

This thesis is a study of Dramatic Irony in Gayle Forman's young adult novel *If I Stay* (2009). By focusing on the most important literary device an unreliable narrator and the authenticity in the narration in a young adult narrative proposed by Mike Cadden. Various other theorists on narrative techniques, point of view, forms of irony seems appropriate to discuss dramatic irony from multiple angles.

The purpose of this thesis is to give a fresh account on implication of narrative irony in the novel. While reading fast and the novel progress in non-chronological order it's difficult to understand. Only slow reading, twice and many times over, can bring out all the ironic connections inside the novel, without which the novel remains comprehended. It is the writer's job to convince the reader about the reliability of the story. This research tries to answer the following questions related to the narration of the novel. Why does the author employ an unreliable narrator to tell the story? Does the story create suspicion in the reader that the narrator is not a young person? What purpose does Dramatic Irony serve in the novel?

The novel has a narrative that continues strangely even after the narrator becomes the victim of a car crash. She continues the narration as a soul even after she is hit hard by accident and her body is in a coma. Even as a soul, she is presented as unique; her thoughtful and mature reflections about her past and future and making a careful decision appear beyond a teenager's age. There is a doubt on the authenticity of her narrative that supports Cadden's observation that the "novels constructed by adults to simulate an authentic adolescent's voice are inherently ironic" (146). Cadden's focus on his theory regarding Dramatic Irony revolves around the inauthenticity of the narrator's voice, giving double meaning to the text.

The narrator narrates the events with the play of a young and adult/ mature voice, giving rise to suspicion of authenticity at times. For instance, she says she

cannot feel anything after the crash, but she soon says she listens to the music they had played in the car. It is confusing whether she is feeling with body or soul. When her body is in ICU, she says she is unaware of how much time is gone, but she uses clock time at the beginning of the narration. Many contradictory statements in the narration raise the question of authenticity, making the narration an ironic one.

Forman's novel is set in Oregon County of America at the beginning and the hospital of Portland later after the deadly car crash at the beginning of the novel. The county schools are off due to light snowfall, and the Hall family plans to go out on a drive because it is unexpected leisure time for the family. Mia, her Mom, Dad, and her little brother, Teddy, decide to visit a couple named Henry and Willow, Dad and Mom's old friends. It is an exciting outing for them, but a sudden and unexpected mishap falls on them. Another car hits their car on the way, and their car is completely wrecked. Dad and Mom died on the spot, and Mia is taken to a hospital because she is in a coma. She is ignorant of her brother's condition, but she continues seeing the events going around her. She sees her own body and follows it to the hospital, in the meantime continuing her narration. Mia realizes that she has an out-of-body experience.

In the hospital, Mia sees her relatives and friends visiting her, taking care of her, and wishing her to recover soon. Her grandparents, uncles, and aunts visit her. Mia reflects on her past, her grandparents, her best friend Kim, and her romantic relation and love with Adam in the hospital. She expects Kim and Adam to visit her. Kim visits her and prays for her betterment that makes her happy. But the absence of Adam's visit and the news of Teddy's death makes her frustrated. She is under pressure to decide whether she wants to get out of the coma and live again. She broods over the horrible life that lies ahead of her. She confidently says she can wake

up from the coma if she wants to, but she needs the reason to stay in the world and live again:

If I stay. If I live. It's up to me.

All this business about medically induced comas is just doctor talk. It's not up to the doctors. It's not up to the absentee angels. It's not even up to God who, if He exists, is nowhere around right now.

It's up to me. (Forman 77)

This confident rumination of Mia's soul is very ironic. On the surface, it merely shows her confidence and assertiveness towards her life, but it has a deep underlying meaning. For a person, living without reason is not life. It is a death in itself. Mia sees there is no power of God or influence of any angels in our life; only the human will is necessary to live. It is unbelievable for a young narrator who has yet to learn a lot about the medical sciences, and only she knows how to play Cello to question medical science. It ironizes her position as a young narrator as she comments on the medical science that what they are doing is only their talk, and they are so helpless that they can do nothing to save a person's life even though they pretend to help people to live. The willpower and reason to live are above the medical sciences and doctor's talk to save them for a patient to live.

Lack of Adam's visit nearly leads Mia to leave the body forever. But his visit and genuine wish that she should stay give her hope for her future. Finally, Mia decides to stay and comes out in person to this world. The young adult voice in the narrative is ironic as she is presented as if she has got full command over life and death. This research focuses on the study of the ironic side of the narrator.

