FUNCTIONAL SPECIFICS OF PARENTHETICAL INSERTIONS IN METABIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Abstract. The article is focused on the study of the peculiarities of parenthetical insertions in a literary text, namely in the metabiographical narrative. The main structural features, narrative functions and specifics of placement within the host-context are considered. Parenthetical insertions are defined as expressions that are linearly represented in a given host-context (a sentence or paragraph) but are independent in terms of syntactic structure at the same time.

The research material included the text of the novel by V. Woolf, “Orlando: A Biography”, from which contextualised excerpts featuring parenthetical insertions were sampled. Textual analysis was used to determine the impact of parentheticals on the narrative flow and story development. We applied linguistic analysis to identify the structure and functional specifics of parenthetical insertions, having focused on the choice of punctuation (dashes, round and square brackets, and commas), syntactic placement within the sentence, and lexical inventory. The functional categorisation was employed to reveal and systematise specific narrative functions of parenthetical insertions in the studied text.

It has been proven that the analysed parenthetical insertions are placed predominantly at the middle or end of sentences, occasionally occurring as a stand-alone insertion inside the host paragraph. Structurally, parenthetical insertions occur as parenthetical phrases, clauses being a part of a complex sentence, independent sentences within a host paragraph, and parenthetical
paragraphs. Essential narrative functions of parenthetical insertions in the analysed text include reference to historical dates and events to imitate historical authenticity; adding the author’s remarks and comments pertaining to the process of compiling the text of the biography; transposition of the character’s language mode; transposition of narrative perspective; providing additional plot-pertinent information to clarify information or add a broader perspective for interpretation.

**Keywords:** narrative, metabiography, parenthetical insertion, expressiveness, language means, literary text.

Матковська Ганна Олександрівна кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри англійської мови гуманітарного спрямування №3, Національний технічний університет України «Київський політехнічний інститут ім. Ігоря Сікорського», пр-т. Берестейський (Перемоги), 37, м. Київ, orcid.org/0000-0002-0823-7905

Карачун Юлія Геннадіївна кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри теорії, практики та перекладу англійської мови, Національний технічний університет України «Київський політехнічний інститут ім. Ігоря Сікорського», пр-т. Берестейський (Перемоги), 37, м. Київ, orcid.org/0000-0002-5171-8704

**ФУНКЦІЙНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПАРЕНТЕЗИ В МЕТАБІОГРАФІЧНОМУ НАРАТИВІ**

Анотація. Статтю присвячено дослідженню структурних і функційних особливостей парентези в художньому тексті, а саме в метабіографічному наративі. Розглянуто основні структурні ознаки, наративні функції та специфіку розташування цього експресивного засобу в межах основного контексту. Парентетичні вставні конструкції визначаються як вирази, які лінійно представлені в певному контексті (речені або абзаці), але водночас є самостійними з точки зору синтаксичної структури.

Матеріалом дослідження слугував текст роману В. Вулф "Orlando: A Biography", з якого відібрані контекстualізовані уривки, які містять парентезу. Текстологічний аналіз використано для визначення впливу парентези на наративний потік і розвиток сюжету. Лінгвістичний аналіз застосований з метою встановлення структури та функціональних особливостей парентетичних вставних конструкцій, а також пунктуаційного оформлення (тире, круглі та квадратні дужки, коми),
синтаксичного розташування в реченні й лексико-семантичних особливостей. Функціональна категоризація використано для виявлення та систематизації специфічних наративних функцій парентетичних вставних конструкцій у досліджуваному тексті.

