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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Autorka se ve své práci bude soustředit na krátké povídky u nás nedoceněného britského povídkáře Williama Somerseta Maughama (1874-1965). Bude sledovat Maughamovo využití ironie v tematickém zaměření povídek a ve výstavbě děje. Na úvod práce představí různé definice pojmu ironie a jejího využití při tvorbě významu v literatuře či v komunikaci obecně. Vhodným nástrojem mohou být východiska recepční kritiky (např. affective stylistics). Na tomto základě provede rozbor vybraných povídek s cílem zjistit, jakým způsobem Maugham ironii využívá. Autorka bude například sledovat linii předmětu ironie (čtenář či postava). Práci završí kapitola, která z dílčích zjištění vyvodí obecnější závěry.

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Vannatta, Dennis, ed. *The English Short Story 1945-1980: A Critical History*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals with the usage of irony in short stories written by a British author William Somerset Maugham. The theoretical part is divided into two chapters. The first one examines questions of narratology, focusing on different types of narrators and features they possess. The second part is dedicated to the term “pharmakos” or “scapegoat” which is considered to be a typical victim of irony. The connection of these issues with irony in Maugham’s short stories is analysed in the practical part of the thesis.

KEYWORDS

Irony, William Somerset Maugham, short story, scapegoat, pharmakos, narrator.

NÁZEV

Ironie v povídkové tvorbě Williama Somerseta Maughama

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na využití ironie v krátkých povídkách britského autora Williama Somerseta Maughama. Teoretická část je rozdělena do dvou kapitol. První kapitola se soustředí na otázky naratologie a analyzuje různé typy vypravěčů a rysy které vlastní. Druhá kapitola je věnována pojetí „pharmaka” neboli „obětního beránka,” který je považován za typickou oběť ironie. Souvislost mezi těmito pojmy a ironií je zanalyzována v praktické části bakalářské práce.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Ironie, William Somerset Maugham, krátká povídka, obětní beránek, pharmakos, vypravěč.

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Introduction

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the usage of irony in short stories written by William Somerset Maugham. Irony is a concept known to the generality of people at least partially. Despite its worldwide occurrence and application, the term raises a major dispute among the philosophers and literary critics. Claire Colebrook even claims that irony is “curiously indefinable.”¹ The definition of irony seems to vary according to its type and a time period an ironic utterance regards to.

The first occurrence of irony dates back to the times of Socrates, when the term carried a strong negative connotation, “meaning something like ‘cheater’, ‘liar’, or ‘hypocrite.’”² Subsequently the first definition of irony was produced: “a figure of speech or trope in which something contrary to what is said is to be understood.”³ During the Medieval ages, irony preserved its status of a rhetorical device and was used chiefly to make someone’s speech more potent.⁴ With the arrival of Renaissance the concept of irony expanded from a figure of speech to “a figure that could characterise an entire personality.”⁵ By the end of Romanticism, irony helped to present two contradicting opinions on one subject simultaneously rather than just hiding one or meaning the other.⁶ Douglas Colin Muecke notices that a change in the perception of irony occurred as well: attention was paid to a victim of irony rather than its executor. This triggered another transformation: now not only a person could be ironic but something inanimate yet powerful – a situation, circumstances, destiny, life.⁷ The twentieth century perceived irony as “a distinguishing mark of all literature, or at least all good literature.”⁸

Irony itself is “a very messy subject.”⁹ Expectedly, existing classifications of it are rather chaotic as well. D. C. Muecke in his *The Compass of Irony* claims, “I do not know of any book or article [...] or of any European or American dictionary or encyclopaedia which presents a

¹ Claire Colebrook, *Irony* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

² Isabel Ermida, *The Language of Comic Narratives: Humor Construction in Short Stories* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co, 2008), 11.

³ Gregory Vlastos, “Socratic irony,” *The Classical Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1987): 79.

⁴ Colebrook, *Irony*, 7.

⁵ Colebrook, *Irony*, 7.

⁶ Colebrook, *Irony*, 52.

⁷ Douglas Colin Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1970), 19–20.

⁸ Wayne Clayson Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), ix.

⁹ Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, 2.

classification of irony one could regard as adequate.”¹⁰ Norman Knox also states that the authors who invent new types of ironies generally end with introducing new confusing elements. Both scholars attempted to create classifications of irony. In *Irony and the Ironic* Muecke describes several types of irony but warns the readers that “no taxonomic aspiration should be inferred.”¹¹ He defines fifteen types of irony, among which are ironies that can be found in other theoretical works like “dramatic irony” or “cosmic irony” and those which are not common such as “ironic incongruity” or a “catch 22 irony.” Norman Knox comments on Muecke’s categorisation claiming that Muecke confuses “author-victim-audience factor with the field of observation”¹² causing problems with further categorisation and prompting invention of rather atypical classes. Knox himself in *Word irony and its context, 1500-1755* presents ten categories of irony, each having several subcategories, resulting in twenty-five types. Wayne C. Booth believes that “the attempt by Norman Knox to classify all ironies [...] is of even less help in our practical tasks.”¹³ The comments suggest that the usage of such detailed categorisations may cause a certain puzzlement. Thus, a common division of irony into verbal, situational and dramatic will be applied in this bachelor thesis.

Verbal irony represents an incongruity between what is said and what is meant. In fiction, it can be implied both in characters’ speech and the voice of the narrator. Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* is a classic example of the usage of verbal irony. Situational irony occurs when a final result of a situation, drawn up in the story, is different from what the readers expect. This type of irony is often used at the end of the narrative as an unexpected twist. A famous illustration of situational irony used in fiction is a short story “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry. When dramatic irony is introduced, the readers share the knowledge about the character’s present and future but the character himself is kept in ignorance of it. “In that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances.”¹⁴ Dramatic irony is typically used in plays: Greek tragedy was based on the legends the outcome of which was known to the audience in advance, for example, Sophocles’ *Oedipus*.¹⁵ Another irony

¹⁰ Norman Knox, “On the Classification of Ironies,” review of *The Compass of Irony*, by D. C. Muecke, *Modern Philology*, August 1972.

¹¹ Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*, 8.

¹² Knox, “On the Classification of Ironies.”

¹³ Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, 234.

¹⁴ Meyer Howard Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed. (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 137.

¹⁵ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 137.

which has to be mentioned is “irony of fate” or “cosmic irony.” These types of irony emerge from a belief that a certain force – fate, destiny, God – controls people’s lives, deliberately leading them to misery, devastation and sometimes even death. Novels of Thomas Hardy are usually described as the ones where irony of fate is introduced.

Irony is used by writers for a number of reasons. First, irony helps the writer to develop a plot of a story, a concrete situation or a character through a sense of discrepancy.¹⁶ Irony is also a powerful device for provoking the readers’ emotional reaction, for it ranges from a gentle witty comment designed to transmit humour to a shock eliciting discomfiture. The last major function of irony is its ability to translate the author’s opinion on a contentious issue without being didactic or excessively moralising.¹⁷

This bachelor thesis focuses on the usage of irony in William Somerset Maugham’s short stories. In the first part of the thesis irony is examined in its connectedness with the narrative technique the writer applies.

1. Narration

The concept of narrator seems to be the most prominent in a sphere of narratology. It is regarded by a clear majority of narratologists as an indispensable constituent of any narrative text.¹⁸ Narrator is “the imagined ‘voice’ transmitting the story.”¹⁹ The presence of this voice is called “mediacy,” according to a famous narratologist Franz K. Stanzel.²⁰ Stanzel identifies two types of mediacy: teller-mode, in which the narrator functions as a teller of a tale and reflector-mode, in that case the story is perceived as if through the eyes of a character. Pursuant to mediacy, Stanzel identifies three types of the narrator: first-person, authorial and figural.

In the case of a first-person narrator, mediacy is located solely in the fictional world of the characters of the novel; the world of the narrator is identical to the one of the characters. Stanzel mentions the narrator of Dickens’s *David Copperfield* as an example of a first-person narrator. The authorial narrator stands outside the characters’ fictional world and the narration itself

¹⁶ Raj Kishor Singh, “Humour, Irony and Satire in Literature,” *International Journal of English and Literature* 3, no. 4 (October 2012): 65.

¹⁷ Singh, “Humour, Irony and Satire in Literature,” 68.

¹⁸ Irene J. F. de Jong, René Nünlist and Angus Bowie, ed., *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, vol.1, *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 1.

¹⁹ Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 166.

²⁰ Franz Karl Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, trans. Jiří Stromšík (Praha: Odeon, 1988), 12, my translation.

is transmitted from an external perspective – as in case of the narrator of *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding.²¹ Figural narrators are those which function in a reflector-mode, thus, the mediator is absent and because of that the illusion of immediacy occurs.²² Figural narrator may be traced in James Joyce's work *Ulysses*, especially in the prelude to the episode "Sirens."²³

Definition of Stanzel's figural narrator resembles another literary term – *raisonneur*. *Raisonneur* is a character who acts as "a mouthpiece for the opinions of the play's author"²⁴ or "a spokesperson for the author."²⁵ Chris Baldick adds that *raisonneurs* usually have a more distant view of the story's events than other characters.²⁶ James Thomas claims that *raisonneurs* are more objective and credible than other characters, because they stay within action of a story but do not considerably affect it.²⁷ Though *raisonneurs* are usually presented as characters of plays, several critics believe that in Maugham's short stories exactly *raisonneurs* are presented.²⁸ It appears that a figural narrator is, in essence, a *raisonneur*, for both terms refer to a character who offers a limited view on the actions of the story. In order not to reign confusion, the term "raisonneur" will be used onwards, because particularly this expression is used by critics in connection with Maugham's short stories.

When identifying different types of narrators, Stanzel introduces three pairs of opposition: of person, mode and perspective. The interweaving of these constituents enables to identify a type of narrator more precisely. The mode of person (first-person vs. authorial) and mode (teller-mode vs. reflector-mode) have already been discussed. The third component, perspective, refers to the way the readers perceive a fictional reality. In the case of internal perspective, the point of view from which the narrating world is portrayed is the one of the main character or lies in the centre of the story's actions. Internal perspective occurs in an autobiographical form of a first-person narration, an epistolary novel, characters' autonomous internal monologues and figural narration.

²¹ Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, 66, my translation.

²² Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik, "Mediacy and Narrative Mediation," in *Handbook of Narratology*, 2nd ed., ed. Peter Hühn, Jan Christoph Meister, John Pier and Wolf Schmid (Gottingen: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, 2014), 310–313.

²³ Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, 210, my translation.

²⁴ Baldick, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 212.

²⁵ David Rush, *A Student Guide to Play Analysis* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 73.

²⁶ Baldick, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 212.

²⁷ James Thomas, *Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers*, 5th ed. (Burlington: Focal Press, 2014), 216.

²⁸ See Klaus W. Jonas, ed., *The World of Somerset Maugham* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1959), 41; Anthony Burgess, *Here Comes Everybody* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 22; Stanley Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 36.

External perspective is the one in which the point of view lies on the periphery of the story's action or outside the protagonist's zone. External perspective can be found in texts with authorial narrators or peripheral first-person narrators.²⁹ Stanzel's typology circle was used for identification of narrators in Somerset Maugham's fiction, but just several of them seem to be prominent in his short stories: a first-person narrator in a teller-mode, a third-person omniscient narrator and a first-person peripheral narrator introduced in a frame narrative.

A peripheral first-person narrator does not stand in the centre of the story but on its periphery. This type of narrator "mark[s] the transition [from a first-person narration] to the authorial narrative situation."³⁰ A peripheral first-person narrator functions as a witness of the events of a story, an observer, a biographer or a friend of the main character.³¹ Stanzel comments on the difference between a first-person protagonist and peripheral narrators' reliability. The problem with the unreliability of the first-person narrators manifests itself the most when they start retelling quite extensive dialogues of other characters – at that moment their subjectivity is seen clearly. A first-person peripheral narrator is more trustworthy. Jacqueline Viswanathan, whom Stanzel quotes, explains that when it comes to narrative passages, peripheral first-person narrators "function as faultless tape recorders."³² Moreover, peripheral first-person narrators tend to be so engrossed in the process of narrating that they "fall out" from the position of a character and narrate rather as authorial narrators; this translates a sense of bigger objectivity to the readers.

