

## THE COMPLEXITY OF PERSPECTIVE IN KATHERINE MANSFIELD'S "THE ESCAPE": VARIABILITY OF FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE

Izolda Geniene

Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Escape" offers several glimpses of life in a relationship between a man and a woman. In the texture of the short story are richly telescoped the contrastive voices of the characters, expressed in a variety of structures of free indirect discourse (FID).

In the fields of "grammar of narration" and literary theory FID is invariably coupled with the concept of point of view as an important vehicle in stating the perspectives of a narrative (Galperin, 1981; Abrams, 1993, 169; Fowler, 1996, 171-174, etc.). The aim of the present study is to analyse the linguistic characteristics, variations and meaning of FID in relation to the changing focus of the point of view in Mansfield's story.

Before looking closer at "The Escape" from the proposed angles, we consider it useful to linger over several issues concerning the theories of point of view and FID. The problem of point of view in literature is not merely a linguistic one; it is connected with metalinguistic and literary issues discussing questions of composition, human relations, attitudes, beliefs, etc. FID, as one of the vehicles for transmitting point of view,

bridges such issues at the interface of language and literature. Modern theories of point of view (owing the term to Henry James) apart from the voices of the narrator and the characters, also distinguish alternative viewing perspectives.

The French semiotician G. Genette (1772, trans. 1980) introduced the concept focalization: he distinguishes between focus of narration (the teller of the story) and between focus of characters (who perceive what is told in any part of the story). J. Culler says (1997, 89) that "the use of point of view confuses two separate questions: who speaks and whose vision is presented?" Both narrative and character focuses may rapidly shift from the narrator to a character in the story, and from one character to another (Abrams, 1993, 166-167; Fowler, 1996, 161-162).

The diversities and ambiguities of point of view go beyond the traditionally recognized 1st/3rd person narrative or notions of an intrusive/unintrusive, omniscient or limited narrator. B. Uspensky in his "A Poetics of Composition" (1973) outlined four planes of point of view:

- the ideological;
- the phraseological;
- the spatial and temporal;
- the plane of psychology.

In the present article we will be mainly concerned with the linguistic analysis of psychological point of view (which also includes G. Genette's focalization), leading to an analysis of ideology. Spatial and temporal planes are closely connected with the specific structures and wording of language and are reflected in the so-called phraseological plane. The basic meaning of "ideology" does not have here a derogatory sense of the word ("false consciousness" or "delusion") but simply means the system of beliefs, values by reference to which a person or a society comprehends the world (Fowler, *ibid.*, 162). The ideological and psychological viewpoints, in a sense, overlap as the beliefs and systems are formed in the human mind.

In "The Escape" the viewpoints of the characters are reflected in a wide scale of utterances: from FID to direct discourse, indirect discourse and, finally, to structurally and semantically complicated and ambiguous FID cases, the discussion of which will later on be one of the objectives of the present analysis.

The story depicts several scenes in the life of a husband and a wife on their way back home from holidays in an eastern country.

The story opens by employing the "beginning from the middle technique" where the wife's long inner monologue (FID) expresses her biting and jeering irritation, verging on hysteria, concerning arrangements of the trip:

*(1) It was his fault, wholly and solely his fault, that they had missed the train. What if*

*the idiotic hotel people had refused to produce the bill? Wasn't that simply because he hadn't impressed upon the waiter at lunch that they must have it by two o'clock? Any other man would have sat there and refused to move until they handed it over. But no! His exquisite belief in human nature had allowed him to get up and expect one of those idiots to bring it to their room... And then, when the voiture did arrive, while they were still (Oh, Heavens!) waiting for change, why hadn't he seen to the arrangement of the boxes so that they could, at least, have started the moment the money had come? Had he expected her to go outside, to stand under the awning in the heat, and point with her parasol? Very amusing picture of English domestic life. Even when the driver had been told how fast he had to drive he had paid no attention whatsoever – just smiled. 'Oh,' she groaned, 'if she'd been a driver she couldn't have stopped smiling herself at the absurd, ridiculous way he was urged to hurry.' And she sat back and imitated his voice: 'Allez, vite, vite' – and begged the driver's pardon for troubling him...*

The tirade of the wife's thoughts of inner monologue has all the characteristic linguistic exponents of FID: pronominal changes ('he' instead of 'you'), the use of the past tense instead of the present tense ('it was his fault'), supported by other stylistic devices characteristic of this type of discourse: repetitions, rhetorical questions, exclamations and ironical words and phrases belonging to the character's lexicon, such as: It was his fault..., the idiotic hotel people..., ...any other man would have sat there..., the absurd ridiculous way..., etc.

Thus, here, the focus of the point of view rests clearly with the wife and her perception of reality.

