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## VARIUOS COGNITIVE STYLISTIC APPROACH TO CHARACTERIZATION

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### ABSTRACT:

**This article aims to demonstrate how a cognitive stylistic approach is suitable for the analysis of fictional minds in comparative perspective, to examine the mind style of suffering protagonists in A. Chekhov's "Sleepy" and K. Mansfield's "The Child-Who-Was-Tired" in cognitive stylistic tradition, attempts to explore the patterns of creativity and novelty in language use. It is more concerned with investigating how figures of speech can be employed as features of creativity and novelty in "The Sound of Silence". The stories represent an interesting case of "Chekhovian influence" in Mansfield's works in connection with the similarities in plot and setting. The analysis will demonstrate how cognitive stylistic approach to narrative fiction can advance literary interpretation by identifying the aspects of characterization of fiction individuals through their language, thoughts and behavior.**

**KEYWORDS: Cognitive stylistics, mind style, The Child-Who-Was-Tired, darkness, friend, the metaphor, simile, personification, paradox, apostrophe.**

### INTRODUCTION:

Cognitive stylistics is a sub-discipline in the field of applied linguistics. Stockwell observes that "cognitive stylistics provides a new way of thinking about literature involving the application of cognitive linguistics and psychology to the literary texts". He also notifies that cognitive stylistics is more concerned with presenting a descriptive and detailed account of linguistic features of a text in a mechanistic and non-evaluative way. In confirming, the

connection between literature and psychology, Freeman suggests that literary texts are "the products of cognizing minds", and he describes interpretations as "the products of other cognizing minds in the context of the physical and socio-cultural worlds in which they have been created and read".

In this respect, Stockwell asserts that cognitive stylistics looks at people as cognitive human beings who rely on their background knowledge and experiences to understand literary texts. Obviously, cognitive stylistics offers important means for the reader to have a clear view of text and context, circumstances and uses, knowledge and beliefs. It can, thus, be seen as a starting point for readers to understand and approach how a literary context is built.

The analysis has been conducted in the light of "a widespread cognitive turn in the history of literature", and aims to address the important issues of interpretation, as well as the nature of literary connections. The study exploits the concept of a "mind style" to describe the individual features of world-view that are cognitive in origin and include thinking, language and behavioral patterns that can be attributed to authors, narrators or characters. Considering the importance of the linguistic expressions of a particular conceptualization of the world, the value of metaphors is emphasized as one of the most powerful tools of human cognition for the construction of mind style.

In other terms, cognitive stylistics explores, how certain types of metaphorical images can only be understood by using the reader's knowledge, beliefs and inferences. Furthermore, cognitive stylistics, as Jeffries and McIntyre demonstrate, takes into account the

cognitive processes by which readers respond to particular aspects of texts. It attempts to capture how readers employ their real life schematic knowledge in the interpretation of literary texts. These two scholars also confirm that literary texts contain triggers in which stimulate aspects of readers' prior knowledge to allow them to construct a mental representation of the world of the text. One of the most important point to be added here, Stockwell states that many scholars, who work in the field of cognitive stylistics, expanded the boundaries of linguistic analysis of literature by using different theories such as schema theory, conceptual metaphor theory, text world theory, blending theory, mental space theories etc. All these theories provide frameworks for the analysis of literature and focus on reading and cognition.

The subject of this research is a work of demonstration how a cognitive stylistic approach is suitable for the analysis of fictional minds in comparative perspective, to examine the mind style of suffering protagonists in A. Chekhov's "Sleepy" and K. Mansfield's "The Child-Who-Was-Tired" in cognitive stylistic tradition, attempts to explore the patterns of creativity and novelty in language use

The design of this research is qualitative. According to Croker (in Heigham and Croker, 2009: 5), qualitative research is an umbrella of research that refers to the complexity of research methodology.

As the instrument of this research, the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994: 145). In this situation, data are mediated through human instrument, rather than inventories, questionnaires, or machines.

The necessity to apply "real-mind disciplines" to the study of fictional minds has been outlined by A. Palmer, who believes that readers understand fictional minds better when they consider them with the help of scholarship

studies on psychology, philosophy and cognitive sciences. At the same time, J. Culpeper argues in favor of a "dual approach" to characterization that forms the background of cognitive stylistics and addresses both textual information and cognitive aspects. Cognitive stylistics approach is suitable to explain the linguistic construction of world-view in texts. The formation of reality in one's mind is covered by the notion of "mind style" in fiction narratives, which was coined by R. Fowler in reference to "any distinctive linguistic representation on an individual mental self".