In Somerset Maugham's short stories first-person peripheral narrator is commonly used in a frame narrative. A frame narrative is "a story in which another story is enclosed or embedded as a 'tale within the tale', or which contains several such tales."³³ Frame narrative is one of the most widely-used narrative techniques: well-known examples of these are Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Frame narratives are used for different purposes, the primary one is "to vouch for the veracity of the events or narrator of the inner story."³⁴ This is accomplished because frame narratives enable writers to re-create a sense of

²⁹ Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, 138–139, my translation.

³⁰ Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, trans. Patricia Häusler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 90.

³¹ Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, 245, my translation.

³² Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, 247, my translation.

³³ Baldick, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 101.

³⁴ Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda H. MacKethan, ed., *The Companion to Southern Literature: Themes, Genres, Places, People, Movement and Motifs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 282.

an oral narrative. At the same time, the story preserves its shape and the events are presented in an accurate order.³⁵ Frame narratives also provide a distance between the actual author and the ideas presented in the core story, enabling writers to address rather controversial topics safely.³⁶

Peter Barry identifies three subclasses of frame narratives. Single-ended frame narratives are those “in which the frame situation is not returned to when the embedded tale is complete.”³⁷ Analysing *The Turn of the Screw* as an example of a single-ended frame narrative, Barry claims that the act of not-returning to the original frame has a strategic reason. If the story had returned to the original one, many ambiguities of the embedded story would have to be explained or commented on by the characters, violating the story’s atmosphere and, thus, diminishing the effect it produces on the readers. In case of a double-ended frame narrative, “the frame situation is re-introduced at the end of the embedded tale.”³⁸ If not for a comment or explanation, this type of frame is used to bolster the story’s thematics. The last subclass of a frame narrative is an intrusive one. Intrusive frame narratives are, in essence, double-ended frame narratives which are sometimes interrupted by the narrator of a primary tale. The strategy of intrusive frame narrative is to break “the spell of the narrative”³⁹ and remind the readers of the complexities and the thematic linking of the main story with the frame one.

2. Victimization

2.1. Terminological issue

Before the issue of victimization is discussed, it seems relevant to examine whether the term “a victim of irony” carries a strong negative connotation or is perceived as a neutral literary term. To answer this question, the basic secondary literature used in this bachelor thesis was examined in connection with the expression. D. C. Muecke uses the word “victim” explicitly in his work *Irony and the Ironic*. For the first time it is mentioned when Muecke describes the changes in the development of irony which occurred at the end of the 18th century. Among the arrival of new meanings, expansion of irony, its double-natured features and others, there has been a shift

³⁵ Peter Melville Logan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), 322.

³⁶ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 236.

³⁷ Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 236.

³⁸ Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 236.

³⁹ Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 237.

from the ironist to “someone being the victim of irony.”⁴⁰ Thus, a victim of irony is presented by Muecke as an antagonist of an ironist. He also explains that a victim of irony can be either a person at whom an ironic utterance is targeted or the one who failed to understand an ironic sense of some utterance.⁴¹ Analogous ideas are expressed by Katharina Barbe. According to her, in each ironical situation there are three participants: a speaker or an ironist, a hearer or a victim and an audience or an evaluator. She also mentions that an irony’s victim is either an ignorant or an innocent man.⁴² Northrop Frye also uses the term “victim of irony” in his work *Anatomy of Criticism*. Apart from the previous authors, he claims that a typical victim of irony is a pharmakos, who is neither innocent, nor guilty.⁴³ Frye’s ideas will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

In contrast, Linda Hutcheon straightforwardly declares that she does not approve of the usage of a word “victim” with reference to irony. She claims that not all interpreters of irony are its victims, for they may not understand irony only due to a distinctive perspective of their perception.⁴⁴ Neither is she fully satisfied with a term “target” – “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.”⁴⁵ It seems like a word “interpreter” is much more acceptable for Hutcheon; she uses it afterwards multiple times when contrasting to an ironist. Muecke, however, uses the word “interpreter” only with reference to a reader. In this bachelor thesis, Muecke’s categorisation will be adopted: a “victim of irony” is either a person/character at whom the irony is targeted or the one who failed to understand the ironic meaning of some utterance; and an interpreter is a reader solely.

2.2. Pharmakoi

Further remarks about a victim of irony should be made before the analysis of it in Somerset Maugham’s short stories may be performed. Northrop Frye differentiates between a tragic and an ironic victim. According to the theorist, a tragic victim is an absolute victim, while an ironic victim is “unlucky, selected at random or by lot, and no more deserving of what happens to him than anyone else would be.”⁴⁶ He calls such a figure a typical victim – a pharmakos or a scapegoat. The notion of pharmakos comes from the Ancient Greece. Pharmakos was a ritual scapegoat

⁴⁰ Muecke, *Irony*, 19.

⁴¹ Muecke, *Irony*, 19–20.

⁴² Katharina Barbe, *Irony in context* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1995), 16.

⁴³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 41.

⁴⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 40.

⁴⁵ Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge*, 90.

⁴⁶ Frye, *Anatomy*, 41.

who was expelled from a city at the moments of crisis, such as famine or plague. It was believed that with the expel of this man (or woman, gender was not relevant) the city would clean itself and the rest of the population would be saved. Usually the outcasts of the society were chosen to be pharmakoi: slaves, criminals, poor people, or just disabled or ugly ones. The state fed pharmakoi and dressed them in holy clothes before the expulsion. According to some sources, when driven outside the city, pharmakoi were killed “by stoning, burning, or by being thrown over a cliff into the ocean.”⁴⁷ The reliabilities of the sources, however, were not proven. The scholars argue that probably the “sacrifice” often happened at the ideological level, but when it comes to myths or legends, “execution was almost a requirement.”⁴⁸

The stories involving mythical pharmakoi can be united under a scapegoat pattern. They start with a kind of a disaster, subsequently a figure of a scapegoat is introduced or one of the characters undergo a decline to the lowest casts of the society. Usually there is a character of a much higher status than of a scapegoat to highlight the “worseness” of a pharmakos. The motif of death or a descent (at least symbolical) is a traditional ending of a pharmakos story. A simplified list of themes found in the stories depicting pharmakoi is given below.⁴⁹ Although not all of the themes should be presented in a pharmakos story, the presence of a considerable part of them proves that the examined character occupies a position of a scapegoat.⁵⁰ Minor comments to the themes are given in the italics.

Themes used in the pharmakoi stories

1. Ritual pollution. *The first imbalance; is often caused by crime.*
2. Communal disaster. *Such as plague, famine, invasion, cyclic period of infertility, or any combination of the above. This can cause the scapegoat’s expulsion/death.*
3. Oracle. *Often an oracle is involved in interpreting and prescribing a remedy for the disaster.*
4. The Worst. *Pharmakos is a beggar, slave, or criminal – the worst.*
5. The Best. *A person chosen to be a pharmakos is dressed in beautiful clothes and is well fed as if he were aristocracy.*

⁴⁷ “Ritual,” Chapter 1, The Pharmakos in Archaic Greece, Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/4912.part-i-greece-1-the-pharmakos-in-archaic-greece>.

⁴⁸ Center for Hellenic Studies, “Ritual.”

⁴⁹ Center for Hellenic Studies, “Ritual.”

⁵⁰ Center for Hellenic Studies, “Ritual.”

6. Peripety. *The scapegoat can undergo a peripety from best to worst; the well-fed and clothed pharmakos suddenly finds himself a hated outcast.*
7. Procession.
8. Expulsion. *Pharmakos is always expelled from the city; it is a key theme.*
9. Death. *Without exception, pharmakos dies, at least symbolically.*
10. Sacrifice.
11. Hero cult.

2.3. Reader as a victim of irony

In the first part of the chapter a conclusion was drawn that a victim of irony is either its target or the one who failed to understand irony. Both of the definitions may be applied to a reader. Misinterpretation of ironic intentions of an author (or vice versa when irony is read where it was not implied) is a case of unintentional reader's victimization. An example of it is described by Wayne C. Booth in his *A Rhetoric of Irony*.⁵¹ The author narrates a story of one bright graduate student who perceived *Pride and Prejudice* as an ironic book because of his misinterpretation of Mr. Bennet's remark about his son-in-law. The student failed to see irony in Mr. Bennet's words and started to regard him a "really quite stupid, in spite of his claims to cleverness."⁵² Booth illustrates this incident in order to show that even experienced and thoughtful readers often mistake themselves. David H. Richter, who also analyses Booth's case in his article, develops the argument, claiming that a reader can understand that he failed to interpret irony and, thus, became its victim, only when openly compared to the interpretations of other people.⁵³ In sight of this comment, unintentional reader's victimization will not be further analysed in this bachelor thesis. Intentional victimization of a reader should be addressed instead.

According to Richter, intentional victimization is possible in two cases: either an author does not present enough hints for the readers to reject the literal meaning of some utterances, or he obscures his actual beliefs, so the readers cannot undoubtedly say that the author is being ironic.

⁵¹ Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, 1.

⁵² Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, 1.

⁵³ David H. Richter, "The Reader as Ironic Victim," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1981): 135.

“Either strategy, effectively carried out, will turn the best of readers into ironic victims.”⁵⁴ Hoax is the basic form of ironic victimization. The ironist here, Richter continues, creates a persona, whose beliefs are in contrast to the ironist’s.⁵⁵ A well-known example of this technique was illustrated by Daniel Defoe in his political pamphlet “The Shortest Way with the Dissenters.” A similar technique is a “reverberatory irony” or a “double-bind.” In this case, a writer generates hints which provoke the reader to make false inferences about the author’s beliefs and, as the result, to misinterpret irony. Usually the author reveals his real standpoint to the readers later in his work.

Among modern versions of ironic victimization Richter mentions “the device of tricking the reader into an inappropriate emotional response.”⁵⁶ This technique is more complex in comparison with the two mentioned before. In case of “older” methods the readers are given linguistic hints which urge them to reject the literal meaning or question the author’s position. The technique of an inappropriate emotional response does not provide such signs, for the process is going inside the readers’ minds. At the story’s end, the readers find themselves far from their initial ideas and assumptions. Richter uses Kosinki’s novel *The Painted Bird* as an example of “reconsideration of our most cherished beliefs.”⁵⁷ The story is told by a 6-year-old Jewish boy, left alone in Poland during the Second World War. He wanders from a village to village, being a witness and often a victim of both physical and psychological abuse. The cases of these are depicted with a great detail and are shocking in their brutality. Richter points out that the multiplicity of such hideous scenes mitigates the reaction of the readers, so that towards the novel’s end they are rather indifferent to the violence. The technique of an inappropriate emotional response shows the readers that every person, if placed in psychologically harsh conditions, can become an executor, a violent man, who will be indifferent to the sufferings of someone else. Richter calls such a method “corrective irony.”

3. Narrative technique and irony

Narrative technique of Somerset Maugham was commented on by several critics. For instance, Angus Wilson highlights Maugham’s repetitive usage of a first-person narrator and narrative flexibility: “the story moves from mouth to mouth, from viewpoint to viewpoint

⁵⁴ Richter, “The Reader,” 137.

⁵⁵ Richter, “The Reader,” 137.

⁵⁶ Richter, “The Reader,” 144.

⁵⁷ Richter, “The Reader,” 151.

and backwards and forwards in time.”⁵⁸ Archie K. Loss adds that Maugham may use more than one narrator “before getting to the heart of the story.”⁵⁹ According to him, the voice of the narrator maintains the tone of each of the stories and, by doing so, “becomes the most important single unifying element in a Maugham short story.”⁶⁰ It seems that Maugham uses a specific type of narrator when transmitting different types of irony to his short stories. This feature is examined in the following chapter. The stories are divided into anecdotal and tragic ones – according to the prevailing tone of those.

3.1. Anecdotal short stories

Anecdote is a story about an actual incident from someone’s private life, which “is worth recounting.”⁶¹ It resembles rather a report in its size than a fictional narrative. H. Porter Abbott, on the contrary, believes that an anecdote represents the minimum of a narrative.⁶² Because Maugham’s short stories are only based on an anecdote but are developed in a full story, this feature will not be examined further.

