

**ON MODELLING OF THE CONCEPT “CRIME” VIA  
AUTOINTERTEXTUALITY  
(based on R. Dahl’s writing style)**

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The present article engages with multidimensional analysis of autointertextuality, putting forward a cognitive approach based on V. Evans’ Cognitive Model and Lexical Concepts (LCCM) Theory. Taking into consideration a variety of viewpoints introduced in the current article, reference is made to traditional and most recent approaches provided by both Russian and European scholars for the purpose of analyzing intertextuality from the cognitive point of view, putting the imperative on the mental processes occurring in the literary text. The current article explores Roald Dahl’s perception of the concept of “crime” through the prism of cognitive intertextuality. The subject matter of the article is the comprehensive analysis of the techniques employed in the literary text which can serve as prerequisites for the study of autointertextual relations. The topicality is determined by the current tendency of cognitive linguistics to interpret the literary text through the lens of semantic intertextual frames. Eventually, our research is devoted to the study of the concept of “crime” in R. Dahl’s stories in the view of intertextual domain with reference to autointertextuality.

**Keywords:** *cognitive intertextuality, autointertextuality, semantic intertextual frame, concept of “crime”, cognitive models, author’s world picture.*

### Introduction

The aim of the current article is to study the author’s individual worldview and its linguo-stylistic means of representation in autointertextual domain with a view to revealing R. Dahl’s individual perception and verbal representation of the concept of “crime” via semantic intertextual frames and their role in the formation of intertextual links. The focus of our interest is also the means of

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disclosing the author's perception of "crime" through linguo-stylistic and linguopoetic methods of analysis.

It stands to reason that intertextuality is a notion that was first encountered in Julia Kristeva's writings in the 1960s and remains significant in linguistics. Kristeva claims that any text is actually a "permutation of texts" in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36). Accordingly, Allen states that "meaning becomes something that exists between the text and all the other texts to which it refers, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations" (Allen, 2000, p. 16).

Regarding intertextuality from the cognitive point of view, M. Panagiotidou proposes that "the phenomenon of intertextuality arises from the construction of intertextual frames, on online processing construction containing two types of information, intertextual knowledge and textual information" (Panagiotidou, 2010, p. 2).

The term "intertextual frame" was first used by U. Eco in order to describe potential literary 'topoi' or narrative schemes that readers pick up from the storage of their intertextual competence bringing to mind the notion of schema. Eco defines frames as "cognitive knowledge representations about the "world", which enable us to perform such basic cognitive acts as perception, language comprehension and actions (Eco, 1979, p. 21).

Hence, the knowledge encoded in a literary text is represented by means of intertextual frames which help the reader decode and interpret the text. According to Panagiotidou, intertextual frames are created while readers go through a text and come across lexical items or structures that cue up intertextual knowledge. *The semantic intertextual frame* is modelled when an individual reader encompasses the knowledge about the occurrences of the same lexical items or cognitive models in different literary texts (Panagiotidou, 2010, p.5).

M. Panagiotidou's approach to the semantic intertextual frames is closely related to V. Evans' LCCM Theory, according to which meaning construction is based on two theoretical constructs: *lexical concepts and cognitive models* (Evans, 2006). Cognitive models refer to a coherent body of knowledge of any kind (either things or events) and to the potential for simulations which may arise from specific bodies of knowledge. These coherent bodies of knowledge consist of individual frames or related frames. Their crucial characteristic is that

they can be structured into *primary* and *secondary* cognitive models. Primary cognitive models are those which can be accessed directly via a lexical concept. On the other hand, secondary cognitive models are accessed directly via primary cognitive models and thus, indirectly via lexical concepts (Evans, as cited in Panagiotidou, 2009).

Moreover, M. Panagiotidou insists that once the cognitive model is accessed, the intertextual link between the two texts is created and the semantic intertextual frame is formed (Panagiotidou, 2010, p. 5).

Consequently, taking into account these theories, our research is based on the study of R. Dahl's short stories through the lens of the intertextual domain with reference to autointertextuality.

According to recent approaches in linguistics, intertextual relations found in different texts, generated by the same author are described as autointertextuality (Philipova, 2013). A. Philipova assumes that autointertextuality carries out the function of meaning-making and is outlined as a pragmatically actualized instrument of revealing author's individual style (Philipova, 2013, p. 6).

