

# **Focalization and character designations in a first-person narrative: A case study from *Betty***

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## **1. Introduction**

Focalization has become a popular topic in stylistic research in recent decades. One important reason for this is the recognition that focalization is a crucial element in many works of fiction, especially where it enables readers to get into the minds of many different characters within the same story.

This paper explores focalization in the novel *Betty* (2004) by the internationally acclaimed Icelandic crime writer Arnaldur Indriðason (b. 1961). We will show that the novel has various strategies of focalization, including varying designations for the murder victim of the story, which give the reader a sense of a man who has many different sides and may evoke different feelings among the other characters. It will also be argued that a distinction can be made between the first-person narrator of the story and the first-person protagonist in terms of focalization. In this, we follow many scholars who have argued for split focalization with respect to first-person narrator/characters; see e.g. Edmiston (1989), Nielsen (2004) and Morini (2011) and references cited there. This division is most clearly justified by the narrator's knowledge of the past that is not shared by the younger protagonist as the narrator often has the benefit of hindsight in recounting past events. Inevitably, this creates more psychological distance from the narrative and effects the way the narrator views characters and events in the story.

The term *focalization*, originally due to Genette (1980), will be used here as roughly equivalent to the less technical terms *perspective* or *point of view*. We will also follow common practice and employ the term *focalizer* for the person whose knowledge, sensations, thoughts, opinions, and feelings are reported. Indeed, a crime novel in which the protagonist is driven by the quest for truth as well as uncontrollable lust calls for focalization techniques that enable readers to understand her feelings as well as her misguided actions, based on a lack of knowledge and understanding.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides some background information on the plot as well as the nature of the first-person narration. Section 3 continues this discussion by focusing on the distinction between narrator and protagonist as it appears in *Betty*. Section 4 outlines how the different designation for the murder victim in the novel reflect different perspectives on him. Finally, the main conclusions of this paper are summarized in section 5.

## **2. Background**

*Betty* (2003) is a noir-inspired novel featuring a deadly love triangle of Sara, Betty and Tómas.<sup>1</sup> The story is narrated by Sara, a lonely lawyer seeking a more exciting and prosperous life, but Betty is the femme fatale of the story, and Tómas is her partner and a wealthy fishing operator. At the beginning of the novel, Betty approaches Sara at a conference and persuades her to start working as a lawyer for Tómas. Betty seduces Sara and they begin a steamy affair, unbeknownst to Tómas. With the help of Leó, her secret boyfriend, Betty hacks a cunning plot to turn Sara against Tómas, thus paving the way for her to kill him and frame Sara for the murder.

Sara is arrested and sentenced for the murder of Tómas but Bettý is left without any money because of a last-minute change in his will.

The story is told by Sara as she is in custody, recounting past events that led to her predicament and trying to understand how Bettý managed to deceive and manipulate her. There are also some descriptions of Sara's stay in prison and the interrogations she has to endure. As expected, the narration is restricted to what Sara knows and experiences and the result is that there is no dialogue in the story which Sara does not participate in, unless she happens to overhear it or she is eaves-dropping. In fact, the only example of that is when Bettý and Tómas have a heated argument about their relationship in a hotel bar in London.

This restricted first-person view is most conspicuous in passages where Sara is describing her confinement in a prison cell and cannot see anything on the outside. Still, she can hear the footsteps of the prison guards outside her cell and she gets into the habit of counting them to kill time. She also finds herself quite often in a small interrogation room where she looks into the mirror in the room and wonders who is hiding behind it. Sara's imprisonment could be taken as a metaphorical description of her state of mind as she is unwilling to express her innermost feelings and tell the police the full story of the events leading up to the murder of Tómas. Thus, Sara is incarcerated physically as well as emotionally. This can be seen in the following paragraph where Sara explicitly refers to some doors when talking about her feelings towards the police interrogations and the rape she is trying to hide:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) I try not to think about what happened. I don't want to show any reaction. I want this to disappear. I don't want to allow them to open these doors. Bloody Tómas. Bloody Tómas Ottósson Zöega! (chapter 19, p. 124)

Sara is cursing Tómas in this excerpt, initially by his first name and then his full name. The purpose is clearly to bring the reader's attention to Tómas' full name and the stylistic impact it might have but this will be discussed in more detail in 4.3 below.

