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Analysing analytical minds. An interpersonal pragmatics approach to literary discourse

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Abstract:
Taking an interpersonal pragmatics approach, this paper aims to view literary text as social discourse where conversational exchanges convey more than the content of talk. Applying the method of interpersonal pragmatic analysis, centred around the notions of implicatures and the concept of face in pragmatics, the social status of speakers is revealed via expressing their personal desires, preferences and professional ambitions. Combining the models of pragmatic stylistics analysis and the conception of interpersonal rhetoric (Leech, 1983) enables effective exploration of the interplay between characters, their efforts to comply with the cooperative and politeness principles, following particular communicative goals in conversations, making inferences and understanding implicatures. Focusing on the above-stated aims of research, the historical thriller The Interpretation of Murder *by Jed Rubenfeld (2006) was chosen as the subject of analysis. In this novel, psychoanalysis and interpretation of a patient's/victim's responses, the unique application of professional expertise in psychoanalysis, palpable rivalry between scholars, as well as a desire for international recognition provide rich material for analysis. The presented research contributes new insights into the scholarly debate on interpersonal pragmatics, showing that approaching literary discourse analysis via a pragmatic stylistics approach is relevant and beneficial.*

1. Introduction

The development of interdisciplinary studies has opened new perspectives in the processing of literary discourse. A methodological paradigm of interpersonal pragmatics, as closely related to pragmatic stylistics, enables us to view literary discourse as a process of communicative interaction between the writer (addresser) and the reader (addressee) of the literary text. Hand in hand with stylistic characteristics, the interpersonal-pragmatic factors influence the creation of the message by the writer on one hand and its interpretation by the reader on the other. Thus the role of the reader becomes recognized in the process of negotiation of understanding the

message. Exploring the creation process of the set of implicatures by the writer and their understanding by the reader of a literary text becomes the way of cooperation between them, and as such, calls for investigating pragmatic factors in literary discourse.

The interpersonal-pragmatic analysis presented below centres around the notion of *implicature* and the concept of *face* in pragmatics. The main characters of the analysed novel reveal, more or less unintentionally, their social status via expressing personal desires, preferences and professional ambitions. The interpersonal dimension of literary discourse becomes crucial since the way the conversational exchanges are structured shows how power relationships between characters in a novel are distributed. We aim to show that exploring communicative interactions between characters, their efforts to comply with the cooperative and politeness principles, following particular communicative goals in conversations, making inferences and understanding implicatures, may explain some hidden aspects of a literary text and add alternative dimensions to its analysis and interpretation.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Interpersonal pragmatics in the paradigm of modern investigation

The paradigm of interpersonal pragmatics builds on the term interpersonal rhetoric first introduced by Leech (1983). Leech's conception draws on Halliday's threefold model of language functions where, alongside "ideational" and "textual" functions, the "interpersonal" function is described as one that "serves to establish and maintain social relations" (1970, pp. 140-165). Leech involves both the speaker and hearer in his definition and interprets the interpersonal function as "language functioning as an expression of one's attitudes and an influence upon the attitudes and behaviour of the hearer" (1983, p. 56). In his conception of interpersonal rhetoric, Leech considers the cooperative principle (CP) and the politeness principle (PP) as first-order principles, while irony, humour and banter are considered second-order principles, and some others, such as the interest principle and the "optimistic" communicative framework known as the Pollyanna principle, as third-order or minor principles (ibid.: 16). More recently, the notion of interpersonal rhetoric has been revisited as part of interpersonal pragmatics (e.g. Clark 2013, Culpeper 2008, Locher 2015). In their overview of interpersonal pragmatics, Culpeper and Haugh (2014) view interpersonal relations and interpersonal attitudes as the kernel of the interpersonal focus. Indeed, the analysis of social relations facilitated by interaction (such as intimacy, comradeship, power, rights and obligations), as well as interpersonal attitudes (e.g. personal values and perspectives, emotions, etc.) mediated by interaction as expression of generosity, sympathy, likes and dislikes, fear and

anger, etc., are at the centre of the presented analysis of interaction between the participants in collected conversational exchanges. The framework of the analysis draws on the explanatory value of interpersonal rhetoric; more specifically, it is outlined along the concepts of (first- and second-order) pragmatic principles viz the CP and the PP (Leech 2014) distinction between saying and implicating, and the notion of conversational implicatures (Grice 1975). Cooperation and politeness are mostly regulative factors which ensure that once conversation is under way it will develop in a smooth and efficient manner. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the illocutionary force of an utterance and its rhetorical force (its social goals), that is the meaning it conveys regarding the speaker's adherence to rhetorical principles, for instance to what extent the speaker is being truthful, polite, ironic, etc. Together, the illocutionary force and the rhetorical force of an utterance make up its pragmatic force (Leech 1983).

