THE TRANSIDEOLOGICAL AND CINEMATIC PLAY OF IRONY AT LINDA HUTCHEON

Henrieta Anişoara ŞERBAN*

Abstract. The study approaches the concept of irony at Linda Hutcheon as an intriguing manner of self-expression with political relevance and different in content from mere rhetorical tropes. The paper emphasizes social dimensions of irony as discourse, among a host of formal dimensions. In this view people relate to the world and its meaningful aspects, which, precisely because they are meaningful, acquire a double meaning, inferred from the original one. But the manner in which we infer the surplus meaning is different from metaphor or allegory, first and foremost, because it does not trigger mainly esthetical emotions, but evaluative and hierarchy inducing emotions, discerning this way between the "sources" of irony and the "victims" of irony. We are highlighting here the Bakhtinian perspective, in order to clarify the interpretation of the concept of irony at Linda Hutcheon. Within this perspective, speech becomes dialogue because has a particular orientation, that is, toward the other(s), that is, toward their words and toward their values: "Verbal discourse is a social phenomenon". The paper sees irony as intersubjective dynamics and participation; as a perpetual presence in films and as a favored dramatic tool – from the more modest inclusion in the dialogue and witty ironic reply of certain characters and up to daring core of entire films. Political criticism and subjective responsibility are envisioned as interesting consequences of this perspective on irony and postmodern times.

Keywords: irony, postmodern times, film, shared meanings, transideology, subjective responsibility.

More than a rhetorical trope, a vision of life

Along with postmodernism, and especially feminism, we are able to identify a postmodern method: "the personal is political". Considering this method, the manner in which people *choose* to express themselves is political, too. This creates a meaningful context for the understanding of the fact that by the end of the twentieth century irony became an interesting and intriguing manner of self-expression.

Linda Hutcheon approaches the social dimensions of irony among a host of formal dimensions. In this view people relate to the world and its meaningful aspects, which, precisely because they are meaningful, acquire a double meaning, inferred from the original one. But the manner in which we infer the surplus

* Correspondent Member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, henrietaserban@gmail.com

meaning is different from metaphor or allegory, first and foremost, because it does not trigger mainly esthetical emotions, but evaluative and hierarchy inducing emotions, discerning this way between the "sources" of irony and the "victims" of irony, almost as a postmodern capitalization upon the Hegelian distinction and dynamics taking place between the one and the other, between the master and the slave.

This way, the social and political "scene" of irony is unveiled: irony emphasizes more than other factors the relations of power based on relations of communication, as well as the issues that contemporary democracy is particularly interested to address (exclusion and inclusion, intervention and evasion). Within a postmodern perspective, the author avoids to focus on "irony as a way to achieve any kind of truth, freedom, or a host of other ineffables that have been claimed for it over the centuries. In other words, I don't think irony has been a terribly significant force in the evolution of civilization or anything grandiose like that. But it does seem to have been around for a long time, in Western culture at least, and it certainly has been the object of much attention."[1]

We are noticing, thus, a parting of the ways with the linguistic and literary approach of irony, but also with the classical and romantic views of irony which aimed to emphasize and surpass the paradox appearance vs. reality. The key role played in the philosophy of irony is identified by Linda Hutcheon at Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, in Marxist theory, in deconstructive aesthetics, and in American New Criticism.

Is the power of romantic irony in terms of freedom, pleasure, psychic health, intellectual stimulation, and so on to be found in the current and postmodern irony? *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* continues to employ the semiotic methodology from a previous book, *A Theory of Parody*, completed with theoretical perspectives that enlarge the interpretative scope such as "Bakhtinian dialogism, social semiotics, speech-act theory, Burkian dramatism, enunciation theory, pragmatic as well as syntactic and semantic analysis, and a range of poststructuralist and feminist insights."[2] The author underlines also that, in practice, there are a series of elements whose presence is setting in motion irony, along with the interpretation of irony as such: criticism, semantic complexity; the "discursive communities"; intention and attribution of irony; context and contextual dependence, specific indicators. To these we can add a certain culture of irony that functions as an extended referential for the recognition, the production and the interpretation of irony. "Irony is an ill wind that bites the hand that feeds our fashionable cynicism".[3]

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[1] Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 2.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 7.

