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REVISITING THE GARDEN-PATH NARRATIVE: RECONSTRUAL IN MARTIN AMIS'S *LONDON FIELDS*

The article examines the garden-path narrative technique in Martin Amis's postmodernist novel 'London Fields' through the lens of cognitive grammar, specifically employing Langacker's concept of construal and the concept of reconstrual. The study analyzes how the narrator, who proves unreliable through underreporting, misinterpreting, and misevaluating, leads readers to false expectations about the murderer in the novel. Four textual versions of the murder scene are examined, demonstrating how reconstrual operates along three dimensions: specificity (respecifying from schematic to granular detail), prominence (refiguring the murderer-murderee relationship), and perspective (relocating and reviewing from objective omniscient narration to subjective first-person account). The analysis reveals how the narrator's retelling transforms reader interpretation from anticipating the character as a murderer to discovering the narrator himself committed the act, while the supposed murderee orchestrated the entire narrative. The study demonstrates effectiveness of cognitive grammar toolkit in explaining reader response to textual cues, particularly how reconstrual dimensions illuminate the process of re-reading and reinterpretation characteristic of unreliable narration in contemporary fiction, offering new methodological approaches for Ukrainian narrative analysis.

Keywords: garden-path narrative, cognitive grammar, reconstrual, unreliable narrator, postmodernist novel.

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ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЕННЯ ОМАНЛИВОГО НАРАТИВУ: РЕКОНСТРУАЛ РОМАНУ МАРТИНА АМІСА «ЛОНДОНСЬКІ ПОЛЯ»

Стаття присвячена дослідженню техніки «оманливого нарративу» в постмодерністському романі Мартіна Аміса «Лондонські поля» крізь призму когнітивної граматики, із застосуванням концепції конструалу Лангакера та концепції реконструалу. Дослідження аналізує, як наратор, який виявляється ненадійним через недостаттє інформування читача про події, їх хибну інтерпретацію та помилкове оцінювання, систематично спрямовує читача до невірних очікувань щодо особи вбивці протягом усього роману. Розглянуто чотири текстові версії сцени вбивства, які з'являються у різних частинах роману, що демонструють, як реконструал функціонує у трьох ключових вимірах: специфічність (респецифікація від схематичного до деталізованого опису), профілізація (рефігурація відношення вбивця-жертва через зміну конфігурації фігура-фон) та перспектива (релокація та ревізія від об'єктивної всезнаючої нарації до суб'єктивної розповіді від першої особи). Аналіз виявляє, як ревізія наратором свого роману трансформує інтерпретацію читача від очікування щодо протагоніста як вбивці до несподіваного виявлення, що самому наратору доводиться вбити свою героїню, для того, щоб завершити свій єдиний роман, в той час як вона оркеструє наратив від самого початку. Дослідження демонструє ефективність інструментарію когнітивної граматики в поясненні читачької реакції на текстові сигнали та наративну маніпуляцію, зокрема те, як виміри реконструалу висвітлюють когнітивний процес перечитування та реінтерпретації, характерний для ненадійної нарації в сучасній постмодерністській прозі, пропонуючи інноваційні методологічні підходи для українського наратологічного аналізу.

Ключові слова: оманливий наратив, когнітивна граMATика, реконструал, ненадійний наратор, постмодерністський роман.

The application of cognitive analysis beyond the sentence level represents an emerging trend in contemporary cognitive linguistics, gradually encompassing new research areas. While studies involving schema theory, conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual blending theory are ubiquitous, cognitive grammar approach to text analysis is a comparatively new one. It applies cognitive grammar concepts (construal and its dimensions) to the analysis of narrative dynamics suggesting explanation of the reader's interpretation and emotional reaction to certain textual features.

