

F a c u l t a d d e F i l o s o f í a y L e t r a s



**UNIVERSIDAD
DE GRANADA**

Trabajo de Fin de Grado

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

Responsable de tutorización:
Marta Falces Sierra

**PATTERNS OF LOSS: IDEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW IN
ALICE MUNRO'S 'SOON' AND 'SILENCE'.
A critical linguistic approach.**

Lucía Bennett Ortega

Curso académico 2019/2020
Convocatoria ordinaria (mayo-junio)

DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y ORIGINALIDAD DEL TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

Yo, Lucía Bennett Ortega, con documento de identificación 77147406R, y estudiante del Grado en Estudios Ingleses de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Granada, en relación con el Trabajo Fin de Grado presentado para su defensa y evaluación en el curso 2019/20, declara que asume la originalidad de dicho trabajo, entendida en el sentido de que no ha utilizado fuentes sin citarlas debidamente.

Granada, a 27 de mayo de 2020

Fdo.:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucía Bennett Ortega', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lucía Bennett Ortega

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. LITERARY REVIEW.....	4
3. METHOD FOLLOWED	9
4. DATA: CASE STUDY.....	10
5. PRESENTATION OF THE ANALYSIS.....	12
5.1 TEXT 1: SARA.....	12
5.1 TEXT 2: ERIC.....	14
5.3 TEXT 3: PENELOPE	15
6. DISCUSSION.....	16
6.1 SARA.....	16
6.2 ERIC	19
6.3 PENELOPE.....	22
7. FINAL REMARKS	24
8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES.....	25
9. PROJECT REPORT	27

1. Introduction

‘Chance’, ‘Soon’ and ‘Silence’ are three connected stories in Alice Munro’s (2004) *Runaway*. In these stories, readers are led through different stages of Juliet’s life, who appears in her early twenties, then as a young mother, and finally, as a middle-aged woman. The trilogy touches upon various themes such as love, family relationships and loss. It is the latter which I feel to be central to the narrative, and the one I would like to concentrate upon. Juliet experiences the loss of her mother at the end of ‘Soon’, and the losses of her partner and her daughter in ‘Silence’. As a result, much of the story is centred around Juliet’s feelings and her ability to cope with these losses. In fact, Smythe (1992) recognises an elegiac attitude in Munro’s earlier writing and asserts that ‘an effort to control loss often is depicted in her work’ (p.106). In this regard, my research question is the following: how can linguistic criticism contribute to unveil this idea of ‘loss’? For this purpose, I have selected three passages from the stories ‘Soon’ and ‘Silence’ which are representative of the three main losses that Juliet experiences. I have conducted an analysis using Fowler’s (1996) framework on ideological point of view, which involves the examination of transitivity and modality features in the extracts chosen. My main aim will be to demonstrate how a close study of these elements is useful in revealing how Juliet’s experience is rendered through language. In addition, I will examine how certain linguistic choices can determine the reaction and feelings of the reader to a certain extent, as they construct a specific picture of the reality represented.

2. Literary review

For the purpose of exploring how language, and more specifically, certain linguistic choices contribute to create a certain world-view in narrative texts, it is necessary to consider Halliday’s functional theory of language. In his *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2014), Halliday establishes that language carries out three basic functions:

- the textual function, which is concerned with the construction of the text and its formal properties;
- the interpersonal function, which is involved in the enacting of social relationships; and,
- the ideational function, involving the construing of experience (p. 30-31).

It is this last function which I am particularly interested in, as I aim to explore how linguistic criticism can contribute to unveil the representation of reality, and in particular, the depiction of loss, in Alice Munro’s narrative. Fowler (1996) associates his ideological point of view to Halliday’s ideational function, in the sense that both are concerned with the expression of the speaker’s internal world through language (p.168, p.210). However, there is a main difference to

be observed in the application of each linguist's model of analysis, which will be commented on below.

According to Fowler, the notion of ideology can be defined as 'the system of beliefs, values, and categories by reference to which a person or a society comprehends the world' and this system is communicated through the language of a text (p.165). In the first place, I would like to clarify that this notion can be understood in terms of two different levels of analysis. The first is related to ideology at the level of the whole text. In this way, the content of ideology in Harper Lee's (1960) *To Kill a Mockingbird* involves an anti-racist outlook. The second one, however, is concerned with ideological point of view at the level of a character in a narrative text. Fowler provides an example of the expression of ideology at this level in his examination of a passage of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. By means of a short analysis, he demonstrates how language depicts one of the characters, an adult, nonetheless with a child-like mind or limited grasp of the world (p.169). Thus, at this level of analysis, ideology is concerned with a speaker's internal world, which Fowler later refers to as 'mind-style' (p.214). This being clarified, I will now explain how to address the analysis of ideological point of view at the level of character, which is the approach I will be taking to discuss the extracts from *Runaway*.

As determined by Fowler's framework (1996), ideological point of view is primarily manifested in two different ways. The first way is by means of modality, which Fowler defines as the means by which the narrative voice expresses attitudes, opinions and judgements through the use of modal structures (p.166).¹ These modal devices or expressions include modal auxiliaries (expressing different degrees of confidence); modal adverbs or sentence adverbs; evaluative adjectives and adverbs; verbs of knowledge, prediction and evaluation; and finally, generic sentences (p.167). The identification of these elements in a text is essential, but I believe it is also useful to understand the different nuances in meaning that they can convey, especially in relation to the degree of certainty of a speaker's proposition. For this purpose, I am going to use Simpson's (1993, chapter 3) classification of modality into four modal systems:²

¹ It should be noted that according to Halliday's framework, modality is an expression of the interpersonal function of language, rather than the ideational one. This is the main difference to be observed between Halliday's ideational function of language and Fowler's ideological point of view.

² Unlike Fowler, who includes modality as an essential aspect in the study of ideological point of view, Simpson links modality directly to the study of psychological point of view in narrative fiction (Simpson, 1993, chapter 3).

- Deontic: concerns the speaker's attitude towards the degree of duty or obligation → *You must clean the dishes; You are forbidden to clean the dishes.*
- Boulomaic: involves the speaker's expression of wishes and desires → *I hope you are well; Regrettably, I don't feel well.*
- Epistemic: concerns the speaker's confidence in expressing the truth of a proposition → *It could be true, I believe that it is true; Perhaps it is true.*
- Perception: (subcategory of epistemic modality) involving the degree of commitment to the veracity of a proposition expressed by reference to the human perception → *It is clear that it is raining; It is obvious that he means well.*

Fowler explains that there is a second way by means of which ideological point of view is manifested. He states that whereas modal structures convey explicit attitudes or beliefs on the part of the speaker, there are also other structures in language which implicitly express a certain world-view, and this is the system of transitivity (p.168). Halliday (1971) defines transitivity as:

the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the processes of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness, together with the participants in these processes and their attendant circumstances (p.119).

