# Comparative Analysis of the Mind Style: Child Narrators in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and Ismail Kadare's *Chronicle in Stone*

Ardita Ibishi, Lindita Tahiri

University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina," George Bush str. Prishtina, 10000 Kosovo
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8072-0988, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9679-6589
ardita.ibishi@uni-pr.edu, lindita.tahiri@uni-pr.edu

*This study compares the stylistic markers of the thinking style of the child narrators in* The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time *(2003) by British writer Mark Haddon and* Chronicle in Stone *(1971) by Albanian writer Ismail Kadare. The paper analyzes the language of the narrators to identify the foregrounded linguistic elements in the narrative and consequently their reliability and impact on the reader. The linguistic features that characterize the child narrators of these novels are considered as features of their thinking style that indicate the limitations of their age and create the effect of unreliability. The analysis of the narrators' stylistic features points to the foregrounded patterns that differ slightly in both narrators and are demonstrated at different linguistic levels such as lexical choices, coordinated syntactic patterns, juxtapositions of literal and figurative meanings, and the inclusion of other elements that mark the distinction of their idiosyncrasies and social background. By reflecting the child's genuine naiveté, the narrative device of unreliability evokes empathy and enhances the reader's interpretive power.*

Keywords: narratology / English literature / Albanian literature / Haddon, Mark / Kadare, Ismail / narrative strategy / child narrator / linguistic patterns

## Introduction

For Dorrit Cohn, the possibility to access the thoughts of the characters is unique for fiction and makes it distinct from any other form of language and art. In *The Distinction of Fiction*, discussing differences

145

between narrative in history and literature, Cohn identifies three main signposts of fictionality: the lack of referential level, the detachment of the narrator from the author, and the knowledge about the inner life of the characters (110). Moreover, Jesse Matz argues that one of the typical features of the contemporary novel is the focus on the inner world of the characters, intending to avoid preaching and keep the author's ideas "out of fiction" (44).

This paper explores the rendering of the inner world of the child narrator in two novels written in different languages: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) (hereinafter *The Curious Incident*) by the British writer Mark Haddon, and *Chronicle in Stone* (1971) (hereinafter the *Chronicle)* by the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare. Although written in different circumstances, the narrative perspective belongs to children in both novels. *The Curious Incident* is a contemporary English novel presenting the story of Christopher, an autistic 15-year-old boy, whilst *Chronicle* is a book about the Second World War written during the indoctrinating period of socialist realism.

*The Curious Incident* is the recipient of many distinguished awards. It has gained worldwide attention by scholars and critics praising the book's values, in particular its autism portrayal. According to Garan Holcombe, *The Curious Incident* is something entirely new, compared to other books dealing with human behavior from the perspective of a child. He asserts that "Haddon's triumph is to have given us as unusual, convincing and strikingly alive a narrator as any in English literature" (Holcombe). Moreover, Chittaranjan Andrade, a clinical psychiatry scholar, considers this novel different because it does not exaggerate or encourage popular misconceptions about mental disorders, as most fictional depictions do (Andrade 474). In the novel's disability studies analysis, Sarah Jaquette Ray argues that the novel "presents a liberatory model of disability," in part precisely because "Christopher's disability is never named, raising the possibility that disability is in the eye of the reader, not the character himself" (Ray). She points out how this novel works against the tendency of popular culture to portray disability in a negative light and outside the "norm." Patrick C. Hogan, relying on Wolfgang Iser's terminology states that "reading or viewing processes encounter *gaps*, the point at which one's spontaneous processing falters. Typically, this is due to a contradiction in or lack related to information or emotion" (Hogan 57). Consequently, the reader is forced to resolve whether the discrepancy or absence of information is their own, or it is related to the implied reader or to the real author. Thus, one tries to fill in the gaps

with personal interpretations and this gives way to the perception of a narrator as unreliable.

Both novels, belonging to different linguistic and historical backgrounds, have challenged literary and cultural perceptions of their time. As they have chosen a child narrator in their stories, the aim of this study is to analyze the foregrounded linguistic features characterizing their narrators and draw similarities and distinctions between them, as well as their potential effect on the reader. Ismail Kadare has received prestigious international awards and has been mentioned as a possible recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. In socialist countries, politicians were personally involved in decisions regarding literature and literary policies. Writers were prescribed to use socialist realism and everything else was prohibited as subjectivism or bourgeois influence. The technique of detachment from the omniscient narrator and redirection towards the child perspective empowers Kadare to break out of the ideological boundaries and moralistic doctrine of Socialist Realism. The renowned Albanologist, Robert Elsie regards Kadare's novel as a work of linguistic finesse and subtle political allusions. He praises the bravery in challenging the conventions within the Communist system bringing "a breath of fresh air to Albanian culture in the somber years of imposed conformity" (Elsie 14). Additionally, Peter Morgan considers that "Kadare's narratives in the novel are driven by the need to come to terms with his identity as a writer, an individual and an Albanian under the dictatorship" (Morgan 76).