The repetition of the pronoun 'he' the use of which here is both polysemantic and polyfunctional, deserves special attention. Repeated language units (words or sentences) are usually foregrounded and take a strong position in the text. The pronoun 'he' in the passage above fulfills the deictic function which: a) while reiterated and supported by a lexis with negative connotations, becomes strongly ironical expressing the modality of discourse (Galperin, 1981); b) signals the emotional distance between the husband and wife; c) is strongly marked by transitivity of discourse (who does what to whom – *M. A. K. Halliday's term*) – the core of the evil being the husband. In the passage there is one single utterance of the wife's direct discourse (DD): "And she sat back and imitated his voice: '*Allez, vite, vite.*'"

In the second paragraph, part of the transitivity and modality of the wife's judgement is shifted to another object, – the train station: 'the sight of the jaunty little train shuffling away', – and to the native children, – 'those hideous children waving from the window':

(2) *And then the station – unforgettable – with the sight of the jaunty little train shuffling away and those hideous children waving from the windows. 'Oh, why am I made to bear these things? Why am I exposed to them?... 'The glare, the flies, while they waited, and he and the stationmaster put their heads together over the time-table, trying to find this other train, which, of course, they wouldn't catch. The people who'd gathered around, and*

*the woman who'd help up that baby with that awful, awful head...*

Kept in the same ideological plane and the same shrill tonality of malicious irony, the wife's FID in both paragraphs is intermingled with sentences of direct discourse: 'Oh, why am I made to bear these things? Oh, to care as I care, to feel as I feel...'

Utterances of direct discourse do not clash here with those of FID, because of its strongly expressed modality and transivity. The deictic perspective clearly implies some object of FID: an observer or a travelling companion, and, most surely – the husband, to whom the words of direct discourse must have been directed.

In the next two paragraphs the latter idea is suggested by shifts in focalization from the wife to the husband. Here the discourse structure becomes more subtle and ambiguous. The surface structure of the utterance in paragraphs 3 and 4 is homonymous with regular indirect discourse:

(3) *Her voice had changed. It was shaking now – crying now. She fumbled with her bag, and produced from its little maw a scented handkerchief. She put up her veil and, as though she were doing it for somebody else, pitifully, as though she were saying to somebody else: 'I know, my darling,' she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.*

(4) *The little bag, with its shiny, silvery jaws open, lay on her lap. He could see her powder-puff, her rouge stick, a bundle of letters, a phial of tiny black pills like seeds, a broken cigarette, a mirror, white ivory tablets with lists on them that had been heavily scored through. He thought: 'In Egypt she would be buried with those things'.*

However, there are the deictic words, such as 'now' (instead of 'there') to indicate the companions (i.e. the husband's) immediate presence (3). In paragraph 4 it is explicitly stated by the transitive verb 'he could see'. The details of the bag's contents refer to the husband's observation, concluded by a generic sentence expressing his modal perspective: 'In Egypt she would be buried with these things.'

In comparing the two sets of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, 4, we see the changed roles of the participants: in the first set the wife was the agent and the husband – the object; in the second set, the husband becomes the agent, and it is from his perspective that the wife is seen as an object, and evaluated. From both perspectives the evaluations are negative.

However, the subtlety and implicitness of vision from the husband's perspective makes FID in passages 3 and 4 somewhat unobtrusive and ambiguous. In this case there is a balancing between some deeper and hidden senses and structures which require a closer reading and rereading of these passages. What we, in fact, observe is the sliding scale from the definiteness of FID, with the focus on the wife, to a balancing perspective of ambiguity between the narrator and the husband. Thus, in this study, cases outwardly resembling the regular indirect discourse we shall call 'free indefinite discourse' (FIND).

The variability of the explicit FID and implicit FIND tells upon the senses of the story in terms of evaluation of human judgments and beliefs: the wife's voice with outspoken, explicit ironic FID expresses her spiteful, irksome, repulsive nature, whereas the reserved, implicit and ambiguous touches of FIND in the husband's focus place him in

the reader's eyes very much above his spouse.

The ambiguity of the implicit FIND can be neutralised by decoding the following languages signals:

- evaluative modal and deictic words and expressions;
- changes in transitivity;
- irradiation of separate words and utterances (e.g.: 'In Egypt she would be buried with those things.');
- emotional and sentiendi words which indicate from whose perspective the vision is presented, e.g.: the verbs 'she snatched, groaned, crumpled, tossed, etc....' are the husband's evaluative words concerning the wife.

Another characteristic feature of 'The Escape' is the shifting focus of narration distinguished by different tonalities. Compare the wife's and the husband's reference towards the same object – the native children. The husband's sympathetic comment on a troop of little girls and boys selling flowers is: 'Poor little mice', whereas the wife calls them 'Horrid little monkeys'.

These two types of utterances – FID and FIND – testifying to the two contrastive points of view can also be interpreted as unspoken potential dialogue. It is from the implicitness of which that we can derive the sense of mutual relationship of the two characters. M. Bakhtin stated (1979) that dialogical relations are very idiosyncratic and cannot be reduced to merely logical, linguistic, psychological or mechanical relations. They represent special type of sense relations the exponents of which can be independent or potentially independent utterances behind which stand real or potential subjects of dis-

course. An utterance can be expressed both by language and sense. An utterance is a condensed entity, sublimation of thought which may exceed the boundaries of the language itself (Daujotytyė, 1998).

