



“A Refusal of Strict Patterns of Interpretation”: Metaphor, Narrative, and Literary Connections in Katherine Mansfield’s “The Fly”

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Abstract

This paper explores how narrative and metaphor combine to articulate the moral and ideological message in a short story “The Fly” by Katherine Mansfield. The research addresses some of the most popular interpretations of the story that demonstrate its ambiguity and intertextual connections. The story metaphorical language is compared with the metaphorical patterns that account for symbolism in a related short story “Small Fry” by Anton Chekhov. The paper argues that cognitive stylistic approach to narrative study can provide the necessary tools to explain the patterns of imagery that produce the story ambiguity. Personification as an important ontological metaphor generates patterns that rationalize the formation of symbolic individuality in existence.

Keywords: narrative, metaphor, metonymy, cognitive stylistics, personification, anthropomorphism, mind style

1. Introduction

“The Fly” is one of Katherine Mansfield’s principal achievements, since apart from its connections with World War I, “it has been more discussed and interpreted than anything else she wrote” (Alpers, 1980). Its extraordinary appeal, intertextuality and capacity for symbolism generate multiple connections, where the fly’s struggle is believed to have biographical references to the author, or generally symbolizes the destiny of all mortals struggling with the more powerful entity. The antagonism between the oppressed and the oppressor, or Life and Death, which is elaborated on the narrative level, stems from a powerful process of personification and has an ontological significance. Addressing these diverse aspects with cognitive tools provides a set of adequate principles for the consideration of ambiguity, «both as a feature of language and as a characteristic of narrative texts” (Popova, 2002, p. 49), but shows how challenging it is to develop an unequivocal interpretation.

Based on the present readings, the episode with the fly comes as the major factor that accounts for the story symbolism. The article aims to show how metaphor provides with cognitive and emotional patterns that account for the construction of symbolic associations in the light of existing and possible interpretations of the text. The study represents a discussion of metaphorical language related to the fly episode, and its comparison with the analogous metaphorical patterns that create the symbolism in Chekhov’s “Small Fry”, a short story that might have influenced Mansfield when she was writing “The Fly” (Berkman, 1951; Sutherland, 1955; et al.). Since metaphors in both stories operate not only in the narrator’s language, but also through the mind of the characters representing the process of thought, cognitive stylistic approach allows regarding the characters’ mind style, and contributing to the explication of their personality. The text emotional impact is created by attribution of human characteristics to non-human actors, which within the framework of personification represents one of the most important ontological phenomena. The study is carried out on the basis of the original texts, with the accompanying translation of Chekhov’s story into English by Constance Garnett (1921) that we believe to be the most precise in re-expression of Chekhov’s form and meaning.

2. “The Fly” in critical readings

Published in the liberal American weekly “The Nation” on 18 March 1922, “The Fly” is one of the most analyzed short stories of Katherine Mansfield, which she wrote the same year during her stay in Paris. The story starts with the description of Mr. Woodifield, a sick elderly man in retirement, and his conversation with the boss. Gradually we find out that they both lost their sons in WWI. When Woodifield leaves the office, we are shown that the boss has been affected by the reminder of the tragic event. It is evident, that upon the death of his beloved son the boss lost all the hopes and plans for future that had been connected with him. However, the elderly man does not begin to weep as he intended, but instead gets himself occupied with a fly that has fallen into his ink pot. He rescues the fly and watches it

recover only to drop more blots of ink on it until the fly dies. Finally the boss feels miserable, forgets what he originally intended to do and orders his clerk to bring some fresh blotting paper.

The story attracted multiple readings, and brought up social, ethical, philosophical and autobiographical references. The present study shall consider some of the most popular interpretations of this highly ambiguous text. The ideas that Mansfield tried to bring forward when writing the text are best formulated by Vincent O'Sullivan, who believes that the story represents her feelings about "her father, about the war and the loss of her brother, and the courage and final hopelessness of struggling to survive" (O'Sullivan, 1987, p. 59). Indeed, Mansfield's related biographical factors that can be traced in the story include her subjective feelings of an ailing individual, and relationship in the family, where her father and younger brother Leslie stand in the center of symbolic connections (O'Sullivan, 1987; Burgan, 1994; Meyers, 2002).

