



Perspective Structure in Agatha Christie's Five Little Pigs (Murder in Retrospect)

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Abstract

This essay examines the double-layered perspective structure in Agatha Christie's Five Little Pigs (Murder in Retrospect). Poirot's technique for solving the old mystery is to apply a multiperspectival mode of narration. In addition to talking with the related law officials who dealt with the Crale case at the time of its trial, Poirot interviews the five witnesses to the murder and reads their (written) verbal accounts of the crime day. By following his psychological method in conjunction with comparing and contrasting the multiple perspectives, Poirot reconfigures the events which lead to the crime and finally identifies the real murderer through reinterpreting the crime scene with the help of both what the witnesses acknowledge in their oral and verbal narratives and what they do not say. The total narrative structure, configured by the omniscient narrator's and/or implied author's perspective, also privileges Poirot's perspective towards the narrative theme or object.

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1. Introduction

Agatha Christie (1890-1976) "has been praised as an ingenious puzzle-plotter" (Makinen, 2010: 415), as well as considered the "queen of crime" (Scaggs, 2005: 28). According to Stephen Knight, Christie belongs to "the golden age generation of the crime fiction [which] is usually taken as the period between the two world wars" (2003: 77). At this time, the reformulation and transformation of existing narrative techniques brought about a new genre of crime fiction, described by Knight as the following:

Elements that were randomly present in earlier crime fiction suddenly become a norm, like multiple suspects, and some earlier tendencies largely disappear, notably the use of coincidence and historical explanations. A genre of crime fiction, best named for its central mechanism as the clue-puzzle and epitomised by Agatha Christie and 'S. S. Van Dine', clearly forms a recognisable entity by the mid-1920s. (2003: 77)

Christie's narrative techniques were mainly based on the established principles practiced by the pioneers of the crime genre represented by Edgar

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Allen Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle. Regarding this, Joan Acocella (2010) states that:

By Christie's time at least two conventions had been established. First was the detective's eccentricity. [. .] A second rule was the absolutely central role of ratiocination. The detective, when he is working, shows almost no emotion. What he shows—and what constitutes the main pleasure of the stories—is inductive reasoning.

Similarly, Hercule Poirot's approach to the case in *Five Little Pigs* is based on inductive reasoning. He is also an eccentric and a ratiocinative character who finds the real perpetrator of the crime by relying on his rational calculations. "With its vivid characterisation and strong plot," *Five Little Pigs*, as Mark Campbell explains, "is the first and best of Christie's 'murder in retrospect' novels" (2005: 42).

2. Multiperspectival Mode of Narration

Made up of three books, *Five Little Pigs* (1943) (also known as *Murder in Retrospect*) is a crime narrative with a simple plot structure. The narrative structure is based on the arrangement of parallel events that have a direct or indirect connection to the narrative object (or point of the narrative), the presentation of their interconnected nature, and the defining role of the detective in closing the narrative plot. The wide gap between the story time and the discourse time² makes the crime difficult for Poirot to solve. He recreates or "rewrite[s]" (Christie, 2015: 66) the narrative of the crime by focusing on the events both before and after the crime with the help of five witnesses or, as he calls them, pigs³. This technique allows Christie to transform her fiction into a multiperspectival narrative. The book is a tightly plotted narrative whose structure develops through two parallel perspectives. The narrative progression is, however, mainly controlled by Poirot's perspective, which is in line with the implied author's perspective as well. The conflict between the focal character's, Poirot's, perspective and the other perspectives, as well as the conflict among the other perspectives themselves, are finally resolved by Poirot's perspective. In other words, Poirot's perspective is the configuring perspective of the narrative's perspective structure.

The visual and cognitive aspects of perspective have been highlighted throughout literary and narratological discussions of the term. Perspective, according to the narratologist Carola Surkamp:

tends to be restricted to the subjective worldviews of characters and narrators. Rather than merely signifying the way a story is told (as in 'narrative perspective') terms such as 'perspective' and 'perspective

² Gerald Prince defines Story Time as "The period of time in which the narration occurs" and Discourse Time as "The time taken by the representation by the narrated, the time of the narrating" (2003: 94, 21).

³ Poirot calls them five pigs without any reason. We are just told that "A jingle ran through Poirot's head. He repressed it. He must not always be thinking of nursery rhymes. It seemed an obsession with him lately. And yet the jingle persisted" (Christie, 2015: 21).

structure' are now increasingly used to refer to a high-level semantic component of narratives, namely the totality of the world-and belief-models embraced by the fictional individuals of the storyworld. (2005: 423)

In narratology, as Surkamp identifies, there have been three major uses of perspective. In structuralist narratology, perspective "usually designates stylistic facets of narrative discourse." In constructivist narratology, scholars like Ansgar Nünning "reconceptualised perspective as a character's or narrator's subjective worldview." Finally, the perspective structure of a narrative refers to "the sum of a text's perspectival relationships [. .]. The main interpretive strategy for establishing a text's perspective structure is to analyse the contrast-and-correspondence relationships obtaining between the individual perspectives" (2005: 424). Although the perspective structure in Christie's narrative presents opposing perspectives towards a particular situation, it is the focal character's perspective which finally presents itself as a unified worldview of the storyworld. In this way, Christie's narrative operates by what Surkamp terms as a closed perspective structure, defined as when "the perspectives can be integrated into a unified worldview or [...] a single point of view is privileged" (2005: 423). In other words, as Elisabeth Böhm holds, "the closed perspectival structure can be characterized by a multiperspectival inner communication system and a monoperspectival outer communication system" (2016: 145).