Our concern in this article is to disclose Roald Dahl's individual style, who, being a famous British writer, depicts women as more independent, prudent and decisive in times of trouble. In Dahl's short stories men are not portrayed as positively as women and thus lead to the deduction that there is an issue of feminism imbued in the structure and the choice of words in Dahl's stories (Tanusy, 2018, p. 159).

Dahl assumes that throughout the years, women have been overpowered, oppressed and silenced. The act of "angel of the house" was the person that women adopted while, behind closed doors, they endured unjust and cruel treatments (Abdallah, 2021).

Thus, R. Dahl is known for his feminist approach, raising the problem of women's oppression in the society because of their lack of rights, freedom and power.

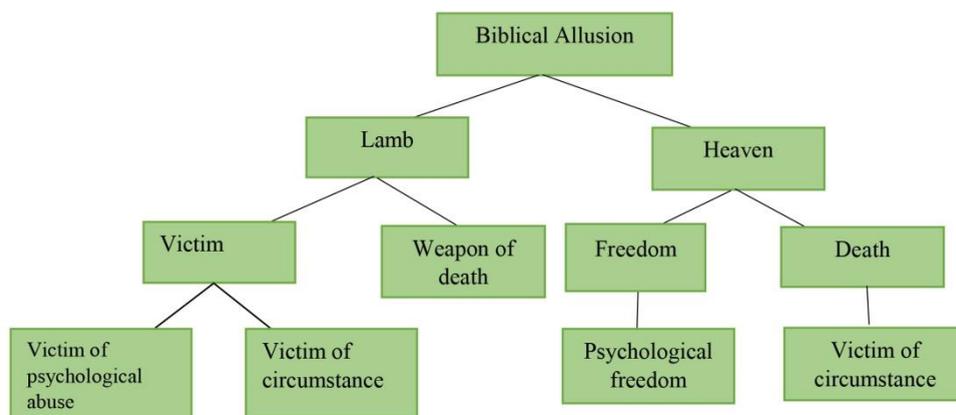
### **The authorial portrayal of the concept of "crime" via semantic intertextual frames**

The focus of our interest in this article is the investigation of autointertextual techniques applied by Dahl in the short stories "*Lamb to the Slaughter*" and "*The Way Up to Heaven*". It is worth mentioning that Dahl resorts to

auto-intertextual techniques through utilizing the same literary devices in depicting the characters as well as applying the mechanisms of transformation in the plot development. To illustrate the above-mentioned, we find it important to start with the interpretation of the titles of the stories in question and disclose the implied meanings of Biblical allusions employed by the author. The title “*Lamb to the Slaughter*” is a Biblical allusion which refers to a person who goes innocently and helplessly into a life-threatening or dangerous situation (“The American Heritage Idioms Dictionary”, 2002). However, in the short story “*Lamb to the Slaughter*”, the title conveys multiple layers of meaning. On the one hand, the leg of lamb serves Mary as a weapon for slaughtering her husband, on the other hand, Mary can be interpreted as a victim of psychological abuse due to the betrayal and cruel treatment on the part of her husband Patrick who, in turn, can be interpreted as a victim of circumstance.

It is interesting to note that the title of Dahl’s short story “*The Way Up to Heaven*” is also related to the Bible. By employing the word “heaven” in the title, the author implies two contrasting meanings: for *Mrs. Foster*, *the way up to heaven* is heading for Paris and living with her daughter and grandchildren, thus gaining the opportunity to get freedom, while, for *Mr. Foster*, *the way up to heaven* signifies his death, implying punishment for his cruel treatment.

Figure 1



By applying LCCM Theory, we observe that lexical items “LAMB” and “HEAVEN” afford access to the above-mentioned cognitive models (*victim of psychological abuse vs victim of circumstance and weapon of death, freedom vs death*). Evidently, in the titles of both stories, the concept of crime is

represented indirectly through the prism of the stylistic device of *irony*. The latter makes it possible for the reader to probe deeper into the literary texts and decode the author's individual perception of the concepts of "crime and punishment".

According to Panagiotidou, a direct access route to cognitive models that foster intertextual meaning can be provided by literary figures (Panagiotidou, 2010, p. 5). An auto-intertextual link between Dahl's two stories is established by the incorporation of two female characters (Mary Malone and Mrs. Foster) and their husbands (Patrick and Mr. Foster).