Several critics agree that some short stories by Maugham resemble an anecdote. Bates believes that Maugham’s short stories “can be expressed anecdotally,”⁶³ Graham Greene claims that best of Maugham’s stories are anecdotes⁶⁴ and that “the anecdote to Mr. Maugham is very nearly everything.”⁶⁵ Stanley Archer declares that the writer successfully composes a complete story from an anecdote.⁶⁶ Richard A. Gordell assumes that in Maugham’s short story “the chief interest is in the anecdote and its irony.”⁶⁷

The key feature of an anecdote is its brevity. Maugham’s anecdotal short stories are short indeed: “The Luncheon,” “The Ant and the Grasshopper,” “The Escape” and “The Poet”,

⁵⁸ Angus Wilson, “The Critics,” in *W. Somerset Maugham: a study of the short fiction* by Stanley Archer (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 111.

⁵⁹ Archie K. Loss, “The Critics,” 116.

⁶⁰ Loss, “The Critics,” 118.

⁶¹ Mike Michael, “Anecdote,” in *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, ed. Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 25.

⁶² H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

⁶³ Herbert Ernest Bates, “The Critics,” 108.

⁶⁴ Graham Greene, “The Critics,” 105.

⁶⁵ Greene, “The Critics,” 104.

⁶⁶ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 8.

⁶⁷ Richard A. Gordell, *Somerset Maugham: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), 161.

for instance, are only four pages long. All of them are written using a first-person narrator, however, there is a certain discrepancy in the distance between the narrator and the reader.

The story “The Poet” depicts a man who intends to visit a poet he admires but eventually comes to a wrong house. Irony of this story is clearly accidental and derives from a contrast between the character’s expectations and the reality he faces. The paradox is commonplace and presumably can be recalled by any reader. This shared experience enables the narrator to build a connection with the readers and get an emotional response from them, in a form of a smile or laughter. Irony and humour are connected: humour can derive from irony, even though irony itself is not always funny.⁶⁸ The story’s resemblance with an anecdote gives it a connection with irony on a structural level. The joke itself consists of a setup and a punch line. The setup is the whole story except for the last sentence. Its function is to create “in the listener a particular set of expectations about how the situation should be interpreted.”⁶⁹ The punch line violates this chain, introducing the perception of incongruity “that is necessary for humour to occur.”⁷⁰ In its essence, irony is incongruity. Thus, introduced at the end of the story, it naturally becomes a source of humour.

“The Luncheon” is an example of an anecdotal story which includes accidental irony based on a discrepancy between one character’s words and actions. Though a woman the narrator meets claims that she never eats anything for luncheon, she manages to eat caviar, salmon, asparagus, half a bottle of champagne, an ice-cream, coffee and peaches. In this story, situational irony is complemented with ironic comments of the narrator, who is concurrently the story’s protagonist. When the woman advises the narrator to follow her example and eat just one thing instead of having a heavy luncheon, he answers: “I *am* only going to eat one thing.”⁷¹ Another example of verbal irony is the narrator’s remark made towards the end of the story: “Are you still hungry?”⁷² Although purely innocent on its own, the question cannot be read not ironically in this context. This also proves Rod’s claim that irony represents a type of conversational humour, that is, the one depending on the social context.⁷³ The story also represents Maugham’s ability to

⁶⁸ Rod A. Martin, *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach* (London, Ontario: Elsevier Academic Press, 2007), 98.

⁶⁹ Martin, *The Psychology of Humor*, 11.

⁷⁰ Martin, *The Psychology of Humor*, 11.

⁷¹ Maugham, *The World*, 87.

⁷² Maugham, *The World*, 89.

⁷³ Martin, *The Psychology of Humor*, 98.

compound different types of ironies inside one story, even so tiny. Ironies complement each other, and the second irony often increases the effect introduced with the original one, as verbal irony exaggerates the situational one in “The Luncheon.”

There is a set of anecdotal short stories encompassing a frame narrative. The frame tales are invariably narrated using a first-person protagonist narrator. Rather untypically, the embedded story is told by the same narrator, but the distance he keeps from the reader is altered. The narrator focuses the reader’s attention on another character and prefers to observe the actions without much participation, becoming a first-person peripheral narrator. One of such stories is “The Ant and the Grasshopper.” It represents a replica of a well-known fable by Aesop, and Maugham is not trying to hide the fact of imitating but highlights it. The fable is commented on by the narrator in the frame tale. It provides the context for the main story to occur: “I could not help thinking of this fable when the other day I saw George Ramsay lurching by himself in a restaurant.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, it makes the readers anticipate a similar ending – that the grasshopper will understand an importance of work when he faces difficulties. The irony of the story is built on this expectation: Tom Ramsay, who represents a grasshopper in the story, becomes a widower and inherits all the fortune. He overcomes difficulties without doing any work. Thus, the usage of a frame narrative in this story gives the author the ground on which irony, thus, humour of the story, may be built further.

There is a possibility of another interpretation of the story. The readers may feel not humour but sympathy for “ant” George, towards whom life was not so willing. Besides, a sermonising tone of the original fable may force the reader to support the moralistic ending as well. The difficulty is solved with the arrival of the protagonist first-person narrator: “I could not help it. I burst into a shout of laughter as I looked at George’s wrathful face, I rolled in my chair, I very nearly fell on the floor.”⁷⁵ Being “allowed” to react on the situation with humour, the readers enjoy the comic ending of the story and its pleasant aftertaste. Thus, “The Ant and the Grasshopper” represents a double-ended narrative. The return of the original narrator enables him to comment on the embedded tale and, consequently, assure himself that irony is perceived by the readers with humour.

⁷⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 90.

⁷⁵ Maugham, *The World*, 93.

Another story including a peripheral first-person narrator is “The Escape.” The dramatic irony is introduced in the very beginning of the story, when the narrator claims that he knew a person who “managed to extricate himself from marriage.”⁷⁶ Having announced that, he proceeds to the actual story of Roger Charing. The actions of the main character are perceived by the reader as purely ironic ones. For instance, Roger decides to buy a house for him and his fiancé, but none of those they visit suits them. “Of course he was hard to please; he could not bear to ask his dear Ruth to live in any but the perfect house, and the perfect house wanted finding.”⁷⁷ The eagerness of the man to find a perfect living for his fiancé could be interpreted as a sincere fit of a man who is in love, if it was not set in the context where the dramatic irony was already introduced. The story represents a single-ended frame narrative, for the embedded story does not need further explanation. Thus, the usage of different subcategories of frame narratives directly influences the reader’s perception of irony and governs it.

It also has to be mentioned that irony is introduced into anecdotal stories differently. In the stories “The Poet” and “The Ant and the Grasshopper” irony is introduced at the very end of the story, as a comic unexpected twist, but in “The Luncheon” and “The Escape” the divergence is clear in approximately the middle of the story. Irony in such cases is repeated several times and, by this recurrence, the humorous effect of irony is increased multiply. For instance, an ironic discrepancy in “The Luncheon” emerges each time the character orders a new dish or drink and is always commented by the narrator either orally or when reflecting his own thoughts or feelings to the reader. From a pleasant gaily mood it is designed to drive the reader to a chuckle or even a burst of laughter. Thus, a great humour of this story depends directly on iterative representations of irony.

According to Lucy L. Notestein and Waldo H. Dunn, the essence of a short story is a single impression. “This effect is that which will unconsciously remain fixed as a brooding influence on the reader’s mind even after the essentials of plot have faded from memory.”⁷⁸ The simplicity of the plot, required by a short story format, does not overload the readers and enables them to revel in the impression of humour which often emerges from irony. A similar idea is expressed by Archie K. Loss in connection with Maugham directly: “In his short

⁷⁶ Maugham, *The World*, 160.

⁷⁷ Maugham, *The World*, 162.

⁷⁸ Lucy Lilian Notestein and Waldo Hilary Dunn, *The Modern Short Story, a Study of the Form: its Plot, Structure, Development and Other Requirements* (New York: The A. S. Barnes Company, 1914), 13.

stories [...] he follows the classic pattern of the short tale that tends toward a single effect.”⁷⁹ Notestein and Dunn also believe that the story’s climax should be preceded by its tone and the two should be in an absolute harmony “that either one might suggest the other.”⁸⁰ The single impression of the story “The Luncheon” is humour, thus, irony functions as a comic element which helps the story’s plot to be developed towards the climax. Loss bolsters the claim, saying that the readers’ “initial impression of a character is usually borne out by his or her subsequent behaviour.”⁸¹ In “The Luncheon” the lady the narrator meets behaves contradictory to her own words and does so towards the very end of the story, enabling the irony to contribute the story’s climax.

3.2. Tragic short stories

Not all Somerset Maugham’s tragic short stories encompass irony, some are essentially tragic. According to Northrop Frye, a tragic catastrophe happens due to certain comprehensible reasons. On the contrary, ironic catastrophe is triggered by rather inadequate excuses “and raises more objections than it answers.”⁸² Two short stories, “The Unconquered” and “The Mother”, represent narratives converging thematically but diverging in terms of genres: one of them is ironic, while the other is purely tragic. In “The Mother” a woman murders her son’s loved one because of jealousy. The reader is not likely to foresee the ending since jealousy towards a grown-up child’s love life is not a justified reason for a homicide in our society. The reasons for the act are inadequate, thus, the story is rather cruelly ironic than tragic. “The Unconquered”, however, represents a tragic story. A young woman kills her own new-born baby because it was conceived in consequence of rape. Her actions are governed by a desire for revenge. The reasons which forced the character to commit the homicide are terrifying, yet comprehensible, making the story a tragedy. Besides, apart from “The Mother” where the main character exults in her victory, in “The Unconquered” there are no characters who benefit from the catastrophe; they are stricken with grief, enhancing the tragic tone of the story.

By the term “a tragic story” no tragedy as genre is implied. Tragic short stories by Maugham are tragic in tone, charged with a depressing atmosphere, end rather shockingly than amusingly and leave a bitter aftertaste. Generally, the stories end with a murder or a suicide. If exceptionally

⁷⁹ Loss, “The Critics,” 114.

⁸⁰ Notestein, *The Modern Short Story*, 14.

⁸¹ Loss, “The Critics,” 115.

⁸² Frye, *The Anatomy*, 41.

death is not presented, the characters are absolutely miserable. It appears that Maugham's tragic stories follow two principal patterns in terms of a narrative technique. Either they are written solely using a third-person omniscient narrator or they are presented as embedded stories with the frame tale told by a Maugham's persona using a first-person narrator. The stories written using a third-person narrator are in majority: "Rain", "Mackintosh", "Red", "The Yellow Streak", "The Force of Circumstance", "The Door of Opportunity", "Before the Party" and some others. Irony there is not affected by the narrative technique much: a third-person omniscient narrator is the most common writer's choice for a story to be told. Presumably irony could not be communicated by a first-person narrator because of the limitedness of his view. The narrator of the mentioned stories provides a profound insight into the characters' personality; he reveals their secret wishes, cravings and passions. Often, he traces their lives in a range of years, methodically observing the change which happens inside them. Irony is not presented in the stories explicitly, it becomes visible (and it should not to all of the readers) gradually, as the character is explored by the narrator. Connectedness between irony and an archetype of a scapegoat is examined in the fourth chapter of the thesis.

As it was shown, Maugham uses the technique of a frame narrative and of a peripheral first-person narrator in anecdotal stories. The writer continues the tradition with tragic ones as well. Such stories are "The Pool," "The Alien Corn," "Virtue," "Footprints in the Jungle," "A Casual Affair" and some others. The embedded story can either be told by a third-person narrator or by another first-person narrator, customarily the man who the persona meets. Stanley Archer supports this claim, "Often on his travels the persona meets another character with a story to tell and, after introducing him at the outset, withdraws and lets the character narrate his story."⁸³ Archer believes that the persona is one of the most immanent narrative techniques used in Maugham's fiction.⁸⁴ It is a professional writer, "keenly observant of human beings."⁸⁵ He is a great traveller, for the scope of his journeys ranges from multifarious places in Europe: Rome, Riviera, London, Geneva, Seville (repeatedly) to totally exotic ones like Samoa, Hawaii, Borneo, the Federated states of Malaya and others. The position of a traveller, Stanley further claims, enlarges the regular estrangement from the story's fictional world and "places [the persona] in the position of an observer reluctant to intervene. The format creates the impression that

⁸³ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 10.

⁸⁴ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 9.

