

UNIVERSITY „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”, IAȘI
FACULTY OF LETTERS
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOLOGICAL STUDIES

POINT OF VIEW IN ACTION
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SHORT FICTION
OF E. HEMINGWAY AND A.P. CHEKHOV)

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

- SUMMARY -

Thesis supervisor :

Prof. dr. Livia COTORCEA

PhD candidate : **Lucian-Marian NICOLAE**

Iași, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I : ABOUT FOCALIZATION AND NOT ONLY – THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- I.1. Theories of focalization
- I.2. Particularities of focalization in the homodiegetic narration
- I.3. Changes of focalization. The relationship between focalization and the thought and speech presentation

CHAPTER II : AVATARS OF THE SHORT FORM

- II.1. Ernest Hemingway and the tradition of the American short fiction
- II.2. Chekhov and the Russian short fiction : terminology, literary history and poetics

CHAPTER III : HEMINGWAY AND CHEKHOV – MASTERS OF THE SHORT FICTION

- III.1. Preliminaries
 - III.1.1. Chekhov and the American literary world*
 - III.1.2. Chekhov and Hemingway*
- III.2. Aspects of Ernest Hemingway's short fiction
 - III.2.1. Language, omission, silence*
- III.3. Aspects of A. P. Chekhov's short fiction

III.3.1. Event and composition

CHAPTER IV : FOCALIZATION IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S PROSE

- IV.1. Zero focalization
- IV.2. External focalization
- IV.3. Internal focalization
- IV.4. Compound focalization
- IV.5. Focalization in the homodiegetic narrative

CHAPTER V : FOCALIZATION IN A. P. CHEKHOV'S PROSE

- V.1. Zero focalization
- V.2. External focalization
- V.3. Internal focalization
- V.4. Compound focalization
- V.5. Focalization in the homodiegetic narrative

CHAPTER VI : PROBLEMS OF FOCALIZATION IN THE SECOND PERSON NARRATIVE

- VI.1. Focalization and narration in the second person in Ernest Hemingway's work
- VI.2. Focalization and narration in the second person in A.P. Chekhov's work

CHAPTER VII : PROBLEMS OF FOCALIZATION IN THE FIRST PERSON PLURAL NARRATIVE

- VII.1. Collective narratives

VII.2. Narration and focalization in texts in the first person plural

VII.3. Focalization and narration in the first person plural in

Ernest Hemingway's work

VII.4. Focalization and narration in the first person plural in A.P.

Chekhov's work

CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Our dissertation is devoted to the study of *Point of View*, a narratological category which represents an artistic and linguistic structure comprising several compositional layers and functions. The study of this pertinent topic was motivated, first of all, by the insufficient and unsystematic examination of this theoretical aspect in Romanian poetics and narratology. Secondly, our endeavor was also prompted by the way the above mentioned category is displayed and used as a textual strategy in literary-artistic writings. Moreover, we deemed both worthwhile and symptomatic the insistence which the latest research has shown in turning from analyzing words and sentences to texts and narratives. Last but not least, we were interested in how this narratological strategy works and how much it can tell us about a writer's individuality when it comes to the short form of prose as practiced by two great masters.

One can naturally ask how essential for a narratological analysis revealing an author's viewpoint is. And does this element warrant a treatment in exclusion of all the other elements of a narrative ? The answer to these questions took the form of this work. At a first estimate, we believe that no narratological study, whether practical or theoretical, can ever ignore discussing point of view or focalization. As one critic pointed out in the early nineties, "Few concepts in Anglo-American literary theory have attracted more critical attention over the twentieth century than the notion of

narrative point of view.”¹

The Romanian readers could acquaint themselves with some aspects of this topic by gleaning information from rather few and brief works belonging to Romanian poetics and researchers, like Constantin Parfene’s *Literary Theory and Analysis*, Nicolae Manolescu’s *Noah’s Ark* or Rodica Zafiu’s *Narration and Poetry*. But, overall, the relatively small number of references did not prove a discouragement and could instead be compensated for, as often as not, by relevant chapters on the same topic which could be found in Romanian translations of reference works, be they collective, like Jean-Michel Adam and Françoise Revaz’s *Analysis of Narrative* or Oswald Ducrot and Jean-Marie Schaeffer’s *New Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Languages*, or individual works by outstanding poetics, like Gerald Prince’s *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Franz K. Stanzel’s *A Theory of Narrative*, Mieke Bal’s *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* or Michael Toolan’s *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, and culminating with the Dutch scholar, Jaap Lintvelt’s *Essay de typologie narrative. Le "point de vue"*, to name just a few. There are yet other ground-breaking works which have not been translated so far into Romanian, and are therefore only available to the Romanian reading public in the original language in which they were first

¹ José Antonio Álvarez Amorós, "Henry James, Percy Lubbock, and Beyond: A Critique of the Anglo-American Conception of Narrative Point of View." *Studia Neophilologica* 66, 1994, p. 47.

written. Such are Boris Uspenski's *Poetika kompozitsii*, Seymour's Chatman's *Story and Discourse* or Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*.