Gayle Forman is an American writer. She started her career by writing an article in *Seventeen Magazine* in 2000. Finally, her first novel, *If I Stay*, was released

in 2009. She won the NAIBA Book of the Year Awards in 2009 and Indie Choice Honor Award winner in 2010 for *If I Stay*.

Though Forman's novel becomes widely popular and eventually became a national best-seller, not many criticisms of the novel are available. It shows the apathy and lack of genuine seriousness in critics regarding young adult fiction. Among the very few criticisms available, H. Kusumaningrum has conducted her MA research project studying the narrator Mia Hall's behavior changes from a psychological perspective. Kusumaningrum observes:

Mia Hall exemplifies a person with behavior change. Mia and Adam are in love with each other, but they do not have a lot in common. Mia and Adam have different music preferences. In their relationship, Mia tries to change her behavior to make her relationship going well. Based on the analysis above, there is two kinds of force field analysis; there are driving force and restraining force. Also, there are three phases in Mia's behavior change: the unfreezing, the movement, and the refreezing phase. She is trying her best to make Adam be happy, and Adam becomes the driving force of Mia's behavior change. (15-16)

Kusumaningrum points out Forman's narrator's behavior changes because she wants her love relation with Adam to keep going well. Mia has got different behavioral patterns and habits in contrast to her lover. They have different music preferences. So, she balances her psychology between driving force and restraining force. There are some psychological stages too through which Mia undergoes. They are unfreezing, movement, and refreezing stages. She tries to make her lover happy, but her lover contributes to her behavioral changes. Kusumaningrum further elaborates:

Mia goes through those three phases of behavior change, and the end is Mia

does not change her behavior permanently because Adam just loves Mia the way she is, and Mia does not have to do anything special to make Adam feel comfortable around her. At first, Adam becomes the driving force of Mia's behavior change, but Mia's previous behavior becomes the restraining force because Mia's previous behavior is precious for Adam, and he convinces Mia about that. (16)

Mia undergoes three phases of behavior change, and her behavioral change stops as Adam becomes ready to love her as she is. He starts loving the restraining force she exerts at the early phase of their love.

Reviewing young adult literature as a whole, Bontempo sees young adult literature as rich literary material to explore the issues and dilemmas experienced by human beings from the perception of young characters:

Young adult literature provides rich literary material for exploring issues and dilemmas of the human experience as perceived by the young. . . . There are many young adult books . . . that deal with. . . young people sorting through and confronting the issue of being "different," of finding their place in a sometimes confusing and diverse world. (31)

Bontempo states that young adult literature presents the young people in the adult world with their own ignored issues and try finding their place in a confusing and diverse world. Mia Hall, the young narrator of Forman's novel, is also in confusion whether she wants to live in this world of uncertainty and confusion after she loses her family members in a crash or to leave this world forever. This research analyzes the authenticity of narration and the irony inherent in Forman's novel *If I Stay*, taking the available reviews into account.

The simplest explanation is that irony occurs when the intended meaning is

opposite of actual meaning. Narrative irony is a subversion of expectation. It is when something is seemingly simple or straightforward is twisted or undermined. More specific and easier to identify it occurs when there is disconnection between what the narrator and reader know. In "Irony and Fiction," Andrew H. Wright talks about the characteristics of an ironic narration. Wright points out the contradictions in human experience in human experience and the detachment of the narrator giving rise to the narrator's perception:

Of the contradictions in human experience, the ironic man has a perception which yields a marvelous detachment and a detachment that grants a perception. There is, in the disengagement of the ironist, objectivity which is not scientific because not disinterested or dispassionate. In fact, the ironist is deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions he perceives; and this concern leads to an ambivalence of attitude to one side and the other to both at once. Searching the orchards of human experience, he finds the bittersweet apple of confusing appearance and ambiguous essence-and he becomes a man of the divided, the ironic, vision. (113)

The ironist, whether s/he is a writer or the narrator, leads the readers to the ambivalence of the attitude with his concerns with both aspects of the contradictions s/he perceives at the same time. This ambivalent, confusing appearance of the ironist gives him a divided, ironic vision.