With the intention of creating the image of loyal, loving and modest wives, in both stories Dahl employs stylistic devices such as *epithets* - "*smiling air, curiously tranquil, translucent quality, soft mouth, placid look*", *metaphor* and *simile* - "*She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel - almost as a sunbather feels the sun*" in "*Lamb to the Slaughter*". The epithets "*loving wife, modest, loyal woman*" in "*The Way Up to Heaven*" are of paramount importance for the further two-dimensional portrayal of the females' personalities.

#### ***Mary's portrayal***

*There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin – for this was her sixth month with the child – had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger and darker than before....*

*She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel - almost as a sunbather feels the sun – that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 1)*

#### ***Mrs. Foster's Portrayal***

*Mrs. Foster was and always had been a good and loving wife. For over thirty years, she had served him loyally and well ... Even she, a very modest woman, was aware of it ...(The Way Up to Heaven, p. 1)*

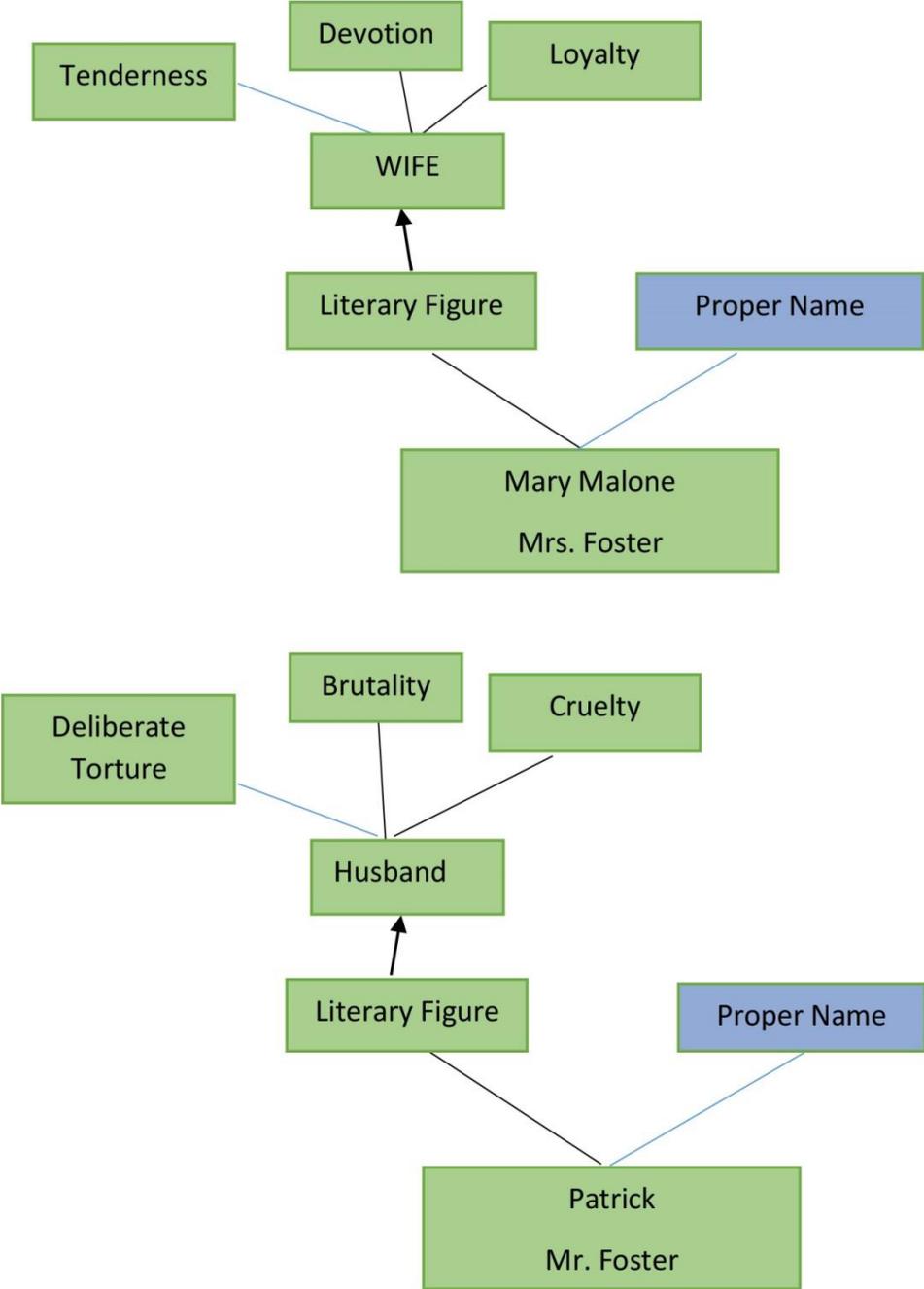
To highlight the sharp contrast between the wives' warm attitudes to their husbands and the husbands' cold and commanding tones, Dahl employs the stylistic device of *antithesis*. Applying a feminist approach to the utterance, Dahl provides some detailed evidence of Patrick's and Mr. Foster's brutality, cruelty, pressure and deliberate torture in treating their wives.