Vincent O'Sullivan relates Mansfield's self-conceptualization as a fly to her illness and a depressed state that came to her when she learned of her low chances of having a child (O'Sullivan, 1987, p. xiv). He believes that in "The Fly" Mansfield used the image that she had previously developed with bitter irony in her earlier writings: "Oh, the times she had walked upside down on the ceiling, run up glittering panes, floated on a lake of light, flashed through a shining beam! ... And God looked upon the fly fallen into a jug of milk and saw that it was good. And the smallest Cherubims and Seraphims of all who delight on misfortune struck their silver harps and thrilled: How is the fly fallen fallen!" (Journal 1954, p. 153). This idea is consistent with Antony Alpers, who connects her closing journal entry for 1918 to her sense of loss. In his view it is a metaphysical loss when the writer feels like a fly that imagined itself glittering in the sunlight, but has instead fallen into a jug of milk – observed by God and his angels (Alpers, 1980, p. 289). Alpers remarks that "the fly in the milk jug" had been Mansfield's favorite image for years, and develops on her habit of seeing an ink blot as an insect and giving it legs, not to mention her father's familiar inkwell (Alpers, 1980).

At the same time, not all the readings that emerged after the story publication and especially in the 1960s supported the factor of biographical cross points. What is also characteristic of the story interpretations is that they seldom contain a unified picture of its symbolism.

When considering the story from the existential point of view, it can be seen as the description of the boss's "escape from the reality of death and the sterility of his own existence" (Oleson, 1961, p. 585). John Hagopian (1964) regards the boss as a sympathetic character, who comes across the inescapable realization of death. In contrast, Ted Boyle is skeptical about such sympathies and remarks on the parallels between the boss and old Woodfield. He believes that the story deals with the spiritual death and cruelty of the boss, "with his substitution of things material for things human" (Boyle, 1965, p. 183). The fly can be seen as a symbol of the boss's son in the grave (Hagopian, 1964), or "The Life Force", struggling for survival and finally "done to death by human perversity" (Thomas, 1961).

In the "critical exercise" of Bateson and Shahevitch it is acknowledged, that without the author's illness and conflict with her father the story "could not have been begun"; however, realistic convention is inside the story and "... is resistant both to abstractions and to strict autobiography" (Bateson & Shahevitch, 1962, p. 40). Instead, they argue that language as the medium of narrative sequence prompts a more precise analysis of the vocabulary and grammar. In particular they mention the "subjectively anthropomorphic" confrontation of the fly and the boss that can be inferred from the language analysis, and a question regarding the formation of value-judgment that they pose as crucial to understanding the text: "the reader is not aware that a moral attitude is gradually forming itself within his consciousness" (Bateson & Shahevitch, 1962, p. 53).

The symbolic image of a fly has intertextual with Shakespeare's drama that Mansfield read and referred to in her letters to her husband John Murry the same week she wrote "The Fly". In this regard, Jeffrey Meyers (2002) also indicates Shakespearean motives in the central symbol of "The Fly" in his reference to Gloucester's statement about God's cruelty to mortals:

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods,

They kill us for their sport"

(King Lear, iv, i).

Similar parallels can be traced to William Blake's "The Fly":

"For I dance,

And drink, and sing,

Till some blind hand

Shall brush my wing".

Besides Shakespeare and Blake, interesting are the literary connections between Mansfield's "The Fly" and Chekhov's "Мелюзга" (1885), or "Small Fry" in translation by Constance Garnett (1921), that also remain in the focus of comparative literary analysis (Brewster & Burrell, 1925; Berkman, 1951; Sutherland, 1955; Meyers, 2002; Rodriguez-Salas, 2007; et al.). Indeed, "what could be more compromising than to interpret moods that terminate in such acts as the crushing of a cockroach or the torturing of a fly?" inquire Brewster and Burrell in their critical essay on Chekhov-Mansfield comparative readings (Brewster & Burrell, 1925, p. 43). Ronald Sutherland in his account of Chekhov-Mansfield parallels finds both stories of "pertinent interest", and argues that Mansfield "did derive the idea of "the Fly" from Chekhov" (Sutherland, 1955, p. 89). This approach is shared by Sylvia Berkman, who sees the story connections

not only with Shakespearean “King Lear”, but also justifies Mansfield’s ties with and knowledge of the Russian classic: “... she (Katherine Mansfield – E.G.) may have come upon Chekhov’s “Small Fry” with which her story has several close similarities, when reading the collection of Chekhov’s short stories published in 1920” (Berkman, 1951, p. 194).