⁸⁵ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 10.

the reader is hearing the story as the narrator first hears it.”⁸⁶ Hence, the usage of a first-person narrator in the frame tales enables the writer to establish a closer contact with the readers and gain their credibility. It has to be mentioned that in Maugham’s later fiction the *I* of the persona is supplanted by a character called Ashenden or sometimes Mr. Maugham. He is not the stories’ protagonist but “the analytical, tolerant observer of the passage,”⁸⁷ resembling a first-person peripheral narrator considerably. Thus, although in later fiction Maugham’s persona is modified and developed into “both well rounded and complex”⁸⁸ character, he still occupies the position of an observer. In order not to reign confusion, the stories involving Ashenden persona will not be examined in the thesis.

Frame narrative provides the context for the main story to occur. It explains the reader how and why the persona meets the man whose history is about to be told. For example, in the story “The Book-Bag” the persona declares that he never “venture[s] far without a sufficiency of reading matter,”⁸⁹ explaining the story’s title. Although he admits the inconvenience of carrying books in a sack, he also mentions that without it he “should perhaps never have heard the singular history of Olive Hardy.”⁹⁰ The next paragraph, however, does not reveal the story of the mysterious character. The persona takes some time to tell the reader about Mark Featherstone – the character with whom he stays for several days and who later tells the story of Olive Hardy, which is the main one of “The Book-Bag”. Thereby, there are two embedded stories in “The Book-Bag”: the first two are told by the first-person narrator and the main one by the third-person one.

Gregory O’Dea believes that a frame narrative yields a transition between the “outer” and “inner” worlds and, thus, eases the tension which the main story creates.⁹¹ Fox develops the idea, claiming that a frame narrative may make the embedded story more tolerated by the reader.⁹² The main story of “The Book-Bag” describes love between a sister and brother, which is greater than the one siblings usually have towards one another.

⁸⁶ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 10.

⁸⁷ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 47.

⁸⁸ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 46.

⁸⁹ Maugham, *The World*, 1041.

⁹⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 1042.

⁹¹ Gregory O’Dea, “Framing the Frame: Embedded Narratives, Enabling Texts, and Frankenstein,” *Romanticism on the Net*, no. 31 (August 2003), accessed February 24, 2019, <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ron/2003-n31-ron738/008697ar/>.

⁹² Michael V. Fox, “Frame-Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qohelet,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 48 (1977) quoted in Craig G. Bartholomew *Ecclesiastes* (Ada: Baker Academic, 2009), 77.

Although the issue of incest is not openly addressed in the story, the idea of a rather unnatural affection the characters have for each other is clearly stated. The topic of incest is one of taboos in our society, thus, an insertion of rather prolong frame stories (around ten pages long) may be interpreted as a safe way to address the issue and make the reader consider the story, not being carried away with an emotion of disgust and repulsion it could arise if narrated forthwith.

“The Pool” represents another tragic story with a frame narrative. It starts with the persona being introduced to Lawson by Chaplin. While Lawson is the protagonist of the embedded story, Chaplin is a minor character, who exists in the frame story only. Chaplin has a small yet crucial role in the appearance of the embedded tale: he persuades the persona to draw his attention to Lawson. The persona admits that he “paid no particular attention to [Lawson]”⁹³ in the very first sentence of the story. Chaplin, however, claims that Lawson is “worth talking to”⁹⁴ and, more importantly, gives the persona a summary of Lawson’s story:

“Good chap,” said Chaplin flatly, as Lawson went out of the door into the sunshine.
“One of the best. Pity he drinks [...] It's the island done it, and Ethel.”

“Who's Ethel?”

“Ethel's his wife. Married a half-caste. Old Brevald's daughter. Took her away from here. Only thing to do. But she couldn't stand it, and now they're back again. He'll hang himself one of these days, if he don't drink himself to death before. Good chap. Nasty when he's drunk.”⁹⁵

This indicates the context for the embedded story to appear and the reason the persona got interested in the character. Furthermore, dramatic irony is introduced: from that moment onwards, the reader is very probable to expect the character to either commit a suicide or be deceased due to an alcohol overdose. The reasons for the character to do so are stated in the main story, told by a third-person omniscient narrator. The transition to the embedded tale is done very smoothly:

[...] a few days later I met his wife. I knew they had been married for five or six years, and I was surprised to see that she was still extremely young. When he married her she could not have been more than sixteen. She was adorably pretty. She was [...]⁹⁶

⁹³ Maugham, *The World*, 98.

⁹⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 99.

⁹⁵ Maugham, *The World*, 99.

⁹⁶ Maugham, *The World*, 102.

The first sentence is written in the first-person narrator, the third introduces a speculation about the character's past, the last and those which follow are told strictly by a third-person omniscient narrator. The usage of this narrator provides an insight into Lawson's thoughts and feelings and enables to chronicle his life for five or six years – the time the couple was married. The transition back to the first-person narrator is again done deftly:

Wild rage seized him [Lawson], and having no one to vent it on he drank more and more heavily. A little while before I came to the island he had had another attack of delirium tremens. I met Ethel at the house of [...]”⁹⁷

What is noteworthy about the transition from the primary story to the embedded one is that it is done as if through the persona's contact with Ethel. Both times the persona comments on something European he sees in her. “There was something extremely civilised about her, so that it surprised you to see her in those surroundings [...]”⁹⁸ he mentions before the story shifts to the third-person narrator. When returning from the embedded story, the persona comments: “In her pretty pink frock and high-heeled shoes she looked quite European. You could hardly have guessed at that dark background of native life in which she felt herself so much more at home.”⁹⁹ Through these remarks another irony of the story is introduced – a cosmic irony or an irony of fate. Ethel was of a Norwegian origin, looked European and had the manners, got education at a mission school, married a white man and came with him to Scotland. Despite all the opportunities and efforts, she comes back to the wilderness of Samoa and starts behaving more primitively than she ever did before. “Her stay in Scotland seemed to have thrown her back on her own people, now that she was once more among them, with a passionate zest, and she turned to her native ways with abandon.”¹⁰⁰

A similar irony of a place influencing characters contrarily to what they expect is directed on Lawson. While a return to nature is routinely seen as an act which refines a person, it controversially makes Lawson regress and eventually leads him to a suicide. “For Lawson [...] contact with the primitive means dissolution, loss of control, alcoholism and eventually death.”¹⁰¹ A bitter irony can be traced in the love story itself: perceived by

⁹⁷ Maugham, *The World*, 124.

⁹⁸ Maugham, *The World*, 102.

⁹⁹ Maugham, *The World*, 124.

¹⁰⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 117.

¹⁰¹ Philip Holden, *Orienting masculinity, orienting nation: W. Somerset Maugham's exotic fiction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 49.

the majority (particularly Lawson himself) as a feeling which is designed to make a person happy, love ironically makes the character desperate and despondent. Finally, Lawson becomes a target of irony of fate as well – no matter how passionately he loves Ethel, what he does to her, what he is willing to sacrifice in order to be with her, she turns away from him. The pool – the place where Lawson first finds Ethel and falls in love with her – becomes the place where he kills himself: the place of an utmost joy ironically becomes a place of a great tragedy. Other cases of irony may be found in the story rather easily and depend on the readers' point of view and their interpretation of the story. The ironies which were mentioned show a considerable number of ironies to be found in Maugham's more complex fiction and its great interweaving.

In "The Book-Bag" the embedded narrative is told by another character using the first-person narrator. The similar narrative technique is used in the story "The Footprints in the Jungle." In both stories, the persona does not let the character narrate the story freely but interrupts him¹⁰² by commenting or asking the questions which actually guide the story. The persona in "The Book-Bag", for instance, asks Mark Featherstone if Olive was Tim's sister, how old they were, why they were not popular with the neighbours, why he did not marry Olive Hardy, whom he loved from the first sight, etc. The narrator interferes even more in the story "The Footprints in the Jungle," which is centred upon "a grisly murder that occurred 20 years earlier."¹⁰³ The first story the reader is introduced to is written using the first-person peripheral narrator. The persona describes how he stayed in Malaya with a man called Gaze who later introduced him to the Cartwrights. The frame story comprises a description of the people playing bridge and the observations the persona makes about the characters. The embedded story is told by Gaze in a first-person. Although Gaze is a policeman, the persona ironically resembles a policeman himself interviewing the witness with the questions like: "Did you recognize Mrs. Cartwright when you saw her again?", "Did the Bronsons get on well together?", "What sort of a man was Cartwright at that time?" etc. Thus, the story is re-created with the help of the persona's guiding comments and questions. The only time the persona consents the character to tell the story all by himself is when Gaze starts narrating the actual investigation of the murder. It represents the third story in "The Footprints in the Jungle" and it is told using the third-person narrator.

¹⁰² In the clear majority of Maugham's stories, the person the narrator meets is a man.

¹⁰³ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 35.

The irony of the story arises at the very end and is again incorporated by the persona. He assumes that the Cartwrights, being actually murderers, cannot be amiable people. Gaze does not agree with him: he believes that some people may be driven by certain circumstances to commit a crime but that does not imply that they are essentially vile and should be isolated from society. “They are very nice people; they’re about the pleasantest people here.”¹⁰⁴ A common image of a murderer is of a dangerous person, who should be steered clear of. Thus, the readers are likely to be surprised by Gaze’s statement. Such a twist is, however, pretty common for Maugham: Gordell claims that the writer often staggers the readers “by an unconventional ethical point of view.”¹⁰⁵

Another irony is hidden in the structure of the characters. Although Gaze himself does not believe that he is a good teller, and the persona, being a writer, guides him throughout the story, “Gaze has the final word and turns the tables at the end, becoming Maugham’s *raisonneur*.”¹⁰⁶ In this story the irony is introduced not to provoke a strong emotion in the readers as in other Maugham’s stories, but to express one of the author’s beliefs without needless sermons. “Footprints in the Jungle” represents a double-ended frame narrative: the characters of the frame tale are reintroduced in order to explain the thought hidden between the lines. The readers may become the victims of irony if they fail to identify *raisonneur* in Gaze and continue treating the story as a purely detective one.

Sometimes the narrator goes further with guiding the main story and, in essence, re-creates it according to someone else’s information. The technique is implemented in its best in the story “A Casual Affair.” The story is written using the first-person narrator – the persona proclaims it at the tale’s outset:

I am telling this story in the first person, though I am in no way connected with it, because I do not want to pretend to the reader that I know more about it than I really do. The facts are as I state them, but the reasons for them I can only guess, and it may be that when the reader has read them he will think me wrong.¹⁰⁷

The extract suggests that the story is written in the first-person peripheral narrator: though the narrator exists in the described fictional world, he is not actively involved in the story’s actions and prefers to observe the situation. The narrator hears the story only occasionally – from Mr. and

¹⁰⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 1010.

¹⁰⁵ Gordell, *Somerset Maugham*, 175.

¹⁰⁶ Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 36.

¹⁰⁷ Maugham, *The World*, 1401.

Mrs. Low at a dinner-party. The embedded tale is told by Mr. Low in a first-person narrator. When he was a District Officer in Selangor, he examined the demise of an unknown white man. The only thing which could shed the light to the person's identity was a pile of letters found by Mr. Low. Mr. and Mrs. Low discovered the letters' addressee – their (and the persona's) common acquaintance Lady Kastellan. On the basis of the one-side correspondence they had, they re-created the story of a love affair between the deceased Mister X and Lady Kastellan. The story is told in the third-person narrator, but the affirmative sentences alternate with assumptions, remaining the readers that the whole tale is only a mere conjecture. "She was never for a moment absent from his thoughts. It looked as though her infatuation was equal to his, for [...]"¹⁰⁸ The main story ends when Mr. Low gets to know the name of Lady Kastellan's lover – Jack Almond. This discovery is shocking for the narrator and the persona, as they both knew this person. The identification of the man proposes the first major irony of the story. When a person has a friend, he expects to recognize him easily, both alive and deceased. However, Jack Almond had changed so radically that Mr. Low could not identify him.