The multiperspectival structure of narration enables the author to manage the communication of the narrative information more efficiently. Nevertheless, as the narrative scholar Marcus Hartner (2014) points out, multiperspectivity has had multiple and sometimes incongruent applications in narrative studies. It is most commonly used "either as a basic aspect of narration or as a mode of storytelling in which multiple and often discrepant viewpoints are employed for the presentation and evaluation of a story and its storyworld." The second definition of the term is associated with the philosophy of perspectivism. In this regard, according to Hartner (2014):

Scholars have attempted to differentiate between basic types of the phenomenon and their differing epistemological and semantic implications. The most widely employed distinction is the one between 'open' vs. 'closed' forms [. .] of multiperspectivity: it serves to differentiate between the presentation of entirely incompatible points of view and the depiction of perspectives which, despite their differences, can still be integrated into a coherent account of the story. Such 'closed' forms seem to be particularly suited to stage the relative or limited nature of individual viewpoints, while at the same time creating a dominant voice that provides an authoritative account of the narrated events.

Through employing a closed perspective structure which allows Poirot to find out the reality or solution "pieced together from different witness accounts" (Hartner), Christie builds up the tension between the perspective Poirot

takes and the opposing ones held by most of the other characters in the storyworld. Poirot asks the five witnesses to narrate what happened on the day of the crime, and through their portrayals he finally discovers the missing part of the problem or, as Merja Makinen says, "his investigations rely predominately on a careful piecing together of the facts in an explicable chain, ignoring no detail, however small and domestic" (2010: 420). Therefore, as R. A. York states, the device of multiple perspectives "informs the basic conception of *Five Little Pigs*, where Poirot [. . .] works from narratives provided by the five suspects. The narratives (and the interviews which parallel them) clearly relate the perception of events to the character of the observer" (2007: 29). Poirot carefully evaluates the contradictory accounts of the crime as narrated by the five witnesses—Philip Blake, a stockbroker and Amyas Crale's greatest friend; Meredith Blake, Philip's elder brother; Elsa Greer (Lady Dittisham), Amyas Crale's mistress and painting model; Cecilia Williams, the devoted governess; and Angela Warren, Caroline's younger half-sister. Accordingly, in York's words, Poirot discovers the solution to the mystery through comparing and contrasting the five views:

All these views are wrong in one respect; they share the assumption that Amyas was willing to sacrifice his marriage for Elsa's sake, and Poirot is able to demonstrate that in fact he is a weak man, who has capitulated to his wife's demand that he abandon Elsa, who remains present only so that he can complete his portrait of her – since he is an obsessive painter. Meanwhile the novel has systematically shown how people take sides, how their view of others is determined by what they conceive of to be their own needs. (2007: 30)

"Poirot's method," in the crime fiction scholar John Scaggs's words, "consists of the observing and ordering of facts, [. . .] it is Poirot's aim (and purpose) to restore order after it has been disrupted by crime" (2005: 47). The novel's multiperspectival structure enables Poirot to act, as Susan Rowland says, "like an analyst" as he "finds talking to suspects [is] the key, and also seeks inconsistencies and slips of the tongue" (2001: 93). Multiperspectivity, furthermore, engages the narrative reader more directly in the discovery of what actually happened. The nature of multiple perspectives can also shed light on different aspects of the focalized object or the narrative point. In this way, it provides the narrator with reliable evidence from different sources. Through examining the possible codes related to the crime in both oral and verbal narratives, Poirot obtains the already hidden knowledge needed to solve the past crime. While examining their sometimes opposing accounts of the related shared event(s), Poirot also tries to find out what the witnesses abstain from telling. Therefore, he uses narration and narrative perspective as his basic tools to solve the crime.

3. Multiperspectivity and Narrative Truth in *Five Little Pigs*

Five Little Pigs is a reconstruction of an event through an excursion into the past. By applying the mode of analepsis (flashback), the narrative recounts a single event in the story level many times from different perspectives, which are by nature parallel and unreliable. Poirot is trying to find out the ultimate truth of who killed Amyas Crale. In order to clear her mother's name and prove that she was

"innocent," Carla Lemarchant (whose real name is Caroline Crale) hires the private agent Hercule Poirot to "investigate" the case of her father's "murder" (Christie, 2005: 7). She asks him to find the "*truth*" (Christie, 2015: 9, emphasis in the original). She even reminds him of his own unusual method:

'I've heard about you. The things you've done. The way you have done them. It's psychology that interests you, isn't it? Well, that doesn't change with time. The tangible things are gone – the cigarette end and the footprints and the bent blades of grass. You can't look for those any more. But you can go over all the facts of the case, and perhaps talk to the people who were there at the time—they're all alive still—and then—and then, as you said just now, you can lie back in your chair and think. And you'll know what really happened...' (Christie, 2015: 8-9, emphasis in the original)

To solve the Crale case, Poirot uses, as the above quote highlights, a psychological approach⁴: "I will search back into the events of sixteen years ago and I will find out the truth [...] I will find out the truth. I do not, you understand, have the bias. I do not accept your assurance of your mother's innocence" (Christie, 2015: 9). This approach allows him to explore different aspects of the problem without falling prey to his own preconceptions of the crime. A multiperspectival structure enables Poirot to orient different perspectives towards a meta narrative-truth which is unknown to him, as well as to the other characters and the reader. The desired truth, however, lies in the story level, and every character's narration of the story events is highly perspectival, since "any truth," as the novelist Sarah Pinborough says, "is, after all, just a matter of perspective. The only rule I have in how I let characters tell stories is that they must always tell the reader their version of the truth." Likewise, in Christie's narrative, Poirot tries to discover the real truth based on the incomplete versions of the existing half-truths.

