

**FICTION AND NARRATIVE INSTANCE AND GRAMMAR  
IN THE SHORT STORY "STOLEN DAY"  
BY SHERWOOD ANDERSON**

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**Abstract**

*In the article, we study the fictional structuring, narrative instance and grammar of Sherwood Anderson's story "Stolen Day".*

**Key-words:** *fiction, narrative instance, narrative grammar.*

**Rezumat**

*În articol, cercetăm structurarea fictivă, instanța și gramatica narativă ale povestirii lui Sherwood Anderson "Stolen Day".*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *ficțiune, instanță narativă, gramatică narativă.*

**1. Introduction**

Narratology is a research technique of the narrative<sup>1</sup> which is revealed in a discourse. Narratology is usually studied by scientists from three perspectives, such as: (1) modality of the narrative to relate or represent fiction; (2) narrative instance<sup>2</sup> and (3) narrative grammar<sup>3</sup>. These perspectives have peculiarities of realization in every text. This article regards the peculiarities of realization of these perspectives in the short story "Stolen Day" by Sherwood Anderson.

**2. Fiction and Narrative Instance**

As a short story, "Stolen Day" has poor fiction and a short narrative. The fiction of this story is created by the following existents and events:

| <b>Fiction existents</b>  | <b>Fiction events</b>   |
|---|---|
| (1) The little boy who goes to school (the <i>hero</i> or the <i>central character</i> of the story); | (1) Walter has inflammatory rheumatism, but he can walk and go fishing; |
| (2) Walter (a boy who has inflammatory rheumatism);   | (2) The hero sees Walter fishing;                                       |
| (3) The hero's teacher, Sarah Suggett;  | (3) The hero says to his teacher he has inflammatory rheumatism too;    |
| (4) The hero's mother;  | (4) The hero returns home and gets into bed for an hour or two;         |
| (5) His brothers – Irve, Ray, Earl etc.;  | (5) All this time his mother is very                                    |

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<sup>1</sup>Prince, 2004, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>Bal, 1977, p. 14; Prince, 2004, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Genette, Genot, Mathieu-Colas, Pavel *apud* Prince, 2004, p. 123.

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
|                           | busy;   |
| (6) His sister Stella;    | (6) The hero thinks to his death and imagines how his family, and especially his mother, will be sorry; |
| (7) His father;           | (7) The hero remembers how his mother had found a drowned child one day;                                |
| (8) The Wyatt child;      | (8) The hero goes fishing in Mr Fenn pond;  |
| (9) The Wyatt family;     | (9) He gets a big carp and gets him home;   |
| (10) Mr Fenn;             | (10) His mother puts the carp in a washtub with water in it.  |
| (11) His big carp;        |   |
| (12) The hero's neighbors |   |

These existents and events are related in a discourse created by an autodiegetic narrator, that is, a narrator who is introduced in the diegesis of this piece of work through the hero. This narrator is the gnarus of the fiction he related. His narrative competence is showed through his ability to produce and understand his narrative. In this short story the link of the existents to the events is coherent and is directed towards a goal. All that shows again the high degree of the competence and the high gnarus of the narrator of the fiction. Sometimes, the narrative competence and gnarus of the narrator are successfully expressed through the narrator's modality to approach existents, events and narration. This approach is usually created by the details the existents and events of the fiction carry:

- (1) "He could go fishing *in the creek or the waterworks pond*. *There was a place up at the pond where in the spring the water came tumbling over the dam and formed a deep pool. It was a good place. Sometimes you could get some big ones there*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).
- (2) "There he was, *sitting with a fish pole in his hand*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).
- (3) "*It was then that my own legs began to hurt. My back, too*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).
- (4) "*I limped painfully away. I kept on limping until I got out of the schoolhouse street*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).
- (5) "I went home and *sat on the front steps of our house. I sat there a long time*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

The details introduce a small distance in this piece of work.

Sh. Anderson's narration carries an emic approach which relies on (1) the description of the systems of the fiction and (2) the functional perspective of the narration. Thus, the central agent of the text is a little boy who thinks he has inflammatory rheumatism and gets a big carp. He is presented as a central character (as the hero) of the fiction. He is described from a functional point of view:

- (6) "I *went down* that way on my way to school one spring morning" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).
- (7) "I *began to cry*. I *did it* when the teacher, Sarah Suggett, had come out into the schoolhouse yard" (ibidem).
- (8) "I *kept to crying...*" (ibidem).
- (9) "So I *went*" (ibidem).
- (10) "I *sat* there a long time" (ibidem).
- (11) "I *got up* and *went* downstairs" (*idem*, p. 251).

This modality of description is applied to other characters of this story too, such as:

(1) Walter:

(12) "There he was, *sitting with a fish pole in his hand. He had been able to walk down there all right*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

(2) the members of the hero's family:

(13) "... *Mother or my brothers and my sister Stella might laugh. They did laugh at me pretty often...*" (ibidem).

(14) "*There wasn't anyone at home but Mother and the two little ones. Ray would have been four or five then and Earl might have been three. It was Earl who saw me there. [...]. Earl was always a quiet, solemn little fellow. [...]. Mother and Father had been speaking of Walter's case at the table just the day before. [...]. She (Mother) had gone to get a pail of water, and there the child was, drowned and dead. [...]. She (Mother) was making for the Wyatt house as hard as she could run, and she was pale. She had a terrible look on her face...*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 250).