The first-person narration in *Bettý* has one very interesting twist: The name and gender of the narrator is not disclosed until the middle of the book. Until that point, readers are lead to believe that the narrator is a man in view of the steamy affair with Bettý combined with a hidden bias for heterosexual relationships. As discussed by Guðfinnsdóttir & Jónsson (2016), the point of all of this may be to get readers to consider how gender and sexual orientation affects the way people are treated and evaluated and also to remind them that we are all easily deceived, just like Sara is in the novel.

It is also worth noting that we learn Sara's name through a policeman interrogating her in chapter 19. This seems to imply that her name and consequently the person behind it is totally insignificant. Sara's gender is revealed in chapter 18 where she discusses her homosexuality and the frictions it has caused within her family. That chapter reads like the introduction to Sara's life that would have been expected at the beginning of the novel. This chapter is filled with gender-marked words describing Sara, in stark contrast to earlier chapters that contain no such words. For a detailed discussion on how it is linguistically possible to hide the gender of Sara in the first half of the book, see Guðfinnsdóttir and Jónsson (2016).

### 3. The narrator vs. protagonist

Since Sara is both the narrator and the protagonist in *Betty*, the question is to what extent the story is focalized through the narrator or the protagonist in so far as such a distinction can be made. The general issue of narrator vs. protagonist is nicely summarized by Fludernik (2009:90):

- (2) An interesting aspect of fictional first-person narratives is that the focus can be either on the so-called *narrating self* or the *experiencing self*. For instance, when events and actions are reported from the perspective of a now older and wiser narrator, this narrating self often indulges in retrospection, evaluation and the drawing of moral conclusions. Conversely, the text may eschew retrospection and concentrate on the action as it takes place, at any one particular moment in time. In such cases, the focus is on the narrator as protagonist, the experiencing self.

Applying these criteria to *Betty*, the conclusion is that the experiencing Sara is the main focalizer of the story. This is expected since the story tells how Sara is manipulated because of Betty's cunning plan and the fact that she is driven by an uncontrollable lust for Betty and a desire for a more exciting and prosperous life. To truly understand Sara's actions and engage with the plot, the reader must get good access to her thoughts and feelings and simultaneously be unaware of all the intricacies of Betty's scheme. Indeed, retrospective comments from the narrator are fairly limited throughout the story and do not tell the reader very much. Moreover, the narrator sometimes withholds important information. All of this is exemplified in (3a-b) below:

- (3a) I was probably bored. Nothing exciting was happening in my life and even though I wasn't necessarily looking for excitement, I was looking for something new. Perhaps this work would open up other opportunities. More big fishing companies would want to hire me. I would be able to work in what I knew best and was my speciality. No more asset allocation agreements in Breiðholt. (chapter 3; p. 22)
- (3b) She said she bumped into the door when she was on her way to answer the phone. Why didn't she answer the phone in the bathroom? Why did she lie about the black eye? Was it Tozzi who treated her like that? Was Tozzi rich enough to think that he had the right to hit his partner? (chapter 3; p. 27)

Although (3a) starts with some speculative retrospection, this example describes high hopes that turn out to be illusory. Since the narrator knows this, it is clear that this part of (3a) is focalized through the overly optimistic protagonist. In (3b), the protagonist is asking four pressing questions that she wants to be answered. The narrator, by contrast, knows the answers but keeps them to herself to maintain the suspense that has been created about the relationship between Tómas and Betty.<sup>3</sup>

Still, there is some room for informative retrospection in the novel, e.g. in the following example where Sara is describing Betty with the benefit of hindsight:

- (4) The strange thing was that Betty had not left my mind after we said goodbye at Hôtel Saga earlier that day. There was something about her that I could not figure out but I think that I know now. She had a kind of confidence and certainty that I did not understand then. For her, this was a game she had played before. She was well aware of her beauty and had probably always used it to get what she wanted. Few women I know are as conscious of the power that beauty and sexuality give them. She had played with people all her life and she was so skillful that you didn't realize how she did it until you were in her arms.  
(chapter 3; p. 21)

Note also how the narrative shifts to present tense in lines 3 (*I think that I know now*) and 6-7 (*Few women I know are as conscious of the power that beauty and sexuality give them*) to emphasize that this is something that the narrator knows now. Despite passages like (4), retrospection usually fails to provide Sara with the answers she is looking for. This is already apparent in the opening paragraphs of the novel:

- (5) I have not fully understood what happened but finally I know about my role in this story.

I have been trying to understand how it all fits together but that is not easy. For example, I don't know when it started. I know when my part started, I remember when I saw her first, but perhaps my role in this strange conspiracy had been decided long ago. Long before she came to see me. (chapter 1, p. 7)

The feminine singular pronoun (*she/her*) in the last two lines refers to Betty, who is designated by a pronoun 18 times at the beginning of the story before she introduces herself to Sara. Thus, the pronouns in (5) reflect the experiencing Sara's state of knowledge as she does not learn Betty's name until they meet for the first time. As is well-known, antecedentless pronouns are often used in fiction to create suspense about the identity of the person they refer to. In this case, the purpose is rather to emphasize Sara's infatuation with her as there can only be one person in Sara's life that the pronoun refers to.<sup>4</sup>

The final paragraphs of the novel are also quite revealing because they show that Sara's lust for Betty has not diminished in any way despite everything that Betty has done to her and she is still as lonely as before:

- (6) As always when I lie in my loneliness and think about all that happened my mind drifts to Betty. I curl up under the duvet. Sometimes the memories are so strong that they bring me to tears.

How I miss her!

How I miss her sweet kisses on my body.

Oh, Betty . . .

(last chapter; p. 215)

The ordeal that Sara goes through in the story does not seem to change her in any significant way or teach her any lessons. Thus, she appears to be just as uncertain and emotionally unstable towards the end of the novel as she is at the beginning. Inevitably, this obscures the contrast between the narrating Sara and the experiencing

Sara, despite the specific examples we have already seen where the contrast is fairly clear.

As a final issue in this section, a quick look at some linguistic cues relating to focalization is in order. Words describing psychological state are obvious cues as they invite the reader to enter the minds of the characters whose perceptions, thoughts, feelings etc. are reported. For instance, the words *loneliness*, *think*, *mind*, *memories* and *miss* in (6) above describe the psychological state of Sara and this points to the protagonist rather than the narrator as the experiencer of these emotions and memories. This effect is further enhanced by the two exclamative clauses (*How I miss...*) in (6) where the second one repeats the initial four words of the first one.<sup>5</sup> Exclamative clauses are not statements that are either true or false but rather expressions that bring the addressee's attention to something; in (6) it is the degree to which Sara misses Bettý and the repetition makes this message even more forceful.

Exclamative clauses and repetitions are widely used as stylistic techniques in *Bettý* and they strengthen the expressive force of the relevant piece of text. The same can be said about rhetorical questions, as in (3b), and sentence fragments, as in the following excerpt (where the relevant examples are underlined):

- (7) I wanted to go to Tómas' home and kill him. Literally kill him. I was boiling with anger. This was what he was getting for his money. Bettý's blood-stained face. (chapter 11; p. 73)

Importantly, these stylistic devices do not by themselves signal focalization through the protagonist in *Bettý*. Rather, they emphasize emotions that are most naturally ascribed to the protagonist, i.e. the experiencing Sara.

