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in relation to absurd prose fiction.**

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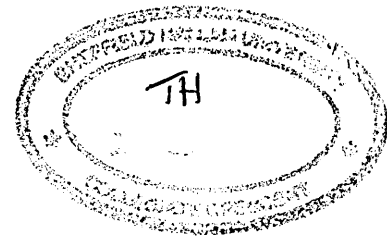
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# Text World Theory:

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## A Critical Exposition and Development in Relation to Absurd Prose Fiction

Joanna Gavins



Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University for the award of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.

December 2001

# Abstract

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*Text World Theory: A Critical Exposition and Development in Relation to Absurd Prose Fiction*

Joanna Gavins

PhD Thesis

This thesis presents a unified and systematic Text World Theory, tested and refined under practical application. It draws on a variety of linguistic, psychological, critical theoretical and cognitive scientific models, principally the cognitive discourse grammar originally developed by Paul Werth. The thesis delineates the critical and philosophical inheritance out of which Text World Theory evolved, in order to evaluate and engage critically with the theoretical framework in the light of recent developments in literary linguistics and cognitive poetics. This inheritance includes the fields of possible worlds semantics and narratology, artificial intelligence research and cognitive psychology. Essential modifications, revisions and crucial adjustments are made to Werth's approach in order to produce a refined model of Text World Theory.

The augmented framework is tested through several practical and inter-related analyses. These centre around Absurd prose fiction, selected in order to highlight the adaptability of the new Text World Theory especially in the context of literary environments that are often judged to be challenging on a cognitive dimension. Extensive analyses of Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*, Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, Emmanuel Carrère's *The Mustache*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* are undertaken over the course of the thesis. Further adaptations to the model are proposed as a result of these applications.

The thesis aims primarily to be a contribution to the field of cognitive discourse study. However, incidental contributions are also made to the areas of the critical study of Absurd prose fiction, pragmatics and semantics, cognitive poetics and literary critical theory in general.

*'The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that  
it is at all comprehensible.'*

*Albert Einstein*

# Contents

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<i>Acknowledgements</i>		<b>i</b>
<i>List of Diagrams</i>		<b>iii</b>
<b>Chapter One</b>	<b><i>Preliminaries</i></b>	<b>1</b>
	1.0 Aims and Parameters	1
	1.1 The Literature of the Absurd	5
	1.2 The Structure of the Thesis	11
	1.3 Further Implications	16
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b><i>Origins and Influences</i></b>	<b>19</b>
	2.0 Preview	19
	2.1.0 Possible Worlds	21
	2.1.1 Possible Worlds in Literary Theory	27
	2.2.0 Conceptual Worlds	34
	2.2.1 Scripts and Schemata	35
	2.2.2 Mental Representations	43
	2.2.3 Cognitive Models	49
	2.2.4 Frames and Spaces	56
	2.3 Review	61
<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b><i>Text World Theory</i></b>	<b>63</b>
	3.0 Preview	63
	3.1.0 The Discourse World	63
	3.1.1 Negotiation	67
	3.1.2 Knowledge	71
	3.1.3 Common Ground	75
	3.2.0 The Text World	83
	3.2.1 How to Build (and Maintain) a World	86
	3.2.2 Function-Advancing Propositions	94
	3.3.0 The Sub-World	98
	3.3.1 Attitude	101
	3.3.2 Epistemology	107
	3.3.3 Deictic Alternation	113

3.4.0	Narratological Perspectives	118
3.4.1	A Preliminary Text World Analysis	120
3.4.2	Extended Metaphor	131
3.4.3	<i>The Music of Chance</i>	134
3.5	Review	145
<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b><i>Text Worlds of the Absurd</i></b>	<b>150</b>
4.0	Preview	150
4.1.0	<i>The Third Policeman</i>	150
4.1.1	Analysis Review	171
4.2.0	<i>The Mustache</i>	173
4.2.1	Analysis Review	193
4.3.0	<i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i>	195
4.3.1	Analysis Review	215
4.4.0	<i>Snow White</i>	217
4.4.1	Analysis Review	241
4.5	Review	243
<b>Chapter Five</b>	<b><i>Conclusions</i></b>	<b>244</b>
5.0	Preview	244
5.1	Text World Theory Augmented	244
5.2	Future Directions	251
5.3	Thesis Review	256
<b>References</b>		<b>261</b>



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My involvement in the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) has provided me both with an annual audience for my ideas and with a group of friends upon whose unfailing academic and emotional support I have come to depend greatly over the past few years. In particular, I would like to thank Mick Short, who allowed me access to Paul Werth's manuscript for *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* prior to its publication. I am also grateful to Peter Verdonk, who not only provided assistance in tracking down a number of Werth's more obscure and unpublished works, but also continues to offer a source of constant friendship and inspiration. I am equally grateful to Tony Bex, Michael Burke, Ron Carter, Szilvia Csabi, Cathy Emmott, David Gill, Laura Hidalgo Downing, Rocio Montoro, Elena Semino, Paul Simpson, Gerard Steen and Katie Wales. All of my PALA colleagues have helped shape this thesis in one way or another. Those who have not been mentioned have not been forgotten.

My greatest debt of gratitude, however, is owed to my family, who have shouldered the burden of my prolonged silences and ever-shifting moods with characteristic grace and good humour. I dedicate this thesis to them and to my husband, Peter Stockwell, whose tolerance and love astounds me. Above all else, I am thankful for Peter.

My first contact with Paul Werth's work during my Masters degree six years ago permanently transformed the way I think (and the way I think about the way I think in particular) and has set the path for much of the rest of my life. This thesis stands, therefore, as a memorial to Paul Werth and as a testimony to the extraordinary influence his ideas and his writings continue to have beyond his own lifetime.

# List of Diagrams

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<i>Chapter Three</i>		<i>Page Number</i>
Figure 3a	<i>The Discourse World</i>	66
Figure 3b	<i>Participant Knowledge</i>	71
Figure 3c	<i>Scale of Probability</i>	77
Figure 3d	<i>Scale of Authority</i>	78
Figure 3e	<i>Knowledge in the Discourse World</i>	82
Figure 3f	<i>Text-Drivenness</i>	83
Figure 3g	<i>Temporal Values and English Tenses</i>	89
Figure 3h	<i>Sub-Categories of Function-Advancers</i>	95
Figure 3i	<i>Accessibility</i>	100
Figure 3j	<i>Space, Time and Epistemic Distance</i>	108
Figure 3k	<i>The Initial Text World of The Music of Chance</i>	125
Figure 3l	<i>Embedded Epistemic Sub-World</i>	128
Figure 3m	<i>The Opening Paragraph of The Music of Chance</i>	130
Figure 3n	<i>Embedded Metaphor</i>	136

<i>Chapter Four</i>		<i>Page Number</i>
Figure 4a	<i>The Opening Passage of The Third Policeman</i>	155
Figure 4b	<i>Simpson's (1993) Modal Grammar of Narrative Fiction</i>	158
Figure 4c	<i>Embedded Modal Worlds in The Third Policeman</i>	160
Figure 4d	<i>The Narrator's Footnotes in The Third Policeman</i>	163
Figure 4e	<i>Embedded Worlds in The Mustache</i>	178
Figure 4f	<i>The Paranoid Narrative Voice in The Mustache</i>	188
Figure 4g	<i>Billy Pilgrim's Time Leaps</i>	204
Figure 4h	<i>Embedded Worlds in Snow White's 'Hair Speech'</i>	222
Figure 4i	<i>Embedded Worlds in Bill's 'Reaction to the Hair' Speech</i>	225
Figure 4j	<i>Embedded Worlds in the Poisoning Scene</i>	229

<i>Chapter Five</i>		<i>Page Number</i>
Figure 5a	<i>Modifications to Text World Theory</i>	249

## 1.0 Aims and Parameters

The central focus of this thesis is the text world approach to discourse study conceived by the late Professor Paul Werth and outlined both in his 1999 monograph, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*, and in numerous preceding articles and essays (Werth 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b and ms.). Throughout this body of work, Werth claims to have devised a methodological framework capable of accounting for the cognitive processes behind the production and interpretation of *all* forms of human communication; from telephone conversations to dramatic performance, from church sermons to newspaper reports. Rarely are such ambitious theoretical objectives encountered within the field of linguistic study. Werth's development of his all-encompassing model, however, was sadly cut short by his untimely death in 1995. By that time, Werth had set down only the basic foundations of Text World Theory in published form, though he had also managed to complete a manuscript for his monograph on text worlds prior to his death. Although not in the camera-ready form that had been requested by the publishers (Longman) on their original acceptance of the text, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* was felt to be of such academic importance as to warrant the extensive further editing work needed to bring the volume to a publishable state.

This task was undertaken by Professor Mick Short at the University of Lancaster between 1995 and 1998 and involved a number of changes to Werth's draft. Alongside numerous missing and inaccurate references, some of the examples Werth had used for

analysis (including an unreferenced satirical extract on former President of the United States, Ronald Reagan) were deemed potentially libellous and were duly removed and replaced with similar, though less legally problematic, extracts of Professor Short's devising (see, for example, Werth 1999: 151). Several of Werth's diagrams were also removed in order to reduce costs. These discrepancies have been borne in mind throughout the course of this study and close comparison has consistently been made between the final volume, eventually published in 1999, and its original manuscript. This comparison has shown, however, that little significant difference exists between the two texts at the theoretical level and that the majority of changes made to Werth's original version of the book have been largely cosmetic.

Although the account of Text World Theory presented in the 1999 monograph may be far more extensive than those offered in earlier essays (e.g. Werth 1994, 1995a, 1995b), no further exploration of the validity of the considerable claims contained in that text (see Chapter Three for further detail) has yet been attempted. As I have already mentioned, the potential for the application of Text World Theory to a broad range of discourse situations is stressed throughout Werth's work. Furthermore, Werth emphasises that he believes his fundamental responsibility as a *discourse* linguist to be the formulation of a methodological framework that will enable the systematic examination, not only of entire texts, but also of the *contexts* surrounding their production and interpretation (see Werth 1999: Chapter 1). Indeed, Werth admits that, consequently, his central subject matter is no less than 'all the furniture of the earth and heavens' (Werth 1999: 17). Whether Werth actually achieved his aim of producing a fully context-sensitive discourse model, capable of explaining the vast data of all human communication, is yet to be tested and established. Although selected areas of Werth's

text worlds framework have been discussed and put into use in a number of recent discourse studies (e.g. Emmott 1997, Hidalgo Downing 2000), no extended critical evaluation or development of the model yet exists.

This thesis constitutes just such a project. It is the first step towards an exhaustive testing of the benefits and boundaries of *Text World Theory*. Indeed, that very term is coined in this thesis for the first time, as a means of referring to the expanded and refined version of Werth's text world framework presented throughout the course of the coming chapters. In his own work on text worlds, Werth did not refer to his approach to discourse study as an identifiable unified 'theory' of human communication in this sense. Although, in his 1999 monograph, Werth does claim to be working towards the formulation of a 'Cognitive Discourse Grammar' (Werth 1999: 50), he does so as a means of relating his text world model to other discourse frameworks (e.g. Fauconnier 1994 and 1997, Langacker 1987, 1990 and 1991) previously put forward within the field of cognitive linguistics (see sections 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 3.2.2 for further discussion of these correlations). Werth's somewhat tentative classification of his methodology, then, can be seen as appropriate to the status of his project as a 'work-in-progress' at that time. The retrospective schematisation and development of the central principles of the text world approach undertaken in the current thesis, however, reveals a discrete and cohesive system of discourse analysis to which the 'Text World Theory' label may now be confidently applied.

It is important to stress, however, that, due to the standard constraints of time and scope, the present thesis is not intended as a comprehensive investigation of *all* aspects of Werth's framework. Indeed, the all-embracing nature of Text World Theory necessarily

means that only selected areas of the model can be fully explored in an investigation of this size. A corresponding restriction of data for analysis must also be made for the same reasons. Therefore, since this thesis constitutes the first detailed exploration of Text World Theory attempted since Werth's death, it seems appropriate to begin the evaluation and development of the framework at the precise point at which it was left by its creator. This means that the viability of using the text worlds approach to examine face-to-face communication, for example, will not be assessed in these pages (see Chapter Five, however, for some further discussion of the possibilities of such a project). Rather, the further advancement of Text World Theory will start with an exploration into that mode of discourse which formed the central focus of Werth's own work, namely the discourse of prose fiction.

A number of shortcomings can immediately be identified in the analyses of literary discourse carried out by Werth during his development of Text World Theory. Firstly, despite repeated gestures towards the examination of real, extended discourse, Werth's own use of his framework was limited to the analysis of relatively short literary extracts, aimed at exemplifying rather than assessing the text world approach (Werth 1999: 10 provides a typical example). This thesis, on the other hand, studies the text world structures of a series of *entire* novels in order to investigate fully Text World Theory's capacity for dealing with complete texts. Werth's choice of examples for analysis was also often further restricted to the work of realist novelists from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Extracts from William Thackeray, Henry Fielding, John Steinbeck and Charles Dickens feature prominently throughout Werth's work, with Ernest Hemingway and E.M. Forster emerging as particular favourites for investigation (see, for example, Werth's use of Hemingway in Werth 1993: 82, 1995b: 202, 1995b: 203-

204, 1999: 10, 1999: 52, 1999: 217, 1999: 220, and his use of Forster in Werth 1994: 84-85, 1995b: 190-191, 1999: 8, 1999: 254, 1999: 318-319). The present purposes of exploring both the advantages and the absolute limits of Text World Theory as a methodological tool for stylistic analysis, however, demand a more challenging selection of literary texts. Section 1.1 below, therefore, explains the rationale behind the application of Text World Theory to a series of Absurd novels, which forms the core of this thesis.

## 1.1 The Literature of the Absurd

**Absurd** *adj.* and *n.*

**A.** *adj.* ... Out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical. In modern use, *esp.* plainly opposed to reason, and *hence*, ridiculous, silly...

**B.** *n.* An unreasonable thing, act or statement. *Obs. exc.* as a rendering of Fr. *l'absurde* (Camus)... 1962 *Listener* 13 Dec 1027/1 The theatre of the absurd, whose master remains Camus.

(*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989)

Although *The Oxford English Dictionary* here acknowledges the work of Albert Camus as a central influence on much contemporary use of the term 'absurd', its choice of citation can be seen to present a somewhat misleading picture of the historical development of the notion of the Absurd in both philosophy and literary criticism. The quotation from *The Listener* in 1962 above would appear to suggest that Camus was in some way responsible for, or at least involved in, the twentieth century dramatic tradition which has come to be known as the 'Theatre of the Absurd'. In actual fact, although the use of 'absurd' to refer to both a literary work and a general state of human existence can be traced back to Camus' 1942 text *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Camus 1975), Camus himself never used the term to refer to either his own or other authors' dramatic work. Rather, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* is made up of a series of philosophical essays in which Camus questions whether life has meaning in order to explore the further question of the legitimacy of suicide. He evokes the Greek myth of Sisyphus as an



allegory for the 'absurd' human condition. Sisyphus, of course, having angered the gods, was condemned to ceaselessly rolling a huge stone to the top of a mountain, only to have to watch it roll back down again under the force of its own weight. Camus explains:

Sisyphus is the absurd hero. He *is* as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of this earth.

(Camus 1975: 108)

During the course of his existential deliberations, Camus also mentions a number of other fictional works, including Franz Kafka's (1925) *The Trial* and *The Castle* (1926), and Herman Melville's (1851) *Moby Dick*, which, he argues, share the 'absurd sensitivity' (Camus 1975: 10) of Sisyphus' tale. These brief observations, however, remain secondary to his central philosophical purpose.

The phrase 'Theatre of the Absurd' was coined much later by Martin Esslin (1980) in his seminal text of the same name, originally published in 1961. Esslin draws upon Camus' original depiction of the absurdity of human existence in order to describe the dramatic works of, primarily, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter. Esslin explains:

A term like Theatre of the Absurd is a working hypothesis, a device to make certain fundamental traits which seem to be present in the works of a number of dramatists accessible to discussion by tracing the features they have in common.

(Esslin 1991: 12)

Unfortunately, Esslin fails to specify what these fundamental traits actually are, offering only a highly impressionistic description of the works of each of his chosen authors without any reference to the stylistic features the texts may share. However, Esslin does provide slightly more rigorous detail in his differentiation between those writers he considers to be dramatists of the Absurd and those, including Jean Giraudoux, Jean-Paul

Sartre and Camus himself, whom he identifies as belonging to an earlier tradition of 'Existentialist theatre' (Esslin 1980: 25). He argues that

these writers differ from the dramatists of the Absurd in an important respect: they present their sense of the irrationality of the human condition in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, while the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought. While Sartre or Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes one step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which these are expressed.

(Esslin 1980: 24)

Sartre, Camus, and their contemporaries, then, can be seen to be expressing the same metaphysical anguish as Beckett, Pinter, and the rest of Esslin's Absurdist writers, only in a more conventional, realist form. Indeed, Esslin goes on to describe Camus' writing as displaying 'the elegantly rationalistic and discursive style of an eighteenth century moralist' (Esslin 1980: 24), while he claims that Sartre's plays are 'based on brilliantly drawn characters who remain wholly consistent and thus reflect the old convention that each human being has a core of immutable, unchanging essence' (Esslin 1980: 24).

The 'Theatre of the Absurd', by contrast, is characterised by its deliberate violation of such literary and dramatic norms, displaying numerous features which can be seen to defy those conventions which had previously defined the qualitative boundaries of the literary canon. As Esslin explains:

If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable character and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold up the mirror to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings.

(Esslin 1980: 21-22)

However, Esslin is also quick to point out the speed and readiness with which such initially incomprehensible avant-garde work was embraced by its audience and transformed into the 'all too easily understood modern classic' (Esslin 1980: 11).

Indeed, Esslin's own terminology enjoyed a similar rush of popularity following the publication of *The Theatre of the Absurd*, as the phrase swiftly became a widely used, but often ill-defined, umbrella term applied to numerous disparate plays and playwrights of the mid to late twentieth century.

As a consequence, Esslin made several attempts, both in later editions of his initial monograph and in other subsequent studies of Absurd drama (e.g. Esslin 1965), to re-draw and re-emphasise the boundaries of his 'Theatre of the Absurd', describing the term as having become a 'catchphrase, much used and much abused' (Esslin 1965: 7).

He argues that

the term, coined to describe certain features of certain plays in order to bring out certain underlying similarities has been treated as though it corresponded to an organized movement, like a political party or a hockey team, which made its members carry badges and banners... The artists of an epoch have certain traits in common, but they are not necessarily conscious of them. Nor does the fact that they have these traits preclude them from being widely different in other respects.

(Esslin 1980: 12)

Esslin seems torn, then, between the need to demarcate and differentiate the Theatre of Absurd from other literary forms and the desire to broaden his grouping to encompass numerous stylistically and historically diverse texts. More recent developments in literary criticism would appear to suggest that the latter of these forces ultimately prevailed, as the term 'Absurd' has continued to be employed as a means of describing a vast array of both drama and prose fiction (see, for example, Brothers (1977) on Henry Green; Galloway (1970) on John Updike, Saul Bellow, J.D. Salinger and William Styron; Hauck (1971) on Herman Melville, Mark Twain, William Faulkner and John Barth; Hilfer (1992) on Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth and Vladimir Nabakov; Hinchliffe (1969) on, among others, Samuel Beckett, John Osborne, Tom Stoppard and Edward Albee; Ketterer (1978) on Kurt Vonnegut and Philip K. Dick; Miller (1967) on William Faulkner, Walt Whitman and Emily

Dickinson; Paolucci (1980) on Luigi Pirandello; Penner (1978) on Vladimir Nabakov; Safer (1983, 1989 and 1990) on Thomas Pynchon, Ken Kesey and John Barth; and Weinberg (1970) on, among others, Franz Kafka, John Hawkes and Joseph Heller). As the above list shows, in many of these latter studies of novels and short stories, the line drawn by Esslin between Existentialist and Absurdist forms becomes blurred, with realist texts such as Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), for example, often being categorised as 'Absurd' alongside more stylistically experimental works, such as Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963) (see, for example, Safer 1989).

Weinberg (1970), however, offers a useful formalisation of such apparent academic inconsistencies. Like Esslin, she distinguishes between those novels which convey Existentialist concerns through a conventional narrative structure and those which strive to achieve a more innovative expression of the absurdity of the human condition. In the former, realist category she includes Camus' (1942) *L'Etranger* and Sartre's (1938) *La Nausée*, as well as later works such as J.D. Salinger's (1951) *The Catcher in the Rye* and Bruce Friedman's *Stern* (1963). Weinberg goes on to explain:

These novels are informed by a vision of absurdity and have at their centre a passive, rationalistic, or hopelessly ineffectual victim-hero, dominated by his situation rather than creating or acting to change it. They have a more or less realistic surface, with somewhat surrealistic elements. Realism of detail, rather, underscores the madness of the world, its grotesque comedy.

(Weinberg 1970: 10)

Weinberg claims that, by contrast, in novels like Thomas Pynchon's (1963) *V*, Joseph Heller's (1961) *Catch-22* and John Barth's (1958) *The End of the Road*, the same philosophical themes that form the focus of the realist texts listed above are made manifest through what she terms a 'stylized absurd surface' (Weinberg 1970: 11). She goes on to explain:

The absurd surface exaggerates. Through exaggeration and repetitions; grotesqueries; unique, exotic, bizarre or strange symbols... the absurdity found in life is transcribed through surreal descriptions. Special surrealistic situations, too, are created to embody the

inexplicable; and somewhat common situations, such as those of war, are exaggerated and distorted to produce a heightened effect of the sort experienced in dreams.

(Weinberg 1970: 11)

Despite the somewhat incongruous description of war as a 'common situation' here, Weinberg's separation of Absurd prose fiction into two distinct categories, one realist and one non-realist, nevertheless provides a positive development of Esslin's original classification of Existentialist and Absurdist drama.

In particular, Weinberg's approach allows us to further differentiate between Absurd prose fiction and numerous other twentieth century novels which may also make use of a non-realist narrative structure. Although many novels of the last one hundred years or so may, for example, display a disrupted chronology, or contain surrealistic elements and situations, not all of them communicate the Existentialist unease which, according to Weinberg, must be present in order for a text to be considered truly Absurd. The novels selected for analysis in this thesis, then, each conform to the basic requirements of Weinberg's categories, although they display varying degrees of 'surface' Absurdism. Paul Auster's (1992) *The Music of Chance*, for example, examined in Chapter 3, can be seen to explore the possible futility of human existence within the constraints of a chronologically structured, realist narrative. The analysis of Emmanuel Carrère's (1998) novel *The Mustache* in Chapter 4, on the other hand, reveals a text which initially appears to be similarly mimetic, but becomes increasingly populated with surrealistic situations as the novel progresses. Flann O'Brien's (1993) *The Third Policeman* and Kurt Vonnegut's (1991) *Slaughterhouse-Five* (originally published in 1967 and 1969, respectively) present yet further significant challenges to the conventional literary forms described by Esslin (1980: 24). Both of these novels are also examined in Chapter 4. Finally, closing that chapter's series of detailed analyses is the novel with perhaps the most 'stylized absurd surface' (Weinberg 1980: 11) of all those

examined during the course of the thesis, Donald Barthelme's (1996) *Snow White*, originally published in 1967.

Together, these five texts represent a broad spectrum of Absurd prose fiction, not only in stylistic terms, but also in terms of the historical (from 1967 to 1992) and cultural (French, Irish and American) traditions they cover. As such, their selection enables the viability of Text World Theory as a stylistic methodology to be thoroughly tested against what can be seen as a gradually developing cline of literary experimentalism. Perhaps more than any other identifiable genre of contemporary prose fiction, the literature of the Absurd allows the development of Text World Theory to be pursued from its original application to realist texts through to the very limits of the novelistic form. Thus, within the necessarily limited scope of the current thesis, the texts chosen for detailed examination provide the most wide-ranging, yet systematically selected literary data possible through which the benefits and drawbacks of Werth's text world approach may finally be established.