This approach has been applied to various aspects of narrative analysis by Harrison et al. (2014), Browse (2018), Nuttal (2018), Giovanelli et al. (2021), Giovanelli and Harrison (2024). K. Wales (2014) persuasively argued that 'cognitive grammar can and

should be included in the stylistics ‘toolkit’

The phenomenon of reconstrual has been examined in diverse narrative contexts: murder mystery fiction (Harrison & Nuttall, 2019), poetry (Giovanelli, 2019), political discourse (Browse, 2021), and historical psychological novel (Harrison & Nuttall, 2018). Some studies focus on the readers’ responses to textual triggers using cognitive grammar methodology (Harrison & Nuttall, 2018), while others examine the function of intertextual, inter-narrator, and narrator retellings in fiction (Harrison, 2023). However, Ukrainian researchers have yet to explore this phenomenon.

This study addresses this gap by applying cognitive grammar concepts (Langacker, 1989, 2008), particularly construal, its dimensions, and reconstrual (Giovanelli & Harrison 2024 : 53-58) to explain the effect of defeated expectations characteristic of the ‘garden-path narrative’ (Jahn, 2008 : 70; Harrison & Nuttall, 2019 : 151) in postmodernist fiction.

The study pursues **the following objectives**:

- to define the methodological framework;
- to examine the garden-path narrative and its role in shaping readers’ expectations;
- to analyze selected excerpts depicting the murder scene in Martin Amis’s ‘London Fields’, focusing on reconstrual dimensions and their effects;
- to demonstrate how cognitive grammar illuminates readers’ reinterpretation of the narrative upon rereading.

The research material comprises four key excerpts from Martin Amis’s ‘London Fields’ (1989), each rendering the murder scene through different narrative technique: (1) anticipation of the murder, (2) the murderee’s reflection about its possibility, (3) the narrator’s reference, and (4) the completion of the murder. The of the novel ‘London Fields’ treated as a wider context of our analysis.

1. ‘London Fields’ as a Garden-Path Narrative.

The novel is a postmodernist work by M. Amis, defined as ‘a true story, a love story and a murder story’ (Amis, 1989 : 1). It features one of the main characters, Nicola Six, the murderee, who wants to be killed for love on her 35th birthday, exploring the topic of love as a driving force at the turn of the millennium. It also abounds in typically postmodernist features like metafictionality, fragmentation, ambiguity, irony, and ludism.

‘London Fields’ can be considered an example of a so-called ‘garden-path narrative’ (Jahn, 2008 : 70), the narrative in which the reader is being misled for the most part of the story, or ‘led up the garden path’. It is indicative of the ‘twist in the narrative’ (Emmott, 2003 : 150) which causes rereading or reconsideration of the previous events. It usually involves the following stages 1) creation of false expectations; 2) the ambiguity of textual clues; 3) the unexpected ending; 4) the revision of the clues and reinterpretation of the story.

Initial default expectations. The narrator Samson Young, who is lethally ill, feels he has found perfect material for his one and only novel, a true story he can turn into a bestseller, which practically writes itself. The reader’s default setting is to trust the narrator, unless he proves the opposite. Actually, never truly outside the story, the homodiegetic narrator fluctuates between authoritative and unauthoritative narration: he either seems to know what will happen in the end or drifts on the surface, unable to control the story.

On the one hand, Samson Young makes a strong claim: ‘*This is the story of a murder. It hasn’t happened yet. But it will. (It had better.) I know the murderer, I know the murderee. I know the time, I know the place. I know the motive (her motive) and I know the means. I know who will be the foil, the fool, the poor foal, also utterly destroyed. And I couldn’t stop them, I don’t think, even if I wanted to. The girl will die. It’s what she always wanted*’ (Amis, 1989 : 1).

Furthermore, the initial chapter titles ‘*The Murderer*’, ‘*The Murderee*’, ‘*The Foil*’ which introduce characters Keith Talent (a low-class minor criminal), Nicola Six (a femme fatale), Guy Clinch (an upper class businessman) respectively, reinforce the initial expectations. The narrator describes his characters’ meeting in the Black Cross, a London pub, after which the murderee, endowed with magic power of knowing the future, makes a prophetic entry in her diary: ‘*I have found him*’ (Amis, 1989 : 22).

Additionally, the prolepsis made through the description of the murder scene placed at the beginning of chapter 2 testifies to the narrator’s knowledge of the outcome (Amis, 1989 : 15).

