



Research Article

FUNCTION OF DIALOGUES IN CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY'S NOVELS

Submission Date: October 16, 2023, **Accepted Date:** October 21, 2023,

Published Date: October 26, 2023

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/philological-crijps-04-10-09>

Journal Website:
<https://masterjournals.com/index.php/crijps>

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ABSTRACT

In this article main functions of dialogues in such satirical novels as The White House Mess, They Eat Puppies, Don't They? Thank you for smoking are defined. Buckley by means of characters' dialogues conveys comic message, pokes fun and identifies the object of satirical representation. Furthermore, by implementing various forms of comic category like irony, satire and sarcasm Buckley reflects his attitude towards the government policy or a particular layer of establishment. Main purpose of this work is draw attention to the acclaimed and yet insufficiently investigated literary heritage of the writer.

KEYWORDS

Satirical novel, political satire, dialogue, character speech, forms of comic, contemporary literature.

INTRODUCTION

Christopher Taylor Buckley is a contemporary American writer, critic and editor. He is an author of several bestselling satirical novels like Thank You for Smoking, They eat puppies, don't they? No way to treat a first lady. [2] Objects of satirical representation in Buckley's novels vary from political establishment up to European historical

past. In each novel Buckley contemplates over certain situations which took place in real life and which he, sometimes, witnessed. Thus, being a speechwriter, he witnessed the inside of political mechanism, how domestic and foreign policy is shaped. This experience, in its turn, led to publication of satirical novels featuring politicians, lobbyists, layers, judges and other representatives



of political establishment and business. All his novels could be characterized by precise reflection of his contemporary American society regardless of satirical transformation.[8]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Despite positive reviews from literary critics and readers about Buckley's novels, his literary works remain insufficiently explored. Among those who studied novels of Christopher Buckley should be mentioned William Warford who compared the writer with the British writer and journalist Evelyn Waugh. This comparison was based mainly on two factors such as biography: both writers were from wealthy families with excellent education, and the commonality of satire in their novels. The object of ridicule in their novels became the society in which they appeared, grew up and worked. [9] Evelyn Waugh's work thus spans post-war modernity, the upper class of British society, particularly the education and penal systems, and the entrenched Fleet Street media barons. While Buckley, much less known and studied, satirizes all three branches of government power and rapidly growing lobbying industry. The political-media establishment of New York and Washington, in particular, dominates in Buckley's work. [10]

In general, Warford has thoroughly analyzed *Decline and Fall*, *A Handful of Dust*, *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh and *The White House Mess*, *Little Green Men*, and *Thank You for Smoking* by Christopher Buckley, and has come to the conclusion that both writers stopped writing

satire because of the absurdity of the society they lived in. [10]

However, William Warford was wrong in asserting that Buckley's satire was as merciless as Waugh's. Buckley maintains a certain neutrality when satirizing the system, for example in the novel *They Eat Puppy, Don't They?* American leadership is not condemned, but on the contrary, in the description of the president and Henry Kissinger respect and authority of the persons is revealed. They are the ones who decide the outcome of the world politics. [6]

Consequently, Buckley ridicules only a certain part of the system, and not the puppet apparatus of power itself, controlled by the richest representatives of the country. It can be assumed that William Warford wanted to flesh out the satire in only three of Buckley's novels, and not his entire legacy.

We were also able to find an article by law professor and practicing attorney Jonathan Siegel in which he critiqued Buckley's novel *Supreme Courtship*. Siegel described this novel as "disappointing" compared to Buckley's previous novels because there were many repetitions of successful satirical moments from previous novels and drawn-out scenes with Judge Pepper. In general, the novel is believable and the legal aspects of the plot are depicted correctly - according to the lawyer.[7]

Thus, novels of the writer have not yet been analyzed through the view point of artistic merit.



Buckley being a satirist implements almost all satirical techniques and devices from irony and inner monologue up to character transformation. In this field of particular interest is a character dialogue. Buckley uses it to convey comic expressiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mainly in Buckley's novels there are several types of character dialogues, for instance, dialogues of misunderstanding and verbal confusion, other dialogues include abundance of language expressive means. [1] For instance, Buckley's debut novel, *The White House Mess*, where all these dialogues could be found.