## **1.2 The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Following the present preliminary discussion of the aims and parameters of the study, Chapter Two goes on to examine a range of academic disciplines and sub-disciplines which can be seen to have influenced the initial development of Text World Theory. The origins of Werth's framework are, firstly, traced to the field of possible worlds semantics, with a particular focus on the historical evolution of the notion of a 'world' in the traditions of both linguistics and philosophy. The later use of possible worlds in literary theory is also examined in order to establish the degree to which Werth's approach can be seen to correspond with, or indeed differ

from, those of other linguists and literary theorists working within the same worlds-based parameters. Chapter Two considers the field within which Werth saw his Text World Theory as being most firmly based: cognitive linguistics. More specifically, the notion of a 'world', both in that tradition and in the related field of cognitive psychology, is examined and discussed. The varying terminology used by a wide-range of cognitivists to refer to conceptual worlds, including 'mental representations', 'scripts' and 'schemata', 'cognitive models' and 'mental spaces', are all analysed in order to gain a detailed understanding of the fundamentally cognitive basis of Text World Theory.

With the central influences that inform Werth's framework thus established, Chapter Three of the thesis provides a comprehensive exposition of the main tenets of Text World Theory itself. Each of the three separate levels into which Werth's model is divided is examined in turn; from the discourse world, to the text world and, finally, the sub-world. Werth's own typical use of Text World Theory is also explained and exemplified in Chapter Three, with a discussion of Werth's notion of extended metaphor followed by a corresponding analysis of Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*, already mentioned in section 1.1 above. As well as presenting a detailed overview of Text World Theory as a whole, Chapter Three also begins the critical evaluation of the model which forms the main focus of the present study. In particular, certain problems in Werth's account of co-operation in discourse, spatial and temporal shifts in narrative, modality, and the representation of speech and thought in fiction are identified. Werth's relatively limited application of Text World Theory to short textual extracts, already briefly mentioned in section 1.0 above, along with the problems arising from his approach to extended metaphor, are also further discussed. Finally, possible solutions to

each of these flaws are put forward throughout Chapter Three for further testing and development in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Chapter Four forms the main bulk of the thesis, consisting of a series of detailed analyses of the text world structures of four entire Absurd novels. As already explained in section 1.1 above, these novels can be seen to provide the challenging literary data necessary to test the advantages and limits of the Text World Theory approach to discourse analysis in full. The chapter begins with an examination of Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, which focuses, in particular, on the numerous difficulties caused by the somewhat unreliable narrator of that text. The focalised nature of the narration also reveals further inconsistencies within Werth's framework. The application of Text World Theory to Emmanuel Carrère's *The Mustache* in section 4.2.0 continues the discussion of the problems raised in the preceding analysis and suggests certain modifications to Text World Theory as a possible solution. These modifications are then further tested and developed in section 4.3.0, in the analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. That section also addresses the questions surrounding Werth's notion of co-operation in discourse, raised earlier in Chapter Three of the thesis. The analysis of Donald Bartheleme's *Snow White*, in section 4.4.0, can be seen to bring each of the methodological issues raised throughout the chapter together in one final application of Text World Theory.

It is important to emphasise, at this point, that the limited scope of the present study means that, once again, certain methodological constraints have necessarily been placed on the text world applications which make up both the latter portion of Chapter Three and the whole of Chapter Four. For example, one possible approach towards the



validation of Text World Theory's claims to account for the way that real readers process real texts would have been to design a large-scale empirical reader-response survey. This could have involved comparing the results of 'thinking out loud' (TOL) protocols produced as a large number of readers read through the same literary text (see Steen 1994). These protocols could then be examined for key similarities and differences in terms of text world construction and development, in order to compare multiple responses and avoid the single subjectivity of just one reading. However, this particular methodological procedure need not necessarily be invoked in order to establish the validity of the central tenets of Text World Theory.

Although the readings contained in Chapter Three and Chapter Four are my own readings, they are produced not simply intuitively or impressionistically but as the end result of the analytical process of systematically applying the principles of Text World Theory. Furthermore, as is explained in section 2.2.2 of this thesis, these principles are to a great extent founded on those of cognitive psychology; an extensively empirically-tested discipline, discrete from literary study. My readings, then, are not the self-referential products of introspective speculation, but are directly derived from the established methodological authenticity of cognitive science. Of course, I fully recognise the existence of variant readings of the same texts and, where appropriate, give some discussion of their possible implications for Text World Theory. However, the analytical grounding of my own readings, and the detailed explication of my text world methodology which precedes them, allows a transparency of evidence to be achieved in this instance. It is, therefore, left to the reader of this thesis to confirm (or refute) the plausibility and centrality of my responses to the chosen texts according to

their own relative personal and cultural experiences (see section 3.1.2 for a further exposition of these ideas).

This statement, of course, implies a scale of possible readings. Indeed, my own response to the texts has already been identified as one of many central or likely readings. Relative to that category it is also possible to distinguish less likely readings, as well as those which are eccentric and, eventually, even unsupportable according to current psychological understanding. In effect, then, my readings can be seen to occupy the position of ‘ideal reader’ (Eco 1976 and 1981), or ‘super-reader’ to use Riffaterre’s (1956 and 1959) terminology, with the added proviso, stated above, that they are analytically derived. Furthermore, unlike the ideal or super-reader I do not claim access to and use all human knowledge, but specify precisely what knowledge informs my eventual conclusions (again, see section 3.1.2 for further discussion). In this sense, my readings, although not by any means objective, are not simplistically subjective either.

As Verdonk and Weber (1995) argue:

... the text world will be different for the writer and for each reader (since we all use different assumptions, values, beliefs and expectations in the processing of the text). This by the way is not exclusive to literary discourse, but applies to both literary and non-literary texts, simply because all representation through language is a constructive process. Nor can stylistics nullify the indeterminacy of meaning. What is important, however, is that with a stylistic methodology, this indeterminacy is neither ignored nor allowed to go wild but it is contained, for the stylistic methodology ensures that our reading is both explicit and replicable. It thus allows us to achieve in our reading, not scientific objectivity, but an intersubjective validity.

(Verdonk and Weber 1995: 2-3)

Many of the issues raised in this extract, such as the use of individual values and beliefs in the construction of a text world (see section 3.1.2), are discussed elsewhere in this thesis. For the moment, however, Verdonk and Weber’s comments are useful as a means of further emphasising the systematic basis of the text world applications and readings presented during the course of this study. Specifically, their essential foundations in an ‘explicit and replicable’ stylistic methodology, as Verdonk and Weber

put it, secure their position as intersubjective, rather than subjective, readings; fully transparent and available for inspection from any number of possible critical perspectives.

Chapter Five concludes the thesis with a complete overview of the problems within Werth's original framework that have been identified and addressed over the course of the preceding chapters. It also provides a detailed synopsis of each of the modifications that have been made to Text World Theory during this study. The essential elements of the resulting revised and developed model are then summarised and presented in a simplified form. Chapter Five also assesses the potential impact of the thesis on a range of academic disciplines, including linguistics, stylistics, cognitive science and literary theory. Some of the possible directions in which the present work may be expanded and developed in the future are also explored.

### **1.3 Further Implications**

The central aims and parameters of this thesis, to provide a critical exposition and development of Text World Theory through the application of the framework to a series of Absurd novels, have been clearly established over the course of the preceding paragraphs. However, it is also possible to identify a number of what might be termed 'academic by-products' arising from the present work which are worthy of further explication at this point. Perhaps most significant of these is the original contribution to literary criticism on Absurd prose fiction which results from the applications of Text World Theory in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. As already mentioned in section 1.2 above, abundant critical material developing Esslin's (1980) initial classification of drama into a means of describing certain narrative fiction already exists. However, none

of these existing studies approach their central subject matter from a linguistic standpoint. Indeed, those works that do make some degree of critical engagement with the language of Absurd prose fiction often do so in an ill-informed and unsystematic manner (Tanner's (1971: 81) discussion of language as 'another structure in which man can become trapped' provides a typical example). Even Weinberg's (1970) promising remodelling of Esslin's distinction between Existentialist and Absurdist drama falls short of a full explanation of the linguistic features of a typical 'stylized absurd surface' (Weinberg 1980: 11), remaining steadfastly fixed within the same impressionistic parameters which constrained Esslin's own account.

Furthermore, although a number of existing stylistic analyses have offered a more rigorous linguistic examination of certain Absurd novels than those presented in the literary criticism mentioned above (see, for example, Hidalgo Downing 2000, Simpson 1993 and 1997), these analyses are nevertheless limited to an examination of single works in isolation, rather than as part of a wider literary genre. The application of Werth's discourse model to a *collection* of Absurd works in the latter sections of this thesis can therefore be seen as the first instance of an extended analysis of the linguistic structure of Absurd narratives. Although by no means comprehensive, the observations made about the text world composition of each of the chosen texts constitute the first step towards a deeper understanding of the poetics of Absurdism as a whole. The use of Text World Theory, an essentially *cognitive* framework, to achieve that progression of our literary understanding can also be seen as a significant contribution to the emerging field of *cognitive poetics*.

This recent and highly innovative advance in the field of literary study has been developing at the interface between cognitive linguistics and literary theory since the early 1990s. Its practitioners are concerned with the application of cognitive theory to a range of literary subjects; from metaphor (e.g. Freeman, D. 1995, Freeman, M. 1997, Gibbs 1994, Steen 1994) to poetic structure (e.g. Tsur 1992, Semino 1997), from literary affect (e.g. Kuiken and Miall 1994, Miall 1989, Oatley 1994) to narrativity (e.g. Bridgeman 2001, Emmott 1997, Gerrig 1993, Stockwell 2000). Each of these highly individual studies can nevertheless be seen to be built on a common basic assumption that the thought properties central to the processing of literary texts also form the principal building-blocks of our understanding of the everyday world (see Stockwell 2002, and Gavins and Steen 2002, for a detailed overview of the discipline of cognitive poetics as a whole). As Mark Turner explains:

Although literary texts may be special, the instruments of thought used to invent and interpret them are basic to everyday thought. Written works called narratives or stories may be shelved in a special section of the bookstore, but the mental instrument I call narrative or story is basic to human thinking.

(Turner 1996: 7)

The present thesis is also constructed according to these basic cognitive poetic convictions, the origins of which are explored in further detail in section 2.2.3 of this study. As such, the exploration of the text world structures of complex literary texts which follows should also be considered as an investigation into the conceptual processes by which we negotiate our everyday lives.

## 2.0 Preview

This chapter examines the origins of and influences on Werth's initial development of Text World Theory. It examines a number of academic disciplines and sub-disciplines in order to establish the extent to which particular preceding frameworks and methodologies can be seen to have informed Werth's own approach to discourse study. More specifically, it focuses on the notion of a 'world', the primary component of Werth's model:

We all know what the world is, or we think we do. But are there other worlds? Are they the science-fiction writer's dream, or do they exist? And what about such expressions as 'the world of high finance', 'the world of the drug addict', 'the dream world', and so on? It seems that a world, even in day to day language, isn't just a ball of rock, gas and liquid spinning round some star somewhere, but is also used to refer to some complex state of affairs. We perceive some of the states of affairs as existing outside ourselves, and others as being entirely imaginary, cooked up in our heads, or in someone else's head... all these worlds are the product of our mental processes, even those which we think of as very real and concrete.

(Werth 1995a: 49)

As Werth points out here, the term 'world' is not only used to refer to the planet on which we live and those which surround us, but is also frequently employed as a convenient locational metaphor to enable us to talk about particular states of affairs. These states of affairs may be real or imagined, factual or hypothetical but, in either case, they will basically constitute a set of entities at a certain time and place and in certain relationships with one another. Werth's own employment of the 'worlds' metaphor to discuss these states of affairs can be more fully understood by first examining its presence in a number of other fields of study.

Firstly, Werth (1995b: 53, 1999: 68) acknowledges that any theory of ‘text worlds’ inevitably refers, however indirectly, to the theories of ‘possible worlds’ adopted by philosophers and logicians in the latter half of the twentieth century to help solve a number of logical and ontological problems. The initial sections of this chapter examine that relationship, with the aim of establishing the degree to which an understanding of the logic of possible worlds can provide an illuminating perspective on the mechanics of Text World Theory. Section 2.1.0 provides a brief overview of the origins and later development of the notion of ‘possible worlds’ in the fields of logic and philosophy. The more recent adaptation of possible worlds philosophy as a means of discussing literary fiction are then discussed in more detail in section 2.1.1. Werth’s own use of the ‘worlds’ metaphor in his discourse model is thus fully contextualised in relation to preceding applications of the ‘text as world’ analogy in the associated fields of narratology and literary theory.

Although Werth recognises the significant influence of possible worlds models on the logical structure of his and other ‘worlds’ frameworks, we have already seen in section 1.0 above that he explicitly situates Text World Theory within the discipline of cognitive linguistics (see also Werth 1999: 50). It is Werth’s central concern with human conceptual processes that sets his approach apart from those of possible worlds philosophers. The latter part of section 2.1.1 explores Werth’s eventual rejection of the possible worlds approach on the grounds of its inability to account for the complexity of human cognition and discourse processing. Section 2.2.0 then goes on to examine the alternative notion of ‘worlds’ presented within the tradition of cognitive science and linguistics. The precursors of contemporary cognitive linguistics are examined in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, while the work of Werth’s contemporaries is evaluated and

discussed in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4. The chapter as a whole can thus be seen to provide an initial reference point for numerous diverse concepts and their related terminology which recur throughout this thesis.

### **2.1.0 Possible Worlds**

The primary hypothesis of all possible worlds theories is that our actual world is only one of a number of possible worlds. The roots of this concept can be traced back as far as eighteenth century philosophical theology and the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in particular. In his text *The Monadology* (Leibniz 1985), originally written in 1713, Leibniz states:

Now, as in the Ideas of God there is an infinite number of possible universes, and as only one of them can be actual, there must be a sufficient reason for the choice of God, which leads Him to decide upon one rather than another. And this reason can be found only in the fitness, or in the degrees of perfection, that these worlds possess, since each possible thing has the right to aspire to existence in proportion to the amount of perfection it contains in germ. Thus the actual existence of the best that wisdom makes known to God is due to this, that His goodness makes Him choose it, and His power makes Him produce it.

(Leibniz 1985: 33-34)

According to Leibniz, then, God's mind eternally contains the ideas of infinite worlds which He could have chosen to create. However, since God chose to make *this* world actual, and since God is good, this must mean that the actual world, although there is much evil and suffering within it, is nonetheless the best of all possible worlds. More recently, Leibniz's concept of 'possible worlds' has been given a semantic, rather than theological, application. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, philosophers such as Jaako Hintikka (1967, 1979, 1989), Saul Kripke (1972, 1985), David Lewis (1972, 1973, 1983, 1986), Alvin Plantinga (1974, 1979) and Nicholas Rescher (1975, 1979) developed Leibniz's initial notion of 'possible worlds' as a means of solving a number of logical and ontological problems concerning, among other subjects, reference, denotation, modal properties and proper names.



A brief reconsideration of Russell's (1905) theory of descriptions, and his discussion of the clause '*the present King of France is bald*' in particular, reveals just one example of the importance of possible worlds semantics for the advancement of the philosophy of language. Russell points out that the clause contains a denoting phrase, '*the present King of France*', which has no referent in the actual world. As such, he argues, the phrase denotes nothing and any predication made about it (i.e. '*is bald*') must consequently be considered false. However, if we take an alternative possible worlds approach, accepting the notion that the actual world is only one of a multitude of possible worlds, we can easily imagine that '*the King of France*' might exist in one of them. Thus, the truth value of the predication made about him (i.e. that he is bald) may be assessed in relation to that world, rather than being immediately dismissed as necessarily false. Where traditional logic does not allow for the human ability to speculate and hypothesise, the multiple-world perspective proposed by possible worlds semantics accommodates the existence of non-actualised possible states of affairs and enables the extension of truth values to hypothetical entities and situations.

This extension is constrained by a number of logical conditions, however, a succinct explanation of which is provided by Semino (1997), based on the following propositions:

1. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.
  2. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1989.
  3. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 or it is not the case that Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.
  4. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 and it is not the case that Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.
- (Semino 1997: 58)

In relation to the actual world (1) and (2) can be said to be true and false respectively. The same can also be said of (3) and (4) respectively, only in these cases we do not need to refer to our knowledge of the actual world in order to make that distinction. Logic tells us that (3) will always be *necessarily true* and (4) will always be *necessarily*

*false*. Indeed, possible worlds semantics can be seen to provide a means of fully explicating the previously undefinable modal abstraction of ‘truth’. A proposition that is necessarily true can now be defined as *true in all possible worlds* and a proposition that is necessarily false can be defined as *false in all possible worlds*.

By the same reasoning, a proposition may also be *true in at least one possible world* but may not be true in all worlds. Sentence (1) above, then, is *possibly true*, since it is true at least in the actual world but may not be true in all worlds. The same applies to sentence (2), which is *possibly false*, since it is false in at least one world (the actual world) but may be true in another possible world. For a world to be possible it must also adhere to the rule of the ‘excluded middle’ (see Ronen 1994: 54 for a detailed explication). In essence, this constraint means that in any possible world, given a proposition  $p$ , either  $p$  or its opposite,  $not-p$ , must be the case. There can be no ‘middle ground’ in which neither  $p$  nor  $not-p$  obtains. In terms of our initial example clause taken from Russell, this means that, in a possible world in which the King of France exists, he must either be bald or not bald. A situation in which neither of these predications could be said to be true would constitute an impossible state of affairs.

The diverse philosophical approaches of the possible worlds theorists who make use of this basic logical machinery can be roughly divided into two main categories, according to the degree of realism they assign to the non-actualised states of affairs under discussion (see Ronen 1994: 21-24). The first of these categories, ‘modal realism’ (also known as ‘extreme realism’), is a radical philosophy of which David Lewis (1972, 1973, 1983, 1986) can be seen to be the central proponent. Lewis argues that every way in which a world could possibly be is a way that some world is, and conversely that no

world is any way that a world could not possibly be. The ‘ontological extravagance’ (Ronen 1994: 22) of Lewis’ approach, however, is apparent in his insistence that all these possible worlds are realised in some alternative logical space:

There are countless other worlds, other very inclusive things. Our world consists of all of us and all our surroundings, however remote in time and space; just as it is one big thing having lesser things as parts. The worlds are something like remote planets; except that most of them are much bigger than mere planets, and they are not remote.

(Lewis 1986: 2)

Lewis attributes physical existence to *all* possible states of affairs, both actual and non-actual. The term ‘actual world’ itself becomes highly subjective under this perspective, as the inhabitants of each possible world view their own world as the ‘actual’ one:

I suggest that ‘actual’ and its cognates should be analyzed as *indexical* terms: terms whose reference varies, depending on relevant features of the context of utterance. The relevant feature of context, for the term ‘actual’, is the world at which a given utterance occurs.

(Lewis 1983: 184-5)

When Lewis uses the term ‘actual world’, then, he does so as a means of specifying the deictic particulars of the world of which he considers himself to be a part and all other parts of it (his ‘worldmates’, as Lewis (1986: 92) puts it). When someone else uses the term, Lewis argues, whether that person be a worldmate of Lewis or an unactualised entity, then the term ‘actual world’ likewise applies to his or her own subjective view of the world and all its parts.

Lewis acknowledges that an acceptance of modal realist philosophy, or the entry into ‘a philosopher’s paradise’ as he puts it (Lewis 1986: 4), involves a considerable suspension of disbelief:

Modal realism *does* disagree, to a certain extent, with firm common sense opinion about what there is... When modal realism tells you – as it does – that there are uncountable infinities of donkeys and protons and puddles and stars, and planets very like Earth, and of cities very like Melbourne, and of people very like yourself, small wonder you are reluctant to believe it. And if entry into a philosopher’s paradise requires that you believe it, small wonder you find the price too high.

(Lewis 1986: 133)

He maintains, however, that, while his approach to possible worlds has been met with many incredulous stares, he has yet to encounter any convincingly argued objections to his perspective (Lewis 1973: 86, 1986: 133-134). According to Lewis' reasoning, then, the King of France may not only be *imagined* to exist, he actually *does* exist, physically, in another possible world. Indeed, to pursue Lewis' approach to its logical conclusion, countless kings of France must be attributed physical existence in countless other possible worlds. Some of these kings may be bald and some of them may not, some of them may be married and some may not, some of them like butter and some of them do not, and so on, and so on, since each of these separate states of affairs is perfectly possible.

In complete contrast to Lewis' radical views on the ontological status of possible worlds, however, 'moderate realism' (often also known as 'actualism') views possible worlds as existing only within the confines of the actual world. According to the proponents of this approach (including Kripke 1972 and 1985; Plantinga 1974 and 1979; and Rescher 1975 and 1979), the actual world is a complex structure containing both actual elements and non-actual possibilities. As Kripke states:

A possible world isn't a distant country that we are coming across, or viewing through a telescope. Generally speaking, another possible world is too far away. Even if we travel faster than light, we won't get to it. A possible world is given by the descriptive conditions we associate with it...

(Kripke 1972: 44)

Kripke and his fellow 'moderate realists', then, can be grouped together under that term according to their common assertion that possible worlds are not in fact actualised parallel entities, but exist only as the products of rational human behaviour. As Ronen explains:

The moderate realist, rejecting speculation about what happens in worlds unattached to our own, hence attributes possibilities to our world. Possible worlds yet produce explanations in modal contexts because they can be employed, for instance, to account for the meaning

of modal propositions as propositions true in possible worlds: modal propositions do not impose quantifying over nonexistents; they only require that we quantify over things similar to actualities.

(Ronen 1994: 22)

The rationalistic approach of moderate realism prevents an admission of the material existence of possibilities disconnected from the spatial and temporal parameters of our own actuality. According to this reasoning, possible alternative states of affairs can only exist as components of the actual world. McCawley (1981: 326), for example, suggests that such components may arise as the abstract constructs resulting from ‘world-creating predicates’, including verbs such as *to imagine*, *to believe*, *to dream* and *to suppose*. The use of any one of these examples in ordinary discourse can be seen to stipulate a possible world which, though it may differ in a number of ways from the state of affairs in the actual world, at the same time remains essentially connected to it.

Possible worlds philosophers in the moderate realist tradition can thus be seen to have focused their attention on the differences and similarities between possible worlds and the actualised state of affairs from which they originate, rather than on ‘the way things are’ in some physically realised, but unattached, possible world. With the basic logical machinery of possible worlds semantics thus established, alongside the key philosophical differences which set its various proponents apart, section 2.1.1 below examines more recent developments of possible worlds philosophy in the field of contemporary literary theory. Werth’s adoption of the ‘worlds’ metaphor as a means of discussing both literary and non-literary texts can thus be fully contextualised and understood through its comparison with related applications of the notion of possible worlds as a framework for literary semantic analysis.

### 2.1.1 Possible Worlds in Literary Theory

Following the initial development of Leibniz's notion of possible worlds in 1970s' logic and philosophy, possible worlds semantics can be seen to have undergone a further dramatic revitalisation in the late 1980s and 1990s, resulting from the adoption of its methods and terminology by a number of literary theorists and narratologists (see, for example, Doležel 1988, 1989 and 1995; Eco 1989; Hintikka 1989; Maître 1983; Pavel 1986; Ronen 1994; Ryan 1980, 1991 and 1998; Semino 1997). Ryan (1998) argues that the reasons behind, and further implications of, this apparent academic trend are best understood by its comparison with a contrasting but equally popular metaphor for the literary experience: 'the text as game' (Ryan 1998: 137). The use of this metaphor in postmodern aesthetics, Ryan explains, presupposes a model of literary texts as analogous either to the structured rules and activities of board games (a view favoured in structuralist poetics, see Culler 1975), or to the relatively unstructured forms of behaviour associated with playing, for example, with dolls or construction sets (see, for example, Derrida 1970).

However, Ryan argues that, while the 'textual-game' metaphor might provide a useful account of readers' desires for chaos and transgression in their experience of literature, the equally fundamental need for order and security remains unexplained under this perspective. She goes on to explain:

The world metaphor restores the legitimacy of such desires as gaining a comprehensive overview of the text, finding stable structures, experiencing the text as a welcoming space and habitable environment, feeling able to orient oneself in its landscape, being transported to the scene of the narrated events, and achieving intimacy with its inhabitants.

(Ryan 1998: 138)

For Ryan, then, an alternative view of literary texts as creating 'worlds', rather than 'games', is a more accurate analogy for the reading experience, which she describes elsewhere as the sense of becoming completely 'immersed in a fiction' (Ryan 1991: 21)

(see also Gerrig 1993 for a similar view, although expressed from the perspective of cognitive psychology). Possible worlds semantics, of course, provides just such a metaphor, by which the reader's apparent transportation into an alternative time and space might be more systematically discussed.