The second embedded story is purely assumptive. Mr. Low says that he cannot comprehend how his friend, one of the best and "the last man [he] should ever have expected to go that way"¹⁰⁹ could end up being a drug and alcohol addict. It is also stressed that for five years after the affair Jack Almond was doing all right and relapsed only after a visit home. "That's where the novelist comes in"¹¹⁰ announces the persona and offers his explanation of a sudden regress of Almond. The persona assumes that at first Almond was satisfied because of "the sacrifice he'd made."¹¹¹ Presumably he expected that the woman for whom he relinquished everything would love him as passionately as he does, however, "she didn't care a row of pins for him any longer."¹¹² The irony notably resembles the one which was targeted at Lawson in the story "The Pool". The essence of it is described by the persona: "He'd sacrificed everything, his friends, his familiar surroundings, his profession, his usefulness in the world, all that gives value to existence – for nothing."¹¹³ In "A Casual Affair" the embedded and frame stories are intertwined in a sense of a question and answer. The embedded tale reveals the identity of the letters' author, and raises a

¹⁰⁸ Maugham, *The World*, 1407.

¹⁰⁹ Maugham, *The World*, 1415.

¹¹⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 1417.

¹¹¹ Maugham, *The World*, 1417.

¹¹² Maugham, *The World*, 1417.

¹¹³ Maugham, *The World*, 1418.

question – what could force Jack Almond, one of the best of his kind, to fall that low? The answer is given by the persona in the second half of the frame tale – love. Once again, love, which is designed to make a person happier, ironically drives him into a state of despair and eventual death.

4. Scapegoat as a victim of irony

As it was stated, Northrop Frye believes that a typical victim of irony is a pharmakos or a scapegoat. It appears that in some Maugham's stories the main character indeed occupies a position of a scapegoat. An attempt was made to differentiate between two types of pharmakoi to be found in Maugham's stories: the "primary" and the "secondary", both implying different targeting of irony.

4.1. Primary scapegoat

There are short stories by Somerset Maugham which present an exemplary scapegoat, that is, possessing several objective pharmakoi features. Such are, for instance, the stories "Rain", "The Vessel of Wrath", "Before the Party", "The Mother" and others.

"The Mother" depicts a woman called La Cachirra who murders her son's loved one due to jealousy. In the story's outset the reader and members of the community where La Cachirra comes, discover that she is a recently released prisoner who served seven years sentence for a murder. A figure of a scapegoat is usually the one from the outcasts of society, precisely like a former inmate. Even in this day and age ex-convicts are not welcomed in an ordinary community, so the attitude towards La Cachirra is quite comprehensible. The denizens are not elated about her arrival, huddle together when she passes them and are glad that there are the police to protect them if the woman is aggressive. La Cachirra worsens the situation by voluntary isolating herself from her neighbours: she does not greet them, locks herself in her room and leaves it only for work.

Often a pharmakos can be just a disabled or an ugly person. La Cachirra's appearance is unappealing as much as her personality and Maugham depicts it explicitly: "haggard and very thin, with bony hands and fingers like a vulture's claws", "teeth that were pointed like those of a best of prey", "her eyes [...] shone fiercely", "Her face bore an expression of such ferocity that no one dared come near to speak with her."¹¹⁴ Thus, a classic figure of a scapegoat is drawn: an ugly old woman and a former prisoner, who is not welcomed by a society.

¹¹⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 237.

As the story develops, such a negative image is contrasted with her position of a mother, when her son visits her. The author emphasizes the reaction of the people observing the scene. The contradiction is seen as if through their eyes:

The woman threw her arms round his [son's] neck and kissed him passionately. She fondled him and with a loving gesture stroked his face with both her hands. The girl and the mother who watched would never have thought her capable of such tenderness.¹¹⁵

From that moment onwards, the readers are likely to doubt their attitude towards La Cachirra and may hesitate when drawing further expectations concerning her behaviour. The demonstration of a passionate love the woman has for her child presumably appeals to the reader. In our society, it is the gospel truth that there is nothing greater than love of a mother to her child. A woman who is indifferent to her son would provoke a much more negative reaction than the one who is excessively caring and loving.

Even if the position of a mother is left aside, there is a certain stereotypical portrait of a woman – a weak, dependent, emotional creature. Although nowadays this image is actively opposed, inequality between men and women still prevails in many spheres of life. One of them is aggression. A quick look at academic articles concerning violence reveals that the majority of them focus on brutality towards women. There is even a new term “femicide” which means “the culmination of different forms of violence against women.”¹¹⁶ On the contrary, little is known about men who suffered from violent behaviour of women, for “an aggressive woman is not a ‘normal’ woman.”¹¹⁷ Until recently, the stereotype that men are naturally aggressive, apart from women, “led researchers to conclude that women are nonaggressive and, therefore, to ignore the topic of female aggression as a distinct phenomenon.”¹¹⁸ Nowadays, presumably, there are multiple tests and experiments examining whether women are capable of being aggressive in the same way as men are, but facts are not relevant. The stereotype of a peaceful, weak, not able to commit an act of true violence woman, is crucial. A reaction of ordinary readers to the story's ending is

¹¹⁵ Maugham, *The World*, 239.

¹¹⁶ Shalva Weil and Marceline Naudi, “Towards a European Observatory on Femicide,” in *Femicide across Europe: Theory, Research and Prevention*, ed. Shalva Weil, Consuelo Corradi and Marceline Naudi (Bristol: Policy Press, 2018), 167.

¹¹⁷ Diederik A. Stapel and Willem Koomen, “When Stereotype Activation Results in (Counter)Stereotypical Judgments: Priming Stereotype-Relevant Traits and Exemplars,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 34, no. 2 (March 1998): 144.

¹¹⁸ Jacquelyn W. White and Robin M. Kowalski, “Deconstructing The Myth Of The Nonaggressive Woman: A Feminist Analysis,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (December 1994): 1.

plausibly consternation, for the preponderance of people is affected by stereotypes substantially. As shown above, in “The Mother” irony is presented in its purest form – a paradox, which is composed of the readers’ expectations about the character created on the basis of a strong gender stereotype and the opposite actions of this character. In this case, the victim of irony is the reader.

Maugham, however, enlarges the irony of the story. He does not emphasize a stereotypical image of a woman by highlighting motherly feelings the character has towards her son. On the contrary, La Cachirra’s uncivilised behaviour is accentuated: “she could not bear him to look at a woman and she writhed at the bare idea that he might pay court to some girl,”¹¹⁹ “when she saw Rosalia’s provoking glance and Currito’s answering smile, rage leap to her throat,”¹²⁰ “stood [...] with fury gnawing at her heart,”¹²¹ “her eyes glowed like coals of fire and she felt them burning in the sockets; but no one noticed her, and she gave a groan of rage,”¹²² “the blood leaped to her head and choked her eyes,”¹²³ etc. As a result, Maugham enlarges the gap between the readers’ expectations and the reality which he is drawing, showing the potency of the stereotype the readers have. Even though there are hints designed to facilitate doubts about the whole womanliness of the character, the bias is that strong that the readers are not able to fight it.

Another irony can be identified if the position of a scapegoat is considered. At the end of the procession, scapegoats are usually either expelled from the city or murdered by the rest of society. Ironically, the scapegoat in this story is a violent perpetrator herself. Not only does not La Cachirra regret committing the crime, but she exults over her victory: “her eyes shone with triumph.”¹²⁴ It seems like by employing irony Maugham challenges two stereotypical images which ordinary readers have: of an innocent, weak woman, not capable of violent behaviour, and of an outcast, who wanes under the burden of society.

A similar theme of a woman committing an aggressive act is developed in the stories “The Unconquered”, “Before the Party” and “The Footprints in the Jungle”; all of them constitute a homicide. “The Footprints in the Jungle” represent the only short story where a woman is not a murderer herself. However, she is the one who organizes the plan of the homicide, which still

¹¹⁹ Maugham, *The World*, 240.

¹²⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 240.

¹²¹ Maugham, *The World*, 240.

¹²² Maugham, *The World*, 243.

¹²³ Maugham, *The World*, 243.

¹²⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 247.

is inconsistent with a traditional image of a woman. Though the narrator accentuates her frankness, confidence and a habit of making sarcastic comments, these are still perceived in a positive light due to other remarks like “I thought her a very agreeable person. I liked her frankness [...] And it was a pleasure to play bridge with her.”¹²⁵

“Before the Party” is a complex story in which both tragedy and irony can be traced. It is a story of a well-kept secret of a murder which is revealed one evening while the family is preparing themselves for a party. It represents a frame narrative. The inner story – Millicent’s tale of her unhappy marriage – proposes a bitter and cruel irony. After several years of fighting with her husband’s alcoholism, she finds him heavily drunk though he promised her to break this habit. Millicent is so devastated that in a fit of anger she kills him with a sword and later claims it to be a suicide. Irony in this case is tragic in a sense of the character’s mental defeat. The readers are also inclined to express sympathy for her.¹²⁶ Yet a contrast between the character’s expectations and reality she faces makes the whole case cruelly ironic. When Millicent was away from Harold [her deceased husband] she thought about him all the time and “all at once [she] knew that [she] loved him.”¹²⁷ The same day she came home, craving to tell him, but encountered him lying in the bed half-naked and blind drunk. The crash of Millicent’s dreams is tragic but the suddenness of it and a contrast respond she gets from her husband is bitterly ironic.

The external story is built around the family listening to Millicent and commenting on her story sporadically – it represents an intrusive frame tale. Apart from the internal tragedy, the tale ends rather with a satire than an irony. Although Millicent does not want to tell her family the truth in the first place, they force her to do so; her sister claims that she “can count on [their] sympathy and understanding.”¹²⁸ The promise is, however, broken: after they discover the truth, all the family care about is the forthcoming party and how they will look there. They do not express a bit of compassion for Millicent, but only for themselves. For instance, Millicent’s father says that she was very selfish to tell him, a solicitor, such a thing. Their hypocrisy and indifference, so clearly expressed, are disapproved by the narrator and, expectedly, by the readers as well. Agnus Wilson

¹²⁵ Maugham, *The World*, 986.

¹²⁶ Muecke, *Irony*, 51.

¹²⁷ Maugham, *The World*, 275.

¹²⁸ Maugham, *The World*, 266.

holds a similar opinion about the story: “we are in full middle-class suburbia whose narrowness and hypocrisy the author wishes to expose.”¹²⁹

If the story is analysed from the position of a scapegoat, it yields impressive results. In the embedded story Harold is a pharmakos – a drunkard who does no good neither to his family nor to the natives at his job. At the end of the story, he is “expelled” from the society to an eternal peace in order to enable it to clean itself. In the frame tale, however, Millicent resembles a pharmakos. She is not going to be separated from the society conspicuously, for the secret should be kept as it was earlier but will be detached from her family emotionally. It is expectable, at the first place, to Millicent herself: “She seems to live in a different world from their and to have no connection with them.”¹³⁰ With the help of irony, Maugham again illustrates two issues: a stereotypical image of a woman and society’s intolerance to murderers. Although some readers may approve of Millicent’s act, they are explicitly shown that with the revelation of her secret she has lost connection with her family. Presumably, the idea of the story may be interpreted so: no matter whether the act a person commits is in favour of his own interests or not, if it is disapproved by society predominantly, this person is doomed not to be accepted in the community.

This story also serves as a vivid example of two types of a scapegoat which can be traced in some of Somerset Maugham’s stories. It has to be emphasized beforehand that the classification is made for the sake of this bachelor thesis only, no link to possible similar categorisations in other works is drawn here. The first type of a scapegoat is labelled as the primary one. Such characters are “the worst” in their own fictional reality and possess sinister features long before the events described in the stories occur. Harold is a heavy drunkard before he meets Millicent, his vice provokes the later conflict and the following it catastrophe. Other primary scapegoats are Sadie Thompson from “Rain” who has been offering her services to men on the other islands before she comes to Pago-Pago where the story unfolds. Ginger Ted behaves outrageously from the very first day he comes to the island of Baru, as narrated by the Reverend Mr. Owen Jones in “The Vessel of Wrath.” La Cachirra comes to the city after she has served seven years in the prison, thus, she became an outcast long before the narrative starts.

¹²⁹ Angus Wilson, “The Critics,” 111.

¹³⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 266.

The conflict arises when these characters change their location, as Miss Thompson and La Cachirra do. This step is customarily taken due to the problems which beset the characters in their original community. Miss Thompson left San Francisco and now is afraid to return because she would be sent to a penitentiary. La Cachirra was hated and persecuted by her community and had to leave. Sometimes both a future pharmakos and its antagonist arrive at a new area, as the characters of a short story “Rain” do.