<p><b><i>Patrick's Commanding attitude</i></b></p> <p><i>This is going to be a bit of a shock to you ... I know it's kind of a bad time to be telling you... But there needn't really be any fuss... It wouldn't be very good for my job.</i> (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 2, 3)</p>	<p><b><i>Mr. Foster's cruel, despotic nature</i></b></p> <p><i>... it was hard to believe he wasn't purposely inflicting a nasty private little torture of his own on the unhappy lady. ... she would never dare to call out and tell him to hurry. He had disciplined her too well for that. ... he could drive her nearly into hysterics. ... it seemed almost as though he had wanted to miss the train simply in order to intensify the poor woman's suffering.</i> (The Way Up to Heaven, p. 1)</p>
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In the above-given passage, the author demonstrates the husband's spiritual oppression on Mary who is in her sixth month of pregnancy. Patrick's selfishness and inhuman attitude towards his wife are illustrated in the story by his egocentric attitude, rigid and self-obsessed manners as well as his infidelity.

With the purpose of revealing Mr. Foster's despotic nature, Dahl employs such emotively charged words as "*torment*" and "*torture*". Meanwhile, Mrs. Foster's lack of authority and absence of any rights are verbalized by the modal verb "*dare*" and the expressions "*he had disciplined her well*", "*he could drive her nearly into hysterics*", "*to intensify the poor woman's suffering*". Actually, the use of the epithets "*unhappy lady, poor woman*" discloses the author's feminist biased attitude to the woman, who is devoid of freedom, making it possible for the reader to sympathize with the tragedy of the woman.

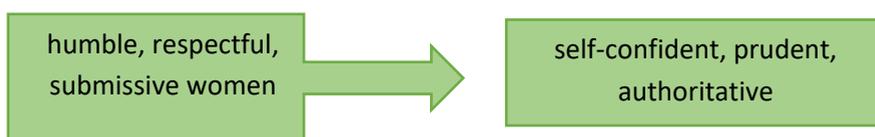
Figure 2



As can be seen from Figure 2, the semantic autointertextual link between Dahl's two stories is firmly established and can be illustrated in the following way. Mary Malone/Mrs. Foster and Patrick/Mr. Foster are literary figures who provide access to the primary cognitive model WIFE/HUSBAND, engendering access to such secondary cognitive models as TENDERNESS/DEVOTION/LOYALTY for female characters and CRUELTY/BRUTALITY/DELIBERATE TORTURE for male characters.

Moreover, of special interest in both stories is the climax which is realized through the *plot twist* and character transformation. It is due to the vicious treatment of their husbands that both female characters undergo metamorphosis and transfer from *humble, respectful and submissive women* to individuals with a tone of authority capable of making *sound judgments, demonstrating strong will and prudence*.

Figure 3



It is worth mentioning that the author, sticking to the feminist approach, introduces into the narration the notion of *temporary insanity* which contributes to underscoring the fact that both Mary Malone and Mrs. Foster performed spontaneous and mechanical actions, being in the state of trance and losing the link with the reality. Thus, zooming deeper into the concept of “crime”, Dahl poses the problem of unforeseen, exceptional circumstances which cloud people's judgments and provoke them into committing ungovernable actions due to the harsh reality too hard for them to tolerate. In his two stories, Dahl invents different life situations with mitigating circumstances, extenuating guilt with the help of which the author succeeds in generating dislike for Patrick and Mr. Foster and empathy for Mary and Mrs. Foster

To achieve his aim, Dahl utilizes the *syntactical stylistic device of asyndeton* to highlight Mary's and Mrs. Foster's subconscious, impulsive and automatic actions.

