Translating Irony between English and Arabic

Translating Irony between English and Arabic

By

Raymond Chakhachiro

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Translating Irony between English and Arabic

By Raymond Chakhachiro

First published by Sayyab Books Limited in 2011

Published 2018 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0632-0
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0632-9

To Denise, Matilda and Ibraaheem

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My extreme gratitude goes to Stuart J. Campbell for his constant encouragement, guidance and support in the process of writing this work. I would like to also thank George Saunders who made insightful comments on the initial draft of this book and Douglas Muecke for his constructive criticism on the literary chapter. I am indebted to Western Sydney University for the time it has provided me with which made this work possible.

I warmly thank Denise Cox Chakhachiro who helped me so much at every stage and patiently read through and commented on every chapter. My thanks also go to George Zantis and Sephen Morse for their feedback on the initial draft of this book.

I am heartily thankful to Alya' Al-Rubai'i for her review of the draft and valuable comments and to the founding director of Sayyab Books, Ali Al-Manna', for his constant support throughout the process of completing this work.

Finally, thank you so much to my daughters Elizabeth and Nadia who have provided me with the time and quiet space to complete this project.

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND CHARTS

ROMANISATION CONVENTIONS

Note: previously published Arabic names may not conform to these conventions	Proper names	Quotations, book titles, linguistic notions, etc.
ا *alif wasla*	a	a
ء	’	’
ا long vowel	aa	aa
ب	b	b
ت	t	t
ث	th	th
ج	j	j
ح	h	H
خ	kh	kh
د	d	d
ذ	dh	dh
ر	r	r
ز	z	z
س	s	s
ش	sh	sh
ص	s	S
ض	d	D
ط	t	T
ظ	z	Z
ع	‘	‘
غ	gh	gh
ف	f	f
ق	q	q
ك	k	k
ل	l	l
م	m	m
ن	n	n
ه	h	h
و consonant	w	w
و long vowel	ou	uu
ي consonant	y	y
ي long vowel	ee	ii
--◌َ	a	a
--◌ِ	i	i

--ً	u/ou	u
ة	a	a, t
آ	aa	ʾaa
ى	a	a
لا	laa,	laa
ال	al-	al-
ـَيْ diphthong	ay	ay
ـَوْ diphthong	aw	aw
ـّ	Double consonants, digraphs or vowels	Double consonants, digraphs or vowels
ـَيّ	ayy	ayy
ـِيّ	iyy	iyy
ـُوّ	ouww	uww

INTRODUCTION

The main premise of this book is that the translation of irony is not amenable to conventional translation theories. Taking English and Arabic as a case in point, the way speakers of this pair of languages employ this pervasive tool to express their attitude reflects the linguistic and cultural distance between these languages and adds a significant translation problem to the interpretive challenge.

Verbal irony is essentially purposeful, constructive and instrumental. It has been used, feared, revered and studied through the ages. In modern times, literature and journalism are two major grounds where irony flourishes. What we know about irony, however, is passed on to us through philosophy and literary criticism, where irony is seen as poetic, contextual, artistic, modular, non-linear and multi-dimensional, hence not lending itself to rigorous linguistic scrutiny. Literary critics in recent times (e.g. Booth 1974; Muecke 1969) have identified rhetorical devices, strategies and modes of irony, hence have taken a reconciliatory approach with the textual, as well as the 'hypertextual', representation and interpretation of irony. Considering these illuminating works, I argue that the rhetorical devices of irony are linguistically identifiable and that there are linguistic, non-rhetorical devices that serve ironic purposes. I also argue that ironic devices inherently contribute to the structural development of discourse and that their interaction with the discourse structure and context of situation constitutes a framework for the overall rhetorical meaning of texts or discourse goals.

The book then ventures into contrastive linguistic and stylistic analyses of irony in Arabic and English from literary, linguistic and discourse perspectives. It sheds light on the interpretation and the linguistic realisation of irony in Arabic and English through an interdisciplinary approach, and, consequently, identifies similarities and discrepancies in the form and function of ironic devices between these languages. As such, the book has in mind professional translators, instructors and students of translation, as well as language learners, language teachers and researchers in cross-cultural and inter-pragmatic disciplines.