On the other hand, the narrator claims his role in the narrative is ‘*less a novelist, than a queasy cleric taking down the minutes of real life*’ (Amis, 1989 : 3); ‘*If London is a spider web, then where do I fit in? May be I’m the fly. I’m the fly*’ (Amis, 1989 : 3). Therefore, he has to rely on the main characters’ sometimes contradicting verbal or written accounts of events (Nicola’s diary, Keith’s brochure, Guy’s fiction) (Amis, 1989 : 42). Unable to invent anything himself, he hopes Nicola ‘*will be taking things into her own hands*’ (Amis, 1989 : 14); ‘*As for artistic talent...Nicola wins. She outwrites us all*’ (Amis 1989 : 43).

The metafictionality of the text adds to the perception of the narrator as unreliable. He shares doubts about his ability to write: ‘*I sat there wondering why I just can’t do it, why I just can’t write, why I just can’t make anything up. Then I saw her*’ (Amis, 1989 : 25); speculates about the process of writing the novel: ‘*When I take on Chapter 3, when I take on Guy Clinch, I’ll have to do, well, not happiness, but goodness, anyway. It’s going to be rough*’ (Amis, 1989 : 23); honestly shares information his approaching death: ‘*I must remain calm. I’m on deadline too here, don’t forget*’ (Amis, 1989 : 1).

Ambiguity. For the most part of the novel the narrative remains ambiguous as for the narrator’s role in it. Samson Young is a homodiegetic unauthoritative narrator. Soon he finds himself involved in the events he describes, though he wants to remain beyond them. The ambiguity remains concerning the questions who will eventually kill the lady; whether she will manage to fulfill her plan to be killed for love; whether Keith Talent (the main contender) will be able to kill her in the end (‘*the capacity for love was extinct in him*’ (Amis, 1989 : 72)), moreover there is not enough violence in him (Amis, 1989 : 9). However, the failure of his lifelong dream – winning dart’s championship may drive him to the point of murder (Amis, 1989 : 100).

The narrator remains in the background, constantly interacting with characters and tracking events, yet his role in the narrative remains obscure. His brief account of first meeting the characters doesn’t reveal his true purpose, though he pursues his own goals. Driven by ambition to write his one novel, Samson Young feels pressured by implicit comparison with Mark Asprey – the extremely successful writer and womanizer whose London apartment Samson is currently using through an exchange scheme. He cannot afford to lose his chance to rival Asprey by finishing a potential bestseller. Also he wants to save little Kim, Keith Talent’s baby daughter, who evokes genuine empathy in him. His wish is to give her a new family and a chance to thrive.

Unexpected ending. According to C. Emmott such stories ('tales of the unexpected') surprise, because they "break our default assumptions" (Emmot, 2003 : 150). Here we deal with the case of **narrator retelling** (Harrison, 2023 : 5), where scene is retold by the same narrator four times.

Ultimately, the narrator appears in the final scene and, exhausted and disillusioned, eventually has to kill his character to finish 'the wicked book' (Amis, 1989 : 466). Thus, the reader surprisingly discovers they have been led 'up the garden path': the narrator deliberately or unintentionally misled them into the belief the murderer may be one of the characters he announced to be such in the initial chapters.

Reconstrual. Revisiting the novel. Exposed to the unexpected turn of events, the reader needs to re-read the novel and reconsider the textual clues scattered throughout its text. Arguably, the second reading experience is quite different from the first reading (Harrison and Nuttal, 2018 : 11). Instructed by the narrator, who appeared to be unreliable, the reader's attention focus shifts to the aspects of the story, textual clues which were overlooked during the initial reading of the novel.

The narrative technique of unreliable narrator. The term itself was introduced by W. Booth (Booth, 1961 : 274-275). In the taxonomy later suggested by W. Booth and J. Phelan the narrator performs three kinds of telling: **reporting** (on the axis of facts, characters, events); **interpreting/reading** (on the axis of perception, understanding); **evaluation/regarding** (on the axis of ethics). Consequently, the narrator can be unreliable as reporters, interpreters, evaluators either because they are well off the mark or by not reaching the mark. Thus, Phelan and Booth identify six types of unreliability: misreporting, misreading and misregarding; and underreporting, under-reading, and under-regarding (Phelan & Booth, 2008 : 390).

