SCALAR STRUCTURE AND VERBAL GRADABILITY IN KATHERINE MANSFIELD'S *THE GARDEN PARTY*

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Abstract. *This article argues that verbal scalarity provides a covert semantic architecture for Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party." Formal scale semantics is combined with phase-based stylistic annotation in a manually verified micro-corpus of 110 verbal predicate tokens drawn from the story's 5,564 running words. Each token is coded for verb class, open or closed scale topology, and the linguistic cue that activates its scalar interpretation. The density of coded predicates rises from 12.1 per 1,000 words during the preparations to 21.3 after the news of the carter's death and 36.2 during Laura's descent to the cottages. Closed-scale predicates increase from 43.8 percent in the first phase to 77.5 percent in the second and remain dominant at 68.4 percent in the final phase. Directed-path predicates account for 52.6 percent of the final phase. On this evidence, the article proposes a Scalar Narrative Alignment Model. Open intensity scales support the party's sensory expansion, terminal predicates encode the shock of death, and bounded paths map social descent onto Laura's movement across class space. The unfinished final question reopens a discourse that the event structure repeatedly tries to close.*

Keywords. *scalar structure; verbal gradability; event structure; telicity; stylistics; Katherine Mansfield; The Garden Party; narrative semantics.*

Annotatsiya. *Maqolada Ketrin Mensfildning "The Garden Party" hikoyasida fe'l darajalanishi yashirin semantik tuzilma vazifasini bajarishi asoslanadi. Formal shkala semantikasi hikoyaning 5 564 so'zidan ajratilgan va qo'lda tekshirilgan 110 ta fe'l predikati asosidagi bosqichli stilistik tahlil bilan birlashtirildi. Har bir birlik fe'l sinfi, ochiq yoki yopiq shkala turi hamda scalar talqinni yuzaga chiqaruvchi til vositasi bo'yicha kodlandi. Kodlangan birliklar zichligi tayyorgarlik bosqichidagi har ming so'zga 12,1 tadan o'lim xabaridan keyin 21,3 taga, Lauraning pastdagi uylar tomon tushishi jarayonida esa 36,2 taga ko'tarildi. Yopiq shkala birliklari birinchi bosqichda 43,8 foiz, ikkinchi bosqichda 77,5 foiz va yakuniy bosqichda 68,4 foizni tashkil etdi. Yakuniy bosqichdagi birliklarning 52,6 foizi yo'naltirilgan*

harakat fe'llaridir. Shu natijalar asosida Scalar Narrative Alignment Model taklif qilindi. Ochiq intensivlik shkalalari bazmning hissiy kengayishini, chegaralangan predikatlar o'limning keskinligini, maqsadli harakatlar esa ijtimoiy makon bo'ylab tushishni ifodalaydi. Yakundagi tugallanmagan savol voqea tuzilishi yopishga urinadigan ma'noni qayta ochadi.

Kalit so'zlar. *scalar tuzilma; fe'l darajalanishi; hodisa tuzilishi; teliklik; stilistika; Ketrin Mensfild; The Garden Party; narrativ semantika.*

Аннотация. *В статье обосновывается положение о том, что глагольная скалярность образует скрытую семантическую структуру рассказа Кэтрин Мэнсфилд "The Garden Party". Формальная семантика шкал объединена с поэтапным стилистическим анализом вручную проверенного микрокорпуса из 110 глагольных предикатов, выделенных из 5 564 слов текста. Каждая единица кодировалась по классу глагола, открытому или закрытому типу шкалы и языковому показателю скалярной интерпретации. Плотность единиц возрастает с 12,1 на тысячу слов в сценах подготовки до 21,3 после известия о смерти возчика и до 36,2 во время спуска Лоры к бедным домам. Доля предикатов с закрытой шкалой увеличивается с 43,8 процента в первой фазе до 77,5 процента во второй и составляет 68,4 процента в финальной фазе. Направленные глаголы движения образуют 52,6 процента последней фазы. На основании этих данных предложена модель согласования скалярной и нарративной структуры. Открытые шкалы интенсивности поддерживают чувственное развертывание праздника, предельные предикаты передают окончательность смерти, а ограниченные траектории соотносят социальный спуск с движением героини. Незавершенный финальный вопрос вновь открывает дискурс, который событийная структура неоднократно стремится завершить.*