Western studies provide a large body of work on the interpretation of verbal irony, albeit mainly in literature. To tackle the concept for translation purposes, however, this book addresses the following pertinent interpretive and translation shortcomings: first, the lack of a systematic approach in Arabic literature to the analysis of ironic devices from functional and discursive perspectives. Arab stylisticians, rhetoricians and literary critics have provided a wealth of textbooks and scattered observations on style embellishment and rhetorical devices; irony, however, has not been specifically addressed. Second, the lack of linguistic discussion of the formal realisation of irony in the classifications of ironic devices, found in a handful of Western works on philosophy and literary criticism, is addressed. In this context, I also take to task the relativistic, open-ended views that cast doubt on the plausibility of interpretation of irony. Third, the need for a theoretically grounded approach to the translation of irony, where hitherto its discussion has been patchy in translation literature (e.g. Hatim 1997), treating it from a conversational perspective, or commenting anecdotally on the translation of irony, dealing with textbook rhetorical devices and equating irony with humour (e.g. Mateo 1995). Above all, in describing the process of decision-making and discussing translation appropriateness, the book also examines the mostly-ignored 'production' of irony.

This project is then challenging entrenched literary views that promote the impracticality of linguistic, stylistic and functional approaches to the analysis and translation of irony. It considers these scientific fields of enquiry as the building blocks on which ironic devices in English and Arabic are grounded, and according to which the appropriateness of the methods of translation in the literature can be assessed in a quest to pin down an interactive model for the interpretation and translation of irony.

0.1 Approach

Given the intertwined factors that affect the inferential process, a scientific analysis of irony for translation purposes is, *ipso facto*, interdisciplinary. No linguistic theory can account for the description of the rhetorical phenomenon of irony. The main concern is then to explore this 'discourse semantic' area as van Dijk (1977: 4) calls it, and, using a top-down analytical approach, identify the formal devices that constitute the channel of ironic intentions, including grammatical, lexical and paralinguistic devices. These devices are not only integral to trace meaning-making

processes but also to inform the reverse decision-making process about translation strategies and, ultimately, textual equivalents.

This proposed approach is not meant to be comprehensive or prescriptive, although probable and conventional interpretation, and translation equivalents, for example, in the form of idiomatic and fixed expressions, will be readily available in some cases. Although irony has been given the rank of poetry in terms of its reliance on formal devices, phonological devices such as alliteration and assonance are deliberately excluded because of their marginality to ironic messages.

The following examples of ironic devices in Arabic and English highlight the discrepancy in the way each language materialises ironic intentions. In Arabic, binomials and root-echo may be employed lexically, and inversion, conditional sentence and resumptive pronoun grammatically. The linguistic correlates of an ironic rhetorical device in Arabic, such as an understatement, may be realised through negation, adverbial sentence and causal preposition. English, on the other hand, may employ semotactic anomalies and compound words as lexical devices of irony, cleft sentences and ellipses as grammatical devices, and italics and capitals as paralinguistic tools to infer irony. A praise in order to blame in English may be delivered through reference and lexical choice, while overstatements can be realised via adverbs, deictics, near-synonymy and collocation, among other linguistic devices.

The approach then makes reference and cross-reference to linguistics, stylistics and literary criticism. Texts employing irony are highly communicative in that they imply strong views and aspire to convey signalled attitudes and information (Hutcheon 1995) to, and to motivate, the readership. This is achieved through various types of linguistic manipulation and usage to give the reader clues to reject the literal meaning of utterances, and activate their communicative competence to infer irony. This entails that ironic texts pertain to the literary ‘non-technical’ (House 1977) genre, which, therefore, ought to be treated as discourse, which, following Widdowson (1975: 6), “attempts to show specifically how elements of linguistic text combine to create messages, how, in other words, pieces of literary writing function as a form of communication.”

0.2 Plan

Chapter 1 examines the notion of irony from a literary standpoint. A number of influential works in literary criticism, particularly in English, dedicate specialised accounts to the interpretation and classification of irony (e.g. Booth 1974; Muecke 1969 and 1982). By contrast, Arab literary critics and writers discuss the notion but do not stop at it as a stylistic phenomenon of writing. This applies to both ancient and modern Arab writers and literary critics. With reference to a number of literary excerpts, literary critics and rhetoricians, I try to exemplify, through selected observations, clues of irony employed by known Arab novelists and prose writers. This chapter also dedicates a section to the intricate definition of irony, and the borderline between irony, sarcasm, satire, and humour.