In addition to narratological and stylistic theories, this study uses research dealing with a child's perspective or autism characteristics and literary portrayal. Monika Fludernik regards that child language "lends itself particularly well to the portrayal of a figural point of view since it has connotations of lack of knowledge of the world, naivety, innocence and the like; the use of language typical of children allows for a particularly convincing depiction of a young person's view of the world or for a high degree of unreliability"(Fludernik, *An Introduction* 71). Wayne Booth's notion of "unreliability" refers to potentially deceptive narrators who do not speak following the implied author's norms (158–159). This notion has aroused a lot of discussion between scholars who explain it as a rhetorical feature of the text and those who see it as the potential of creating particular effects on the reader. For instance, Hogan states that readers have emotional responses to a particular story due to the fictional aspects of the story, as well as to the real world (Hogan 33). Tamar Yacobi relates unreliability to the integration mechanism whereby readers account for textual incongruities

(Yacobi 224), while Bruno Zerweck explains it as the effect of interpretive strategies based on textual signals (Zerweck 155). Yet, none of the definitions have managed to bypass the issue of authorial agency and the problematic notion of the "implied author," which appears as both the source and the construction of the text. Ansgar Nünning claims that the issue with the definitions is the attempt of defining unreliability, an "ill-defined and paradoxical concept" in itself (Nünning 86). He considers that the rhetorical tool of unreliable narration is a mode of expression compatible with the post-modern spirit of thinking: "The almost steady rise of the unreliable narrator since the end of the eighteenth century suggests that there is indeed a close connection between the development of this narrative technique and the changing notions of subjectivity." (95) A narrator's unreliability may occur from deceit or ineptitude when a narrator fails to provide necessary and accurate information. However, it may also result from cognitive and emotional bias, fallability or articulateness. Readers' response towards narrators might differ; while one is likely to feel apathetic towards biased and deceptive narrators, another may feel empathy for emotional and cognitive disability. One is typically inclined to look for reasons justifying the narrator's falsehood because understanding the situation enables correcting it. In the case of Benjy, in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury,* the reader may attempt to figure out what would lead this character to misconception, so one is likely to seek clues, from the same or other narrators (Hogan 153–154).

The unreliability of the child narration in these novels is approached from the perspective of the "mind style," a term coined by Roger Fowler as a reference to "any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual self" (Fowler 76). This broad definition of the mind style may analyze a character's mental life, topics on which a character reflects may display preoccupations, prejudices, perspectives, and values within a character's worldview. Fowler's notion has been taken on by several scholars (e.g. Halliday and Matthiessen; Booth; Fludernik, *An Introduction*). Moreover, Elena Semino reviews the contributions made on the field and this notion pointing out the importance of mind style as it captures the minds of fictional characters, thus being central to the understanding of how novels work. This is further seen in her comments on the child narrator's approach toward figurative language (see Semino). This paper will use the tools proposed by Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, who consider mind style as "a realization of a narrative point of view" (Leech and Short 152), and analyze styles that they qualify as "unmarked" compared to examples of "unusual" mind styles

(e.g. Benjy). They consider that "mind style" can be observed through language construction of lexis and grammar, and they elaborate the "style markers" as salient features which are particular features of style in a specific text. Their analysis is based on identifying and analyzing the lexical and the grammatical categories, figures of speech, as well as context and cohesion (73–83).

## Stylistic markers in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

### Underlexicalization and overlexicalization

The lexis of the child narrator exhibits a combination of underlexicalization, typically when describing emotions, and overlexicalization when using scientific terminology. There are several cases highlighting Christopher's vocabulary restrictions. The reader is given indications that strengthen the impression that his choice of lexis is abundant in technical or scientific vocabulary. Nevertheless, his lack of experience and social difficulties affect and diminish his social and emotional lexis. For example, in a particular situation, Christopher is unable to even denote the meaning and value of the word "quid": "And he said, 'About 30 quid.' […] And I said, 'Is that pounds?' […] And he said, 'Christ alive.'" (Haddon 70) His underlexicalization in expressing emotions is illustrated further on through his vocabulary describing his feelings after his mother's death. He mentions facts about her actions, the way she consumed food when ill, his father's words, her messages of love, the card he had sent her and how much she had liked it. The underlexicalization does not overtly tell anything about Christopher's feelings and deems him unaware of the situation. Yet, it shows a lot about his emotional state and makes the reader feel that he/she knows more than the character. This is one of the typical features of unreliability.

Christopher describes his mother's medical situation through overlexicalization using terms such as "aneurysm" and "embolism" followed by explanations and implications referring to her death. His usage of concrete words like "molecules" transmitting impersonality and detachment, instead of using emotional terms, expresses his desire to have her around him everlastingly: "But Mother was cremated. This means that she was put into a coffin and burned and ground up and turned into ash and smoke … I think that there are molecules of Mother up there, or in clouds over Africa or the Antarctic." (Haddon 16)

**Coordination versus subordination**

Christopher is prone to declarative sentences or statements, and his syntax is usually simple: "'The dog was dead.' […] 'The dog was called Wellington.' […] 'Wellington was a poodle.'" (Haddon 2). His phrases are usually coordinated, sometimes as run-on sentences, and typically put together through the conjunction "and." The frequent use of "and" reminds the reader of spoken language and of child-like speech or narrators with such a mind. They are quite often found in initial positions in the sentence:

> What do you want to do today? you say, I want to do painting with Mrs. Peters, but you don't say, I want to have my lunch and I want to go to the toilet and I want to go home after school and I want to play with Toby and I want to have my supper and I want to play on my computer and I want to go to bed. And I said a white lie because I knew that Father didn't want me to be a detective. (22)

The coordinated structures imply a linear progression of the character's experience, transmitted directly and objectively to the reader. However, the last sentence is not a parallel description of the routine experience of the character. On the contrary, it shows an abrupt change of behavior caused by the utterance of a lie upsetting the narrator, his emotions stirring beneath the smooth syntactic surface. There are cases when Christopher uses subordinate structures, such as when recollecting Terry's offenses: "I would only ever get a job collecting supermarket trollies or cleaning out donkey shit at an animal sanctuary and they didn't let spazzers drive rockets that cost billions of pounds." (12). The accumulated nesting of clauses matches with the desire to surround the verbal abuse that bursts out at the end with the derogatory "spazzers" contrasted with "drive rockets."