2.2 Pragmatics, literary pragmatics and pragmatic stylistics

There are many definitions of **pragmatics**, most of them share the idea that pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning, contextual meaning, the study of what more gets communicated than said, etc. In general, pragmatics investigates language in use (e.g. Yule 1996), or broadly speaking, pragmatics is an investigation of the relationship between language, its users, and its context of use (Warner, 2014, p. 362). The main idea that language users do not merely communicate through their words but implicate and perform particular acts and effects was introduced in the 1950s and 1960s by philosophers J. L. Austin and Paul Grice. Their ideas were further elaborated and popularized by linguist John Searle. Literary pragmatics and pragmatic stylistics have emerged out of their works devoted mainly to the study of communicative principles and their maxims, types of implicatures, and speech act theory.

Before discussing literary pragmatics, let us briefly discuss the concepts of *implicature* and *face* as crucial to our approach. *Conversational implicature* in pragmatics is commonly understood as "an additional unstated meaning that has to be assumed in order to maintain the cooperative principle". In other words, if the speaker utters "something which is literally false, the hearer must assume the speaker means to convey more than is being said" (Yule, 1996, p. 128). We distinguish several types of conversational implicatures, namely generalized and particularized conversational implicature. Unlike particularized conversational implicature, generalized conversational implicature does not require particular knowledge to understand the message. In our analysis presented below, mostly particularized conversational implicatures will be discussed, since the analysed conversations take place in very specific contexts in which

particular inferences are assumed. The reader is required to make such inferences to work out the conveyed meanings that results from particularized conversational implicature. Considering the reading and analysing of fiction, not all readers may be able to make adequate *inferences* and recognize all conveyed meanings that result from particularized conversational implicatures (see the discussion on competent reader in Black, 2006, p. 37).

It might be useful here to realize that *inferences* can be made before, during, or after we first read the text. For instance, before we start reading the novel *The Interpretation of Murder*, our inferences might be based on a wide range of sources, including what we already know about the author (e.g. his academic credentials that provide for an elegant style, as well as his background in psychoanalysis and criminal law), information we have from other readers, or ideas expressed in reviews (the novel received excellent reviews and became a bestseller). Our interpretation might also be influenced by the design of the cover (the cover designs differ in the US and UK editions). In this paper, we focus on inferences we, the readers, make during the reading of the novel. As noted by Clark (2009, p. 10), the most obvious varieties of inferences are of two types: those between the characters of the novel (about how one character will interpret the utterance of another character), and those between the author and the reader (about what the author is communicating by what he writes or by what he has characters do or say). However, the interpersonal-pragmatic analysis presented in this paper combines the analysis of both types of inferences. For instance, making inferences about what Freud says to his acolytes enables us to see the interpersonal relationship Freud develops with his younger scholarly colleagues. At the same time, we make inferences about their attitude to the "master" as well as their interaction with other colleagues. An inherent part of the processing of literary discourse is the reader's competence and willingness to adequately infer what the author communicates by what he writes and by what his characters do or say. For instance, in section 5.3., we analyse conversational implicatures in the discourse context model "Crime and Murder Investigation", making inferences about the utterances and actions of the mayor, the coroner, and a detective. We make inferences about the attitudes of the city and police authorities, inferring private goals and ambitions, corruption, and tendencies to manipulate the investigation. Moreover, we may wonder if what the detective says to the coroner implies a lack of professional judgment, or if it is the detective's way of teasing the coroner, making him even more confused.

Another concept we apply in the interpersonal-pragmatic analysis is the pragmatic concept of *face*, commonly understood as "a person's self-image" (Yule, ibid., p. 128). In everyday speech, we often talk about face in many figurative ways. For instance, we talk about

"saving, losing or maintaining face". In the analysed novel, we can observe the awareness of the main protagonists of potential face threats in talk, and uncover their communicative strategies and considerate language choices intended to save their "self-image", i.e. to preserve the face of a respected scholar, famous doctor specialist, breakable female victim or a dogged detective.