Poirot's activities throughout the narrative can be divided into three phases—the trial, the interview, and the narrative. He begins his examination process with the final stage of the case—the trial. During this phase, Poirot talks to five people who were legally involved in the Crale case. In spite of some differences in details, they present a monoperspectival account of the crime and its agent. Having gained some introductory information about the trial, Poirot talks to five people close to

⁴ Poirot's method, as he explains it to Philip Blake, one of the witnesses, is a psychological method which allows him to "rewrite the stories of certain bygone crimes - from the psychological angle. Psychology in crime, it is my specialty. [...] I assure you, Mr Blake, I am really interested. It is not just a matter of money with me. I genuinely want to recreate the past - to feel and see the events that took place, to see behind the obvious and to visualize the thoughts and feelings of the actors in the drama" (Christie, 2015: 69-70). By paying attention to details, Poirot first tries to understand the personality traits of the people involved in the crime. As he acknowledges to Meredith Philip, "Until you know exactly what sort of a person the victim was, you cannot begin to see the circumstances of a crime clearly" (Christie, 2015: 101). This technique helps him to know things "without having to be told" (Christie, 2015: 248). His method is, therefore, a kind of mind reading. Implying this, he explains his method to Miss Williams, "It is the eyes of the mind with which one really sees" (Christie, 2015: 247). In terms of its concept, his psychological method is similar to the concept of perspective.

the Cralles, then reads their retrospective verbal narrations of the event. In the third phase, Poirot dares to narrate, or write, his own account of the event and draw his own conclusion about the narrative truth. It is only after a process of comparing and contrasting the witnesses' oral and verbal accounts of the event that Poirot can identify the real murderer.

3.1. The Legal Establishment's Monoperspectival Narrative

During the first phase of his examination, Poirot analyses the legal side of the defence by visiting the council for the defence, the council for the prosecution, the young and old solicitors and, finally, the police superintendent. Since none of them can remember the exact details of the case, they narrate what they do remember based on their own interests and concern. All their narratives share the perspective that Caroline was guilty of poisoning her husband, Amyas. Their narrativizations of the event mainly focus on the two central women, Amyas's wife, Caroline, and his model, Elsa. By their monoperspectival narratives, the legal establishment try to persuade Poirot that Caroline's verdict was a rational sentence based on the available evidence and her own confession. None of them, however, can produce any evidence about their claim. Despite this, Poirot pursues what can be termed as his Cartesian approach to truth. Not only does he talk to the five people legally engaged with the case, he also talks to five witnesses and reads their narratives about the crime.

Sir Montague Depleach, the council for the defence, is the first person Poirot talks to. His perspective on the case represents the dominant perspective of the storyworld that Poirot challenges on behalf of Caroline's daughter. Depleach still firmly believes that Caroline Crale was guilty, "I don't think there's much doubt about it" (Christie, 2015: 16). In reviewing Caroline's defence and what happened on her trial day, Depleach finds the judge's decision "right," and thus questions Poirot's intention to find out the truth. When Poirot tells him that Caroline's daughter wants "the truth," he says, "I'm afraid she'll find the truth unpalatable. Honestly, Poirot, I don't think there's any doubt about it. She killed him" (Christie, 2015: 20). Therefore, although Depleach suggests that Poirot go see the junior judge, Young Fogg, and the "five people who were really in it" (Christie, 2015: 21), he still firmly believes that Caroline committed the crime. When Poirot remarks, "it seems logical to suppose that one of these five people must have done so," the lawyer objects: "one of them could have done it, I suppose," said Depleach doubtfully. "But I don't see why any of them should. No reason at all! In fact, I'm quite sure none of them did do it. Do get this bee out of your bonnet, old boy!" (Christie, 2015: 23) Unlike Caroline's attorney, Poirot does not take anything for granted. His reaction to the attorney's words is similar to his reaction to the claim of the Cralles' daughter. Unable to reject the general assumption completely, Poirot prefers to examine the different aspects of the affair before coming to any conclusion.

The junior judge of the Crale trial, Judge Fogg, gives Poirot more detailed information about the defence. In a similar way to a New Historicist critic, Poirot continues his examination process of the different aspects of the session based on both what Judge Fogg says and what he does not or cannot say. He still thinks that Caroline was "guilty as hell" (Christie, 2015: 24). However, he also does not

understand why she did not try to mount a better defence for herself against the accusation, since her defence, as Judge Fogg says, was “absolutely unconvincing!” (Christie, 2015: 25). She could convince neither the senior judge, Humpie Rudolph, nor the jury: “she didn’t play up to him. It made the worst possible effect on the jury” (Christie, 2015: 25). Judge Fogg ascribes part of this effect to Caroline’s “unconvincing” manner of defence and part to the judge’s opposing council, as the judge “got her to admit the absurdities of her own statements, he got her to contradict herself, she floundered in deeper and deeper” (Christie, 2015: 26). The judge was able to convince the jury to bring charges against Caroline mainly by filling the gaps in her statements, saying, “I suggest to you, Mrs Crale, that this story of yours about stealing coniine in order to commit suicide is a tissue of falsehood. I suggest that you took it in order to administer it to your husband, who was about to leave you for another woman, and that you did deliberately administer it to him” (Christie, 2015: 26). The fact that her attorney, Depleach, “hadn’t been able to get hold of any evidence,” persuaded the judge and the jury that “there was a great deal too much proof. She’d handled the poison—admitted pinching it, in fact. There were means, motive, opportunity—everything” (Christie, 2015: 28). Judge Fogg also gives Poirot some valuable clues about Amyas’s mistress, Elsa:

‘Actually, you know, she made a good contrast to the other woman in the case. The girl. The jury were unsympathetic to her from the start. She never turned a hair. Very good-looking, hard-boiled, modern. To the women in the court she stood for a type—type of the home breaker. [.] She was honest. Admirably honest. She’d fallen in love with Amyas Crale and he with her and she’d no scruples at all about taking him away from his wife and child. I admired [Caroline] in a way. She had guts. Depleach put in some nasty stuff in cross-examination and she stood up well to it. But the court was unsympathetic. And the judge didn’t like her.’ (Christie, 2015: 27)

Like Caroline’s lawyer, Judge Fogg defends something about which he has no evidence. He repeats himself by stating that Caroline was guilty since she had a motive and had stolen poison from Meredith’s laboratory. He is also unable to differentiate between both Caroline and Elsa, “I admired Elsa Greer because she had guts, because she could fight, because she stood up to her tormentors and never quailed! But I admired Caroline Crale because she didn’t fight, because she retreated into her world of half-lights and shadows. She was never defeated because she never gave battle” (Christie, 2015: 31).