We are highlighting here the Bakhtinian perspective, in order to clarify the interpretation of the concept of irony at Linda Hutcheon. Within the Bakhtinian perspective, speech becomes dialogue because has a particular orientation, that is, toward the other(s), that is, toward their words and toward their values. "Verbal discourse is a social phenomenon".[4] This way, the perspectives of others are dynamically integrated into one's own frame, tough acquiring one's new forms and formulae of expression. Dialogue and discourses in dialogue bring about the resonance of perspectives and novelty into new and "territories", as dialogue means entering into the "territory" of the other. For Bakhtin, the categories of the "system of language", of "monologic utterance" and of the "speaking individuum" are both generated and shaped by the "historical forces at work in the verbal-ideological evolution of specific social groups; they comprised the theoretical expression of actualizing forces that were in the process of creating a life for language. *These forces are the forces that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world*."[5]

Language is seen inscribed into life and not abstract. The categories of speech have a formal important role that does not account for the role played by anguage in human life. It is a part of culture, it is a part of the vision of life and a part of human ife itself. "What we have in mind here is not an abstract linguistic minimum of a common language, in the sense of a system of elementary forms (linguistic symbols) guaranteeing a minimum level of comprehension in practical communication. We are taking language not as a system of abstract gammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life. Thus a unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization."[6]

The central concept proposed by Bakhtin is heteroglossia. It referrs to the voice of another inserted into (any discourse) the discourse of an author, making so that the expression of the self is double-voiced and sustains the double-meaning. "It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they – as it were – know about each other (just as two exchanges in a

[4] M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination*, Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin and London, Texas University Press, 1981.
[5] *Ibidem*, p. 270.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 271.

dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. Examples of this would be comic, ironic or parodic discourse, the refracting discourse of a narrator, refracting discourse in the language of a character and finally the discourse of a whole incorporated genre – all these discourses are double-voiced and internally dialogized."[7]

On the one hand, irony is an indication of heteroglossia and, on the other, it is an indication of the potential of discourse to go beyond the ideological saturation of an world view.

The politics of irony as transideological politics

The philosophy of language and communication and, especially, the understanding of heteroglossia represent the foundation of the view entertained by Linda Hutcheon in which the "transideological" politics of irony works, showing that there is no correct understanding of the word irony, no historically valid reading of irony. Irony is suitable to serve a variety of interests – conservative or authoritarian as easily as oppositional and subversive (but not necessarily liberal), as a play between the source and the receiver of irony.

Communication is not an ideal, utopian, balanced exchange: it is an exchange that reveals power relations and hierarchies, as well as power actions and power plays. The author shows that contemporary theorists from Jacques Derrida to Kenneth Burke consider that irony is inherent in signification, in its deferrals and in its negations. In Hartman's perspective, verbal irony is "language giving the lie to itself yet still relishing its power"[8]. Irony is correlated to social use, interactivity and subjectivity. This sustains the logical choice of discourse as site and scope of investigation. We are following a play of meaning and attitude.

Linda Hutcheon uses the term "transideological" to describe the nature of irony in a similar manner to that of H. White[9]. The one expressing irony is either masking any weakness or founds herself in a position of power, being situated paradoxically both within the social fabric and somewhat outside the social system, partially detached, assuming a standpoint exterior to the system. This situation of the source of ironic discourse is an indication of power. At its magnificent state, the function of irony is directed to the *system* itself, inclusively to the ironist. The ironist uses and plays the system to different ends, although the changes produced can only be "local and sporadic"[10].

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[7] *Ibidem*, p. 324.

[8] Linda Hutcheon, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[9] H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 38. Apud L. Hutcheon, *op.cit.*

[10] R. Chambers, "Irony and the canon", *Profession* 90, 1990, pp. 18–24, esp. p. 21. See also R. Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Linda Hutcheon differentiates between "irony that is seen to exclude and finalize and irony that is seen to relate and relativize, the politics of irony are never simple and never single. Unlike most other discursive strategies, irony *explicitly* sets up (and exists within) a relationship between ironist and audiences (the one being intentionally addressed, the one that actually makes the irony happen, and the one being excluded) that is political in nature, in the sense that ´[e]ven while provoking laughter, irony invokes notions of hierarchy and subordination, judgment and perhaps even moral superiority´".[11]

