

INTRODUCTION

“Unlike such textual elements as character, plot, or imagery, point of view is essentially a *relationship* rather than a concrete entity. As it tends to evade stabilization into the language of ‘things’, it has been difficult to grasp and codify”¹ – wrote Susan Sniader Lanser in her influential book. In spite of those past and present difficulties, the concept of point of view is one of the most significant and extensively discussed notions in literary criticism – and there are no signs that things are going to change. Throughout the long and complicated history of the term, the abundance of ideas and interpretations can be viewed as an advantage, yet also as a challenge to be addressed by scholars daring again to ‘grasp’ the matter. Recent studies have rather concentrated on controversies, intermediate and ambiguous cases, as well as unusual combinations that blur traditional distinctions and allow to highlight the multifariousness of the phenomenon. Today, the concept, as many others in narratology, has an interdisciplinary dimension; it enables, or even requires, literary studies, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, anthropology and other domains to be addressed jointly.

In this volume of ‘Philological Studies: Literary Research’ we present a number of texts devoted to various aspects of the concept of point of view; however certain common denominators can clearly be seen. The articles examine the applicability and functionality of point of view as a tool in the interpretation of literary works and investigate both the history and future perspectives of the notion through either specific case studies or reflection upon different approaches towards the idea of point of view based on various theoretical grounds.

One of the aspects of the abundance of ideas on perspective is the terminological plurality. Our volume opens with Jiří Hrabal’s study coming up with a proposal of distinguishing and defining point of view, focalization, and perspective. In the next article Darin Tenev, using the narratological theory of Christo Todorov, a representative of the Bulgarian Guillaumist school, examines the relationship between narrative modalities and point of view.

¹ Susan Sniader Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 13.

He comes up with a concept of a double direction of the point of view which for him is the basis of the narrative logic, referred to as the 'narrative potentiality.' Hrabal's and Tenev's articles address general matters; they are followed by a collection of papers focusing on analysis of specific narrative phenomena. As six articles examine the area of autobiography and literary journalism it can be well observed what paths the concept has recently taken when travelling from fiction to non-fiction. Joanna Jeziorska-Haładyj's study focuses on second person non-fiction texts (Oriana Fallaci's and Hanna Krall's), where the problem of different perspectives (of the narrator and the addressee) is particularly relevant. Magdalena Horodecka examines Swietlana Alexievich's narrative strategies, especially the tension between the narrator's and witness's point of view. Przemysław Pietrzak refers to the history of the press: using the example of Polish nineteenth-century daily newspapers, he shows the implications of the collective perspective for literary work. The three subsequent articles focus on autobiographical writing. Robert Kusek investigates the concept of the point of view with regard to the genre of memoir, employing Genette's categories, especially the modal triad. In his study Jan Tlustý, in turn, analyses the play of perspective in Bohumil Hrabal's autobiographical trilogy and his late works on several levels; narrative observations lead to questions of identity. Zuzana Fonioková examines different focalization strategies in autobiographical texts by Günter Grass and Mary Karr, texts providing a comparison of different relations between the narrating 'I' and the experiencing 'I.' Zofia Mitosek in her contribution returns to the origins of the point of view technique; she analyses four novels (by Henry James, Włodzimierz Odojewski, Claude Simon and Szczepan Twardoch) and uses the notion to consider the epistemological aspects of the genre. Our volume closes with two studies which in fact open new perspectives. Agnieszka Łaszczuk's article focuses on translation studies and the linguistically-oriented conception of *point of view*, drawing on examples from selected Polish translations of one of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. Finally, Magda Nabiałek's contribution represents drama theory and concentrates on the intersection of dramatic background and the protagonist's perspective.