It should be noted that insects have long been considered to be powerful spiritual symbols (Clarke, 1995, p. 84) that come in various forms, from fluttering butterflies to weevil. In this regard the cockroach can represent insignificant routine work, whereas Mansfield’s fly can symbolize struggle.

Thus, the appeal and greatness of Mansfield’s short story is derived from her ability to manage with the powerful force of emotion and “to make the central symbol express a universal theme” (Meyers, 2002, p. 234). It instigates the existential, ambiguous and thought-provoking topics of life and death, fate, submission and authority, whereas Chekhov’s text goes in symbolic parallel, with insignificant insect standing for ontological notions.

3. Personification and anthropomorphism

Metaphor is a fundamental capacity of human cognition, which can powerfully constrain the way we think. In fact, human cognition is determined “by the natural reflex to think metaphorically” (Gibbs, 1994, p. 207). At the same time, metaphors are more than just conceptual or cognitive phenomena, since they invoke emotion in the process of metaphorization (Ricoeur, 1978; Nünning, 2009), and represent a form of symbol (Knowles & Moon, 2006). A great deal of story symbolism relies on metaphor that, according to Gibbs, works to convey symbolic meaning (Gibbs, 1994). The narratological importance of metaphor is manifested on the linguistic level of the text, since metaphor creates strong all-embracing structures, which are crucial for the novel symbolism and operate on the level of the story, plot and setting (Fludernik, 2009, p. 74). These structures represent important patterns for interpretation and understanding of the story imagery and symbolism. Since metaphors contain a variety of cognitive, emotional and ideological connotations (Nünning, 2009, p. 232), the analysis of metaphorical patterns can connect to other elements of text structure, such as plot and characterization (Popova, 2002, p. 50), contribute to their explanation, and provide a discussion framework for conflicting or ambiguous readings. People draw on their pre-existing knowledge during metaphor processing.

Metaphors in narrative are formed in the narrator’s discourse, as well as in the thoughts and speech of the characters. Moreover, the instances of figurative language play an important role in structuring the text. It should be noted that metaphor in narrative is strongly related to metonymy (Kövecses & Radden, 1998; Barcelona, 2000; Goossens, 2002), where metaphor produces associations that can be traced back to metonymical peculiarities of the source domain (Fludernik, 2009). Personification (or the use of anthropomorphic language in metaphor) is one of the most important ontological metaphors where “the physical object is further specified as being a person” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 33). Being the “fundamental trope of narrative” (Miller 1995, p. 79), it may take the form of metaphor or metonymy, where the non-personal tenor and a personal vehicle are linked by analogy, logic, or contiguity (p. 340). The use of anthropomorphic metaphors allows us to comprehend various experiences with non-human entities as possessing human activities, motivations and characteristics. Personification addresses a wide range of metaphors, including the extensions of ontological metaphors, and allows comprehending the world in human terms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 33-34).

In fiction personification presupposes the formation of realistic or quasi-realistic actors by attribution of various kinds of agency (Hamilton, 2002, p. 411) to inanimate objects. Since these kinds include mental activity, personification provides a special kind of knowledge, where the source domain is a human mind.

Cognitive stylistics approach is suitable to explain the linguistic construction of world-view in texts. The formation of reality in one’s particular mind (Bockting, 1995, p. 159), 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” (Fowler, 1977, p. 103). The notion of “mind style” has developed from Leech and Short until over twenty-five years, and has a significant impact for stylistics and narratology, since the combination of linguistic and cognitive analyses also known as “cognitive stylistics” or “cognitive poetics” (Stockwell, Semino and Culpeper, Gavins and Steen)” has promoted the studies of a range of such fictional phenomena, as, for example, text worlds or characterization, together with the research of fictional minds and their characteristic attributions (Semino, 2007, p. 5).

The necessity to apply “real-mind disciplines” to the study of fictional minds has been outlined by A. Palmer, who believes that people understand fictional minds better when they consider them with the help of scholarship studies on psychology, philosophy and cognitive sciences (Palmer, 2007, p. 206). Sanford and Emmott also support the application of psychological and neuroscience research to the functions of narrative (Sanford & Emmott 2012, p. 269).