Hence, he establishes a framework for the classification of processes encoded into the grammatical system, each belonging to a specific domain of experience. The three main types of processes established are the following: material processes (external experience of actions and events), mental processes (internal experience of thoughts and feelings) and relational processes (processes of being and having). There are also three other categories, namely, behavioural, verbal and existential processes (Halliday, 2014). Each of these processes are associated with specific participants.

For my analysis of the extracts selected from the *Runaway* stories, I will use the explanations provided by Downing and Locke (2006), which provide a concise version of all the types of processes and their respective participants.³ **Table 1** offers a summary of the processes and their associated participants as used by Downing and Locke:

³ The terminology used by Downing and Locke (2006) is sometimes different to Halliday's (2014) terminology: they use Agent instead of actor, Affected instead of goal, and Said instead of Verbiage, among several others. Nevertheless, these terms are equivalent.

Table 1. Summary of processes and participants

Process type (meaning)	Participants	Example
Material ('doing or happening')	(Agent) + (Affected)	- Juliet read the letter
Mental ('experiencing or sensing') - Cognition - Perception - Affection - Desideration	Experiencer + (Phenomenon)	- She realised that Eric was dead - Soon I'll see - She can't stand me - She wanted to stay away
Relational ('being or becoming') - Attributive - Circumstantial - Possessive	- Carrier - Carrier - Possessor + possessed	- Eric was dead - She was in Vancouver - She has no time for me
Behavioural ('behaving')	Behaver	- Juliet winced
Verbal ('saying')	Sayer + (Recipient) + Said	- Sara had said, <i>soon I'll see Juliet</i>
Existential ('existing')	Existent	- Eric did not exist

Note 1: elements between parenthesis are elements which are optional
Note 2: all examples are taken from the case study

In his influential article, Halliday (1971) uses the transitivity system and analyses how certain patterns are used by the author of *The Inheritors* to suggest specific characters' mental states, such as diminishment of awareness or control. His analysis includes the examination of the types of processes, the participants involved, and the circumstances surrounding the processes in order to complement the interpretation of the work. There are in fact many papers based on Halliday's analytic framework of *The Inheritors*, such as those by Burton (1982), Simpson (1993), O'Halloran (2007) and Canning (2014), all of which deal with mind-style, and also those which go further and explore mental transformation and evolution, as in the case of Ji and Shen (2004).

In spite of the success of his article, Halliday also received severe criticism. Fish (1980a) argues that 'Halliday's interpretation precedes his gathering and evaluating of the data and it [...] is responsible for the way in which the data are read' (p.82). In other words, Fish believes that rather than carrying out an 'objective' analysis, what Halliday does is impose his interpretation of the text, and then use a specific analysis to support his interpretation. I believe that while it is true that there is usually an interpretation of the text before the actual carrying

out of a linguistic analysis, this happens because as well as analysts, linguists are also readers, and hence, there will always be some kind of immediate evaluation or interpretation of a text. Thus, it could be argued that the use of specific patterns or a given framework is not carried out to impose an already decided interpretation, but rather, to help understand how readers arrive to such an interpretation or perspective.

However, Fish (1980b) goes on to say that formal patterns ‘will always be the product of a prior interpretive act’ and thus, ‘there is no such thing as a formal pattern, at least in the sense necessary for the practice of stylistics’ (p.144). Nuttall (2019) refutes Fish’s assertions and defends that there are certain ‘low-level impressions that are always invited by particular linguistic choices’. For example, she argues that the use of body parts or inanimate objects as actors, in combination with a goal-less intransitive clause or a passive, always suggests a certain lack of awareness or control on the part of the human actor involved (p.161). Notwithstanding, I think this statement can be nuanced, as clauses, and more broadly, texts, can convey an array of different meanings according to the wider context they belong to. Indeed, Simpson (1993) maintains the following:

where the problem of interpretative positivism arises is where a *direct* connection is made between the world-view expounded by a text and its linguistic structure. Amongst other things, this step will commit an analyst to the untenable hypothesis that a particular linguistic feature, irrespective of its context of use, will always generate a particular meaning (p.113).

In this way, I believe that specific linguistic choices will invite the reader to interpret the text in a certain way, according to what the text as a whole hopes to convey, but there is not always a well-defined relationship between linguistic form and its function. In order to illustrate this, I am going to compare the following clauses:

- a) Her hand shot towards the gun
- b) Her trembling hand reached out towards the gun

Following Nuttall’s (2019) example, I have used two clauses in which a body part assumes the role of actor in an intransitive clause. On reading a), the meaning conveyed is that of an involuntary quick movement of the ‘owner of the hand’. In contrast, only by changing the process itself and using the modifier ‘trembling’, the meaning conveyed in b) could be completely different to that of a). For example, in a narrative text, the use of a body part as agent might be the result of a film-like effect of zooming in towards the most important element in the picture.

My point is that the relationship between linguistic form and function, as Fish rightly points out, 'will always be the product of a prior interpretative act' which depends on elements such as the reader's set of assumptions and previous knowledge. For this reason, an analysis of the formal patterns of a text provides an explanation as to why the content has been interpreted in a specific way. An illustration of this will be provided in section 6, as I will explore the fact that in the narrative, Juliet is depicted as a powerless character by and large. Nevertheless, this is not something that she or the narrator explicitly *says* or expresses, but something that is conveyed linguistically through specific linguistic choices and structures. In relation to this idea, Stockwell (2013) claims the following:

it is not enough to notice that a reader has been positioned ethically in relation to a literary work and its matrix world; it is essential to observe and analyse *how* that positioning has occurred, and how the text's imagined minds and the reader's actually situated mind have arrived at a certain place' (p.274).

In this sense, the consideration from an ideological point of view provides an explanation of how the reader has been 'positioned' towards a text, or in other words, what linguistic choices have led the reader to interpret the text in a certain way. Burton (1982) claims that the analysis of transitivity choices 'allows us really to see 'what it means' to have chosen a particular prominence for, say, one type of process' (p.200). In addition, the analysis of expressions of modality provides a more complete picture of the character's interior world as regards to the degree of confidence and certainty. In fact, Toolan (2015) asserts that Munro's writing 'involves the most painstaking craft, alongside exceptional psychological insight into people's drives and emotions, their fears and desires' and thus, he believes that a stylistic analysis of her work is justified (p.11). For these reasons, I will approach the theme of loss in the stories of 'Soon' and 'Silence', with the aim of exploring how reality is represented and why readers are guided towards a certain interpretation, or at least, certain feelings and reactions towards the texts.

3. Method followed

In order to investigate my research question (How can linguistic criticism contribute to unveil the idea of 'loss' in Munro's 'Soon' and 'Silence?'), I have followed Fowler's (1996) framework for the discussion of point of view from an ideological plane. Thus, the tools used for the analysis have been the study of the transitivity system and the modality features. I have chosen this approach because in order to understand Juliet's losses, it is essential to explore her mind-style, which in turn is shaped by the specific linguistic choices used to depict it. Thus, an analysis of transitivity patterns and modality features provides an understanding of how Juliet's reality is constructed.