Доведено, що проаналізовані парентези розміщуються переважно в середині або в кінці речення, поодиноко трапляються окремі вставні конструкції всередині основного абзацу. Структурно парентези представлені вставними словосполученнями, підрядними реченнями, що входять до головного складного речення, самостійними реченнями в межах головного абзацу, а також парентетичними абзацами. Домінантними наративними функціями парентетичних вставних конструкцій в проаналізованому тексті є посилання на історичні дати та події для імітації історичної достовірності; додавання авторських ремарок та коментарів, що стосуються процесу укладання тексту біографії; зміни мови персонажа; транспозиція оповідної перспективи; надання додаткової сюжетно-релевантної інформації для уточнення інформації або додавання ширшої перспективи для інтерпретації.

Ключові слова: наратив, метабіографія, парентеза, експресивність, мовні засоби, художній текст.

Introduction and problem statement. The interplay of form and content is considered a clue to understanding the author’s personal writing style; it can also provide a glimpse into the broader cultural milieu to which the work belongs. A luminary of the modernist movement, Virginia Woolf employed innovative narrative techniques, trailblazing new approaches to conventional genres, such as biography, and methods of representation. An array of unconventional stylistic techniques is observed in her novel *Orlando: A Biography*, the epitome of genre convergence through blurring boundaries between a factual biographic approach and a subjective method of presenting fictionalised material. Among the prominent features pertinent to the authorial style is the abundant use of parenthetical insertions, which structural, lexical, syntactical, and functional peculiarities are the prime focus of the present study.

Literature review. According to N. Dehé and Y. Kavalova, parentheticals are “expressions that are linearly represented in a given string of utterance (a host sentence) but seem structurally independent at the same time” [7, P. 1]. Functional specificity of parenthetical insertions varies in scope and linguistic underpinning, conveying the speaker’s attitude to the utterance in the form of sentence modifiers or comments.
Mentioning parentheticals’ grammatical independence from the surrounding context, G. Bruni Roccia also points out that these insertions are phrases or sentences performing qualifying or amplifying functions [3, P. 97].

Parenthetical insertions are an extremely important means of expressive syntax based on the expansion of the host sentence. Functional specifics of parenthetical structures in V. Woolf’s works were extensively studied by D. Blackmore (2009), Y. Cui (2014; 2016), G. Bruni Roccia (2017), and I. Kaminsky (2017).

D. Blackmore highlights their role in mimicking spontaneous discourse features such as digression, self-interruption, self-correction, and revision [2, P. 143]. Embedded in free indirect speech, parenthetical structures express the unorderly sequence of memory interweaving with haphazard thoughts and reflections. At the same time, parentheticals can represent the narrator’s discourse serving as the narrator’s remark embedded in the character’s free indirect discourse [2, P. 147]. By doing so, the author allows the reader to better understand the context of an event when the character’s thought was conceived.

The author uses these disruptions in the narrative to create an illusion that the reader has direct access to a character’s thoughts, even though that is not genuinely possible. These disruptions serve several purposes: first, they help convey the challenges a character faces when experiencing unfamiliar or surprising emotions; second, they intensify the portrayal of a character's feelings or thoughts; and third, they illustrate how a character's thought process may be interrupted, either due to connecting with another memory or because of something noticed in the surroundings. As a result, the reader gains a stronger sense of understanding the character's thoughts and thinking patterns, providing a more accurate representation of their inner world.

Analysing narrative methods of consciousness presentation in Mrs Dalloway and To the Lighthouse, V. Sotirova reflects on the use of free indirect style in creating juxtaposed individual viewpoints connected through interperspectival links in the text [10]. Developing this premise in her study of the representation of multipersonal consciousness in V. Woolf’s novels, Y. Cui mentions that parentheticals, due to their digressive nature, serve as a convenient tool to introduce new viewpoints into the continuous narrative [5, P. 177]. Consequently, parenthetical insertions allow even a single sentence to incorporate two narrative perspectives. However, this inclusion of parentheticals disrupts the flow of a unified viewpoint, making it challenging to distinguish separate instances of consciousness, thus providing room for the reader’s interpretation. E. Auerbach refers to this distinctive feature of Woolf’s fiction as ‘multipersonal representation of consciousness’ [1, P. 769].
Subsequently, Y. Cui notes that parentheticals can perform different stylistic functions depending on the context in which it is used [5, P. 178]. In V. Woolf's novels, parenthetical insertion might serve as a marker of the transposition of narrative points of view between external and internal modes of representation, illustrated in the following example:

("I'm twenty-two. It's nearly the end of October. Life is thoroughly pleasant, although unfortunately there are a great number of fools about. One must apply oneself to something or other – God knows what. Everything is really very jolly – except getting up in the morning and wearing a tail coat.")