Anthropomorphic metaphors narrativize human behavior, and project human-related qualities onto the non-human entities they claim to represent. Metaphoric projection is a complicated process that can be explained within the theory of conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner, 1999). The resulting blend, which contains human-related qualities in the non-human shape, is no longer subordinate to either the source (vehicle) or the tenor (target), but instead creates an emergent structure that exists neither in the source, nor in the target domains (Fauconnier & Turner, 1999, p. 398). The target becomes personified by acquiring the relevant characteristics, where the degree of “humanness” is bestowed upon the agent in his involvement in human-related activities, and the acquisition of human-related characteristics.

Where personification refers to a literary device, anthropomorphism represents a psychological phenomenon and is understood as the tendency to attribute human characteristics or states to non-human objects (Epley et al., 2007). It incorporates ideas from social, cognitive and developmental psychology and neurosciences. Although within psychological approach weaker forms of anthropomorphism appear to be metaphorical ways of thinking, the difference

between those types is not fundamental and does not diminish the role of metaphors, since they still have an influence on behavior, with people treating the agents in accordance with these metaphors (Epley et al., 2007, p. 867).

Waytz et al. develop on Xenophanes's (6-th century B.C.) observation that reflects two types of anthropomorphism: (1) attributing humanlike physical features, and (2) attributing humanlike mind to nonhuman agents. The scholars believe that the essence of anthropomorphism lies in assigning humanlike mental capacities (intentionality, emotion, cognition, etc.) to non-humans, since it is the presence of mental states that makes a sufficient condition for humanness, and define anthropomorphism as "a particular form of mental state attribution" (Waytz et al., 2010, p. 220-221). People imbue the imagined or real behaviour of non-humans with humanlike intentions, motivations or characteristics (Epley et al., 2007, p. 864). Consequently, perceiving the agent as someone with a human mind presupposes his ability for conscious experience, and capacity to serve as a source of normative social influence on the perceiver.

Anthropomorphization is a multiply determined phenomenon. It involves both cognitive and motivational elements, where the most important ones are effectance and solidarity (Epley et al., 2007, p. 866). The first helps to decrease anxiety and resolve uncertainty by predicting an agent's behavioural pattern, whereas the factor of sociality presupposes that anthropomorphism operates as a means to establish connections to satisfy one's motivations for social interaction. As a result, the need to anthropomorphize increases with the lack of social bonding.

4. The realization of humanness in "The Fly" and "Small Fry"

4.1 "The Fly"

"The Fly" by Katherine Mansfield is an interesting example of how the symbolic value of the fly is recognized in the final part of the story, and re-established after finishing reading the text, when the reader sees the boss in a new light and applies the metaphoric and metonymic associations with the fly to the story characters. The story symbolism is built on the richness of complementary imagery, where its understanding is grounded in the central figurative patterns and the inferences that the readers make of these patterns.

The gradual formation of anthropomorphic metaphor in the narrative is mainly represented through the narrator in the story, and the boss as the focaliser, which will be considered later through the explication of his mind style. The issue in question is the responsibility for metaphors that can be on the part of the character, narrator or the implied author. It is important to bear in mind that the focaliser can change from sentence to sentence, or even within sentences (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 301). For example, in the introducing sentence "*At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broad inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again*" (426), the question is whether the imagery should be ascribed to the author or to the narrator. This is a disputable point, where one can argue that the main clause refers to the boss, where the verb "to notice" in past simple tense indicates his role of a focaliser, and the second part of the subordinate clause "... *and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again*" belongs to the narrator. Perceptual attributions between the character and the object are made by means of explicit perceptual verbs (e.g. see, watch, notice, etc.), or by "assessing the likelihood that objects are being perceived by the character" (Sanford & Emmott, 2012, p. 171).

Throughout the major part of the final episode the fly is personified by the narrator through a set of figurative tools, such as metonymy and metaphor that render the qualities of humanness or quasi-humanness to the non-human entity.

A specific type of personification frequently encountered in fiction is "body-part" personification, which involves a personification of parts of the human body (Dorst, 2011, p. 128). In the story the little front legs of the fly are "crying for help": "*Help! Help! Said those struggling legs*" (427), "*rub*" against each other "*lightly, joyfully*" (427), or are "*waving*" (427), thus causing relief on the part of the boss. In the first example the verbs signal an appeal for help and in the second display joy after a narrow escape. The examples show a close tie between metaphor and metonymy, when the personified parts stand for the being, and can be accounted for the phenomenon of "metaphonymy", or "metaphor from metonymy" (Goossens, 2002). Dorst points out that these body part personifications can be used to create a particular narrative point of view or certain stylistic effect in fiction (Dorst, 2011, p. 132).