Similarly to Depleach and Judge Fogg, the young solicitor George Mayhew “remembered the case, of course, but not at all clearly” (Christie, 2015: 32). Although he says that “he himself didn’t really know anything,” he still claims that “there wasn’t much doubt as to Mrs Crale’s being guilty” (Christie, 2015: 32-33). He suggests that Poirot talk to their managing clerk, Edmunds, who was interested in the case at the time of the trial. According to Edmunds, the case “was a disgraceful business” (Christie, 2015: 34). Like Carla, he thinks that Caroline was innocent, but when Poirot asks him, “is there anything you can tell me to support that belief?”, he says “I could not conscientiously say there was” (Christie, 2015:

35). His descriptions of Mrs Crale as “a quality”, Elsa as “vindictive”, Philip as “prejudiced”, and Meredith as “vague, hesitating,” however, help Poirot to better know their characters.

Poirot’s next destination is the old solicitor’s, Mr Caleb Jonathan’s, house. Jonathan provides him with some basic information about the genealogy of the Crales, since he rightly knows that Poirot is interested in character and how “to get under the skin.” His description of Amyas reveals a hidden aspect of his character: “he got his artistic trend from his weakly mother, and his driving power and ruthless egoism from his father. All the Crales were egoists. They never by any chance saw any point of view but their own” (Christie, 2015: 39). When Poirot asks him to describe Caroline’s character, asking, “What was she?”, he calls her “a turbulent, unhappy creature. Very alive. [. . .] Passionately jealous.” He also points out that her childhood mistake—permanently blinding her stepsister in one eye by striking her—gave the impression in court that “she was a woman of ungovernable temper” Jonathan, however, believes that “that was not true” (Christie, 2015: 40), based on Caroline’s family history. He also gives some valuable information about the marriage between Caroline and Amyas. Despite their frequent arguments and some affairs on Amyas’ part, Jonathan believes that they truly were in love: “it was a love match, all right. They were both crazy about each other” (Christie, 2015: 41). Moreover, he thinks that Amyas’s behaviour should be considered in light of the fact that he was an artist. Though “he loved Caroline [. . .] she came a long way behind his art. That came first. And I should say at no time did his art give place to a woman” (Christie, 2015: 41). Jonathan, furthermore, gives some valuable information about the differences between Elsa and Caroline. He compares Elsa’s love for Amyas to Juliet’s love for Romeo, “there speaks love allied to youth, in Juliet’s words. No reticence, no holding back, no so-called maiden modesty. It is the courage, the insistence, the ruthless force of youth” (Christie, 2015: 43). Elsa, according to him, was crude and lacked experience. She was looking for a hero: “Caroline loved Amyas Crale the man, not Amyas Crale the painter. Caroline Crale was not crude—Elsa Greer was” (Christie, 2015: 44). After leaving Jonathan’s, Poirot finds himself “fascinated with the problem of personality” Despite his interviewees different descriptions of Amyas, Caroline, and Elsa, he finds a common thread among their words—Caroline is always considered the “murderess” (Christie, 2015: 44).

Ex-Superintendent Hale is the last legal person Poirot talks to. In reviewing the Crale case report, Mr Hale gives Poirot more information about details of the event. When Poirot says that he is going to find out the truth—“it is the truth I must have—not a plausible or not very plausible lie”—Mr Hale replies, “You talk about the truth. I’d like to make it plain to you that we think we got the truth in the Crale case” (Christie, 2015: 46). And when Poirot wonders, “Was there no doubt at any time in your mind as to the guilt of Mrs Crale?” Mr Hale says, “No doubt at all, M. Poirot. The circumstances pointed to her straight away, and every single fact that we uncovered supported that view.” At Poirot’s prompting, Mr Hale gives “an outline of the evidence against her” (Christie, 2015: 47). Poirot considers the verdict against Caroline to be mainly based on her past behaviour of blinding her stepsister out of jealousy, rather than reliable evidence. The case report states that

when Elsa tells Caroline that she will marry her husband soon, Caroline says, “I’ll kill Amyas before I give him up to you” (Christie, 2015: 53). When Poirot asks Mr Hale whether all the witnesses agree in this case, he says “Near enough—you never get two witnesses to remember a thing exactly alike” (Christie, 2015: 54). Furthermore, Mr Hale tells Poirot that there was another conversation between the Crales the following morning about which no witnesses agree: “Mr Philip Blake overheard a portion of it. Miss Greer overheard a different portion of it. It took place in the library between Mr and Mrs Crale. Mr Blake was in the hall and caught a fragment or two. Miss Greer was sitting outside near the open library window and heard a good deal more” (Christie, 2015: 55). Both witnesses only have a perspectival version of a missing totality. Mr Hale also acknowledges that the judge in the Crale case could not quite completely understand how the murder happened. Despite this, all evidence signified Caroline’s guilt of a “premeditated crime” (Christie, 2015: 60). For example, when referring to the conversation the witnesses, Elsa and Philip, overheard, Mr Hale firmly states that Caroline killed her husband, saying “she threatens to kill him. She takes the stuff from the laboratory. The empty bottle is found in her room and nobody has handled it but her. She deliberately takes down iced beer to him” (Christie, 2015: 59). Mr Hale emphasises that, along with the witnesses’ testimonies, the physical violence she previously committed against her stepsister was what finally led to her conviction. When, Poirot, not convinced by the Ex-Superintendent’s words, says that he is going to visit the witnesses, Mr. Hale again implies that the result will not change, “None of their stories are going to agree. Don’t you grasp that elementary fact? No two people remember a thing in the same order anyway. And after all this time! Why, you’ll hear five accounts of five separate murders!” (Christie, 2015: 65)