'I say, Bonamy, what about Beethoven?'

('Bonamy is an amazing fellow. He knows practically everything – not more about English literature than I do – but then he's read all those Frenchmen'.) [122–123, P. 71]

According to G. Bruni Roccia, parentheticals in V. Woolf's novels help to distinguish between the objective and subjective perspectives in the character’s mind [3, P. 100]. The given example demonstrates the use of parenthesis as a formal marker of the character’s internal speech, which alternates with unmarked replicas of his external utterance.

Interpreting V. Woolf's novel To the Lighthouse within the framework of posthumanism, I. Kaminsky asserts that parentheticals in round and square brackets serve the purpose of freeing “the stream of consciousness from the bounds of corporeality and materiality by creating parenthetical embodiment” [8, P. 244]. The emerging syntactic patterns in the text confine physicality or characters’ actions to generate a pure thinking process detached from material constraints. Thus, I. Kaminsky concludes that parenthetical insertions are primarily aimed at setting boundaries between the spiritual consciousness and the corporeal manifested through the action in the text [8, P. 245].

This study aims to uncover the structure, lexical and syntactic specifics, and narrative functions of parenthetical insertions in the novel Orlando: A Biography.

Methods and materials. We studied the text of V. Woolf’s novel Orlando: A Biography and selected excerpts containing parenthetical insertions for further analysis and interpretation. Through selective sampling, the representative passages illustrating the use of the scrutinised phenomenon were pinpointed. Textual analysis was used to analyse the context in which parenthetical insertions are actualised and examine their contribution to the narrative flow and story development. We applied linguistic analysis to determine the structure and functional specifics of parenthetical insertions, having focused on the choice of punctuation (dashes, round and square
brackets, and commas), syntactic placement within the sentence, and lexical inventory. The functional categorisation was employed to reveal and systematise specific narrative functions of parenthetical insertions in the given text.

Results and Discussion. Even though the subtitle of Orlando is “a biography”, suggesting a representation of actual events, it is a work of fiction. However, according to E. Cooley, factual elements of Vita Sackville-West’s background and character are pretty accurately depicted in the heritage and personality of Orlando [4, P. 75]. As pointed out by A. Nünning, this new variety of the genre is called metabiography since it is endowed with general characteristics of a biography on a meta-level, at the same time using an array of narrative techniques pertinent to fiction [9, P. 132]. Consequently, fictional metabiographies represent a genre reflecting biographical conventions, production schemes and reception expectations with the representational possibilities of fictional narrative texts.

The narrative is delivered by the biographer, whose name is not mentioned. However, with specific details presented in the text, it is possible to partially reconstruct the narrator’s personality. From the text, we learn about the biographer’s gender: Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one! Never need she vex herself, nor he invoke the help of novelist or poet [12, P. 9–10]; the time when he compiled the biography – “so that even now (the first of November 1927) we know not why we go up stairs” [12, P. 74].

Besides, in her diary, V. Woolf mentions the idea to write this work on 5 October 1927 [13, P. 116], and on 20 November, she writes about the beginning of the work on the third chapter. Consequently, we may assume that the fictional time of the story (1 November 1927) coincided with the actual time of writing this chapter. In addition, the narrator mentions in the text the publishing house that will publish the biography and set the price for it: whatever sum the Hogarth Press may think proper to charge for this book [12, P. 268]. The publishing house in question was founded by the writer and her husband, Leonard Woolf, in 1917. Thus, the narrator-biographer acts as a fictionalised alter ego of the writer, who collects information about the hero/heroine from old documents (... the story of Orlando's life, documents, both private and historical, have made it possible to fulfil the first duty of a biographer...) [12, P. 61] but does not directly participate in the events he narrates, i.e. acts as a heterodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator, in G. Genette’s terminology.