Linda Hutcheon in *Irony's Edge*, talks about the effects of irony. Hutcheon believes that its effect characterizes irony:

Unlike metaphor or metonymy, irony has an edge; unlike paradox, irony is decidedly edgy . . . irony is a "weighted" mode of discourse in the sense that it is asymmetrical, unbalanced in favor of the silent and unsaid . . . irony involves the attribution of an evaluative, even judgmental attitude, and this is

where the emotive or affective dimension also enters – much to the dismay of most critical discourse and most critics. (37)

Pointing to the edgy nature of irony, Hutcheon favors the position that irony can be used to create a certain effect, and thus, it can show a certain way of human conduct. As the affective dimension of irony has not been much discussed in Albee's play, it is examined through this viewpoint in this research. This shows how irony can be used as the means to correct the course of society, creating a certain effect.

From the observations on irony discussed so far, one can easily concede that the narratives of the fiction contain a number of ironies, or the device of irony pervades them. In simplest terms, the narration is a storytelling technique, while irony is a device to generate meaning other than the narration's actual saying. The narration has got its own theories that can broadly be divided into two kinds, according to Roger Seamon:

Broadly speaking, theories of narration can themselves be divided into two basic kinds: representational and technical. Representational theories focus on what the structuralists call "story," which is composed of the characters, events, scenes, and acts that we attend to when we understand a narration. Technical theories focus on "discourse," i.e., how these stories get told. This includes a discussion of the various media of narration (film, mime, and drawings), arrangements of episodes, the nature of the narrating voice, the relationship of the narrator to characters and the author, etc. Technical theories attend to the means storytellers use in order to tell their stories, and representational theories focus on the stories authors tell. (369)

Seamon clarifies that theories of narration are representational and technical in which representational theories focus on the story (characters, events, scenes, and acts) while

technical theories focus on how the story is told. Technical theories are devoted to analyzing discourses, the media of narration, an arrangement of episodes, nature of narrating voice, writer's relationship to the character, etc. In brief, technical theories talk about the means the storytellers use to tell their stories, while representational theories focus on stories the writers tell. In this research, Gayle Forman's novel *If I Stay* is analyzed based on technical sides; the evaluation of the narrator's voice and irony embedded in it are the basic issues of this study.

This research focuses on studying Dramatic Irony in Gayle Forman's novel *If I Stay*. The narrative of the novel is strange due to its clock time headings in each of the sections from the very outset. It is narrated like a diary, but there is clock time like 7:09 a.m., 8:17 a.m., and 9:23 a.m. and so on instead of using the calendar time or specific day and date. So time directionality can help the audience to understand the significance the grid of moments in the novel as a whole. It also provides readers a special attention either it results an unreliable interpretation. Time variations also indicates various degree of intensity of displacement. As in novel, the family immediately plans the car drive because the kids' school is unexpectedly off due to light snowfall in Oregon County. Everything happens quickly from the very beginning of the novel. The scene is different every one or two hours. Teenage narrator Mia narrates the scene of a car crash in a snowy morning ride when their car on a family outing is overridden by another vehicle:

The car is eviscerated. The impact of a four-ton pickup truck going sixty miles an hour plowing straight into the passenger side had the force of an atom bomb. It tore off the doors, sent the front-side passenger seat through the driver's-side window. It flipped the chassis, bouncing it across the road, and ripped the engine apart as if it were no stronger than a spider web. It tossed



wheels and hubcaps deep into the forest. It ignited bits of the gas tank so that now tiny flames lap at the wet road. (12)

There are four persons in the car; they are on the family visit to “Henry and Willow,” who are the “old music friends” of Mom and Dad. (6) The visit is considered a surprise visit without the knowledge of the hosts, and it is an adventure. Mia Hall, the narrator, is “Seventeen” years old while her little brother is “eight” (6-7). Soon, the crash occurs. Mia narrates the crash in the above quote. The car is turned to pieces due to the collision with another car. She gives the appalling picture of the wrecked car even though she is also hit with the car. It is quite unreliable.

The narrator’s unreliability generates the dual meaning of the narrator’s statements, and the meaning he/she wants to communicate becomes different from what she actually says. The readers feel certain information is excluded and certain information intentionally included in the story they narrate. Linda Hutcheon points out the scene of the irony is like:

The “scene” of irony involves relations of power based on relations of communication. It unavoidably involves touchy issues such as exclusion and inclusion, intervention, and evasion. Because of training and temperament, no doubt, I have shied away from focusing on irony as a way to achieve any kind of “truth,” freedom, or a host of other ineffable that has been claimed for it over the centuries. (2)

Mia Hall is the sole young narrator who communicates with the readers, and there is no presence of other points of view. She can give the narration in any direction she wants. Hutcheon points out that the scene of irony is not true freedom rather, it presents the exclusion and inclusion, intervention and evasion. The narrator of Forman’s novel also appears to evade the impact of accident and trauma a person

generally feels as soon as there is a car crash. Her out-of-body experience seems to be rhetoric to continue the narration taking it to the written to oral level and at the same time giving making the narration unreliable.