Therefore, the narrator in 'London Fields' leads the reader astray through **underreporting**. He naively presumes he is uninvolved – 'I am not a contender in all this. I'm disinterested' (Amis, 1989 : 60) – while omitting his interpretation of important scenes (like the meeting at the Black Cross). Driven by his desire to finish the novel in a meaningful way and save Keith's baby daughter from her parents, he eventually becomes a part of the murderer's plan. Notably, these two goals may motivate him to interfere and commit the murder.

Samson also **misinterprets** his role in the story: he is not an observer, but an active participant. During the initial meeting in the pub, he deliberately puts Nicola, Keith and Guy into the focus of reader's attention, keeping himself in the background. He comments, reflects and speculates, while they are acting. Eventually it becomes obvious that the murderer has been masterminding the narrative, because she was orchestrating her death and manipulating him to write the novel.

Moreover, the narrator **misevaluates** ethical boundaries: he thinks that killing Nicola is justified because she is a manipulative femme fatale who 'outwrote' them all. Doomed to die soon himself, he needs 'to do the dirty job' and kill his character in order to finish the novel and save Keith's infant daughter. Motivated by the good cause, he hardly sees anything immoral in the murder.

2. Cognitive Grammar Framework: Construal and Reconstrual

According to R. Langacker 'construal is our ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways' (Langacker, 2008 : 43). Since its usage has expanded to the sequences above the sentence-level, it has been applied in a number of works for the analysis of different aspects of fiction (Harrison 2017; Browse 2018; Nuttal 2018, 2021). It has proved efficient in offering a comprehensive framework which allows scientifically based explanation to reader's interpretation.

The following dimensions of construal are used to analyze the fictional text: specificity, prominence, and perspective (Langacker, 2008 : 55-85).

Specificity refers to granularity of the scene. It concerns schematicity or specificity of the terms that describe the scene. Zooming in and out is a visual metaphor used in cognitive grammar to describe how we adjust the level of specificity, when describing scenes or concepts (Langacker, 2008 : 65). When we zoom in, we increase the resolution and bring finer details into focus; zooming out provides a broader, more general view.

Prominence operates through highlighting of certain parts of content and backgrounding others through scope and profiling. **Scope** may be regarded as a viewing frame that determines what conceptual content an expression brings into view. Immediate scope (IS) is the specific, focused portion within that wider domain – maximal scope (MS) – that the expression directly highlights or zooms in on. It is the part that is 'onstage' and directly relevant. Maximal scope is the full picture or context needed to understand the expression (Langacker 2008 : 63-65).

e.g. *Roof* (profile) – *the upper part of the building* (IS) – *the entire building/house* (MS)

The figure-ground relationship organizes scenes by bringing some elements to the foreground (figure) while moving others to the background (ground), which expresses how objects are seen both visually and grammatically (e.g. active and passive voice) (Giovannelli 2024 : 45-46).

Perspective deals with the viewing position from which we describe a scene shown through vantage point and how subjectively or objectively the information is presented. **Vantage point** refers to the viewing position a speaker or writer takes when describing a scene. It affects how spatial relationships and movements are expressed.

Objective construal keeps the speaker in the background as an observer, it highlights the content, while subjective construal makes the speaker's viewpoint more visible through the first-person narration or modalized free indirect discourse, which is actually a blend where the character's epistemic stance (degree of certainty, obligation, possibility) is expressed through the narrator's voice, making the subjectivity particularly evident. In this way subjective construal includes the viewer into conceptualization (Nuttal 2021: 83).

Reconstrual refers to the process of re-experiencing or re-interpreting the same conceptual content in a different way, either by the same person at a different time or by different conceptualizers. It involves a cognitive process where a scene, an event, or text is conceptualized again with a shift in perspective, focus, specificity, or other dimensions of construal (Giovannelli & Harrison, 2024 : 53-58).