3.2. The Opposing (Oral and Verbal) Accounts of the Five Witnesses (Little Pigs)

Talking to the people associated with the legal side of the Crale case gives Poirot a basic understanding of the crime. But the legal accounts are second-hand narrations of the event, and Poirot also needs the witnesses’ first-hand accounts. Beyond simply considering what he has been told, he tries to find out theunnarrated and disnarrated part of these narrative accounts. Poirot follows this method in his subsequent meetings with the five witnesses. First of all, Poirot meets Philip Blake, Amyas’s best friend. Poirot’s evaluation of Philip’s character implies that he cannot be Amyas’s murderer, although he is a potential suspect, “What was he like, this man, this Philip Blake? A man, it would seem, without cares. Prosperous, contented. No remorseful thoughts, no uneasy twinges of conscience from the past, no haunting memories here. No, a well-fed pig who had gone to market” (Christie, 2015: 67). Philip supported Caroline’s conviction at the time of the trial, and still thinks that she was the murderer. His account of the crime is also under based on the presupposition that Caroline was rightly found guilty. He thinks that she committed the crime solely based on a “crude female jealousy” (Christie, 2015: 70). She took the poison from Meredith’s laboratory and, in Philip’s view, decided to poison Amyas because of the intimate relationship between her husband and Elsa. Philip uses Caroline’s childhood jealousy of her stepsister as evidence for his belief, “she was jealous, you know. Her mother had

married again, and all the notice and affection went to little Angela. Caroline couldn't stand that. She tried to kill the baby—smash its head in. Luckily the blow wasn't fatal. But it was a pretty ghastly thing to do." This leads him to conclude that, "well, that was the real Caroline. She had to be first. That was the thing she simply could not stand—not being first. And there was a cold, egotistical devil in her that was capable of being stirred to murderous lengths" (Christie, 2015: 73). He describes Caroline as a psychologically ill person who enjoyed hurting Amyas, as well as other people. Compared to her, he thinks that Elsa was a really "different" (Christie, 2015: 76) woman who understood Amyas's character and art completely. Poirot, however, finds his description of Amyas contradictory, as he says "the best thing for Amyas would have been to be quite free of female entanglement" (Christie, 2015: 77).

In a similar manner to his oral narration of the event, in his verbal narrative, Philip tries to prove that it was Caroline who murdered Amyas. He rejects the possibility that Amyas committed suicide, stating that "he was far too fond of living" (Christie, 2015: 68) and he loved painting. He describes Caroline as a "neurotic girl, subject to uncontrollable outbursts of temper, not without attraction, but unquestionably a difficult person to live with" (Christie, 2015: 168). Compared to Elsa, he writes that Caroline "hadn't Elsa Greer's scornful honesty—with Caroline everything was oblique, suggested rather than said" (Christie, 2015: 173). Despite his attempts to prove the point that Caroline murdered Amyas, his narrative reveals some influential counterevidence for Poirot. Philip writes that he realized Amyas and Caroline were talking in the library, and he heard Caroline saying, "You and your women! I'd like to kill you. Some day I will kill you.' Amyas said, 'Don't be a fool, Caroline.' And she said, 'I mean it, Amyas'" (Christie, 2015: 180). After hearing Caroline's words, Philip sees Elsa "sitting on one of the long seats. The seat was directly under the library window, and the window was open. I should imagine that there wasn't much she had missed of what was going on inside. When she saw me she got up as cool as a cucumber and came toward me. She was smiling" (Christie, 2015: 180). The reliability level of Philip's oral and verbal narrations of this event is undermined by the other characters' narrations of the same event and situations.

Meredith Blake's narration gives Poirot some valuable information about Amyas, Caroline, and Elsa. Like his brother and the other witnesses, he does not see any need to talk about a problem that has already been solved, "It's – it's g-ghoulish the way they dig these things up. Sixteen years ago. Why can't they let it be? [...] Why rake up everything again? How much better to let it all be forgotten" (Christie, 2015: 84-85). Although he "can't imagine any alternative solution" than the fact that Caroline committed the crime, his narration of the event gives Poirot some valuable information about Amyas's, Caroline's and Elsa's characters (Christie, 2015: 100). Meredith's descriptions of Amyas's character, including his relationships with his wife and mistress and the significance of his art, help Poirot to speculate about Amyas's thoughts about the two women. Meredith introduces Amyas as a "rank egoist" and "a kind of man who did not take women seriously" (Christie, 2015: 90). Moreover, he also states that Amyas always put his art, not either of the women in his life, first: "he was like a man in a dream—completely

obsessed by what he was doing. Not till the canvas was finished did he come out of this absorption and start to pick up the threads of ordinary life again" (Christie, 2015: 86). When Meredith asks Amyas to stop hurting his wife by openly flirting with Elsa, he replies, "You don't seem to understand, Meredith, that this thing I'm painting is the best thing I've done. It's *good*, I tell you. And a couple of jealous, quarreling women aren't going to upset it—no, by hell, they're not" (Christie, 2015: 88, emphasis in the original). Meredith gives the impression that nobody other than Amyas himself knew exactly what he thought about the two women. As Amyas once confided to him, "You're a good chap, Merry. But you're too sentimental. You wait till the picture's finished and you'll admit that I was right" (Christie, 2015: 89). Meredith describes Elsa as a self-infatuated person. He represents her as a "modern," "pathetic," and "self-confident" woman who was "determined on a certain course," and believes that Amyas and Caroline should break up because of their continuous rows (Christie, 2015: 95). If art was the driving force in Amyas's life, the desire to marry Amyas was the force in Elsa's.

Meredith's account also reveals some aspects of Caroline's character. Although he emphasises that it was Caroline who took the poison from his laboratory, he thinks that she "took the stuff for herself" as "it was highly uncharacteristic of Mrs Crale to commit murder" (Christie, 2015: 98-99). However, he thinks that she was the only serious suspect, and therefore still believes that she committed the crime despite having no concrete proof. Meredith's narration, furthermore, cast doubt on the narration of his brother, Philip. He rejects Philip's idea that Caroline murdered her husband by stating "he's a mass of prejudices [...] against Caroline" (Christie, 2015: 102). He even explains the roots of his brother's prejudice by stating that since Caroline rejected Philip's proposal of marriage before her marriage to Amyas, Philip got worried about his relationship with his closest friend, Amyas. Despite this, according to Meredith, Philip was against Amyas's relationship with Elsa, though "he was just faintly pleased at seeing Caroline let down [...] that feeling was at the back of his mind" (Christie, 2015: 103). When Poirot asks Meredith to write down the details of his narration for him as he has previously asked Philip to do, Meredith again tries to disqualify his brother's narration, saying, "Philip's a busy man. Things slip his memory once they're past and done with. Probably he'll remember things all wrong" (Christie, 2015: 106).