**Figurative language and autism**

The relation between the language of autism and figurative language is an essential aspect of the novel already elaborated on by Semino. She discusses the child narrator's attitude towards metaphors stating:

> Haddon brilliantly exploits both the folk psychological notion that autistic people have problems with metaphor, and a folk linguistic view of metaphor as a salient and creative use of language which involves stating something that

is obviously untrue. As a consequence, he succeeds in making Christopher's problems believable without attempting to achieve accuracy in medical terms, or complete consistency in terms of the linguistic characteristics of the narrative. (Semino, "Mind" 288)

Autistic language is characterized by concrete lexis and difficulties in grasping abstract concepts, as well as the tendency of taking metaphoric language literally (Chew 133). This is illustrated through Christopher's personality and the way he expresses his dislike for metaphors and inclination towards similes. This occurs because similes enable him to create a picture in his head, a type of resemblance or comparison: "And a simile is not a lie, unless it is a bad simile." (Haddon 9) Christopher uses similes several times in the text by comparing and relating them to science:

> And when I am in a new place, because I see everything, it is like when a computer is doing too many things at the same time and the central processor unit is blocked up and there isn't any space left to think about other things. […] And sometimes when I am in a new place and there are lots of people there it is like a computer crashing and I have to close my eyes and put my hands over my ears and groan, which is like pressing CTRL + ALT + DEL and shutting down programs and turning the computer off and rebooting so that I can remember what I am doing and where I am meant to be going. (65)

Christopher is more apt in understanding technology than in comprehending the mind and emotions of human beings and this is portrayed in his linguistic choices. Therefore, he uses his knowledge of the former to make sense of the latter. The conceptual metaphor example of the brain as a computer describes the limitations of the child narrator who expresses his feelings by closing his eyes, putting his hands over his ears, and groaning. This way, he achieves a different effect of transmitting his powerful cognitive computer-like habits. Using mechanical terms and imagery seems pertinent to his mind style and the depiction of an individual belonging to the autistic-spectrum disorder. His machinery related metaphors highlight the rationale and consistency of the sentimental and emotional aspects.

Similar to Christopher, this paper can refer to Bromden, the protagonist in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), who can be considered an example of a representative character of an individual's difficulties in interacting with society. Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst analyze conceptual metaphors and mind style in this novel by building their theory on the cognitive approach of metaphors.

They suggest that the systematic use of a particular metaphor(s) reflects an idiosyncratic cognitive habit, a personal way of making sense of and talking about the world: in other words, a particular mind style (Semino and Swindlehurst 147). Their analysis of Bromden's linguistic aspect shows that his mind style consists of a limited number of conventional metaphors which have been extended and serve as the foundation of his conceptual system. They assert that:

> This explains the imbalance in Bromden's linguistic and mental abilities: due to his background knowledge, he is overlexicalized in the semantic area of machinery, but he is relatively underlexicalized when it comes to the inner workings of people and, to some extent, society. He, therefore, draws on one area to make up for some of his limitations in the other. (151)

Considering the above, similarities can be drawn between these characters as they both have imbalances in their particular linguistic and mental abilities. They use technical vocabulary to make up for their limitations in communication and social interaction.

Christopher's effort to decipher the "real" meaning of words shows naivety, honesty, and a search for truth, as when elaborating on his name and its religious meaning. He considers metaphors as lies since they reflect unreal things: "I laughed my socks off. […] He was the apple of her eye. […] They had a skeleton in the cupboard. […] We had a real pig of a day. […] The dog was stone dead." (Haddon 8) Further on, he comments on the relation between fiction and truth, expressing his dislike for proper novels and viewing them as lies that cause him to feel scared. Therefore, "this is why everything I have written here is true" (10). His statement about the trueness of his novel compared to the lies of "proper novels," becomes a playful self-reflection on literary narration, arousing thought-provoking interpretations about fictional impersonality and objectivity in fiction. The role of the reader is essential in understanding the narrator and empathizing with a character with whom it would be difficult to relate had the novel been narrated from another perspective. His actions might seem odd when seen externally, but seeing events through his own eyes enables the reader to comprehend and justify his actions. The reader fills in the gaps by manifesting the things read, imagining how the character feels, and visualizing even how he/she looks like.