For my case study, I have selected three extracts from ‘Soon’ and ‘Silence’ that deal with each of Juliet’s losses: Sara, Eric and Penelope. As for the collection and analysis of the data, I have begun with the transitivity system. Firstly, I have identified the processes in the passages in which the aforementioned characters are participant constituents.⁴ I have listed them and numbered them in order of appearance. Then, I have classified them into types of processes, as well as assigned participant roles to each of the participants involved. Regarding modality, I have extracted all the modality elements as listed by Fowler and categorised them according to the different types of modality. I have organised all the data into tables.

My discussion is based on the observation and interpretation of the analysis presented. For the discussion of transitivity, I have considered two elements. First, the participant frequency: who is the main character in the passage and what does this mean? Then, for each participant, I have analysed the types of processes in which they are involved and how they are relevant to the interpretation of the text. In addition, I have looked at how modality intersects and contributes to the ideas discussed regarding transitivity.

4. Data: case study

For the purpose of conducting an in-depth analysis of the way in which Juliet experiences her losses, I have chosen three extracts from ‘Soon’ and ‘Silence’ and I will discuss them in order of appearance in the stories. In ‘Soon’, readers find Juliet returning to her beloved hometown, Ontario, with her one-year-old daughter Penelope, to visit her parents. However, this visit does not turn out as Juliet expected, as she finds the relationship between her parents greatly deteriorated. She finds herself in an unfamiliar setting, with a disappointing father and a gravely ill mother. In spite of this, during this visit, she writes Eric a letter in an uplifted tone, covering up her unease. In fact, the passage I have selected for analysis is situated at the end of ‘Soon’, when several years later, Juliet re-reads the letter, right after the reader learns that Sara has died. The death of her mother is the first loss that Juliet experiences. The passage selected involves a particularly interesting moment, when Juliet re-reads the letter some years later and thinks back to the moment when it was written:

⁴ I have not included the processes in which Juliet, Sara, Eric and Penelope are not participants, as I want to focus on those in which they are directly involved, as well as the participant roles they assume within these processes. I would like to note that I have also included the processes in which the participants are not explicitly expressed, but which can be retrieved by means of a paraphrase or because they are simply omitted. For example, in **Text 3**, the clause ‘getting on the bus’ clearly refers to an action carried out by Juliet, although there is no explicit reference to her. For these types of processes I have included the participant roles between square brackets: [Juliet] *getting on the bus*.

When she read the letter, Juliet winced, as anybody does on discovering the preserved and disconcerting voice of some past fabricated self. She wondered at the sprightly cover-up, contrasting with the pain of her memories. Then she thought that some shift must have taken place, at that time, which she had not remembered. Some shift concerning where home was. Not at Whale Bay with Eric but back where it had been before, all her life before.

Because it's what happens at home that you try to protect, as best you can, for as long as you can.

But she had not protected Sara. When Sara had said, *soon I'll see Juliet*, Juliet had found no reply. Could it not have been managed? Why should it have been so difficult? Just to say *Yes*. To Sara it would have meant so much - to herself, surely, so little. But she had turned away, she had carried the tray to the kitchen, and there she washed and dried the cups and also the glass that had held grape soda. She had put everything away (p.125).

(Text 1)

In 'Silence', readers find Juliet travelling to Denmand Island to a spiritual balance centre. She arranges this visit in order to see her daughter Penelope, whom she has not seen in six months, with the hope that Penelope is going to return home. However, Juliet ends up finding out that Penelope has left, perhaps for good. Contact is completely severed between mother and daughter, except for two birthday cards that arrive on Penelope's birthday with nothing written inside. The narrative then jumps back to the death of Juliet's partner, Eric. After his death, Juliet and Penelope stay at their friend Heather's for a while, and then Juliet gets a job at the reference library in Vancouver and a two-bedroom apartment. The passage I have selected involving Juliet's second loss is taken from the middle of 'Silence'. I have chosen this passage because it is the moment in which one day, waiting for the bus after work, the realisation that Eric is dead hits Juliet:

She realized that Eric was dead.

As if all this time, while she was in Vancouver, he had been waiting somewhere, waiting to see if she would resume her life with him. As if being with him was an option that'd stayed open. Her life since she came here had still been lived against a backdrop of Eric, without her ever quite understanding that Eric did not exist. Nothing of him existed. The memory of him in the daily and ordinary world was in retreat.

So this is grief. She feels as if a sack of cement has been poured into her and quickly hardened. She can barely move. Getting on the bus, getting off the bus, walking half a block to her building (why is she living here?), is like climbing a cliff. And now she must hide this from Penelope (p.147). **(Text 2)**

The last passage selected corresponds to Juliet's third loss: that of her daughter. Unlike Juliet's previous losses, Penelope does not die, but she abandons her mother and severs all contact with her. The pain and anguish that Juliet experiences impregnates the whole of 'Silence'. For this reason, I believe that the passage selected is a quite representative fragment of the whole story, as it reflects Juliet's constant mental activity (she continually thinks about her daughter, wondering where she is and the reasons why she left her), as well as conveys the ever-present feeling of loss, and also uncertainty, that Juliet feels:

My daughter went away without telling me good-bye and in fact she probably did not know then that she was going. She did not know it was for good. Then gradually, I believe, it dawned on her how much she wanted to stay away. It is just a way that she has found to manage her life.

It's maybe the explaining to me that she can't face. Or has not time for, really. You know, we always have the idea that there is this reason or that reason and we keep trying to find out reasons. And I could tell you plenty about what I've done wrong. But I think the reason may be something not so easily dug out. Something like purity in her nature. Yes. Some fineness and strictness and purity, some rock-hard honesty in her. My father used to say of someone he disliked, that he had no use for that person. Couldn't those words mean simply what they say? Penelope does not have a use for me.

Maybe she can't stand me. It's possible (p.157). (Text 3)

5. Presentation of the analysis

5.1 Text 1: Sara

Table 2. Transitivity

	<i>Participant 1 (role)</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Type of Process</i>	<i>Participant 2 (role)</i>
<i>i.</i>	She (Agent)	read	Material	
<i>ii.</i>	Juliet (Behaver)	wincing	Behavioural	
<i>iii.</i>	She (Experiencer)	wondered	Mental: cognition	
<i>iv.</i>	She (Experiencer)	thought	Mental: cognition	
<i>v.</i>	She (Experiencer)	had not remembered	Mental: cognition	

<i>vi.</i>	She (Agent)	had not protected	Material	Sara (Affected)
<i>vii.</i>	Sara (Sayer)	had said	Verbal	
<i>viii.</i>	Sara (Experiencer)	will see	Mental: perception	
<i>ix.</i>	Juliet (Agent)	had found	Material	
<i>x.</i>	She (Agent)	turned away	Material	
<i>xi.</i>	She (Agent)	had carried	Material	
<i>xii.</i>	She (Agent)	washed	Material	
<i>xiii.</i>	She (Agent)	dried	Material	
<i>xiv.</i>	She (Agent)	had put away	Material	