In narrative characters or narrators may reconstrue the same events multiple times, presenting them from different perspectives or with different emphasis, which is particularly evident in unreliable narration or trauma narratives. Potentially reconstrual works along the following dimensions (Table 1).

Table 1

Construal Dimensions (after Giovanelli 2022 : 154)

Construal Phenomena	Construal Dimensions			
Specificity	Respecifying (making a construal more granular or schematic)			
Prominence (Scope and Focus)	Reprofiling (adjusting the focus of explicit attention)	Rescoping (adjusting the immediate and/or maximal scope)	Refiguring (altering the figure-ground configuration)	Realigning (altering the trajector – landmark relationship)
Perspective	Relocating (viewing a scene from a different vantage point)	Reviewing (adjusting a construal to make it more subjective or more objective)		Rescanning (altering the mode of mental scanning)

The second type of reconstrual, **re-reading**, occurs when readers return to the text and construe events differently based on newly acquired knowledge, revised expectations, or altered interpretive focus (Harrison & Nuttal, 2018). In re-reading literature, readers may shift their attention to different textual aspects, identify previously unnoticed patterns, or reinterpret character motivations.

3. Analysis and Discussion

Appearing four times throughout the novel, twice in the strong positions – at the opening of chapter 2 and in the final chapter 24 – the resolution scene acquires particular salience. This repetition defines the narrative not as a traditional ‘who-done-it’, but rather as a ‘why-do-it’ murder mystery.

The analysis of the first version of the murder scene.

‘THE BLACK CAB will move away, unrecalably and for ever, its driver paid, and handsomely tipped, by the murderee. She will walk down the dead-end street. The heavy car will be waiting; its lights will come on as it lumbers towards her. It will stop, and idle, as the passenger door swings open.

His face will be barred in darkness, but she will see shattered glass on the passenger seat and the car-tool ready on his lap.

‘Get in.’

She will lean forward. ‘You,’ she will say, in intense recognition:

‘Always you.’

‘Get in.’

And in she’ll climb... (Amis, 1989 : 15).

Perspective. The scene reveals a prospective and omniscient vantage point. The events here are narrated in the future (‘will move away’, ‘will be waiting’, ‘she will walk’). In this way the narrator creates distance between himself and the murderee. Such a vantage point creates an eerie sense that the story is being foretold, not told.

This sense of control over the narrative is evasive, since the narration of the novel vacillates between knowledge and delusion. The narrator apparently knows the final murder scene, but does not know how the characters will reach their destination. The murderee is depicted objectively from the outside, which results in rather objective construal, creating detachment.

Specificity. This construal is general and **schematic**, the only specific detail mentioned is the ‘shattered glass on the passenger seat and the car-tool ready on his lap’.

Prominence (Figure/ground relationships). The figure of murderee is profiled against the background of the black cab, the interior of the car and supposedly present driver. Grammatically she is profiled through the passive voice: ‘its driver paid, and handsomely tipped, by the murderee’. The other sentences are rendered mostly in active voice ‘she will walk’, ‘she will see’, ‘she will lean’, ‘she will say’, ‘And in she’ll climb’. Although she is certain to recognize her murderer, his identity will be kept in the background, suggesting he is unknown yet, his is referred to by possessive pronoun ‘his’: ‘His face will be barred in darkness’. The pronominal grounding elements (definite articles) suggest the cab and the car are also known to the murderee. The car functions as a ground, but it is also construed as an active participant through verbs suggesting either stasis (‘wait’, ‘stop’, ‘idle’) or slow, heavy movement (‘lumber’).

The second version of the murder scene appears in the middle of the same chapter 2 (Amis, 1989 : 18). It is embedded in the murderee’s free indirect thought (FIT). Nicola Six, a mastermind behind the whole story, speculates about her prospective murder. ‘The other ending, the real death, the last thing that already existed in the future was now growing in size as she moved forward to confront or greet it. Where would she see the murderer, where would she find him...?’