The personhood of the fly is not suggested to a full extent. For instance, the narrator uses the combination of human and quasi-human related adjectives "stunned" and "cowed", and the human-related noun "beggar" to attribute human-like qualities, whereas the pronoun "it" normally refers to an animal or a thing: "*The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward*" (427). In this regard, according to Rundell's Macmillan English Dictionary (2002), the adjective "stunned" presupposes a human agent in its meaning of "very shocked or upset, especially so that you are unable to act normally" (p. 1428), and the adjective "cowed" has the human-related reference of "intimidated" (p. 322). The noun "beggar" in the story deviates from the initial meaning of "someone who is very poor and lives by asking people for money or food" (p. 111), to the metaphoric contextual meaning of "someone asking for help". The adjective "laborious" that modifies the noun "task" in "... *the fly had again finished its laborious task...*" (427), is used in human-related sphere, and refers to a job or process that is "long, difficult and often boring: We eventually began the laborious task of sorting through the papers" (p. 793).

The poetic qualities of personification in the narrative are enhanced by the use of non-human related similes, which characterize the fly's actions and are formed according to the visual similarity of grinding: "*Over and under... went a leg along a wing as the stone goes over and under the scythe*" (427), or washing one's face: "... *sitting down, it (the fly - E.G.) began, like a minute cat, to clean its face*" (427).

In the final part of the story the third-person narration is combined with the fictional viewpoint of the boss who is tormenting the fly. Actually, feeling anxious and uneasy about the topic of mortality raised by Woodfield, and witnessing a fly's narrow escape, he decides to recreate the conditions of immediate danger. "*What would it make of that?*" (427) is the central question that signals of the boss's concern. The anthropomorphic mechanism which occurs in the mind of the boss reflects his desire to decrease anxiety and make sense of the ontological issue of survival. The key symbol of the fly is elaborated and supported in the boss's mind by the use of expressions that suggest feelings and motion to the non-human insect: The nouns "courage", and "spirit", that are explicated in the boss's thinking assume a human agent: "*He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit*" (427). In Rundell's Macmillan English Dictionary (2002), "courage" represents "the ability to do something that you know is right or good, even though it is dangerous, frightening, or very difficult" (p. 319); whereas "spirit" refers to "your attitude to life or to other people", or in a narrow sense, to "an enthusiastic or determined attitude" (p. 1378).

The boss's internal viewpoint and the quasi-humanization of the fly are observed in his directly addressing the fly in the following passages: "*he leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, "You artful little b..."*" (427), or "*Come on," said the boss. "Look sharp!"*" (428). Noticeable is the shift from the deictic form "it" in "*What would it make of that? What indeed?*" (427), to the pronominal reference by means of "he": "*He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage*" (427). The imperative "*Come on... Look sharp!*" (428) in the end of the text signals of the boss's emergence in the fantasy-world that he created.

In the end the boss cannot remember "*for the life of him*" what he initially intended to do, but he is seized by the feeling of wretchedness when he sees the death of a creature he attributed some form of conscious experience. The same phrase "*Look sharp!*" with which he addresses to the dead fly and to his clerk Macey can testify to his oppressive treatment of his subordinates, and characterize the boss as someone with a stable need for control and aspiration for authority. With this regard, humanization that comes from the need to experience control and understanding of the environment (Epley et al., 2008, p. 144) turns to be a key to understanding the ambiguous personality of the boss. Salient traits of behavior, that are rendered through humanization and displayed towards non-human objects, can give an insight on how the character feels towards other characters, and even signal of the author's intention to express his personality through such thinking.