The area that focuses on the communicative dimensions of literary encounters, that is making inferences about the messages conveyed through literary discourse, is known as **literary pragmatics**. How the interaction between producer, recipient and text are manoeuvred in various ways through linguistic choice is the matter of a closely related field, pragmatic stylistics (see Warner, 2014, p. 362).

Considering pragmatic theories for literary studies, as well as multiple attempts to apply pragmatic concepts and principles in the processing of literary texts, gave rise to the field of pragmatic stylistics. Elizabeth Black published a book entitled **Pragmatic Stylistics** (2006) discussing the potential benefits of applying pragmatic concepts in the analysis of literary discourse**.** The issue highlighted by Black is "whether using Grice in the interpretation of literary discourse can usefully guide our reading" (Black, 2016, p. 27). In relation to literary works, Gricean maxims suggest interpretative procedures which we are familiar with from our daily conversational interactions. At the same time, Billy Clark popularized the interfaces between pragmatics and stylistics, publishing broadly on pragmatic stylistics, accentuating the inferential approach to pragmatic stylistics (Clark 2015, 2013, 2009). In this paper, we are using the term "pragmatic stylistics" as the application of ideas from pragmatics to the stylistic analysis of literary discourse.

3. Material and method

The language material for the presented analysis was collected from the historical thriller *The Interpretation of Murder* by Jed Rubenfeld (2006). The novel is worthy of scholarly interest with its rich variety of communicative strategies and models of conversational exchanges that take place between speakers at various social levels, hence a spectrum of communicative contexts involving combinations of interaction between scholars, doctors, patients and victims in all possible arrangements in mutual dialogues. The specifics of the communicative strategies of the main protagonist, Sigmund Freud, contributed to the choice of research material, since Freud's analytical mind and the procedure of psychoanalysis correspond with the interpersonal focus and analytical procedure of the presented research (hence the title of this paper).

The story of the novel weaves around the visit of Sigmund Freud to America in 1909 with a vivid depiction of old New York and a fascinating insight into the early days of psychoanalysis. After being asked to help with a murder investigation, Sigmund Freud treats surviving victims of similar attacks, Manhattan's wealthiest heiresses, and undertakes a series of interviews and interrogations. During the visit Freud is accompanied by Carl Jung, his rival and protégé from Zurich, and Sándor Ferenczi, another young psychoanalyst from Budapest. Their American hosts and colleagues are Dr Abraham Brill and Dr Stratham Younger, America's most committed Freudian analyst.

Excerpted below are samples of conversational exchanges displaying interpersonal relationships between detectives and criminals, victims and doctors, scholars such as Freud and his colleagues, and thus exemplifying the sense and force in human communication. Following the aims of our research, we narrowed down the selection to conversational exchanges where social relationships and interpersonal attitudes played a distinctive role. These were further considered from the point of view of context models created in the novel, such as personal and professional relationships (collegiality vs rivalry), implicatures of a generation gap (senior scholar vs young acolytes), clash of cultures (Europe vs USA), a variety of social and cultural settings, the specific historical period depicted, etc. In this paper, the focus of analysis is limited to three models of interaction. The first one depicts Sigmund Freud entering communication with his colleagues (acolytes, other psychoanalysts) and patients (victims of attacks). The second model stands for the social mosaic of historical Manhattan, analysing conversational exchanges between high class representatives, and the third one focuses on communicative models in the context of crime and investigation. Across these groups, we explore the interplay between cooperativeness and politeness, discussing semantic and pragmatic processors, which determine the rhetorical force of utterances. These in turn imply the nature of social relationships (e.g. symmetrical – asymmetrical, familiar – formal, intimate – distant, etc.). Consequently, inferential processes are examined and the relevance of conversational implicatures is considered. The analytical method can be best characterized as a multi-dimensional interpersonal-pragmatic analysis, enriched by the inferential approach to literary pragmatic stylistics.