A recurrent theme in the novel is the size of various concrete things that indicate financial and/or social status. For instance, the murder weapon is often referred to as *the small sledgehammer* as if to highlight that it was used by a petite woman (Bettý) to kill Tómas.<sup>6</sup> This is exemplified in the following passages (where the words *big* and *small* are underlined):

- (8a) I started thinking about my small apartment. My classmates from law school had already moved into private houses. They had big and expensive cars, went skiing in Austria, licked the sun in Italy and shopped in London. (chapter 2; p. 15)
- (8b) It was as if I was no match for her. As if I was no match for her partner either and his big, big fishing company in the north and their wealth and their house in Pingholtin which they could easily afford to demolish. (chapter 2; p. 16)

Both of these passages are in chapter 2 where Sara is becoming so intrigued by the lavish lifestyle of Bettý and Tómas that she is getting tempted to work for Tómas. This is made abundantly clear by the repetition of the adjective *big* in (8b). Adjectives like *big* and *small* are evaluative by their nature and it appears that the excerpts in (8a-b) reflect the evaluation of the protagonist because the narrator should know better than be enticed by all the glamour associated with Bettý and Tómas.

## 4. The many sides of Tómas

### 4.1 Tómas vs. others

As outlined in 4.2 - 4.4 below, Tómas is designated by various referential expressions which indicate how he can be viewed in different ways by different characters, e.g. as a big powerful man, a man that has gotten rich through the quota system, a lover that can be manipulated, a man that suffers a terrible and senseless death etc. By contrast, the reader rarely sees anything from his vantage point, i.e. Tómas is predominantly an object of focalization rather than a focalizer. The few cases where Tómas is the focalizer, or at least one of them, can be quite striking, as shown by the following description of his dying moments:

- (9) This was followed by a strange silence but suddenly we heard him moan. We looked at each other. We moved closer to the edge and saw him look at us. I can not forget the pain in his expression, the cluelessness, the fear. It was the same expression of pain as my father showed when he was dying. It was as if he was trying to get our attention. Then the eyes closed. (chapter 24; p. 157)

The nouns *pain*, *cluelessness* and *fear* in the third line refer to Tómas' state of mind. Moreover, the finite verb shifts to present tense (*can*) in the relevant clause to mark the shift in focalization from Sara and Bettý to Tómas; otherwise, the whole passage is in the past tense (*was*, *heard*, *looked*, *moved* etc.).

Tómas' full name is *Tómas Ottósson Zöega*, which includes both *Ottósson* (literally 'the son of Ottó'), in accordance with the patronymic system of Iceland, and the family name *Zöega*. Tómas is the only character in the story whose full name is revealed. All the other characters are referred to either by their first name or occupation, including Sara and Bettý. Tómas is also the only character who is properly introduced to the reader (in chapter 6). In our view, this reflects the fact that he is clearly the most ambiguous character in the novel. He is a self-made, greedy, extravagant and ruthless fishing operator but also a deeply unhappy man stuck in a loveless and childless relationship and eventually a murder victim. And even though he rapes Sara in the middle of the story, there is a lot of room for sympathy because of the way he is described in the rape scene and the fact, which Sara discovers later, that the rape was instigated by Bettý.<sup>7</sup>

In comparison to Tómas, Sara and Bettý are distinctly one-sided characters. One cannot help but feel sorry for Sara who is sentenced for a crime she did not commit; by contrast, it is very hard to sympathize for Bettý who spins an intricate web of deceptions to frame Sara for a murder she commits for financial gain. Still, Sara's lust for Bettý is unaffected by everything that takes place and she has no harsh word for Bettý throughout the novel. Sara does not hold back in her negative comments about Tómas while he is alive but she becomes much more sympathetic towards him after his death.

Tómas is not only referred to by his first name or full name but also by the first two names, *Tómas Ottósson*, and the nickname *Tozzi*. Using the first name only is the most common way of referring to people in Icelandic, at least in written texts. Thus, *Tómas* is used 195 times in the novel whereas the full name, *Tómas Ottósson Zöega* appears 24 times, *Tómas Ottósson* 16 times and *Tozzi* 41 times. Using the first name only has no stylistic significance as far as we can tell, but the full name and the nickname are clearly intended to emphasize certain roles or characteristics of Tómas (see 4.3 and 4.4 below). This is also true of the epithets he is sometimes designated by, i.e. *my/her man* (where the possessive pronouns refer to Bettý) and *the quota king*.