“Rain” is a complex story, where several cases of irony can be traced. The first irony is a situational one: although the characters do not want to stay at Pago-Pago, they are urged to do so due to a broken epidemic of measles on the island they intended to go in the first place. At the same time a natural disaster happens: rain starts to fall in torrents with no signs of stopping. The rain is mentioned by the author throughout the story as a leitmotif and force, which worsens the psychological state of the characters and makes them nervous:

And Dr. Macphail watched the rain. It was beginning to get on his nerves. It was not like our soft English rain that drops gently on the earth; it was unmerciful and somehow terrible; you felt in it the malignancy of the primitive powers of nature. It did not pour, it flowed. It was like a deluge from heaven, and it rattled on the roof of corrugated iron with a steady persistence that was maddening. It seemed to have a fury of its own. And sometimes you felt that you must scream if it did not stop, and then suddenly you felt powerless, as though your bones had suddenly become soft; and you were miserable and hopeless.¹³¹

In this small extract the powerfulness of rain is highlighted several times: “the malignancy of the primitive powers of nature”; “a fury of its own”; “you [a person] felt powerless [...] you were miserable and hopeless”. Such a description is typical for the irony of nature, where fauna is seen as an all-mighty power and is contrasted by a vulnerable and defenceless man. Dr. Macphail is affected by the rain the most. He repeatedly wishes the rain would stop, imagining that the whole situation would improve, yet nature is intransigent. The weather makes the characters uptight and affects their further actions and behaviour. At the same time, the irony of nature prompts the idea of inevitability and characters’ incapability to change anything. Gordell believes that the rain affects the readers as well: “the everlasting rain at first depresses the reader, but its effect is cumulative and becomes almost distracting.”¹³²

¹³¹ Maugham, *The World*, 18.

¹³² Gordell, *Somerset Maugham*, 173.

In “Rain” an embedded tale is presented as well. Rev. Davidson tells the story of Fred Ohlson – a Danish trader who had been on the Davidsons’ islands for a long time before the Missionaries came. Ohlson is described as an unfaithful to his native wife drunkard and a corrupted man. Mr. Davidson says that the man was given a chance “to mend his ways”¹³³ but refused it. From the next extract it is obvious that the Reverend found the means of making Ohlson change:

In two years he was a ruined man. He’d lost everything he’d saved in a quarter of a century. I broke him, and at last he was forced to come to me like a beggar and beseech me to give him a passage back to Sydney.¹³⁴

The character of Fred Ohlson represents a scapegoat. It is explained not only by his status of “the worst” but his wish to leave the city – a voluntary expulsion. Mr. Davidson here is explicitly shown as a person of a much higher status, which highlights the contrast between him and the pharmakos. Moreover, he is the person who forces the man to the state of a scapegoat by making conditions unbearable for him. This short flashback reveals to the reader the methods which the Reverend uses and predicts a similar pattern of behaviour targeted now at Miss Thompson.

In some scapegoat stories, pharmakoi are treated kindly before the expulsion: they are dressed in beautiful clothes and well fed. There is no physical improvement happening to Miss Thompson, but, from Mr. Davidson’s point of view, the woman undergoes a great change of soul. His reaction suggests that Miss Thompson is proceeding to “The Best” phase. The rituality of the process is stressed by the narrator: “The whole household, intent on the wretched, tortured woman downstairs, lived in a state of unnatural excitement. She was like a victim that was being prepared for the savage rites of a bloody idolatry.”¹³⁵ This feature, as disasters happening in the beginning of the tale, also links “Rain” with a typical scapegoat story.

In sight of a presence of the embedded tale functioning as a mirror for the main one, and the changes which are seen in Miss Thompson, the readers are probable to expect her to be actually expelled from the community soon. Moreover, Dr. Macphail makes several attempts to persuade the Reverend not to send Miss Thompson back, but Mr. Davidson is uncompromising. The process of the expulsion is “interrupted” by death and, ironically, not of a scapegoat, but its antagonist – Mr. Davidson. This character represents the real victim of irony in “Rain”.

¹³³ Maugham, *The World*, 12.

¹³⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 12.

¹³⁵ Maugham, *The World*, 32.

Throughout his life he cleaves to the principles of saving souls with any tools which work. The Reverend believes that a missionary from the West is in a way vaccinated from sinister thoughts and vices, apart from a native one: “If you leave a mission in charge of a native missionary, no matter how trustworthy he seems, in course of time you’ll find he’s let abuses creep in.”¹³⁶ The revenant’s erroneous idea of a Western person being a wiser, smarter, better person apart from a native man faults him – another small irony targeted at this character is incorporated. When Mr. Davidson is contrasted with his own true self possessing the same vices that he tried to clear in other people, it is so horrifying and shameful for him that he sees no other way than to end his life. Robert Gish proposes that Mr. Davidson was “forced to see his true self in the ironic virtue of his antagonist.”¹³⁷ Thus, as in “The Mother”, it is through a pharmakos that the real irony’s victim is revealed. This irony overly intertwines with the best ideas of naturalism – no matter what a person tries to do, natural forces will win over him. Philip Holden assumes that Miss Thompson’s “triumph” represents a victory of natural powers “over civilization’s nurture.”¹³⁸ He also believes that in the stories like “Rain”, “Mackintosh” and alike winning primitivism is set up in order to critique some features of the Western world.¹³⁹

Mr. Davidson sees his vocation in curing vices of others, yet he fails to see that he possesses a sin of lust, which just metamorphoses from a desire for power to a sexual one towards the story’s end. This transformation is prompted by the author throughout the story. Applying Richter’s differentiation, Maugham uses the basic strategy of turning the readers into victims of irony by not providing them with enough hints to doubt the text’s truthfulness. The first hint is hidden in the description of Mr. Davidson. It is highlighted that this character created a feeling “of suppressed fire.”¹⁴⁰ The description ends with the words “He was not a man with whom any intimacy was possible.”¹⁴¹ When re-reading the story, the reader cannot think of the phrase as of not implying irony, however, it is not possible during the first reading. The common image of a person devoted to religion is of the one banned from any sexual contacts. If Reverend Davidson’s holiness and high morality were doubted right in the beginning of the story, the ending of it would be quite

¹³⁶ Maugham, *The World*, 9.

¹³⁷ Robert Gish, “The Exotic Short Story: Kipling and others,” in *The English Short Story, 1880-1945*, ed. Joseph M. Flora (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 21.

¹³⁸ Holden, *Oriental masculinity*, 49.

¹³⁹ Holden, *Oriental masculinity*, 49.

¹⁴⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 5.

¹⁴¹ Maugham, *The World*, 5.

expectable, while Maugham wanted to create the opposite effect. A strong supporter of a stable structure, he believed that in the story “everything contributes to the conclusion, which should not be expected but in retrospect should seem inevitable.”¹⁴²

Scapegoat stories end with a pharmakos being expelled from the community and sometimes murdered as well. Although “Rain”, “Mother” and similar Maugham’s stories do not resemble classic ancient Greek stories entirely, the readers are still greatly probable to expect a corresponding ending. Throughout time, a symbol of a scapegoat has transformed in an archetype. The term was examined and popularised by a psychologist Carl G. Jung. According to him, an archetype is a prototype or a primordial image, which represents a “repeated patterns of common human experience [...] which survive in the collective unconscious of the human race and are expressed in myths, religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in works of literature.”¹⁴³ Incorporation of an archetype in a fictional work enables to establish a strong connection with the reader and “revoke a profound response”¹⁴⁴ from him. Katharine Quarmby claims that a scapegoat archetype is one of the most powerful ones preserved till today.¹⁴⁵ It appeals to us both in real and fictional worlds. For instance, Northrop Frye perceives Christ as a classic non-fictional example of a scapegoat archetype, “the perfectly innocent victim excluded from human society.”¹⁴⁶ A famous short story “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson represents a scapegoat archetypal character in fiction.¹⁴⁷

Although some Maugham’s characters resemble pharmakoi a lot, the effect they produce on the reader is different than of classic scapegoat stories. First of all, the structure of a scapegoat story is violated: while a pharmakos should be either expelled or killed, pharmakoi in Maugham’s stories revolt and triumph over society. Moreover, irony only seems to be targeted at a scapegoat, but it is through the contact with him that the real object of irony is revealed. The irony’s victim is either another character of the story, as Rev. Davidson in “Rain”, or the readers themselves, as in “The Mother.” Maugham brilliantly builds up his irony either on a stereotype or an archetype, sometimes blending both. Stereotype proposes the thematical background for irony to be built,

¹⁴² Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 9.

¹⁴³ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 12–13.

¹⁴⁴ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Katharine Quarmby, *Scapegoat: Why We Are Failing Disabled People* (London: Portobello Books, 2011), 21.

¹⁴⁶ Frye, *Anatomy*, 42.

¹⁴⁷ Victor Malo-Juvera, “Teaching *Geography Club* to Reduce Homophobia and Bullying,” in *Queer Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the English Language Arts Curriculum*, ed. Paula Greathouse, Brooke Eisenbach, and Joan F. Kaywell (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 24.

while archetype – a structural one, based on the readers’ subconscious expectations. A visible part of irony represents a paradox: the readers expect one thing and the fictional reality draws a totally different picture. Application of a scapegoat story pattern shows why the paradox occurs in the first place – because of the dramatic, though absolutely natural, impact stereotypes and archetypes exert on the readers.

4.2. Secondary scapegoat

The second type of a scapegoat which can be found in Somerset Maugham’s stories is a secondary scapegoat. Such characters are not members of an underclass, who are contrasted by elite. On the contrary, they are representatives of at least upper-middle class, who undergo a rapid decline and become a disgrace to their original community. The transformation is again commonly caused by a change of location, specifically when a European arrives at an exotic location and is “infatuated with the place” and “succumbed to evil influences.”¹⁴⁸ The lines used as an example are expressed by Bateman Hunter – a character who embodies stereotypical values and ideals of an industrial man in a story “The Fall of Edward Barnard.” Barnard, in his turn, is an exemplary secondary scapegoat. Originally a man of a higher status, he comes to Tahiti in order to earn a fortune to be able to marry his fiancé Isabel, a girl from an aristocratic Chicago family. In course of two years he changes his mind and does not want to leave Tahiti. He is fully satisfied with a peaceful, hasteless life he has and does not want to come back to a rat race of Chicago. His friend Hunter comes to visit him and cannot comprehend this sudden metamorphosis. For him, staying at Tahiti is “nothing less than suicide.”¹⁴⁹ He has his own set ideals and values, which Isabel, whom he secretly loves, his parents, friends and the rest of the community shares. The price Bateman and Isabel are about to fight for is exquisitely depicted at the end of the story:

And as he held her in his arms he had a vision of the works of the Hunter Motor Traction and Automobile Company growing in size and importance till they covered a hundred acres, and of the millions of motors they would turn out, and of the great collection of pictures he would form which should beat anything they had in New York. He would wear horn spectacles. And she, with the delicious pressure of his arms about her, sighed with happiness, for she thought of the exquisite house she would have, full of antique furniture, and of the concerts she would give, and of the *thés dansants*, and the dinners to which only the most cultured people would come. Bateman should wear horn spectacles.

¹⁴⁸ Maugham, *The World*, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Maugham, *The World*, 62.

“Poor Edward,” she sighed.¹⁵⁰

Hunter is “a caricature of a civilized man”¹⁵¹ and this hyperbolised image is ironically humorous. Not only does he disapprove of Barnard’s decision to stay at Tahiti but strives to change his friend’s mind. For example, “in a masochistic gesture of self-sacrifice”¹⁵² he offers Barnard a place at his firm to help him start over. Hunter perceives himself as a person whose mission is to cure Barnard from alien vices which forced him to betray his principles. This mode of thoughts considerably reminds the one Reverend Davidson had.