4. Literary discourse contexts in *The Interpretation of Murder* by Jed Rubenfeld (2006)

4.1. Cognitive context models in literary discourse

In his studies on literacy discourse, T. A. van Dijk identifies cognitive context models which can be efficiently studied in non-literary as well as literary discourse. These are to be

investigated as providing important triggers of the cognitive processing of literary discourse. The reader's attempts to make relevant inferences in literary discourse are guided by the provided information on the setting, social circumstances, institutional environment, overall goals of the (inter)action, participants and their social and speaking roles, current situational relations between participants, group membership or categories of participants, such as gender, age, etc. (van Dijk, 1978, p. 193). The overall interaction and type of discourse of the analysed novel endorse the general characteristics of literary discourse, a novel where the elements of detective story and thriller are blended creatively. Weaving the facts of Freud's short visit to America in 1909 into a riveting story of corruption and murder, drawing on case histories, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and the historical details of New York City on the brink of modernity, the novel creates an interesting tension between reality and fiction, providing an excellent example of a literary text utilizing sophisticated literary communication.

4.2. Literary discourse context "Sigmund Freud and acolytes, academic community"

The literary discourse context of academic community plays an important role in the novel. The visit of Freud and his acolytes, Jung and Ferenczi, to America took place on the basis of academic collaboration. Freud was invited to give a series of lectures on psychoanalysis at Clark University NY. During the stay, Abraham Brill, an associate lecturer at Clark University, and Dr Stratham Younger, graduate of Harvard university, also teaching at Clark University, served as their hosts. This close company of young scholars, assembled around Freud, provides a colourful mosaic of personal desires, professional ambitions, elements of potentially conflicting culture-specific factors including generation gap and other social factors.

4.3. Literary discourse context "Manhattan's high society"

The context of Manhattan's high society opens another door for interpersonal-pragmatic analysis, inviting analysis of a variety of social relationships, high society representation in historical NY, and Manhattan in particular, political connections of high social classes and sophisticated distribution of power within its main representatives, revealing manipulative strategies, biases and prejudices, manifested at the interpersonal level of this multi-layered literary discourse. This context of literary discourse takes readers into the grand hotel at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street, the Palm Garden, the Empire Room, the outdoor Myrtle Room and lets them witness the inaugural events, charitable balls, and the honourable representation of Manhattan high society at the Royal Ball with the entire orchestra and company of the Metropolitan Opera. In the background of this gold-plated picture personal animosity,

hypocrisy and intrigue between the honourable members of the Fish, Vanderbilt, and Schermerhorn families are foregrounded and expressed via conversational implicatures in talks.

4.4. Literary discourse context "crime, murder and criminal investigation"

The world of crime, murder and criminal investigation brings into play another context of literary discourse with characters of detectives and criminals, investigators, victims and victims' relatives, as well as city and police authorities, and institutional policies. The issues of corruption and manipulation of crime investigations are tangible.

5. Analysis and commentary

In this section, the analysis of selected representative examples of conversational exchanges is presented exemplifying the importance of the interpersonal element in human communication. Within the framework of three discourse context models, the analysis aims to reveal how personal and professional relationships may be determined by the personal and professional attitudes of the speakers, biases, and predispositions, conveyed via conversational implicatures alongside the message of the talk.

5.1. Discourse context model: Sigmund Freud - acolytes and academic community

In the conversations discussed below, Freud takes a leading role, modifying his communicative strategies according to the specific communicative purposes of the talk. Shifting from one social role to another, Freud's communicative techniques imply the role of an advisor/senior colleague, a prominent specialist in psychoanalysis, or a doctor treating a patient.

Professional interests blend with personal beliefs and attitudes

Example (1) represents a typical conversational model between Freud and his younger colleagues. He preserves the face of an older and more experienced scholar, expecting sincere but professionally guided responses to his ideas. The conversation reflects mutual negotiation between interlocutors in need to arrive at the accurate meaning of the message. In his talk on religious beliefs and their relevance to human psychology, Freud adheres to the conversational maxims of the cooperative principle, being truthful (maxim of quality) and clear in his argumentation (maxim of manner). Addressing Younger, Freud asks him the same question that Younger started the conversation with. We may infer that Freud returns the question with a particular intention in mind, and also that Freud is not avoiding answering the question but needs to answer it in full, providing the context and in-depth explanation of his attitude. Discussing one's religion is a sensitive topic, thus Freud, with respect to the face of a younger