## Cohesion, coherence, and visual elements

The definition of coherence and cohesion is discussed by various scholars. Some describe cohesion as a semantic concept claiming that it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as text (Halliday and Hasan 4). Others argue that a text is coherent if it makes sense, has unity, and is, therefore, well-formed (Wales 67). The cohesion and coherence of the novel are achieved through a combination of textual elements, visual data, photographs, different tables and charts, typography elements, and illustrations as some of the non-textual foregrounded elements in the novel; together, they offer a clearer understanding of Christopher's mind style. The novel's title is inspired by Conan Doyle's short story "Silver Blaze" featuring Sherlock Holmes. The text is presented coherently from the novel's beginning, when the dog's death is revealed, and his killer is unknown. Lack of formal coherence in the text becomes a feature of the mind style of the child narrator. This is seen in Christopher's inability of distinguishing relevant and irrelevant information providing unnecessary facts to the police:

> The policeman squatted down beside me and said, "Would you like to tell me what's going on here, young man?"
> I sat up and said, "The dog is dead."
> "I'd got that far," he said.
> I said, "I think someone killed the dog."
> "How old are you?" he asked.
> I replied, "I am 15 years and 3 months and 2 days." (Haddon 4)

Christopher's own perspective of coherence is referred to as a "desire for order" provoking stimulating interpretations about rationality. The novel offers several examples of anaphoric and cataphoric references referring to other words and ideas in the text. The references to the pictures are done through demonstratives "this, these, it, other" creating cohesion through visual means. For instance, Christopher explains the organization of the chapters in prime numbers, referring to the picture with: "*[T]his* is how you work out what prime numbers are." (6) Furthermore, he uses drawings to make his point, as in chapter 53, where he describes the picture in his get-well card to his mom: "*It* looked like *this*." (13) The visual elements point out the already discussed issue of the relation between language, truth, and reality, similar to his attitude towards figurative language. Christopher begins to write after getting advice from his teacher Siobhan to include descriptions so

that people can relate to their own experiences. He suggests taking and adding pictures in the book, but his teacher thinks otherwise: "But she said the idea of a book was to describe things using words so that people could read them and make a picture in their own head." (30) This is a constant reference to the connection between the visual and the verbal aspects in Christopher's worldview. Accordingly, the detailed linguistic description, which is supposed to give the impression of problematic expression of meaning, in fact, manages to produce compelling images:

> Furthest away in the sky were lots of little white clouds which looked like fish scales or sand dunes which had a very regular pattern. Then next furthest away and to the west were some big clouds which were colored slightly orange because it was nearly evening and the sun was going down. Then closest to the ground was a huge cloud which was colored gray because it was a rain cloud. (31)

Another visual trait of the text is the typography and its variations. The reader can notice the differences in symbols and fonts such as capital letters, italics, and bold letters; highlighting and foregrounding the effect that certain words or events have upon the character. The visual foregrounding takes further on the reflection about the relation between language and reality by focusing on the graphological potential for meaning.


## Stylistic markers in *Chronicle in Stone*

There are two parallel narrating perspectives in this novel: the child narrator and the chronicler of the city. Only the first one is the object of study in this paper.


### Lexis

The child narration displays an intense sensitivity of the boy towards language. The child narrator thinks and creates new different meanings for the words he already knows whilst expressing his fear of the power of words: "Fjalët kishin një energji të caktuar, në gjendjen e tyre të ngrirë. Tani, kur ato filluan të shkrijnë, të zbërthehen, po lëshonin një energji të tmerrshme. Kisha frikë nga zbërthimi i tyre."[1] (Kadare,

---

[1] "Words had a certain force in their normal state. But now, as they began to shear and crack up, they acquired amazing energy. I was afraid they would explode." (Kadare, *Chronicle* 45)

*Kronikë* 120) The child tries to relate the words and their referents, such as the Fools' Alley where you could do anything you wanted ("Sokaku i të Marrëve që ishte, na e lejonte këtë," 76)[2] or Bridge of Clashes where the boy and his friend expect to see a fight but are left disappointed. Another example of the reflection about words and meanings is the word "Kiameti" which repeatedly occurs in the text. The child narrator wonders whether its repetition affects the end of the world: "Kiameti,—tha kako Pinoja, me siguri për të njëqindtën here."[3] (123) The effect of this mind style is sometimes provoking and is seen when the narrator ponders about sight and questions the possibility of seeing via other senses:

> Tani, përsëri po vrisja mendjen të kuptoja se si ndodhte që njeriu të shikonte vetëm me sy dhe nuk shikonte edhe me gishta, me faqe ose me ndonje pjesë tjetër të trupit. … Si ndodhte që bota futej në sy? … Më mundonte sidomos shpjegimi i verbërisë, prej së cilës trembesha shumë. Kjo frikë vinte, ndoshta, ngaqë pjesa më e madhe e mallkimeve që dëgjoja drejtoheshin gjithmonë kundër syve. (52)

> I started wondering again why people see with their eyes and not with their fingers, cheeks or some other part of the body. … How does the world manage to get in through an eye? … I was obsessed by the mystery of blindness, which I feared more than anything else. This fear may have come from the fact that most of the curses I used to hear had to do with eyes. (23)

Instances like this reflect the child's inclination towards literal meanings. His fascination with words is also related to his obsession with reading. Belonging to a society that talks about witches, ghosts, spells, and legends, he gets overly attached to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and is struck by the words "ghost," "magician," "murderer" and the like.