Poirot learns many significant details from Meredith's narration because, as an "ineffective" person with a "lack of personality" (Christie, 2015: 96), he gives more objective descriptions of the main characters. In his verbal narrative, Meredith modifies his opinion by emphasising that Amyas certainly "took his own life." He thinks this mainly because of Caroline's claim in court that Amyas committed suicide: "she knew Amyas better than anyone else. If she thought suicide possible, then suicide must have been possible in spite of the skepticism of his friends" (Christie, 2015: 189-190). To support this claim, he brings up evidence of Amyas's desperate situation: "he could not envisage life without Elsa. He realized that Caroline could not live without him. He decided there was only one way out—to use the coniine himself" (Christie, 2015: 193). Meredith also uses Caroline's words, mood, and behaviour in court as further evidence for his claims: "Caroline was quite calm. Yes, she was quite calm. She was able, of course, to control herself

better than Elsa. She didn't seem remorseful—then. Just said he must have done it himself. And we couldn't believe that" (Christie, 2015: 201).

The more Poirot talks to different people about the Crale case, the more he learns about the personality traits of the witnesses. For example, when he comes to Elsa Greer, now Lady Dittisham, he already knows many things about her character, her place in the Cralles' life, and her possible role in the tragedy. Poirot finds her a "very frank woman [who] might lie from necessity but never from choice" (Christie, 2015: 121). Accordingly, in his investigation, he tries to find out whether anything in the Crale case has made it a necessity for her to tell lies. Similarly to how the Blake brothers have described her, she presents herself to Poirot as a woman full of abomination, hate, and enmity: "You're thinking me vindictive? So I am vindictive – to anyone who has injured me. That woman was to my mind the lowest kind of woman there is. She knew that Amyas cared for me—that he was going to leave her—and she killed him so that I shouldn't have him" (Christie, 2015: 123). She also shows herself to be a woman of determination. Referring to her relationship with Amyas, she says that she was the hunter rather than the prey: "Don't think that Amyas Crale seduced an innocent young girl. It wasn't like that at all! Of the two of us, I was responsible. I met him at a party and I fell for him. I knew I had to have him" (Christie, 2015: 124). As Poirot later points out to her, this aspect of her character is so strong that it blocks her more positive emotions, such as love. She refuses to give up, despite the odds against her, saying, "I suppose—really—one ought to put a knife into oneself—like Juliet. But—but to do that is to acknowledge that you're done or—that life's beaten you" (Christie, 2015: 124). Poirot's evaluation of Elsa's character summarises what she is: "Poirot saw her plainly trying so hard to fulfill that crude determination. Saw her beautiful and rich, seductive to men, seeking with greedy, predatory hands to fill up a life that was empty. Hero worship—a marriage to a famous aviator; then an explorer" (Christie, 2015: 125). Her only goal is to follow her own desires, regardless of their impact on the other people's lives. She also dismisses the Blakes' accounts of the event based on her own egocentrism, saying, "Those two! Philip was always stupid. Meredith used to trot around after Caroline—but he was quite a dear. But you won't have any real idea from their accounts" (Christie, 2015: 127). Her pretension and hypocrisy enable her to present herself as an innocent lover whose life has been destroyed by a heartless woman: "She killed him. She killed Amyas. Amyas, who wanted to live—who enjoyed living. Hate oughtn't to be stronger than love—but her hate was. And my hate for her is—I hate her—I hate her—I hate her..." (Christie, 2015: 128).

In her verbal narrative to Poirot, Elsa portrays herself and Amyas as true lovers. Elsa tries to prove that Caroline could not understand and love Amyas the way she did. However, her claims are contradictory. For example, while she says that when she saw Amyas for the first time, he said: "I'm married, you know, and I'm very fond of my wife" (Christie, 2015: 205); she also claims that "if [Caroline] loved him she'd put his happiness first, and, at any rate, she wouldn't want to keep him if he wanted to be free" (Christie, 2015: 207). She tries to show that Caroline and Amyas had a broken marriage, although both of them did not dare or even want to apply for a divorce. She even acknowledges that for Amyas "nothing else mattered" other

than “painting with a kind of frenzy (Christie, 2015: 208). Accordingly, she decides to tell Caroline about their affair, although Amyas did not want her to do so.

Along with Elsa’s contradictory statements, Poirot discovers two lies in her narrative. She writes to Poirot that she knew nothing about Caroline’s motives for stealing the poison: “I didn’t see her take the coniine. I want to be honest, so I think that it’s just possible that she may have taken it as she said she did—with the idea of suicide in her mind” (Christie, 2015: 210). She adds that she thinks this because she knows Caroline’s character well, “she was a very bitter and revengeful woman—vindictive” (Christie, 2015: 210). Elsa also narrates her experience of hearing Caroline and Amyas’s private talk from the next room. Poirot already knows about this experience from Meredith Blake’s narrative, and he compares Elsa’s narrative to Meredith’s to try to discover what has been fictionalised. Elsa replaces the words that Meredith claimed Amyas and Caroline said with quite different ones, as Poirot and the reader will later discover, and says that the conversation went as follows:

Then he hardened up and said, “But understand this: I’m damned well going to marry Elsa, and nothing shall stop me. You and I always agreed to leave each other free. These things happen.” Caroline said to him, “Do as you please. I’ve warned you.” Her voice was very quiet, but there was a queer note in it. Amyas said, “What do you mean, Caroline?” She said, “You’re mine and I don’t mean to let you go. Sooner than let you go to that girl I’ll kill you...” (210)