The notion of "mind style" can be accounted for analyzing the aspects of worldview of particular real or fictional individuals with similar age or status characteristics in comparative perspective, where those aspects that are shared and culture-dependent can be distinguished from the ones dependent on one's individual cognition and experience. In addition, non-standard thinking and behavior can be conditioned on specific atmosphere (e.g. external abuse, physical or mental detriment), which can account for certain deviations from norm.

Katherine Mansfield's comparison with Anton Chekhov primarily comes from the minimal dependence on traditional approach to plot, and the focus on a single situation in which reality is interrupted by a crisis. The history of "Chekhovian legacy" in Mansfield's famous short stories originates from one of her most curious debut writings "The Child-Who-Was-Tired", which is often compared to Chekhov's earlier "Спать хочется". Both stories carry consistent similarities in plot and setting, and represent an account of child abuse, sleep deprivation, hard labor, and a resulting baby murder.

It should be noted that novel approaches to fiction which touch upon the cognitive aspects of character representation and

understanding have forwarded the necessity to reconsider and carry out a more specific analysis of the issues, that to date have received insignificant attention. For example, Sutherland takes notice of the subjective visions “created by the troubled mind” of the Child, or the states of semi-consciousness that the characters of both stories slip in, but does not address the construction of the characters’ mental worlds. Since characters result from text interpretation on the part of the reader and the linguistic organization within the text, “purely textual account” of characters might not be enough for text interpretation. The plot itself involves an idiosyncratic murder case, committed by a child in a distorted mental condition, which outlines the importance to address cognitive alongside with canonical literary aspects.

In this study the first step leading to the explication of the protagonist’s mind style is the account of the environment that influences its formation. Varka’s mental activities are strongly affected by the surroundings, including the relations with her Masters - the shoemaker and his wife. From the first pages of the story, one can see that the atmosphere in the household is dark and suffocating in the literal and figurative sense: **“It is stuffy. There is a smell of cabbage soup, and of the inside of a boot-shop”** («Душно. Пахнет щами и сапожным товаром»).

In addition, Varka experiences permanent maltreatment from her masters, who keep her in a state of terror, speechless and submissive.

This includes:

a) Physical abuse: **“all at once someone hits her on the back of her head so hard that her forehead knocks against a birch tree”** («кто-то бьет ее по затылку с такой силой, что она стучается головой о березу»); **“he gives her a slap behind the ear”** «он больно треплет ее за ухо»;

b) Verbal abuse, when the girl is referred to as “scabby slut” or “wretched girl” (“паршивая” (9), “подлая”(10));

c) Constant shouting and brusque angry orders to bring the wood, do the washing and cleaning, buy food, rock the baby. The shoemaker and his wife **«the stout, broad-shouldered woman»** (“толстая, плечистая хозяйка”) only address her in the imperative, and even her name is pronounced in a derogatory manner which is accounted for by the use of suffix “k” in her name as “Varka”. Varka’s verbal behavior is limited to her lullaby (**“Hush-a-bye, my baby wee, While I sing a song for thee”** («Баюбаюшки-баю, А я песенку спою...»)), and an inquiry **“What is that for?”** (“Зачем это?”) which she says in her dream at the sight of passers-by.

The girl’s lullaby resembles more a murmur than a song, and represents a monotonous semi-conscious repetition that reflects her tiredness and despair. The character’s constrained linguistic patterns shift our focus on to Varka’s physical state, thoughts, visions and imaginings that fall under the influence of the surroundings. Since Varka is the focaliser, her state of mind is rendered through the narrator’s language. It is evident, that at times the girl falls into a dream in which she sees **“a broad high road covered with liquid mud”** («шоссе, покрытое жидкой грязью»), peasants with wallets on their backs, her late father Yefim Stepanov and her mother Pelageya. Her dream is chronologically organized and reflects two major periods in her life; the tormenting death of her father, and their long walk with her mother to the town in search of a job. Varka’s dream is hard, depressive, and full of anxiety; her reminiscences drive her to tears. Varka’s exhaustion and drowsiness leads to her performed recognition of the actual world, when objects expand in her traumatized mind: **“She sits down on the floor, cleans the goloshes, and thinks how nice it would be to put her head into a deep big golosh, and have a little nap in it. ...And all at once the golosh**

**grows, swells, fills up the whole room. Varka drops the brush, but at once shakes her head, opens her eyes wide, and tries to look at things so that they may not grow big and move before her eyes**”, («Она садится на пол, чистит калоши и думает, что хорошо бы сунуть голову в большую, глубокую калошу и подремать в ней немножко ... И вдруг калоша растет, пухнет, наполняет собой всю комнату. Варька роняет щетку, но тот час же встряхивает головой, пучит глаза и старается глядеть так, чтобы предметы не росли и не двигались в ее глазах»).