### Coordination versus subordination

The syntactic pattern preference is mainly on coordinated structures, albeit there are several occasions when the boy uses subordination. Short sentences are also used, although with fewer cases including complex and compound sentences. Another similar feature of both mind styles is the usage of multiple run-on sentences without interrupting the trail of thought and narration:

---

[2] "But Fools' Alley, crazy as it was, allowed us to do that." (34)
[3] "The end of the world, said kako Pino, for at least the hundredth time." (55)

Vështroja pamjen e ndryshuar brenda natës dhe mendoja se si lumi e urrente urën, udha automobilistike urrente me siguri, lumin, përrenjtë urrenin muret, era urrente malin, që i priste furinë dhe të gjitha këto bashkë urrenin qytetin, i cili shtrihej i lagur, gri dhe mospërfilles, midis këtij pezmi shkatërrimtar. (Kadare, *Kronikë* 45)

I looked out at the countryside, transformed during the night, and thought that if the river hated the bridge, the road surely felt the same hatred for the river, and the torrents for the embankments and the wind for the mountain that checked its fury. And they all must have loathed the wet, grey city that looked down with contempt on this destructive hatred. (Kadare, *Chronicle* 19)

The coordinated structures reproduce the character's experience of perception, including personification. Even when subordination is used, the reproduction of the argumentation process of the child in explaining different situations is complemented with the coordinate conjunction. The tendency towards coordination displays a childlike mind style and reflects the syntactic preferences of mostly child narrators. This is supported by Leech and Short who in their study of Faulkner's narrator Benjy state that "the childlike Benjy shows a tendency common in the writing of young children to string sequences of paratactic and coordinated main clauses together" (Leech and Short 165).

### The literal interpretation of figurative language

The sensitivity of the child narrator gets more intense when figurative language is used. His understanding of the meaning of the curses becomes very graphic. Such an example is: "Të dalshin sytë."[4] (Kadare, *Kronikë* 54) He remembers this as he sees Maksut on the street, whose eyes look a bit out of the sockets; he imagines the eyes popping out and himself stepping on them, bursting them open. The boy interprets figurative language literally, so all the metaphors he has heard become part of an appalling sight of imagination. His world gets crowded with all kinds of weird images of people with wandering pumpkin or severed heads, freezing blood like ice, forked tongue and the alike: "Dikush përpiqej të hante dikë jo me anë të dhëmbëve, por me anë të syve; … Bota po shkërmoqej përpara syve të mi."[5] (121)

---

[4] "May your eyes burst from their sockets." (Kadare, *Chronicle* 24)

[5] "Someone was trying to devour someone else not with his teeth but with his eyes; … The world was falling apart before my very eyes." (54)

The grotesque draws from the Albanian folklore, such as proverbial sayings and curses, which reminds of Bakhtin's view about the folkloric basis of grotesque images in Rabelais' novel. The grotesque produces a doublevoicedness, or in Bakhtin's terms, it reminds us of the "already bespoke quality"—the "ogovorennost" as the world is described through someone else's words. The authorial stance and politics of the time are found behind the figurative features of the child narrator's mind style. Although the boys' conversation is naive and concerns postcards swap, the situation echoes the political reality of the time:

> Na Francën dhe Kanadanë dhe më jep Luksemburgun.
> Jo more! E dashke Luksemburgun!
> […]
> Ne kishim një orë që po grindeshim dhe po bënim tregti me pulla poste mu në mes të rrugës. Ishim në zënkë e sipër, kur kaloi Javeri dhe na tha më të qeshur: E, po bëni rindarjen e botës? (47)

> "OK, you can have France and Canada, but give me Luxembourg."
> "You're kidding! You really want Luxembourg?"
> […]
> We had been haggling for an hour, sitting in the middle of the street trading stamps. We were still arguing when Javer came by. He said, "Still carving up the world, I see." (21)

Another example suggesting the authorial stance is the narrator's reproduction of an overheard talk about the world becoming a slaughter-house. He compares this to animals' butchering: "Bota do të mbytet në gjak … E nga do të dalë gjaku?—i thashë unë.—Fushat dhe malet nuk kanë gjak."[6] (125) Likewise, in Haddon's child narrator, metaphors often become the starting point of reflection about the potential of language in reference to reality.

## Personification and animism

Animism and personification are quite present in the boy's narration in the novel. This feature of the novel has been commented on by John Updike in his review "Chronicles and Processions," where he states that "the egocentric and metaphorical point of view of the child contributes to the creation of constant poetry" (Updike 31). For instance,

---

[6] "The world will drown in blood … Where will all the blood come from? I asked. Fields and mountains don't have blood." (56)

there are several cases when the boy refers to the city as a living being, as a character in the novel. The city is described as rough, cold and ancient: "Ky ishte një qytet i çuditshëm, që dukej sikur kishte dalë në luginë papritur një natë dimri si një qenie parahistorike dhe, duke u kacavjerrë me mundime të mëdha, i ishte qepur faqes së malit."[7] (Kadare, *Kronikë* 37) He further explains that the city's coldness and crudity had caused trouble to the people living under its shell: "përderisa ky ishte një qytet prej guri dhe çdo prekje e tij ishte e ashpër dhe e ftohtë."[8] (38)

The novel's first chapter begins with the boy's description of the rain and the raindrops falling. He attributes them human qualities and describes the end of their lives as they get stuck on the depths of the house's cistern: "Kështu merrte fund jeta e lirë dhe gazmore e pikave të shiut."[9] (39) Similarly, the boy treats the cistern as a human being as well. Due to the heavy rains, the cistern has been overfilled with water and the neighbors help the family avoid any flood in the house. The boy expresses his love for the cistern and the pleasant conversations they shared. Moreover, he is concerned with the feelings of the rooms in his house when due to the bomb attacks the whole city is forced to find shelter in their basements. The same happens when the boy's house is used to shelter up to ninety people. He expresses his sadness of the abandonment of the main room: "Unë ia qaja hallin dhomës së madhe, që dridhej e trandej e tëra, atje lart, e vetme fare."[10] (138) Besides the poetic effect, the narrator's mind style features ironically express the situation of the war, such as the sheltering from the bomb attacks described from the perspective of filling up a room and making it more social. Besides, these characteristics show the boy's defense mechanism of escaping the sad reality of the time by talking to inanimate objects.