Having said that, we believe that the effort to identify and investigate the point of view in any literary text is never disproportionate, in view of the fact that it is exactly this element which is responsible for regulating the narrative information, that is, it enables a narrative to convey to the readers more or less details in a more or less unmediated fashion, thereby making it appear to stand at a lesser or greater distance from what it reports. Without a viewpoint, as Genette rightly observed, we cannot speak of *histoire*, story. Properly speaking, the story does not exist before a "vision" or "perspective" is focused on the narrative matter. The story is formed, first of all, out of selecting individual elements from an indiscriminate mass which characterizes the events. The problem is that, as cognitive theorist David Herman pointed out, "stories not only facilitate but also formally encode ways of seeing" and "the concept of focalization" – which we will be using as a synonym for «perspective» or «point of view» – points up this modeling capacity of narrative."²

The above reference to Gérard Genette was not accidental since the tools used for describing focalization – the word he used when he renamed "point of view" – as well as those for text analysis

² David Herman, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002, p. 302.

will be partly borrowed from his contribution to the field of narratology as this is expressed in *Discours du récit* (1972) and *Nouveau discours du récit* (1983), landmarks in their own right, despite various attempts at either reformulation or disparagement. The proliferation of definitions and classifications which befell this concept in the post-classical period through the works of David Herman, Monika Fludernik or Manfred Jahn, among others, did not always mean a clearer understanding of it and the ensuing confusion pointed towards areas in need of supplementary investigation.

This dissertation aims to cover those areas but it does not possess an exclusively theoretical quality, which can be seen from the dynamic orientation of the title. What is implied is that the presentation and the informative exposition should be naturally continued into an application of the speculative and conceptual vision to products of literary activity. The short fiction of Hemingway and Chekhov – the pair of writers chosen for exemplification and illustration – will be analyzed with respect to the influence of the exigencies of narrative focalization on the particular nature of the short form and of its manifestation in the individual work. There will also be taken into account the implications of the brevity on the narrativity of the literary genre as such. However, we believe that the analysis of a narrative text as far as focalization is concerned should not be reduced to simplistically revealing the type of viewpoint and placing it into the right category.

And so, the establishment of focalization is but a starting

point: it provides clues for a fine reading which should make sense of other signs and, above all, offer new meaning to the same signs of the narrative text, so that the reader should be prompted to practise an active and fecund reading, whereby internal correspondences suggested by this “lazy machine”, which is the text, should be put into equation and then into correlation. The precise analysis of focalization is naturally indispensable but if performed strictly technically or mechanically it serves little purpose unless it is taken as a basis for a more complex investigation of the text, which should also take into account other text-forming modalities.

We have divided this dissertation into seven chapters, following the concrete manifestations of focalization in the general context of the narrative art, as well as the prose invoked by the presence of the pair of writers in the title. *Chapter I*, entitled **About focalization and not only – theoretical and methodological considerations** gives review, in *Subchapter I.1, Theories of focalization*, of the main schools and directions that have in the course of time shaped this compartment of narratology, presenting seminal contributions from the Anglo-Saxon world, as well as from leading French or Russian narratologists. Juxtaposing different conceptual stances has the advantage of stressing the hard core of the dominant framework, but also the still contentious areas. Supplying the readers with the criteria and the research patterns of the aforementioned schools, the first chapter impartially highlights their strengths and original points. Standing out of all the other theories as

profoundly original and far-reaching, Genette's theory stimulated the later development of the problem and served as a reliable working tool for the practical analysis section of this dissertation, too.

The French poetician takes as a starting point of his research the narrator's knowledge and, following other French narratologists, especially G. Blin and J. Pouillon, conceives of the point of view as a restriction on the narrative information conveyed by the narrator. He renames "zero focalization" what others had called omniscience or vision "from behind", "internal focalization" what was known as subjective vision or vision "with" and "external focalization" what was known as objective vision or vision "from without."

The above issues are considered in greater detail in *Subchapter 1.2.*, called **Particularities of focalization in the homodiegetic narration**, which elaborates on the mechanics of focalization in the first person narrative, a type of narrative that possesses specific features and a particular mode of functioning as regards the narrative perspective. As a matter of fact, the first person narrative resembles closely the non-fictional genres in the limitations that its narrator is forced to observe. Thus, the narrator in this case cannot communicate but those events which he personally witnessed or about which he learnt from other people or sources. As for the inner life, all he can disclose are but his own feelings and perceptions while he can only speculate on the mental processes of the others, based on an apparent material or verbal behaviour.