Ключевые слова. *скалярная структура; глагольная градуируемость; структура события; предельность; стилистика; Кэтрин Мэнсфилд; The Garden Party; нарративная семантика.*

Introduction

Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party," first collected in 1922, organizes a familiar social conflict through unusually precise verbal movement. The story begins in a world of preparation, abundance, and sensory animation; it is interrupted by the death of a working-class carter; and it ends after Laura Sheridan crosses the road and enters the dead man's house [1]. Critics have explained this design through social

occasion, spatial opposition, heteroglossia, focalization, and the politics of voice [10-15]. Those approaches establish that the story's ethical pressure is inseparable from its language. They do not, however, describe how verb meanings themselves distribute degrees, boundaries, and endpoints across the narrative.

Scalar semantics supplies a vocabulary for that problem. A scalar predicate locates a state, change, intensity, or path on an ordered dimension. Some scales lack an inherent maximum, as with increasing brightness or emotional intensity. Others provide a lower or upper boundary, as with opening, closing, arriving, or dying. In a narrative, these distinctions matter because a verb can make an event feel expandable, incomplete, interrupted, or terminal before the narrator offers an explicit interpretation. The contrast between "shine" and "close," or between "hurry on" and "cross," therefore concerns more than lexical choice. It determines how the reader tracks progress and completion.

The present study asks three questions. First, how are open and closed scales distributed across the story's major phases? Second, which verbal classes carry the scalar contrast: changes of state, directed motion, intensity and emission, or experiencer predicates? Third, how does event-level closure interact with the story's famously unfinished final utterance? The hypothesis is that the party preparations favor open intensity, the death announcement produces a sharp concentration of terminal predicates, and Laura's descent converts scalar closure into spatially bounded motion. The final exchange then weakens propositional closure even while the surrounding event structure remains strongly bounded.

The article contributes a reproducible bridge between formal semantics and literary stylistics. It does not treat frequency as a substitute for interpretation. Instead, a small, manually checked dataset identifies where scalar meanings cluster, after which close reading explains their narrative work. The resulting Scalar Narrative Alignment Model links scale topology, event mapping, narrative phase, and focalized evaluation within one analytical sequence.

Theoretical Framework

Scale Topology and Event Structure

Vendler's distinction among states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements made temporal contour central to verb classification [2]. Dowty later formalized the relation between lexical meaning and aspectual interpretation [3]. Scalar accounts refine this tradition by asking whether an event advances along an ordered dimension and whether that dimension has an endpoint. Hay, Kennedy, and Levin show that the telicity of degree achievements depends on the scale associated

with the underlying property and on contextual standards of change [4]. A verb such as "cool" may describe an unbounded decrease or a change completed at a contextually supplied degree.

Kennedy and McNally distinguish open scales from scales that are closed at a minimum, a maximum, or both endpoints [5]. Kennedy and Levin extend the analysis to measure-of-change functions: a change-of-state verb relates the theme's value at the beginning of an event to its value at the end [6]. This framework explains why a modifier can measure extent while a result phrase supplies culmination. Beavers further shows that scalar complexity may arise from event structure itself, particularly when parts of a path or result correspond to parts of an event [7]. Thus a clause can be scalar without an overt degree word.

This distinction is important for literary prose. Overt modifiers such as "very," "more," and "slowly" announce degree directly. Lexical endpoints and goal phrases encode it more quietly. In "the road was crossed," the path has a natural endpoint even though no adjective names a degree. In "the afternoon slowly faded," the adverb highlights temporal progression while the verb supplies an open decrease. Both clauses are scalar, but their topologies and narrative effects differ.

