tension and irony. Here are some examples of irony in their interactions [4]:

1. – *I'm not the Commonwealth.*

– *And that's as modest as he gets.*

After the process of deduction, which is shown in detail on the screen, the famous detective asks the representative of the royal family for a lighter, to which he replies that he does not smoke. In response to his phrase, Sherlock Holmes claims that the high-ranking official who hired him smokes. Then the civil servant is surprised by such an accurate deduction of the detective and says that before Sherlock, they managed to hide this fact. To this, Holmes replies "I'm not the Commonwealth", which makes it clear that he is different from others, feels superior to others, and is capable of much more than they think of him. John Watson immediately picks up the line, uttering the phrase "And that's as modest as he gets",

hinting that the mentioned modesty is not at all characteristic of Sherlock. Sherlock Holmes has such a constant character trait as excessive self-confidence. John Watson, who is well aware of this, therefore, when uttering an ironic phrase, tries to emphasize the opposite meaning of what he said, since irony is the use of words in a negative sense, directly opposite to the literal one. It is thanks to this answer of Watson that we can observe his bright constant character trait - irony.

2. The following dialogue takes place between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson:

- *See I'm wondering who could have got hold of your phone. It would've been in your coat.*
- *I'll leave you to your deductions.*
- *I'm not stupid, you know.*
- *Where do you get that idea?*

In this episode, Sherlock Holmes receives a message on his phone, which is notified by the sound of an incoming SMS of an obscene nature. John Watson, not indifferent to what he heard, asks his friend what that sound was. Holmes, pretending not to understand what Watson is talking about, continues to go about his business, reading the newspaper. Then, after John explains that he meant the sound of an incoming message, Sherlock calmly tells him that the ringtone probably sounds like that because someone changed it. John, starting to lose his temper, says "See I'm wondering who could have got hold of your phone. It would've been in your coat". By this he means that no one could have changed the ringtone, since the phone was always in the pocket of Sherlock's coat, which Irene Adler was wearing in the scene when Holmes and Watson were at her house, and this leads John to the idea that it was Miss Adler who did it. Sherlock, having followed such a simple logical chain, utters the phrase "I'll leave you to your deduction". With this phrase he is trying to say that John has made a really complex conclusion, meaning the exact opposite. His friend, offended by such a reaction, says "I'm not stupid, you know", showing Sherlock that he really underestimates his mental abilities, belittling him over such a trivial matter. To which Holmes replies "Where do you get that idea?", "sincerely" wondering why Watson decided that Sherlock considers him stupid. It is in this phrase that we can observe local irony, which, in turn, is Socratic irony – it is constructed in such a way that the object to which it is addressed (Watson), as if independently comes to natural logical conclusions and finds the hidden meaning of the ironic statement, following the premises of the subject "who does not know the truth" (Sherlock). In this case, Sherlock's constant trait is evident – a tendency to "make fun" of others.

The interactions between Sherlock Holmes and Jim Moriarty are also filled with sarcasm, reflecting their complex and adversarial relationship. Here are some specific examples of sarcasm from their exchanges [4]:

1. "You're just getting that now?"

In their confrontation, Moriarty taunts Sherlock by saying, "You're insane." To which Sherlock responds sarcastically, "You're just getting that now?" This line

highlights Sherlock's awareness of Moriarty's manipulative nature and his own intelligence, while also mocking Moriarty's delayed realization of the obvious.

2. "You talk big."

During a tense exchange, Moriarty says, "You talk big. Nah. You're ordinary. You're on the side of the angels." Sherlock retorts with a sarcastic tone, "Oh, I may be on the side of the angels, but don't think for one second that I am one of them." Here, Sherlock sarcastically downplays Moriarty's attempt to belittle him by asserting his own complexity and moral ambiguity.

3. "I have been reliably informed that I don't have one."

When Moriarty threatens to burn the heart out of Sherlock, he retorts with sarcasm: "I have been reliably informed that I don't have one." This line cleverly plays on the idea of heartlessness associated with both characters while also mocking Moriarty's threats. It emphasizes Sherlock's emotional detachment and his refusal to be intimidated by Moriarty's bravado.

4. "So nice to have had a proper chat."

At the end of one encounter, Moriarty says, "So nice to have had a proper chat," which is dripping with sarcasm given the tension and danger surrounding their conversation. This remark highlights the absurdity of their situation –two enemies engaging in a casual conversation despite the life-and-death stakes involved.

These examples illustrate how sarcasm serves as a tool for both characters to assert their intelligence and manipulate each other during their encounters. The wit and sharpness of their dialogue not only enhance the tension but also highlight their respective personalities –Sherlock's keen intellect and Moriarty's theatrical villainy.

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