Chapter 2 addresses the contribution of linguistics to the analysis and interpretation of irony. The aim here is twofold: 1) to review the literature in search of a benchmark according to which the communicative function of irony could be analysed in Arabic and English, and 2) to enable plausible postulation of strategies for the translation of irony. The functional theory provides an explanation of the meaning of texts 'in the real world'. It sees language as communication and studies the co-textual (Hatim and Mason 1990) meaning of the formal features of texts. Stylistics, the offshoot of linguistics, takes the position that style is a deviation from normal language usage. It accounts for the description and classification of the stylistic markers in the text, but it stops short of giving a consistent and credible account of the integral process of identifying the 'ironic triggers' of these stylistic markers. To cover this, speech act theory and the conversational cooperative principle are explored. The discussion yields a three dimensional discourse-functional model for the interpretation of irony, namely, stylistic, sociolinguistic and rhetorical dimensions.

Structural stylistics is also invoked in Chapter 2. Aided by speech act theory, stylistics proves useful in describing the contribution of ironic devices to text development, that is, their use-value in specific acts of communication (House 1977).

Chapter 3 concerns itself with the contribution of translation theory to the translation of irony. The overview covers modern translation theories with reference to contrastive analysis and comparative stylistics. The review

examines the relevance of these theories with regard to translation methodology and/or an approach applicable to the translation of irony.
Following a discussion of the techniques and tools required for a contrastive analysis of ironic texts, Chapter 4 proposes a discourse model for the analysis and translation of irony. The model considers three interactive components: 1) texture and structure; 2) features that affect the communicative function of texture and structure; and 3) the rhetorical meaning of discourse, which encapsulates the discourse goal, based on the textual and communicative functions of ironic devices.

The model is used to analyse comprehensively four authentic texts, two in Arabic and two in English. The ironic devices found in the analysis are discussed and the functional meaning of concepts used in both languages is provided. The generic features of the text-type at hand along with the temporal, geographical and sociological settings are suggested to have implications on the form and content of these texts as well as their translation.

In Chapter 5, a comprehensive analysis of the four texts is conducted. Each text is analysed systematically in line with the analysis model in Chapter 4, including its rhetorical, lexical, grammatical, and paralinguistic devices of irony; sequential organisation and communication functions of its devices; and its rhetorical meaning approached from three stylistic perspectives: attitude, province and participation.

Chapter 6 has two major sections. With reference to the analysis in the preceding chapter, the first section highlights the textural and structural matches and mismatches between Arabic and English and draws conclusions about the textual, functional and conversational strategies employed by each language. Qualitative and quantitative contrastive analyses are conducted and suggestions are made for translation equivalence from English into Arabic, using samples from the analysed texts, with particular reference to the identified forms, functions and conversational strategies.

The second section of Chapter 6 expands on its first and provides general strategies for the translation of irony between English and Arabic. Each strategy draws on examples of ironic devices from the English texts and on the model devised in Chapter 4. The Chapter culminates in a full translation of the English texts into Arabic implementing the proposed translation strategies.

In conclusion, this work sets out a principled model for explaining the concept of irony from a linguistic standpoint. Theoretically, it provides for the analysis and translation, therefore for the reception and production, of verbal irony. Practically, it furnishes the reader with a functional linguistic framework for an aspect of cross-cultural pragmatics through which formal translation equivalents can be generated.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTRIBUTION OF LITERARY THEORY

1.1 Definition of irony

This book is, by its nature, about intentional irony found in prose, about instrumental irony in which language is the instrument, about ironic satire in stable irony that lends itself to reconstruction (Booth 1974), and about corrective irony; therefore, it is about irony that entails an author, a victim and a reader. As such, it does not concern dramatic irony perceived only by a receiver, situational irony that springs from an earnest intention and ironic result, or 'theatrical' irony (Muecke 1982). Despite the pervasiveness of irony throughout the history of verbal literature, studies dedicated to the 'language' of irony have not matched its prevalence. This stems, at least in the Western world, from the fact that irony is taken for granted or, as Muecke (1969: ix) puts it, "to be able to be ironical is perhaps part of the definition of our [Western] civilisation". Another factor may well be that irony is such a highly rhetorical and elusive tool that it is difficult to define in terms of its interpretation, let alone style and language.

In his attempts to describe the various features that affect the quality of irony, Muecke recognises the necessity for ironists "to break with advantage the rules of art" (1982: 52) in order to enhance irony. He suggests four principles for a successful irony based on his observation that "A rhetorically effective, an aesthetically pleasing, or simply a striking irony owes its success… largely to one or more of a small number of principles and factors" (ibid: 52).