Classes of Verbal Gradability

Research on verbal gradability shows that gradation is not confined to deadjectival change-of-state verbs. Fleischhauer identifies systematic degree readings in change-of-state, emission, and experiencer predicates [9]. Emission verbs may vary in intensity, as when something shines or a voice sounds more desperate. Experiencer predicates grade affect or cognition, as with caring, liking, or wanting. Rappaport Hovav and Levin's distinction between manner and result also clarifies why intensity predicates commonly lack an inherent endpoint while result verbs specify a state attained by the theme [8].

The present analysis adds directed motion as a separate class because the story's vertical and horizontal movements are semantically and socially salient. A path provides an ordered set of locations; a goal, boundary, or completed crossing can close that scale. Motion without an attained goal remains open. This treatment follows the scalar analysis of directed motion discussed alongside variable telicity by Kennedy and Levin [6] and allows the linguistic model to represent Laura's descent without reducing space to a metaphor imposed after the fact.

Mansfield Scholarship and the Analytical Gap

Mansfield scholarship has repeatedly connected style to class perception. Sorkin argues that the story's style absorbs and transforms its detailed social

occasion [10]. Zapf's account of time and space divides the narrative into contrasting zones and notes the rapid motion vocabulary of the preparations [11]. Zivley locates class difference in diction and heteroglossia rather than in imagery alone [12]. Day shows that ideological tension is conditioned by textures of voice and by Laura's partial assimilation of other people's discourse [13]. Studies of focalization likewise describe the movement between internal perception, irony, and covert narrative progression [14]. A recent class-centered study confirms that the party and the cottages construct opposed social spaces [15].

These accounts make linguistic form central, but they do not provide a phase-based description of verbal scale topology. Scalar analysis can therefore add a missing level between individual words and broad thematic oppositions. It can show when the text presents experience as indefinitely intensifiable, when it makes change irreversible, and when it turns physical movement into a sequence of attained boundaries.

Materials and Method

Text and Narrative Segmentation

The primary text is the 1922 Constable edition reproduced as Project Gutenberg eBook 1429 [1]. Front matter and editorial material were excluded. A simple word-token procedure counted 5,564 running words in the story. The text was divided at two narratively explicit thresholds. The preparation phase begins with the ideal weather and ends immediately before the cream-puff delivery becomes the report of a fatal accident. The disruption and party phase begins with the sentence "There's been a horrible accident" and ends with Mrs. Sheridan's instruction that Laura should take the basket down the hill. The descent and encounter phase begins when dusk falls and Laura shuts the garden gates, continuing through the final exchange with Laurie.

The segmentation follows textual events rather than equal word counts. The three phases contain 2,639, 1,875, and 1,050 words respectively. This asymmetry is analytically useful: density per 1,000 words can distinguish a genuine concentration of scalar predicates from the simple fact that the opening phase is longer.

Annotation Procedure

A verbal predicate entered the analytical sample when its context satisfied at least one of four diagnostics: it lexicalized ordered change or intensity; it accepted or occurred with a degree or manner-of-degree expression; it mapped an event onto a directed path; or it supplied a result, boundary, or culmination. Participles were included only when they preserved an eventive result, as in being "shut in the

passage." Purely adjectival descriptions and figurative nouns were excluded. Repeated tokens were counted separately because repetition itself changes the local scalar profile. The first pass identified candidates; a second contextual pass removed homographs and assigned one primary class to every token.

Table 1 Annotation dimensions and diagnostics

Dimension	Values	Diagnostic question	Representative forms
Verb class	Change and boundary; path; intensity and emission; experiencer	What ordered dimension is lexicalized or compositionally introduced?	ripen; cross; shine; care
Scale topology	Open; closed	Does the context provide an inherent or explicit endpoint?	fade vs close; hurry on vs cross
Scalar cue	Lexical; overt degree; goal; result	Where does the ordering or endpoint come from?	glow; very gently; into; killed
Narrative phase	Preparation; disruption and party; descent and encounter	At which textual threshold does the token occur?	before news; after news; below the gate

The final sample contains 110 tokens in 96 distinct local contexts. Counts were normalized as tokens per 1,000 words for each phase. Closed-scale share was calculated as closed tokens divided by all coded tokens in the phase. Because the study examines one story and uses one analyst, the statistics are descriptive rather than inferential. The coding decisions are therefore reported through definitions, phase totals, class totals, and representative textual contexts rather than through significance testing.