Indeed, Ryan's emphasis on the highly realistic nature of the readerly experience might seem, on first encounter, to fit quite neatly into Lewis' modal realist approach to possible worlds semantics, described in section 2.1.0 above. A more detailed examination, however, reveals Ryan's careful maintenance of the link between the actual world and the fictional alternatives created from within its boundaries:

To speak of a textual world means to draw a distinction between a realm of language, made of names, definite descriptions, sentences and propositions, and an extra-linguistic realm of characters, objects, facts and states of affairs serving as a referent to the linguistic expressions.

(Ryan 1998: 139)

Although Ryan stresses the all-engrossing qualities of literary fiction, then, the objects and entities contained within the fictional world nevertheless exist only as the abstract mental constructs of linguistic reference in the actual world. This attitude to the ontological status of possible worlds is, of course, far more in keeping with the moderate realist approach of Kripke, Plantinga and colleagues than with Lewis' radical perspective. According to Ryan, fictional worlds instigate a 'recentering' (Ryan 1991: 22) of the reader's notions of possibility and actuality into the sphere of an alternative possible world, which the narrator presents as the actual world for the duration of our submergence in the text. The *real* actual world, however, continues to constitute the central reference point in relation to which the possibility of all other worlds is determined. The main focus of Ryan's attention is the degree of *accessibility* between these separate worlds. This is a notion which is difficult to detach from that of *possibility*; indeed, Kripke (1972) introduces accessibility and possibility as equivalent

concepts (see also Lewis 1973: 52-56 and Van Dijk 1977: 30). Accessibility can, however, be more specifically defined in logic as *relative possibility*.

Ryan's (1980, 1991) own schematisation of the degree of accessibility between the actual world and fictional worlds, for example, is carried out according to certain correspondence factors. These include known physical objects, chronology, natural laws and language. The more of these factors a fictional world shares in common with the actual world, the more accessible it will be. Furthermore, Ryan introduces a 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan 1991: 48) to limit the divergence of the fictional possible world from the state of affairs in the actual world to those differences actually specified by the text:

We construe the world of fiction and of counterfactuals as being the closest possible to the reality we know. This means that we will project upon the world of the statement everything we know about the real world, and that we will only make those adjustments which we cannot avoid.

(Ryan 1980: 406)

This principle is most easily explained through its application to a fictional text. Consider the following extracts, from John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* and George Orwell's *1984*, respectively:

(1) The closest that Owen Meany and I could get to love was a front-row seat at The Idaho. That Christmas of '57, Owen and I were fifteen; we told each other that we'd fallen in love with Audrey Hepburn, the shy bookstore clerk in *Funny Face*, but we *wanted* Hester. What we were left with was a sense of how little, in the area of love, we must be worth. We felt more foolish than Fred Astaire, dancing with his own raincoat.

(Irving 1989: 293)

(2) It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the doors of Victory mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

(Orwell 1949: 7)

Text (1) specifies the existence of several non-actual entities in the fictional world, including the characters of the narrator, Owen Meany, and Hester, as well as the cinema The Idaho. The reader may still assume, however, that the rest of the fictional world



remains identical to the actual world, as no other points of departure are mentioned. Indeed, such an intuition is reinforced by the mention of Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire, whose names may be assumed to refer to the same film stars with whom we are familiar in the actual world. The fictional world of text (2) also contains a non-actual entity, Winston Smith, but, in Ryan's terms, is less accessible from the actual world than the fictional world of text (1) as it does not share the same time system; as is textually-specified in the line 'and the clocks were striking *thirteen*'.

It is possible, however, to identify a number of flaws in Ryan's typology of fictional worlds. From within the wider field of possible worlds semantics, Eco (1989) argues that the majority of Ryan's work is based on a naïvely unproblematic view of the ontological status of the actual world. For Eco, attributing ontological stability to the actual world is highly problematical and he points out that the identification of this conflict has resulted in a long-running pre-occupation for many philosophers with questions such as what determines the relation of one world being possible relative to another, and according to what criteria is this relative possibility settled? (See also Goodman 1978.) It is possible, then, to identify a significant split between those literary theorists whose interest in possible worlds centres mainly around the question of the ontological status of fictional entities and the worlds they inhabit (e.g. Doležel 1988, 1989 and 1995; Eco 1989; Hintikka 1989; Pavel 1986), and those whose more selective use of possible worlds forms part of a wider theory of narratology (e.g. Maître 1983; Ryan 1980, 1991 and 1998; Semino 1997). Indeed, Ronen (1994: 69) observes that, despite their ardent criticisms of traditional logic and equally enthusiastic advocacy of a multiple-world approach, the vast majority of literary theorists of fictionality who

purport to employ the logic of possible worlds make use of the discipline's terminology, while ignoring many of its more problematic philosophical concerns.

Even overlooking her lack of engagement with the deeper questions facing possible worlds philosophy, further problems can be identified within Ryan's specifications for her 'principle of minimal departure'. The assertion that all readers will construe the world of fiction as 'being the closest possible to the world we know' (Ryan 1980: 406) until any further departure is mentioned, disregards the possibility that readers may operate according to a modified set of world-rules when encountering fictional texts. Is it really the case that practised twenty-first century readers, accustomed to the quite frequently non-realist tradition of contemporary fiction in particular, will nevertheless approach each text expecting a high level of convergence with the real world? What about the readers of science-fiction and fantasy, for example? Surely it is conceivable that prior knowledge of the genre of the literary text at hand might alter one's realist world-assumptions at least to some degree. Some of Werth's own criticisms of possible worlds semantics in general would also seem to apply to Ryan's typology of narrative fiction, with both the motivation for, and the end-products of, her analyses being particularly questionable. Discussing Lewis, Werth argues that the specification of the degree of accessibility between possible worlds 'amounts to a justification for being able to designate a world as being closer or farther away from another world, without providing anything like an explanation of what this would imply psychologically or functionally' (Werth 1999: 70). Ryan's application of possible worlds semantics to narrative fiction appears to be similarly inconsequential, since she at no time elaborates on the wider implications of identifying one particular narrative world as being more or less accessible from the actual world than any other.

In terms of possible worlds semantics as a whole, although Werth acknowledges the usefulness of the ‘worlds’ metaphor which lies at the heart of its philosophy, he takes issue with the general failure of the approach to extend its definition of a world beyond ‘an arrangement of objects, individuals or things having various properties and standing in various relations to one another’ (Bradley and Swartz 1979: 7). Even Ryan develops her notion of what actually constitutes a world little beyond her list of ‘characters, objects, facts and states of affairs’ (Ryan 1998: 139). Literary theorists’ adoption of the minimalistic definition of ‘worlds’ offered by possible worlds semantics can therefore be seen to result in what Werth argues is ‘a simplification of the notion of a situation’ (Werth 1999: 79-80). As Kripke points out, ‘possible worlds are *stipulated*’ (Kripke 1972: 44), and for a specific reason, as Werth explains:

Possible worlds contain just those elements which will make the truth-conditions under scrutiny come out right. This means that they are both over-specific and under-specified. They are over-specific because they are ‘tailormade’ to a single proposition; they are under-specified because as worlds go, they are minimalistic, containing none of the complexity of anything speakers would recognise as a world.

(Werth 1999: 70)

Werth (1981: 19) compares the structure of possible worlds to those of mathematical sets, pointing out that their contents are nominated for the purposes of analysis and that the conditions placed upon them are the ordinary conditions of logic (i.e. that possible worlds cannot be self-contradictory). Werth also claims that a fundamental difference exists between a logician’s motivation for invoking the concept of ‘worlds’ and his own. He argues that possible worlds semantics

is claiming nothing more than to be able to study the logical relationships obtaining, given a tightly defined model. What it does not do is to look at the assessment of actual truth in that world... I think this is where people who are interested in language and people who are interested in logic part company. Non-logicians tend to be interested in actual truth, i.e. what is true in an actual situation, rather than what might in theory be true.

(Werth 1999: 72)

Since he claims that Text World Theory is intended to provide a model of real language, involving real people, in real situations, producing and processing real discourse, Werth

necessarily finds himself at odds with the basic aims and interests of the majority of possible worlds philosophers. He adds:

The principal problem... is that... [possible worlds philosophers] simplify by *reducing the content* of their basic units in order to be able to formalise them rigorously. They are, thus, content-free by comparison with what people normally experience as situations and have no more contact with real situations than an algebraic formula.

(Werth 1999: 80)

He also argues that his own text world framework succeeds in producing a similarly rigorous formalisation, without restricting the world-content beyond what people *do* normally recognise and experience as a real situation.

Werth regards the strictly defined and rigorous nature of the possible worlds approach to both logic and narratology to be both its strength and its weakness. The minimalistic notion of worlds presented by modal and moderate realists, as well as by literary theorists who adopt their methods and terminology, may render the objects under scrutiny transparent and manageable, but the resulting model has nothing of the complexity of a real situation and, as such, is of limited use within a theory of discourse processing. Werth states:

... when non-logicians are faced with... [possible worlds semantics'] description of a 'world' or a 'model', they find it trivial, because it is so minimal... what we actually need, rather than a minimal world, or model, like that, is what has been called a **rich model**. We need a way of talking about states of affairs in something like their normal richness and complexity.

(Werth 1999: 72)

The rest of this chapter turns to an investigation of cognitive science and linguistics in order to discern whether Werth was able to find the methodological tools necessary for the construction of this 'rich model' of real language situations within the conceptual models its proponents offer.

## 2.2.0 Conceptual Worlds

The crucial point at which Text World Theory and possible worlds semantics diverge has been identified, in section 2.1.1 above, as the fundamental difference between what possible worlds and Werthian worlds contain. While the situations presented and analysed by possible worlds semanticists are strictly defined, and primarily non-epistemic in nature, Werth's central concern is with the *conceptual* worlds that speakers and listeners, and writers and readers, are responsible for creating during the production and reception of discourse. As far as Werth is concerned, these worlds are mental representations which are as richly detailed as our direct experience of, and interaction with, the real world. As Werth explains:

... conceptual space is modelled upon physical space. Most directly, this concerns our mental representations of places and routes: finding our way through the physical world reported by our senses must depend on mental maps. Mental maps, in turn, are built up not only from what we can perceive on any single occasion, but also on our memory of previous occasions, our knowledge of similar situations, and inferences we can draw between all of these sources.

(Werth 1999: 7)

The remainder of this chapter examines the cognitivist disciplines which inform the essentially conceptual nature of Werth's worlds, and to which Werth explicitly attaches his own text world framework. Of particular interest are those notions of conceptual space, reasoning and understanding, and the storage and retrieval of knowledge, presented in both contemporary cognitive linguistics and its precursors and described by Werth above.

In order to begin the investigation into cognitive models of human understanding at their point of origin, the knowledge structures suggested within both Artificial Intelligence research and the related field of schema theory are examined in section 2.2.1. The theories of mental representations emerging from within cognitive psychology are then explored in section 2.2.2. There, a particular focus is placed on the

work of Philip Johnson-Laird (1983, 1988), whose ‘mental models’, Werth (1999: 74) claims, are most closely related to his own text worlds. The ideas presented in each of these fields are then traced through to their more recent development in cognitive linguistics, the central proponents and approaches of which are discussed in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4. The remainder of this chapter thus provides a detailed exposition of the conceptual models from which Werth draws the greatest influence for his text world framework.

### 2.2.1 Scripts and Schemata

Schema theory has its origins in the Gestalt psychology of the 1920s and '30s. Its basic assertion is that new experiences, both sensory and linguistic, are understood by means of comparison to a stereotypical model, based on similar experiences and held in memory. New experience is evaluated in terms of its conformity to, or deviation from, that model or *schema*. A concise definition of schemata is provided by Rumelhart and Ortony:

Schemata are data structures for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. They exist for generalized concepts underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, and sequences of actions.

(Rumelhart and Ortony 1977: 101)

Schema theory, in its contemporary form, is most frequently cited as deriving from the work of British psychologist Frederick Bartlett and his seminal text *Remembering* (1932) in particular.

In a series of experiments, Bartlett asked a number of subjects to recall visual and textual material after longer and longer periods of time. Observing the changes made to a North American folk tale during this process, Bartlett noted that the majority of his subjects tended to omit or rationalise events and details which did not fit their personal

expectations of the story. Many only remembered those parts of the story most relevant to their own life experiences and connections not stated in the text were explicitly made in his subjects' reproductions, along with added details often showing similarities with other stories more familiar to the reader. The results of Bartlett's tests supported the Gestalt hypothesis that human text processing is based on discourse schemata, which allow only important details to be selected while default elements are filled in automatically. However, Bartlett's approach to the study of mental processing relied heavily on introspection and his discoveries were soon to be eclipsed in the late 1930s by behaviourism, the central doctrine of which is described by J.B. Watson (1913):

Psychology as the behaviourist views it is a purely objective natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behaviour. Introspection forms no essential part of its method nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness.

(Watson 1913: 158)

The development of research into Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the 1970s, however, instigated a massive revival of interest in schema theory. The origins of AI are usually traced back to Alan Turing, who first proposed a test for determining the 'intelligence' of a machine based on its responses to random questions from a human being. In the AI boom which followed, it quickly became evident that a computer would need a vast store of knowledge in order to be able to replicate human cognition. Just how this knowledge store would be organised and deployed presented AI scientists with a considerable problem. The most promising solution to this, the knowledge 'frame', was suggested first by Marvin Minsky (1963, 1975) and later developed by Roger Schank and Robert Abelson (1977) in their work on 'scripts', 'plans' and 'goals'. Numerous other explorations into schema-based cognition were carried out throughout the 1970s and 1980s, most notably by David Rumelhart (Rumelhart 1975, Rumelhart and Ortony 1977, Rumelhart 1980), Robert de Beaugrande (1980) and Teun van Dijk (1980).

However, Schank and Abelson's framework remains the most influential investigation of its era and, as such, will be the main focus of this section.

According to Schank and Abelson, human cognition is structured around 'scripts': knowledge stores corresponding with Minsky's notion of frames, containing information about familiar types of events and situations. They further define a script as

a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context. A script is made up of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots... Scripts handle stylized everyday situations... a script is a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation.

(Schank and Abelson 1977: 41)

These stereotyped sequences, Schank and Abelson argue, are what allow us to understand texts such as:

John went into the restaurant. He asked the waitress for a coq au vin. He paid the check and left.

(Schank and Abelson 1977: 38)

The narrator of the above story need not describe every minute detail of the situation, but assumes instead that his or her listener or reader is familiar with the script to which the story makes reference and will understand the narrative as long as crucial details are mentioned. The referenced script in this case is that which has become famously known as the RESTAURANT script, which contains our expectations of service, ordering, paying, and so on. The frequent use of the definite article in the example above (*the waitress, the check*) shows that these elements are implicitly introduced as soon as the script is initiated.

Schank and Abelson (1977: 61-66) detail three different types of script: 'situational', 'personal', and 'instrumental'. The RESTAURANT script falls under the situational heading, as would going to the pub, taking the bus or going to a football match. Personal scripts tend to have character roles which people adopt as the occasion arises,



and include such examples as JEALOUS SPOUSE, FLIRT, GOOD SAMARITAN, and so on. Some examples of instrumental scripts are LIGHTING A CIGARETTE, STARTING A CAR, BUTTERING BREAD, and any other action which requires knowledge of how to achieve a particular physical objective. Each of these three types of script is activated by a 'header', or direct reference to an entity or action associated with the script. Schank and Abelson (1977: 48-50) specify four types of header as follows:

- Precondition headers – references to a precondition necessary for the application of a script, e.g. *John was hungry.*
- Instrumental headers – references to actions that are a means towards the realisation of a script, e.g. *John took the bus to the restaurant.*
- Locale headers – references to a location normally associated with a script, e.g. *John went to the football ground.*
- Internal Conceptualisation headers – references to an action or role from a script, e.g. *The waitress came over to the table.*

In order for a script to be fully instantiated, Schank and Abelson (1977: 47) argue that at least two elements associated with it must occur, specifically a header and one other element. For example, in the story quoted above, the need for the RESTAURANT script is initially indicated with the Locale header 'restaurant'. The script is then fully instantiated with the Internal Conceptualisation header 'waitress', from which point the reader can proceed in making sense of the story by relating it to his or her knowledge of typical restaurant scenarios. However, had the story read, 'John went into the restaurant and later to the park', the RESTAURANT script would not have been fully instantiated as the lack of a second header indicates that background knowledge of restaurants is not of

central importance in understanding this particular text. Schank and Abelson refer to such instances as 'fleeting scripts'(Schank and Abelson 1977: 46).

The theoretical notion of a 'plan' is introduced in Schank and Abelson's model to account for how people make sense of seemingly unconnected sentences when processing discourse. They explain:

By finding a plan, an understander can make guesses about the intentions of an action in an unfolding story and use these guesses to make sense of the story.

(Schank and Abelson 1977: 70)

Plans, then, are more generalised than scripts and enable us to connect a particular goal state with the possible actions necessary to achieve it. Furthermore,

plans are where scripts come from. They compete for the same role in the understanding process, namely as explanations of sequences of actions that are intended to achieve a goal. The difference is that scripts are specific and plans are general. Both are necessary in any functioning system.

(Schank and Abelson 1977: 72)

'Goals', on the other hand, provide an explanation for aims and objectives themselves. They are schemata containing knowledge of people's possible motivations for the behaviour enacted through scripts and plans. In our initial story, for example, John follows his RESTAURANT script with the aim of satisfying his hunger. Further possible goals are identified by Schank and Abelson (1977: 112-117), including enjoyment, achievement and preservation.

Schank and Abelson's framework was originally formulated solely for the purpose of providing AI research with a working model of human knowledge structures on which to base their experiments. More recently, however, schema theory has been adopted as a means of analysing literary texts, most notably by Guy Cook (1994) (see also Cockcroft 2002, Culpeper 2001, and Semino 1997). Cook proposes a shift in focus in literary theory, from analysis restricted to textual structure to a consideration of the interaction

between the text and the reader's knowledge of the world. He attempts to define literariness as the process by which a text presents such a challenge to the reader's expectations that he or she is forced to abandon established schemata in favour of new, 'refreshed' ones. Cook further argues that the schema 'disruption' and 'refreshment' caused by literary texts differs from the effects of other often textually deviant discourse, such as advertising. He claims that advertising relies on the shared world-view of its audience which it actively seeks to reinforce rather than disrupt.

There are numerous striking flaws in Cook's argument. As has been pointed out by Semino (1997), his approach tends towards the assumption that all literary texts are innovative and challenging:

A high degree of discourse deviation... may well be the distinguishing feature of works that are considered prototypically literary (although this is probably more true of poems than of novels or plays). On the other hand, it is also true that discourse deviation is not limited to literature, and that not all texts that are considered to be literary display discourse deviation.

(Semino 1997: 154)

For Cook, the boundaries between the literary and non-literary seem all too clear and appear to be drawn along medium-specific lines. He takes no account of the conceptual blur between the discourse of advertising, literature, music, and the internet, pervasive in consumer-driven Western society. Semino proposes an alternative view, in which texts regarded as literary range on a continuum, from schema reinforcement at one end to schema refreshment at the other. This adaptation, however, does not address some of the more fundamental problems involved in a schema theory approach to literary analysis.

Many of the flaws in both Cook's work and in Semino's own application of schema theory to poetry stem from the understated difference between the agenda of AI

researchers on the one hand and that of literary theorists on the other. As I have already pointed out above, Schank and Abelson's model of human cognition was not intended as a psychological account of neurological activity, but rather as a working model on which to base a particular computer program. This fact alone renders any wholesale, unquestioned adoption of the theory as a means of explaining real-life human discourse processing theoretically unstable to say the least. Some attempt has been made to prove the existence of schematic processing patterns in discourse, most notably by Derek Edwards (1997), in his assessment of extracts of real talk. However, empirical studies of schema-based language processing remain somewhat rare.

Even if one accepts the hypothesis that human cognition is schema-driven, the model proposed by Schank and Abelson is not sufficiently detailed to explain why, for example, when following a RESTAURANT script, an actor may use any number of different ways of, say, greeting a waitress, or ordering roast chicken. Choice of utterance is not accounted for in any AI framework or in subsequent applications of the theory to discourse. Furthermore, in a dyadic exchange (diner-waitress, for example) schema theory can only account for the process experienced by either one or the other participant. It does not explain their *interaction*, let alone why and how they might share the same schemata. Finally, both in AI and in literary theory, the labelling of schemata appropriate to individual situations is apparently carried out on an entirely *ad hoc* basis. In a manner similar to that employed by possible worlds theorists, schemata are plucked, seemingly from thin air, to suit the discourse under scrutiny. This practice is apparent in its most exaggerated form in Jonathan Culpeper's (2001: 265-285) analysis of schema refreshment in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Culpeper argues that the reader has a SHREW schema, which is challenged by the development of Katherina's

character, forcing an eventual re-evaluation not only of Katherina's perceived personality but of the reader's own stereotyped mental image of shrews. The idea that every reader has had enough encounters with shrews in order to form such a knowledge structure is questionable in itself, not to mention the consequent differences that are inferred to exist between one's SHREW schema and one's RAT, MOLE, OR MOUSE schemata (see also Fodor 1975 and 1981 for a related discussion). Culpeper's analysis can be seen to typify a wider tendency in literary theory to use schemata to add apparent scientific weight to what are actually little more than highly subjective readings of texts. Schema labels are attached after the fact, and, indeed, schema theorists themselves seem unable to formalise the model beyond this point. This raises a fundamental question: if schema theory is not predictive, what exactly is it a theory of?

Despite schema theory's numerous psychological and methodological flaws, however, its equivalent notions of frames, scripts and schemata have been enormously influential in the fields of cognitive science and linguistics. They continue to provide a common-sense framework for the discussion of the structures and processes of human knowledge storage and retrieval, for which, as Edwards (1997) has shown, there appears to be significant evidence in natural language. The influence of AI and schema theory's concepts of scripts and schemata on Werth's work is particularly evident in his attempts to systematise speakers' and hearers' (as well as writers' and readers') deployment of previously stored, wider knowledge during the discourse process. This area of Text World Theory is discussed in detail in section 3.1.2 of this thesis. The next section of this chapter, however, moves on to examine the related field of cognitive psychology and the importance of the conceptual models it proposes for Werth's own formulation of his text world approach.

### 2.2.2 Mental Representations

Cognitive psychology can be seen to have developed almost in parallel to AI research and schema theory, emerging from the shadows of behaviourism at around the same time. There are many crossovers between the disciplines, yet I have chosen to examine them separately because of their fundamentally differing aims and emphases. While schema theorists have concentrated on the study of knowledge systems with the explicit aim of replicating human behaviour, cognitive psychologists, while employing many of the same metaphors and methodologies as their AI counterparts, have something of a reverse objective. This is most easily explained through an examination of some of the main tenets of cognitive psychology.

Cognitive psychology, according to Glass *et al* (1979: 2), 'is the study of knowledge and how people use it'. However, rather than attempting to understand cognition solely in order to create a computer program with processes and reactions identical to those of a human being, cognitive psychologists have also used knowledge of computer systems in order to try and understand human cognition. Werth explains the fruitfulness of the computer as a metaphor for the human mind:

... minds are not computers, but both minds and computers are examples of something more general: information-processing systems.

(Werth 1999: 28)

The relationship between cognitive psychology and computer science is reciprocally productive. In particular, comparisons have been made between human cognition and the computer processing system known as 'parallel distributed processing' (see Johnson-Laird 1988, Lindsay and Norman 1972, Martindale 1991), which is also sometimes referred to as 'connectionism'.

As Werth himself notes (Werth 1999: 28), in recent years computer technology has developed at a startling rate, with central processing capacity doubling approximately every twelve months. As a result, a number of problems with serial processing have become increasingly evident. In a serial processing system, all information has to pass through a central processing unit, which can result in a bottleneck effect, slowing the computer down. A number of methods have been tried to counteract the problem, for the most part concentrating on the production of faster central processors to cope with demand. An alternative structure has been suggested, however, in which the processing load is spread across a great number of smaller chips, each performing a simple task. As Johnson-Laird (1988: 174) points out, 'The power of the system comes from how the units are connected'. The parallel distributed structure, it is argued, is similar to that of the neural networks of the brain, with the separate simple processors being 'a little like idealized brain cells' (Johnson-Laird 1988: 174), and the connections between them bearing resemblance to human synapses (see Fodor and Pylyshyn 1988 for an opposing view).