colleague, takes the paternal attitude calling Younger "the boy". Freud also uses mitigating devices, such as verbal politeness and hedges, to soften the directness of his question (*I may possibly*). Yet, Younger still feels like a student being examined by his teacher (*Freud scrutinized me*) and his response (*My father was*) implies surprise and hesitancy via blatantly violating the maxim of relevance as noted by Ferenczi: *"You answer a question different from the one that was put."* Freud, as a master in analysing the human mind, makes inferences and reveals the meaning which results from particularized conversational implicature in *My father was.* He claims he understands Younger's response (*he means…*) and presents a full analysis of the conveyed message: "because his father believed, he is inclined to doubt", "whether a doubt so founded is a good doubt", "which inclines him to believe". Freud's analysis exemplifies how more gets communicated than said. The apparent generalized implicature is that Younger is not a believer, violating the maxim of relevance by his response (*My father was*), otherwise, he would say so. However, Freud seems to infer more about Younger's relationship with his father than what can be drawn from Younger's response, leaving both disciples astonished. In doing so, Freud reveals the secrets and magic of psychoanalysis to the reader, and, at the same time, helps the reader to infer the message conveyed by Younger's response.

Example 1

'The boy has taken an interest in my ideas; he may as well know their implications.' Freud scrutinized me. All at once, the severity disappeared, and he gave me an almost fatherly look. 'And as I may possibly take an interest in *his*, I returned the question: are you a religious man, Younger?'

To my embarrassment, I didn't know how to respond.

'My father was,' I said.

'You answer a question,' Ferenczi replied, 'different from the one that was put.'

'But I understand him,' said Freud. 'He means: because his father believed, he is inclined to doubt.'

'That's true,' I said.

'But he also wonders,' Freud added, 'whether a doubt so founded is a good doubt. Which inclines him to believe.'

I could only stare. Ferenczi asked my question. 'How can you possibly know that?' [JR: 81]

Mediating social relationships and attitudes (humour, irony and banter)

Example (2) illustrates how mutual respect, collegiality and comradeship are mediated in conversational exchanges via second-order principles such as humour and (good-natured) irony. When collegiality meets rivalry, irony and banter may be inferred beside the content of talk. In order to make appropriate inferences, certain knowledge of a variety of nuances rooted

in cultural and social contexts is required on the readers' part. As illustrated below, the intended interpretation of example (2) requires both sets of representations, those that are linguistically (semantically) provided (so-called explicatures) and those that are not linguistically provided (implicatures), (Carston, 2002, pp. 142-152). Thus the description of the way Younger looked at his colleague implies good-hearted humour and helps the reader visualize the situation "*looked down on him as if at a laboratory specimen*". Younger's utterance "*It is not quite accurate, …, to say the three of us analyzed each other*" provides clear semantic propositions (i.e. you were not there so you don't know, I will explain how it went). However, this is just the initial semantic trigger that needs to be completed via further pragmatic processing. Inferring the intended interpretation, we are able to work out conversational implicatures such as that Younger and Brill are friends and the expression "*a laboratory specimen*" that seems to belittle Brill's qualities is an expressive stylistic means, a simile, that adds figurativeness and thus attractiveness to the writer's style. What may look like a piece of criticism is in fact an implicature of friendly mocking. Comradeship and good-humoured nature are observable throughout the whole talk, however, professional interest in psychoanalysis stands out clearly. Younger's and Ferenzi's utterances, just like Brill's response "*You mean no one dared to analyze the Master?*" can be inferred as teasing and banter aimed at Freud. Linguistic expressions used (e.g. exclaimed, betraying no affect, a knowing smile) create the perception of an informal professional debate conducted in a mood of comradeship, teasing, and good-natured humour. The context of conversational interaction here provides initial semantic triggers that need to be completed via further pragmatic processing. Inferring the intended interpretation, we are able to work out conversational implicatures such as "all three are friends, colleagues, and rivals at the same time", "they compete for Freud's praise and recognition" (*we are all good sons, and we know our Oedipal duty*); "Freud's professional interest dominates his social relationships," etc. Freud's personal beliefs and values are reflected all through his communicative effort and thus mediate the social values he adheres to, for instance, respect toward his acolytes, encouraging them to express themselves openly and frankly (*but you all analyze me to death as soon as my back is turned, don't you, Abraham?*). A touch of reproach and kind criticism are to be inferred here.

Example 2

Jung, almost a foot taller than Brill, looked down on him as if at a laboratory specimen. 'It is not quite accurate,' he replied, 'to say the three of us analyzed each other.'

'True' Ferenzi confirmed. 'Freud rather analyzed us, while Jung and I crossed interpretative swords with each other.'

‘What?’ Brill exclaimed. ‘You mean no one dared to analyze the Master?’

‘No one was permitted to,’ said Jung, betraying no affect.