Results

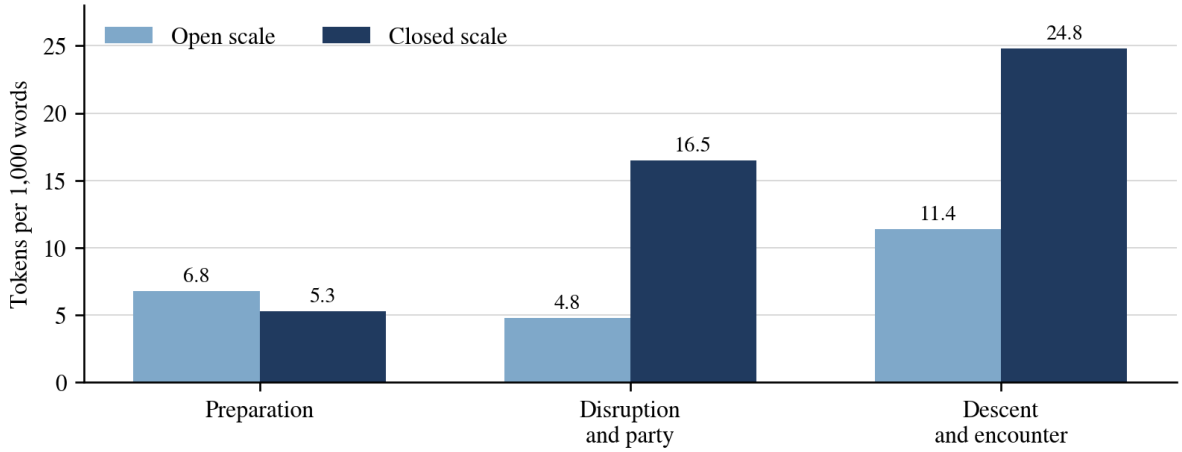
Phase Distribution of Scalar Predicates

Scalar predicates become progressively denser as the story approaches the cottages. The preparation phase contains 32 coded tokens, or 12.1 per 1,000 words. The disruption and party phase contains 40 tokens, or 21.3 per 1,000 words. The final phase contains 38 tokens despite being the shortest section, producing a density of 36.2. The last phase is therefore almost three times as dense as the opening phase.

Table 2 Scalar predicate distribution by narrative phase

Narrative phase	Words	Tokens	Per 1,000	Closed scale	Dominant class
Preparation	2,639	32	12.1	14 43.8%	Change 14
Disruption and party	1,875	40	21.3	31 77.5%	Change 20
Descent and encounter	1,050	38	36.2	26 68.4%	Path 20
Total	5,564	110	19.8	71 64.5%	Change 46

Figure 1 Density of open and closed scale predicates by narrative phase



The increase is driven principally by closed scales. Their density rises from 5.3 per 1,000 words in the preparation phase to 16.5 after the death announcement and 24.8 during the descent. Open-scale density falls at the moment of disruption and then increases in the final phase, where emotional and perceptual predicates coexist with strongly bounded movement. This mixed final profile is crucial: Laura's route is spatially determinate, but her interpretation remains incomplete.