Elsa, accordingly, uses this version of the conversation to justify her unending hatred of Caroline:

Horrible woman!...
Horrible, scornful, cruel, vindictive woman!...
I hate her! I still hate her!
They didn’t even hang her.
They ought to have hanged her...
Even hanging was too good for her...
I hate her!... I hate her!... I hate her!... (Christie, 2015: 213)

Like the three previous witnesses, Miss Cecilia Williams’s statements strongly support the monoperspectival position that “Caroline Cralle was guilty” (Christie, 2015: 147). Despite this, Poirot learns more about the three main characters’ personality traits from her discourse. She represents the Cralles as a “devoted couple” (Christie, 2015: 136) and describes Amyas as a person who “naturally thought that he should come first and he intended to” (Christie, 2015: 138). She considers his destiny as the result of his own actions, saying that he “deserved what he got. No man should treat his wife as he did and not be punished for it. His death was a just retribution” (Christie, 2015: 141). Caroline, according to her, “was really completely wrapped up in her husband. She existed, one might say, only in him and for him” (Christie, 2015: 135). She thinks that Caroline’s love did not allow her to “submit to humiliation” (Christie, 2015: 137) when she discovered the affair, which was a “justification for what she eventually did” (Christie, 2015: 135). Furthermore, she describes Elsa as a tactful actress who could deceive not only the other witnesses, but also the solicitors and judges

involved in the case. With her cold-blooded nature, she could persuade the others into believing that Caroline did the crime. Miss Williams considers Elsa a “thoroughly unprincipled young woman [...] That girl had absolutely no morals of any kind. It meant nothing to her that Mr Crale was a married man. She was absolutely shameless about it all—cool and determined. Possibly she may have been badly brought up, but that’s the only excuse I can find for her” (Christie, 2015: 140).

In her verbal narrative of the event, Miss Williams informs Poirot about two points she noticed. The first one is related to Caroline’s sister, Angela. She explains that Caroline found her sister in the kitchen when she was going to take a bottle of beer to Amyas:

Mrs Crale went in ahead of me. She said, “I want a bottle of beer to take down to Amyas.” It is so difficult now to know whether I ought to have suspected anything. Her voice, I feel almost convinced, was perfectly normal. But I must admit that at that moment I was intent, not on her, but on Angela. Angela was by the refrigerator and I was glad to see that she looked red and rather guilty. (Christie, 2015: 222)

Besides that, Miss Williams writes to Poirot about an important scene she saw:

Mrs Crale was busily polishing the beer bottle on the table with her handkerchief. Having done so, she took her dead husband’s hand and pressed the fingers of it on the beer bottle. All the time she was listening and on the alert. It was the fear I saw on her face that told me the truth. (Christie, 2015: 224)

Such revelations provide Poirot with reliable evidence that will help him prove Caroline’s innocence. Using this evidence, Poirot argues that Caroline didn’t defend herself against the false murder accusation because she believed that it was Angela who poisoned Amyas and wanted to protect her. In order to compensate for her evil thoughts and actions against her stepsister in childhood, she decides to sacrifice her life for Angela as an atonement.

Caroline’s stepsister Angela’s words about the other witnesses are more calculated and thoughtful than Miss Williams’. She strongly believes that “Caroline didn’t do it. I’ve always known that” (Christie, 2015: 151) and instead supports the idea that Amyas committed suicide. According to her, Elsa was an unfortunate victim: “Elsa, who might have been said to have started with all advantages-youth, beauty, riches—had done worst. She was like a flower overtaken by untimely frost—still in bud but without life” (Christie, 2015: 149). When Poirot tells her that all the evidence is against her sister, she says “My own conviction is based on knowledge—knowledge of my sister. I just know quite simply and definitely that Caro couldn’t have killed anyone” (Christie, 2015: 152). Unlike the others, she thinks that Caroline’s childhood actions are in fact strong evidence that she did not commit the crime: “Caroline did that [damaged my eye]. That’s why I’m sure—I know—that she did not do murder” (Christie, 2015: 152). To support her claim, she points out that Caroline continuously regretted what she had done to her:

'To a sensitive person, like Caroline, that horror and remorse will never quite leave you. It never left her. [. .] Caro was haunted, continually haunted, by the fact that she had injured me. That knowledge never left her in peace. It colored all her actions. It explained her attitude to me. Nothing was too good for me. In her eyes, I must always come first. Half the quarrels she had with Amyas were on my account.' (Christie, 2015: 153)

Furthermore, Angela states that Caroline's childhood experience taught her to control her anger. Her harsh language and her quarrels with Amyas were in fact her ways of controlling her anger: "She felt (and I think, quite truly) that if she were violent enough in speech she would have no temptation to violence in action. She found by experience that the method worked" (Christie, 2015: 154). Likewise, Amyas also enjoyed their quarrels, as "living that way, with continual rows and makings up, was Amyas's and Caroline's idea of fun!" (Christie, 2015: 154). In addition, Angela interprets the letter that Caroline wrote to her from the prison sixteen years ago as objective evidence for her innocence. When Poirot states that "You take it that this letter indicates innocence?" she says:

'Of course it does!'

'It does not say so explicitly.'

'Because Caro would know that I'd never dream of her being guilty!'

'Perhaps - perhaps... But it might be taken another way. In the sense that she was guilty and that in expiating her crime she will find peace.'