### Grotesque and magic

Peter Childs and Roger Fowler define the grotesque as an exaggerated and distorted way of representation exploiting similarities between people and animals or things, and *vice versa*, which is often regarded

---

[7] "It was a strange city, and seemed to have been cast up in the valley one winter's night like some prehistoric creature that was now clawing its way up the mountainside." (Kadare, *Chronicle* 16)

[8] "That was only natural, for it was a stone city and its touch was rough and cold." (16)

[9] "Here ended the raindrops' life of joy and freedom." (17)

[10] "I felt bad for the main room all alone up there, for I knew it was trembling, shaking all over." (62)

in opposition to realism (Childs and Fowler 101). The writer Arshi Pipa discusses the role of the grotesque in his foreword to the English translation of the novel. He relates it to Shklovski's technique of defamiliarization that brings a sense of unfamiliarity and strangeness to already known or common things (see Kadare, *Chronicle* 25). In his discussion about the grotesque use of the fantastic in Rabelais' novel, Bakhtin points out how the bizarre is "brought down to earth and made more material" (Bakhtin 173), comparably, the grotesque tone in Kadare's narration highlights the ideological context of the Albanian actuality. When the child's unreliable narration employs the grotesque, it demonstrates the reality with an overemphasized clarity through the power of exaggeration.

Sexuality and the grotesque in the novel are interrelated because all the distortions and absurdities express a sort of revulsion for the political and social situation in Albania. The child hears many conversations which fascinate him, although he is unable to understand the real meanings behind them. For instance, a rainbow appears linking the brothel with Aunt Xhemo's house remarking Nazo's impotence, noticed by his bride's reaction: "Sytë me bisht të nuses së Nazos ishin të përqendruar."[11] (Kadare, *Kronikë* 201) This is proceeded by stories of Bufe Hasani courting the soldiers or Ceço Kaili's daughter who has grown a beard and is forbidden to go outside: "Vajzës së Çeço Kailit i ka dalë mjekër. Mjekër e zezë, na, si e burrave."[12] (43) The case of Argjir Argjiri is more complicated as he is perceived to be "half-woman and half-man" allowing him access to every house in the city. His decision to claim his manhood and get married costs him his life. The terrible condition of the city is mirrored in the characters' conversations who compare it to Sodom and Gomorrah, standing as metaphors of vice and homesexuality. The most compelling gaps in a literary work are internal to the text itself because they are part of the experience of the implied reader provoking interpretative reflection; hence, affecting one's accurate construct of the story, as well as one's emotional response. Such moments of reflective consideration often bear on the thematic concerns of a literary work, thus the ethical implications of the work for one's daily life or its political implications for one's social relations (Hogan 59).

Another grotesque character is Llukan the Jailbird, who spends his life in and out of prison. People see him leaving prison and ask him to

---

[11] "She narrowed her almond-shaped eyes." (Kadare, *Chronicle* 135)
[12] "She grew a beard. A black beard, really, just like a man's." (18)

leave the blanket there, since he will be back soon enough, something he considers as proof of manhood: "Epo, burgu për burrat është."[13] (Kadare, *Kronikë* 55) Other grotesque events become ironic comments about the political reality, such as Sheik Ibrahim, who, sensing the arrival of the partisans, tries to pull his own eyes out with a nail. People attempt to stop him while he keeps shouting that blindness is better than witnessing communism: "Nuk dua të shoh komunizmin."[14] (289) This sharp allusion to Albanian reality is exceptionally daring for the period of the novel's publication. The power of the reader's knowledge is shown here as one's interpretations are derived not only from the text alone, but also from the awareness of the world outside the text. Let us conclude the examples with the bizarre realization of the child, who, after putting on the glasses to correct his sight, decides to see the world blurry rather than real:

> Unë, gjithashtu, kisha vënë në sy disa herë një nga ato qelqet e mallkuara … Për habinë time, pashë se bota përnjëherësh u trondit. … Dukej sikur një dorë e padukshme e kishte fshirë botën sikur të ishte nje pasqyrë që kishte zënë mjegull dhe ajo po shfaqej tani përpara meje e re, e qartë. Megjithatë bota nuk më pëlqeu kështu. Isha mësuar ta shihja gjithmonë prapa një hukatjeje avulli, ku përvijimet e saj bashkoheshin dhe ndaheshin lirshëm pa çarë kryet fort për rregullat e përcaktimet e kufijve. (51)

> I too had put one of those accursed lenses to my eye more than once … I was astonished. Suddenly the world around me fell into place … It was amazing, as if an invisible hand had wiped clean a misted window that had covered the world, revealing it as something new and bright. Despite that, I didn't like it. I was used to looking at the world through a cloud of haze, so that the edges of things ran together and separated freely, not according to any fixed rules. (23–24)

Equivalently with the reflections of Haddon's narrator, the relation between objectivity and truth is evoked, associating it with the process of narrating and reading in fiction.