The dialogue of misunderstanding is shown in the chapter "Citadel", at a moment of crisis when Wadlough calls the military. Misunderstanding is a result of Wadlough's ignorance of US Air defense facility in Aleutian Islands – Unimark. The consequence of ignorance is sarcasm: "Good God...I don't care if the problem originated in Siam," In fact, Siam for Wadlough, is just a figure of speech, a figurative meaning of a long distance. As a result, the colonel literally interprets Wadlough's phrase and seriously replies: "That would be unlikely, sir. We don't maintain any facilities in Siam" Here Siam - modern Thailand, is perceived as a state in Southeast Asia. [4]

Verbal confusion is demonstrated in Wadlough's dialogue with Marvin. The situation described in the dialogue happens after Marvin's meeting with Fidel Castro, about which Marvin reports to

Wadlough. Marvin's first line immediately causes confusion: "I met with Cucumber...The dressing was delicious." Based on this remark, only Castro's code name – cucumber is comprehensible, whereas more valuable political information remains unknown. Therefore, without the code, it is not possible to decipher Marvin's message. Wadlough, in an attempt to find a thematically close meaning, continues the dialogue with the question: "It was a good lunch?" The humor in this passage lies in the inaccessibility of the code, which led to one-way communication between Marvin, and as a result, the lack of mutual understanding between employees is clearly shown. [4]

Expressiveness of language is reflected in the dialogue between Wadlough and Bamford Lleland. Lleland, to strengthen his own triumph, initially uses a condescending tone of communication, and after the incident with the friends of the first lady, he switches to obscene language. The dialogue begins with Lleland's phrase: "I'm calling about those queers." The dysphemism "queers" is used here to describe the friends of the first lady. Lleland further expresses his dissatisfaction in the form of sarcasm: "...It's un-presidential. We're going into an election, Wadlough, in case you haven't looked at your calendar." Focusing his speech on his opponent, Lleland reproaches Wadlough for his "unprofessional" behavior during the election period. Wadlough, in response to this interpretation of the event, also switches to sarcasm: "If it's signals you're worried about, why don't you get rid of that floating embarrassment



of yours?” The last part of the question contains the dysphemism “floating embarrassment” – yacht, and is presented in the form of inversion to focus on the inconsistency of Lleland’s image as a politician in the administration of an “egalitarian president”. Lleland’s defeat in this speech duel was reflected in a change of communication style from informal, sometimes familiar, to a more formal one, but maintaining a dismissive tone: “I didn’t call to submit myself to abuse from a member of the President’s wife’s staff.” Lleland downgrades the position of “First Lady’s business manager” - the head of the East Wing of the White House - to a mere employee. [4]

If dialogues in the novel *The White House Mess* are more satirical, the dialogues in the novel *They Eat Puppies, Don’t They?* are mainly sarcastic. The brightest example of sarcastic dialogue in the novel takes place after Walter’s reluctant agreement to buy a new horse for Mindy. Walter asks Mindy to give him her old horse and for her consequent question about a reason of such inquiry he responds: “Aren’t we having Blake and Lou Ann over on Sunday for a barbecue? At this rate, we can’t afford beef. They say horse meat’s tasty, but you have to cook it slowly” [5]

Next sarcastic dialogue happens between professor and Angel. Here sarcasm becomes more offensive. When professor points out that Angel didn’t read his book and, thus, interprets his idea incorrectly, she turns to aggression. Angel responds abusively: “No, I actually did, but I had to keep my feet in a bucket of ice water. I know that

academic prose is supposed to be boring, but hats off to you. You’ve taken it to a new level.” [5]

Irony as a form of comic, is also typical for characters’ dialogues, for instance can be taken Buckley’s novel *Thank you for smoking*. The dialogue between Nick Naylor and of the employee takes place after Nick’s comment on the advances of modern medical studies of Buerger’s disease. Employee asks whether Nick “actually believe this stuff.” Nick answers open heartedly: “It pays the mortgage” [3]

CONCLUSION

Thus, taking into account all the above-mentioned dialogues, it becomes apparent that the characters’ dialogues in Christopher Buckley’s novels convey comic meaning. Regardless of satirical object each Buckley’s novel can be characterized by the abundance of language expressive means which are mainly concentrated in characters’ dialogues. Apart from evident comic tone of dialogues, development of Buckley’s writing technique is also traceable. Moreover, by implementing various forms of comic category Buckley enriches his writing arsenal and makes his novels easy to comprehend. Even though the level of comprehension depends on the reader’s background knowledge, especially, when the non-native speaker reads the authentic novels.

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