Verbal Classes Across the Three Phases

Table 3 Distribution of verbal scalarity classes

Class	Preparation	Disruption	Descent	Total
Change and boundary	14	20	12	46
Directed path	4	17	20	41

Class	Preparation	Disruption	Descent	Total
Intensity and emission	10	3	5	18
Experiencer	4	0	1	5
All classes	32	40	38	110

Change and boundary predicates form the largest class overall, with 46 tokens. Directed paths follow closely with 41. The distribution is not uniform. Intensity, emission, and experiencer predicates contribute 14 of the 32 preparation tokens, whereas directed motion accounts for 20 of the 38 tokens in the final phase. Only 11 of the 110 tokens rely primarily on an overt degree expression. By contrast, 64 tokens obtain closure from a goal or result configuration. Mansfield's scalar style is therefore mainly event-structural: endpoints are carried by verbs and complements rather than by frequent degree morphology.

Open Scales in the Preparations

The opening phase contains more open than closed predicates, 18 against 14. Light, voice, feeling, and bodily expression can be increased without reaching a lexical maximum. The grass "seemed to shine," leaves are "gleaming," workmen smile, the piano bursts out "so passionately," and Jose's performance sounds "more desperate than ever" [1]. Laura's evaluations also occupy open affective scales. She cares for the workman's gesture and insists that she does not feel class distinctions "not a bit, not an atom." These predicates make sensation and sympathy appear expandable.

Closed predicates are present, but they belong largely to domestic control. The karaka trees must be hidden, the doors swing open and shut, the piano is moved into position, and lists are finished. The party world can therefore intensify aesthetically while its material arrangements are repeatedly brought to completion. Laura's rapid movement into the porch forms one of only four directed-path tokens in this phase. Motion is energetic, yet it remains enclosed within the Sheridan property.

Terminal Predicates After the Death Report

The death announcement changes the scalar profile immediately. Four instances of "killed" and six uses of "stop" constitute one quarter of the 40 coded tokens in the middle phase. The two lexical sets establish opposed endpoints: the carter's life has reached an irreversible boundary, while Laura asks the family to impose a boundary on the party. Jose and Mrs. Sheridan reject the second culmination while accepting the first as socially remote. Their argument is thus

structured by a mismatch between biological closure and the refusal of ceremonial closure.

Other closed predicates reinforce that mismatch. Jose's eyes "hardened"; the band and Laurie "arrived"; bodies and people are carried or followed "into" interior spaces. At the same time, the party is narrated as a natural scalar process: "the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed" [1]. Ripening approaches maturity, fading decreases along an open scale, and closing reaches an endpoint. The coordinated sequence converts a social event into an apparently organic life cycle. Its grammatical smoothness helps the party absorb the earlier moral interruption.

Bounded Paths in Laura's Descent

Directed-path predicates become the largest class in the final phase, accounting for 20 of 38 tokens. Fifteen of those path tokens contain or inherit a goal. Laura goes down the hill, the road is crossed, a shadow moves across a window, she walks up the path, is shut in the passage, walks through into the bedroom, and later finds her way out, down, and past the mourners [1]. These clauses divide the journey into attained thresholds. Spatial syntax makes class crossing sequential and effortful rather than instantaneous.

Vertical direction is not mechanically equivalent to moral knowledge. Laura descends socially and topographically, but the route also exposes how much of the party remains inside her: sounds, kisses, laughter, and crushed grass leave no room for another reality. Her shining dress carries the open scale of the party into the dark lane. The bounded path therefore guarantees contact, not comprehension. It takes Laura to the body but cannot determine what the body means.

At the bedside, closed and open structures converge. The door opens, the sheet is drawn down, the man's head is sunk in the pillow, and his eyes are closed. These are result states. Yet he appears to be sleeping "so soundly, so deeply," expressions that intensify without fixing a measurable maximum [1]. Laura's response also shifts toward open emission: she cries and stammers. Her last question breaks off before a predication is completed. Event structure reaches the room and the body; discourse does not reach a final definition of life.

Scalar Narrative Alignment Model

The findings support a four-stage model in which a dominant scalar configuration aligns with a narrative task. The model includes a final micro-stage, epiphanic suspension, within the broader descent phase because the last exchange

reverses the tendency toward closure. It treats scalarity as an interface among lexical meaning, syntax, plot position, and focalized judgment.

