

Call for Papers: 19th International *Connotations* Symposium

Irony: Dramatic and Otherwise

Tübingen, Germany, 25-28 July 2027

Literary irony is a phenomenon that seems expressly invented for the approach *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* (www.connotations.de) wishes to promote, namely combining the close reading of literary texts with wider theoretical perspectives. Clearly, irony is a textual feature, and it equally clearly reaches beyond individual texts in that it evokes and reflects basic constituents of human communication: in particular, the relationship between what is said and what is meant and the relationship between what is said and what is known.

Irony comes into play when these relationships are marked by significant discrepancies. The discrepancy between what is said and what is meant is essential for verbal irony and the discrepancy between what is said and what is known is fundamental to dramatic (or narrative) irony. If and how these two kinds of irony belong together, however, is a moot point and one of the questions to be addressed by our symposium. Thus the unequal distribution of knowledge (between characters and/or between characters and the reader) which marks narrative and dramatic irony may be related to the divergence which characterizes verbal irony. When Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, disguised as a boy, says to Orsino: "I am all the daughters of my father's house," Orsino, who believes Viola to be a young man, must regard this statement as verbal irony on Viola's part. What is said ("daughters") is very different from what appears to be meant ("sons"). To us, the audience, however, this is a case of dramatic irony since we know that Viola is a woman and we observe Orsino's ignorance. What makes this case particularly intriguing is that here dramatic irony is not based on a discrepancy between what is said and what we know since Viola literally speaks the truth. The discrepancy arises between what we know and what is supposed to be spoken ironically.

The example shows that asking about the relationship between verbal and dramatic/narrative irony entails numerous other questions that the *Connotations* symposium is going to address. In particular, we will ask about effects of irony, both with regard to characters and the audience. What is the added value of an ironic remark? What does it tell us about the speaker? In what way does an ironic utterance signal that there is a common ground between the communication partners? Are the inclusion and exclusion of others, i.e. those who get the ironical meaning and those who don't, similar to cases of discrepant awareness? How do we know that an utterance is meant ironically and how are we to deal with ambiguity in this respect? Can non-verbal irony markers be encoded in literary texts? Are theories of verbal irony based on notions of echo and pretence relatable to drama and fiction?

We invite papers focussing on these and related questions, based on literature in English from the Middle Ages to the present. Please send an **abstract** (300 words max.) to the editors of *Connotations* at symposium2027@connotations.de

by **31 October 2026**