## Second-person narration

According to Fludernik, one of the major handicaps to an adequate treatment of second-person narrative has been the lack of an unequivocal definition of what exactly is a second-person text (Fludernik,

---

[13] "Prisons are made for men." (Kadare, *Chronicle* 24)
[14] "Better no eyes at all than to see communism." (129)

"Introduction: Second-Person" 284). She points out the difficulty of distinguishing between "real" second-person texts and other fiction using the second-person pronoun in interesting and potentially significant ways; Kadare's *Chronicle in Stone*, falls in the second category, accommodating the child narration in cases when it is opened to a variety of "you's." On the occasions within the story when the child narrator experiences and interior monologue, the second person pronoun is "ideologically significant […] to the protagonist's search for his own identity and orientation" (305). The search for identity and truth becomes an invitation for the reader to explore his/her own understanding of the text opening up multiple interpretations: "Ishte me të vërtetë një qytet shumë befasues. Ti mund të ecje rrugës dhe, po të doje mund të zgjatje pak krahun e ta vije kësulën tënde mbi majën e një minarete … Ishte e vështirë të ishe fëmijë në këtë qytet." (Kadare, *Kronikë* 38); "Të shikosh. Sa gjë e pashpjegueshme!" (52); "Por pastaj, befas, na erdhi një guxim i marrë, ashtu sic ndodh nganjëherë në ëndërr, kur gjendesh i vetëm e pa njeri në udhën e shkretë, gjysmë të errët, dhe zemra fillon të të rrahë nga frika." (77); "Ju dilnit papritur nga asfalti dhe pastaj fundoseshit prapë në thellësi të tij."[15] (327)

## Conclusion

Both novels employ first-person child narration forcing the reader to rely only on the narrator's account of the events, thus producing the effect of unreliable narration, considering children's innocence and naivety. Different scholars support the idea of unreliability caused by this type of narration and state the role of the reader in interpreting and filling the necessary gaps left. While discussing the effects of unreliability on the reader, Fludernik points out the contrast between the unreliable narrator and the reader, who "arrives at an understanding of the situation by hint of reading between the lines" (Fludernik, *An Introduction* 27). Given that first-person narration indicates subjectivity, it is usually seen as unreliable, and it is left to the reader to fill the created vacuum.

---

[15] "Yes, a very strange city indeed. In some places you could walk down the street, stretch out your arm, and hang your hat on a minaret … No, it was not easy to be a child in that city." (Kadare, *Chronicle* 16); "Sight. What an inexplicable thing!" (22); "But then suddenly great courage came upon us, as sometimes happens in a dream when you find yourself alone in some dark, deserted street, and your heart pounds in fright." (34); "You emerge from the asphalt all of a sudden and then sink back down straight away." (148)

The style markers' analysis of the child narrators' style in the novels has revealed the foregrounded linguistic features, hinting the reader to read and understand beyond the limited child perspective. There are many similarities and fewer differences in the mind styles of both narrators. At the level of lexis, Christopher's vocabulary moves from underlexicalization to overlexicalization, depending on whether it refers to emotional states or scientific topics. Meanwhile, the Albanian boy's lexis is illustrated through his inclination and obsession with words. The formally impersonal style of self-expression becomes a powerful trigger for the reader to break through the feelings of the child narrator. Both child narrators share their sensitivity for language, and they are obsessed with words and their relation to meaning.

At the syntactic level, there is a similar tendency of both narrators towards coordination, displaying a childlike mind style. They are equally fond of literature: Christopher's inclination leans towards Sherlock Holmes' adventures and the unnamed Albanian narrator is captivated by *Macbeth's* witchcraft and crime aspect. Their comparable insight into language may be interpreted differently. In the case of Kadare's child narrator, the peculiar reflection about language and the abundant presence of personification and animism is perceived as poetic quality. Whilst, similar features in the mind style of Haddon's child narrator may be observed as portrayals of autism. The child narrators understand metaphoric language literally. While Christopher brings in many visual elements to clarify his narration, Kadare's narrator argues for the advantage of the blurred and indefinite vision. Their childlike statements arouse thought-provoking ideas about the relation between fiction, language, and reality.

The results of this paper do not aim to isolate the particular features of child narration as predictable features of narration, as in Sternberg's words "there are no package deals in narration" (Sternberg 256). The Proteus principle speaks for "the advantages of isolating inherent and relational features of narration instead of classifying narrators in toto, and of viewing each (actual or possible) narrator as a variable, ad hoc rather than as a mutually implicative and hence predictable complex of features" (279). In line with this principle, the unreliable child narration in the two novels ranges between varied moral and stylistic decisions. These two novels, which originate from different linguistic and historical backgrounds, resort to unreliability to challenge the literary and cultural conventions of their time. By using the child narrator in the *Chronicle*, Kadare managed to stay away from the role of the preaching narrator and let the readers do the work of

interpretation themselves. He was able to empower the reader during the period of the extreme totalitarian regime when language was saturated with communist manipulative rhetoric, whereas in his novels, the characters were free to think. On the other hand, through *The Curious Incident,* Haddon encourages the reader to challenge the traditional view of disability and normality reinforced by popular culture. His unreliable child narrator is not simply a literary device mirroring a human condition: the child's relationship with his language becomes a dialogue about the detachment between language and reality that everyone faces, as eventually, none of us have full access to the truth. And as Kadare's child narrator claims, the truth is blurry and imperfect.