The repetition of images rendered through the narrator and the character creates the feeling of oppression by the mighty and more powerful entity, where the anthropomorphic depiction of the fly leads to its symbolization of the oppressed on the text level and beyond. That is, it forms a comprehensive phenomenon that is capable to generate various interpretations and associations. As such, we see the boss's clerk Macey, or the boss's son whom he might have sent to the war. Beyond the story level the symbolization renders the ontological message, the antagonism between life and death, the oppressed and the oppressor, and covers Mansfield's illness that was slowly destroying her body, the writer's relation with her father who treated his daughter's achievement with neglect, or her attitude to her late brother Leslie. For instance, Mary Burgan believes that by creating the story Mansfield wanted to resurrect her brother through her art: "the greatest betrayal would be to neglect the work of memory, as she later illustrated so devastatingly in her portrayal of a bereaved old man forgetting his son's grave in Flanders, distracted by a fly struggling its way out of an ink blot ..." (Burgan, 1994, p. 104). The fly becomes symbolic of the author's brother who died in the war, personalities within the novel, and ontological phenomena on the level beyond. One can argue that the boss himself can be symbolized by the fly, in his struggle with the course of time, losing memory and the purpose of living after the death of his son.

4.2 "Small Fry"

Anton Chekhov's short story «Мелюзга», or "Small Fry" in Garnett's translation bears few resemblances with Mansfield's text. A minor clerk Nevyrazimov has to work on Easter Eve for extra money. He writes a letter to his superior whom he utterly hates, but finds it hard to articulate his thoughts. Nevyrazimov notices a cockroach which is running about his desk. The story proceeds to the clerk's conversation with another servant in which he complains about his misery. Finally Nevyrazimov smashes the cockroach that catches his eye, and feels better.

Being completely different in plot, setting, and characters, the stories are united by a striking connection in the central episodes. Primarily, in both stories the protagonists serve as counterparts to the insects, initially feel sorry for them, and kill them in the end. Matthias Freise (2012) regards the murder of the cockroach as the only apparent event in the text, where the cockroach "running about in alarm" can ironically symbolize the life of a small clerk, who suffers from poverty and despair. Freise argues that the clerk even compares himself to the inferior "insect" on similar "duty" in the office (Freise, 2012, p. 28).

In "Small Fry" personification is based on associations with the patterns of motion. The stray cockroach in a dusty room reminds the clerk of his own miserable situation. The recognition of similarities between different fields of reference - the behavior and surroundings of the cockroach on the one side, and the protagonist's anxiety and miserable conditions on the other, results in the metaphorical imprisonment of the character. Symbolization processes involved in metaphorical patterns include the stray cockroach, running in alarm, and the anxious and depressed clerk: "*It's a hopeless position, in fact. One may go on as one is, or one may hang oneself... He moved away from the window and walked wearily about the rooms*" (Rus. «Одним словом, брат, положение безвыходное. Хочешь – так живи, а не хочешь – вешайся... Невыразимов отошел от форточки и в тоске зашагал по комнатам») (210). The descriptions of the clerk's shabby office explicate his "unhuman" conditions and make the main character feel more like an insect: the reader sees the "smoking" and "smelling lamp"; "smutty ceiling"; "dusty cornice"; "muddy walls".

As a result, Nevyrazimov finds himself imprisoned in his office, as the cockroach is “imprisoned” on his desk, which is a metaphor with a strong pragmatic effect. As Fludernik commented on a resembling scene in Samuel Richardson’s “Clarissa”, “the contiguity of scenes of imprisonment results in an overall metaphor” (Fludernik, 2010, p. 353).

The image of a cockroach functioning as a source domain is sustained at different narrative levels, and introduced to the reader through the narrator’s comments: “*the stray cockroach was still running about the table and had found no resting place*” (Rus. «заблудившийся таракан все еще сновал по столу и не находил пристанища» (211), and the character’s speech: “*When I am off duty I shall go away, but he’ll be on duty here all his cockroach life*” (Rus. «Я-то отдежурю и выйду отсюда, а он весь свой тараканий век здесь продежурит (209). Metaphoric connotations in the story are drawn from the two incompatible domains, where human agency is ascribed to normally inhuman objects. The personification effect is sustained in the use of the verb “*to be on duty*” (Rus. “дежурить”) and is observed both in the original Chekhov variant and its translation into English: according to “Glossary of Russian” by S.I. Ozhegov and N.Y. Shvedova (1992), «дежурить» means „1. Выполнять в порядке очереди какие-н. обязанности. Д. по классу. 2. Долго и неотлучно присутствовать при ком-чем-н. Д. у постели больного. ...”. The verb requires a human actor in its primary meaning and can be compared with the similar English equivalent of “to be on duty”, that Rundell’s Macmillan English Dictionary (2002) defines as “legal or moral obligation on duty – working at the moment” (p. 434). The anthropomorphic metaphor operates to represent a distinctive image that functions throughout the text, and is supported by the quasi-humanisation through the verb phrase “*to be running about*” (Rus. «сновать») and a noun phrase “*resting place*” (Rus. «пристанище»), that can refer both to human and non-human actors.