The connectionist model has proven particularly useful to psychologists attempting to explain the process of knowledge retrieval (e.g. Lindsay and Norman 1972, Johnson-Laird 1988, Rumelhart 1998). Lindsay and Norman (1972: 142) use, as an example, the word 'red', partly obscured by ink blots. The human brain, they argue, is still able to recognise the word, even though it is not receiving complete information from external senses. According to the connectionist model, then,

cues can be matched simultaneously to all the contents of memory, like sticking knitting needles through a pack of punched cards... each possible word is represented by a separate processing unit. Likewise, each letter at each position in a word is represented by a separate unit. The units are small-scale processors that are connected to each other and that compute in parallel.

(Johnson-Laird 1988: 176)

The unit representing the word 'red' will be excited by those units representing 'r' in the first position, 'e' in the second, and 'd' in the third. Although other units will respond to those letters in similar positions (e.g. rag, rod, bed, and so on) no word will be as active as the appropriate unit 'red'.

Cognitive psychology is by no means limited to the comparison of computer processing and human thought, however. Throughout the discipline, emphasis is placed firmly on human, rather than artificial, perception and experience. Of central interest to cognitive psychologists is how the human mind *stores* the knowledge it receives as a result of everyday interactions in the real world. More importantly, unlike schema theory, cognitive psychology is concerned with exactly how that knowledge is *represented*. A differentiation is made between two modes of representation: analog and analytic. The first of these, 'analog representation', is explained by Glass *et al* by comparison to a common example, a map. They explain:

A map is an essentially analog representation of the territory it represents because in some important ways the map actually resembles the territory. Consider a map of North America. For every point in North America there is a corresponding point on the map. And for certain important relations between points in North America - direction and distance - there are corresponding relations between points on the map.

(Glass *et al* 1979: 7)

Glass *et al* also make the point that not all of the available information will be present in an analog representation, but that the representation can be as abstract or as detailed as its purpose requires it to be. Analog mental representations are holistic, however. Our memories of faces, locations, sensations, and complex actions are stored as perceptual wholes. The best example of the second type of mental representation proposed by cognitive psychology, 'analytic code', is language, and our use of words as names for objects and concepts in particular. Indeed, the majority of codes are represented in our minds analytically. Unlike analog representations, analytic code does not usually bear a



resemblance to the item it represents. The relationship between the code and the objects and concepts to which it relates is arbitrary.

Johnson-Laird (1983) explores the nature of mental representations further in his attempt to provide a psychological explanation of syllogistic reasoning. He argues against the idea that humans have an internal logic to which they refer in order to perform everyday deductive reasoning, as exemplified below:

Any point on which a player serves out of turn is a 'let'.  
A player served out of turn on this point.  
Hence, this point is a 'let'.

(Johnson-Laird 1983: 72)

According to Johnson-Laird (1983: 10), 'human beings understand the world by constructing working models of it in their heads'. The implications of this premise are best explained through example. Consider the following propositions:

All of the artists are beekeepers.  
All of the beekeepers are chemists.

(Johnson-Laird 1983: 94)

Are all the artists chemists? Johnson-Laird argues that, in order to answer this question, human beings construct a mental representation containing elements that stand for the members of the sets described above. He explains this construction in terms of actors playing particular roles:

... every person acting as an artist is also instructed to play the part of a beekeeper, and, since the first premise is consistent with there being beekeepers who are not artists, that role is assigned to other actors, who are told that it is uncertain whether or not they exist.

(Johnson-Laird 1983: 94-95)

The structure of the resulting mental model can be displayed in tableau form:

artist	=	beekeeper
artist	=	beekeeper
artist	=	beekeeper
		(beekeeper)
		(beekeeper)

There are three actors playing joint roles, plus two actors playing beekeepers who are not artists. The tableau can then be extended to include the second premise, ‘all the beekeepers are chemists’:

artist	=	beekeeper	=	chemist
artist	=	beekeeper	=	chemist
artist	=	beekeeper	=	chemist
		(beekeeper)	=	(chemist)
		(beekeeper)	=	(chemist)
				(chemist)

The actors playing beekeepers are instructed to take on the additional role of chemists and an arbitrary number of new actors, just playing chemists, are also introduced. Again, this final type may or may not exist. With the mental model complete, it is easy to see that all the artists are indeed chemists.

Johnson-Laird claims that all human cognition is based on the same process of mental model construction, and he goes on to specify their analog form:

... a natural mental model of discourse has a structure that corresponds directly to the state of affairs that the discourse describes.

(Johnson-Laird 1983: 125)

He further argues that the psychological processes involved in the comprehension of both factual and fictional assertions are the same (Johnson-Laird 1983: 430), and he details the wider significance of the mental models employed throughout natural discourse:

... mental models play a central and unifying role in representing objects, states of affairs, sequences of events, the way the world is, and the social and psychological actions of everyday life. They enable individuals to make inferences and predictions, to understand phenomena, to decide what action to take and to control its execution, and above all to experience events by proxy; they allow language to be used to create representations comparable to those deriving from direct acquaintance with the world.

(Johnson-Laird 1983: 397)

It is useful, at this point, to compare the final description of mental models given above to the minimalistic definition of worlds presented in possible worlds semantics. If mental models are ‘comparable to... direct acquaintance with the world’, presumably

this must mean that they include not only ‘an arrangement of objects, individuals or things having various properties and standing in various relations to one another’ (Bradley and Swartz 1979: 7), but also the more abstract details associated with our real world experiences, including smell, taste, touch, memory, emotion, and so on. It would seem that Johnson-Laird’s conceptual models contain exactly the sort of ‘richness’ that Werth found so lacking in possible worlds theories. Indeed, Werth makes explicit the usefulness of Johnson-Laird’s framework in terms of his own project:

I will assume... that text worlds are in fact mental models constructed in the process of a given discourse.

(Werth 1999: 74)

While Werth undoubtedly finds the detailed nature of mental models attractive, to the extent that he establishes this direct connection between mental models and his own text worlds, Werth remains unsatisfied with Johnson-Laird’s failure to apply his framework to real texts. Indeed, this is a criticism that has been echoed in relation to cognitive psychology in general.

Edwards (1997), for example, identifies a trend within the discipline to restrict analysis to, and thus to draw unstable conclusions from, artificial examples of thought and language. He explains:

The justifications that psychology has offered for dealing with idealizations of thought and language include an extension of Chomsky’s worries about performance; the world of everyday, ordinary activities is considered much too messy and inconsistent to model or predict.

(Edwards 1997: 4)

Edwards goes on to argue that the idealised language favoured by Chomsky was attractive to psychologists mainly because of Chomsky’s own triumph over behaviourism, with which the psychologists could greatly identify. He claims that cognitive psychology has simplified human language and behaviour in the mistaken belief that that is the only way to see how it works. Edwards argues that, although

dealing with simplifications, its practitioners have not felt the need to worry about the gap between their studies and the real world, so long as the real world works on the same principles:

It has generally been assumed, outside of conversation analysis, that we know what talk is like – and that we know it well enough to invent our own examples of it, or simulations of it, and treat those synthetic objects as worthy of analysis, or as illustrations of theoretical models.

(Edwards 1997: 87)

Furthermore, Edwards suggests that the resulting approach, and specifically its simplistic notion of ‘human beings and animals as a kind of box with input and output’ (Hamlyn 1990: 8), actually bears a striking resemblance to the behaviourism it was designed to replace, precisely because it was designed to replace it:

The adoption of the input-process-output model of cognition was driven not only by the available computer metaphor (with its various input and output devices mediated by a central information processor running rules and representations software), but by the rhetorical requirement that it could handle the kinds of perception-and-action problems that behaviourism had (according to various arguments) tried and failed to explain.

(Edwards 1997: 28)

For whatever reasons, the majority of cognitive psychology (with Edwards’ own work constituting a notable exception) can be seen to continue to make wide-ranging claims based on synthetic data and to pursue an oversimplified notion of human cognition and behaviour. For these reasons, Werth does not limit his own model of discourse processing to the parameters established by Johnson-Laird and his colleagues. Rather, he chooses to locate Text World Theory within the discipline of cognitive linguistics, the central tenets of which are explored in section 2.2.3 below.

### **2.2.3 Cognitive Models**

The emergence and development of AI research and cognitive psychology in the latter half of the last century has been of enormous influence on modern linguistics. The shift of focus from behaviourism to the human mind has been mirrored in the rejection of generative grammar by the proponents of cognitive linguistics since the late 1970s.

Generative grammar had, until that time, remained the dominant approach in linguistic theory for some twenty-five years or more. Indeed, Werth acknowledges the massively revitalising effect Chomsky's (1955, 1957) endeavour to make linguistics as much like the 'hard sciences' as possible had on the status of the discipline. He points out that new university departments were opened, journals set up, and funding for courses, conferences, and doctorates increased tenfold as a direct consequence of Chomsky's influence (Werth 1999: 18-19). However, Werth also comments that

in other terms, Linguistics, led by its flagship the Generative Enterprise, is heading for the asteroid belt. It is travelling in ever decreasing circles, using more and more complex devices to talk about smaller and smaller fragments of language.

(Werth 1999: 19)

While the historical importance of generative grammar should not be underestimated, Werth argues, its restriction of focus to syntax alone has meant that substantial areas of language study have been neglected for more than a quarter of a century. Furthermore, with mathematical rigour as their new ideal, Werth claims that generativists have actively distorted their observations, simplifying or normalising data in order to confirm pre-formed hypotheses. Those aspects of language not susceptible to formalist treatment have been simply shelved or ignored.

Generative grammar's treatment of language as 'an objective system of rules and conditions on rules' (Werth 1999: 20) has resulted in what Werth terms 'tunnel-vision' (Werth 1999: 19). As an antidote to this, he proposes 'a more human linguistics' (Werth 1999: 18), sharing the same anti-objectivist research commitments as those set out by George Lakoff in 1990:

For me, cognitive linguistics is defined by two primary commitments... The generalisation commitment is a commitment to characterizing the general principles governing all aspects of human language... The cognitive commitment is a commitment to make one's account of human language accord with what is generally known about the mind and brain, from other disciplines as well as our own.

(Lakoff 1990: 40)

These commitments, Werth argues, require that cognitive linguistics ‘attributes primacy to *human experience*, both physical and conceptual’ (Werth 1999: 37). Other advocates of this experiential approach to language study include Charles Fillmore and Gilles Fauconnier, whose work will be examined in the final section of this chapter.

Arguably the most influential cognitive linguist of recent years, however, has been George Lakoff himself. In *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*, Lakoff (1987) cites the cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch, and her studies of human categorisation processes in particular (e.g. Rosch 1973, 1975, 1978), as his own major influence. Rosch developed what has since become known as *prototype theory*. Her basic hypothesis challenges the classical view that all members of a category have equal status, each sharing those properties that define the category. On the contrary, Rosch argues that there are varying degrees of membership, and that within certain boundaries there exist good and bad examples of both semantic and conceptual categories. These ‘best examples’ of categories, Rosch calls ‘prototypes’. In a series of empirical studies, Rosch found, for example, that her subjects considered ‘robin’ and ‘sparrow’ to be more representative of the category BIRD than ‘chicken’ or ‘ostrich’. Similarly, desk chairs were judged to be more prototypically ‘chairlike’ than rocking chairs or beanbags.

In her investigations into human categorisation of colours, Rosch (1973) set out to disprove the Whorfian (1941) hypothesis that language determines one’s conceptual system. She examined the New Guinean language Dani, which has only two basic colour categories: *mili* (dark-cool, including black, green, and blue) and *mola* (light-warm, including red, yellow, and white). She aimed to prove that primary colour categories were psychologically real for the Dani, even though they did not have the words to express them. One group of native Dani speakers was taught arbitrary names

tor eight focal, or prototypical, colours, and another group was taught names for eight nonfocal colours. Rosch found that the names for focal colours were learned more easily, a common pattern in English, where speakers are better able to remember the names for such colours as red, blue, and yellow, than nonfocal colours such as purple, brown, and cyan. The significance of Rosch's results, Lakoff argues, is that they show that categories are not objectively external to human beings:

At least some categories are *embodied*. Color categories, for example, are determined jointly by the external physical world, human biology, the human mind, plus cultural considerations.

(Lakoff 1987: 56)

It is this notion of 'embodied experience' which is central to Lakoff's approach to language study, and which forms the theoretical basis of his work on conceptual metaphor (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff and Johnson 1999).

Lakoff (1987) argues that human knowledge is organised around structures known as 'idealised cognitive models', or ICMs. The structure of ICMs in essence corresponds to that of the frames and scripts found in AI and schema theory, in the work of Minsky (1963, 1975) and Schank and Abelson (1977) detailed in section 2.2.1 above. ICMs are image-schematic, which is to say that they are simplified mental representations of complex physical phenomena (such as pulling, pushing, containers, surfaces, and so on) which are essentially visualisable. Like Rosch's prototypes, ICMs have a radial structure, with central and peripheral members. Following Schank and Abelson (1977), Lakoff argues that ICMs are the knowledge structures by which we negotiate our way through life, evaluating new experiences by means of comparison to these idealised models of reality. He proposes that new understanding is achieved through a process of

metaphorical mapping and that, far from being confined to literary discourse, metaphors form the very foundations of all human reasoning. As Lakoff and Johnson explain:

... metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3)

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim to have discovered the existence of ‘conceptual metaphors’, which underlie our basic conceptual processes. It is argued that unfamiliar experiences and abstract concepts are understood in terms of concrete, familiar ones. New knowledge thus gains its structure from our existing ICMs.

This notion is most easily explained through example, for which I will take the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A CONTAINER from Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 51). In this case, our understanding of the abstract concept, or ‘target domain’, LIFE is furthered by its comparison to our more concrete ICM, or ‘source domain’, CONTAINER. Relevant features from the source are mapped onto the target, creating a new knowledge domain with its own image-schematic structure. Evidence for the existence of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A CONTAINER in our everyday lives is found in such surface expressions as ‘my life is *empty*’, ‘he leads a very *full* life’, ‘*getting the most out of* life’, and so on. Lakoff and his colleagues (see also Johnson 1987; Lakoff and Turner 1989; and Turner 1987, 1991, and 1997) argue that all human reasoning is essentially embodied, citing countless examples of conceptual metaphors in which abstract target domains are understood through the metaphorical mapping of our physical experience (e.g. GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN, and so on).



Confidence in the significance and originality of these discoveries is no more assured than within the Lakoff camp itself, as is perhaps most evident in the opening paragraph to Lakoff and Johnson's most recent publication:

The mind is inherently embodied.

Thought is mostly unconscious.

Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical.

These are the three major findings of cognitive science. More than two millennia of a priori philosophical speculation about these aspects of reason are over. Because of these discoveries, philosophy can never be the same again.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 3)

However, as far back as 1981, in an article published shortly after Lakoff and Johnson's first exploration into conceptual metaphor, Ronald Butters (1981: 116) questioned the authors' failure to acknowledge the influence of previous linguistic studies on their own work. Butters lists Korzbyski (1941), Hayakawa (1943), and Johnson (1946) as similar investigations into semantic phenomena and thought, as well as Whorf (1941), Kuhn (1962), Black (1962) and Turbayne (1962) as other possibly unacknowledged sources. Indeed, the concept of embodied thought and experience has already received considerable attention in the field of feminist studies (see Grosz 1994 for a concise overview). Butters examines the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, in particular, taking issue with Lakoff and Johnson's assertion:

Even if you have never fought a fistfight in your life, much less a war... you still conceive of arguments, and execute them, according to the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 63-64)

Butters argues that it is impossible that human beings can have learned to conceive of an everyday occurrence like ARGUMENT in terms of something as remote from everyday experience as WAR. A similar criticism of conceptual metaphor is made by Edwards (1997). In this case, Edwards chooses an example offered by Gibbs (1994): LOVE IS A NUTRIENT. Again, Edwards questions whether the source domain, NUTRIENT, can really be considered to be a more familiar concept than target domain, LOVE:

'Nutrition' is arguably a technical abstraction, a generalization about the biology of organisms and diets, no more familiar an idea for most people, I imagine, than 'love' itself. It seems more sensible to talk of experiencing love than nutrition.

(Edwards 1997: 240)

Furthermore, Edwards argues that the physical, bodily experiences upon which Lakoff and colleagues insist metaphorical understanding is based are 'subjectively different experiences' (1997: 240). He suggests that the assumption that every human being experiences life, and thus processes discourse, in the same way is actually a thinly veiled form of objectivism in itself.

Werth's own criticisms of recent work on conceptual metaphor are twofold. Firstly, as far as Werth (1994, 1995a, 1999) is concerned, there are fundamental differences between the metaphorical practices of everyday language and those of poetic language. He argues that what impels the producer of a metaphor in ordinary language is not the same as that which impels the producer of a literary text. Werth insists that Lakoff and Johnson's view of metaphor, as a tool which enables us to express abstract experience for which no *sui generis* language exists, fails to explain a great deal of poetic metaphor. Rejecting the suggestion that a poet's thoughts are always so ineffable that they have to use the language of physical phenomena to express otherwise inexpressible concepts, Werth stresses that

there are many cases where the metaphor is used simply to make the expression more striking, and still others where using a metaphor allows the topic to be viewed from more than a single perspective... Metaphor in such cases is more a question of *poetic choice*, then, rather than being forced on the producer because of the poverty of the language.

(Werth 1999: 318)

Secondly, Werth is dissatisfied with the failure of Lakoff and colleagues to extend their investigations beyond sentence-level phenomena. Even in those applications of the theory of conceptual metaphor to entire texts (e.g. Lakoff and Turner 1989, Turner 1997), the texts chosen are always relatively short poems. Werth (1994), on the other hand, proposes a model of the phenomenon of extended metaphor, whereby a text

displays a sustained metaphorical undercurrent which, Werth argues, is usually the source of a reader's sense of the 'gist' of a literary work (see also Nair, Carter and Toolan 1988). He terms these undercurrents 'megametaphors', and argues that they can only be perceived when a text is examined in its entirety. A detailed exposition of this concept is provided in section 3.4.2 below.

#### 2.2.4 Frames and Spaces

Both Lakoff (1987) and Werth (1999) cite the work of Charles Fillmore, and his notion of 'frames' in particular (see Fillmore 1982, 1985), as a major influence on their own theories of human knowledge structures. Fillmore (1985: 223), in turn, acknowledges the origins of his terminology in AI research, and in the work of Minsky (1963, 1975) and Schank and Abelson (1977) in particular. Like Werth, Fillmore draws a firm distinction between those semantic theories based on judgements of relative truth, which he terms 'T-semantics', and those based on language understanding, termed 'U-semantics'. He sets out the theoretical principles of the latter along similar lines to Lakoff's (1990) cognitive commitments:

A U-semantic theory takes as its assignment that of providing a general account of the relation between linguistic texts, the contexts in which they are produced and the process and products of their interpretation. Importantly, such a theory does not *begin* with a body of assumptions about the difference between (1) aspects of the interpretation process which belong to linguistics proper and (2) whatever might belong to co-operating theories of speaking and reasoning and speaker's belief systems.

(Fillmore 1985: 222)

In his attempt to provide a fully defined semantics of understanding, he introduces the notion of frames as those knowledge structures which enable us, for example, to identify a link between such words as *buy*, *sell*, *cost*, *pay* and so on. Fillmore explains:

What holds such word groups together is the fact of their being motivated by, founded on, and co-structured with, specific unified frameworks of knowledge, or coherent schematizations of experience, for which the general word frame can be used.

(Fillmore 1985: 223)

Fillmore argues that a frame can be evoked either by the interpreter of a text, in situating its content in a pattern independent of the current discourse, or by the text itself, in the occurrence of linguistic forms conventionally associated with a particular frame. He also makes a distinction between frames which are innate, i.e. frames which are an unavoidable part of the cognitive development of every human being (such as knowledge of the features of the human face), and those which are learned through experience, such as knowledge of social institutions, units of measurement, calendric units, and so on.

The central role of knowledge in Fillmore's explanation of understanding means that he views the lexical, grammatical, and semantic material of a sentence as serving as a kind of 'blueprint' from which the interpreter constructs a richer whole. As Fillmore explains:

The interpreter accomplishes this by bringing to the 'blueprint' a great deal of knowledge, in particular knowledge of the interpretative frames which are evoked by or capable of being invoked for the sentence in question, but also including knowledge of the larger structure (the 'text') within which the sentence occurs.

(Fillmore 1985: 233)

Werth (1999: 104) points out, however, that the question as to what exactly constitutes a frame is never addressed in Fillmore's work. He relies, instead, on lexical examples, such as the following, to serve as definitions:

The word *bachelor* has to be understood in the frame of the 'normal marital situation', which contains the following properties: (in Western culture) adults normally get married; this happens in their 20's; they normally stay married for life; marriage is exclusively heterosexual. Like all frames, this is a 'folk model', which encapsulates a traditional, stereotypical set of cultural expectations. Within this frame, a bachelor is of an age from his 20's up to the upper age-limit of sexual activity; he is unmarried, and has never married; he is male and heterosexual; he lives in normal society.

(Fillmore 1982:48)

Werth argues that Fillmore's frames remain fuzzy-edged and that, as a result, one can only arrive at an intuitive understanding of what a frame is, based on Fillmore's many lexical examples. According to Werth, there is so much overlap between frames that

they come to resemble situations far more than they resemble rigid word-definitions. Furthermore, much of Fillmore's definition of the 'bachelor' frame above can be seen to be made up of a set of highly subjective opinions on what being a bachelor entails, rather than being based on any universally identifiable, or even culturally-specific, factors or traits.

More recently, the theory of conceptual spaces that has proved to be of greatest significance to Werth's text world framework has been that developed by Gilles Fauconnier (e.g. 1994, 1996, 1997) under the title of 'Mental Space Theory'. In essence, mental spaces are conceptual domains, set up during the discourse process, through which language is conceptualised and understood. Fauconnier argues that these domains

are not part of the language itself, or of its grammars; they are not hidden levels of linguistic representation, but language does not come without them.

(Fauconnier 1994: 1)

Thus, mental spaces are constructed according to the guidelines set out by linguistic expressions within a given discourse. Fauconnier terms these expressions 'space builders', and specifies that they may take the form of prepositional phrases, adverbs, connectives, or subject-verb combinations, at the linguistic level. Fauconnier states that any new space is always set up relative to an existing, or 'parent', space. This parent space will often, but not always, be the 'reality space' of the speaker, which can be seen to correspond directly with the notion of the 'actual world' in possible worlds philosophy and semantics. Fauconnier goes on to specify a number of possible causes for the construction of a new 'projected space' during any given discourse.

Firstly, any change in the temporal setting of the parent space, typically indicated by temporal adverbials, tense and aspect, will result in the construction of a projected space. A change in the parent space's spatial setting has a similar effect and is typically indicated by the use of locative adverbials and verbs of movement in discourse. Hypothetical constructions also create projected mental spaces, as do switches in the domain of activity being focused on in the discourse (e.g. the occurrence of such space-builders as 'in American football...', or 'in the field of genetics...'). At any stage in the discourse, either the parent space or a projected space will be the 'Base' of the system, while the other will be the 'Focus'. Fauconnier explains:

Metaphorically speaking, the discourse participants move through the space lattice; their viewpoint and their focus shift as they go from one space to the next.

(Fauconnier 1997: 38)

The Base is thus the starting point for a new space construction, while the Focus is the space which is then internally structured in the process of discourse comprehension. The 'Viewpoint', briefly described by Fauconnier in the quotation above, can then be seen as the space from which all other spaces are accessed. To give an example of this system in use, consider the following sentences:

*Joanna can't fly. She believes she can fly, but she can't.*

BASE

VIEWPOINT

FOCUS

BASE

This sequence begins with a Base space, in which '*Joanna can't fly*'. A projected space is then created by the verb construction '*she believes*', with the resulting space's contents becoming the Focus of the discourse. Joanna's belief system, described in this Focus space, is also the Viewpoint from which the other spaces are accessed: for example, in the final shift from the projected space back to the Base.

The close resemblance between the structure and genesis of Fauconnier's mental spaces and those of Werth's text worlds is discussed in further detail in section 3.2.1 of this thesis. At this point, however, it is important to outline some of the reasons behind Werth's eventual rejection of Fauconnier's theory as a satisfactory model of discourse processing. Once again, Werth takes issue with the sentence-level analysis upon which Mental Space Theory is based, echoing his criticisms of possible worlds semantics, cognitive psychology and the cognitive linguistic models discussed above. He argues:

... given the cognitive principles underlying [Mental Space Theory]... one would expect it to apply *principally* to discourses, and only secondarily to sentences, since the latter are merely practical components of the former, and in cognitive terms do not occur without the deictic terms which make them part of discourses.