These principles are: 1) the principle of economy, which implies the use of few signals. It is used in parody, advice and encouragement, the rhetorical question and other ironical tactics. 2) The principle of high contrast, which takes place when "there is a disparity between what might be expected and what actually happened" (ibid: 53), or when there is antithesis, semotactic anomalies or internal contradiction. 3) The position of the audience,

particularly in the theatre where "the quality of the irony depends very much on whether the audience already knows the outcome or true state of affairs or learns of these only when the victim [of irony] learns" (ibid: 54); and 4) the topic. This last factor or principle relates to the importance of emotions in generating and enhancing both the observer's feelings toward the victim or the topic of the irony and the reader's awareness and appreciation of the irony on an equal footing, among "the areas in which most emotional capital is invested: religion, love, morality, politics, and history" (ibid: 55). Although only the fourth principle above seems to touch on the function of irony, it is fair to say that the first three principles are integral to get to grips with ironic messages.

Irony for the father of irony, Socrates, is pedagogical. In addition to its aesthetic function, verbal irony (henceforth irony) is mainly used for corrective purposes, i.e. as an instrumental tool (Muecke 1982) which serves to realize a purpose using language ironically. Booth (1974) refers to such phenomena as ironic satire. The other class of irony to Muecke (1969) is the unintentional and art-for-art's-sake 'observable irony'. Booth (1974), on the other hand, speaks of stable irony and unstable irony. Stable irony offers the reader a stable reconstruction of the message through rhetorical tools shared with the writer, not to be undermined at a later stage. Unstable irony implies that "no stable reconstruction can be made out of the ruins revealed through the irony" (ibid: 240).

It is the thesis of this book that instrumental and stable ironies are integral to verbal irony used as a weapon to reveal and correct social injustice and hypocrisy, and dwell on culture- language-specific and on rhetorical and stylistic devices that are – hypothetically – shared by the ironist, the victim and the reader; hence, these devices are analysable and translatable.

The intricacy of irony by definition is well documented in the myriad of papers, theses and books written mainly by literary and philosophy – but non-ironist – experts on the concept, and the emphasis placed on the indeterminacy of meaning imparted by irony as opposed to the simplistic definition of saying one thing and meaning another.

However, a determining factor in pinning down the concept of verbal irony is the consensus among ironists that it is largely a means to an end. Following Muecke (1969), the main uses of irony in prose are satiric, heuristic and rhetorical. It may be used as a rhetorical device to enforce meanings and as a satiric device in any of his four modes of ironies – the

Impersonal, the Self-Disparaging, the *Ingénu* and the Dramatised (see Section 1.2 below) – "to attack a point of view or to expose folly, hypocrisy, or vanity. It may be used as a heuristic device to lead one's readers to see that things are not so simple or certain as they seem, or perhaps not so complex or doubtful as they seem" (ibid: 232-233). Apart from the above three uses, Muecke speaks of two other 'expressive' uses of irony employed by a 'private ironist' (ibid: 236): self-protective irony and self-regarding irony. The self-protective irony takes place when irony is "a means of avoiding decisions in situations in which a decision is either impossible or clearly unwise" (ibid: 236), or "it may be an expression of prudence or wisdom in the face of a world full of snares or a world in which nothing is certain" (ibid: 238). Compare also Kierkegaard's self-defeat of the ironical man in Romantic Irony (in Muecke 1969: 242-246). The self-regarding irony is employed by one "who may, for example, be determined to tell the truth, to satisfy one's own conscience, in circumstances in which telling the truth is dangerous" (ibid: 236). This book is only concerned with the satiric, heuristic and rhetorical uses of irony, that is, with 'public irony' as opposed to 'private irony'.

To this end and to gain a first-hand insight into the treatment of form and function of irony in prose, highlighted in Muecke's principles above, from a literary perspective, the sections below will attempt to wade into the concept with particular reference to the literary critics and ironologists Booth and Muecke, and Arab rhetorician al-Jaahiz. English and Arabic excerpts and examples from the data set in Chapter 5 will be used for illustration. First, the pertinent question of delimitation between irony, sarcasm, satire, and humour is addressed.

1.1.1 Borderline of irony with sarcasm, satire and humour

This section is deemed necessary to demystify the confusion between irony and concepts that are often inappropriately attributed to, or associated with irony based on common features. Sarcasm, satire and humour share similar methods with irony but to different ends and in different settings, therefore there is a need for criteria that assist in telling the difference between the ironic and comic, for example. Another pertinent factor is the fact that, at times, there is a thin line between irony and sarcasm, and reliance on heavy explicit irony, bordering on sarcasm, can be a function of the degree of the freedom of speech enjoyed by the ironist.