‘Yes, yes,’ said Freud, with a knowing smile, ‘but you all analyze me to death as soon as my back is turned, don’t you, Abraham?’

‘We do indeed,’ Brill replied, ‘because we are all good sons, and we know our Oedipal duty.’ [JR: 14]

Cooperation and politeness in doctor – patient communicative model

Example (3) aims to demonstrate the prominent role of the interpersonal element in literary discourse. Alongside the relationships between the protagonists of the novel, the relationship between the writer/narrator and the reader is equally important. The writer spends a lot of time addressing and creating an intimate relationship with the reader. Thus, providing assistance with the processing of the literary discourse, especially understanding conversational implicatures and inferring correctly the intended meanings of the messages that result from them, may enhance interaction and cooperation between the writer and the reader. In example (3), both the clues from the narrator as well as personal experience help to make adequate inferences. The narrator provides some clues and essential context for conversational implicatures (Freud wanted first…, The girl nodded, Freud concluded). We observe that the politeness principle works here as in real-life situations, thus the reader’s personal experiences are helpful. The reader is able to observe the politeness principle at work. Positive politeness strategies serve to avoid embarrassment and highlight friendliness, thus Freud waits for permission to start the medical examination from the victim’s close relative (Please proceed). He proceeds gently and carefully, using the structures of verbal politeness, namely the manner of address (Miss Acton), indirect requests (I would like to), and a question using a performative verb (Will you permit me?). The conversational implicatures derived from this brief sample can be, for instance, Freud a) takes a fatherly approach, b) is older than the female patient he is treating, c) knows how frightened she must be, d) expects she is embarrassed in front of male doctors, etc. Along with these, readers make inferences about Freud’s excellent professional conduct and highly esteemed expertise (no cranial injury of any kind). Freud’s strictly professional conduct can be interpreted as a positive politeness strategy that enables all participants to interact fully on the basis of the common ground created by Freud’s approach. By way of making inferences about conversational implicatures, the reader may create an intimate relationship with the protagonists of the novel on one side and the writer on the other.

Example 3

‘Please proceed, gentlemen,’ said McClellan.

Freud wanted first to rule out a physiological basis for her symptoms. 'Miss Acton,' he said, 'I would like to be sure you have not suffered an injury to your head. Will you permit me?' The girl nodded. After making a thorough inspection, Freud concluded, 'There is no cranial injury of any kind.' [JR: 83]

Looking to the bright side – Pollyanna principle

In the following example, Freud's positive politeness strategy highlighting friendship and common ground employs secondary pragmatic principles such as the interest and Pollyanna principles. Freud's professional interest, knowledge and expertise enable him to focus on the positive aspects of the victim's state of mind and use more positive words and terms during a conversation. This optimistic preparatory phase enables him to open a more direct line of questioning, where Freud's face as an expert medical examiner is preserved. The line of questioning is carefully structured as an explanation of further steps (Now: I am going to…), softened by hedges (but none, only) and structures of verbal politeness (Would you care…). The act of offering something to drink may be perceived as a gesture of understanding and support, however, since it seems to represent a common social etiquette and standard practice in psychiatric sessions, we can infer an act of professional routine and as such another act of preserving Freud's face.

Example 4

'My dear,' Freud said to her, 'you are anxious about the loss of your memory and your voice. You need not be. Amnesia after such an incident is not uncommon, and I have seen loss of speech many times. Where there is no permanent physical injury – and you have none – I have always succeeded in eliminating both conditions. Now: I am going to ask you some questions, but none about what happened to you today. I want you to tell me only how you are at this moment. Would you care for something to drink?' [JR: 84-85]

5.2. Discourse context model: Manhattan's high society

Readers with some grounding in the history of Manhattan and New York will make inferences about the social classes and high-society lifestyle at that time, and the author's comment "New York society in the Gilded Age was essentially the creation of two very rich women, Mrs William B. Astor and Mrs William K. Vanderbilt, and of the titanic clash between them in the 1880s" (Rubenfeld, 2006, p. 63) will certainly make more sense to them than to those who do not share this grounding. Saying this, the well-informed reader will be able to infer the message created by the particularized conversational implicature in "the Gilded Age" and "the titanic clash between them in the 1880s", while others will make inferences from generalized conversational implicatures in "two very rich women" and will rely upon the writer's

explanation and the broader context provided further in the novel. In the following analysis, the aim is to explore those conversational implicatures that create the effects of humour and banter, which represent a common mode of communication between the high-society characters.