Hunter is another Maugham’s *raisonneur* – his observations bring a comic irony to the story, for they represent a combination of praise and criticism. For example, when first seeing Barnard, Hunter notices that “he was certainly better-looking than ever”¹⁵³ and yet disapproves a jauntiness of his walk and “a gaiety about nothing in particular.”¹⁵⁴ James Thomas notices that a *raisonneur* is often “a doubter wishing to offer sound advice or to convince through reason.”¹⁵⁵ Hunter attempts to overpersuade Barnard to leave Tahiti constantly. For instance, he remarks that Barnard will not be able to make a fortune leading such a lifestyle. Barnard agrees with him and adds that he is quite satisfied with the amount of money he earns.¹⁵⁶ Yet Hunter is not capable to hear and understand that: “Do you mean to say you don’t want money, big money, money running into millions? Do you know what you can do with it? Do you know the power it brings?”¹⁵⁷ The iterative inability of Hunter to accept his friend’s reconsidered standpoint and obstinacy with which he denies obvious signs of it is comic and transmits a single impression of humour to the story. The narrator and the readers presumably stand on Barnard’s side, who is not afraid to challenge the traditional pillars of society and recklessly fights for his own contentment. An image of a person favouring life in a remoted and quiet place over living in a hectic metropolis is very acute and modern. “Many readers fancy that they would be content to ‘fall’ as well,” claims Gordell.¹⁵⁸ In “The Fall of Edward Barnard” irony is once again used as a device which enables to incorporate humour to the story. It is not targeted at the readers, but on Hunter who represents a parody of

¹⁵⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 64.

¹⁵¹ Gordell, *Somerset Maugham*, 169.

¹⁵² Archer, *W. Somerset Maugham*, 26.

¹⁵³ Maugham, *The World*, 49.

¹⁵⁴ Maugham, *The World*, 49.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas, *Script Analysis*, 216.

¹⁵⁶ Maugham, *The World*, 48.

¹⁵⁷ Maugham, *The World*, 59.

¹⁵⁸ Gordell, *Somerset Maugham*, 169.

an upper-class Western society. The story's outcome is a happy-ending, for the characters are delighted with visions of life which anticipate them. On the contrary, "Rain" where the readers become the victims of irony ends tragically.

"The Alien Corn" is another secondary scapegoat story, depicting a Jewish family living in an English society. George, a promising young man, announces that he wants to become a professional pianist instead of going into Parliament, as his parents wish him to. After several quarrels, they make an agreement: George will study music in Germany in two years and when the time comes will play for a professional pianist. The expert should issue her verdict whether the man may become a pianist or not. The story is introduced as a frame narrative, but the persona preserves his role of the narrator in the embedded story as well. When he visits George in Germany, he remarks that the man gained a lot of weight, was not shaved, neither clean, and did not resemble a neat boy in a costume back in England any more. Thus, from the position of society, he undergoes a decline from "The Best" to "The Worst", common of a scapegoat. Yet George is satisfied with his life as it is. Apart from Bateman Hunter, the persona does not start sermonizing; keeping to his role of a peripheral first-person narrator, he preserves the position of an observer. He notes that George "play[s] with vigour"¹⁵⁹ and yet that "the two hands did not exactly synchronise"¹⁶⁰ and afterwards adds that "[he is] ignorant of these things."¹⁶¹ Bombarded with contradictory hints, the readers find themselves on a periphery, not able to decide what ending they anticipate. On the one hand, they presumably sympathy George, hence an aspiration to follow your dream no matter what is praised in our society. There are multiple stories, both in literature and cinematography, depicting a person who believed in his dream and achieved success despite lack of support and obstacles life set him. On the other hand, the reader may have another life experience and be more pessimistic or anticipate an ironic twist with which Maugham's stories often end. The writer manages to find a golden mean and keeps the reader in suspense till the story's ending.

The critic says that George is not meant to be a musician. Devastated, George goes to a gunroom and puts the bullet through his heart. "One reads of such accidents in the paper often", ends Maugham. This phrase is often seen as a cynical one, however, it also may be interpreted as a distancing element which once again makes the story digestible for the readers.

¹⁵⁹ Maugham, *The World*, 422.

¹⁶⁰ Maugham, *The World*, 422.

¹⁶¹ Maugham, *The World*, 422.

Gordell denies ironic constituent in the story, for “the pathetic failure of [Rabenstein’s] unconfirming and not very gifted son to become a great pianist moves us to pity.” It seems that the critic’s main argument is an emotion of compassion which is evoked in the readers. However, irony may be used to transmit a palette of emotions and that “The Alien Corn” elicits pity in the readers is just one possible variant. “Rain” ends tragically as well and provokes an emotion of shock in the readers, yet the story is undoubtedly perceived as an ironic one. Besides, applying Frye’s differentiation between a catastrophe in a tragedy and irony, the reasons for George to commit a suicide are perfectly comprehensible.

“The Alien Corn” is probably just one scapegoat story, where the victim of irony is a scapegoat. George is a victim of a cosmic irony: despite his true passion, earnest endeavours and dogged determination to achieve success, he suffers a defeat. The readers may become victims of irony if they anticipate the happy ending of the story. Another irony could be traced in the readers who, having read several scapegoat stories by Somerset Maugham, expect that a pharmakos will again rebel and triumph over society.

To conclude, in the short stories including a secondary scapegoat, irony is constructed inside the story and is targeted at one of the characters. The readers are the observers of irony and experience its effect: amusement in case of “The Fall of Edward Barnard” or compassion in “The Alien Corn”. The majority of scapegoat characters stories can be found in the collection of *The South Sea Stories*, which comprises the stories like “Rain”, “The Fall of Edward Barnard”, “The Pool” and others. The presence of a pharmakos in such stories can be explained by a contrast with a foreign culture, which forces the characters to doubt their ideals, values and wishes. There are tragic short stories by Maugham where irony can be traced but which do not fall into a scapegoat pattern. Such stories are usually love-centred, depicting affairs, indifference of one of the partners and other unexpected twists in the relationships. Irony there is not explained by any pattern but just inexplicability of people when it comes to emotions and feelings.

Maugham varies his subject matter, but seldom his themes, his technique, or his fundamental sense of human nature. The ground might shift to England or to the south of France, but with great consistency the themes remain the selfishness of human motives and the frailty of human will.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Loss, “The Critics,” 115.

Conclusion

In this bachelor thesis an attempt to analyse usage of irony in Somerset Maugham's short stories was made. All in all, thirteen short stories were analysed in detail, several were further mentioned as complementary arguments. The analysis of irony was conducted in two dimensions. The first one focused on the connection between irony and a narrative technique. The stories were divided into anecdotal and tragic ones, according to a prevailing tone of those. It has been shown that a clear majority of anecdotal short stories are told in a first-person narrator, granting a closer contact with the readers and the story's greater authenticity. The narrator is either the story's protagonist ("The Poet", "The Luncheon") or a peripheral first-person narrator ("The Ant and The Grasshopper", "The Escape"). Usage of a first-person peripheral narrator increases objectivity and credibility of the story, particularly when the narrator retells the dialogues between the characters or monitors the characters' lives for quite a long period of time. A peripheral first-person narrator is used in the stories with a frame narrative, which often provides a platform for irony to be introduced. If not as a surprising end-twist, irony serves as a source of humour when it is used iteratively. Hence, the humour of the story is expanded each time the irony is re-introduced.

Frame narratives are used excessively by Maugham in tragic short stories as well. Complexity and size of these stories are reflected in their structure: some stories represent multiple frame narratives ("The Alien Corn" or "The Book-Bag") and the story "A Casual Affair" shows such a strong linkage between the two embedded stories that it is impossible to identify the main one. In tragic short stories a frame tale is always presented by Maugham's persona in a first-person narrator. Watchfulness of the persona, his comments and observations provide the grounds for irony to be incorporated. What differentiates the usage of frame narratives in tragic stories apart from anecdotal ones is the distancing element. Often frame narratives postpone the main story to be introduced, and by doing so abate the effect it produces, making the main story more digestible for the readers. The incorporation of a frame narrative and a change of the narrator in the main story to a third-person or another first-person narrator also distances the actual author from the ideas expressed in the main story, making it safer for him to address. Repeatedly, frame tale functions as a mirror, reflecting the thematics of the following main story. Moreover, the mirror tale gives the readers the base on which they built their expectations, which are ironically violated in the story's end. Given these points, narrative structure facilities

incorporation and usage of irony in Maugham's short stories, especially the technique of a frame narrative.

The second part of the thesis is dedicated to the examination of a victim of irony in short stories. The analysis was conducted on the basis of Northrop Frye's claim that a typical victim of irony is a scapegoat or a pharmakos. It has been discovered that Maugham's characters notably resemble scapegoats, especially in the stories which represent *The South Sea Stories* collection. Such characters find themselves in exotic remote places, facing not only another culture and tradition, but their own latent wishes, hopes, fears and vices. Scapegoat characters used in Maugham's fiction were divided into two categories: primary and secondary ones. It has been discovered that there is a direct proportion between a type of pharmakoi and the targeting of irony. Secondary scapegoats represent the characters who undergo a rapid decline in the eyes of the society during the course of the story. In this case, the irony is constructed inside the story and is targeted at one of the characters or the community they stereotypically represent. The reader is expected to have an emotional reaction towards this irony, thus, as in anecdotal short stories, the irony is incorporated to facilitate a translation of a single impression effect.

Primary pharmakoi occupy the role of a scapegoat in the fictional reality before the story narrated to the reader happens. In the majority of these stories the readers themselves become the victims of irony. It has been shown that stories with primary scapegoats incorporate a complex irony which can be compared to an iceberg. The top of the iceberg, its visible part, represents irony as a pure paradox: the readers expect one ending, yet they face its contrary. The analysis of the stories' ironies with an application of a scapegoat pattern reveals the hidden part, which can answer the question why the readers expected a specific ending in the first place. Maugham's irony is built on either a stereotypical image the majority of the readers held (for instance, of a weak woman) or on an archetype of a scapegoat, according to which the outcast should be eliminated from the society in order for it to get better. Both stereotype and an archetype are violated by Maugham in the story's end.

To conclude, the analysis of Somerset Maugham's short stories showed great complexity and forethought of the writer's usage of irony. Mostly irony support the single impression of the story to be transmitted – of humour in anecdotal short stories and of sadness, compassion, shock or any other emotion – in more complex ones. Irony may be introduced in the story's middle

and repeated several times, may be incorporated as a twist in the end, or hidden in a frame narrative and revealed and guided with the help of the persona. Irony may represent a simple and obvious paradox or may be built upon the readers' stereotypical expectations, affecting them on a subconscious level. Irony may be targeted both at the characters and at the readers. In many stories, different types of irony are introduced, intertwining and encouraging each other. Although certain patterns of incorporation and usage of irony were revealed, a great multiplicity of ironies and its complexity proves talent of Mr. Maugham and possibly may suggest a new reading of this author.

Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce je provést zevrubnou analýzu využití ironie v povídkové tvorbě britského spisovatele Williama Somerseta Maughama – jednoho z nejproduktivnějších a nejčtivějších autorů 20. století. Vydal více než třicet divadelních her, dvacet románů, čtyři sbírky kritických esejí a přibližně sto krátkých povídek v devíti sbírkách. Největší úspěch mu přinesly právě povídky, které byly publikovány v populárních časopisech, a byly tak přístupné široké veřejnosti. Od roku 1960 bylo dokonce celkem šedesát tři z Maughamových povídek zpracováno jako televizní inscenace a několik dalších povídek bylo zfilmováno. I v dnešní době má své publikum, které nadále těší uchvacujícím dějem, zručným vylíčením psychologických mezilidských problémů a v neposlední řadě svým osobitým humorem a ironií.

Na úvod práce je uveden stručný přehled vývoje ironie od antického Řecka až po současnost, jelikož názorně zobrazuje změny tohoto pojmu. Publikace Claire Colebrookové slouží jako základní sekundární zdroj, protože představuje rozsáhlý a důkladný rozbor vývoje ironie skrz různá historická období. Další problematikou je klasifikace ironie v současné době. Přestože se literární teoretici snaží vytvořit jednotné třídění ironií, často tím způsobí ještě větší chaos. Doposud žádná kategorizace ironie není jednoznačná. Pro účely následujícího rozboru ironie v povídkové tvorbě Maughama je aplikováno tradiční rozdělení ironie na verbální, situační a dramatickou. Verbální ironie představuje rozpor mezi tím, co je řečeno a tím, co je myšleno. V případě situační ironie vzniká konflikt mezi očekáváním čtenáře a konečným výsledkem určité situace v románu. Dramatická ironie odhaluje čtenáři osud určité postavy, přičemž tato postava zůstává v nevědomosti, a její jednání se tak zdá čtenáři neshodné s danými okolnostmi. V Maughamových povídkách je také zastoupena ironie osudu, která je založena na víře v to, že určitá vyšší síla – Bůh, osud, úděl – kontroluje život postavy a nastavuje jí překážky vedoucí k trápení, strádání nebo i smrti.