There is no gap between written and oral communication in Forman's novel. It is strange to see that Mia's narration continues uninterrupted even after becoming the crash victim. Ironically, Mia has nobody to perform the narrative still it continues, and all the narrative narrated after the crash is oral. With this narrative, Forman appears to validate oral over the written narrative.

Mia furthers the narrative account of a crash with the horrible detail of noise in musical language. She loves to play Cello; she is a good cellist, and they were playing Beethoven's Cello Sonata no. 3 at the time of the crash. So she talks about the sound of grinding in terms of symphony, and the sound of popping in terms of chorus. All the clamors are musical for her. It shows tranquility of her mind that is quite unreliable at the shock of crash hits:

And there was so much noise. A symphony of grinding, a chorus of popping, an area of exploding, and finally, the sad clapping of hard metal cutting into soft trees. Then it went quiet, except for this: Beethoven's Cello Sonata no. 3, still playing. The car radio somehow still is attached to a battery, and so

Beethoven is broadcasting into the once-again tranquil February morning. (12)

The time setting is clear in this narration. It was a tranquil February morning slightly covered by snow. The clock time is between 8:17 to 9:23 a.m., as titled in each piece of the narration. Even after the car has been broken to pieces, Mia listens to Beethoven's Sonata that they were playing on the car's radio.

It is quite unreliable to see that Mia thinks everything normal at the beginning. One of the reasons she gives for her feeling of normalcy that she can still hear the

Beethoven. Another reason is that she is not feeling pain anywhere and finds herself standing in a ditch near the road:

At first, I figure everything is fine. For one, I can still hear the Beethoven.

Then there's the fact that I am standing here in a ditch on the side of the road.

When I look down, the jean skirt, cardigan sweater, and black boots I put on this morning all look the same as they did when we left the house. (12)

Mia feels pretty normal as she is well, upright, and in the same dress, she was wearing when they left home in the morning. Everything in her body looks fine and normal.

This condition is quite strange and unreliable.

After Mia feels she has no problem, she climbs out of the ditch to have a better look at the car. She sees it wholly damaged in the crash; it has no seats, and there is nobody in her family. She reasons that they must have been thrown from the car like her:

I climb up the embankment to get a better look at the car. It isn't even a car anymore. It's a metal skeleton, without seats, without passengers. Which means the rest of my family must have been thrown from the car like me. I

brush off my hands onto my skirt and walk into the road to find them. (12-13)

It is very unreliable to see a girl who just came out of the horrible crash is looking for her family members instead of lamenting the wreckage of a car, the possible outcome of an accident of that magnitude. One cannot believe that she did not have any suffering and worries about the horrible outcome with that reasoning mind. Further, her cool and normal walk on the road brushing off her hands on her skirt, is very unreliable. But her narrative authority is uninterrupted, and the narration continues.

Mia's search takes some time, and she tracks both Dad and Mom in a short interval of time, but she cannot find her little brother. She has an urge and reason to

look for her family members, which means she has certain feeling and some reasoning power, but ironically she says she does not feel a thing:

I see Dad first. . . . I find Mom next . . . . *I need to find Teddy! Where is he? . . .*  
 . I don't feel a thing . . . . Then I hear something. It's the music. I can still hear  
 the music. So I concentrate on that. I finger the notes of Beethoven's Cello  
 Sonata no. 3 with my hands, as I often do when I listen to pieces I am working  
 on. (13-15)

The narrator says she cannot feel a thing at the same time she says she can hear the music. It is unreliable as well as ironic. She may probably be giving currency to the saying that music is the language of the soul. Whenever one is unable to feel anything, s/he can feel music is an unreliable predicament.

After Mia finds her father and mother, she thinks about the dilemma of her death or life. Before that, she appears to be sure that she is alive. But at this point of narration, she starts to doubt that she is dead:

*Am I dead?*

I actually have to ask myself this.