Insisting upon the context, frame, space and scope of discourse for this investigation the author emphasizes that the semantic and syntactic dimensions irony are intricately connected to the social, historical and cultural aspects of the ironical contexts. Linda Hutcheon shows that these social, historical and cultural aspects of the ironical contexts emphasize in turn specific mechanisms of deployment and attribution, which emphasize that the entities of authority and power are enrooted in discourse, in a similar manner as Burke noticed that such entities dwell in rhetoric. "To discuss irony as a speech act but outside of this broader political frame is to risk idealizing communication as a reciprocal, utopic exchange and thus minimizing the workings of power by downplaying something crucial to irony's complexity: the fact that agents do not characteristically engage in speech acts ´from positions of equal advantage or conduct their transactions on an equal footing´. Communicative exchange (or discursive activity) is a form of social activity and it therefore involves relations of not only real but also symbolic power, not to mention relations of force, as well. After all, the touchy political issues that arise around irony's usage and interpretation invariably focus on the issue of intention (of either ironist or interpreter). And it is because of its very foregrounding of the politics of human agency in this way that irony has become an important strategy of oppositional rhetoric."[12]

The power of irony is recognized by a wide variety of authors. Some concentrate on the power to exclude and create and reinforce hierarchies, others on the power of irony to create "amiable communities"[13]. Irony takes place on the basis of a social and discursive transaction, which is in turn possible, because the discursive communities already exist. Discursive communities indulge the relative perspective on power relations: the perspective of the one who produces the irony and the perspective of the one who interprets it may very well differ.

There is no objective irony one that is independent of the ironic subject, of the conventions of discursive communities and of the subjective interpreter. Linda Hutcheon gives the example of jokes, which are understood by people who share certain meanings (interests, social positions and views of the world): British

[11] Linda Hutcheon, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17.
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 17.
[13] W.C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Chicago and London, Univ. of Chicago Press. 1974, p. 28.

political satire may be confusing or uninteresting for a Canadian. And this is different from elitism, because it only involves different social and discursive experience and not superiority in world views, social position, education etc. When an individual acquires the understanding that there are double meaning expressions and that people may say one thing and mean the opposite or merely something else, without lying that is a proof for the genuine belonging of that specific individual to a discursive community. The understanding of irony is such a marker of belonging to a specific discursive community. In the interpretation of Linda Hutcheon, the existence of discursive communities makes irony possible. "Irony is a **relational** strategy in the sense that it operates not only between meanings (said, unsaid) but between people (ironists, interpreters, targets). Ironic meaning comes into being as the consequence of a relationship, a dynamic, performative bringing together of different meaning-makers, but also of different meanings, first, in order to create something new and, then, to endow it with the critical edge of judgment. As noted, that Greek *eiron*, from whom irony got its name, was a dissembler, a pretender, and that notion of pretense figures frequently in ´performative´ theories of irony, humor and figurative language, in general. In fact, it seems that children have to learn about pretense in order to understand irony."[14]

We cannot conceive the idea of relational irony if we do not consider the unsaid along with whatever gets said in the ironic expression. The said and the unsaid are themselves in a relational connection and their meanings are interdependent: "the power of the unsaid to challenge the said is the defining semantic condition of irony"[15]. Our mind experiences both at once although our ears carry on only what was said. The perception of verbal expression and even of mimicry or social situations as irony implies the simultaneous perception of more than one meaning[16]. The image of irony is like a photographic double exposure[17]. Irony combines action and interaction in creating an ironic meaning, which is critical and evaluative. "Irony needs *both* the stated *and* the unstated, for it is a form of what has been called ´polysemia´"[18] – "this unsaid that is nevertheless said"[19]´ The model of the inversion of meaning in irony, when the opposite is implied instead of the literal meaning is undermined by an inclusive model for ironic meaning, which does not substitute "the duck" for "the rabbit", but rapidly

[14] Linda Hutcheon, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
[15] *Ibidem*.
[16] C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, "Problèmes de l'ironie", *Linguistique et sémiologie* 2, 1976, pp. 9–46. C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *L'Enonciation: de la subjectivité dans le langage,* Paris, Armand Colin, 1980.
[17] A. Rodway, "Terms for Comedy", *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, vol. 6, 1962, pp. 102–125, especially p. 113. Apud L. Hutcheon, *op. cit.*
[18] Linda Hutcheon, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
[19] M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, New York, Pantheon, 1972, p.110.

oscillates between meanings acknowledging both as possibilities. The inclusive and simultaneous characteristics of the ironic meaning, gives way for the politics of irony and not the exclusion model. Linda Hutcheon agrees with Roland Barthes stating that the rejection/substitution model brings limitation to the domain of action and to the results of irony. The author provided a wider, active and more inclusive perspective on irony.