(Werth 1999: 70)

Werth acknowledges that Fauconnier, at least, does make some gesture towards a discourse-level application of his theory, as exemplified below:

There is a long tradition in grammar and in philosophy (of the non-continental variety) to take the sentence, in isolation, as the basic object of study... Theories developed for fragments seldom extend to the general case, and, what is worse, they lead to improper partitioning of the data... The study of mental space phenomena... attempts to break out of this mold by focusing on linguistic generalization.

(Fauconnier 1994: xix-xxiv)

However, Werth also points out that, in practice, Fauconnier limits his analysis to synthetic, single-sentence examples, 'albeit sometimes with some declared context' (Werth 1999: 77). These contexts, Werth (1999: 91) argues, bear a striking resemblance to the sets of repetitious sentences commonly used in EFL exercise books to give a pseudo-discourse impression. As a result, mental spaces appear to be conjured 'rather like rabbits out of a hat' (Werth 1999: 77).

A typical example of Fauconnier's construction of such 'pseudo-discourse' can be found in the following extract:

Suppose a movie is made about Alfred Hitchcock's life; the main role (Hitchcock) is played by Orson Welles, but Hitchcock himself plays a minor role (the man at the bus stop).

(Fauconnier 1994: 36)

In this case, the ‘context’ is nominated solely in order for Fauconnier to be able to discuss multiple connectors in the sentence, ‘Hitchcock saw himself in that movie’. It could, therefore, be argued that mental spaces are as guilty of being ‘both over-specific and under-specified’ (Werth 1999: 70) as possible worlds have been shown to be in section 2.1.1 above. In Fauconnier’s defence, it is worth pointing out that, in his own use of it, Mental Space Theory functions as a heuristic device for solving logical problems, rather than as an all-encompassing explanation of how we process discourse. As with possible worlds semantics, then, it is likely that Werth finds Mental Space Theory lacking as a result of differing aims and objectives, rather than because of any fundamental flaw in the model itself. Even with this possibility in mind, however, one puzzling question remains regarding Mental Space Theory. Given the obvious logical emphasis of the mental space project, we might ask why Fauconnier invokes the notions of discourse and context in the first place?

### **2.3 Review**

This chapter has traced the origins of and influences on Werth’s text world approach to discourse study to the notion of ‘possible worlds’ presented by Leibniz in the eighteenth century. The further development of that concept, both in 1970s logic and philosophy and in contemporary literary theory, has also been examined. In both cases, although choosing to adopt the ‘worlds’ metaphor at the heart of all possible worlds theories, Werth finds the minimalistic nature of the worlds they examine an unsatisfactory basis on which to found his own approach. The cognitivist tradition in which Werth prefers to locate Text World Theory has been examined in detail throughout the latter sections of this chapter. In particular, the models of human knowledge structures proposed by schema theory and AI research, as well as the ‘mental models’ of cognitive psychology



and the 'ICMs', 'frames' and 'mental spaces' of cognitive linguistics, have been put forward as central influences on Werth's development of his own framework for a deeper understanding of human discourse processing. Both the main tenets and the possible shortcomings of each approach have been examined and discussed.

With the basic methodological foundations for the formulation of Text World Theory thus established, in Chapter Three of this thesis I now investigate how a range of components from each of the influential disciplines examined above manifest themselves in Text World Theory itself. Chapter Three therefore provides a detailed exposition of Werth's own framework and explores the means by which Werth seeks to address those flaws so far identified in preceding cognitive and linguistic models. The basic mechanics of each of the three main levels of Text World Theory are examined and discussed alongside an exemplary application of the framework to a literary text.

## **3.0 Preview**

This chapter provides a detailed exposition of the mechanics of Text World Theory, informed by the examination of Werth's influences and contemporaries presented in Chapter Two. The chapter is initially divided into three main sections, corresponding with the three world-levels of the theory: the *discourse world*, the *text world*, and the *sub-world*. Together, these sections offer an investigation into Werth's unique adaptation of the 'worlds' metaphor as a means of explaining the conceptual space in which human beings process and understand discourse. With the theoretical foundations of Text World Theory thus established, section 3.4.0 goes on to explore Werth's own typical use of the text worlds approach. A practical demonstration of the basic tenets of Text World Theory at work is provided in the preliminary text world analysis of an extract from Paul Auster's (1992) novel *The Music of Chance* in section 3.4.1. Section 3.4.2 then explores Werth's further adaptation of his framework to explain the phenomenon of extended literary metaphor. An extended analysis of *The Music of Chance* as a whole is then presented in section 3.4.3, as a means of assessing the benefits and limits of this type of text world application. Throughout the chapter, key problematic areas of Werth's approach are outlined in preparation for their further exploration in Chapter Four.

### **3.1.0 The Discourse World**

Werth offers a provisional definition of the discourse world as the immediate situation surrounding at least one speaker or writer and one or more listeners or readers

participating in the 'joint venture' (Werth 1995a: 51) of communication. To a certain extent, the discourse world can be seen to correspond with the notion of the 'actual world' in the moderate realist tradition of possible worlds semantics (discussed in section 2.1.0 above), insofar as it is the actualised state of affairs from which all other possibles derive. As we have already seen in section 2.1.1 above, however, Werth is not content to limit his understanding of states of affairs to the simplified definition of 'an arrangement of objects, individuals or things having various properties and standing in various relations to one another' (Bradley and Swartz 1979: 7). His central concern is not with the stipulation of minimalistic worlds for the purposes of logical analysis, but with the provision of a comprehensive model of human discourse production and reception. Chapter Two also demonstrated Werth's belief that his commitment to this enterprise demands an account of states of affairs which bears the same complexity that speakers and hearers recognise in the real world.

To achieve this, Werth begins by distilling each state of affairs into smaller, constituent parts, or 'situations'. Thus:

A situation is a particular kind of state of affairs, in which the time and place are held constant (or rather – since time is continuously progressing – are held in tandem). So a series of situations will make up a state of affairs.

(Werth 1999: 68)

Werth claims that this refinement enables him to overcome those problems of under-specificity encountered by possible worlds semantics and described in section 2.1.1 above. It renders the world under scrutiny manageable and analysable without reducing its content. Imagine, for example, a state of affairs as analogous to a piece of video footage. The footage necessarily unfolds over a period of time, during which the relationships between the entities and objects portrayed is constantly shifting. To attempt to analyse the film as a whole would be impossible without at least some degree

of reduction and generalisation. Approaching the subject matter scene by scene, or even frame by frame, however, enables a localised analysis which captures the complexity of the state of affairs in its entirety.

Werth also stresses the importance of the presence of sentient beings in the discourse world, known as the *participants* at this level of the theory. He argues that situations are not simply collections of entities at a certain place and time, but rather are '*states of affairs conceived of by participants*' (Werth 1999: 84, original emphasis retained). He adds:

Situations do not occur in a conceptual vacuum: they are given their situational status by an act of human will. We can conceive of situations without any humans in them - but we cannot conceive of unconceived-of situations. The very notion of situation, then, is an experiential notion, and any kind of theory of situations other than an experientialist one must be incoherent.

(Werth 1999: 84)

Thus, an arrangement of elements including inanimate objects but no human beings would not constitute a situation under Werth's criteria. A real situation must contain at least one participant in order for the existence of the other inanimate elements involved to be realised. Furthermore, Werth insists that the discourse world contains not only the participants and what they can perceive in their immediate surroundings, but also 'what the participants can work out from their perceptions' (Werth 1999: 83). He goes on:

In order to interpret and make sense of that [sensory] input, we must be able to classify these 'percepts' (as psychologists call them). In order to do *that*, we must be able to call upon the knowledge we already have stored away from previous experience... This means we, the participants, have to be able to recognise qualities, both perceivable and non-perceivable, and infer relationships between things which we have previously been able to distinguish as entities (including also memories of approaching this type of object and seeing it from different viewpoints at different times).

(Werth 1999: 83)

These specifications highlight the inter-subjective (as opposed to objectivist) focus of Text World Theory and position it firmly within the cognitivist tradition described in Chapter Two. Indeed, Werth (1999: 50) offers 'Cognitive Discourse Grammar' as an alternative term for his approach.

Werth is also keen to emphasise, however, that he views *discourse* as ‘the combination of a text and its relevant context’ (Werth 1999: 47), and he argues that the notion of context has yet to be systematically approached by any of the central proponents of cognitive linguistics. Werth points out:

Like democracy, discourse is universally assumed to be a Good Thing, but as also with democracy, very few are prepared to go out of their way to approach it. Indeed, even those who apply experientialist ideas most consistently tend to avoid direct confrontation with the horrors of context.

(Werth 1999: 46)

The considerable practical implications of Werth’s commitment to addressing this gap are evident in his illustration of the discourse world (1995a: 52), adapted and reproduced in Figure 3a below. Here, the situation surrounding the participants engaged in face-to-face communication is shown to include not only their immediate perceptions but also such abstract notions as beliefs, hopes, dreams, and so on. Werth admits that the discourse context initially appears to incorporate ‘no less than *all* the information available in principle to the human race’, and he concedes, ‘small wonder, then, that so many people have fought shy of attempting to deal with the notion in any systematic way’ (Werth 1999: 117).

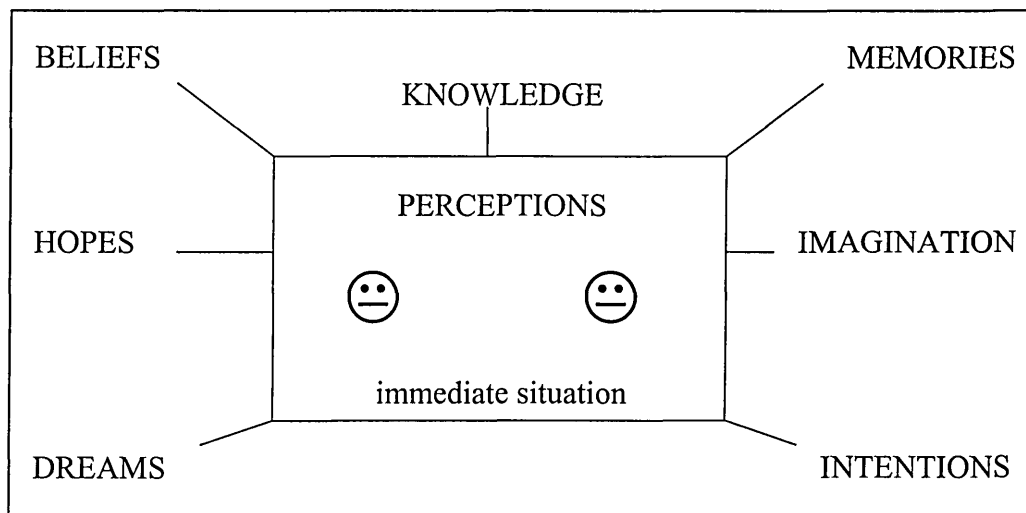


Figure 3a. *The Discourse World*

However, Werth maintains that Text World Theory provides the methodological means necessary to account not only for the structure of the text itself but for the context surrounding its production and interpretation as well. His framework, he claims, incorporates ‘current knowledge concerning the cognitive processes of information handling, storage and retrieval, the social principles of co-operation and purposefulness, and the pragmatic conditions of coherence and relevance’ (Werth 1999: 17). In the following sub-sections, I will deal with the latter of these areas first, with an examination of the negotiated nature of the discourse world in section 3.1.1. This is followed by a discussion of the role of human knowledge and experience in Werth’s model of discourse processing in sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3.

### 3.1.1 Negotiation

In explaining his position as a *discourse* linguist, as opposed to a *text* linguist, Werth places great emphasis on the precise differences between those terms, ‘text’ and ‘discourse’. He states:

A **text** is to a **sentence** as a **discourse** is to an **utterance**. That is to say, a text, like a sentence, is somewhat of an abstraction which is made for the purposes of analysis. What it is abstracted from is its **context**... texts do tend to be written... although that is not the important thing about them. What is important is that they have been abstracted away from the real-life situation in which they occur, for one purpose or another.

(Werth 1999: 1, original emphasis retained)

As a discourse linguist, then, Werth believes he must necessarily account for the nature and structure of context as thoroughly and systematically as that of the text to which it is inextricably linked. Indeed, Werth gives precedence to the ‘real-life situation’, using its pragmatic structure as a prototype for every level of Text World Theory. More specifically, while Werth stresses that his Cognitive Discourse Grammar extends to all language situations, from telephone conversations to written communication of all types, the situation surrounding the participants in a face-to-face conversation, depicted

in Figure 3a above, constitutes the basic language event upon which Werth's framework is based. He explains:

[conversation] represents our prototypical use of language: it is, in other words, the basic discourse-type – socially, historically, statistically. This is particularly important for the concept of **negotiation**... The face-to-face, turn-taking, open-topic kind of activity we call conversation serves as the model for this process of negotiation, and may usefully be extended to non-prototypical language uses such as conversations-at-a-distance, monologue and written language.

(Werth 1999: 85, original emphasis retained)

Werth argues that all discourses are consciously and purposefully initiated, although he does make exceptions for marginal cases such as automatic writing and talking in one's sleep (Werth 1999: 51). He points out that discourses are not simply a series of randomly generated sentences but are 'mutual attempts to negotiate a Common Ground' (Werth 1999: 49). The exact nature of this Common Ground will be explored in section 3.1.3 below. It is Werth's concept of 'mutual negotiation' which concerns us for the moment.

In keeping with his conversation prototype, Werth argues that the interaction between the participants involved in the discourse is governed by a set of pragmatic meta-principles, which he terms 'the principles of discourse' (Werth 1999: 49). These are as follows:

- (i) **Communicativeness** (informativeness): discourses should normally be assumed to be *purposive*, and to be *efficient* in prosecuting their purposes, unless there is evidence to the contrary.
- (ii) **Coherence**... except in pathological cases, entities, events and propositions are not introduced into the Common Ground superfluously...
- (iii) **Co-operativeness** (responsibility, authoritativeness and reliability): the participants in a discourse tacitly agree to jointly negotiate a CG [Common Ground] as efficiently as is consistent with the other principles.

(Werth 1999: 49-50, original emphasis retained)

The similarities between this list and the following maxims from Grice (1975) initially appear striking:

- QUANTITY... 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).  
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required...

QUALITY... 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.  
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

RELATION... 1. Be relevant.

MANNER... 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.  
2. Avoid ambiguity.  
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).  
4. Be orderly.

(Grice 1975: 45-46)

A more detailed analysis of Werth's terminology, however, reveals some re-working of Grice's model. Werth's first principle, *communicativeness*, for example, can be seen to subsume Grice's maxims of Quality and Quantity. Under the second principle, *coherence*, Werth explains that propositions can be considered coherent if they 'fit their context' (Werth 1999: 51), a requisite suggestive of the maxims of both Relation and Manner. The discourse principle of coherence is obviously reminiscent of related 'relevance theory', which is discussed in detail in section 3.1.3 below. However, Werth's addition of a third, apparently all-encompassing principle, *co-operativeness*, appears to be an attempt to incorporate Grice's super-maxim of the same name alongside his other principles. Indeed, Grice's explanation of the necessity of the co-operative principle bears a strong resemblance to Werth's later re-working of the model:

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, co-operative efforts; and each participant recognises in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or set of purposes might be fixed from the start (e.g., by an initial proposal of a question for discussion), or it may evolve during the exchange; it may be fairly definite, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude to the participants (as in a casual conversation). But at each stage, SOME possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe, namely: make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(Grice 1975: 45, original emphasis retained)

Despite a number of cosmetic alterations, then, for both Grice and Werth co-operation nevertheless forms the underlying, default principle for all communication, against which background any further conversational implicatures arise (see Eelen 2001 and Toolan 1996 for an opposing viewpoint).



The ease with which Werth claims to be able to map the conversation prototype onto *all* other forms of language, however, raises a number of questions. Not least, Werth's assumption that the relationship between the author of a written text and that text's reader will be as *necessarily co-operative* as that between conversation participants would seem somewhat simplistic. This possibility is further demonstrated and explored in Chapter Four of this thesis. Furthermore, while Werth chooses the situation surrounding participants communicating face-to-face as his exemplary illustration (see Figure 3a), the discourse world involving the reader of a novel in the year 2001 and its writer in 1901 would certainly be more difficult to reproduce. As Werth notes:

The discourse worlds of written texts are almost always split: since the writer and the readership occupy different spatio-temporal points, there will certainly be very little which is mutually perceivable. So even if the writer is writing about his/her discourse world, this won't correspond to anything in the reader's discourse world.

(Werth 1995a: 54-55)

So how significant can the immediate situation be during our processing of a novel which makes no reference to the chair in which we sit, or the dog at our feet, or to the situation surrounding the author at the time of writing? Werth himself admits:

There's a parallel discrepancy here between the text-function for the writer and that for the reader: what is recapitulative for the writer may be informational for the reader, and so on. However, the immediate situations, respectively, of writing and reading are presumably less important in such cases than the shared baggage of cultural assumptions, general knowledge etc. – collectively known as frame knowledge.

(Werth 1995a: 55)

The nature and importance of this frame knowledge is explored in the following section of this chapter. For the moment, however, following Werth's admission of the limited relevance of the immediate situation in written communication, the question persists as to why he continues to place such importance on its pragmatic structure as a prototype for all other discourse processing. This question is all the more perplexing given the fact that Werth's own use of Text World Theory is entirely limited to written texts and, despite considerable gesturing towards the adaptability of the framework as a tool for pragmatic analysis, Werth never attempts such an application himself.

### 3.1.2 Knowledge

With the pragmatic configuration of the discourse world defined, Werth goes on to examine the role of participant knowledge in the production and reception of discourse:

The **informative mode** of language involves the transfer of propositions from exclusive speaker – or hearer – knowledge into shared knowledge. This means that communication consists of the transfer of knowledge ‘possessed’ by only one of the participants into their *shared* knowledge area, i.e. into the knowledge of all the participants.

(Werth 1999: 95, original emphasis retained)

The separate domains of knowledge Werth is describing here are illustrated in Figure 3b below (adapted from Werth 1999: 94). The process by which knowledge is transferred from the speaker-only, or hearer-only, knowledge-base to the domain of mutual knowledge is known as *incrementation* and will be discussed further in section 3.1.3 below. For the moment, however, let us focus on the precise nature of the knowledge being exchanged during the discourse process.

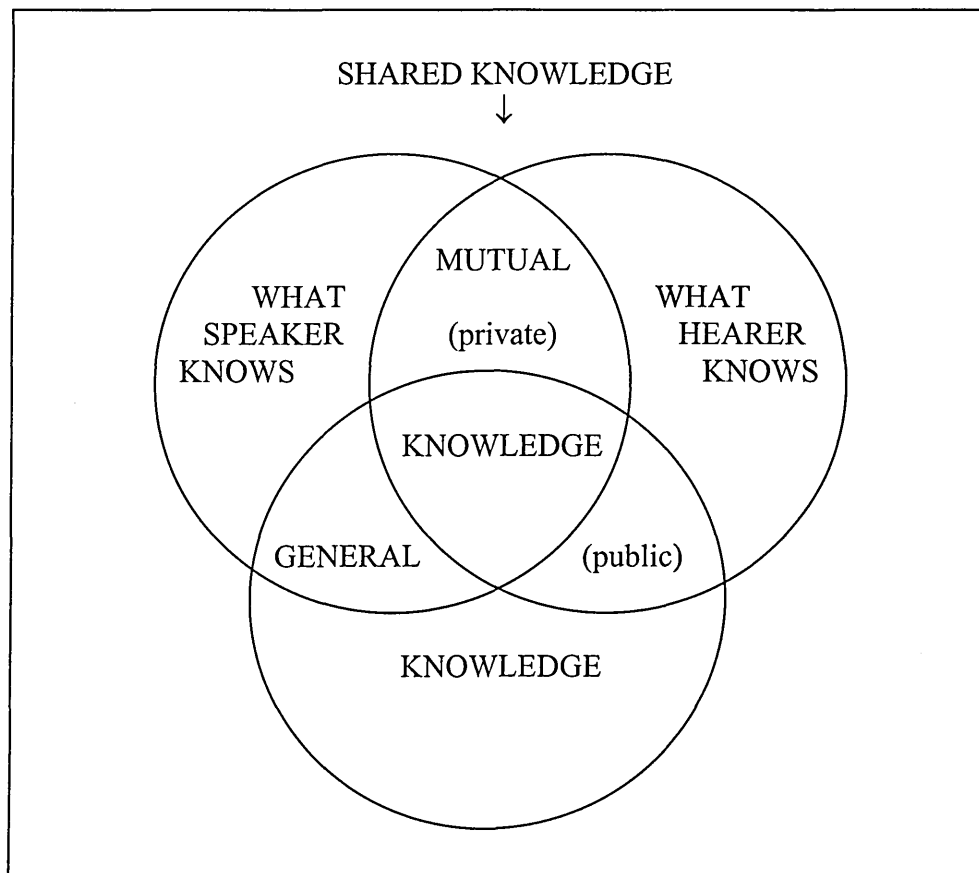


Figure 3b. Participant Knowledge

Werth divides the knowledge-bases of both speaker and hearer into two initial categories; 'general knowledge' and 'mutual knowledge'. He defines general knowledge, first of all, as consisting of 'all that information which is in principle available to individuals by virtue of their membership in various larger social groupings' (Werth 1999: 96). This general knowledge is then separated into two further categories; 'linguistic knowledge' and 'cultural knowledge'. Linguistic knowledge, Werth explains, is characteristically analytical. He takes issue with the generative linguistic view of language as an autonomous cognitive system by arguing that the links between cultural and linguistic knowledge 'are multifarious and complex... all cognitive systems are interlinked, in that all may provide input for each other' (Werth 1999: 98). Cultural knowledge is all of the remaining non-linguistic information available, in principle, to members of a particular society, although not all members will have the same degree of access to it. It is characteristically open-ended, due to the fact that new cultural information is constantly being generated and made available to participants, and also contingent, in so far as it is not logically necessary and could have been otherwise.

Werth classifies mutual knowledge as all that information which is exchanged between participants during the discourse. He stresses that this type of knowledge is a *result*, rather than a part, of the incrementation process. He explains:

Mutual knowledge consists, in principle, solely of knowledge shared by, and available to, the participants in the discourse under scrutiny. It may come from the discourse so far, or from previous discourses.

(Werth 1999: 98)

Werth refers to Sperber and Wilson's (1986) notion of mutual manifestness as a sufficient explanation of the system by which participants are able to interpret each other's allusions correctly during the discourse process. This is to say that participants

make interpretative decisions based on assumptions about one another's cognitive environments, or the set of facts potentially available to each person's awareness.

Sperber and Wilson give the following example:

Suppose Peter and Mary are looking at a landscape where she has noticed a distant church. She says to him:

(49) I've been inside that church.

She does not stop to ask herself whether he has noticed the building, and whether he assumes she has noticed, and assumes she has noticed he has noticed, and so on, or whether he has assumed it is a church, and assumes she assumes it is, and so on. All she needs is reasonable confidence that he will be able to identify the building as a church when required to: in other words, that a certain assumption will be manifest in his cognitive environment at the right time.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 43-44)

Within his own framework, Werth terms that part of mutual knowledge derived from the elements immediately manifest to the participants as 'perceptual knowledge'. He differentiates between this and 'experiential knowledge'. He argues that the latter consists of those situations in the memories of the participants in which they both know they have directly participated or with which they have some other indirect connection.

Werth also distinguishes between the *modes* through which the various types of knowledge described above are expressed and, again, proposes two main categories: the 'propositional mode' and the 'functional mode'. He claims that each of his four categories of knowledge – linguistic, cultural, perceptual and experiential – can be propositional in nature, and that knowledge in this mode tends to be consciously acquired and retrieved. Werth (1999: 101-102) gives numerous examples of the sorts of 'facts' propositional knowledge may express, including:

- Belgium is a kingdom – **cultural**
- A bachelor is an unmarried male adult human – **linguistic**
- There is an echo in this building – **perceptual**
- Speaker went to hearer's wedding – **experiential**

All four types of knowledge can also be functional in nature. In essence, this mode consists of a set of acts, either directed towards a particular goal or undirected, and

either physical or conceptual in nature. Werth (1999: 102) gives several examples of each, in which conceptual activities are marked **C** and physical activities are marked with **P**. These include:

Cultural	<b>C</b>	Diagnosing an illness.
	<b>P</b>	Tying a shoelace.
Linguistic	<b>C/P</b>	Formulating a report.
	<b>P</b>	Articulating an utterance.
Perceptual	<b>C</b>	Listening out for the postman.
	<b>C/P</b>	Checking the quality of a wine.
Experiential	<b>C</b>	Recognising faces.
	<b>C/P</b>	Learning to drive.