Indeed, using different expressions for the same fictional character is a well-known stylistic device to highlight the various roles or sides of that character and different attitudes towards him (see e.g. Backus 1972-1973, Uspensky 1973:20-32, Short 1996:272-274, and Leech and Short 2007:102).

#### 4.2 Epithets

Tómas is first mentioned in chapter 1 where Bettý is talking to Sara and refers to him as her partner.<sup>8</sup> The relevant excerpt is shown below:

- (10) My partner is looking for a lawyer, she said. We have been looking for ... she hesitated before she finished the sentence - ... the right person. She had a partner. A known fishing operator in the north. I recalled having seen them on the cover of a tabloid. (chapter 1; p. 10)

As can be seen here, the narrator repeats the fact that Bettý has a partner and adds that he is a known fishing operator in the north who has been on the cover of a tabloid along with Bettý. Thus, Tómas is inextricably linked to Bettý as his main role in the narrative is to be her partner and provide her with all the glamour that money can buy. As the reader discovers some 150 pages later, this role turns out to be his undoing. As argued in 4.4 below, the nickname *Tozzi* also links Tómas to Bettý although this is not apparent from the name itself.

In addition to being Bettý's partner, Tómas is a public figure because of his occupation and the riches that go with it. In fact, the emphasis on his different roles is so strong at the beginning of the novel that his name is not disclosed until chapter 6 where he is finally introduced. In the preceding chapters, he is often designated as Bettý's partner but he is also twice referred to as *the quota king*, in both cases in connection to his wealth. This is illustrated in (11) below:<sup>9</sup>

- (11a) We went through every room in the house and I felt how cold and lifeless the house was and I thought to myself that even if the quota king would spend another hundred million krónur it would still remain cold and lifeless. (chapter 4; p. 33)
- (11b) We were alone in the house. She had told me that all the work would start next day and then an army of workers was coming to decorate the palace of the quota king. (chapter 4; p. 34)

These are the only examples in the novel where Tómas is referred to in this way. The epithet drives home the message that he has become incredibly rich through the quota system in the Icelandic fishing industry. Note also that being a quota king is a different role from being Bettý's partner and yet both roles are interconnected because Bettý is only Tómas' partner because of his wealth.

#### 4.3 The full name

Full names are used in everyday language when people are introduced to addressees that do not know them but after that they need not be repeated. Thus, full names are associated with lack of familiarity. In works of fiction, a full name may occur many times, but the effect will often be that the relevant person is in some sense reintroduced to the reader. Backus (1972-1973) observes that full names are

sometimes used in the works of Henry James to indicate a pause or change in the narrative. This does not seem to be the case in *Betty* where the full name *Tómas Ottósson Zöega* is mostly employed to designate the public person, e.g. in a formal setting, or to reinforce the view that Tómas is a big, powerful and wealthy man.<sup>10</sup> Three examples of the first use are shown in (12):<sup>11</sup>

(12a) A few years after the beauty pageant, Betty started to be seen with Tómas Ottósson Zöega, a twice-divorced fishing king from Akureyri, who was more than twenty years her senior. The tabloids got really interested in this and published photos of them partying. (chapter 14; p. 91)

(12b) So it [the rape] is not the reason why you murdered Tómas Ottósson Zöega? said Lárus. (chapter 19; p. 127)

(12c) I was convicted of the murder of Tómas Ottósson Zöega. (last chapter; p. 209)

In all these examples, the full name is presumably focalized through someone other than the narrator. This is quite clear in the direct quotation in (12b), but (12a) also reads like a quotation from the tabloids, especially the phrase *twice-divorced fishing king from Akureyri*. Things are less clear in (12c), which nevertheless sounds like a public statement except for the first-person subject.