Subchapter 1.3., entitled **Changes of focalization. The**

relationship between focalization and the thought and speech presentation adds to the general picture by discussing the peculiarities and the implications that the focalization has for those situations when it is not consistent over the course of the narration. True, there are no reasons that can bind an author to one and the same type of focalization throughout the same text. Since focalization sustains a certain authorial ideology, the narrative intentions of the implied author can change from one paragraph to the next, or even from one sentence to the other. The subchapter also delineates the features of the relationship between focalization and the thought and speech presentation.

Chapters II and III, entitled, respectively, **Avatars of the short form and Hemingway and Chekhov – masters of the short fiction**, have been designed to ensure the transition to the practical section of the dissertation. These two chapters outline the main features and the peculiar nature of the species belonging to the short form in the American and Russian literature. Against a literary, historical, typological and biographical background of the two cultural spaces, we have proceeded to highlight the most relevant aspects of the narrative poetics of each of the two writers because we thought that these aspects can really facilitate a greater understanding of focalization at work in a text. Thus, we have divided *Chapter II*, called **Avatars of the short form**, into two subchapters. *Subchapter II.1.*, **Ernest Hemingway and the tradition of the American short fiction** attempts a short presentation of the history and the theory of

the short fiction species in the American literature, mainly those practiced by Hemingway in his works. Under review is the meaning of terms like “tale”, “short story”, “novella” and “sketch”, as well as the presence of these forms in American literary works.

Symmetrically, *Subchapter II.2.*, called **Chekhov and the Russian short fiction : terminology, literary history and poetics** aims to highlight the characteristics of two main species of Russian short fiction, namely „*повесть*” (*povest'*) and „*рассказ*” (*rasskaz*), as practised by A. P. Chekhov. If *povest'* goes back to a multisecular history, *rasskaz*, Chekhov’s favourite, can be traced back to modern times, somewhere at the beginning of the 19th century.

Chapter III, entitled **Hemingway and Chekhov – masters of the short fiction**, by far the largest of all chapters, has a threefold structure. *Subchapter III.1.*, **Preliminaries** places the two writers side by side in order to reveal the reasons why they were selected for this comparison. Apart from obvious similarities in composition, occasional pronouncements on literary and artistic topics point to their propensity for narrative technique, although more often than not critics chose to ignore them.

Subchapter III.2., called **Aspects of Ernest Hemingway’s short fiction** focuses on language, omission and silence, in other words, what we considered to be the most representative aspects of the American writer’s poetics. His propensity for theoretical statements, considerably keener than his Russian counterpart’s, became noticeable in the 1930s and onwards, in various interviews

and autobiographical fragments of fiction, culminating in *The Art of the Short Story*, an essay written in 1959 but published posthumously. Though it did not start with Hemingway, the iceberg text theory was promoted and refined by him through a succession of statements in order to explicate, justify and anchor his revolutionary style of writing prose – a prose which reveals as much as it hides. The metaphor of the iceberg not only qualifies the theory of omission, but also provides the writer with a pattern of consistency for the various cryptic remarks on his own art. Translated into narrative terms, this theory evokes the idea that the surface simplicity is deceiving as it hides from view a depth, a dimension which does not get to be expressed fully or directly, but which nevertheless is perceived as such by an authentically engaged reader.

Subchapter III.3., called **Aspects of A. P. Chekhov's short fiction**, examines the specific nature of the event, as well as compositional aspects of the great Russian writer's work. The vast majority of interpretations of his fictional universe call attention to a dominant aspect, which can hardly be contested at all : the peculiar nature of the Chekhovian event. This is also due to the fact that the novelty of Chekhov's style consists not so much in "what" or "how much" happens, but in "how" the material of the *fabula* is handled.

Chapters IV, V, VI and ***VII***, respectively entitled, **Focalization in Ernest Hemingway's prose, Focalization in A. P. Chekhov's prose, Problems of focalization in the second person narrative** and **Problems of focalization in the first person plural**

narrative make up the practical section of this dissertation. In connection with this, mention should be made that, since the topic of our research, that is, narrative focalization, is a rather technical and specialized one and the prose works of the two writers total a very great number of pieces, it is inevitable that this study will appear incomplete. If the investigated corpus of short stories is relatively small in size, this can be accounted for by the fact that our research goals were not exhaustive, but they merely sought to highlight and describe the functioning of the narratological category called “point of view.”

The practical applications of *Chapters IV* and *V*, called **Focalization in Ernest Hemingway’s prose** and **Focalization in A. P. Chekhov’s prose**, respectively, are symmetrically structured and divided into five subchapters that are entitled according to the type of predominant focalization: zero, internal and external; two subchapters treat of the focalization in the homodiegetic narrative and of the compound focalization, by which are meant those situations when the text displays different types of focalization and one cannot decide if or which the predominant one is.