*Am I dead?*

At first, it seemed obvious that I am. That the standing-here-watching part was temporary, an intermission before the bright light and the life-flashing-before-me business that would transport me to wherever I'm going next. (15)

Mia's unique and quite unreliable introspection continues. She starts to feel that her standing-here-watching out part of self is temporary. Bright light and life-flashing-before-me are the terms she gives the two worlds. The first world of bright light is an ethereal world after death, and the life-flashing-before-me is the material world. She asserts her authority over her life, and it is quite unbelievable how she is so certain

about it. She asserts that this life business is transporting her wherever she is going next.

Mia appears to be independent and autonomous in Forman's novel; she presents herself as a young girl who can make choices independent of others. She is empowered beyond her age, and the very empowerment of the young narrator and the undermining of the choice of young readers give the narrator an ironic position.

McCallum points to this quality of young adult fictions:

The image of empowered individuals capable of acting independently and making choices about their lives presents young readers with a worldview which for many, is simply idealistic and unattainable. Alternatively, to overemphasize the construction of subjectivity within society implies a mechanistic view of individuals constructed within and determined by social institutions. (257)

McCallum observes that the image of independent individuals like Mia Hall, who is able to make choices in her life, gives young readers an idealistic and unattainable worldview. How many young-victims of the car crash are lucky, like Mia, to make an independent choice in their lives? How many of them have experienced undisturbed and painless out-of-body experience? The visions of the narrator's idealist worldview as presented by Mia are likely to give relatively negative worldviews on the young readers, according to McCallum:

Such visions offer young readers relatively negative worldviews, and more recent "bleak" fiction for adolescents in Australia, which depicts young people in irresolvable states of alienation, is perhaps characterized by this implication and might be criticized on the grounds it does not offer its young readers the possibility of making empowered choices. (257)

At the same time, the young adult fictions present the idealized worldviews full of independent choices of the narrator as well as promoting the negative, bleak worldviews that do not let the young readers the possibility of making empowered choices. The narrators of the young adult fiction present the irony itself in their actions.

The interesting part of narration is that Gayle Forman has established her narrator as a unique personality at home and in her habits. She is not a common narrator; she is an anomaly, a superlative, or a pointed-out narrator. As the narration continues, Mia narrates her uniqueness in her family:

Dad sometimes joked that the hospital where I was born must have accidentally swapped babies because I look nothing like the rest of my family. They are all blond and fair, and I'm like their negative image, brown hair and dark eyes. But as I got older, Dad's hospital joke took on more meaning than I think he intended. Sometimes I did feel like I came from a different tribe. I was not like my outgoing, ironic dad or my tough-chick mom. And as if to seal the deal, instead of learning to play electric guitar, I'd gone and chosen the Cello. (19)

Mia is quite a unique character than her family expected. Her dad is sometimes seen joking that she was an accidental mistake. She might have been swapped for his baby mistakenly by the doctors at the hospital. She has nothing that matches with her family – they all are blond, but she is dark and shadowy like the image in a negative picture. She has brown hair and dark eyes, and she starts to believe that her dad's hospital joke was real as she grows up and finds that she is different. She feels that she came from a different tribe; her habits do not match with her parents, and even more, she chooses to play Cello instead of electric guitar that is quite unlike the

expectation of her family.

Mia also talks about the different social self of her own. People like her well, but they do not actually know her. It presents her unique and unreal presence in society. In class, she is neither brilliant nor a poor student:

People liked me well enough, but they also didn't really know me. I was quiet in class. I didn't raise my hand a lot or sass the teachers. And I was busy, much of my time spent practicing or playing in a string quartet or taking theory classes at the community college. Kids were nice enough to me, but they tended to treat me as if I were a grown-up. Another teacher. And you don't flirt with your teachers. (29)

Mia is very devoted to music. She spends most of her time playing Cello or taking its theory class at community college. Kids behave with her like a mature person, and she does not flirt with her teachers.

With all this uniqueness in her narrator, Forman has established her as a unique and extra-ordinary narrator who has got everything different, and her choices were her independent and determined choices. Every narration can vary from one to another. But Forman is trying to establish undisputed authority in her narrator. Roland Barthes suggests this nature of narration:

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item,

conversation. (237)

The writers use a variety of narrators for a number of purposes giving rise to a number of different narratives. The narrative is the foremost genre and variation, and the way the narration is narrated by the writer has got infinite formal diversity, and the choice of the narrator. The presence of narration is international, transhistorical, and transcultural irrespective of its division into good narration or bad one:

Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind, and there nowhere is nor have been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds.

Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, Trans historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (237-272).