The climax of the story is achieved by the husband's vision which carries him into a dream world. At this point we couple the title of the story 'The Escape' with the husband's metaphorical escape into a fantasy world free of his wife's negative reality.

*(5) It was then that he saw a tree, that he was conscious of its presence. There was something beyond the tree – a whiteness, a softness, an opaque mass, half-hidden with delicate pillars. Then from within its depth or from beyond there came a sound of a woman's voice. A woman was singing. The warm untroubled voice (contrasted with the wife's shrill pitch – I. G.) floated in the air, and it was all part of the silence as he was part of it... What was happening to him?...*

The passage starts with the words of the temporal sequence of the narrative (It was then that...) and might be argued as representing the narrator's voice. But the personal deixis – "he saw a tree", coupled with the spatial deictic projection (Yule, 1997) – "he was conscious of its presence just inside the garden gate", "he looked at the tree" clearly focalize the man's point of view. The immediacy of his emotional and evaluative reaction is rendered through the transitivity of direction towards new objects – "a whiteness, a softness' (beyond the tree), "delicate pillars", "the warm untroubled woman's voice (as opposed to the wife's shrill pitch – I. G.), through repetitions – "it seemed to grow, it seemed to expand...", "he became part of the

silence" through a rhetorical question – "What was happening to him?...", etc.

The change of tonality, and epiphany expressed through allegory (silence, a beautiful woman's voice): signal a new turn in the husband's perspective.

Some sentences create the impression of standing 'between' the narrator and the character (Dry, 1995): "It was an immense tree, with a round, thick silver stem and a great arc of copper leaves...", "As he looked at the tree he felt his breathing die away and he became part of the silence", "something stirred in his breast", etc.

In the story the merging of the narrator's and the character's point of view, rendered by the variations and development of inner monologue – free indefinite discourse (FIND) – becomes a vehicle of controlling the reader's distance from the character and conveying, at the same time, the events from his perspective. It is very interesting to note, that the use of FIND in the story concerns mainly the husband's perspective.

The whole short story ends with a spatial change. The final scene takes place in the shaking corridor of the train. The open dialogue and the wife's address to the compartment mate discloses the hypocritical duplicity of her character ("Oh, my husband is never so happy as when travelling").

Simultaneously, another allegory of escape, is projected through the husband's focus (at the open door of the carriage):

"But so great was his heavenly happiness as he stood there he wished he might live for ever..."

K. Mansfield's story exposes the range of human nature by the variability of the narra-

tive focus and the explicit and implicit structures of FID and FIND, allowing the reader

to make discoveries of the inside views of the character's mind.

## Conclusion

A close reading and interpretation of the examined story shows that the bulk of narrative is represented by FID (free indirect discourse) and its variety which we call FIND (free indefinite discourse). Both varieties of inner monologue can be distinguished by some differences in structure and the functions they fulfill.

- The passages of FID have all the traditional structural elements characteristic of this type inner monologue, with clearly expressed focalization and transitivity. In the text they are used as one character's (the wife's) inner speech and outspoken tirade directed towards another character (the husband).

- Another variety of inner monologue – FIND – is more implicit and ambiguous; it is

created by structures homonymous to regular indirect discourse (ID).

The technique of FIND is used:

- to express the dual focalization in the narrative: it makes the impression that the voices of the narrator and the characters merge, allowing, at the same time, to visualize the events from the character's perspective;

- to signal a different turn of the narrative distancing it from the present flow of events in the discourse;

- to create polysemy and ambiguity of the surface structure of the utterance, reflecting the complex inside views of characters' mind.

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## PERSPEKTYVOS SUDĖTINGUMAS K. MANSFIELDO NOVELĖJE „PABĖGIMAS“: VIDINIO MONOLOGO VARIACIJOS

Izolda Genienė

Reziumė

Pateikta K. Mansfieldo novelės „Pabėgimas“ analizė ir interpretacija remiasi dviejų filologijos mokslų – lingvistikos ir literatūros teorijos sandūra. Lingvistinės analizės parametrai papildomi diskurso fokalizacijos ir tranzityvumo teorijų sąvokomis, kurios leidžia prasiskverbti į vidinio monologo (FID – *free indirect discourse*, laisvo netiesioginio diskurso) struktūrą ir semantiką. Straipsnyje išskiriamas ir kitas vidinio monologo variantas (FIND – *free indefinite discourse*, laisvas nežymimasis diskursas), kurio pavir-

šiaus struktūra sutampa su netiesiogine kalba. Abiejų vidinio monologo diskursų sąveika išreiškia potencialų dialogą tarp dviejų charakterių ir skirtingų požiūrių. Vidinio laisvo monologo nežymimasis variantas (FIND) atlieka tekste ir kitas funkcijas, pavyzdžiui, išryškina charakterio minties perspektyvą, suvienija pasakotojo ir charakterio balsus, ir kt. Jo daugiareikšmiškumas atspindi personažų mąstymo ir emocijų giluminį kodą.

Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto  
Anglų filologijos katedra

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