Another function of the full name is to highlight how big, rich and powerful Tómas is. This is shown by the fact that the full name often occurs in contexts where these characteristics are under discussion:

(13a) I despise men like Tómas Ottósson Zöega. Men that look down on everyone around them thinking that no one is their equal. (chapter 6; p. 40)

(13b) The house was gigantic just like everything else associated with Tómas Ottósson Zöega. (chapter 6; p. 44)

(13c) When they realised that it was Tómas Ottósson Zöega, they called out more rescue squads and the helicopter from the Coastal Service. (chapter 20; p. 133)

Note also that the full name is a good example of iconicity as the form, consisting of no less than three words and eight syllables, imitates the meaning that Tómas is a big man. This is further reinforced by the sound-symbolic effect of the back rounded diphthong [ou] in all three parts of the name, [t<sup>h</sup>ou:mas] [ɔhtou:son] [sou:eka], which is more strongly connected with fear than any other vowel in Icelandic.

#### 4.4 The nickname

Nicknames signal a personal connection as they are typically used only by those who know the person referred to. Still, there is a lot of variation in how people feel about their nicknames because they can both be seen as terms of endearment, reflecting a special relationship between people but also as labels used to manipulate or degrade people. As discussed by Windt-Val (2012), fiction writers make use of this ambiguity in their stories and this is nicely illustrated in *Betty* as we will discuss further below.

As we have already seen, Tómas has the nickname *Tozzi*. The story implies that this nickname was coined by Betty<sup>12</sup> and this is easy to believe as *Tozzi* is not a word of Icelandic and the standard nickname for someone called Tómas is *Tommi* in

Icelandic. *Tozzi* also stands out as a written form because there are no words in Icelandic that are spelled with a /zz/ (and /z/ is, in fact, no longer part of the Icelandic alphabet).

Due to its spelling, *Tozzi* can be interpreted as an abbreviation of the full name, *Tómas Ottósson Zöega*. It is the opposite of the full name as it seems to literally cut *Tómas* down in size. It is as if Bettý, by using this name, is telling us that *Tómas* is her plaything and blissfully unaware of her plans to kill him. Note also that *Tozzi* is homophonous with the word *tossi* ‘a lazy student’ since both /s/ and /z/ are pronounced as [s] Icelandic. Hence, the nickname is also a reminder of the fact that *Tómas* has little education.

*Tómas* is referred to as *Tozzi* a few times before his real name is disclosed.<sup>13</sup> The first mention of this nickname is when Bettý is scolding *Tómas* for being rude to Sara. This is shown in (14a). A few pages later, the nickname is put in quotation marks when Sara is trying to get Bettý to stop calling her; see (14b). This example indicates that Sara thinks of *Tozzi* as a rather odd nickname that is strongly associated with Bettý. Finally, the beginning of chapter 6, shown in (14c), contrasts the nickname with the full name, leaving readers in no doubt that the different versions of *Tómas*’ name may be stylistically significant.

(14a) *Tozzi*, she [Bettý] said, do you always have to be like that?  
(chapter 3; p. 26)

(14b) I have no interest in all the little secrets that you and “*Tozzi*” have. Leave me alone. Don’t call me again. (chapter 4; p. 32)

(14c) She never called him anything other than *Tozzi*. His name was *Tómas Ottósson Zöega* and he did not even try to be friendly when I sat down in front of his big desk. (chapter 6; p. 39)

Chapter 16 describes how Sara is raped by *Tómas*. The rape is later seen as a motive for Sara to kill *Tómas* and her refusal to admit that this happened undermines her credibility with the police when she proclaims her innocence. The nickname *Tozzi* appears six times in this chapter, more than in any other chapter of the story. It seems that the purpose is to downplay the violence involved but also to highlight Bettý’s involvement in the rape. Importantly, the nickname *Tozzi* is used in the sentence describing the rape:

(15) I want to sleep with you, he repeated. And I know you want to. I started to laugh. I don’t know why. There was something so pathetic about him ... He got angry and hit me and then attacked me. *Tozzi* raped me that night in the big house of his and Bettý’s up there in the north. (chapter 16; p. 112)

This sentence is incredibly powerful, not only because of the content, which is highly relevant for the plot, but also because it is very brief and does not go into any detail. Hence, the reader is left to imagine what exactly happened. It is also quite telling that Bettý is mentioned here, presumably to imply that she is implicated in the rape by bringing *Tómas* into Sara’s life. Moreover, the text conveys a clear sense of Sara being on her own in an unfamiliar territory as she is in a big house *up there in the north*, i.e. a house that she could not possibly afford and far away from her hometown, Reykjavík.