Table 3. Modality

<i>Modal auxiliaries</i>	<i>Modal adverbs</i>	<i>Generic sentences</i>	<i>Verba sintendi</i>	<i>Evaluative adjs. & advs.</i>
must, could, should	surely	‘as anybody does on discovering the preserved and disconcerting voice of some past fabricated self’ ‘because it’s what happens at home that you try to protect, as best you can, for as long as you can’	wondered, thought, remembered	preserved, disconcerting, fabricated, sprightly, difficult
<i>epistemic</i>	<i>epistemic</i>	<i>epistemic</i>	<i>perception</i>	-

5.1 Text 2: Eric

Table 4. Transitivity

	<i>Participant 1 (role)</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Type of process</i>	<i>Participant 2 (role)</i>
<i>i.</i>	She (Experiencer)	realised	Mental: cognition	
<i>ii.</i>	Eric (Carrier)	was	Relational: attributive	
<i>iii.</i>	She (Carrier)	was	Relational: circumstantial	
<i>iv.</i>	He (Agent)	had been waiting	Material	
<i>v.</i>	She (Agent)	would resume	Material	with him
<i>vi.</i>	[Juliet] (Carrier)	being	Relational: circumstantial	with him
<i>vii.</i>	She (Agent)	came	Material	
<i>viii.</i>	Her life	had been lived	Material	against a backdrop of Eric
<i>ix.</i>	Her (Experiencer)	understanding	Mental: cognition	
<i>x.</i>	Eric (Existent)	did not exist	Existential	
<i>xi.</i>	Nothing of him [Eric] (Existent)	existed	Existential	
<i>xii.</i>	She (Experiencer)	feels	Mental: perception	
<i>xiii.</i>	A sack of cement	has been poured	Material	into her (Affected)
<i>xiv.</i>	She (Agent)	can (barely) move	Material	
<i>xv.</i>	[Her] (Agent)	getting on	Material	
<i>xvi.</i>	[Her] (Agent)	getting off	Material	
<i>xvii.</i>	[Her] (Agent)	walking	Material	
<i>xviii.</i>	She (Agent)	living	Material	
<i>xix.</i>	She (Agent)	must hide	Material	from Penelope

Table 5. Modality

<i>Modal auxiliaries</i>	<i>Modal adverbs</i>	<i>Generic sentences</i>	<i>Verba sintendi</i>	<i>Evaluative adjs. & advs.</i>
must	-	-	realised, understanding, feels	-
<i>epistemic</i>	-	-	<i>perception</i>	-

5.3 Text 3: Penelope**Table 6.** Transitivity

	<i>Participant 1 (role)</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Type of Process</i>	<i>Participant 2 (role)</i>
<i>i.</i>	My daughter (Agent)	went away	Material	
<i>ii.</i>	[Penelope] (Sayer)	telling	Verbal	me (Target)
<i>iii.</i>	She (Experiencer)	did not know	Mental: cognition	
<i>iv.</i>	She (Agent)	was going	Material	
<i>v.</i>	She (Experiencer)	did not know	Mental: cognition	
<i>vi.</i>	I (Experiencer)	believe	Mental: cognition	
<i>vii.</i>	It	dawned	Mental: cognition	on her (Affected)
<i>viii.</i>	She (Experiencer)	wanted	Mental: desiderative	
<i>ix.</i>	She (Agent)	has found	Material	
<i>x.</i>	She (Agent)	can't face	Material	the explaining to me
<i>xi.</i>	[Penelope] (Possessor)	has	Relational	no time for me
<i>xii.</i>	I (Sayer)	could tell	Verbal	
<i>xiii.</i>	I (Agent)	have done	Material	
<i>xiv.</i>	I (Experiencer)	think	Mental: cognition	
<i>xv.</i>	Penelope (Possessor)	does not have	Relational	for me (Affected)
<i>xvi.</i>	She (Experiencer)	can't stand	Mental: affective	me (Affected)

Table 7. Modality

<i>Modal auxiliaries</i>	<i>Modal adverbs & adjectival versions</i>	<i>Generic sentences</i>	<i>Verba sintendi</i>	<i>Evaluative adjs. & advs.</i>
-	probably, maybe, maybe, it's possible	'we always have the idea that there is this reason or that reason and we keep trying to find out reasons'	know, know, believe, dawn, think, stand	rock-hard
-	<i>epistemic</i>	<i>epistemic</i>	<i>perception</i>	-

6. Discussion

6.1 Sara

The first text I wish to discuss deals with the loss of Juliet's mother, Sara. For reasons of clarity I have divided this passage into two parts. Thus, I am going to divide my analysis accordingly. For the skeleton analysis of all the processes and modality features see **Table 2** and **Table 3**. The first part runs from 'When she read the letter...' to the words '...for as long as you can'. In this part, Sara does not appear as a participant. Juliet, however, appears in a total of five processes. I list and number them below:

- i. When she read the letter*
- ii. Juliet winced*
- iii. She wondered at the sprightly cover-up*
- iv. She thought that some shift must have taken place*
- v. She had not remembered*

Of these five, the first one, (*i.*), is the only Material process and thus, the only instance where Juliet assumes the semantic role of Agent. Arguably, the following process (*ii.*) can be classified as Behavioural. Behavioural processes such as *cough, yawn, blink, sigh...* are typically regarded as involuntary and are situated in 'a borderline area between mental processes and material processes' (Downing & Locke, p.152). Therefore, whereas the first process is clearly a deliberate one, the act of wincing, however, is not. The participant role associated to this type of

process is the role of Behavior. As a result of the voluntary process of reading her letter, Juliet responds with an involuntary bodily reaction, temporarily losing control, or in other words, her agency. The remaining three processes (*iii.*, *iv.*, *v.*) are Mental processes, and more specifically, cognition processes, in which Juliet fulfils the semantic role of Experiencer. These Mental processes build Juliet's mental make-up, as her thoughts drift back to the moment when she wrote the letter during the visit to her parents' house. In more detail, *iii.* is a process of thinking, in which the Phenomenon is a 'sprightly cover-up'; *iv.* is slightly different, as 'facts, beliefs, doubts, perceptions and expectations are encoded as finite *that*-clauses' (Downing & Locke, p. 141). In this way, it is not a process of thinking, but of believing the Phenomenon. Finally, *v.* contributes to the emerging picture of Juliet remembering and thinking about the past.