Similarly, the particular vision undertaken for the discursive communities in this interpretation of the politics of irony is wider, too. "My particular sense of the term ´*discursive* community´ here is not quite the same as that of ´*discourse* community´ which has been defined as ´a sociorhetorical construct, neutral in terms of medium and unconstrained by space and time´. Instead, the notion of discursive community (as signaled, I hope, by the Foucaultian echo of ´discursive formations´) is not unconstrained at all but acknowledges those strangely enabling constraints of discursive contexts and foregrounds the particularities not only of space and time but of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice - not to mention nationality, religion, age, profession, and all the other micropolitical groupings in which we place ourselves or are placed by our society".[20] People belong to overlapping communities which generate specific and sometimes overlapping constrains. Other times these constraints are not only overlapping, but also contradictory. Whatever meanings are shared, the forge the discursive communities and generate the conditions of possibility for irony. The socio-rhetorical role of irony is to create complicity on the basis of the shared meanings and to create a relatively elitist hierarchy of the ironist of the interpreter and of the knower (potential ironist or interpreter). It negotiate between inclusion and exclusion and it is endowed with the power to structure a "reflective community", built on the hope that discourse is to bring consensus in a post-industrial world of anarchistic fragmentation and dissent. Nevertheless, these hopeful perspectives created around the "reflective community" and around the Habermasian public sphere and ideal speech community remain utopian, though.

Irony brings about participation, although, it does not restore the perfection of an ideal community. What irony replenishes is "communal achievement", the pleasure to "commune with kindred spirits" as Wayne C. Booth showed in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, which echoes the views of irony as "infinite sympathy" that "captivates with indissoluble bonds" (Kierkegaard). These are still utopian views of irony. Other utopian views, this time, of Linda Hutcheon, consider that irony can fight totalizing narratives. When it is not invested with similar powers to those of laughter and humor, in making intellectual connections among people, irony is seen with suspicion as a common ground for the exploitation of the common knowledge of participants. Irony is seen rather as a

[20] Linda Hutcheon, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

force to speculate the asymmetrical relations of power. This takes us again to an elitist perspective, where irony is an assertion of sophistication and a form of flattery. Even though irony maintains the characteristic of participation, it induces a hierarchy of *participants*. The initiate looks down upon a hierarchy of uninitiated, while the victim is outside this community created by irony. "But what if the discursive community *precedes* and *makes possible* the comprehension of irony? Then there would still, perhaps, be two potential kinds of audiences, but instead of initiate and uninitiated, they might more accurately be called "addressees" and ´hearers´. Both would be within the irony's "participation framework"; that is, they would both be in perceptual range of the ironic utterance, but they would have different kinds and degrees of participation relative to it."[21] Yet, there are limits to the participation set by interpretation and the consequential understanding. "Those who do not ´get´ the irony are not necessarily what most want to call its victims: they may not care at all; they may simply ´misunderstand´ (i.e. interpret differently) because they are operating within a different discursive context. The so-called uninitiated are not always the same as the targets either, for many miss (or get) ironies directed at others as well as at themselves. Those who engage the multiple said and unsaid meanings of irony are certainly interpreting *differently* than those who engage only the said; yet, for most theorists, there does seem to be more at stake here than simple difference, and the language in which the distinctions are regularly made is revealing of both implicit power relations and evaluative judgments: naive vs. sophisticated".[22]