Irony and banter as a communicative model in pals and acquaintances

Example 5 illustrates the informal chatting, and gossiping, between pals and acquaintances. Younger and Belva are actually cousins and, as may be inferred from the conventionalized conversational implicature "At least" and particularized conversational implicature "hasn´t brought her dog tonight", they share a critical view of their rich aunt. We are able to make correct inferences about the meaning created by the particularized conversational implicature only with help of the explanation provided by the author (Aunt Mamie once threw a ball in Newport for a new French poodle, which made its entrance prancing down a red carpet in a diamond-encrusted collar). The responses of Bella make us smile as they create a humorous and ironic message, and the reader makes inferences about Bella's bitter feelings toward her aunt, perhaps even jealousy towards her aunt's daughter. Irony and humour often involve figures of speech and as such are considered typical cases of the flouting of the cooperative principle maxims. In this case, the maxim of quality is flouted (calling a person a dog is a clear "untruth"). Based on further explanation provided by the narrator (… to whose stunning debut Belva had not been invited), we make inferences about Belva being upset and perhaps offended. Thus the irony here is not quite a friendly mocking but receives more power and pragmatic force as an expression of offence and anger. Considering the directness of their talk, Younger and Belva must have a close and friendly relationship. They express their feelings freely, understanding each other's situation. A set of conversational implicatures creates the message of closeness and friendly teasing between two pals. We make inferences about Younger's feelings, he feels uneasy in the company of a high-society crowd, hates snobbishness, and demonstrates that he attended the ball only out of courtesy. At the same time, we infer that he shares Belva's feelings and perhaps her desire to be noticed, but has no need to stay longer. His response "That's it, cousin" is a friendly informal way of saying goodbye, and together with the rest of his utterance "You're on your own" we may infer banter, a friendly teasing, within their intimate mode of communication.

Example 5

'At least,' I added, 'Aunt Mamie hasn't brought her dog tonight.'

Aunt Mamie has once thrown a ball in Newport for a new French poodle, which made its entrance prancing down a red carpet in a diamond-encrusted collar.

‘But look, she has brought her dog,’ replied Belva pleasantly, ‘and still wearing the diamond collar.’ Belva was pointing to Marion Fish, Aunt Mamie’s youngest daughter, to whose stunning debut Belva had not been invited.’ That’s it, cousin. You’re on your own.’ [JR: 71]

Inferring the utterance meaning: Saying and implicating

Snobbishness and negative attitudes towards others, and prejudices and superstitions, are commonly communicated via irony. The following example illustrates how while inferring irony we may make inferences about particularized conversational implicatures and interpret the message created by irony in example 6. The series of semantic triggers (run away, my understanding, one might as well…) and the rhetorical question (What can the girl have been thinking?) help the reader to reveal the pragmatic force of the utterance. The implicatures that create the meaning of the message (elite society’s attitudes, opinions about preferable places to live, comparing the state of Washington to Congo) enable the reader to interpret the sharp sarcasm of the message, inferring the feeling of dominance and superiority of a speaker, an elite society representative. It can be noted here, that the readers’ readiness to interpret the message adequately depends on their familiarity with US geography and history.

Example 6

‘She, however, has run away to Washington. It is my understanding that people run away from Washington. What can the girl have been thinking? One might as well elope to the Congo.’ [JR: 72]

5.3. Discourse context model: Crime and murder investigation

Politeness and cooperation as a framework of professional talk

The personal request of the mayor to the coroner (I want you to go yourself) shows the mayor’s deep involvement in the matter, referring to his relationship with the victim’s family (George Banwell is an old friend of mine). At the same time, this request renders the initially asymmetric relationship into a symmetric one. The reader may wonder about the nature of this relationship, making inferences about the negative politeness strategies used by the mayor (showing appreciation and trust: a man with experience, a man whose discretion I can count on, one of the few) as well as the meaning of the message created by conversational implicatures. The statement “You are one of the few I have left” generally implies what is the situation in the police like. Particularized implicature implies corruption and dishonesty that may cause potential manipulation of investigation. At the same time, we can see the changing power distribution in talk between the mayor and the coroner. In fact, the message is communicated via mutual exchange of ideas and negotiation. The mayor makes a request, explaining his

reasons; in turn, the coroner takes the lead in the conversation and states his conditions. In spite of the differences in their personal ambitions and motives, they share the same professional aim, to solve the murder, and thus aim to cooperate efficiently, preserving their faces during the conversation. Highlighting common ground is an efficient politeness strategy. The coroner's request for the involvement of an inexperienced detective in his investigation creates conversational implicature that generally implies awareness of the corruption in the police. The implicature is confirmed by an explicit explanation (Because he can't be bought).