The reader is given an account of the relation between the outer world and an individual that is trying to make sense of it. The relation emphasis is found on the repetition of the words of physical and mental perception (пахнет, кажется, видит, понимает, узнает – **there is a smell, she feels as though, sees, understands, recognises**). A number of expressions is used to describe the state of her mind through the descriptions of her brain – her visions **“take possession of her brain”** («овладевают ее мозгом»), “cloud her brain” (туманят мозг). Varka’s brain is **“half slumbering”** (наполовину уснувший), and her eyes are “half open” («полуоткрытые»), which explicates her semi-consciousness, and incomplete functioning in the actual text world.

In Mansfield’s “The Child-Who-Was-Tired” the reader is introduced to the protagonist from the very beginning of the story, when she is seen her in a state of semi-consciousness walking “along a little white road with tall black trees on the either side”

The thoughts of the Child can be examined for the errors of logic under the influence of external conditions. Same as Varka in Chekhov’s story, the Child suffers from the maltreatment, which includes:

a) Physical abuse: (**“... a hand gripped her shoulder, shook her, slapped her ear”, “It wasn’t me – it wasn’t me!”** screamed the Child,

beaten from one side of the hall to the other, so that the potatoes and beetroot rolled out of her skirt”);

b) Verbal abuse, exposed in such phrases as **“you good-for-nothing brat”; “sleeping... like a sack of potatoes”, “swine of a day – swine’s life”;**

c) verbal threats – **“get up and light the oven or I’ll shake every bone out of your body”; “don’t guzzle (the bread) yourself or I’ll know”; “If you don’t keep that baby quiet you’ll know why later on.”**

The description of the situation the Child finds herself in closely related to her emotional and physical state, and helps to assess her mind style. The atmosphere in the house is overwhelmingly aggressive as in relation to the little servant, as to the other children in the household. Doors are **“pulled violently open”**, the Frau exhibits aggressive behavior on her own children and gives the Child an undeserved punishment. As a result, the children are either “subdued” by the parents, or incessantly crying, howling, abusing and fighting one another.

The Child is constantly trying to escape to fantasy as a way to self-manage her tormenting situation. She seems to lose any hope of support from the outside and at times is walking **“along a little white road with tall black trees on either side...”** which appears in the text four times. This sentence reflects the textual and cognitive aspects of the protagonist’s characterization, since, it structures the text and symbolizes “the release and protection that the Child desires”, and on the other hand gives an access to the child’s mental world and accounts for her inability to sustain the sense of reality and distinguish between the fantasy-reality boundaries.

The Child’s references to the road can be viewed as a means of escapism. With the Child, the reality, dream and fantasy merge into consciousness: **“Perhaps”**, thought the Child-Who-Was-Tired, **“if I walked far enough up**

**this road I might come to a little white one, with tall black trees on either side - a little road.** Throughout the text one can recognize delusive imagery appearing in her mind, including the **personification** of household objects: **“The oven took a long time to light. Perhaps it was cold, like herself, and sleepy...”**.

Figures grow and diminish in the Child’s distorted vision: the Frau is **“as big as a giant”** and by the end of the day **“the Man and the Frau seemed to swell to an immense size as she watched them, and then become smaller than dolls, with little voices that seemed to come from outside the window”**. In terms of physical state the Child is constantly **“cold”**, **“sleepy”**, evidently experiencing pain from heavy beatings, undernourished (the master harshly warns her against eating some bread from the kitchen table), with **“thin arms”**, shaking hands, feeling **“heavy”**.

As it is essential and one of the major perspectives in stylistics is to investigate novelty in language use, this study aims at exploring the patterns of creativity and novelty in "The Sound of Silence". It particularly discusses the following question: How does Simon employ figures of speech as features of creativity and novelty in "The Sound of Silence"?

The use of figures of speech seems important in literary texts since it provides writers with the possibility of investing words to articulate new meanings. More specifically, the construction of new metaphorical mapping shows that there is a need to express thoughts and impressions other than the conventional verbal representations. Before going on to the analysis part, let us start with an initial interpretation of Simon’s lyric "The Sound of Silence" which reads as follows:

Hello darkness, my old friend  
I’ve come to talk with you again.  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping

And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains  
Within the sound of silence.  
In restless dreams I walked alone,  
Narrow streets of cobblestone.  
Neath the halo of a streetlamp  
I turned my collar to the cold and damp  
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a  
neon light,  
That split the night  
And touched the sound of silence  
And in the naked light I saw  
Ten thousand people, maybe more.  
People talking without speaking  
People hearing without listening  
People writing songs that voices never share  
No one dares  
Disturb the sound of silence.

Though, "The Sound of Silence" was written nearly 55 years ago, its pessimistic and dark ideas are very much significant and relevant in today’s context. Simon's lyric reveals a deep personal feeling and deals primarily with a common human experience. It is told from the perspective of a speaker who feels that he has an important message to deliver to the people entrenched in materialism. A man who dreams of a more moral and conscious world.