Irony represents at once a type of communication disguise and revelatory communication. One consequence is the discussion of irony producing solidarity and the other is the correlation f irony with competence. "Developing Noam Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence, Jonathan Culler has pointed out that the understanding of any utterance (including an ironic one) demands ´an amazing repertoire of conscious and unconscious knowledge". Extending this notion, he has also posited a specifically literary competence: the tacit knowledge of the conventions by which we read literary texts. Theorists of irony have added other kinds of interpreter competence to the list: paralinguistic; metalinguistic; rhetorical; ideological; social. Many also invoke a sort of general cultural competence to cover the presuppositions, background information, assumptions, beliefs, knowledge and values that are shared by ironist and interpreter."[23] In authors view, the accent should be placed rather on shared meanings (shared assumption and shared social, esthetical, political values and beliefs). "But, to come back to my original hypothesis, if they are indeed shared, then irony might

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 89.
[22] *Ibidem*, p. 90.
[23] *Ibidem*, p.91.

not so much create communities as come into being because the communal values and beliefs already exist. It might, therefore, be less a matter of interpreter ´competence´ than of shared assumptions on many different levels. For even the most simple of verbal ironies, for example, there would have to be mutual agreement on the part of both participants about the following basic things: that words have literal meanings; that words can, however, have more than one meaning, especially in certain contexts; that there is such a thing as irony (as distinct from deception) where a spoken meaning is played off against implied but unspoken meanings – with some evaluative edge; that this irony can be deliberate, but need not be; that there will likely be some sort of culturally agreed upon markers in the utterance and/or in the enunciative context to signal both that irony is in play and how it is to be interpreted."[24] Irony is a sort of "signal", for an attitude and an action, for distancing someone from something and participation in something, for particular types of perspective upon the world, with at least a political dimension. Irony's style functions as an indicator to suggest the specific frame and the specific context in which irony can unfold. „The greater the mutual acceptance of conventions of signaling the more likely an intended irony will be interpreted as ironic and done so with ease. What general rhetorical treatises, throughout the ages, have usually *not* taken into account in their descriptions of ´pronunciatio´ - or the unmasking of ironic markers - in oratory is that even commonly agreed upon signals (such as an air of contempt or a gross exaggeration of claims) are still socially and culturally codified. Nuances of tone of voice or gesture are even more so, as classical and medieval diagrams of oratorical gestures and their coded meanings suggest. Psychologists have also tended to universalize, assuming that a negative
facial expression or bodily gesture (smirking, rolling eyes, making a fist) are shared signals of ironic intent that children learn. Yet, it is not hard to imagine cultures - even situations - in which actions such as these might signal some totally different meaning."[25]

However, what clarifies the ironic signal as signal is the specificity and clarity of the ironic context. "Context is crucial for all interpretation, of course, but especially so for risky ironic interpretation. It is not as if television and film have not represented images of imperialist conquest of Africans for years and in ways much more offensive than ´Into the Heart of Africa,´ with its reflexivity and indirection. (…) But it is a question that has haunted the history of irony too and one that consistently points to the transideological nature of irony's politics. The many-voiced play of said and unsaid can be used to ironize the single-voicing of authoritative discourse – no matter what the politics of that discourse. And not only those on the receiving end are perhaps going to find this inappropriate. But,

[24] *Ibidem*.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 142.

are there times when indirection is wise? Or is irony's evasiveness always suspect? To what end can irony work - both in intentions and in attributions? What are the dangers, in the extreme, ´of putting the whole world in quotation marks´? What is at stake when irony happens - and when it does not?"[26] The answer of Linda Hutcheon's conceptualization is that with irony, at stake is resistance and attitude, against authoritative discourse and, more importantly, genuine and consciously assumed responsibility.

Irony, dramatism and films

Irony as intersubjective dynamics and participation is a perpetual presence in films and a favored dramatic tool, from the more modest inclusion in the dialogue and witty ironic reply of certain characters and up to daring core of entire films. In House, M.D. the main character is often ironic, when he is not sarcastic and borderline cynical. His standpoint and worldview is ironic, too. Sometimes, irony catches up with him and his friend, Wilson M.D., or another character are trying the cutting edge of irony upon him. In one of the episodes, a documentary made for a TV show takes all is sarcastically warm hearted lines literally and accompanies these with similarly sarcastic puppy dog blue eyed gazes taken at "face-value" and produces a terribly undermining ironic filmed "portrait" of a popular culture stereotypical M.D.

In *Natural Born Killers* the camera itself is ironic incessantly. This is a postmodern fascinating film that adopts irony as method: in describing the romantic blossom when Mickey met Mallory, in constructing violence as main trait of American life, the attention given to violence and killers, the high level of tolerance for violence, the fact that we have become accustomed with it and the treatment of killers as royalties in popular culture. Irony here is postmodern political criticism.