Since the narrative is present everywhere in an infinite number of forms, the way it is narrated differs from writer to writer. Gayle Forman has opted to narrate the story from her unique teen narrator Mia Hall's first-person voice and perspective. It can easily be claimed that the authority, narrator's autonomy, and control over the narration chosen by the writer generate the irony of narration.

Mike Cadden shows the reason behind irony in the authoritarian, autonomous narrator in young adult narratives:

When an adult writer speaks through a young adult's consciousness to a young adult audience, he or she is involved in a top-down (or vertical) power relationship. It becomes important, then, that there be equal (or horizontal) power relations between the major characters within the text so that the young



adult reader has the power to see the opposing ideologies at play. (146)

The irony in young adult narratives results from the adult writer speaking through the young narrator's consciousness. The writer has vertical power relations with the readers, but the young narrator needs to have an equal or horizontal power relation to the young readers. The play between these alternate power relations makes the narrators of the young adult fiction ironic and unreliable.

Whatever Mia says and claims, the young readers must believe in her in the novel. She keeps imposing authoritarian and unreliable proceedings as the novel progresses. It is very unreliable to believe that Mia follows her best friend, Kim, leaving her body back to the ICU of the hospital. Actually, one is bound to wonder and doubt the reliability as Mia's soul follows Kim as she goes out to the chapel when she visits Mia at the hospital. She does not only follow her but also sit down on the chair beside her and listens to her chat as if she is a material and visible body:

I sit down in a chair beside her. It feels so natural the way that Kim is talking to me like she always does. Other than the paramedic who told me to hang in there and the nurse who keeps asking me how I'm doing, no one has talked to me since the accident. They talk about me. I've never actually seen Kim pray.

(59)

Mia narrates that she sits beside Kim. She feels the natural intimacy with her, but she has presented herself as unable to feel in many other places of the novel. Mia's intimacy with Kim is clear but her description following her and feeling a natural intimacy without the body is strange.

More unreliable is that she notes the time of the day at the beginning of the narration segments, but still, she says she is unable to feel. For example, "4:47 p.m." is the time she notes in a part of the narration, but in the narration, she says she is

unable to guess the exact time: “The ICU is like that. You can’t tell what time of day it is or how much time has passed. There’s no natural light” (66). It is not the question about the description of the ICU or the inability to feel the time in the ICU. Rather, it is how she manages to get the exact clock time at the beginning of the narration segment if she is unable to tell how much time is passing by.

There also appears the soul, body contrast. With which, soul or body, is she feeling? The narration about the inability to feel the time in the ICU appears as if she cannot feel the time with her body. But at the same time, she can feel the intimacy of Kim with her soul. Is talking from the perspective of body and soul at the same time is reliable? Is it possible? She, as a soul, follows Kim to the chapel and follows back to the hospital. She has first-person narration to offer, which means she sees the things around her. She sees Kim’s mother, Mrs. Schein is emotionally a wreck when she returns with Kim. “Kim has left. When she came back to the waiting room after visiting the chapel, she found Mrs. Schein a total wreck” (68). At the same time, she narrates that she cannot say or feel how much time passes by as if she is the body alone inside the ICU. There appears to be the situation of soul-body detachment where she cannot feel her body, only can witness it. But interestingly, she sometimes talks about how her body is feeling.

According to Mike Cadden, the first-person point-of-view from a young character is generally regarded as the preferred technique of the young adult novel. This preferred technique has irony in its authenticity as the first-person narratives are expected to be reliable and authentic.

The irony of the use of “authenticity” is important to consider. While any novel is an ideal site for studying the different layers of narrative relationships, the young adult novel that features the consciousness of young characters is

especially interesting because of the unique and ironic relationship between author and reader in this age-based genre. Novels constructed by adults to simulate an authentic adolescent's voice are inherently ironic because the so-called adolescent voice is never — and can never be — truly authentic. (146)

Gayle Forman's novel *If I Stay* is narrated in the first person from the point-of-view of Mia. The writer establishes the autonomous authority of the narrator with the target of authentic narration. In order to make the reader believe that the story narrated by Mia is authentic, the entire story takes place in Mia's mind as she lies unconscious in a hospital following a devastating car accident. As the book's narrator, Mia switches back and forth between the present tense, which she uses when talking about what she is currently thinking or what is going on around her, and the past tense, which she uses when reflecting on her life and relationships. Using a first-person narrator means that the reader always knows what Mia is thinking and feeling, including during her reflections on previous experiences. However, we only see the other characters through her eyes with no opportunity to get information from their own perspectives.