In *The Oxford Book of Humorous Prose*, Frank Muir (1990) touches explicitly on some of the characteristics of irony when he defines, in his own personal theory about comedy, the concepts of 'comedy', 'wit', 'buffoonery', and 'humour'. Comedy in some of its forms shares with irony a corrective purpose. He calls such comedy satiric, denoting an attack on somebody using "invective, parody, mockery, or anything else which might wound" (ibid: xxvi). However, irony differs strategically from comedy; the former is reserved and a means to an end, while the latter is unreserved and an end in itself.

With wit, irony shares an elitist language, such as poetic references, paradoxes and puns. The definition of wit, as an upper social class offensive weapon, classifies it as one of the devices of irony. This is not confined to English. Irony is widely used in oral, i.e. colloquial, and written standard Arabic; in both forms, a high degree of linguistic and cultural competence shared by the producer and receiver of irony is required.

Muir also relates English humour to the English culture, the environment of a free society and individuality. He considers humour a variety of irony confined to and originating from England. He remarks that "[European] visitors were dismayed... by the way the English used irony to a degree unknown across the Channel; not only literary irony employed in satirical humour... but also in ordinary conversation when wrong words were used but the sense came through clearly" (ibid: xxix). He then says that "satire expressed through humour was found to be more widely effective... [and] had a deeper appeal" (ibid: xxxiii). Any Arab can perhaps argue with Muir's exaggerated and subjective view of humour. The Egyptian sense of humour is well known in the Arab world, and so is that of other Arab countries, as seen in Lebanese and Syrian ironic-humouristic plays. Humour is part of Arab life; one can almost argue that humour kept the Arab spirit going in the darkest of recent times. Egyptians and, indeed, all Arabs ironised their defeat in 1967. Arabs laugh at their misery, whether it stems from political oppression or economic depression, in their gatherings in *cafés*, in literary writing – for example, Taaha Houssayn, Naguib Mahfouz and Maroun Abboud – and through their comic actors who have used humour and irony covertly or overtly since plays were introduced to the Arab world. Historic evidence for the inherent nature of humour in the Arabic culture is documented and is further illustrated in my discussion on al-Jaahiz and bin al-Mouqaffa' below.

In arguing that one of Henry Fielding's works, *Tom Jones*, is ironic, Booth (1974) attacks the views that draw a distinction between irony and satire based on an epistemological dichotomy of ambiguity and clarity, respectively. He argues that clarity does not rule irony out so long as "silent modifiers, like stable or satiric or ambiguous or metaphysical, are implied" (ibid: 179n).

Muecke shares Booth's views. He attacks some literary critics who draw the line between irony and satire when they claim that the former deals with the absurd and the morals of the universe while the latter treats the ridiculous and the manners of men. He sees that "Nothing is gained by denying the name of irony to the corrective irony of *Jonathan Wild*, and certainly nothing by confusing corrective irony with satire, which needs not even employ irony" (1969: 28) [emphasis in original].

Booth believes that only irony that implies a victim is ironic satire; "irony is used in some satire, not in all; some irony is satiric, much is not. And the same distinctions hold for sarcasm" (1974: 30). On the other hand, irony is often a means to some didactic end, and may be found in an aesthetic form. "There may even be an ironic literary genre in a further sense: works written for the *sake of the irony*, not works using irony for tragic or comic or satiric or eulogistic ends" (ibid: 101) [emphasis in original].

Further, Booth describes ironic satire as "probably the most widespread genre using stable irony" (ibid: 140). The view that irony could be employed for satiric ends brings a sort of relief to the uneasy question of whether an utterance is to be labelled ironic or satiric.

Muecke (1969) underscores the difficulty in defining irony and the concepts that it is often associated with, and tries to dispel the mist that surrounds its identification. He denies the conjunction of irony with satire, comedy and humour and agrees with Booth above that "irony is not essentially related to satire, and when it is related in practice it is a relationship of means to end" (ibid: 5).

Muecke admits the elusiveness and diversity of the forms and functions of irony for it may function as "a weapon in a satirical attack" (ibid: 3), while some sarcasm which is, in his definition, found in the Impersonal Irony mode, merely represent forms of irony, and "has been called the crudest form of irony" (ibid: 54). However, this is the case only when the

ostensible meaning is not the intended meaning (cf. Booth's remark on Fielding's work above). Muecke's definition of sarcasm relates to the tone of overt irony which "may be either congruous with the real meaning, and it is then that we have sarcasm or 'bitter irony', or an exaggeration of the tone appropriate to the ostensible meaning, in which we speak of 'heavy irony'" (1969: 54). Gibbs also considers sarcasm as "an especially negative form of irony" (1994: 384). For example, a sarcastic remark such as 'You are a nice sort of friend!' is not for a moment plausible in its literal sense; the tone conveys reproach so strongly that no feeling of contradiction is possible.