...Nicola would click through the darkness of the dead-end street. Then the car, the grunt of its brakes, the door swinging open and the murderer (his face in shadow, the car-tool on his lap, one hand extended to seize her hair) saying, Get in. Get in... And in she climbed. It was fixed. It was written. The murderer was not yet a murderer. But the murderee had always been a murderee (Amis, 1989 : 18).

The scene is verbally grounded in hypothetical future as the verb ‘would’ suggests. There is an increase in specificity, certain **respecifying** is involved, details are added (‘the grunt of its brakes’, ‘the door swinging open’, ‘one hand extended to seize her hair’), however the murderer remains underspecified (‘his face in shadow’). The murderee’s figure is still profiled, against the setting of the scene. Her proactive role in search of the murderer is given salience.

Refiguring is minimal here: the figure remains the murderee herself positioned against the scene. However, scene 2 is viewed from a different vantage point, Nicola Six’s perspective, representing the reconstrual type of **relocating**. Seen from the murderee’s

perspective and embedded in her free indirect thought, the construal becomes more subjective compared to the relatively objective construal of scene 1. In other words, this shift involves **reviewing** (adjustment of the construal in terms of subjectivity).

The third occurrence of the murder scene is included in narrator's metafictional commentary: *'I guess I could just wing it. But all I know for sure is the very last scene. The car, the car-tool, the murderer waiting in his car, the murderess ticking towards him in her heels. I don't know how to get to the dead-end street'* (Amis, 1989 : 117). Here the mode of mental scanning has changed from sequential to summary scanning resulting in **rescanning**. The scene is depicted through a narrative summary, not as a sequence of events. The narrator confesses he knows how the murder will happen, but has very little idea how to get to the point of destination.

The final version of the murder scene which is the scene of accomplished murder, appears at the end of the novel in chapter 24 *'Deadline'*. It is verbally grounded in the past. Here, the narrator describes the final stage of his transformation into a murderer. *'DOWN THE DEAD-END street the car was waiting. And so was I... I'm here. I'm in it'* (Amis, 1989 : 464). This is the first recognition of narrator's involvement in the murder.

Specificity. Granularity increases dramatically compared to the initially schematic description of the scene, illustrating the reconstrual type of **respecifying**. *'And how strange it is in here, fish-grey, monkey brown, all the surfaces moist and sticky, and the air no good to breathe. Already destroyed. And not worth saving. The car was there on the other side of the dead-end street. When midnight struck or tolled I crossed the road and bent my body and looked in through the broken window, broken by my own hand, so long ago. The murderer turned toward me'* (Amis, 1989 : 464).

The suspense created by the previous sentence is short – the murderer appears to be Guy, not Keith, as it was stated in the first chapter of the novel *'The Murderer'*:

'Get out of the car, Guy. Get out of the car, Guy.'

He was crying. But so what? We're all crying now, from here on in.

It was Guy. Of course it was. After a thousand years of war and revolution, of thought and effort, and history, and the permanent millennium, and the promised end of mine and thine, Guy still had all the money, and all the strength (Amis, 1989 : 464).

The phrase *'We closed our deal'* signals the exchange between the narrator and Guy. Terminally ill, Samson Young deters Guy from committing the murder by offering to kill the victim himself, provided Guy adopts Keith's abused baby daughter and gives her a chance at a decent life. This agreement shifts the narrative focus from *'what is it like to be a murderess?'* (Amis, 1989 : 15) to *'what is it like to be a narrator-murderer?'* (Amis, 1989 : 494).

Perspective. The subjectivity of the construal in this scene increases: the shift is made from a rather objective construal in the initial version of the murder scene to a highly subjective one, rendered through Samson Young's first person narration. The scene is being viewed from his vantage point. Such adjustment allows us to consider the reconstrual type of **reviewing**. It also involves **relocating** from the omniscient impersonalized narrator's vantage point to a personalized one.