Everything was <b>automatic</b> now – down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand	Now it was right up against the door, and for still another few seconds she remained in that position, head up,
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*inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. A leg of lamb. (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 3)*

*ear to the door, hand on key ... (The Way Up to Heaven, p. 7)*

To emphasize his attitude toward the current situation that resulted in Mary's subconscious aggressive behavior, the author employs the *metaphorical epithet "dazed horror"*, implying the pain that was too strong for a loving wife to bear.

*And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she was very still through it all, watching him with a kind of **dazed horror** as he went further and further away from her with each word (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 3).*

Furthermore, to make his feminist approach more convincing, Dahl goes on with the hypothesis of temporary insanity, underscoring the fact that Mary's and Mrs. Foster's actions cannot be considered a premeditated crime.

*She sat down before the mirror, tidied her hair, touched up her **lips** and **face**. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again. (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 3)*

*The way she was standing there, with her head in the air and the body so tense, it seemed as though **she were listening for the repetition of some sound that she had heard a moment before from a place far away inside the house.***

*Yes – quite obviously she was listening. **Her whole attitude was a listening one ... so it seemed, to hear and to analyze these sounds that were coming faintly from this place deep within the house.** (The Way Up to Heaven, p. 7)*

Of considerable significance is the fact that Dahl resorts to the stylistic device of *metonymy* to allow the reader to take a closer look at Mary's shocked emotional state. The author wants to emphasize the transformation the character underwent, depicting the scene after the murder in the state of temporary insanity as if Mary were going to play a new role, rehearsing the scenario she invented herself. "*She touched her lips*" signifies her attempts to reproduce the

story created in her mind and “*her face*” implies her attempts to wear a mourning expression she had to express to display the reality in the way she wanted to. Consequently, she disguises her genuine emotions for the sake of realizing her authentic intentions to take up a decisive posture so that she could support her child.

In “The Way up to Heaven”, the use of the stylistic device of metonymy “*the repetition of some sound*”, “*to hear and to analyze these sounds*” is employed by the author, implying the events that were going on inside the house. The old man was stuck in the elevator and there was no one in the house to help him. In fact, the old woman was facing the dilemma – to provide freedom for her future life with her daughter and grandchildren by letting her husband die in the elevator or go on leading a depressing life with her dominant, despotic husband.

<p><i>The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock .... It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden</i> (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 3).</p>	<p><i>Then, all at once, she (Mrs. Foster) sprang to life again.</i>  <i>The chauffeur, had he been watching her closely, might have noticed that her face had turned absolutely white and that the whole expression had suddenly altered. There was no longer that rather soft and silly look. A peculiar hardness had settled itself upon the features. The little mouth, usually so flabby, was now tight and thin, the eyes were bright, and the voice, when she spoke, carried a new note of authority</i> (The Way Up to Heaven, p. 8).</p>
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The expressions “*bring her out of the shock*”, “*her mind became clear all of a sudden*” “*Then, all at once, she (Mrs. Foster) sprang to life again*” are utilized by the author with a view to having a strong impact on the reader, thus indicating the transition of women’s actions from instinctive, automatic to fully realized ones, conscious and well-thought-out. Mrs. Foster finally gains authority, shifts into a more determined, sensible woman capable of providing enough alibi for herself. The use of the stylistic device of *metaphor* “*A peculiar*

*hardness had settled itself upon the features*”, “*the voice carried a new note of authority*” along with the contrasting *epithets* “*soft and silly look*”, “*The little mouth, usually so flabby, was now tight and thin, the eyes were bright*” contribute to testifying her transfer.

Figure 4



Interestingly enough, the women’s complete lack of emotions transforms into a rational state of mind capable of analyzing the situation and finding sensible solutions.

<p>“Please,” she begged.  <b>“Please eat it (lamb) .... It’d be a favor to me if you’d eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards”</b> (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 7).</p> <p>And in the other room, Mary Maloney began <b>to giggle</b> (Lamb to the Slaughter, p. 8).</p>	<p><i>She walked quickly across the hall and disappeared for a moment around the corner to the left, at the back. There was something deliberate and purposeful about this action; she had the air of a woman who is off to investigate a rumor or to confirm a suspicion. And when she returned a few seconds later, there was a little glimmer of satisfaction on her face</i> (The Way Up to Heaven, p. 9).</p>
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The closing lines in “Lamb to the slaughter” are indicative of Mary’s acute senses and decision- making ability. The author introduces into the narration the stylistic device of *irony* with the purpose of making the situation ridiculous by begging the sergeants to eat up the lamb which was the weapon of murder they were looking for. In addition, *irony* is expressed by using the verb “**to giggle**”. The latter possesses the connotation of triumph over the professional officers who regarded the leg of lamb not as a weapon of murder but just as a tasty dish and enhances the humorous effect of *irony*.