We should notice that several examples involve aspects of both conceptual and physical activity. Werth also points out that functional knowledge can often be ‘turned into’ knowledge in the propositional mode, the teaching of any skill being a prime example of this transition.

Following Fillmore (1982, 1985), whose work has already been discussed in section 2.2.4 above, Werth claims that the composite structure of knowledge is essentially frame-based. However, as we have also already seen in section 2.2.4, he remains dissatisfied with Fillmore’s explanation of what exactly constitutes a frame. Werth argues that one can come to an intuitive understanding of frames based on the numerous lexical examples Fillmore offers, but that these examples can at best provide only a fuzzy-edged idea of what a frame actually is. He also takes issue with Lakoff’s (1982: 48) characterisation of frames as both generalised and experiential, arguing that human beings do not *experience* generalisations but rather that ‘generalisations are the result of abstract cognitive processes applied to material gained from experience’ (Werth 1999: 110). Werth proposes that this material is made up of repeated encounters with real-life situations. He explains:

The single experiences which make up the set from which the frame is distilled are situations which... represent actual phenomena. These situations will not be identical to each other; but they must be *sufficiently* similar to count as recurrences of something previously experienced. At a certain point (perhaps after as few as *two* such experiences), they fuse into a **situation-type**. It is to the situation-type that the frame is related – indeed perhaps situation-types are rudimentary frames.

(Werth 1999: 111, original emphasis retained)

Werth emphasises, however, that frames are not created simply from repeated situation-types. The semantic and pragmatic complex which the situation-type becomes as it gathers more and more variation must also gain influence from the participant's cultural knowledge-base. As Werth argues:

When a situation is expressed in propositions, each one is also accompanied by relevant information from the participant's knowledge store. We can therefore see that when this happens often enough to set up a pattern, we get a frame.

(Werth 1999: 112)

Frames, then, represent complexes of situation-types and background knowledge. How this knowledge is divided up and deployed during the processing of discourse is explored in the following section of this chapter.

### 3.1.3 Common Ground

We have already seen that Werth views all communication as a mutual attempt to negotiate what he calls a Common Ground (CG), for which Werth offers the following provisional definition:

**Common Ground:**

*the totality of information which the speaker(s) and hearer(s) have agreed to accept as relevant for their discourse*

(Werth 1999: 119)

The act of negotiating this information takes place within the discourse world, the pragmatic configuration of which has been set out in section 3.1.1 above. We have also seen that the discourse world contains not only the participants and their immediate surroundings, but also the personal and cultural background knowledge they bring with them to the language event. Werth points out, however, that not *all* of the knowledge potentially available to participants will be needed during the discourse. Only selected

information will be added to the CG by a continuous updating process, known as 'incrementation'.

Werth offers the following explanation of incrementation and how it works:

In text-processing, each Current Proposition (CP) is linguistically interpreted, the final stage of which is the coherence mechanism which relates the 'raw proposition' to the inferencing mechanism and the knowledge-base, and specifically, knowledge of the accumulated CG. **Incrementation** then adds the current CP to the current CG, together with the additional 'annotation' of evoked knowledge.

(Werth 1999: 131, original emphasis retained)

The grounds upon which the CP is selected (or not) for incrementation are based, to some extent, on the truth or falsity of that proposition. We have already seen some of the difficulties involved in traditional logical approaches to truth identified and discussed in section 2.1.0 and 2.1.1 above. Werth (1999: 131) gives the following further examples of propositions for which the assessment of truth is problematic:

- My wife is the most beautiful woman in the world.
- George is a genius.
- God is Love.

Werth argues that possible worlds semantics offers some solution and can easily account for the truth-value of imaginary or abstract sentences, and indeed for each of the examples above, with reference to the particular world defined by the discourse. However, Werth also points out that the problem of indeterminacy still exists even within a multiple-world model of truth. He gives the example of a world containing proposition (1), in which it is possible to determine that further propositions (2) and (3) are true and (4) is false. The truth-values of (5) and (6), however, are not easy to ascertain with the same degree of certainty.

1. Hobbits are round and fat, and live in holes in the ground.
2. Hobbits exist in this possible world.
3. Hobbits are living creatures.
4. Hobbits are thin.
5. Hobbits are stocky.
6. Hobbits are jolly and like to tell jokes.

(adapted from Werth 1999: 132-133)

Although the last two propositions seem reasonable, it is not possible to say whether they are definitely true or false. Werth, then, prefers to approach truth assessment from a different perspective, that of *probability*.

100% ..... 0%				
Certain (true)	Probable (likely to be true)	Possible (could be either true or false)	Improbable (likely to be false)	Impossible (false)
EVIDENCE AND RESULTS OR LOGICAL NECESSITY	DEGREES OF EVIDENCE	NO CLEAR DECISION CAN BE MADE	DEGREES OF NEGATIVE EVIDENCE	NEGATIVE EVIDENCE OR LOGICAL IMPOSSIBILITY

*Figure 3c. Scale of Probability*

Figure 3c above (adapted from Werth 1999: 133) illustrates the scale upon which a proposition’s probable truth can be assessed, ranging from 100% probable, or certain, at one end to 0% probable, or impossible, at the other. Werth (1999: 134) explains the reasons for his departure from traditional notions of truth and falsity as being based on the context-sensitivity of truth. He cites numerous examples from such disciplines as medicine, mathematics and physics, where analytical truths often turn out to be not quite as concrete as they first appeared and are frequently superseded by new discoveries and developments. He argues:

‘Analytically True’ often means ‘true at this moment, or in the present state of our knowledge, or for present purposes’, which is significantly different from the rigorous objectivist picture of analytic truth as an immutable property of certain propositions, irrespective of physical circumstance or human interaction.

*Contingent* truths, on the other hand, are susceptible to circumstances. Thus, the inclusion of contingent truths into logic opens up logic to the inclusion of context. Contingent truths are cognitively respectable, since they are subject to human experience and intervention. This means that the seditious definition of ‘Analytically True’ given above as ‘true at this moment, or in the present state of our knowledge, or for present purposes’ is (part of) the *normal* definition of ‘Contingently True’.

(Werth 1999: 134-135, original emphasis retained)



By this reasoning, Werth argues that many so-called analytical truths are actually contingent. He also points out a further practical problem regarding truth assessment, specifically the need to take into account the reliability of the author or speaker of the proposition under scrutiny. He argues:

... in practical terms, it seems not to be sentences, or even propositions, that have truth-values or probabilities, but **utterances**, i.e. propositions in contexts of situation... [this means] that the truth or probability which we loosely attribute to a proposition has actually to be assessed relative to certain properties of the context it is in.

(Werth 1999: 135, original emphasis retained)

Perhaps the most important factor in this context-sensitive assessment is the perceived authority the speaker has on his or her chosen subject. Parallel to the scale of probability in Figure 3c above, Werth (1999: 135) proposes a second scale by which such a judgement is made, reproduced in Figure 3d below.

100% ..... 0%				
Highly authoritative	Fairly authoritative	Middling authoritative	Low authority	No authority

*Figure 3d. Scale of Authority*

Werth suggests a number of means by which hearers may conclude where on the scale of authority a particular speaker belongs. As well as the function they have within the discourse, speakers will also hold various social roles and individual properties, many of which will be part of the mutual knowledge of the discourse participants and may thus affect how their authority is perceived. Werth further suggests an amalgamation of the notion of power presented in social psychology (e.g. Brown and Gilman 1968, Fairclough 1989) and Milroy's (1987) theory of Social Networks. Thus, any connection within a network will also hold a certain power relationship, resulting in three possible

types of connection: unequal power ( $\rightarrow$  or  $\leftarrow$ ); equal power with respect to a mutual connection (e.g. power over a third person) ( $\leftrightarrow$ ); or equal power with respect to each other (e.g. equal lack of power) ( $\text{---}$ ). Werth gives the following example:

... as an amateur gardener of somewhat patchy accomplishment, I might exercise authority on the subject of gardening in my role relationship with Joe Bloggs, a lifelong inhabitant of a high rise in Hackney, whereas in my role relationship with, say, the Head Horticulturist at Kew Gardens, my gardening authority is zero.

(Werth 1999: 137)

Under Werth's approach, authority is not an inborn property of a particular individual, who either has it or has not. Rather, authority is a function of whatever role relationship is in place between participants during a particular discourse.

A further possible explanation of the incrementation process is that offered by relevance theory, the main proponents of which are Sperber and Wilson (1986) (see also Blakemore 1987, 1992). Originally derived from Grice's (1975) maxim of Relation (see section 3.1.1 above), relevance theory takes the following principle as the basis for its all-encompassing model of human cognition:

*Principle of relevance*

Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 158)

According to Sperber and Wilson, when speakers produce an ostensive stimulus – a stimulus that is intended to be perceived as relevant (e.g. an act of speech, or a physical gesture) – hearers automatically presume it to be so. A kind of cognitive trade-off then ensues, during which the effort needed to process the communication is weighed up against its cognitive effects. As a result, the hearer will only commit that amount of cognitive effort needed in order to process the information to a level of optimal relevance. Werth (1999: 138) gives the following literary example for his analysis of relevance theory at work:

MEG: Was it dark?  
PETEY: No, it was light.

(Pinter 1960: 10)

Here, Petey's answer 'no' is highly relevant, since it provides all of the information demanded by the question and requires little cognitive effort to process. His further expansion 'it was light', however, according to relevance theory, is of very low, if not zero, relevance. Yet Werth notes that Sperber and Wilson at no point make clear how one is supposed to assess such degrees of relevance in the first place, and further raises the question of the lack of attention paid to the *meaning* of such utterances under the relevance theory approach. He argues that while the expansion 'it was light' may be deemed of little relevance, it is still more relevant than if Petey had given an answer with no semantic connection to the question, such as 'it was pink lace' or 'it was amazing' (Werth 1999: 139).

Werth claims that the notion of context 'receives surprisingly cavalier treatment in the Sperber and Wilson approach' (Werth 1999: 139) and objects to their definition:

The assumptions left over in the memory of the deductive device from the immediately preceding deductive process then constitute an immediately given context in which the next new item of information may be deductively processed.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 139)

He (1999: 139) argues that while Sperber and Wilson claim to be arguing against uniquely determined context, they are in fact arguing against context being *predetermined*, and he further objects to the fact that their argument is based on the demonstration that a single conversational opening may be followed by any number of possible outcomes. He states:

Obviously, such an approach, while it may help to elucidate various possibilities of whatever is under scrutiny, has no more than a very limited value as an instrument of discourse analysis or discourse explanation – since no *single* coherent discourse is being examined. But since they have chosen to vary their examples in this way, they cannot claim to have said anything about the context being uniquely determined. They have shown that it is not predetermined, i.e. that it may vary as the discourse proceeds.

(Werth 1999: 139)

Werth argues that, while a definition of context as the set of assumptions the participants have in mind during the processing of discourse may be adequate in those cases where one utterance follows on from another, it cannot explain the processing of the changes of subject and new topics which arise during the course of perfectly relevant conversation. Furthermore, he points out that Sperber and Wilson also frequently confuse the concept of relevant information with *news*, using the following example to illustrate his point:

... if Mary knows that Peter buys every book by Iris Murdoch, and she sees the latest one being put on display in the local bookshop, it would be reasonable for her to say to Peter,

(63) Iris Murdoch's new book is in the bookshops.

It may turn out that Peter already has this information, in which case utterance (63) will in fact be irrelevant to him.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 159-160)

Werth argues that, while Peter may already have the information Mary offers him, he would probably still consider it relevant in the circumstances described. Other critiques of relevance theory include Green (1997), on problems with the application of relevance theory to literary texts; Harvey's (1988) anthropological critique of the cultural-specificity of relevance theory; and Toolan's (1996) integrationalist evaluation of the narrowness of relevance theory's notion of context.

Werth, then, opts for a different approach to context, his basic argument being that the incrementation of a current proposition into the Common Ground is a 'text-driven' process. In order to explain this concept more clearly, it is useful to review our understanding of the configuration of the discourse world at this stage, illustrated in Figure 3e below. (This diagram originally appeared in the manuscript for Werth (1999), but was one of many illustrations removed prior to publication due to financial restrictions.) Each participant brings a certain amount of knowledge to the discourse event. The set of propositions which constitute this knowledge are represented in Figure

3e by the notation {K}. As we have already seen, not all of the participants' knowledge will be relevant for the processing of the current discourse. Werth explains that the *text-driven* nature of human cognition means that those which are relevant will be defined by the text itself and the propositions contained within it {P}. He states:

these propositions have many notional links with other propositions which are unexpressed, but nevertheless present. Some of them {P<sub>E</sub>} are more or less directly connected with the expressed propositions as entailments. Others {P<sub>K</sub>}, probably the majority, are pragmatically connected in that they relate the propositions actually expressed {P} to speaker and hearer knowledge, {K<sub>S</sub>} and {K<sub>H</sub>}.

(Werth 1999: 47)

Each of these links constitute areas of potential relevance, some of which will be activated as the text proceeds and some of which will not.

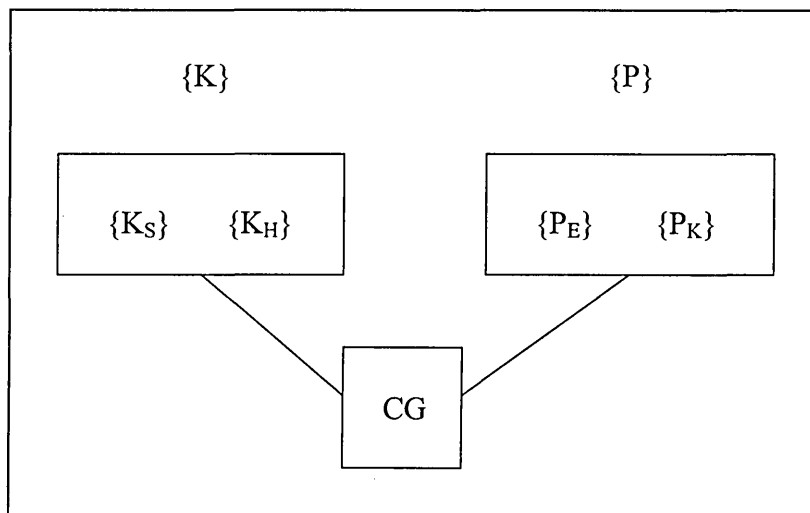
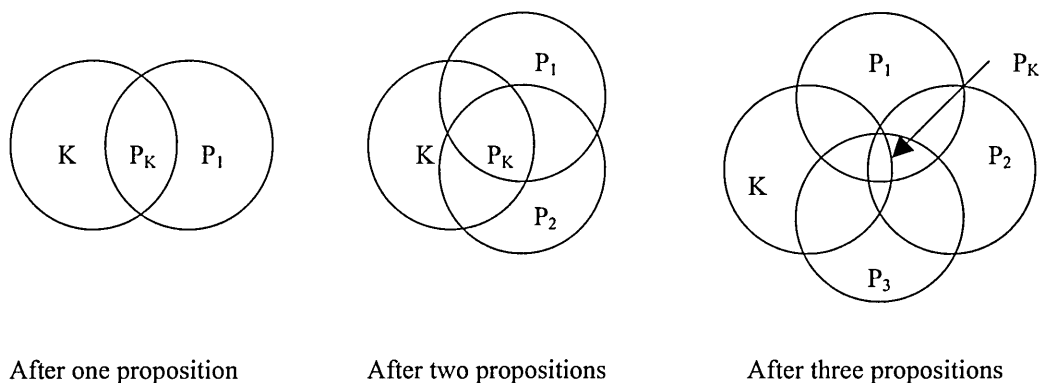


Figure 3e. Knowledge in the Discourse World

Werth (1999: 46) points out that the content of {P} is extremely limited at the start of the discourse, as is the content of {P<sub>E</sub>}. {P<sub>K</sub>}, however, is very large, since it represents the intersection of {K} with only one proposition. As the discourse proceeds, then, new propositions are introduced and {P} grows in direct proportion. {P<sub>E</sub>} grows too, though not always in direct proportion as some entailments of early propositions may be blocked by later ones. {P<sub>K</sub>}, meanwhile, becomes more and more restricted, a process

illustrated in Figure 3f below, adapted from Werth (1999: 146). As the text defines which parts of the participants' knowledge are needed to process the discourse, it creates what Werth (1999: 146) terms a 'homing-in' effect, as the relevant area of the knowledge-base becomes more and more specified. My application of Text World Theory to *The Music of Chance* in sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.3 below provides a practical demonstration of the principle of text-drivenness at work. The following section of this chapter, however, now moves on to examine the precise structure of the mental representations which result from the participants' co-operative and text-driven negotiation of a Common Ground at the discourse world level.



*Figure 3f. Text-Drivenness*

### 3.2.0 The Text World

We have seen in section 3.1.0 above that Werth considers all acts of communication to be deliberate attempts to negotiate a Common Ground. The pragmatic rules which govern this negotiation have been demonstrated in section 3.1.1, with the rules which govern the incrementation of knowledge and information into the Common Ground described in section 3.1.2. However, the means by which the participants *make sense* of those propositions advanced during the discourse remains as yet undefined. In order to explain this area of the cognition process, Werth introduces the 'text world' metaphor,

from which his approach as a whole takes its name. The text world is a conceptual space which, as already mentioned in section 2.2.2, bears a strong resemblance to Johnson-Laird's (1983, 1988) notion of a mental model. Werth states explicitly:

I will assume... that text worlds are in fact mental models constructed in the course of processing a given discourse.

(Werth 1999: 74)

Indeed, Werth's entire framework can be seen to be based on Johnson-Laird's basic premise that 'human beings understand the world by constructing working models of it in their heads' (Johnson-Laird 1983: 10). Thus, according to Werth, the participants at the discourse world level make sense of the discourse itself by constructing a mental representation of it – a text world – in which the language at hand can be conceptualised and understood. Where Johnson-Laird limits his analysis to single propositions, however, Werth claims that his own primary application of the notion of conceptual space is to the processing of entire texts. The validity of this claim is explored further in section 3.4.0.

As already mentioned in section 2.2.4, further similarities can also be identified between the structure and genesis of text worlds and those of Fauconnier's (1994, 1996, 1997) mental spaces. As also already mentioned in 2.2.4, according to Mental Space Theory, a projected mental space (M) can be constructed from within the participants' reality space (R) following a variety of different space-builders, such as

prepositional phrases (*in Len's picture, in John's mind, in 1929, at the factory, from her point of view*), adverbs (*really, probably, possibly, theoretically*), connectives (*if A then..., either... or...*), underlying subject-verb combinations (*Max believes..., Mary hopes..., Gertrude claims...*).

(Fauconnier 1994: 17)

Fauconnier's reality space can be seen to correspond with Werth's notion of a discourse world; the projected mental space with his text world; and space-builders with what

Werth terms *world-building elements*, which are discussed in detail in section 3.2.1

below. However, Werth notes:

Fauconnier does not restrict [the reality space] to the immediately perceivable environment. In his system, it appears to include all speaker knowledge, which makes it something of a blunt instrument, undefined, unrestricted, and unrelated specifically to M. Speaker reality is nothing more nor less than the undefined notion of reality that has bedevilled philosophy for centuries, and has made Possible World theory, Situation Semantics and much of formal semantics at the end of the twentieth century unworkable.

(Werth 1999: 181)

The undefined nature of Fauconnier's speaker reality space is particularly significant to Werth since, in his own approach, he is keen to emphasise that the text world is *constitutionally equivalent* to the discourse world from which it springs. Such a claim demands a rigorous definition of that world in order for any clear understanding of subsequent worlds to be achieved. Werth's attempts to provide such a definition have already been accounted for in sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 above. The means by which an equivalent richness of detail is created in the text world are the focus of this section of the chapter.

The pragmatic constraints at work within the discourse world, identified in section 3.1.1, ensure that the contents of the text world are always negotiated. This means that, while varying personal experience will affect the precise detail of each individual participant's text world to some extent, their basic structure will remain broadly within the same parameters. Werth divides that structure into two main components, corresponding with what he views as the two central functions of language, which he terms the 'informational function' and the 'modality function'. The informational function, Werth argues, consists of propositional meaning or, more crudely, what the text is 'about'. It is made up of what Werth terms 'function-advancing propositions', which will be discussed in section 3.2.2 below. The modality function of language, on the other hand, is concerned with 'the situating of information with respect to the



current context' (Werth 1999: 157), and constitutes the background against which propositional meaning is expressed. The world-building elements which make up this background are discussed in the following section.

### 3.2.1 How to Build (and Maintain) a World

Werth offers the following further division of the modality function of language, briefly defined above:

You can situate information in terms of (i) **interaction**, or social relationships; in terms of (ii) **location**, physical or abstract (which is then perspectivised for one participant, giving viewpoint); or in terms of (iii) **probability** (including reliability).

(Werth 1999: 183, original emphasis retained)

Werth (1999: 183) calls these the 'three levels of modality' and argues that world-building elements can be any of the three, depending on the type of world concerned.

He proposes a world-building principle:

**World-building principle**

The world-building elements used are in every case appropriate to the level of modality currently in force.

(Werth 1999: 185, original emphasis retained)

For the moment, we are only concerned with the first two levels of modality, interaction and location, since the probability level will be dealt with in detail in section 3.3.2 below. The discourse world, then, operates at the 'interaction' level, its parameters being defined according to the principle of mutual manifestness (Sperber and Wilson 1986; see also section 3.1.3 above). This is to say that the elements that make up the discourse world will tend to be implicit, particularly in a prototypical discourse situation such as face-to-face conversation, since they are mutually manifest to both participants. Werth (1999: 187) points out, however, that as discourse worlds get less and less prototypical these elements may need to be explicitly expressed. A mobile-phone user's provision of the basic deictic information 'I'm on a train' for the benefit of his or her co-participant is a useful example of this progression. Furthermore, Werth notes:

A written discourse will often go to considerable pains to make this kind of information available (consider all those novels which begin: '*As I write these pages, fifty years have passed since the tumultuous events I shall shortly describe. Sitting here in my comfortable apartment, it is hard to believe that...*').

(Werth 1999: 187)

Thus, the discourse worlds of written texts constitute the extreme end of the scale, in which cases it is extremely rare for the writer and reader to occupy the same physical space.

More often than not, the language produced, even within a prototypical discourse world, will concern a situation which is remote in either time or space (or both) from the mutually manifest surroundings of the participants. The boundaries of the text world will therefore need to be established overtly, usually with one participant describing the text world for the benefit of the other. The text world thus operates at the modality level of 'location' and is further defined by Werth (1999: 80) as 'a deictic space, defined initially by the discourse itself, and specifically by the deictic and referential elements in it'. He goes on to explain:

Assuming that we are at the beginning of our prototypical discourse, we need to be able to retrieve, at least in a general way, the **time**, **place**, **entities** and relevant **relationships** between them.

(Werth 1999: 187, original emphasis retained)

Werth provides a list of examples of deictic world-builders which may be used to establish the boundaries of a text world:

**Time (t):** time-zone of verbs; adverbs of time; temporal adverbial clauses, e.g. *it was a dark and stormy night, in 1979, at two minutes past midnight on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>9</sup> seconds after the Big Bang, as soon as John realised.*

**Place (l):** locative adverbs; NPs with locative meaning, locative adverbial clauses, e.g. *on the table, at Lewes in the county of Sussex, there was an old barn..., where the sea meets the sky.*

**Entities (c and o):** noun phrases, concrete or abstract, of all structures and in any position, e.g. *my friend Susan, these are the voyages of the starship Enterprise, a policeman who had lost his way, the square root of -1, your attitude to market forces.*

(Werth 1999: 187, original emphasis retained)

Werth notes that time and place tend to be explicitly mentioned only at the beginning of a discourse and, since they are not usually a central focus of the discourse as a whole, only time will continue to be marked linguistically by means of the tense used.

Werth follows Reichenbach's (1947) tense system, regarding verbal time expressions as consisting of a Speech Time (ST) component, a Reference Time (RT) component, and an Event Time (ET) component. Additionally, he argues that this system is most productive if the separate components are viewed as being layered (see Hornstein 1977, Rohrer 1985, and Adelaar and Lo Cascio 1985, for alternative analyses of time expressions). Taking ST as the start point of the discourse, RT as the principal time period of the situation concerned, and ET as the time of the actual event described, Werth offers the following examples of these concepts:

- (a) Pete had finished by 4 o'clock:  
ST (*now*) is preceded by RT (*4 o'clock*), and both are preceded by ET (*Pete finishes*) or alternatively: (ST – RT) – ET
- (b) Pete will have finished by 4 o'clock:  
ST (*now*) is followed by RT (*4 o'clock*) and both are preceded by ET (*Pete finishes*); otherwise: (ST + RT) – ET.