Mental processes, according to Fowler's (1996) framework, are not only elements that belong to the transitivity system, but are also expressions of modality. Another modality expression that can be observed is the single modal auxiliary *must* in clause *iv.* This modal auxiliary deserves particular attention, as it can belong to both the deontic system and the epistemic system, and in this particular clause cause potential ambiguity: *she thought that some shift must have taken place*. However, the use of *must* here is related to the notion of certainty, not obligation. Thus, its use conveys the sense that Juliet's confidence in her thoughts seems to waver. It is particularly relevant as it contributes to form a picture in which Juliet is immersed in her thoughts, but introduces the element of doubt in her memories, as she expresses that she is not sure of what happened. In a similar way, the two generic sentences and the evaluative adjectives used in this first part of the passage contribute to this sense of doubt, confusion and ambiguity. More specifically, the generic sentences claim universal truths, they are constructed to project universally accepted facts. However, in this context, the clauses only refer to Juliet and what is suggested is that she no longer feels sure about these assertions. In fact, the evaluative adjectives used (*preserved*, *disconcerting*, *fabricated*, *sprightly*) convey her uncertainty towards both the content of her letter and towards her uplifting artificial tone. In this sense, Juliet is depicted as self-analysing herself and her actions, and what comes across is a sense of self-justification.

Turning now to the second part of the passage, there are eight processes in which Juliet is a participant. I list them below as numbered in **Table 2**:

- vi.* *She had not protected Sara*
- ix.* *Juliet had found no reply*
- x.* *She had turned away*

xi. She had carried the tray to the kitchen

xii. & xiii. She washed and dried the cups

xiv. She had put everything away

It is very interesting to observe that all these processes are Material processes, in which Juliet fulfils the role of Agent. A closer examination of these processes, however, suggests that rather a succession of processes of ‘doing’, Juliet is ‘not doing’. This is due to two main features. The first is related to the use of negation. In *vi.*, although Juliet fulfils an Agent role, the process is negated. It can be thus understood a process of not doing, more precisely, of not protecting her mother, who is the Affected participant in this process, and indeed the person affected by Juliet’s inaction. Simpson and Canning (2014) argue that in spite of the fact that negated transitivity processes convey a ‘non-event’, they nonetheless convey a ‘pragmatic presupposition’ of their narrative significance (p. 294).⁵ Indeed, what is brought to the fore is the significance of Juliet’s inaction. In *ix.*, it is not immediately clear whether Juliet chooses not to reply, or if she was simply unable to. Either way, there is again a lack of agency conveyed through the use of negation. In this sense, the narrative significance acquired and foregrounded is Juliet’s lack of doing.

The second feature in the text that conveys the sense of ‘not doing’ is somewhat more complex. In the succession of processes *x. turned away, xi. had carried, xii. washed, xiii. dried, xiv. put away*, Juliet is described as the Agent of deliberate actions. However, the last process is the element that lies at the heart of the matter: *xiv. She had put everything away*. This sentence corresponds to the last words of the passage, and in fact, to the last words of ‘Soon’. The key to the question lies in the word ‘everything’, which not only refers to the objects that Juliet is tidying up, but also refers to Juliet’s feelings. Thus, at one level, Juliet is doing chores, moving around and getting things done. At a second level, Juliet is ‘not doing’: she is not dealing with her feelings and she is not giving her mother a reply. It is not clear whether it is an act of avoidance, unwillingness, or simple inability, and I think that is left open to interpretation. Nevertheless, it is evident that the representation of Juliet’s inaction through the use of Material processes is evidence of specific linguistic choices that lead readers towards a specific viewpoint of the situation. The effect of the cumulative build-up of unimportant actions is the foregrounding of Juliet’s regret and distress upon her own inaction.

⁵ A pragmatic presupposition is a term that refers to the fact that sentences (and in this case, processes) ‘work from shared knowledge, expectations and assumptions, rather than from a semantic core’ (Simpson & Canning, 2014, p.294).

As for the use of modality in this second part, the modal auxiliaries used (*could, should, would*) as well as the modal adverb *surely* reinforce this sense of regret. They belong to the epistemic system and they convey different degrees of confidence. As a result of her inaction, Juliet is left to imagine the ‘what could have been’ and the ‘what would have happened’. In particular, the combination of *should* with the use of the evaluative adjective *difficult* in ‘why should it have been so difficult?’, precisely convey Juliet’s anguish and feelings of regret.

As it has been demonstrated, the focus of the passage is entirely on Juliet. In fact, there are only three processes with Sara as a participant, and they all appear within one line: *vi. But she had not protected Sara. vii. When Sara had said, viii. soon I’ll see Juliet...* Sara does not take part in any Material processes, only in a Verbal process (*vii.*) and a Mental process (*viii.*), that consist of the words and feelings that Sara expresses, which Juliet is unable to answer. As the whole passage conveys Juliet’s feelings of regret, it is not surprising that Sara appears as an Affected participant in *vi.* To sum up, the linguistic choices in this passage have the purpose of representing Juliet in the midst of a mental voyage to the past, which gives rise to feelings of uncertainty, anguish and regret.

6.2 Eric

The second passage I am going to examine involves the moment in which Juliet realises that Eric is dead. First, I am going to focus on Juliet. In this text, there are a total of thirteen processes in which Juliet is a participant. Out of these, three are Mental processes:

- i. She realised that Eric was dead*
- ix. [...] without her ever quite understanding that Eric did not exist*
- xii. & xiii. She feels as if a sack of cement has been poured into her*

These mental processes are finely distributed into the first, second and third paragraphs of the extract, and they contribute to an overall cohesion, a sense of mental activity maintained throughout the passage. The first one, *i.*, is a Mental cognition process and it provides the theme and summary of the whole passage. It is particularly interesting because Eric died months before this realisation, but it is only in this particular moment, that Juliet seems to become fully aware of the situation. This establishes a clear link between this passage and the one previously discussed, as in both, Juliet thinks back to her past in a kind of delayed reaction to previous events. Moreover, the verb *realise* is an interesting lexical choice. Obviously, Juliet already *knew* that Eric was dead. This realisation comes as an involuntary action, it does not depend on Juliet’s agency, it is not only a matter of experiencing, but also a rather a sudden ‘receiving’ of this realisation. It is a Mental cognition process, but in this context, it could be argued that it is a

process of ‘recognition’. The implication of this choice suggests that Juliet has been avoiding the truth. Up to this moment in the story, it seems that Juliet has carried on with life, she has tried to set her things in order and take care of Penelope. However, in this particular moment, she suddenly becomes fully aware of the death of her partner. The second Mental process, *ix.*, is also a cognition process, negated by the word ‘without’, which reinforces the idea of not being aware of the situation. Unlike the first two, the third process (*xii. She feels...*) is a Mental perception process, and its Phenomenon is constructed as another process: *xiii. as if a sack of cement has been poured into her.* Nuttall (2019) observes that passivisation is one of the features that in transitivity analysis contributes to ‘a reduced sense of the awareness, intentionality or control in the human agent responsible’ (p.161). Indeed, Juliet assumes the role of Affected participant in *xiii.*.