The lyric presents a disturbing image of a society encircled in the arms of materialism and self-absorption. It is a fair portrayal of modern life as there is a lack of meaningful communication in our modern urban world. Modern life, as Simon describes it, raises the sense of alienation, loneliness and dislocation. Even the future of humanity looks very gloomy. People seem overwhelmingly entrenched in the material life without paying any attention to the value of their life as human beings.

In "The sound of Silence", Simon employs many varieties of figures of speech; there are the metaphor, simile, personification, paradox, and apostrophe.

Focusing on three patterns of language varieties that Simon cohesively implies in his lyric to portray new metaphorical and conceptual image schemas featured by novelty and creativity in language use. For instance, in the first stanza, and precisely in the opening line, "Hello darkness, my old friend", Simon uses the apostrophe, which is an important figure of speech, especially in the lyric poetry. Apostrophe is "almost synonymous with the lyric voice". It is generally used to address absent people or personified things. In other words, apostrophe as a figure of speech is associated, in its use, with personification. In "The Sound of Silence", Simon uses apostrophe to address the personified "darkness" by using the word "hello", which is a greeting word that can be used to greet a person that one sees or meets. "Darkness" is thus described here as an intimate person that the narrator used to see and meet. Hence, the metaphorical formula that can be captured here from the linguistic construction "Hello darkness" is that darkness is a human being.

Personification, on the other hand, is created by giving "darkness" some human traits by implying some words related to humans (hello, friend, talk, and you).

Simon actually elevates the notion of darkness to the level of a human personality. This is undoubtedly one of the personification's positive features to make the narrative interesting and vivid, and it may be more noticeable in the poetic composition where readers understand things as human beings. Indeed, when a human being takes "darkness" as his "friend", one may not even imagine to what extent he feels lonely. Therefore, addressing "darkness" as his friend conveys more than one meaning: on the one hand, there is no one to talk with, or rather no one would like to listen to him. It is thus an indication to the gaps among peoples as well as to his personal loneliness too. On the other hand, the

expression "my old friend" (line 1) indicates that the narrator used to live in "darkness" for a long time. Hence, "darkness" for him is not something strange; rather it is the only thing that he can share his feeling with. By applying this figure of speech, i.e. in personifying "darkness" as "friend", Simon tries to alter the readers' perception of the notion of "darkness".

He transfers features from the source domain "friend" to recontextualise them in the target domain "darkness", as it is one of the functions of metaphor is to alter or transform readers' perception of the target domain. Likewise, in (line 2) "I've come to talk with you again" Simon stresses and reinforces the form of personification because talk is a human trait. In addition, the word "again" reveals that the narrator used to talk with his supposed intimate friend the "darkness". As a consequence, it is perhaps clear to be understood that the personification of "darkness" is derived from the need to talk.

Paradox is a figure of speech which is used to combine words or expressions side by side with opposites. In "Hello darkness, my old friend" (line 1), Simon maps "friend" who is an intimate person in the source domain to "darkness" which is an inanimate abstract notion in the target domain. Through this mapping, "darkness" turns into an intimate person that can listen and hear what the narrator would like to say. However, according to our cognitive understanding, "darkness" is an inanimate and liveness thing. It is absolutely the power of figures of speech, through which Simon brings two opposite concepts together to create a new metaphorical formula that can be evoked here as DARKNESS IS A FRIEND. This portrayal is achieved by using paradox.

Hence, to understand the image-schemas and the relation that Simon establishes between "darkness" and "friend", readers need to apply a process of mental representation because metaphorical conceptualization is a process of

mapping between two different conceptual domains. From novelty and creativity perspective in language use, "Hello darkness, my old friend. I've come to talk with you again" (line1-2) is a powerful metaphorical image, through which Simon creates new expressions that definitely carry new meanings by using the criterion of coherence among figures of speech.

Various methods are used to discover the sublime mysteries of literary texts. Cognitive stylistics is one of the rich and most useful approaches that focuses on the process of reading to infer meaning. Though meaning is located in the formal structure of the literary text, readers can also approach meaning by deploying aspects of their previous background knowledge.

Cognitive stylistic analysis attempts to explore the patterns of creativity and novelty in language use. It is more concerned with investigating how figures of speech can be employed as features of creativity. The analysis traces that are used of different types of figures of speech and shows how such a use leads to produce new metaphorical mappings and novel image schemata. The analysis also reveals how the coherence among figures of speech, and the use of extended and complex figurative expressions, lead to creating new stylistic frameworks and metaphorical formulas that illustrate the idea of novelty and creativity in this lyric.

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