(Christie, 2015: 158)

Angela, however, does not pay attention to the phrase with which her sister finished her letter, "one has to pay one's debts" (Christie, 2015: 157). This is one of the pieces of evidence which Poirot will later use to try to prove Caroline's innocence. Although Angela repudiates her sister's conviction, she does not see any "reason for suspecting anybody else" (Christie, 2015: 160). When Poirot asks her to re-examine the other witnesses' possible role in Amyas's death, she thinks that Philip Blake is "the most likely person" (Christie, 2015: 161) although she cannot come up with his motive. In her verbal account of the event, Angela acknowledges that she and Amyas were mutually jealous of each other, as if they were in a competition to win Caroline's attention. Her little mind could not understand the adult thoughts (codes). Angela overhears Amyas telling Elsa that he would marry her. She then asks Elsa about it, and Elsa confirms it to be true. Not satisfied, she goes to Amyas and asks him about it. Amyas gets angry, and says it is just a joke. Still not satisfied, she then goes to her sister Caroline and asks her about it, and Caroline says, "Amyas will marry Elsa only after I am dead." This "reassures" Angela "completely" (Christie, 2015: 227). Therefore, Angela is not quite sure whether her sister committed the crime, though she tries to prove her innocence.

Poirot's significance lies in his ability to challenge the monoperspectival nature of each account. He processes the available information through speculating about the invisible or non-narrated aspects of the event. In his second meeting with Carla Lemarchant, he describes how he processes the information he gathers from different sources. In response to Carla's confusion about the real murderer after

reading the five witnesses' narratives, Poirot says, "You are at least right in this—not to take what has been written down as necessarily a true narrative. What has been written may have been written deliberately to mislead" (Christie, 2015: 237). He urges Carla not to be deceived by what is apparent, stating that "because Cecilia Williams says she saw your mother faking Amyas Crale's fingerprints on the beer bottle—on the beer bottle, mind—that is the one thing I need to tell me definitely, once for all, that your mother did not kill your father" (Christie, 2015: 239). After comparing and contrasting all of their accounts, Poirot gathers the witnesses together in Meredith's home and shares with them his understanding of the case. He states that the real reason for Philip's distaste for Caroline was his love for her: "you were always violently attracted toward Caroline Crale. You resented the fact, and tried to conquer it by steadfastly telling yourself her defects and reiterating your dislike" (Christie, 2015: 253).

Poirot reveals that Philip, in his oral or in his verbal narrative, did not mention anything about his meeting with Caroline where he expressed his love for her and she rejected him by stating that she was married to another man. Moreover, Poirot asks Meredith about the moment he saw Caroline coming out of his laboratory while he was talking to Elsa. He learns that, since Meredith had his back to the room, he could not see what Caroline was doing in the room, but Elsa could see Caroline's actions. Poirot also reminds Meredith that his resentment of Amyas's conduct was not mainly because of Caroline but because of "the young, beautiful Elsa Greer that was occupying [Amyas's] mind and thoughts" (Christie, 2015: 253). From observing her actions, Elsa knew what Caroline planned to do, though she did not tell anyone. Furthermore, Poirot tells Elsa that, in her either interview or (written) verbal account, she did mention anything about Philip's marriage proposal to her after the trial. Using this evidence in conjunction with Caroline's letter to her sister from the prison and what Miss Williams saw, Poirot comes to the conclusion that Caroline took the blame for Amyas' murder in order to save Angela. Since Caroline wrongly thought that it was Angela who had put the poison into the bottle, she rubbed her fingerprints on the bottle—as Miss Williams saw—after she found Amyas dead in order to direct suspicion away from Angela. In her letter, she indirectly told her sister this when she said "*one must pay one's debts*" (Christie, 2015: 263, emphasis in the original).

In nullifying the established monoperspectival hypothesis that Caroline murdered Amyas, Poirot also proves that Amyas really loved his wife and did not want to leave her. By telling lies to Elsa, he just tried to persuade her to keep standing as his model and Elsa, a simple and "terribly sincere" girl (Christie, 2015: 269), believed what he told her. Nevertheless, on the day of the crime, when she overheard Caroline and Amyas, she heard Amyas promise his wife that he would give up Elsa after he finished his painting. She also heard what Caroline said, "You and Your women [. . .] Someday I'll kill you" (Christie, 2015: 271). Elsa also overhears Caroline's criticism of Amyas: "What he is doing is shameful! She won't stand for it! It's unbelievably cruel and hard on the girl! Amyas, irritable at being interrupted, says it's all settled—when the picture is done he'll send the girl packing! 'It's all settled—I'll send her packing, I tell you'" (Christie, 2015: 273). Since she has learned that Amyas does not care about her, Elsa decides to kill

Amyas, putting the poison she saw Caroline steal into Amyas's bottle before Caroline brings him his iced beer. Accordingly, Amyas had been poisoned before Caroline put the beer into the bottle because he said "everything tastes foul today" (Christie, 2015: 273). Poirot states that Elsa decided to kill Amyas because her mind lacks, "all the grown-up emotions—pity, sympathy, understanding. The only things you know—have ever known—are love and hate" (Christie, 2015: 276-277). Thus, Poirot's psychological approach not only enables him to identify the true agent of the crime after sixteen years, it also leads him to determine the main causes and motives of the crime.

4. Conclusion

Poirot's discourse in *Five Little Pigs* challenges the dominant discourse of monoperspectivity. The double-layered perspective structure of the narrative facilitates the revelation of the narrative truth. Through examining the witnesses' oral and (written) verbal narrations, Poirot identifies the missing parts or gaps that are crucial to construct the hidden truth. The parallel perspectives allow Poirot to discover what the witnesses, particularly the main suspects, intentionally leave out of their narratives. His psychological approach allows him to determine the story of the crime without the intentional omissions. Through the witnesses' oral and verbal narrations, he is given information about their character traits and motives that he uses to identify the real murderer. His approach enables him to scan through the connected scenes and reconstruct the whole event. The task becomes one of attempting to overcome the two dominant assumptions in the case, that either Amyas committed suicide or his wife, Caroline, poisoned him. His exploration, however, reveals the true murderer, Elsa Greer. Truth is a centripetal force in the narrative plot. Every narrative scene and event moves towards it by Poirot's orientation. Nobody tells a complete lie in the story, but each of them tells half-truths rather than the whole truth. Following a deductive method allows Poirot to construct a reliable whole through knitting the small unreliable pieces together. Christie uses multiperspective structure as a method for revealing the whole truth and, to imply that truth is controlled not by one, but by many sources.

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