Turning to the observation of Relational processes, Juliet is a Carrier within two Relational processes, which are both circumstantial and simply situate Juliet locally and with accompaniment, respectively:

- iii. While she was in Vancouver*
- vi. [Juliet] being with him*

However, Material processes are once again the most interesting elements in the passage. Juliet is the Agent of a total of eight processes. The first one (*v. if she would resume her life with him*) is a conditional clause and thus, it is hypothetical, something that has not actually happened. Furthermore, it is subject to modal auxiliary *would* which reinforces this idea. Thus, even though she is the Agent of this clause, she is not actually carrying this process out, it is merely a projection. The next process (*vii. since she came here*) is the only Material process that explicitly denotes agency. Her decision to move to Vancouver was an intentional one, one where she was in charge of her actions and her life. However, skipping several processes and turning to process *xviii. Why is she living here?*, there is an element of self-doubt introduced. It is ambiguous whether the referent of ‘here’ is Vancouver or the new apartment, but either way, she is self-questioning a decision she has previously made. In this way, this rhetorical question, gives rise to doubts regarding the agency in process *vii.* This sense of doubt and confusion could be understood to arise as a result of her loss.

What is more, turning to material processes *xiv.*, *xv.*, *xvi.* and *xvii.*, it can be observed that in all of them, in spite of being an agent, it is explicitly expressed that she is having difficulties in carrying out these actions, so again her agency is not ‘total’ or ‘strong’. Taking a closer look, in *xiv. She can barely move*, it is evident that the use of *barely* is used to depict the constraining of Juliet’s movement. Although it is a Material process, it is explicit that her agency is limited and her powerlessness is brought to the fore. Similarly, the next clauses (*xv. Getting on the bus*, *xvi. Getting off the bus*, *xvii. Walking half a block to her building*) are all

compared to ‘climbing a cliff’. Again, readers are presented with a series of actions being carried out by Juliet, but which are immensely difficult for her to execute. In addition, they are all intransitive processes, namely, they have no affected participants. Thus, it can be asserted that the consequence of realising that Eric is dead is a kind of physical inability for Juliet, a lack of control over her body.

Finally, the last clause of this passage is also a Material process (*xix. And now she must hide this from Penelope*). After a series of processes denoting mental activity on the one hand, and another series of Material processes denoting lack of physical control on the other, this last clause appears as something different. Her role as Agent is not ambiguous. This clause in fact includes one of the only instances of modality to be found in this passage. The rest of modality features involve the use of the verba sentiendi.⁶ In this sense, this use of *must* becomes a foregrounded choice. According to Simpson’s classification, this modal auxiliary belongs to the modal system of ‘deontic modality’, which ‘is concerned with a speaker’s attitude to the degree of obligation attaching to the performance of certain actions’ (p.47). In this sense, the use of a Material processes denoting strong agency, in combination with the modal auxiliary, emphasises Juliet’s conviction and her firm belief of what she thinks is her obligation. In a similar way to **Text 1**, it can be argued that Juliet is demonstrating a pattern of avoidance. Once again, there is a delayed reaction to something which happened in the past. What is more, she maintains the attitude of avoidance by deciding to hide her feelings from her daughter and putting them away. She might be avoiding a conversation, avoiding her feelings, or even trying to prevent her daughter from sharing her pain.

Eric on the other hand, assumes a more secondary role in this passage, only appearing in a total of seven processes, which I list below:

- ii. Eric was dead*
- iv. As if [...] he had been waiting somewhere*
- v. She would resume her life with him*
- vi. [Juliet] being with him*
- viii. Her life [...] had been lived against a backdrop of Eric*
- x. Eric did not exist*
- xi. Nothing of him [Eric] existed*

As it can be observed, the only Material process in which Eric is an Agent is *iv.*, but it is a hypothetical clause, something that has not happened. In *ii.*, Eric is a Carrier and in *x.*, and *xi.*, an Existent, again depicting no agency, but simply being portrayed as a participant in processes of ‘being or existing’. In process *v.*, Eric is not an independent participant, but is part of the noun phrase that functions as Affected participant (*her life with him*). In addition, *with him*

⁶ Term used by Uspensky (1973) to refer to words denoting feeling, thinking and perceiving.

expresses the meaning of accompaniment.⁷ This circumstantial meaning appears again in *vi*. In *viii*., he is part of the circumstance as well, this time expressing the meaning of manner.

In short, in this passage, Juliet is portrayed as the predominant participant, whereas Eric carries out the simple function of ‘being’. However, her role as Agent is largely absent. Her confused and fuzzy thoughts, as well as her inability to move and take control over her body results in the reader’s perception of Juliet as somebody greatly affected by her partner’s death. At the same time, there is also a clear pattern of avoidance. Firstly, it takes her a long time to actually feel this immense loss, and in this sense, there is a clear delayed reaction to Eric’s death. Secondly, she decides to hide her feelings from her daughter.

6.3 Penelope

Finally, I am going to examine the third and last passage I have selected, which corresponds to Juliet’s third loss: her separation from her daughter. It is interesting to point out that from a typographical point of view, unlike the other two passages, this last one is written in italics. According to Bigot (2010), ‘in Munro’s fiction, italics, which create a visual disturbance on the page, are used to signal a different form of speech’ such as ‘unspoken, “silenced” speech’ (p.3). Indeed, these words are unvoiced. They embody what Juliet imagines she would tell her lover, Gary, about Penelope, but which she does not dare to say out loud. In relation to this, another important consideration, which sets apart this passage from the previous ones, is the fact that it is no longer the narrator narrating, but Juliet.

There are a total of sixteen processes in which Juliet and Penelope appear as participants in this passage. Penelope, or any reference to her (*my daughter, she*) assumes a participant role in a total of twelve processes. She fulfils the role of Agent in four Material processes: *i.*, *iv.*, *ix.*, and *x.*; Experiencer in the following Mental processes: *iii.*, *v.*, *viii.*, *xvi.*; Carrier in two Relational processes expressing possession: *xi.* and *xv.*; Sayer in the Verbal process *ii.*; and Affected participant in *vii.* As it can be observed, Penelope is a participant in a variety of processes: Material, Mental, Relational and Verbal; none of which particularly stand out, or need special consideration. What is important to understand is that the fact that Penelope is a participant in diverse process types is evidence of the variety of roles she assumes in Juliet’s mind. Juliet represents what could be called a ‘complete picture’ of her daughter’s reality: Penelope is represented as doing, thinking, saying, having, feeling, and even as an Affected participant in a process of cognition.

⁷ Accompaniment expresses a joint participation in the process, involving either the notion of ‘togetherness’ or that of ‘additionality’ (Downing & Locke, 2006, p.157).

As for Juliet, she is a participant in nine processes (which is slightly lower to Penelope's participation in twelve). The only process in which Juliet is an Agent is in *xiii. I have done wrong*. However, this process is what Ji and Shen (2004) call a secondary process, as it is included into a primary one. To clarify this, the whole clause is the following: *I could tell you plenty about what I've done wrong*. Thus, *what I have done wrong*, is the Said pertaining to the primary Verbal process *xii. I could tell you [that]*. The reason why this is particularly relevant is that the primary process, the Verbal one, has not been carried out, as the modal auxiliary *could* conveys possibility, but not realisation. This in turn, affects the Said, which is understood in the same terms, as something which could be done, but which has not been carried out yet. My point is that the agency in this process is somewhat limited.