The analysed work is characterised by the extensive use of parentheticals of various structural and functional types. In this paper, we focus on the following structural types of parenthetical insertions:
- parenthetical phrases: Now the Abbey windows were lit up and burnt like a heavenly, many-coloured shield (in Orlando’s fancy) [12, P. 25];

- parenthetical clauses that are part of a complex sentence: Venice of whom he bought (but only at the sword’s point) his lacquered cabinet, might, in other hands, prove worth the telling. [12, P 107];

- parenthetical independent sentences: ... in despair of keeping pace with her vagaries, Orlando should have struck his pen in earnest against his paper. (For we can, if we have the resolution, turn the hussy, Memory, and all her ragtag and bobtail out of the house) [306, c. 38];

- parenthetical paragraphs: How good to eat!’ (The gipsies have no word for ‘beautiful’. This is the nearest.) [12, P. 141]

Parentheticals in V. Woolf’s works are graphically marked. The most common means of highlighting these insertions include the use of a dash or a pair of dashes and round brackets:

When the boy, for alas, a boy it must be — no woman could skate with such speed and vigour — swept almost on tiptoe past him... [12, P. 33].

Instantly she plucked a ring from her finger (the joint was swollen rather) and as she fitted it to his, named him her Treasurer and Steward [12, P. 20].

Less common means of marking parenthetical insertions include a comma and square brackets:

And it was that same night, so tradition has it, when Orlando was sound asleep, that she made over formally, putting her hand and seal finally to the parchment... [12, P. 18–19].

...A thousand, thousand kisses to Tom, Gerry, Peter, and dearest Mew’ [presumably her cat] [12, P. 127].

Regarding positioning, parentheticals are primarily placed in the middle of a host sentence, thus interrupting the speech flow and creating digression. The following excerpt showcases the use of the parenthetical conditional clause holding a mid-sentence position: And he says (if sawings like his can be given a name so sacred and tender) Life’s labour, or so we interpret the whirr of his dust-choked gullet [12, P. 272]. As seen from the context, it interrupts the narrative report being placed between the reporting phrase (...he says) and free indirect speech that follows the insertion. In some cases, parenthetical insertions occur at the end of a sentence: The thought popped into her head violently, irrerelevantly (unless old Greene were somehow the cause of it) [12, P. 283]. Alternatively, they appear as an independent sentence or paragraph, which is not included in a host sentence.
The functional range of parentheticals in the studied novel is exceptionally diverse. The most significant functional diversity of this technique is observed in the novel Orlando: A Biography, where it provides an explanation of details that are not obvious from the general context: *He now commissioned Mr Isham of Norfolk to deliver to Mr Nicholas Greene of Clifford's Inn a document which set forth Orlando's admiration for his works (for Nick Greene was a very famous writer at that time) and his desire to make his acquaintance...* [12, P. 40]

In this passage, a parenthetical sentence, separated by brackets from the main text, is used to emphasise the cause-and-effect relationship between the story's events – Orlando’s admiration for Nicholas Greene’s works and his desire to meet him.

The prolific use of parenthetical commentary in this novel is determined by its genre nature. Since it imitates a biography, the author uses parentheticals to create the effect of historicity. This function is realized by the following means:

- parentheticals referring to historical dates and events: *On the seventh day of his trance (Thursday, May the 10th) the first shot was fired of that terrible and bloody insurrection of which Lieutenant Brigge had detected the first symptoms* [12, P. 65].