Muecke sheds further light on the closeness of irony to sarcasm. He describes the judgment between irony and sarcasm as frequently subjective as it builds on the individual's perception of when overt irony "will be regarded as having degenerated beyond sarcasm or understatement into direct language" (1969: 56).

In summary, the verbal corrective irony is a means to an end. It is purposeful, moral, reserved, instrumental and stable. Sarcastic irony represents the degree of overtness of the form of irony; satiric irony represents the covertness of the content of irony. Humour is simply the common denominator to all manifestations of irony.

Starting with English, let's have a closer look at irony in literary criticism and then examine a number of excerpts with reference to literary terminology and description.

1.2 Views on Irony in English

Studies devoted to irony in English have mainly tackled the concept from literary, rhetorical and philosophical perspectives (e.g. Kierkegaard 1841/1989; Booth 1974; Muecke 1969, 1982; Handwerk 1985; Winner 1988; Finlay 1990; Muir 1990; Colebrook 2004). Although they differ in details, these studies unanimously stress the duality of meaning in irony.

The discussion of irony in English below outlines the position of Wayne Booth and D.C. Muecke, two major contributors to the concept of irony in literary criticism, on the classification and function of irony. Compare the largely theoretical, pragmatic and philosophical works which do not advance the crucial cause of interpretation and analysis of irony (e.g.

Gibbs 1994; Hutcheon 1995; Sperber and Wilson 1995; Attardo 2000; Simpson 2004).

1.2.1 Wayne Booth

Classification of irony

Booth classifies irony in two forms: stable and unstable; each is divided into local and infinite into two levels, covert and overt (1974: 235). Stable irony involves two steps: the authors offer an unequivocal invitation to reconstruct, and this reconstruction is not to be later undermined (ibid: 233). Unstable irony implies that "no stable reconstruction can be made out of the ruins revealed through the irony" (ibid: 240). The covert and overt scale refers to the "*degree of openness or disguise*" (ibid: 234) [emphasis in original] of the author's irony, while the local and infinite scale represents the "ground covered by the reconstruction or assertion... How far is the reader asked to travel on the road to complete negation, and how does he know where to stop?" (ibid: 234).

Clues of ironic intention

This section highlights the intricate relationship of the perception of irony to its interpretation, and ultimately, translation. Examples from the data in Chapter 5 will be used for illustration of Booth's clues or strategies in stable irony (ibid: 53-86). Texts in bold refer to clues of irony; examples with plain text only indicate clues triggered by the whole examples. A full analysis of the devices and their textural and textual significance is provided in Chapter 5. Booth suggests the following strategies:

1. Straightforward warnings, that is, signals in the author's own voice
    a) In titles, e.g.
    'Unpopular, but Collins is Staying'. (English Text (ET) 1)
    b) In epigraphs, e.g.
    'المضحك المبكي' 'the laughable tearful [laugh till you cry]'. (Arabic Text (AT) 1)
    c) Other direct clues by the author, such as parallelism, juxtaposition of incompatibles, e.g.
    'The Liberals can't understand why **they keep losing** elections. That's easy. **They keep making** stupid decisions. (ET2)

2. Known Error Proclaimed
    a) Popular expressions, when the writer makes deliberate errors, e.g.
    'If the Liberals want to shoot themselves **in both feet** then Reith is their man.' (ET2)
    This device would also come under wordplay, as the correct expression is 'to shoot oneself **in the foot**'.
    b) Historical fact, e.g.
    '[Dr Hewson – the Opposition leader] thought *Hey Hey It's Thursday Night* was a better medium to sell his complex policies'. (ET2) [Italics in original]
    The impact of the utterance arises from the substitution of Saturday with Thursday, which is a blunt manipulation of a historical fact regarding a television variety program that had been running for twenty years.
    c) Conventional judgment. This clue relates to the common knowledge and assumptions between the writer and the readers, e.g. irony can be marked by the address to the readership using an honorific title:
    لماذا يا ترى؟ لأنه، **أيها السادة**، يقول في كتاباته التاريخية أن زعيم ألمانيا، رودلف [كذا] هتلر بريء من مذبحة اليهود ولا يعرف عنها شيئاً. (AT2)
    'Why, one wonders? Because, **dear Sirs**, he says in his historical writings that the leader of Germany, Rodolph [sic] Hitler, is innocent of the Holocaust of the Jews and knows nothing about it.'