WORKS CITED

Andrade, Chittaranjan. "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time." *Primary Care Companion to The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 9.6 (2007): 474.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holoquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holoquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bellos, David. "Introduction." *Chronicle in Stone*. Author Ismail Kadare. Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 2008. 10–13.

Booth, C. Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Chew, Kristina. "Fractionated Idiom Metonymy and the Language of Autism." *Autism and Representation*. Ed. Mark Osteen. New York, NY: Routledge, 2008. 133–144.

Childs, Peter, and Roger Fowler. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

Cohn, Dorrit. *The Distinction of Fiction.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Elsie, Robert. "Subtle Dissent of a Balkan Bard, the Life and Works of Ismail Kadare." *The Times Literary Supplement*, 24 June 2005. 14–15.

Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

Fludernik, Monika. "Introduction: Second-Person Narrative and Related Issues." *Style* 28.3 (1994): 281–311.

Fowler, Roger. *Linguistic & The Novel*. London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1977.

Fowler, Roger. *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse: an essay in method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.* London: Jonathan Cape, 2003.

Halliday, Michael, and Ruqaiya Hasan. *Cohesion in English.* London: Longman, 1976.

Halliday, Michael, and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen. *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Rev. ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 1985.

Hogan, Patrick C. *Narrative Discourse: authors and narrators in literature, film, and art.* Columbus: Thomson-Shore, Inc. 2013.

Holcombe, Garan. "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time." The Literary Encyclopedia, 15 September 2006. Web. <https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=16877>.

Kadare, Ismail. *Kronikë në gur*. 1971. Tiranë: Onufri, 2015.

Kadare, Ismail. *Chronicle in Stone*. Transl. by Arshi Pipa. 1987. Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 2008.

Leech, Geoffrey, and Mick Short. *Style in Fiction: a linguistic introduction to English fictional prose*. 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2007.

Matz, Jesse. *The Modern Novel: a short introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Morgan, Peter. "Ismail Kadare: Writing Under Dictatorship." *Arts: The Proceedings of the Sydney University Arts Association* 32 (2010): 69–88.

Nünning, Ansgar. "But Why Will You Say That I Am Mad?: on the theory, history, and signals of unreliable narration in British fiction." *AAA Arbeiten Aus Anglistik and Amerikanistik* 22.1 (1997): 83–105.

Pipa, Arshi. "Subversion vs. Conformism: the Kadare phenomenon." *Telos* 73 (1987): 47–77.

Ray, Sarah Jaquette "Normalcy, Knowledge, and Nature in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.*" *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33.3 (2013). Web.

Semino, Elena. "Mind Style 25 Years On." *Style* 41 (2007): 153–203.

Semino, Elena. "Language, Mind and Autism in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.*" *Linguistics and Literary Studies.* Ed. Monika Fludernik and Daniel Jacob. Berlin; Boston, MA: de Gruyter. 2014. 279–303.

Semino, Elena, and Kate Swindlehurst. "Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.*" *Style* 30 (1996): 143–166.

Sternberg, Meir. *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*. Baltimore, MD; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Updike, John. "Chronicles and Processions." *The New Yorker*, 14 March 1988. 111–116.

Yacobi, Tamar. "Package Deals in Fictional Narrative: the case of the narrator's (un)reliability." *Contemporary Narratology* 9.2 (2001): 223–229.

Wales, Katie. *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.

Zerweck, Bruno. "Historicizing Unreliable Narration: unreliability and cultural discourse in narrative fiction." *Style* 35 (2001): 151–178.

# Primerjalna analiza miselnih slogov: otroška pripovedovalca v *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Marka Haddona in v *Chronicle in Stone* Ismaila Kadareja

Razprava primerja stilistične označevalce miselnega sloga otroških pripovedovalcev v romanih *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) britanskega pisatelja Marka Haddona ter *Chronicle in Stone* (1971) albanskega pisatelja Ismaila Kadareja. V prispevku analiziramo jezik pripovedovalcev, da bi identificirali izpostavljene jezikovne prvine pripovedi, s tem pa tudi raven njihove zanesljivosti in vpliv na bralca. Jezikovne značilnosti otroških pripovedovalcev v navedenih romanih so obravnavane kot značilnosti njunega načina razmišljanja, ki kažejo na določene omejitve zaradi starosti in ustvarjajo učinek nezanesljivosti. Analiza slogovnih značilnosti pokaže, da se izpostavljeni jezikovni vzorci pri pripovedovalcih razlikujejo, tako na ravni leksikalnih izbir kot usklajenosti skladenjskih vzorcev, sopostavitve dobesednih in figurativnih pomenov ter z vključevanjem drugih prvin, ki razkrivajo njune posebnosti in družbeno ozadje, na podlagi katerih se razlikujeta. S tem ko pripovedna strategija nezanesljivosti odraža pristno otroško naivnost, zbuja empatijo in krepi bralčevo interpretativno moč.