Table 4 Scalar Narrative Alignment Model

Narrative operation	Scalar profile	Typical realization	Narrative function
Aesthetic expansion	Open intensity and affect	shine; gleam; smile; care; more desperate	Makes the party world sensorially extensible
Terminal interruption	Closed change and boundary	killed; die; stop; harden	Introduces irreversible death and a disputed endpoint
Liminal traversal	Closed directed path	down; across; into; out; past	Maps class space as a series of attained thresholds
Epiphanic suspension	Open emotion with syntactic noncompletion	cry; stammer; "Isn't life—"	Withholds a final proposition after spatial arrival

The model predicts that narrative transition is strongest where scale type and plot function align. The death report is powerful because lexical endpoints cluster around an event that cannot be reversed. The descent feels transformative because social distance is represented through completed spatial intervals. The ending is resistant because the path has closed while evaluative language remains open. This last misalignment prevents the model from equating telicity with moral resolution.

Discussion

Scalar Closure and Social Order

The scalar distribution clarifies how class ideology operates without continuous explicit commentary. Inside the Sheridan domain, open intensity predicates enlarge beauty, friendliness, sound, and pleasure. Closed predicates manage objects and servants: trees are hidden, doors shut, furniture is moved, and tasks finish. After the accident, the family treats death as a completed event outside its social field while keeping the party's event structure active. Laura's request to "stop" the party attempts to transfer closure from the dead man's life to the Sheridans' celebration. The request fails because the family controls which boundaries count.

This reading complements accounts of heteroglossia and ideological voice [12, 13]. Laura can borrow the workmen's friendliness and momentarily imagine herself "like a work-girl," but her movement remains linguistically contained until she

leaves the property. Even then, the grammar of goal-directed motion gives her access to the cottage without erasing the social conditions that made the journey exceptional. Scalar structure thus marks both her ethical responsiveness and its limits.

Completion Without Final Knowledge

The analysis also explains why the ending can feel complete and unfinished at once. The plot supplies arrival, encounter, exit, and reunion. The path has a sequence of boundaries, and the final scene closes several physical transitions. Laura nevertheless cannot complete the clause "Isn't life—" [1]. The dash does not merely omit a word that the reader can confidently restore. It suspends the choice of a property and therefore the scale on which life would be evaluated. Laurie's answer confirms shared affect without supplying that missing measure.

Verbal gradability is therefore part of the story's epistemology. Open scales allow experience to exceed fixed standards; closed scales make action and death appear definite; their final collision produces an epiphany that is intense but not paraphrasable. This finding supports critical descriptions of Mansfield's narrative as a negotiation among voice, perception, and social space [10-14], while locating that negotiation in the semantics of predicates and complements.

Limitations

The study is limited to one text and one annotator. Some predicates permit more than one defensible classification: "shine" can be treated as emission or as a change in luminosity, and a motion verb may become bounded only through its complement. The protocol resolves such cases by assigning one primary contextual reading, but an independent annotation study would be needed to estimate agreement. The phase boundaries are also interpretive, although they coincide with explicit textual thresholds. Future work should test the model on other Mansfield stories and compare it with nonmodernist short fiction of similar length.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that scalar structure is not a peripheral ornament in "The Garden Party." Across 110 manually checked predicate tokens, scalar density rises as Laura approaches the dead man's house, and closed scales dominate after the accident. The opening favors intensity and affect; the middle phase concentrates terminal change; the final phase converts social distance into bounded path structure. Only at the end does open emotional language return strongly enough to resist a final proposition.

The proposed Scalar Narrative Alignment Model captures this sequence as aesthetic expansion, terminal interruption, liminal traversal, and epiphanic suspension. Its main claim is modest but consequential: narrative form can be tracked through the endpoints built into verbs and their complements. Mansfield's story reaches physical and aspectual boundaries repeatedly, yet it leaves the meaning of life without a completed predicate. That tension joins formal semantic closure to modernist uncertainty.

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