In addition, out of nine processes, Juliet assumes the role of Experiencer in two Mental processes: *vi. I believe* and *xiv. I think*, which are central to the passage, due to the fact that the whole extract is a picture of Juliet's mental activity, as she thinks of the possible reasons why her daughter left her. What is more, semantically, these processes express an important degree of uncertainty, as they are *verba sentiendi* of thinking, not of knowing. These specific choices bring to the fore the fact that Juliet is simply speculating. Regarding the rest of the participant roles Juliet assumes, they are all realised by the personal pronoun 'me', as illustrated in **Table 6**. Hence her roles are either a Target in a Verbal process (*ii. Without [her] telling me*) or as Affected (as in *xvi. She can't stand me*). The overall effect of these choices is that Juliet is depicted as either experiencing (thinking about her daughter), or being affected by her daughter's actions. In this way, Juliet presents herself as powerless, there is no 'doing' on her part in this extract, and this conveys a general lack of agency, as well as a lack of control of the situation. Conversely, Penelope is the protagonist of this reality, she is presented as the person who is in control of the situation, and in fact she is, as it is her choice to stay away, and not have any contact with her mother. It is clear that Penelope's active and predominant role is deliberately foregrounded this way, and it contributes to provide the counterpart to Juliet's own inaction and helplessness.

As for modality in this extract, it has an important role in reinforcing the sense of helplessness conveyed by means of transitivity choices. Although there is a lack of modal auxiliaries altogether, the rest of modal elements identified by Fowler's framework are all present. Particularly interesting are the modal adverbs and the adjectival versions present in the following clauses:

- *She probably did not know then that she was going.*
- *It's maybe the explaining to me that she can't face.*
- *Maybe she can't stand me.*
- *It's possible.*

The underlined expressions belong to the epistemic system of modality, and thus are concerned with the degree of certainty of the speaker. In this case, they all convey a high degree of uncertainty. Juliet spends many years wondering about Penelope and struggling to understand why she left, so the choice of these modal expressions comes as no surprise. This uncertainty can be understood in terms of Juliet's lack of confidence and knowledge. In addition, there is also a generic sentence in this passage: 'we always have the idea that there is this reason or that reason and we keep trying to find out reasons'. As I mentioned previously in the analysis of **Text 1**, generic sentences have the function of conveying a proposition that is supposedly universally accepted. However, what is actually being conveyed is Juliet's self-consciousness about her search for reasons. In this sense, Juliet is understood to be self-justifying her personal reaction to her daughter's silence. There is also one only evaluative adjective in this text, but it is very significant. The use of the adjective 'rock-hard' to describe Penelope's honesty is somewhat reminiscent of the choice of words used in **Text 2** to describe how Juliet feels towards Eric's death ('she feels as if a sack of cement has been poured into her and quickly hardened'). Arguably, rather than meaning 'complete honesty', the choice of this adjective suggests how Juliet physically feels towards Penelope's honesty: it hurts her.

To sum up, Juliet paints a picture in which she is the Affected participant in her relationship with her daughter. The pain of her loss is conveyed through the constant mulling over why Penelope abandoned her. The combination of her role mainly as Affected, as well as the use of Mental processes points towards a nearly complete lack of agency on her part. Modality intersects with transitivity to reinforce her feeling of powerlessness, and to represent her uncertainty towards the situation, as she is completely left in the dark.

7. Final remarks

I have attempted to demonstrate how linguistic criticism contributes to discuss the idea of loss in Munro's 'Soon' and 'Silence'. For this purpose, I have selected three passages from the stories that deal with Juliet's internal state of mind and the way in which she experiences the three losses of her loved ones. To carry out my analysis, I have followed Fowler's framework for the expression of point of view on the ideological plane. Thus, the tools for analysis used have been the examination of the transitivity system and the modality features in the texts. For each passage, I have extracted the processes in which Juliet, Sara, Eric and Penelope are participants, and I have provided a classification into types of processes and participant roles. I have also isolated the modality elements and categorised them into systems. The data extracted has been discussed and studied at length. To provide a broad overview, one of the elements the three passages have in common is an important presence of Mental processes, which represent Juliet's mental build-up. Moreover, and more interestingly, what this analysis has shown is how

Munro makes an extensive use of Material processes to convey a general lack of agency. In the first extract, Juliet is depicted as inactive with regard to dealing with her feelings and with respect to providing an answer for her mother. In the second extract, her lack of agency is more physical, as a result of her feelings of grief. In the last passage, Juliet presents herself as helpless and affected by all the actions taken by her daughter. Thus, the general pattern being conveyed is a pattern of inaction towards these losses, and this can be interpreted as Juliet's effort to control loss, and more specifically, an effort to avoid her feelings of grief and regret. I have also shown how modality elements in the text reinforce the sense of loss and contribute to convey a feeling of uncertainty. In this way, the analysis has examined the way in which reality and experience are made to look in language, and in particular, how the reality of Juliet's inner world is depicted. I have demonstrated how certain linguistic elements and structures paint a specific picture for the reader, and to a certain extent determine the reader's feelings and reactions towards the text. In this respect, it would be very interesting to explore the idea of loss from the study of speech and thought presentation. More in particular, the examination of Munro's use of Free Indirect Thought, would be very interesting, as it typically makes readers feel 'closer to the character, almost inside his head as he thinks, and sympathise with his viewpoint' (Short, 1995, p.315), and this is exactly what happens in the stories, as readers experience first hand the pain that Juliet goes through, and at the end of 'Silence', they are placed alongside Juliet as she 'keeps on hoping' (Munro, p.158).

8. Bibliographical references

- Bigot, C. (2010). Alice Munro's "Silence": From the politics of silence to a rhetoric of silence. *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 55, 23-38. <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1116>
- Burton, D. (1982). Through glass darkly, through dark glasses. In R. Carter (Eds.), *Language and literature: An introductory reader in stylistics* (pp.195-214). Allen & Unwin.
- Canning, P. (2014). Functionalist stylistics. In M. Burke (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of stylistics*. Routledge. <https://www.pdfdrive.com/the-routledge-handbook-of-stylistics-d183872788.html>
- Downing, A., & Locke, P. (2006). *English grammar: A university course*. Routledge.
- Fish, S. (1980a). What is stylistics and why are they saying such terrible things about it? In S. Fish (Eds), *Is there a text in this class?: The authority of interpretative communities*, (pp. 68–96). MA: Harvard University Press.

