Published Date: - 25-11-2026

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Irony And Satire As Artistic Tools Of Social Criticism In The Short Stories Of Abdulla Qahhor And Anton Chekhov

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how irony and satire expose social injustice, hierarchical dependence, and moral indifference in selected short stories by Abdulla Qahhor and Anton Chekhov. Through comparative-typological analysis, it considers Qahhor's "O'g'ri," "Bemor," and "Anor" alongside Chekhov's "Chameleon," "The Death of a Government Clerk," and "Fat and Thin." The findings identify narrative understatement, ironic characterization, situational reversal, and expressive detail as shared artistic devices. They also reveal a distinction: Qahhor frequently connects satirical exposure with economic deprivation, whereas Chekhov particularly emphasizes the psychological habits sustaining social hierarchy. Both writers transform ordinary incidents into criticism of unequal social relations.

KEYWORDS: Abdulla Qahhor, Anton Chekhov, social criticism, irony, satire, comparative typology, short fiction.

INTRODUCTION

Literary irony allows an author to communicate criticism through a discrepancy between what characters say, what they believe, and what readers recognize. Satire develops this discrepancy into an evaluation of individual conduct or collective practices. Hutcheon emphasizes that irony acquires its force through interpretation within a social context [3], while Frye's account of satirical writing connects ridicule with recognizable moral standards [4]. These perspectives illuminate the compressed narratives of Qahhor and Chekhov, in which a seemingly minor event exposes a larger injustice. Although the writers belong to different literary and historical environments, both portray ordinary people confronting authority, prejudice, and social vulnerability. The purpose of this thesis is to establish the principal similarities and differences in their use of ironic and satirical techniques without assuming direct literary influence.

The research applies comparative-typological analysis supported by close textual reading. Its primary material consists of three stories by Qahhor and three by Chekhov [1; 2]. The comparison focuses on narrative perspective, characterization, contrast between speech and action, symbolic detail, and narrative outcome. Each episode is assessed according to the social behavior it exposes and the reader's position toward the characters. Such a procedure distinguishes overt ridicule from tragic irony and allows functional parallels to emerge despite differences in cultural setting. The study is qualitative; it does not claim statistically representative conclusions about either writer's complete oeuvre.

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In Qahhor's "O'g'ri" ("The Thief"), Qobil bobo's stolen ox initiates a futile search for assistance. Local officials perform concern while exploiting the old man's desperation. The irony lies in the contrast between their apparent responsibility for maintaining order and their actual contribution to his suffering. Even the title becomes accusatory: the narrative encourages readers to question whether theft is confined to the unidentified person who took the animal. By presenting official misconduct through repeated encounters rather than extended authorial condemnation, Qahhor makes bureaucratic indifference visible as a system.

"Bemor" ("The Patient") shifts the emphasis from administrative abuse to unequal access to medical help. Sotiboldi's attempts to save his wife encounter poverty, ineffective remedies, and the limited sympathy of a prosperous employer. The distance between expressions of compassion and meaningful assistance creates bitter irony. In "Anor" ("Pomegranate"), the wife's modest desire for fruit becomes a source of marital conflict because poverty has made an ordinary purchase difficult. Turobjon's eventual return with pomegranates offers no reassuring resolution; his distress makes the apparent fulfillment of her wish disturbing. Here irony approaches tragedy, exposing deprivation through the disproportion between a simple need and its destructive consequences.

Chekhov constructs similarly concentrated situations but often directs his satire toward obedience to rank. In "Chameleon," police inspector Ochumelov repeatedly changes his judgment about a dog-biting incident according to the animal's presumed connection with a general. The rapid reversals ridicule an official whose notion of justice depends on status rather than facts. In "The Death of a Government Clerk," Chervyakov's repeated apologies after accidentally sneezing on a general escalate an insignificant event into fatal anxiety. The disproportion between the accident and its consequences exposes internalized subservience, not merely the general's impatience.

In "Fat and Thin," a spontaneous meeting between former schoolmates deteriorates once the lower-ranking man discovers his friend's superior position. His suddenly servile language and posture replace genuine familiarity. Chekhov thus makes hierarchy recognizable in everyday gestures, whereas Qahhor more frequently reveals its material costs. Both writers use dialogue economically: characters expose their values through the way they address others, without needing an explicit moral pronouncement.

The comparison suggests that irony performs two related functions: it unmasks hypocrisy and creates critical distance between the reader and prevailing social conventions. Qahhor's satire is particularly forceful where institutions fail vulnerable people; Chekhov's becomes acute where individuals reproduce hierarchy through fear and opportunism. Yet the distinction is not absolute. Qahhor also examines humiliation and damaged relationships, while Chekhov portrays institutions through individual behavior. Their typological affinity therefore rests on narrative structure and ethical purpose rather than identical historical circumstances. The selected stories also demonstrate that satire need not produce laughter: tragic endings can intensify the exposure of injustice.

Qahhor and Chekhov employ irony and satire as compact but powerful means of social criticism. Ironic titles, shifting judgments, revealing dialogue, and contrasts between declared

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intentions and actual behavior expose exploitation, servility, and indifference. The comparative reading shows both a common artistic logic and distinct emphases shaped by different social environments. Qahhor foregrounds the consequences of poverty and failed support, while Chekhov often isolates the absurdity of status-conscious conduct. Together, their stories show how short fiction can turn an everyday incident into a broader ethical judgment.

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