When Tómas is killed, Sara is full of regret because of the way he died. To highlight her emotions, Tómas is often referred to as *Tozzi* in these passages:

- (16a) Tozzi's death was not fair in any way either. I know that. No one wants to die like Tozzi died. Ridiculously. Unsuspecting. Suddenly. Doesn't matter what kind of a man he is. No one should die like Tozzi died. (chapter 24, p. 155)
- (16b) Tozzi knew nothing. Betty and I were death and we sent him moaning into the darkness. (chapter 24, p. 156)

This is particularly striking in (16a) where *Tozzi* occurs three times and the emotional content is amplified by the use of repetitions and sentence fragments.

As a final note of caution in this chapter, it is not our claim here that every instance of the nickname *Tozzi* or the full name *Tómas Ottósson Zöega* has an obvious stylistic effect. Rather, we hope to have shown that there is clearly some regularity in the way these two versions of Tómas' name are used and this can be seen not only in individual passages but also in the distribution of these forms within the novel.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have discussed the intricate patterns of focalization in the crime novel *Betty*. We have argued that *Betty* displays the split focalization of many first-person narratives, as the narration is mostly seen through the vantage point of the experiencing Sara, the protagonist of the story, whereas the narrating Sara is backgrounded.

We have also discussed the varying expressions to refer to Tómas, the murder victim of the story. Expressions of this kind are a powerful tool of focalization and they include his full name *Tómas Ottósson Zöega*, his nickname *Tozzi* as well as epithets like *Betty's man* or *the quota king*. These designations indicate how Tómas can be viewed in many different ways unlike all other characters in the story. We have also argued that the full name and the nickname are iconic in the sense that they highlight the "big Tómas" vs. the "small Tómas" in the story. Thus, these names involve fairly subtle ways of viewpoint manipulation that can easily be missed by readers because they go beyond the ordinary use of nicknames and full names.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not the whole story because it turns out late in the novel that Bettý has a secret lover, Leó, who is also Tómas' employee.

<sup>2</sup> All the translations from *Bettý* in this paper are our own since the novel has not been translated into English.

<sup>3</sup> Tómas' nickname, *Tozzi*, is discussed in 4.3 below.

<sup>4</sup> This is also clearly seen in the passage where Sara describes the first time she sees Bettý and is overwhelmed by her beauty; see Guðfinnsdóttir and Jónsson (2016).

<sup>5</sup> The lack of an exclamation mark in the second clause makes no linguistic difference. This is still an exclamative clause by the standard diagnostics for such clauses (see Zanuttini & Portner 2003 for relevant discussion).

<sup>6</sup> This can also be seen in the use of Tómas' full name vs. nickname (see further in 4.3 and 4.4 below).

<sup>7</sup> Bettý contacts Sara and tells her that Tómas wants to meet her, having already told Tómas that Sara likes rough sex and knowing that he is likely to act upon this piece of information.

<sup>8</sup> The word she uses is *maður* (literally 'man'), which does not indicate marital status and is therefore ambiguous between 'husband' and 'partner'. We will translate this word as *partner* since Tómas and Bettý are not married.

<sup>9</sup> Note how the king metaphor is maintained in (11b) by the words *army* and *palace*.

<sup>10</sup> Tómas is also referred to by the first two names, i.e. *Tómas Ottósson*. We have not found any clear pattern in the way this designation is used although it may not be a coincidence that it is not used in any dialogues and it only occurs once in the second half of the book.

<sup>11</sup> *The fishing king* is an epithet used twice to refer to Tómas and the same is true of *the fishing operator*.

<sup>12</sup> This can be seen in the excerpt in (14c) below.

<sup>13</sup> These examples include example (3b) in section 3.