- author’s remarks and comments pertaining to the process of compiling the text of the biography: *We had a word for them. Ah! I have it...’ (But we must omit that word; it was disrespectful in the extreme and passing strange on a lady's lips.) 'Lord! Lord! she cried again at the conclusion of her thoughts...* [12, P. 76].

- transposition of character’s language mode: *Was that figure of fun at the end of the table with her hair rigged up like a Maypole (comme une grande perche mal fagotee) really the Queen?* [12, P. 19]

The character’s language mode is a specific verbal design of an utterance that characterises the character's social background, age, occupation, etc. A verbal portrait of a character is created through the use of stylistically coloured vocabulary (e.g. colloquialisms, professional slang, archaic vocabulary, etc.). V. Woolf uses the technique of changing the phraseological point of view to emphasise the foreign origin of the character through the use of foreign language insertions. In the example above, this means of expressive syntax is used to imitate the characters conversing in French.

- transposition of narrative perspective: *The news — that she was to attend him instantly — brought tears to the eyes of good old Mrs Grimsditch, now grown somewhat old. Together they perambulated the house.*
The towel horse in the King’s bedroom (‘and that was King Jamie, my Lord,’ she said, hinting that it was many a day since a King had slept under their roof; but the odious Parliament days were over and there was now a Crown in England again) lacked a leg... [12, P. 103–104].

The given passage showcases the use of two functional types of parentheticals. The first one, marked with dashes, provides a back-reference to the already-mentioned communicative situation within the same, fictional biographer’s, narrative perspective. However, the second parenthetical insertion, marked with round brackets, shifts the narrative point of view from a neutral description of the damaged furniture item, reported by the biographer, to a more subjective account of the story of the afore-mentioned item recalled by one of the novel’s characters, Mrs Grimsditch.

The polyphony of V. Woolf’s novels implies changes in the narrative perspective, as the author simultaneously conveys the events from the outside and through the lens of the character’s perception. In this case, the parenthetical insertion serves as a link between the fictional text world, perceived by the character and fictional narrator, and the character's inner world, realised as a set of emotional and intellectual reflections related to the reality in which he exists.

The functions of parentheticals also include retrospection manifested in the informative coherence of the text. In the following excerpt, the parenthetical insertion functions as a back-reference to information that has been previously mentioned in the text:

He kept looking at the grass and at the sky and trying to bethink him what a true poet, who has his verses published in London, would say about them. Memory meanwhile (whose habits have already been described) kept steady before his eyes the face of Nicholas Greene...[12, P. 49].

The parenthetical insertion interrupts the character’s train of thought, expressed in free indirect style, with a narrator’s sober remark referencing to his ways of dealing with memories and past experiences. The linguistic markers of retrospection in the given passage are the adverb with temporal semantics (already) and the verb in the present perfect tense.

However, in many cases, parentheticals provide additional plot-pertinent information to clarify or add a broader perspective for interpretation. The following passage contains a parenthetical insertion providing a glimpse into the further development of one of the characters, the Archduke/the Archduchess:

The Archduchess (but she must in future be known as the Archduke) told his story — that he was a man and always had been one... [12, P. 178].
The narrator’s remark in mid-position serves as a hint to foreshadow the advancement of the storyline. The effect is achieved by juxtaposing gender-marked nouns (the Archduke/the Archduchess) and pronouns (he/she).

Another narrative function performed by the parenthetical insertion is the one of commentary on the content of the biography. The excerpt below showcases

*Once look out of a window at bees among flowers, at a yawning dog, at the sun setting, once think ‘how many more suns shall I see set’, etc. etc. (the thought is too well known to be worth writing out) and one drops the pen, takes one’s cloak, strides out of the room, and catches one’s foot on a painted chest as one does so* [12, P. 12].