3. Conflicts of facts within the work, or two contradictory statements, e.g.
    'John Howard, the most experienced and effective performer in the Coalition, is the obvious choice' / 'Howard's problem is that he is almost as closely identified with the hard-right policies of John Hewson as Hewson himself'. (ET2)

4. Clashes of style, e.g.
    Fahey took three years to get his industrial relations legislation. Green paper, white paper, **lots of paper**. (ET1)

5. Conflicts of belief. Under this heading, Booth includes the notion of 'Illogicality'. "Every reader knows, or thinks he knows, what is 'logical'. Violations of normal reasoning processes will be subject to

exactly the same manipulations as violations of other beliefs or knowledge" (1974: 75), e.g.

وقام [الغرب] بكل ما أوتي من قوة، بصحفه وإذاعاته، بسفرائه ووزرائه، يكتب، يدافع،
يحاور ويجادل دفاعاً عن **سلمان رشدي المسكين** الذي يتهدده **المسلمون البربر والمتخلفون،**
لا لشيء إلا لأنه كتب كتاباً يعبر فيه عن رأيه!!
لماذا هذا الدفاع المستميت عن سلمان رشدي؟!
أهو دفاع عن الحرية والديموقراطية وحرية الرأي؟
أم دفاع عن كاتب **تهجّم** على الإسلام، **وشتم** رسول المسلمين؟ (AT2)

'It [the West] used every means it has [all its powers], through its newspapers and radio broadcasts, through its ambassadors and ministers, writing, defending and arguing in defence of the **poor Salman Rushdie** who is threatened by the **barbaric and backward Muslims**, just because he wrote a book expressing his opinion!!
Why is this heroic defence of Salman Rushdie?!
Is it a defence of freedom, democracy and freedom of opinion?
Or defence of a writer who **offended** Islam and **insulted** the Messenger of Muslims [Islam]?'

The violation of the logicality of the argument is based on the contextual meaning, imparted mainly in the last two rhetorical questions. The lexical choice 'offended' and 'insulted' reflects, interpersonally, the writer's opposing opinion about Rushdie. Hence, the second rhetorical question stands as the intended answer to the first question, i.e. '**It is** a defence of a writer who...'

Furthermore, Booth (ibid: 196), posits the difficulties of identifying ironies even for literary critics. Literary evaluation of ironies requires, in his view, different processes. He specifies four types of processes where the "justification in each process differs from all the others": 1) judging parts as they contribute to whole works; 2) judging completed works according to their own implicit standards, their intentions; 3) judging parts according to universally desirable qualities, critical constants (cf. Grice's (1975) conversational maxims); and 4) judging kinds compared with other kinds. For the first two types, the criteria of possible evaluations are found 'in' the particular work and in its inferred intentions. The other two "lead us away from the individual work to other works, other kinds" but he adds,

"[T]here seems to be no definable limit to the number of larger contexts that particular literary works can be fitted into and judged by". Booth's second and third types of the process above would also be measured linguistically as intertextuality which, as argued by de Beaugrande (1980: 20),

> subsumes the relationships between a given text and other relevant texts encountered in prior experience, with or without mediation. A reply in conversation... or a recall protocol of a text just read... illustrate[s] intertextuality with very little mediation. More extensive mediation obtains when replies or criticisms are directed to texts written down at some earlier time.

Adopting Hume, Booth (1974: 221-229) goes one psychological step further to defend his view of the impossibility of giving a plausible and exact interpretation of irony: the non-existence of common sentiments of human nature. He quotes "Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles." He names five crippling handicaps that hinder the judgment of irony: "Ignorance, Inability to pay attention, Prejudice, Lack of Practice, and the Emotional Inadequacy" (ibid: 222).

Booth's rather pessimistic view in terms of the impossibility of a tangible interpretation of irony, particularly of the type or irony investigated in this book, does not help the cause of translation of irony, although his clues for interpretation may be of use further in the analysis. It can be suggested, however, that part of Booth's literary insight into the identification of irony can be 'regulated' linguistically under the banner of intertextuality, which is, in de Beaugrande's view, "the major factor in the establishment of TEXT-TYPES... where expectations are formed for whole classes of language occurrences" (1980: 20) [emphasis in original].