Point-of-view is regarded as a crucial unifying and constructive element of a narration. There are reasons why it is important. Irani clarifies the value of the point-of-view:

Point of view is the most important unifying and constructive element because (1) it directs the reader's understanding of the story, and (2) it determines a writer's relationship with the story's world to provide his needed materials. Due to these two reasons, it is the main basis for the story's criticism and evaluating its value system." (72).

Point of view is the crucial element of the narrative as it unifies and plays a constructive role in shaping it. As the narrator narrates the story, the reader gets the

message and understands the story based on the point-of-view used. It also helps the writer deliver the message s/he wants to deliver from the world of the story. So, point-of-view is regarded as the main basis for the criticism and evaluation of the narrative's value. Irani further elaborates this in simple terms, Point-of-view is the most important factor in forming and giving unity to the materials of the parts of the story. It determines the relation of the writer with the story's world and directs readers' feelings towards characters" (379). Point-of-view directs readers' feelings towards the characters and lets them form their trust in the narrator. In young adult fiction, including Forman's *If I Stay*, the first person point of view enables the reader to form various impressions towards characters, narration, reliability, authenticity, and messages.

There is another irony embedded in the young adult fiction that is related to the commercial market. There is a huge chance that the teenage narrator is fabricated according to the market demand as perceptive, sensitive, intelligent, mature, and able to make a decision like an experienced adult person. This makes the narration ironic and unreliable. Timothy Akers points to this irony:

There is a formulaic approach encouraged in commercial markets where the teenage main character is usually perceptive, sensitive, intelligent, mature, and independent, and the actions and decisions of the main characters are major factors in the outcome of the conflict. Before dismissing all works of children's literature as simple, it is possible to have a book be simplistic without it being simple. (16)

Ackers points out that the fabrication of the narrator or the main character according to the market adds complexity to work, which is expected to be simplistic. Many actions and outcomes result from the wise and mature decision of an assumingly raw

and inexperienced young narrator. This kind of irony is clearly seen in Forman's novel *If I Stay*, which totally depends upon narrator Mia's decision to stay in this world, evaluating all pros and cons in the future life. The careful and wise consideration of her life can be seen in many instances in the novel:

How am I supposed to decide this? How can I possibly stay without Mom and Dad? How can I leave without Teddy? Or Adam? This is too much. I don't even understand how it all works, why I'm here in the state that I'm in, or how to get out of it if I wanted to. If I were to say, *I want to wake up*, would I wake up right now? (77-78)

Mia carefully considers whether she wants to stay in this waking up from the coma or she wants to leave the body forever. Her careful thought and decision-making process show that she is not a teenage girl but an experienced adult woman. This fact is the irony of the young adult fiction affected by the commercial market. This very fact also makes the narrator unreliable and inauthentic.

Chatman also talks about the reason that tends to make the narrator unreliable and inauthentic. According to him, the unreliability results from the conflict between the norm of work the writer is applying in the narrative and the narrator's presentation:

What makes a narrator unreliable is that his values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author's; that is, the rest of the narrative – “the norm of the work” – conflicts with the narrator's presentation, and we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the “true version.” The unreliable narrator is at virtual odds with the implied author; otherwise, his unreliability could not emerge. (149)

The conflict between the writer's expectation upon the narrator to deliver something

s/he intends to use a particular form or genre, and the narrator's conduct goes beyond his/her general assumption of how the narrator should result in unreliability in the narrator and the narrative. For instance, the narrator of young adult fiction is expected to present the simple, childish, and inexperienced view authentic to his age, but if s/he acts like an adult and gives a complex and experienced account, there is a clash between the norm of work set for the young adult fiction and the narrator. Mia's experienced and thoughtful decision-making in *If I Stay* doubt in the mind of the reader that she is not an inexperienced teenage narrator. Rather, she is a mature adult woman. It contributes to her unreliability and inauthenticity.

Sheridan Baker points out another irony of the narration that is related solely to the modernist detachment between the reader and the writer:

Modern authors, however ironically, are not merely artists or entertainers, not producers of mere texts, not launchers of texts no longer related to them toward readers who make of them what they will. They are tellers of parables for the modern world, working out some implied answers to the questions of belief, of action, of choice for themselves and their readers alike. They imitate a speaker telling us what happened and what people said in an imagined reality we can all recognize, whether as mundane as Main Street or strange as Star Trek. This is the writer's essential, and existential, mimesis. (163)

According to Baker, in modern times, the writer and the reader's relation is no more responsible relation as it was in past eras. They are doing more than writer function and readers' expectation upon them as they are not only artists, entertainers, or producers of mere text as per the reader's expectation. They are the tellers of the modern world's stories, working out some implied answers to the questions of belief, action, and choice for themselves and their readers both. This mimesis of the modern

world makes them unreliable to the readers.