Pulp Fiction, a story made up of many fragmentary stories, seems to emphasize the reality of pulp, flesh, its faults and sins. But the interplay of stories and stereotypes that constitutes the architecture of the film is saved by irony, precisely against the above mentioned stereotypes and by the postmodern perspective that puts different "pulp" on the different "stereotypes". When they change stories, they change the role and become a different stereotype. There is no "good guy", there is no "bad guy", that is, postmodern vision somehow enlarges the space (hope) for redemption: the characters are fluid and the narratives may change. Irony is the key to ascension and this is the meaning of the fiction of the pulp.

Jameson criticism of the postmodern announced the effect of trivializing irony the emphasis on nostalgia, probably, as a countering effect for the

[26] *Ibidem*, p. 194.

postmodern fragmentation. He referred to George Lukas's *American Graffiti* and to Laurence Kasdan's *Body Heat*. These films attempt, in his view, recapture a missing past, but they are inauthentic, precisely because they are nostalgic celebrations of someting else, more palatable than the actual past, virtualizing historical representation.[27]

As film theorist Anne Friedberg[28] noticed Jameson protest is founded on the vision that *every* film is distanced from its historical referent, so that he past disappears into a "perpetual present interminably recycled."[29] Film becomes a force of misinterpretation and of nostalgia as regression and as impossible recapture of "lost authenticity", rather paralyzing for a successful historical thinking.

Irony comes to the fore to portray nostalgia at the core of our postmodern times, to describe the faults and the dangers of a culture of nostalgia we are inescapably a part of. irony captures both the obssessions of remembering and of forgetting captured in "museummania": the wax figures museums, the various memorials, the reenactments of wars, even the Comic Con festivals and the Disney parks are at the same time expressions of our amnesiac fobia and of irony as sole (more or less obvious) means to cope with nostalgia, forgetfulness and other related fobias of our times. Linda Hutcheon mentions William Hofman and John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* played at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, ironically and paradoxically called a "grand opera buffa", as a reflection on the present as much as it is a reflection on the past.[30] Nostalgia goes hand in hand with irony as responses of the active responsible posmodern human beings: Don Quijote embodies the irony against the chivalric past as epitome of incongruity and inappropriateness through his nostalgia; the irony in Madonna's Marilyn and Evita cannot be separated from a collective nostalgia capturing a certain sort of responsability that goes through emotion.[31]

Irony is political mainly through this characteristic of particular reflection followed (triggering) an action of appropriation: of "status", of limits, of roles, of the past etc.

Conclusion

That distance set by irony and nostalgia, by the ironizing of nostalgia is essential for the reflective thought of postmodern subjects, that is, for their esthetical, historical, ethical, conscientious, thus, responsible reflection.

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[27] See Linda Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern", http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html, accessed June 8, 2017.
[28] *Ibidem*.
[29] *Ibidem*.
[30] *Ibidem*.
[31] *Ibidem*.

Irony is a relevant marker of our times with specific contemporary features. We are living within liberal cultures of irony. The participative framework is the only framework in which irony remains meaningful. This is the reason why Linda Hutcheon brings to the fore illustrations and interpretations of irony in art, in literature and in film. Irony signals individuality, separation, and, as an "art of separation"[32] (Michael Walzer), freedom. But the important nuance here is that irony is individual expression of the self against the others within the others. Irony loses all meaning outside a community of tolerance, a community that enjoys the culture of irony and the potential reversal of the direction of irony.

Linda Hutcheon does not place the accent on the *liberal*, but on the *political* dimension of ironic expression and thought. She is careful not to privilege one political perspective and action against the others, a view which is consistent with the author's transideological view of irony. Between expression and understanding postmodern times create a perfect space suitable for ironic interpretation.

Within this theoretical perspective the distinction between irony and cynicism (for "irony is an ill wind that bites the hand that feeds our fashionable cynicism") represents a new perspective on irony, seen now as a negotiation between separation and togetherness. Only cynicism is the site of cold and rather final separation, while irony is the space of personal expression of the self. Irony is not an indicator for cruelty; this is the refusal of cruelty and a strengthening social symbolic form.

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