(Werth 1999: 169)

The important fact about these examples, Werth argues, is that the ET/RT relationship remains the same, while the position of ST in relation to RT shifts. He advocates a double relationship:

... the first is RT/ST, with RT capable of being Before (–), Simultaneous with (=) or After (+) ST. This provides the basic three-way semantic time (or time-zone) distinction. The second relationship is RT/ET; again, there is a choice between Before, Simultaneous with or After, but now it is ET which lays this on to RT, fine-tuning the basic threeway distinction into nine temporally related values.

(Werth 1999: 169-171)

Thus, the ST/RT relationship defines the background time-zone of the text world, while the RT/ET relationship defines the foregrounded time. The nine temporal values, and their related English tenses, are shown in Figure 3g below (adapted from Werth 1999: 171).

ST/RT RT/ET	precedes ST – RT	same as ST = RT	follows ST + RT
precedes RT – ET	Past Perfect	Present Perfect	Future Perfect
same as RT = ET	Past Simple Past Continuous	Present Continuous	‘True Future’
follows RT + ET	‘Future-in-the-Past’	Intentional Future	(Future + adverb)

*Figure 3g. Temporal Values and English Tenses*

When  $ST = RT$ , the text world time-zone is the Present; the foregrounded situations relate to the present situation surrounding the participants and the discourse itself is therefore likely to be about some aspect of the discourse world. Werth also includes a Present time-zone tense in his system which he calls the ‘Intentional Future’ and which relates to the projection of the subject’s current state of mind. This is separate from the ‘True Future’, which Werth claims ‘represents a prediction, speculation, etc., based in the Future time zone’ (1999: 171). When  $ST - RT$ , the text world is in the Past time-zone, and when  $ST + RT$ , the text world is in the Future. In either case, the discourse will refer ‘into’ some text world context. Werth explains:

... the ST/RT relationship gives the general time zone (and in the text this might be expressed by adverbs or by the preceding sentences), while the RT/ET relationship fine-tunes the more precise time of the situation within that time zone. To represent this layering, I bracket the notation as follows:

(ST – RT) – ET

Thus RT is established by the more deeply embedded (bracketed) part of the expression, while ET is determined in relation to this.

(Werth 1999: 172)

The following examples of Werth’s system are adapted from Werth (1999: 172):

1. (ST = RT) = ET (Present Simple, Present Continuous)  
I’m bleeding.
2. (ST = RT) – ET (Present Perfect)  
I’ve finished.

3.  $(ST = RT) + ET$  (Intentional Future)  
I'm going to finish soon.
4.  $(ST - RT) = ET$  (Past Simple, Past Continuous)  
John left at 4 o'clock.
5.  $(ST + RT) = ET$  (True Future)  
Tomorrow will be foggy.
6.  $(ST - RT) - ET$  (Past Perfect)  
John had left earlier.
7.  $(ST - RT) + ET$  (Future-in-the-Past)  
John would die later that evening.
8.  $(ST + RT) - ET$  (Future Perfect, 'Past-in-the-Future')  
John will have left by next Tuesday.

Here examples (1) to (3) all refer 'into' the discourse world, while (4) to (8) refer 'into' a text world context.

With the temporal boundaries of the text world set, and its spatial location established by means of locative adverbs, noun phrases and adverbial clauses, entities and objects may also be nominated as present in the conceptual space. At the text world level, any sentient beings are known as 'characters' and, since the text world is constitutionally equivalent to the discourse world, Werth emphasises that these characters should be assumed to 'have the same kind of rational attributes as participants' (Werth 1999: 189). This is a far cry from the manipulation of minimalistic symbols in possible worlds semantics and means that characters not only lead independent conceptual lives, but that the same logical and pragmatic principles apply to them as apply to the human beings in the discourse world.

Werth points out that once entities and objects have been established in the text world, the participants need to be able to keep track of how long they remain in the text world and where they are situated in relation to others as the discourse progresses. This is achieved by means of 'reference-chaining': the process of keeping entities in the active

register of the discourse by chaining each reference to a single entity in order to preserve continuity. The choice of anaphor used to form this chain may depend on a number of factors, as Werth explains:

- If the entity is *present in the immediate physical situation*, the next link in the chain is likely to be a demonstrative of some kind; otherwise a personal pronoun accompanied either by a gesture or by contrastive stress. (For example: **That man** [speaker points] *shouted at me*; **She's** *pretty, isn't she?*)
- If the referent is *first mentioned in the text* (e.g. with a noun phrase), the next link in the chain is likely to be a personal pronoun (without gesture or stress), provided that the distance between the first mention and the next link is not too great... (For example: *A car swept by. It looked like a Maserati.* Cf.: *John squinted down the road. Yes, it definitely looked like a Maserati.*)
- If the distance between the textual reference and the next link *is* too great (roughly, if at least a single sentence intervenes), then the link will probably be a definite NP – either a definite form of the referent itself, or a virtual synonym, or an ‘epithet noun’ (i.e. a hyponym or a metonym).

(Werth 1999: 158-159, original emphasis retained)

Werth goes on to point out that, if the material which interrupts a textual reference and the next link contains a reference to another entity with the same pronoun profile, the use of a definite noun phrase is essential to avoid ‘reference decay’. Werth (1999: 159) makes particular reference to Cathy Emmott’s (1994, 1995, 1997) work on tracking and maintaining character constructs in fictional worlds, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. However, Emmott’s model of narrative comprehension is of such influence on Werth’s understanding of reference chaining that at least a brief introduction to the framework is warranted at this point.

Emmott’s approach to linguistic study in general can be seen to be in harmony with Werth’s. Her account of narrative comprehension is not only grounded in the same cognitive principles as Text World Theory, drawing on many of the same sources and influences, but also places similar emphasis on the importance of a *discourse* approach to human language-processing, using full, real texts (see Green 2000 for an opposing view). Emmott explains:

- Real text often has a hierarchical structure. A reader needs to be able to recognise this structure in order to be able to 'orientate' him/herself, but also to be able to interpret certain items at sentence level, such as pronouns.
- In real text, the meaning of an individual sentence is derived partly from the surrounding sentences, the textual context.
- Real text requires the reader to be able to draw on stored information from the preceding text (and general knowledge).
- Stored information from the preceding text may also be used to assist interpretation by narrowing down the possibilities, such as when a reference item could in theory denote several referents.
- Real text has 'connectivity'. Sentences are organized so that they flow on from each other and this connection is often signalled linguistically.

(Emmott 1997: 75)

Emmott proposes that readers construct mental representations of the fictional context. These, she argues, must contain information about the physical environment and details of the spatio-temporal location of the events being described. Emmott terms these mental representations 'contextual frames' (Emmott 1997: 104), which can be seen to be similar, if not identical, to Werth's text worlds. Emmott explains:

I use the term '**contextual frame**' (or '**frame**') to describe a mental store of information about the current context, built up from the text itself and from inferences made from the text.

(Emmott 1997: 121, original emphasis retained)

A character becomes 'bound' into a contextual frame as soon as the text mentions their presence and they may be assumed to remain bound in that frame until the text gives any indication otherwise. Although a reader may hold information about more than one context at a time, Emmott argues that his or her attention will usually be directed to one in particular. She terms this process 'priming'. Thus, the contextual frame currently being processed, and therefore focussed upon, by the reader is the primed context, and any characters within that context are both bound and primed. Emmott notes that even if a particular sentence does not mention a character by name, common noun, or pronoun, readers remain aware of their presence in the primed contextual frame from the moment they are bound into it. She uses the terms 'textually-overt' and 'textually-covert' to specify whether or not a character is currently being referred to by the text. The complete set of characters mentioned during the course of the text forms what Emmott

terms the ‘central directory’. This contains knowledge about both primed and bound characters and bound and unprimed characters. A further set of characters, those which are unbound and unprimed, may also be included in the directory. The reader will know that these beings exist in the fictional world but the contextual frame to which they are bound may be unclear at that particular point.

In his own Text World Theory framework, Werth introduces a ‘reference-crossing rule’ (see Werth 1999: 166), which sets out the reasoning process by which readers may avoid losing track of characters’ movements and attributes. He identifies both zero reference ( $\emptyset$ ) and pronouns as instances where it may be easy to confuse referents, giving the following example of ambiguity:

He sat on his stool and  $\emptyset$  watched her as she busied herself  $\emptyset$  clearing away the dishes and  $\emptyset$  didn’t say anything.

(Werth 1999: 166)

The final zero is ambiguous between *he* and *she* and Werth offers the following rule as a recovery procedure:

**Reference-crossing rule**

(a) *When a reference chain crosses another or decays:*

- (i) use an anaphor which is at least high enough on the information hierarchy to restore the reference, or
- (ii) re-order the clauses to avoid the crossing or reduce the decay

(b) *Information hierarchy:*

Definite NP > Pronoun > (Gender > Number) > Zero

(Werth 1999: 166, original emphasis retained)

Thus, our initial example can be solved in one of two ways:

*Repair Strategy 1*

He sat on his stool and  $\emptyset$  watched her as she busied herself  $\emptyset$  clearing away the dishes and *he* didn’t say anything.

*Repair Strategy 2*

He sat on his stool *and*  $\emptyset$  didn’t say anything and  $\emptyset$  watched her as she busied herself  $\emptyset$  clearing away the dishes.

Further discussion of Emmott’s explanation of reference repair strategies in narrative is presented in Chapter Four of this thesis. Section 3.3.2 below now goes on to look at the



structure of that part of the text world which makes up Werth's category of the 'informational function' of language, mentioned in section 3.2.0 above.

### 3.2.2 Function-Advancing Propositions

We have seen that the deictic and referential expressions, or world-building elements, contained within a text establish the spatial and temporal boundaries of the text world and any entities or objects which may be present. These details can be seen to form a kind of static background against which the events of the narrative are played out. Throughout the introductory half of his final monograph, Werth (1999) describes the elements which make up the foregrounded 'story' of the text as 'plot-advancing', a term borrowed from Martin Joos (1964):

A 'plot-advancing proposition' is a non-deictic expression which functions, for the most part, as part of the motivation for setting up a text world in the first place: it tells the story, it prosecutes the argument – in short, it helps to satisfy the speech act upon which the discourse at that point is founded.

(Werth 1999: 190)

However, Werth identifies a number of shortcomings with using Joos' 'plot-advancing' terminology for the more advanced chapters of *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. He explains:

... as a technical term, it sends out too restricted a signal: it is fine for narrative texts, but for descriptive, discursive, instructive, etc., texts, it is too limited. I therefore propose to substitute for it the broader term '**function-advancing**'.

(Werth 1999: 190, original emphasis retained)

Within the category of function-advancing elements Werth then specifies a number of sub-categories relating to individual text types, a selection of which are set out in Figure 3h below, adapted from Werth (1999: 191). He argues that all of these sub-categories will be manifested propositionally within the text. This claim raises the question of the precise nature of Werth's understanding of what actually constitutes a proposition in the first place. He offers the definition of a proposition as a '*unit of meaning*' (Werth 1999: 194), and explains:

... unlike a **semantic predicate**, such as <Human>, which by itself makes no predication (in traditional terms, ‘does not make complete sense’), a proposition is independent, in the sense that it is a stand-alone semantic unit. This means that a semantic predicate by itself does not say anything about its text world, no more than does the word *human* by itself. To say something about its text world, a semantic predicate must be incorporated into a proposition, just as a word must be part of a sentence, even if only a sentence implied by the context.

(Werth 1999: 194-195, original emphasis retained)

Werth argues that, by themselves, predicates like <cat> or <table> not only have no connection to any text world entity and, therefore, do not refer, but also do not function. In order to function, a semantic predicate must ‘team up’ with other semantic predicates and logical functions.

Text Type	Predicate Type	Function	Speech Act
Narrative	action, event	plot-advancing	report, recount
Descriptive: scene	state	scene-advancing	describe scene
Descriptive: person	state, property	person-advancing	describe character
Descriptive: routine	habitual	routine-advancing	describe routine
Discursive	relational	argument-advancing	postulate, conclude...
Instructive	imperative	goal-advancing	request, command...

*Figure 3h. Sub-Categories of Function-Advancers*

Furthermore, Werth proposes that his definition of a situation, ‘in which some nominated entities (protagonists and objects) were in some state or relationship at a certain time, in a certain place’ (Werth 1999: 195), not only holds as the configuration of discourse worlds and text worlds but of propositions as well. Following case theory grammarians such as Fillmore (1968) and Langendoen (1969), Werth regards

propositions as akin to a kind of ‘scenario’ containing an arrangement of objects, or an ‘event’ involving some kind of action or change of state. In traditional accounts, however, Werth notes that

The meaning of any proposition is considered to be the conditions which give its truth-value, and every proposition must possess a truth-value in order to be a proposition.

(Werth 1999: 196)

As we have already seen in section 3.1.3 above, there are numerous problems involved with any objectivist attempt to establish the truth-value of a proposition, some of which are emphasised by Werth a second time:

... predicate calculus has no machinery for taking context into account, so extensions of constants have to be known by virtue of the proposition alone – they have, in other words, to be ‘just known’. It is assumed, therefore, that reference is a straightforward matter of being able to designate the extension of a constant ‘in the world’. But this assumes that constants *have* an extension in the world, i.e. that they are objectively definable, and the definition holds for that proposition whatever the circumstances of use.

(Werth 1999: 196)

Under the Text World Theory approach, however, propositions are regarded as representations of simple situations and, as Werth points out, ‘the domain of these situations is always a world, defined by the discourse itself’ (Werth 1999: 196). This means that reference is always resolved at a local, context-sensitive level, within the text world.

To return to Figure 3h above, Werth considers function-advancing propositions to be of two main types. The first of these, to which Werth applies the broad term ‘modifications’, relates chiefly to those propositions which advance the descriptive and discursive functions shown in the diagram. Werth is keen to distinguish between basic world-building and more complex description, as he explains that

the distinction between world-building and description-advancing is sometimes difficult to draw. Nevertheless, it *is* possible to distinguish descriptive elements which belong to the world-building phase from those which advance the descriptive function. The former consist of elements which establish the presence in the text world of certain entities, including any descriptive material necessary to identify them (such as restrictive relatives); the latter provide further modification on elements already nominated as present in the text world.

(Werth 1999: 198)

Werth also identifies three further categories of description; ‘identifying’, ‘individuating’ and ‘framing’. The first of these, identifying, is part of the world-building process, through which an entity is nominated as part of the text world. Individuation advances the description function by providing further detail about that entity’s nature and attributes. Finally, framing is the process by which our knowledge of an entity is broadened yet further by the addition of information from memory.

Werth’s second classification of function-advancers, ‘path-expressions’, may denote either a steady state, as in the case of circumstances, states and metonymies, or a change of state, either real or abstract, as in the case of actions and processes. Werth’s choice of terminology is not accidental and his notion of a ‘path’ is drawn directly from Langacker’s (1987, 1990, 1991) usage as part of his ‘Cognitive Grammar’ (see also Talmy 1978 and 1988). Briefly, Langacker’s approach can be seen to follow on from Gestalt psychologists’ observations on perceptual prominence in human responses to visual stimuli (see Dember and Warm 1979, Haber and Hershenson 1980). According to their hypotheses, perception is separated into ‘figure’, or that aspect of the visual stimulus which is most outstanding, and ‘ground’, which forms the less prominent background. In Langacker’s model of the image-schematic structure of human cognition, he proposes that image-schemas consist of a ‘trajector’, the most prominent element in the configuration, travelling along a particular ‘path’, in relation to a ‘landmark’, which can be seen as a direct development of the notion of ground.

Langacker’s formula is equally applicable to both abstract and concrete motion and is adopted by Werth, who makes explicit that he ‘will assume that all action and process

predications, whether concrete or abstract, are path statements, i.e. mappings from a source situation to a goal situation' (Werth 1999: 198). He goes on to explain:

Paths may cover various kinds of source-goal relationships, from simple **intransitivity** (*John is snoring* = 'The entity John maps onto a situation by way of a snoring function') to more complex functions (*John claimed that dogs didn't like him* = 'The entity John maps on (by a claiming function) to the situation in which no member of the set of dogs maps on to John (by a liking function)').

(Werth 1999: 198, original emphasis retained)

Once again, the particular significance of these specifications is discussed in further detail during my application of Text World Theory to *The Music of Chance* in section 3.4.1 below. For the moment, however, this chapter now moves on to examine the third and final layer of Werth's text world framework.

### **3.3.0 The Sub-World**

So far we have seen that the participants in the discourse world are responsible for the creation of a text world in which propositions are advanced and make complete sense. The structure and contents of this world are decided by means of negotiation. Section 3.1.3 explained the deductive processes by which the participants assess one another's reliability and the truth value of the propositions being expressed, and by which certain propositions are incremented into the Common Ground. Once the text world is established and progressing, as set out in section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above, departures from its basic world-building parameters may occur. In these instances, further worlds are generated. They constitute the third and final layer of Text World Theory and are known as 'sub-worlds'.

In a similar manner to text worlds, sub-worlds may be created by the participants. In such cases its creators are free, particularly in face-to-face communication, to question one another's statements and to clarify any aspect of the discourse they do not

understand. When characters communicate within the text world, however, the reliability of the worlds that they create cannot be assessed according to the same criteria as those produced at the discourse world level. As Werth points out:

... as we shift our focus of attention to the text world level, it is the text world, rather than the discourse world which provides our conceptual backcloth, and truth, probability, reliability and relevance are calculated no longer with respect to the participants, but instead with respect to the characters.

(Werth 1999: 210-211)

To explain his reasoning further, Werth gives the following example of a witness in a court case, explaining that

the witness is allowed to say that he or she has seen and spoken to a certain person, but all references to anything reported by that person have to be discounted as hearsay. Why does the law make that distinction? Because, in a court case, the witness, the judge, the prosecution and defence, and the jury are all co-present: they are all participants. Witnesses are, therefore, open to questioning about what they say – indeed this is the function of the procedure. Furthermore, they are under oath: this corresponds to a formalisation of the tacit principle of co-operativeness.

(Werth 1999: 214)

What a witness has seen, then, is acceptable evidence, since he or she can be interrogated about it, but what a witness may have heard through report is inadmissible, since the court cannot directly question the person responsible for saying it. Werth goes on:

In terms of the court discourse world, the absent informant is not a participant but a character. Unlike a witness, a character cannot be questioned and is bound by no oath to comply with the principles of discourse.

(Werth 1999: 214)

This distinction is essentially founded on those notions of ‘accessibility’, originating in possible worlds semantics and described in section 2.1.1 above. A world created by the participants may also be ‘accessed’ by them, since they have sufficient information to assess it for truth and to follow any inferences and reference chains contained within it. The participants, however, are unable to access those worlds created by characters, since they exist at a level removed from the immediate situation. The information contained within a character world, Werth (1999: 213) argues, can only be stored for possible future processing.

In accordance with this reasoning Werth makes an important distinction between ‘participant-accessible’ sub-worlds and ‘character-accessible sub-worlds’:

A participant-accessible sub-world is one in which the basic text-world parameters remain set as they are, but the participants temporarily depart from them. Since, in the world referred to by the text, the participants are responsible for this departure, the details remain bound by the principles of discourse, and normal discourse processes (reference chaining, inference drawing) continue to go through. A character-accessible sub-world is one in which the text-world parameters are departed from under the responsibility of a character, and hence in a way which is unpredictable and irrecoverable from the point of view of a participant (the reader, say).

(Werth 1999: 214-215)

Figure 3i below, adapted from Werth (1999: 215), schematises accessibility between worlds. The solid arrows in the left-hand diagram mean ‘has access’ and the dashed arrows in the right-hand diagram mean ‘does not have access’. The left-hand diagram shows that participants (marked P) have access to other participants, to characters (marked C) in a text world that they have created and to sub-characters (marked (C)) in a participant-accessible sub-world. The right-hand diagram shows that participants do not have access to sub-characters in character-accessible sub-worlds or to any entity more than two levels removed from the immediate situation. Characters, on the other hand, have access to other characters and to sub-characters in either participant-accessible or character-accessible sub-worlds. We should also note that no entity has any upward access.

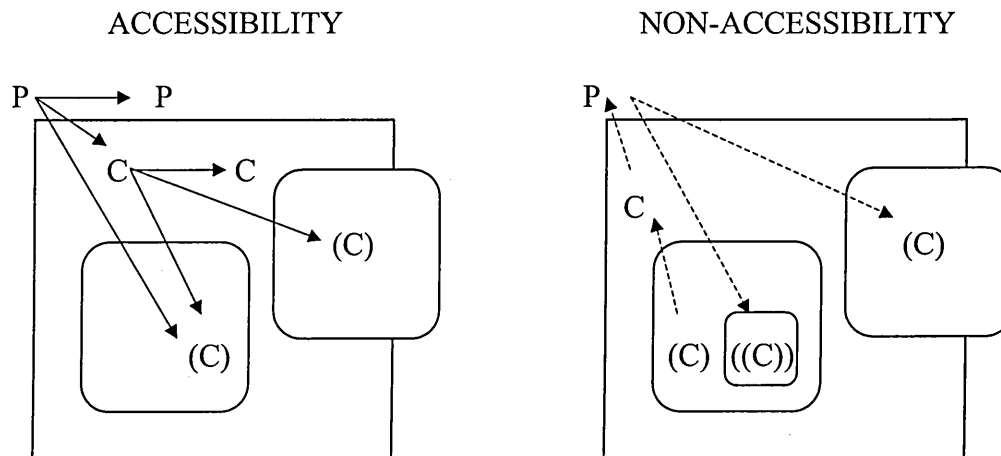


Figure 3i. Accessibility

According to Werth, both participant-accessible and character-accessible sub-worlds can be of three types: ‘attitudinal’, ‘epistemic’ or ‘deictic’. The following sub-sections examine each of these conceptual structures in turn.

### 3.3.1 Attitude

Werth divides his attitudinal sub-worlds into three central areas of conceptual activity: ‘desire’ (or ‘want-worlds’), ‘belief’ (or ‘believe-worlds’) and ‘purpose’ (or ‘intend-worlds’). The sub-worlds related to the first of these, desire, have as their world-building elements such predicates as *wish*, *want*, *hope* and *dream*. In order to explain why separate conceptual spaces are needed to process these predicates, Werth examines the following examples:

- (a) Clive wants to marry **a millionairess**.
- (b) Jill has been trying to catch **a pike**.

(Werth 1999: 227, original emphasis retained)

Here, two senses of the ambiguous NPs in both (a) and (b) are possible, so that either of the following interpretations of each may apply:

- (a) *Sense 1 – Specific*  
There exists a certain millionairess who Clive wants to marry.

*Sense 2 – Non-specific*  
Clive wants to marry any millionairess (who’ll have him).

- (b) *Sense 1 – Specific*  
There’s a certain pike which Jill has been trying to catch (for ages).

*Sense 2 – Non-specific*  
Jill wants to catch a specimen of that particular breed – any individual pike will do.

Werth, however, casts doubt on the traditional distinction between specific and non-specific determiners exemplified above. He argues that such examples of the phenomenon are usually constructed using NPs which may conventionally be easily individuated, such as marriage partners and fish. Werth then provides the following alternative cases for consideration, which contain less easily individuated NPs:



- (a) My son wants to buy a **packet of cornflakes**.
- (b) Bill is looking for **an aspirin**.

(Werth 1999: 228, original emphasis retained)

A simple change of NP, Werth argues, results in the virtual disappearance of the specific sense. Furthermore, he once again takes issue with the sentence-isolate viewpoint from which the specific/non-specific determiner differentiation is usually espoused. Werth argues that, in the majority of *want*-class predicate cases, alleged specific-non-specific ambiguity will not be present under a context-sensitive approach.

He explains:

Thus in the normal case, the usual example of the specific/non-specific distinction:

9. John wants to catch a fish

will be interpreted non-specifically, since it is part of our frame knowledge that fish(es) are not usually individuated (angler's tales and *Jaws* excepted, of course).

(Werth 1999: 229)

The numerous possibilities for interpretation are limited not only by the contextual information immediately surrounding the ambiguous phrase but also by the interpreter's wider frame knowledge, which we have seen schematised in sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 above.