Like in “Lamb to the Slaughter”, in “The Way Up to Heaven” Dahl employs the stylistic device of *irony* which is actualized by the exaggerated use

of legal terms regarding such expressions as “*to investigate a rumor*”, “*to confirm a suspicion*”. To highlight the effect of irony, the author uses the stylistic device of *verbal gradation* “*a little glimmer of satisfaction*”.

### Conclusion

Summing up our investigation, we come to the conclusion that Roald Dahl demonstrates a critical attitude toward the power of men who display tyranny towards women. Being an advocate of women, he highlights the power of women who can display determination, common sense, sound judgments and strong will. Any act of violence on the part of the characters (Patrick, Mr. Foster) recoils on them and they become victims of their own actions. Thus, Dahl does not remain impartial toward the characters who are unable to bear the cruelty and injustice of reality. Their reaction is reflected in their defensive posture against the brutality of their husbands which is too hard for them to bear. Their emotional state of mind results in falling into a state of trance and committing unconscious, automatic actions leading to the death of their husbands.

According to the issues of morality and its relatedness to law, there are some codes of law according to which unconsciousness or automatism can be a defense. Almost all crimes require both “guilty mind” and “guilty act”. Without either, there is typically no offense. That is why many courts recognize unconsciousness as a defense to criminal charges (Schwartzbach, 2016).

It can be inferred from the above-mentioned that “guilty mind” and “guilty act” are obligatory prerequisites of criteria by which the notion of crime is determined. The analysis reveals that none of them is evident in the stories in question.

Finally, our investigation made it possible to yield to the conclusion that autointertextual chaining functions in two different levels: the first one is referring to the linking of ideas between two literary texts, and the second one is relating to the stylistic devices which serve as triggers for the reader in creating associations.

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**«ՀԱՆՑԱՆՔ» ՀԱՄԿԱՑՈՒՅԹԻ ԿԱՂԱՊԱՐՈՒՄԸ  
ԻՆՔՆԱՄԻՉՏԵՔՍՍԱՅՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԻՋՈՑՈՎ (ՌՈՍԱԼԴ ԴԱԼԻ ԿԱՐՃ  
ՊԱՏՄՎԱԾՔՆԵՐԻ ՀԻՄԱՆ ՎՐԱ)**

**Անահիտ Մակարյան  
Շողեր Հարությունյան**

Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է դիտարկել ինքնամիջտեքստայնությունը որպես հեղինակի անհատական ոճի ձևավորման միջոց՝ հիմք ընդունելով ռուս և արևմտյան գիտնականների առաջ քաշած վերջին մոտեցումներն ու դրույթները ճանաչողական միջտեքստայնության տիրույթում: Հոդվածի ուսումնասիրության առարկան «հանցանք» հասկացույթի համակողմանի վերլուծությունն է, որի համատեքստում ներկայացվում են հեղինակի անհատական ոճը և աշխարհի պատկերի հեղինակային ընկալումը: Ուսումնասիրելով Ռոսալդ Դալի կարճ պատմվածքներում առկա ինքնամիջտեքստային հարաբերությունները՝ վեր են հանվում Դալի անհատական ոճի յուրահատկություններն ու աշխարհընկալումը: Երկու գրական երկերի լեզվաոճական, լեզվաբանաստեղծական և միջտեքստային քննությունները թույլ են տալիս եզրակացնել, որ Դալն իր ստեղծագործություններում ֆեմինիստական մոտեցում է ցուցաբերում կանանց նկատմամբ՝ բարձրացնելով նրանց իրավունքների և ազատության բացակայության խնդիրը: Հոդվածի արդիականությունը պայմանավորված է «հանցանք» հասկացույթի առկայացման ուսումնասիրությամբ միջտեքստային տիրույթում, մասնավորապես՝ ինքնամիջտեքստային տարրերի քննության արդյունքում:

*Բանալի բառեր՝ ճանաչողական միջտեքստայնություն, ինքնամիջտեքստայնություն, միջտեքստային կադապար, «հանցանք» հասկացույթ, ճանաչողական կադապարներ, հեղինակային աշխարհընկալում:*