Since the fictional biography focuses primarily on its title character, it is worth noting that an abundance of parenthetical commentaries reveals narrator’s attitude to different facets of their fictional personality. The following passage showcases the use of parenthetical insertion with the narrator’s commentary on the character’s physique and manner of movement:

*He sighed profoundly, and flung himself — there was a passion in his movements which deserves the word — on the earth at the foot of the oak tree* [12, P. 14].

At this point, the commentary does not provide the reader with any objective details but rather the narrator’s subjective perspective on the character. The parenthetical commentary could also serve to interpret the character’s feelings and behaviour they induce:

*...the sails came tumbling on deck, and she perceived (so sunk had she been in thought that she had seen nothing for several days) that the ship was anchored off the coast of Italy* [12, P. 158].

As the story progresses, the narrator shifts the focus from the physical perspective of the surrounding setting, reflecting the character’s personality, to her way of thinking and ideation:

*... the words echoed in Orlando’s sad heart, and she felt that however much landing there meant comfort, meant opulence, meant consequence and state (for she would doubtless pick up some noble Prince and reign, his consort, over half Yorkshire), still, if it meant conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, meant denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursing her lips, and restraining her tongue, then she would turn about with the ship and set sail once more for the gipsies* [12, P. 162].

Presenting her sobering thoughts and uneasy feelings on the prospects of married life, the monologue imitates the somewhat logically incoherent train of thought amplified by repeated use of the verb *meant* and parallel...
syntax structures (fettering her limbs, pursing her lips, restraining her tongue). The free indirect style interior monologue is interrupted with a parenthetical insertion indicating the narrator’s opinion on the matter, which subjectivity is manifested through the use of subjunctive mood and the adverb with modal meaning (doubtless).

Another functional peculiarity of the parenthetical insertion in the analysed text is that it marks the shift from an internal to an external narrative perspective. The example below demonstrates Orlando’s reminiscence of her life in Elizabethan England in the form of a free indirect style internal monologue interwoven with the narrator’s parenthetical commentary, indicating the physical action triggering another flash of memory:

Here she had first met Sasha. About here (she looked down into the sparkling waters) one had been used to see the frozen bumboat woman with her apples on her lap [12, P. 164–165].

The narrator’s parenthetical commentary might also refer to the degree of reliability of the information provided by different characters. The excerpt below shows the use of this functional type of parenthetical insertion:

...the other two gentlemen — ‘there, Ma’am, a little to the right of the lamp-post, one of ‘em humped, t’other much the same as you or me’— were Mr Dryden and Mr Pope.’ ‘Sad dogs,’ said the Captain, by which he meant that they were Papists, ‘but men of parts, nonetheless,’ he added, hurrying aft to superintend the arrangements for landing. (The Captain must have been mistaken, as a reference to any textbook of literature will show; but the mistake was a kindly one, and so we let it stand.) [12, P. 166].

The commentary structure (an individual sentence fully separated from the character’s discourse) and its placement after the Captain’s utterance imply that his account is obscure due to the character’s lack of knowledge on the subject, rendering him unreliable.

**Conclusion.** To conclude, parenthetical insertions play a crucial role in the genre of metabiography, which is represented by blending biographical schematic conventions with narrative techniques associated with fiction. The insertions provide historical context and authorial remarks that create a sense of authenticity of the story.

The syntactic placement of insertions at the middle or end of sentences, as well as a stand-alone insertion inside the host paragraph, predefine diverse functions, including transposition of character language mode, retrospective insights, and commentary on story developments. By presenting the reader with parentheticals that provide the characters’ inner reflections, the novel achieves a multipersonal representation of consciousness, enabling readers to perceive events through the character’s or narrator’s subjective perspective.
Essentially, parenthetical insertions in *Orlando: A Biography* function as a significant narrative and stylistic device that contributes to the novel’s thematic and stylistic complexity.

The future perspective for the research would involve scrutinising the pragmatic impact of parenthetical insertions on the reader’s perception of the narrative from the standpoint of the reader response theory.

**References:**