The last two chapters of this dissertation extend the investigation towards the so-called “unnatural” narrative, namely the second-person narrative and the first person plural narrative. After a short introduction of these two types and their corresponding focalization, we proceed to analyze some of Hemingway’s and Chekhov’s texts which can be fitted into those two respective

categories. **Chapter VI**, entitled **Problems of focalization in the second person narrative**, correlates the second person narrative with the homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrative starting from the its very name: “second person” suggests a distinct narrative category, unlike the traditional first or third person ones. This type of narrative and the focalization it entails represent a relatively complex phenomenon and have generated a range of meanings and interpretations, not without a certain hermeneutical and sometimes ontological uncertainty. As a result, narratologists worldwide (especially, M. Fludernik, B. Richardson, D. Herman or U. Margolin) have been quick to describe and classify its various textual manifestations.

Chapter VII, entitled **Problems of focalization in the first person plural narrative**, starts off by introducing the notion of *collective narrative*, that is, one in which the narrative instance is plural and fulfils the role of protagonist, while the narrative is, overall, the story of this collective narrative instance. Belonging to this category and defamiliarizing perception, “we” narratives can have the meaning of either *inclusive-we* or *exclusive-we*, both of these subtypes being characterized by considerable semantic fluidity.

Finally, **Conclusions** sums up the gains of our research efforts, extracting and synthesizing the characteristic features for the functioning of the focalization first of all in the short form as against the long form, then in the very short stories that have been examined throughout this work. The final chapter also establishes correlations

between the exigencies of the short form and the mechanics of internal, external and zero focalization. Thus, we could notice that fundamentally focalization does not function differently in a short form as opposed to a long form. In this sense, it can be said that focalization is not a text-specific category, but the discipline and the distinctiveness of the short story as a specific literary form exerts an influence at each compositional level, including focalization, which can be best understood as providing a “window” through which we perceive the narrated world.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. AUTHOR BIBLIOGRAPHY

I.1. A. P. CHEKHOV

Cehov, A.P. *Opere*. Vol. 1-12. București: Ed. „Cartea Rusă”, 1956-1963.

Чехов, А.П. *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в тридцати томах*. Москва: Наука, 1974 – 1983.

I.2. ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Hemingway, Ernest. *Zăpezile de pe Kilimanjaro. Povestiri I*. În rom. de Radu Lupan. București: Ed. Univers, 1994.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition (first trade paperback edition)*. New York: Scribner, 2003.

II. GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. In Romanian

- Ducrot, Oswald; Jean-Marie Schaeffer. *Noul dicționar enciclopedic al științelor limbajului*. Trad. de A. Măgureanu, V. Vișan, M. Păunescu. București: Ed. Babel, 1996.
- Genette, Gérard. *Figuri*. Selecție, trad. și prefață de Angela Ion, Irina Mavrodin. București: Ed. Univers, 1978.
- Lintvelt, Jaap. *Încercare de tipologie narativă. Punctul de vedere*. Trad. de Angela Martin, studiu introd. de Mircea Martin. București: Ed. Univers, 1994.
- Parfene, Constantin. *Teorie și analiză literară. Ghid practic*. București: Ed. Științifică, 1993.
- Teoria limbajului poetic. Școala filologică rusă*. Antologie, traducere, studiu introductiv, note bibliografice și bibliografie critică selectivă de Livia Cotorcea. Iași: Ed. Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, 1994.
- Toolan, Michael. *Narațiunea. Introducere lingvistică*. Trad. și studiu introductiv de Sorin Pârvu. Iași: Ed. Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, 2008.
- Zafiu, Rodica. *Narațiune și poezie*. București: Bic ALL, 2000.

B. In other languages

- Herman, David; Manfred Jahn; Marie-Laure Ryan. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London: Routledge, 2005.
- Lanser, Susan Sniader. *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Fiction*.

- Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1981.
- Margolin, Uri. "Focalization: Where Do We Go From Here?" in Peter Hühn; Wolf Schmid; Jorg Schönert (eds.) *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization. Modelling Mediation in Narrative*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009, pp. 41-57.
- May, Charles E. *Short Story Theories*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1976.
- Prince, Gerald. *A Dictionary of Narratology (Revised edition)*. University of Nebraska Press : Lincoln & London, 2003.
- Rabatel, Alain. *La construction textuelle du point de vue*. Lausanne: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1998.
- Reid, Ian. *The Short Story*. London: Methuen, 1977.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London: Methuen, 1983 (2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Rivara, René. *La langue du récit. Introduction à la narratologie énonciative*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000.
- Бицилли, Петр Михайлович. *Трагедия русской культуры. Исследования. Статьи. Рецензии*. Москва: Русский путь, 2000.
- Успенский, Б. *Поэтика композиции*. Санкт-Петербург: Изд-во „Азбука”, 2000.
- Эйхенбаум, Б. *О прозе. Сборник статей*. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1969.