To sum up, the novel's analysis presents various conditions that support Cadden's proposition of unreliability and inauthenticity of the narrator in young adult fiction. In Forman's novel, narrator Mia's unreliable position is generated by the play between young and adult voices in a number of instances. Thus, this researcher concludes that the narration used in the novel is inauthentic and unreliable, giving rise to the irony through its narrator and narration.

In this analysis, it is evident that the smooth transition between written and oral forms of narration after Mia Hall becomes a victim of a car crash lies at the very root of the beginning of the unreliability of the narrator Mia. The transition from the written to oral narration and presenting these two as the indistinguishable parts of the same narration could be the writer's rhetoric in this novel. In that case, the speaker's true meaning becomes clearer to the listener through Mia's communicating tone. In a way, this thesis analyses the most quality representation to unite perception and reality. As Mia totally lacks the support of her teenage body and is only operated as a bodiless soul or a consciousness after the car crash, the intervention of the writer's consciousness could be regarded as inevitable. Looking at this situation alternatively, the writer might be trying to answer some metaphysical questions proving that the soul outside the body is more mature and independent than the soul within the confinement of the body. This thesis provides dramatic irony as an excellent tool to represent narrator's tragic situation and sharpen the story's emotional appeal.

This study shows that Mia's point-of-view is unstable. Mia starts to behave like an adult from the car crash and appears to be autonomous like an experienced adult being. She participates in the sufferings and reactions of her teenage friends but soon, in her reflection of the past and evaluation of the future and the assessment of the

situation, she shows a higher degree of autonomy than a reader expects from a teenage narrator. In such a situation, the readers feel that she is speaking as an adult instead of a teenage girl. Further, her unreliability also results from the lack of her similar attachment to space, time, and her injured body in a coma. Whether the body or the soul is feeling, the time and space also appear unreliable as she narrates all the events in clock time and says she can't say what time it is. It might also be the result of the modern writers' lack of attachment to the readers, as Sheridan Baker's observation. Even in such cases, the young adult readers are misguided as they read the novel, thinking that it is a young adult novel. This study concludes that the use of dramatic irony in the novel, narrator appeals emotional attachment to the helpless situation of tragedy. More generally, narrative irony shows that all perspectives are partial and limited, and that nothing is ever as it seems as like Mia's life.



## Works Cited

- Akers, Timothy, "The Legitimacy of Children's and Young Adult Literature as Literature." 2011, *Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects*. Paper 105.
- Baker, Sheridan. "Narration: The Writer's Essential Mimesis." *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall, 1981), pp. 155-165.
- Barthes, Roland. "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (winter, 1975), pp. 237-272.
- Bontempo, B.T. "Exploring Prejudice in Young Adult Literature through Drama and Role Play." *ALAN Review*, 22(3), (1995), pp. 31-33.
- Cadden, Mike. "Dramatic Irony in the Young Adult Novel." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (Fall 2000), pp. 146-154.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Irony*. Routledge, 2004.
- Forman, Gayle. "Gayle Forman." 2012, Retrieved September 1st, 2019, from <http://gayleforman.com/>
- . *If I Stay*. Random House, 2009.
- Kusumaningrum, H. "Mia Hall's Behavior Change in Gayle Forman's If I Stay." *Research Paper*, Diponegoro University, Semarang, 2016, pp. 1-26. [http://eprints.undip.ac.id/50337/1/project\\_kusumaningrum.pdf](http://eprints.undip.ac.id/50337/1/project_kusumaningrum.pdf)
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. Routledge, 1995.
- Irani, Nasser. *The Art of Novel*. Random House, 2001.
- McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. Routledge, 1999.

Muecke, D.C. *Irony and the Ironic*. Methuen, 1982.

Seamon, Roger. "Acts of Narration." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*,  
Vol. 45, No. 4 (Summer, 1987), pp.369-379.

Tittler, J. *Narrative Irony in the Contemporary Spanish-American Novel*. Cornell  
University Press, 1984.

Wright, Andrew H. "Irony and Fiction." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*,  
Vol. 12, No. 1 (Sep. 1953), pp. 111-118.