- Fish, S. (1980b). What is stylistics and why are they saying such terrible things about it? In S. Fish (Eds), *Is there a text in this class?: The authority of interpretative communities*, (pp. 246–67). MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fowler, R. (1996). *Linguistic criticism* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Halliday, M. (1971). Linguistic function and literary style: An inquiry into the language of William Golding's "The Inheritors". In J. J. Weber (Eds.), *The stylistics reader: From Roman Jakobson to the present*, (pp. 56–86). Routledge.
- Ji, Y., & Shen, D. (2004). Transitivity and mental transformation: Sheila Watson's The Double Hook. *Language and Literature*, 13(4), 335–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947004046284>
- Lee, H. (1960). *How to Kill a Mockingbird*. Arrow Books.
- Munro, A. (2004). *Runaway*. London: Vintage.
- Nuttall, L. (2019). Transitivity, agency, mind style: What's the lowest common denominator? *Language and Literature*, 28(2), 159–179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947019839851>
- O'Halloran, K. (2007). The subconscious in James Joyce's 'Eveline': a corpus stylistic analysis that chews on the 'Fish hook'. *Language and Literature*, 16(3), 227–244. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0963947007072847>
- Short, M. H. (1995). *Exploring the language of poems, plays and prose*. Longman.
- Simpson, P. (1993). *Language, ideology and point of view*. Routledge.
- Simpson, P., & Canning, P. (2014). Action and event. In P. Stockwell & S. Whiteley (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of stylistics*, (pp. 281-299). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139237031>
- Smythe, K. E. (1992). Figuring grief: Gallant, Munro, and the poetics of elegy. MQUP. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Stockwell, P. (2013). The positioned reader. *Language and Literature*, 22(3), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947013489243>
- Uspensky, B. (1973). *A poetics of composition*. University of California Press.

9. Project report

The aim of this report is to retrace the steps that have led to the creation and writing of the project titled *Patterns of loss: ideological point of view in Alice Munro's 'Soon' and 'Silence'. A critical linguistic approach*. Accordingly, it provides a retrospective view of the following stages: starting point, objectives, production process and results. In addition, it includes the greatest achievements and the greatest difficulties involved in the elaboration of this project.

The starting point of this project relates to the question *why stylistics?* The answer to this is not complicated. As a lover of literature, I am also interested in the role language plays in the reader's interpretation of literary texts. This is where stylistics comes in, as it is a discipline that studies texts by concentrating on their linguistic structures. After my reading of Alice Munro's *Runaway*, I was particularly drawn to the three interconnected stories about the character Juliet. The fact that three whole stories are centred around one character gives Juliet a deep and layered depiction, and as such, I felt it would lend itself to an in-depth study of her representation. I was closely drawn to the character, her feelings and reactions, as well as to her relationships with others. What particularly struck me was how much loss this woman experiences, and there were several passages that specifically caught my eye. This feeling was reinforced after watching Almodovar's *Julieta*, which is focused on the feelings of guilt and grief of the protagonist. I then decided that within the field of critical linguistics, it would be very interesting to examine how the idea of loss was constructed through language in Munro's stories.

The question then was what approach to take. On reading Fowler's (1996) study of narrative devices and point of view, I decided that the approach from an ideological point of view was exactly what fitted my initial idea: the examination of Juliet's world-view and mind-style, specifically in relation to her experience of loss. Once this was decided, I proceeded to go back to the passages that had previously interested me, and I selected one for each of the main losses that Juliet had experienced. My case study was thus established. In accordance with Fowler's framework, I identified the following objectives: first, the study of the transitivity system, and second, the examination of modality features, within the selected texts.

The next step involved researching the topic of interest. I used and consulted works by Fowler, Simpson, Halliday, Fish, and Canning, among many others. Following Fowler's framework, and with a clearer idea of how to proceed with the analysis, I was able to start the production process. Firstly, I examined the transitivity system. I identified all the processes in the texts in which the characters were involved. I then isolated all the processes and classified

them into process types. Next, I did the same with their respective participant roles. Secondly, I identified all the modality elements in the texts and classified them into categories as well. Once I had all my information organised into tables, I proceeded to discuss the data obtained.

The main results obtained are as follows. There is an important presence of Mental processes in the selected passages, which represent Juliet's mental build-up. In addition, there is a predominance of Material processes, which interestingly, convey Juliet's lack of agency. In the first passage, Juliet is presented as 'not doing': she does not give her mother an answer and she does not deal with her own feelings. In the second passage, Juliet is again depicted as inactive, but this time, through a lack of control over her body, as a physical reaction to Eric's death. Finally, in the third extract, Juliet portrays herself as the affected participant in the relationship with her daughter Penelope, and thus conveys a sense of helplessness and lack of agency once more. As it can be observed, there is always something holding Juliet back, probably avoidance; something that prevented her from responding to her mother, something that delayed her reaction to her partner's death, something that left her powerless with respect to the situation with her daughter. The conclusion reached is the observation of a general pattern of inaction regarding these losses, which can be interpreted as an attitude of avoidance in order to be able to deal with the feelings of grief and pain. Moreover, the analysis of modality features has contributed to reinforce the pattern of inaction and to convey a sense of uncertainty.

The greatest achievement of this project has been to be able to understand how all these impressions, feelings and interpretations are conveyed and constructed through language. It has made me fully understand how linguistic criticism is essential to the interpretation of texts. As a reader, it is one thing to approach a certain piece of text and go away with something new; a new idea, a new impression. It is a whole other level to be able to deconstruct the text into pieces and to be able to understand how they fit and interconnect, as well as to be able to observe the whole mechanism behind the words printed on the page. Another great accomplishment that has resulted from this project is concerned with the bibliographical research conducted. It is sometimes difficult to find specific monographs, but at the end of the day, it is very rewarding to feel that the reading and studying of a wide variety of articles and papers has given me a deep insight into the field of ideology and character mind-style.

This being said, I have also faced some difficulties, the first of which is related to putting the theory into practice. It might seem straightforward to have a framework to follow and a chosen text to apply the analysis to. However, each text is evidently a world unto itself, and I found it challenging to link the ideas that I had read to the texts I had chosen for the analysis. Another aspect I struggled with was the topic itself. At times, I found it difficult to maintain absolute focus on the topic at hand. It was tempting to read into other related areas of study, such as pragmatics, speech and thought presentation, or cognitive stylistics, as there are

so many elements to take into account when analysing a text. Nevertheless, I understood it made no sense to broaden the subject, as it would have diverted the natural course of the theme and would have prevented an in-depth study of the topic. In this sense, I have acquired significant competency with regard to synthesis, clarity and suitable organisation of ideas.

To conclude, with this project I have contributed to proving how the analysis of transitivity features is essential to unveil a character's world-view. Moreover, I have shown how the study of modality elements contributes to this analysis. Specific linguistic choices regarding transitivity and modality lead readers towards certain interpretations of texts, and this project has demonstrated a rigorous study based on an explicit framework of analysis that has shed light upon these specific choices. On a final note, this project, as the culminating paper towards the completion of my English Studies degree, has allowed me to take responsibility for my own learning. I have been able to determine the focus and direction of my paper and it has proven to be good practice for further studies at postgraduate level.