(3) Mr Fenn:

(15) "*Mr Fenn was a man who had a big pond of his own. He sold ice in the summer, and the pond was to make the ice. He had bought some big carps and put them into his pond...*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 252).

The emic approach of the narrative strategy of this short story is successfully linked to the internal focalization. In this situation the enunciator is an attentive and kind person who knows to appreciate good and bad things. He is the witness of all the characters of fiction. This perspective of narration often carries an algebrization status which relies on

the economization of the perceptive forces of the enunciatee through a gnoseologic instance:

(16) "I might die," I thought. "I might just suddenly die right here; my heart might stop beating" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 250).

In this piece of work we can identify one example of *general voice* or *general point of view*:

(17) "It must be that all children are actors" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

In this story the narration of existents and events is combined with the narration of thinkings:

(18) "I know what I'm going to do," I *thought*..." (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 251).

(19) "It probably comes and goes," I *thought*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 252).

(20) "Walter has it and he goes fishing," I *thought*" (ibidem).

Sometimes the narration is realized through the *internal* voice:

(21) "Just the same," I *said to myself*..." (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

Along the whole story the narrator's vision is always a coordinated vision, because the narrator relates only the things known by the hero - the little boy who thinks he has inflammatory rheumatism too, that is way about in all the sentences of this story we can find the pronoun "I":

(22) "I went on to school but, at the recess time, I began to cry" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

(23) "I had got tired of sitting and was lying on the porch" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 250).

(24) "And then, of course, I'd pitch forward, over the bank into the pool; and, if I wasn't dead when I hit the water, I'd drown sure" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 251).

(25) "I stayed there until Mother came up" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 252).

Sometimes the story includes interest points of view. Thus, the following sentences show:

a) the hero's interest point of view:

(26) "I had a feeling that, if I said I had inflammatory rheumatism, Mother or my brothers and my sister Stella might laugh" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

(27) "... I began to cry. I did it when the teacher, Sarah Suggett, had come out into the schoolhouse yard. She came right over to me. "I ache all over," I said. I did, too. I kept on crying and it worked all right" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

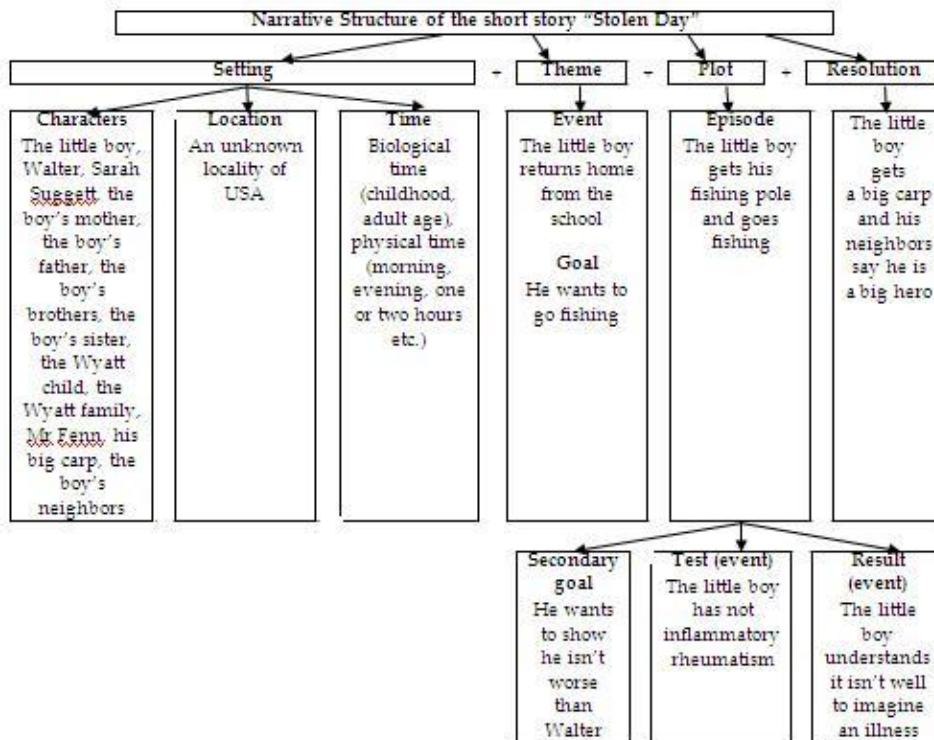
b) the father's interest point of view:

(28) "Mother and Father had been speaking of Walter's case at the table just the day before. *"It affects the heart,"* Father had said" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 250).

This short story often uses the restriction of the field of vision, in the situation when nobody knows that the little boy doesn't want to stay to the school and has a secret.

### 3. Narrative Grammar

From a traditional approach narrative grammar is also a technique which shares structure and type of the narrative. The short story "Stolen Day" by Sherwood Anderson has the following narrative structure:



The narrative type of this piece of work represents a dialogical type in the majority of cases. The retorts of the dialogue are usually followed by tag clauses which rely on three *verbi dicendi*:

a) to **say**:

(29) "I ache all over," I *said*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 249).

b) to **ask**

(30) "Why aren't you in school?" she *asked*" (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 250).

c) to **cry**:

(31) “Well, I have got it – I have,” I *cried*...” (Sh. Anderson, *Stolen Day*, p. 252).

In conclusion, we can say the fiction of the short story “Stolen Day” as well as its narration includes a simple construction which is accorded to the type of the story and its narrative instance.

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#### Texts

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