Teoretická část je rozdělena do dvou kapitol. První kapitola se zaměřuje na otázky naratologie a identifikace typu vypravěče. Dílo Franze K. Stanzela je základním teoretickým podkladem. Podle něj existují tři základní druhy vyprávěcí situace (dále VS): autorská, personální a VS ich-formy neboli vypravěč v první osobě. Zásadou pro rozlišování mezi těmito druhy je zprostředkovanost. Zatímco svět vypravěče je v první osobě ztotožněn se světem postav v románu, vypravěč autorské VS se nachází mimo svět postav a zprostředkování probíhá z vnější perspektivy. V případě personální VS, je vypravěč zároveň jednou z postav románu, která reflektuje to, co si

myslí, vnímá a vidí. Díky tomu, že reflektor nevypráví román v tradičním slova smyslu – čtenář „neslyší“ hlas vypravěče – vzniká dojem bezprostřednosti zobrazení.

Stanzel identifikuje druhy vyprávěcích situací pomocí třech konstitutivních složek: osoby, perspektivy a modu. Prolínání těchto složek umožnilo Stanzelovi rozšířit seznam vyprávěcích situací a identifikovat tyto druhy přesněji. Výsledkem této práce byl tzv. typologický kruh. Byl použit při rozboru Maughamových krátkých povídek, avšak jenom tři vyprávěcí situace se zdají nejvyužitelnějšími: ich-VS, autorská VS a periferní vypravěč v první osobě. Tento druh vypravěče stojí na periférii dění románu a vypráví „jako očitý svědek dějiště, jako pozorovatel, jako současník hlavní postavy, její životopisec atd.“¹⁶³ Periferní vypravěči v první osobě jsou důvěryhodnější a často zaujímají pozici autorského vypravěče, čímž zajišťují širší a objektivnější pohled na postavy a dění románu. V Maughamově tvorbě je periferní vypravěč v první osobě často uváděn v rámcovém příběhu, tj. v příběhu, do kterého je vložen jiný příběh nebo několik takových příběhů. Klasickými příklady využití rámcového příběhu jsou díla *Dekameron* Boccaccio, *Povídky canterburské* Chaucera a *Frankenstein* Mary Shelleyové. Peter Barry rozlišuje tři podkategorie rámcového příběhu: jedno-závěrečný (single-ended), dvou-závěrečný (double-ended) a zásahový (intrusive). V případě jedno-závěrečného rámcového příběhu se děj, poté co hlavní příběh skončí, nevrací k rámcovému. Pokud po ukončení hlavní historky příběh pokračuje a je vyprávěn postavou rámcového příběhu, jedná se o dvou-závěrečný rámcový příběh. Zásahový příběh představuje dvou-závěrečný rámcový příběh, jehož vyprávění je občas přerušeno vypravěčem rámcového příběhu. Většinou je rámcový příběh znovu uveden proto, aby byly čtenáři vysvětleny nejasnosti vnitřního příběhu. Přerušované vyprávění se používá pro připomínání tematické spojitosti hlavního a rámcového příběhu.

Druhá teoretická část zkoumá ironickou viktimizaci a je rozdělena do třech podkategorií. První podkapitola je věnována problematice pojmu „oběť ironie“, který i v češtině vyjadřuje velice negativní konotaci. Po přezkoumání sekundárních zdrojů se ukázalo, že pojem „oběť ironie“ se používá striktně jako neutrální literární koncept a označuje osobu, na kterou je ironie zacílena, nebo toho, kdo nedokázal porozumět ironickému podtextu nějakého výroku. Druhá podkapitola zkoumá pojetí pharmaka neboli „obětního beránka“, který podle Northopa Frye představuje typickou oběť ironie. Koncept pharmaka pochází z antického Řecka, kde představoval člověka, který byl vyhnán z města v období krize, kterou byl například hladomor nebo epidemie nemoci. Věřilo se, že po

¹⁶³ Stanzel, *Teorie Vyprávění*, 245.

rituálním vyhnání oběti se město očistí a zbytek populace přežije. Klíčovou charakteristikou postavy pharmaka je jeho původ. V převážné většině se „obětním beránkem“ stával člověk nižší vrstvy obyvatelstva nebo škaredí a postižení lidé. Některé zdroje uvádějí, že po vyhnání byl pharmakos zabit. Důvěryhodnost těchto zdrojů sice nebyla dokázána, avšak v literárních dílech je smrt pharmaka prakticky vyžadována.

Poslední teoretická podkapitola se zaměřuje na čtenáře jako na oběť ironie. Čtenář se může stát obětí ironie buď se záměrem autora nebo náhodou, a to když mylně interpretuje ironický záměr autora, nebo vnímá ironii tam, kde žádná nebyla naznačena. Pokud si autor přeje zacílit ironii na čtenáře, může to udělat dvěma základními způsoby. Buď neposkytne čtenáři dostatek narážek na to, aby byl doslovný smysl výroku zavržen, nebo zamlčuje svoje skutečné názory tak, že čtenář nemůže bez pochyb tvrdit, že se autor vyjadřuje ironicky. Současně se také používá metoda nepatřičné emocionální odezvy. Na rozdíl od starších technik nepoužívá lingvistické náznaky a odehrává se jakoby na pozadí vnímání čtenáře. Její důsledky jsou viditelné na konci čtení literárního dílu, kdy se čtenář najednou ocitne daleko od svých původních představ a předpokladů.

Rozbor, který se zabývá prolínáním těchto rysů s ironií v povídkách Williama Somerseta Maughama, tvoří podstatu této bakalářské práce. Třetí kapitola zkoumá interferenci vyprávěcí metody a ironie. Analyzované příběhy jsou rozdělené do dvou skupin (anekdotické a tragické) v závislosti na tom, jaký převládající tón obsahují. Bylo zjištěno, že ironie v anekdotických povídkách slouží dvěma způsoby jako zdroj humoru. Prvním způsobem je imitace struktury skutečné anekdoty: vytváří ve čtenáři řadu očekávání, které porušuje poslední větou příběhu. Humor povídky tak vyplývá z rozporu mezi očekáváním a fiktivní realitou – ze situační ironie. Druhým způsobem je zavedení ironie přibližně v půlce příběhu a dále její vícenásobné opakování. Pokaždé, kdy je ironie opět zavedena do povídky, se její efekt násobí, stejně jako humor povídky. V převážné většině anekdotických povídek Maugham používá vypravěče v první osobě. Toto zajišťuje vytvoření bližšího kontaktu se čtenářem a větší věrohodnost povídky. Vypravěč anekdotických povídek buď zůstává vypravěčem v první osobě, anebo je transformován do vypravěče periferního. V takovém případě Ich-vypravěč zavádí rámcový příběh. Rámcový příběh poskytuje spisovatelovi prostor pro zavedení ironie: například pojednání o Ezopové bajce „O mravenci a kobylce“ v rámcovém příběhu stejnojmenné povídky, tlačí čtenáře k očekávání podobného příběhu. Na základě této anticipace je vystavena situační ironie, která je odhalena na konci povídky.

Rámcové příběhy jsou použity i v tragických krátkých povídkách, a to také za účelem začlenění ironie. Tragickými povídkami se rozumí příběhy v tragickém tónu, jejichž postavy jsou bez výjimky nešťastné a zpravidla jsou na konci příběhu zabity nebo spáchají sebevraždu. Ironie je v nich přítomna, pokud příčiny vedoucí ke katastrofě, nejsou dostačující a logické. Pokud je kauzalita srozumitelná, stane se příběh čistě tragickým. Tragické povídky jsou vyprávěny buď autorským vypravěčem, nebo jsou produktem prolínajících se rámcových příběhů, které jsou většinou zavedeny vypravěčem v první osobě. Vypravěč v třetí osobě je tradiční spisovatelskou volbou. Umožňuje skoro neomezený náhled do životů postav, jejich myšlenek a emocí, přítomnosti, minulosti a budoucnosti. Začlenění rámcového příběhu znovu dodává povídkám důvěryhodnost, jelikož jsou vždy vyprávěny vypravěčem v první osobě – známou Maughamovou personou. Tou je profesionální spisovatel, který cestuje a vnímavě pozoruje lidi, které na svých cestách potkává. Role cestovatele posouvá personu do pozice nezávislého pozorovatele, a tím vytváří dojem, že čtenář slyší příběh souběžně s vypravěčem. Kromě tradičního poskytování kontextu vnitřního příběhu, působí rámcový příběh také jako přechod mezi „vnějším“ a „vnitřním“ světem, čímž zmírňuje působení hlavní povídky a dělá ji pro čtenáře „stravitelnější.“ Rámcový příběh opakovaně odráží téma, zachycené ve vnitřních příbězích, a tím poskytuje čtenářům východisko pro vytvoření očekávání, které je později vyvráceno ironií.

Poslední kapitola je věnována pozici pharmaka jakožto oběti ironie. Bylo zjištěno, že některé Maughamovy postavy skutečně zauímají pozici „obětního beránka“. Jsou to představitelé spodní třídy, což se často odráží v jejich zevnějšku. Navíc jsou společností vnímáni tak, že nejsou součástí jejich komunity, a to skrze společensky nežádoucí charakter postav. Podobně jako v tradičních příbězích o pharmaku, je vyhnání motivem centrálním. Například velká míra děje v povídce „Děšť“ je soustředěna na snahu pana Davidsona vyslat z ostrova Sally Thompsonovou. Postavy „obětního beránka“ byly rozděleny na dvě skupiny: primární a sekundární pharmakos. Hlavním zjištěním je, že zaměření ironie je přímo úměrné typu pharmaka. Sekundární pharmakos představuje postavu, která prožívá tragický pád z vyšší vrstvy společnosti do té nižší, a tím se stává v průběhu příběhu „obětním beránkem“. V podobných povídkách je ironie většinou zacílena na postavy nebo na společnost, kterou tyto postavy reprezentují, za cílem vyjádření nějaké emoce, nebo myšlenky, kupříkladu kriticismu. Tak, v povídce „Pád Edwarda Barnarda“, jejíž název vypovídá o konci hlavní postavy, která je sekundárním pharmakem, Maugham kritizuje hodnoty západní společnosti.

Primární pharmakos reprezentuje postavu, která zaujímá místo “nejhoršího” (“The Worst”) ještě předtím, než se děj povídky odehrává. Konflikt vzniká v důsledku jeho příjezdu do nové komunity. Oběťmi ironie se převážně stávají čtenáři, jejichž očekávání nebylo naplněno. Aplikace vzoru tradiční povídky o pharmaku odhaluje příčinu pro původní vznik těchto očekávání: buď v důsledku silného stereotypu nebo archetypu. Například bylo prokázáno, že již v několika povídkách („Matka“, „Stopy v džunglích“, „Děšť“) je běžné čtenářské očekávání založeno na stereotypu: slabé ženy, nebo odepření jakéhokoliv sexuálního kontaktu člověka oddaného náboženství. Ještě silnější je podvědomé očekávání, vycházející z archetypu obětního beránka, kterého lidé potkávají jak v reálném světě, tak i literárním. Toto předjímání je vázané na tradiční děj příběhů, zachycujících pharmaka: na konci je minimálně vyhnán a ve většině případů i zabit. Maughamovy postavy se ironicky vzpouzí proti společnosti, která se jich chce zbavit, což obrací ve svůj prospěch. Často se skutečná oběť ironie ukazuje skrz kontakt s pharmakem, takže v ideologickém slova smyslu plní svoji funkci „očištění“.

Argumenty uvedené výše prokazují komplexitu ironie, která je použita v Maughamových krátkých povídkách. Je začleněna různými způsoby a plní různé účely – od přenosu určitých emocí nebo vyjádření myšlenky, až do ukázky silného stereotypu, který čtenáře ovlivňuje podvědomě. Jak postava, tak i čtenář se mohou stát oběťmi ironie, přitom se zdá, že se spisovatel nesnaží opravit čtenářova stereotypní vidění a přetvořit ironii do korektivní pomůcky. Podobně jako jeho persona se udržuje v roli nezaujatého pozorovatele a ukazuje čtenářům život jaký je – naplněný očekáváním, touhou, přáními a ironií, občas komicky směšnou, občas kousavou.

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