Example 7

'No,' replied the mayor, 'I want you to go yourself. George Banwell is an old friend of mine. I need a man with experience – and a man whose discretion I can count on. You are one of the few I have left.' …

'I am to have full authority over the investigation, including the choice of detective.'

'Done,' said the mayor. 'You can have the most seasoned man on the force.'

'Exactly what I don't want,' replied the coroner. 'It would be gratifying for once to have a detective who won't sell out the case after I have solved it. There's a new fellow – Littlemore. He's the one I want.'

'Littlemore? Excellent,' said the mayor, turning his attention to the stack of papers on his large desk. 'Bingham used to say he's one of the brightest youngsters we have.'

'Brightest? He's a perfect idiot.'

The mayor was startled: 'If you think so, Hugel, why do you want him?'

'Because he can't be bought – at least not yet.' [JR: 22]

The reader infers that Coroner Hugel considers detective Littlemore "a perfect idiot" and thus makes inferences about Littlemore being stupid. However, the following example of a conversational exchange between the coroner and the detective presents a set of conversational implicatures that make us reconsider our inferences of humour and irony in talk. The coroner's scepticism is verbalized by frequent repetitions of the detective's statements, implying hesitation and mistrust in the detective's opinions. The coroner, together with the reader, seems to be confused and undecided if he should take the detective's opinions seriously. The reader's attempts to make adequate inferences about detective Littlemore are thus equivocal, is it teasing and humour the detective is trying to communicate, or just an expression of his inadequate expertise and blunt stupidity? However, the question asked by the coroner (How many homicide cases have you investigated?) implies his mistrust in the detective's expertise, and the detective's answer seems to confirm it (This is my first). Yet, there are more conversational implicatures we make inferences about. For instance, in spite of some incorrect considerations, the character of detective Littlemore evolves into a likeable one. The reader makes inferences about his frank interest in the investigation and overall excitement, and even though he often

gets things wrong his constant effort in following and examining each lead in the investigation proves helpful at the end.

Example 8

‘Unless he was standing on something,’ said Littlemore.
‘What?’
‘On a stool or something.’
‘On a stool?’ repeated the coroner.
‘It’s possible,’ said Littlemore.
‘A man does not stand on a stool while whipping a girl, Detective.’
‘Why not?
‘Because it’s ridiculous. He would fall off.’
‘Not if he had something to hold on to,’ said the detective. ‘A lamp, maybe, or a hat rack.’
‘A hat rack?’ said Hugel. ‘Why would he do that, Detective?’
‘To make us think he was taller.’
‘How many homicide cases have you investigated?’ asked the coroner.
‘This is my first,’ said Littlemore, with undisguised excitement, ‘as a detective.’

[JR: 38-39]

In addition, examples 7 and 8 highlight the nature of the interaction between the cooperative and politeness principle. Just as in real-life situations, in the conversational exchanges analysed above, the main protagonists find themselves in situations where a decision between being cooperative (direct and frank) and polite (indirect and “diplomatic”) has to be made. Balancing between the two principles of successful communication, the cooperative and politeness principles, creates a set of implicatures, especially when the politeness principle stands as a necessary complement of the cooperative principle, such as in examples 7 and 8 when an impulse of collaboration supresses the tact maxim.

6. Conclusion

The above discussion aims to illustrate what we might achieve by considering the interpersonal-pragmatic stylistic approach in exploring inferential processes involved in producing, interpreting and evaluating a literary text. As exemplified by the presented analysis, the interpersonal element is prominent at various levels of literary discourse, between the characters in the novel as well as between the narrator and the reader. The process of interpreting conversational exchanges, and conversational implicatures in particular, requires cues given by the narrator. These substitute actual situational contexts in face-to-face conversations and enable us to apply pragmatic ideas and principles originally introduced in the analysis of spoken discourse. Undoubtedly, pragmatic stylistic approaches have a role to play in the analysis of

literary discourse. This paper has argued that they also have an important role to play in accounting for the interpersonal dimension in literary discourse.

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