Prominence. Another change is the reversal of the figure-ground alignment – **refiguring**. The murderer becomes foregrounded, he commands *'get out of the car'*, *'get in'*; he observes *'I can see marks on her face'*; he acts *'I crossed'*, *'I bent'*, *'I looked'*, *'I flicked on the lights'*, *'I opened'*, *'I said'*, while the murderess is kept out of the focus of attention. Her actions and control are reduced to the minimum: *'Here she comes'*, *'she leaned forward'*, *'she said'*, *'And in she climbed'*. She achieved her desired end through deliberate manipulation.

...

The black cab has pulled away, unrecalably. Here she comes now on her heels, crying, shivering, through the smell of cordite. There are still fireworks in the sky, subsiding shockwaves, the memory of detonations, cheap gunfire, whistling decrescendo and the smoke of burnt guys. I can see marks on her face. Another hour with Chick and he might have saved us all the trouble. He might have saved us all the goddamned grief. I flicked on the lights and the car lumbered forward. It stopped and idled. I opened the passenger door. I said,

'Get in.'

My face was barred in darkness. But she could see the car-tool on my lap.

'Get in:

She leaned forward. 'You,' she said, with intense recognition. 'Always you...'

'Get in.'

And in she climbed (Amis, 1989 : 464).

The final re-reading. The additional information from the scene is given in the final narrator's word who, on offering the twist of the plot at the end, invites the reader to reconsider the story. He returns to the scene and adds details concerning the shoes the murderess was wearing, how cold she was, how exactly the narrator killed her (Amis, 1989 : 467).

The credibility of the new version of the story end is achieved through establishing new coherence. The reader is invited to backtrack the previous events in search for the clues they might have missed. One of them is the initial scene in the pub the narrator revisits, he confesses the cross actually involves four, not three participants. He was the fourth. When the murderess wrote in her diary *'I have found him'*, she might have meant Samson, not Keith or Guy (Amis, 1989 : 466).

Upon re-reading, one notices the narrator's earlier observation that the cross might actually have four points, depending on the viewing position (Amis, 1989 : 209).

However, as the textual clues suggest when the murderess, the true mastermind of the story, wants to reveal the narrator's role, he silences her by interrupting:

'You are –

'Don't say it!' I said (I astonished myself), and clasped my hands over my ears.

'Please. Not yet. Please don't say it.'

'My God you really are' (Amis 1989 : 63).

This ambiguity is reinforced by self ironizing metafictional statement: *'Boy, am I a reliable narrator!'* (Amis, 1989 : 162). Alternatively, the narrator makes a confession at the end of the novel: *'She outwrote me. Her story worked and mine didn't...Nicola destroyed my book...this wicked thing. This wicked book I tried to write, plagiarized from real life'* (Amis, 1989 : 466-467).

Thus, a central ambiguity persists: did the narrator deliberately misread or unintentionally underread what was happening around him?

4. Conclusion.

Multiple retellings of the resolution scene profoundly shape reader interpretation. Repetition itself makes the scene salient, while the mode of construal transforms throughout the narrative. As the narrative progresses, the murder scene undergoes four reconstruals, from anticipated event to an accomplished murder.

Initially proleptic and grounded in the future, it establishes the murder as inevitable outcome reframing the narrative from 'who-done-it' to 'why-do-it' murder mystery. The final version of the scene, grounded in the past, is reconstrued along three dimensions: increased specificity, shifted figure-ground alignment, and changed perspective. This transformation involves increase in subjectivity: the narrator's vantage point shifts from omniscient external observer to traumatized victim of his character's manipulation. This frames the final scene into personalized first person account of events.

Subsequently, the narrator invites the reader into his own reconstrual of previous events, by revising his narrative in the conclusion. He revisits key moments: the exposition introducing Keith as a murderer, the initial encounter of his characters, and arrives at a surprising realization: he himself is the villain in the story, while the femme fatale / murderess is its true author, having orchestrated his transformation into a murderer from the outset.

Cognitive grammar toolkit, particularly the concept of reconstrual, holds significant potential for future narrative analysis. This framework can help researchers understand how readers reinterpret stories during multiple readings, how authors guide interpretation through shifts in construal dimensions. Such approach would deepen our understanding of how narratives create meaning and how readers construct interpretations through cognitive engagement with textual cues.

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