1.2.2 Douglas Colin Muecke

Muecke (1982: 3-4) gives a list of writers well-known in the Western world in support of his view that irony and great literature are inseparable. He stresses, however, the importance of being earnest if irony is to be established, i.e. one cannot be ironic unless there is earnestness already to play off against – just as there is no print unless there is a contrastingly coloured page to print on. Further, in his introduction, Muecke stresses

that irony is corrective. He likens it in language to an intellectual or literary painting that can be ironic to make a statement or convey a message, while irony may be felt as distracting or intrusive "when it is intent upon formal perfection or technical innovation or absolute expression"[1] (1982: 5).

Philosophical classification

Muecke differentiates between two classes of irony: observable irony and instrumental irony. The instrumental irony is used when someone realises a purpose using language ironically, while the observable irony could be unintentional and hence representable in art. Thus, irony in his view is either specific or general (more explanation on these latter notions below). He emphasises that instrumental irony is dynamic and requires readership participation since it relies on the 'formal aspect' of the language. Most observable irony, on the other hand, comes to us "ready-made, already observed by someone else and presented fully-formed in drama, fiction, paintings and drawings, proverbs and sayings, so that the role of the audience or reader is much less active than that of the reader challenged to a game of interpretation by an Instrumental Ironist" (1982: 42). It is important to note here that proverbs and sayings can come under instrumental and overt irony in specific contexts, e.g. the thematic proverb in AT1(الأصل: شرّ البليّة ما يضحك) شرّ الأمور ما يضحك 'the most devilish matters are those which bring laughter [it would be funny if it were not so sad]'.

Muecke further gives a general definition to instrumental and observable irony, although he admits that it is not always possible to distinguish between the two. Instrumental irony is one where "the ironist says something to have it rejected as false, *mal à propos*, one-sided, etc." (ibid: 56) [emphasis in original]; observable irony is presented by the ironist, e.g. "a situation, a sequence of events, a character, a belief, etc. – that exists or is to be thought of as existing independently of the presentation" (ibid: 56). One can assume that by the former Muecke is referring to irony expressed linguistically, while the latter refers to irony expressed non-linguistically. This observation is based on Muecke's wider classification of irony which distinguishes between two categories: 1) Specific Irony, which encompasses sub-classifications and modes, and which is characteristic of the society's ideology and established values; and 2) General Irony, described by Kierkegaard (cited in Muecke 1969: 120) as "Irony in the eminent sense", which denotes "life itself or any general

aspect of life seen as fundamentally and inescapably an ironic state of affairs."

Functions and interpretation of irony

In *The Compass of Irony* (1969), Muecke introduces the idea that irony becomes in our modern age an attitude to life and a way of organising one's response to, and coming to terms with, the world. Thus apart from giving "a general account of the formal qualities of irony and a classification" (ibid: ix), he touches on the functions, topics, and – most importantly – the cultural significance of irony.

Muecke also considers irony as an art closely related to wit. He emphasises in his attempted definition that irony depends largely on the message and the content rather than the form and its effect on the senses. In this context, he says "[irony] is intellectual rather than musical, nearer to the mind than to the senses, reflective and self-conscious rather than lyrical and self-absorbed" (ibid: 6). This constant and typical denial of the linguistic realisation of form – albeit that Muecke himself lends weight to form in his 'intentional' instrumental irony – is, perhaps, where literary theory falls short of being useful on its own to the study of the translation of irony. Chapter 2 addresses the need to provide 'consistent' and 'reliable' evidence that language, in its written form, is the vehicle that both the writer and the reader use in order to deliver and receive irony.

In his discussion of the duality of irony, Muecke considers the function of Simple Irony, the most familiar kind of irony, as corrective. He stresses that "To ironize something (in this class of irony) is to place it, without comment, in whatever context will invalidate or correct it; to see something as ironic is to see it in such a context" (ibid: 23). Muecke (ibid: 29) also states briefly that we need an ironic intention in addition to the formal requirements of irony, such as confrontation or juxtaposition of contradictory, incongruous, or otherwise incompatible elements and that one should be seen as 'invalidating' the other. This intention could be best identified, perhaps, from the context.

Relevant to this book is Muecke's concession that, from a literary criticism point of view, the classification of ironic devices in a piece of writing is "preliminary to literary discussion" and that "critical evaluation of actual irony would still have to be done" (ibid: 41). Thus, there seems to be a