Unlike the boss in Mansfield’s “The Fly”, only a brief period of anthropomorphism can be registered in Nevyrazimov’s mind style. The initial empathetic attitude is replaced by its denial in the end of the text: “*Ah, I’ll teach you to run here, you devil!*” *He viciously slapped the palm of his hand on the cockroach, who had the misfortune to catch his eye. “Nasty thing!”*... (Rus. «А... бегаешь тут, черт! – хлопнул он со злобой ладонью по таракану, имевшему несчастье попасться ему на глаза. – Гадость этакая!» (212), when he consequently feels better at smashing the cockroach. It is doubtful that he would have felt better by displacing his anger on a quasi-personified agent that he had initially created in his fantasy world. However, the ultimate dehumanization devalued any kind of moral responsibility that could have occurred in his mind.

Certainly, the mental processes that we regard in this study are the manifestations of fictional minds. Moreover, one should not disregard the poetic qualities of personification that ironically outline the miserable state of Nevyrazimov in his solitude and need of social connection. Associations between the stray cockroach and the anxious minor clerk make its image symbolic for the insignificant work of the minor worker, and account for the connections on both the story level and beyond, which makes the story social-problem.

5. Conclusion

This article has supported the statement that metaphorical patterns account for narrative ambiguity (Popova, 2002). Anthropomorphic metaphorical patterns imprint human measure to non-human objects and provide a special kind of knowledge, where the source domain is a human body or mind. Personification, as one of the most significant ontological metaphors, generates emotional and cognitive patterns that operate on various narrative levels, and leads to the formation of symbolic individuality in existence. The conceptualization of an entity in terms of a human places it on the level of a human according to the quality it represents. As such, human metaphor becomes the estimate of understanding for the non-human world (Radman, 1997, p. 127).

By representing suffering and tormenting through a quasi-human agent, “The Fly” accounts for the central ontological, but nevertheless equivocal notions of life and death, and the social moral issues of oppression and the oppressed. Although the personification effect starts operating in the final part of the story, it is sustained to the end of the text and is supported by the boss’s feeling of wretchedness, which can be accounted for his moral responsibility as a “Death Giver” (J. Thomas). In contrast, Chekhov’s short story exemplifies personification that is build up through the narrator, but is disrupted in the end by the main character, when the quasi-humanization of the cockroach undergoes a reverse process rendered through Nevyrazimov’s speech. The symbolic value of the insect does not surpass the story level. In addition, unlike Katherine Mansfield and her “fly in the milk jug” self-representation, Chekhov did not elaborate on the small fry image in his letters or diaries.

Despite the fact that anthropomorphism is a psychology-related notion, its studies are important not only for psychology, but in the disciplines beyond (Waytz et al., 2010). As a mind style phenomenon it is regulated by two major factors in the stories under analysis: motivation to reduce uncertainty and increase the comprehension of events, which is mainly demonstrated through the boss’s mind style, and motivation for social contact, which is exemplified in Chekhov’s short story. Understanding the mechanisms of anthropomorphism can contribute to the studies of cognitive stylistics, and especially to figurative mind style.

Personification in Mansfield’s story functions not only on the text level, but spreads to the discourse-world and produces a large network of associations. Perhaps, it is Einhaus who has most successfully commented on the author’s mastery: “Mansfield’s story in general and the fly as a metaphor in particular allow for numerous interpretations, and this openness and ambiguity of meaning is certainly a deliberate strategy, a refusal of strict patterns of interpretation” (Einhaus, 2013, p. 74). The story symbolism makes us reconsider our own moral and psychological attitudes, and configure them to similar situations. Moreover, using his background knowledge, the experienced reader starts building inferences on the symbolized entity that can integrate with Mansfield’s personality or environment. By emphasizing a

human field as a source domain for its metaphorical patterns the story has generated multiple readings and will provoke new insights and discussions.

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