According to Werth, then, the specific/non-specific distinction is actually one between *existential* and *stipulative* contexts. Existential contexts are those which conform to the parameters of a single text world, with any entities nominated in the world-building process being deemed to exist in that world. Individuated concepts can be seen to fit into this category since they constitute a set of properties predicated of an entity present in the current text world. Stipulative contexts, on the other hand, require a separate conceptual space, a sub-world, to be established, since they describe a set of conditions not fulfilled in the current text world. Thus, the desire predicates *wish*, *want*, *hope* and *dream* are stipulative world-builders, as Werth explains:

... they build a more or less remote sub-world whose function it is to state what it would take to satisfy the desire. At its simplest, this stipulation might be that such and such an entity should exist. More complex desire worlds may contain further conditions on the properties to be possessed by the entity in question.

(Werth 1999: 230)

Advertisements for job vacancies provide a useful example of the sorts of fulfilment conditions one might expect to find set out in the more complex want-worlds that Werth describes above.

Werth's second category of attitudinal sub-world, believe-worlds, are constructed according to similar principles to those which inform Werth's radical understanding of the process of truth assessment, outlined in section 3.1.3 above. The following example of a belief-context sentence is offered in Werth (1999) in order to explain his approach:

John believes that a *Pear* is better than a *Banana*.

(Werth 1999: 233)

The apparent obscurity of this context can be explained by the fact that this is not the original example used by Werth in his manuscript for *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. The names of two leading multinational computer manufacturers were replaced with 'Pear' and 'Banana' in the final version of the text, for obvious legal reasons. The general sense of the belief-context is not changed, however. Werth's argument still follows that if the proposition syntactically below the belief predicate, i.e. *a Pear is better than a Banana*, has already been incremented into the Common Ground, then the belief-predicate itself will be new information. This would mean that not only have the discourse participants accepted the proposition, but that the subject, *John*, also believes it to be true. The following further context is then presented in Werth (1999), again with some minor editorial changes having been made:

John has used a *Banana* compatible all his adult life. The term customer loyalty could have been invented for him. He has always hotly defended his computer, particularly against what he calls 'the Californian beach bums' machine' the *Pear*. Recently, though, several prestigious professional magazines have put both machines through rigorous testing, for hardware, software and user-friendliness. They concluded that a *Pear* was better than a *Banana* on all counts. Several of John's colleagues, including some of whose opinions he

respects highly, have switched to a *Pear*, and finally, reluctantly, he was persuaded to put one through its paces. Now **John too believes that a *Pear* is better than a *Banana*.**

(Werth 1999: 233-234, original emphasis retained)

Since the ‘prestigious magazines’ have already concluded that a *Pear* is better than a *Banana*, and that information has already been incremented into the Common Ground, the validity of the proposition *a Pear is better than a Banana* is not at issue here, rather it is John’s *attitude to* the proposition. Werth explains:

... within the text world of [the above context], the current proposition functions to relate a prior proposition to a new fact about John. This is not an opacity-inducing context, since it does not concern the truth of the embedded proposition E, but the truth of the attitude A in the matrix proposition.

(Werth 1999: 234)

In ‘world’ terms, where E is already incremented into the Common Ground, the proposition *John believes that E* can be regarded as function-advancing, since it simply reports a ‘public’ element of the text world. However, a second possible context for the sentence *John believes a Pear is better than a Banana* is offered as follows:

‘I’m really in a fix. I’ve got to buy the best computer available for my money, and I can’t seem to get any sensible advice. I know there’s a Pear and a Banana, but that’s about all I know.’

‘Well, it’s a pretty personal decision, but John believes that a Pear is better than a Banana. He’s worked with both.’

(Werth 1999: 234)

In this case, the embedded proposition is new information and the credibility of John’s beliefs will depend on who John is, whether a computer salesman or a technophobic computer-illiterate. The truth value of the embedded proposition E will thus be relativised to its context. This places E in a character-accessible sub-world, where E is true. This sub-world is a separate conceptual space from the main text world to which the proposition is relativised.

Werth’s final category of attitudinal sub-world, intend-worlds, relate to those speech-acts or propositional attitudes clustered around the concept of ‘intending future action’.

Werth includes promises, offers, commands and requests as intend-world builders. He

also acknowledges that there is some degree of overlap between intend-worlds and want-worlds. While the fulfilment of want-worlds may involve some form of future action, however, Werth argues that, in their case, there is no intention to carry that action out. He goes on to explain:

Desire worlds [i.e. want worlds], as we have seen, are stipulative (when character-accessible), that is, they operate in terms of conditions for existence, and this can just as easily be existence of states or entities as of actions. Purpose worlds, though, are not conditional, but to a lesser degree **intentional**. Purposes themselves are intentions, while promises, commands, requests and offers involve some mixture of the speaker's intention and the hearer's acceptance.

(Werth 1999: 238, original emphasis retained)

The accessibility of want-worlds is connected to Werth's earlier tense definitions, explained in section 3.2.1 and Figure 3g above. There, a distinction was made between the 'intentional future', based in the present time-zone and relating to any projection of the subject's current state of mind, and the 'true future', based in a future time-zone and relating to predictions and speculations. In a present time-zone text world, then, an intentional future would create a participant-accessible purpose sub-world. Werth (1999: 238) gives the 'Aims of this book' sections which open many academic monographs as an example of such a participant world. A true future construction in a present time-zone text world, on the other hand, would create a character-accessible sub-world. Werth explains that

the system as briefly set out here is as seen from the point of view of us, the participants, in our discourse world, in which the notion of intention is thought of in terms of *speaker-intention*. This is the normal assumption when working with tense, aspect and modality in the verb phrase, as with any deictic system. Speaker-intention is, then, quite normally located within the current text world. But **character-intention** (that is, third-person intention) is not a participant property, but is **reported by** the participants.

(Werth 1999: 238, original emphasis retained )

Since the participants have no means of vouching for the sincerity of a character's intentions, the content of a character want-world is necessarily only character-accessible.

Werth (1999: 227) acknowledges that there are many other propositional attitudes not included in the sub-world system laid out above. However, this brief note is as far as he goes in attempting to account for them. Even more peculiar is the lack of reference to modality anywhere in Werth's explanation of attitudinal expressions. Following Coates (1983), Palmer (1986), Perkins (1983) and Simpson (1993), the attitudinal features of language can be divided into three main categories of modality: 'deontic', 'boulomaic', 'epistemic', each reflecting a different speaker-attitude to a particular proposition. Deontic modality, first of all, is the modal-system concerning the speaker's attitude to the degree of obligation attached to the performance of a particular action. This category includes such modal auxiliaries as *may*, *should* and *must*, forming a continuum of commitment from permission through to requirement. Adjectival and participial constructions such as *it is necessary that*, *you are obliged to* and *you are forbidden to* are also possible. Many of Werth's purpose-worlds, and those relating to commands in particular, would appear to fit quite comfortably into the deontic category of modality.

Consider the following examples:

*You should go straight to the police.*  
*It is necessary that we take a blood sample.*  
*I must take this suit to the cleaner's.*  
*You are forbidden to stay out after eleven o'clock.*  
*You may have another biscuit.*

In each of these cases, the action being modalised can be seen to set up an unfulfilled, future situation in much the same way as Werth describes in his explanation of the formation of intending-future-action sub-worlds, summarised above.

Boulomaic modality broadly concerns any linguistic expression of desire. This category includes such modal lexical verbs as *hope*, *wish* and *want*, making it practically identical to Werth's category of want-worlds. Again, adjectival and participial

constructions are also possible, including *hopefully*, *it is hoped that*, and *it is good that*.

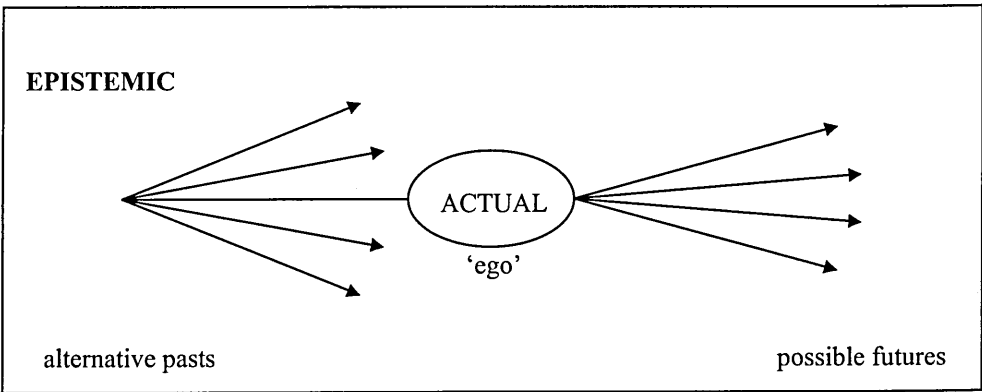
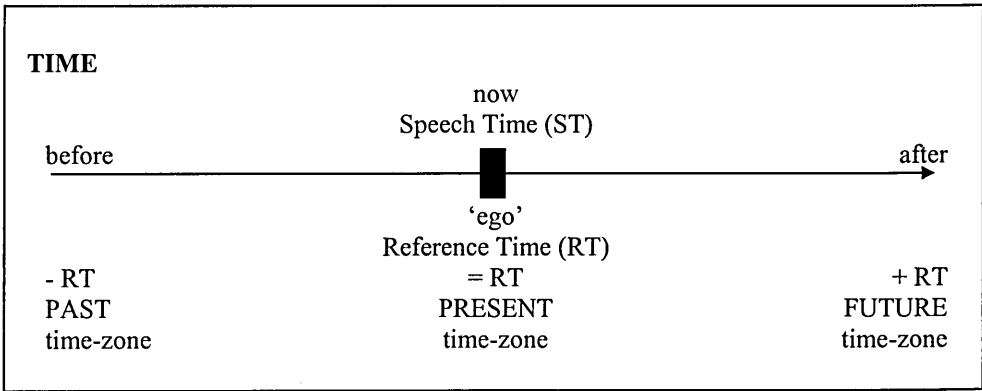
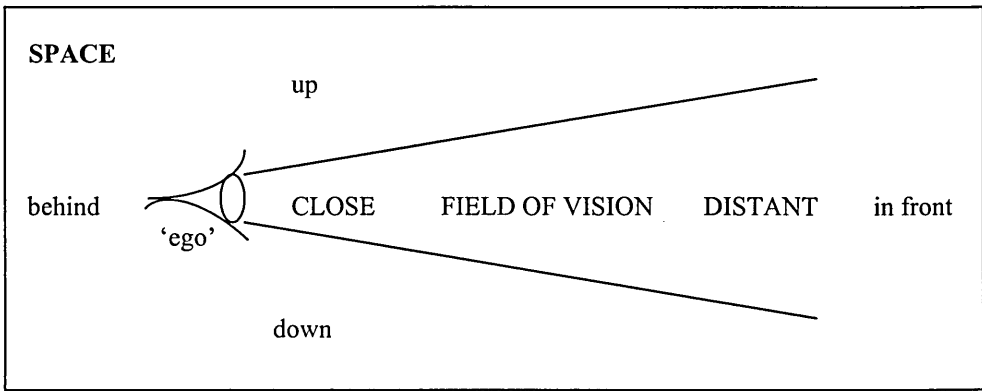
Here are some examples:

I hope that *you will be happy*.  
He wants *a new car*.  
I wish *you'd get lost*.  
It's good that *you're pregnant*.

Once again, the italicised contexts stipulate the conditions by which a particular desire can be fulfilled, in exact accordance with Werth's own explanation of want-world building expressions. Werth's remaining type of attitudinal sub-world, believe-worlds, can be seen to correspond with the final category of epistemic modality. This modal-system will be discussed below, as part of the explanation of Werth's approach to epistemology.

### 3.3.2 Epistemology

According to Werth, epistemic sub-worlds correspond to situations which are in some way remote from either the participants, in the case of participant-accessible epistemic worlds, or the characters, in the case of character-accessible epistemic worlds. The everyday notion of remoteness, of course, refers to physical distance. Not only is it possible for us to talk about certain situations as being more or less removed from our immediate circumstances, in such terms as 'unfamiliar', 'inaccessible' and even 'unreal', but we can also identify instances where a speaker may wish to remain psychologically detached, most frequently for reasons of social politeness. Werth (1997a, 1999) argues, however, that our understanding of these kinds of distance, which have long been a central concern for logicians, are still based on our notions of physical space. Figure 3j below, adapted from Werth (1997a: 249), shows how the conception of time in language mimics that of space.



*Figure 3j. Space, Time and Epistemic Distance*

The zero-point, or 'ego' (which Werth can be seen to have developed directly from Bühler's (1934) notion of the 'origo'), is the 'now' of the speaker, the Reference time in the Reichenbachian terms described in section 3.2.1 above. Past and future time-zones are metaphorically deployed in terms of direction from that point. Similarly, our

epistemic system has as its zero-point the ‘actual’, or our sense of what is contingently true. As Werth explains:

Branching off from the zero-point into the unexperienced resolution of the present situation are an infinite number of possible futures. These correspond to possible outcomes of the present conjuncture of events, which are in principle equal in likelihood. However, frame knowledge, inferencing and common ground knowledge usually also help to set probabilities for different outcomes.

(Werth 1997a: 250)

These possible outcomes are not limited to the decision-point of the actual moment, but occur at all decision-points, past, present and future. For those in the past, we already know how the situation turned out, but, as we have already seen in the discussion of possible worlds semantics in sections 2.1.0 and 2.1.1 above, we are still able to speculate how events may have differed had an alternative decision been made.

Remoteness can be expressed semantically in a number of different ways. The epistemic modal system, which Werth does not refer to, reflects the speaker’s confidence, or lack of confidence, in the truth of a particular proposition. Varying degrees of epistemic distance may be expressed through epistemic modal auxiliaries such as *must*, *could* and *might*, as well as certain modal lexical verbs, such as *think*, *suppose* and *believe*. It is also possible to express epistemic distance through adjectival constructions, such as *it is certain that*, *it is sure that* and *it is doubtful that*, as well as through the use of a number of epistemic modal adverbs, including *maybe*, *perhaps*, *possibly*, *certainly*, *definitely* and *arguably*. The epistemic modal system also includes a sub-system of ‘perception’ modality. This conveys the degree of commitment to the truth of a proposition by reference to some form of human perception, usually visual. Examples of perception modality include such adjectival constructions as *it is clear that*, *it is apparent that* and *it is obvious that*, as well as the use of related modal adverbs such as *clearly*, *apparently* and *obviously*. It should already be evident that this account of the epistemic modal



system conflicts greatly with Werth's own approach to the same subject. Although the remote worlds constructed by the belief-contexts outlined in section 3.3.1 above appear to belong to the traditional system of epistemic modality outlined above, Werth includes them as part of his category of attitudinal sub-worlds instead. He makes no mention of belief-contexts in his discussion of epistemic distance and the remote worlds it creates.

Werth focuses his attention on other semantic expressions of remoteness, noting, for example, that indirect speech can be considered to be more remote than direct speech. (Werth chooses to refer to 'direct' and 'reported' speech, following Banfield (1982), but I will use the more familiar terminology, following Leech and Short (1981), of 'direct' and 'indirect'). While an instance of direct speech will set up a sub-world, having different deictic co-ordinates from the text world in which it occurs (see section 3.3.3 below), indirect speech is a means of further shifting the relationship between those two worlds. Consider the following examples:

**Direct:** 'I like playing golf on Saturdays', said Jack.  
**Indirect:** Jack said he liked playing golf on Saturdays.

Werth (1999: 241) notes that where direct speech contains the original words spoken, the narrativised account of the indirect version moves one tense backwards, suggesting a shift in epistemic distance rather than temporal setting.

Werth also argues that instances of politeness, including tentativeness and certain kinds of conditionality, create epistemic sub-worlds as part of the face-preserving strategy (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987). In cases such as these, speakers can be seen to attempt to distance themselves psychologically from their utterances. The following are typical examples:

- (i) *I'd like a biscuit* (rather than *I want a biscuit*)
- (ii) *Would you be free next Friday?* (rather than *Are you free next Friday?*)

(iii) *We could go to a show* (rather than *We'll go to a show!*)

Each of these can be seen to contain a conditional structure responsible for setting up a hypothetical sub-world, as follows:

- (i) *If you were to offer me a biscuit, I would like one*
- (ii) *If I were to ask you out, would you be free next Friday?*
- (iii) *If you'd like to, we could go to a show*

Werth (1999: 241) also points out that, even though such implicit conditionals cannot be applied to certain past tense structures, e.g. *Did you want to speak to someone?* or *I was hoping to find some work here*, an implied face-preserving condition can still be identified within them, as follows:

I wouldn't want to presume, but it does seem to me that X (where X is face-threatening); so assuming X, then it might be the case that Y.

(Werth 1999: 241)

Thus, X might be *This is the sort of place that takes casual labour* and Y might be *I find some work here*. Under this analysis, X is revealed as world-defining and can be seen to set up a remote hypothetical sub-world.

The sub-world building role of the conditionals implicit within the above examples receives particular attention in Werth (1997a) (see also Werth 1997b). Werth examines the classical division of conditional structures into the 'protasis' and the 'apodosis'. The function of the protasis is to set up a theoretical situation and to mark it as remote from actuality. It therefore contains two components: a proposition defining the remote situation plus its remoteness marker. This marker may either be in the form of an *if*-clause or, alternatively, an inverted modal or auxiliary (see Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988 and Kay and Fillmore 1999 for a detailed examination of these structures).

Consider the following examples of the inverted forms:

- a. **Yes-no question:** *Did you phone your mother?*
- b. **Wh-question:** *Who did you phone?*
- c. **Exclamation:** *Did I enjoy that party!*
- d. **Conditional I:** *Should you see Ben tell him...*
- e. **Conditional II:** *Had I known, I would certainly have...*

- f. **Tags:** *I wasn't drunk, was I?*  
 g. **Negative items:** *Seldom had I seen such a beautiful view.*  
 (Werth 1997a: 251, original emphasis retained)

Werth argues that all of the above share a common property, namely that, rather than simply depicting a situation, they all 'take some situation and hold it up for inspection' (Werth 1997a: 251). Thus, (a) does not assert the situation *you phoned your mother* but rather suggests it to the hearer for either confirmation or disagreement. Similarly, (b) presents the incomplete situation *You phoned X* for completion, (c) considers *I enjoyed the party* and confirms it emphatically, and (d) and (e) stipulate a non-actual situation. The statement *I was drunk* made in (f) is retracted and offered to the listener for confirmation, and the proposition *I see a beautiful view* in (g) is considered and then relativised in terms of frequency.

The apodosis, on the other hand, defines a situation which is consequent on the protasis.

As Werth points out:

... the apodosis can never simply denote an actual or current situation; it can never be anything more than a probability of some degree – or, in other words, an *epistemic* expression.

(Werth 1997a: 252)

Furthermore, Werth argues that it is the epistemic nature of the apodosis which governs its grammatical structure. He explains that

the apparent simple future (or some other form which can also denote futurity) is in fact a high-force epistemic (a strong prediction), while both the so-called "conditional simple" and the "conditional perfect" are actually low-force epistemics (in the lower range of the possibility scale).

(Werth 1997a: 252)

In Text World Theory terms, then, the protasis sets up an epistemic sub-world more or less remote from the actual text world and the apodosis is the event, state or process which takes that initial situation on to a further point or conclusion. As such, the apodosis can be seen as the function-advancing element of the conditional epistemic sub-world.

While existing accounts of modality do not specifically deal with the logical notions of hypotheticality and conditionality that concern Werth here, it nevertheless appears odd that he should separate the sub-worlds created by such expressions from those related to speakers' desires and intentions. I would argue that both the want- and intend-worlds included in Werth's attitudinal category, along with believe-worlds and any other conceptual structure relating to epistemic distance, actually belong under a broad umbrella of what could be termed *modal sub-worlds*. These mental representations, of varying degrees of remoteness from the speaker's zero point, all convey a particular attitude to the proposition being expressed and, as such, should be more usefully grouped together within the Text World Theory framework. The viability of this suggestion is explored in detail throughout Chapter Four of this thesis, through the practical application of Text World Theory to Absurd prose fiction.

### **3.3.3 Deictic Alternation**

This final category of sub-world relates to departures from the deictic signature of the text world. Werth claims that variations of any of the world-building elements of time, place and entity will set up deictic sub-worlds independent of the main text world. These variations may be initiated by either the participants, choosing to focus on a different time, location or set of entities, or by characters, who may also create deictic departures in their narration of memories. Such character flashbacks may have as their world-building elements predicates like *remember* and *recall*, and are the most common form of temporal alternation. They work by taking the narrated action out of the existing temporal parameters of the text world and into a previous time frame. They are also only character-accessible, since they present episodes from within characters' minds and do not carry the same reliability as a narration vouched for directly by the author.

Participant-accessible temporal alternations, on the other hand, remain part of the existing text world, even though they may present events preceding the main plot-advancing elements. Werth includes any shift in tense in the main text world, as well as instances of direct speech, as typical examples of participant-accessible temporal sub-world builders. He explains:

[Direct speech] is not normally thought of as a temporal variation at all, but its main effect is to change the basic time-signature of the text world, for example by injecting some Present Tense utterances into a Past Tense narrative. This takes us, as it were, directly into the character's discourse world: the tenses used are then regrouped around the ST of this discourse world, rather than that of the participants.

(Werth 1999: 221)

We have already seen, in section 3.3.2 above, that indirect speech forms an epistemic rather than deictic sub-world, which can be either participant- or character-accessible. However, it is important to note that Werth appears unsure over this distinction. He claims in the first instance that '[indirect] speech... is not sub-world forming at all' (1999: 221), an assertion repeated in Werth (ms: 10), only to contradict himself later in an extended discussion of the epistemic sub-worlds created by such speech constructions (1999: 240-241). I would agree with the later of these conflicting positions, which holds that the tense shift in indirect speech signifies a greater degree of epistemic distance than that of direct speech.

Werth argues that both direct and indirect *thought*, as well as *le style indirect libre*, provide an insight into characters' mental processes and therefore create sub-worlds which are only character-accessible. This claim raises a question, acknowledged by Werth (1999: 221), namely that since the reader is being given privileged access to a character's thoughts, surely these cases are participant-accessible? Werth explains, however:

... although these techniques make public what is usually private, they also offer only the limited viewpoint of the single individual. Although this viewpoint is being presented to the reader with crystal clarity, the thinker, as a non-participant, is allowed to entertain any

bizarre kind of proposition without having to subject it to the normal safeguards of discourse.

(Werth 1999: 221)

However privileged the insight, then, there can be no guarantee of the truth or viability of its contents. Werth offers the example of the thought-processes of a schizophrenic as a possible example of the sort of suspect material to which a reader may be gaining access. Although Werth includes his discussion of direct and indirect thought in the deictic sub-world section of *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (1999), it is not clear whether he is claiming that this is the type of world such constructions create. Consider the following examples of direct and indirect thought representation:

**Direct:** 'I love Sundays', thought Jack.  
**Indirect:** Jack thought he loved Sundays.

It appears that the direct form fits comfortably into the deictic alternation category, showing the same injection of present tense utterances into past tense narration as direct speech, thus changing the time signature of the text world. Indirect thought, however, does not follow the same pattern. Rather, the tense shift in the narrativised indirect version suggests the same epistemic distance as that created by indirect speech. This would seem to suggest that direct thought representation creates a character-accessible deictic sub-world, while indirect thought creates a character-accessible epistemic sub-world.

Variations in the temporal co-ordinates of the text world frequently also cause a subsequent variation in its spatial parameters as well. This is particularly common with flashbacks, which often project the reader into a sub-world which depicts both a different time and a different place. However, spatial deictic sub-worlds can also occur without a change in time-signature. Werth describes these as the ““Meanwhile, back at

the ranch” variety’ (Werth 1999: 224) which act as windows onto other concurrent scenes. Occasionally, argues Werth, a spatial displacement may be of equal importance in a narrative as the main text world, in which case it would be best regarded not as sub-world variation but as parallel text world. The reader is then able to ‘toggle’ between the split locations. Werth goes on:

This depends on how independent from each other the alternate locations are. In cases where the action simply ‘moves on’, it seems plausible that a whole new set of parameters should be defined, and hence a separate text world... In other cases, there will be parallel scenarios which both (all) relate to a single principal situation. In such cases, it will be preferable to think in terms of parallel sub-worlds within a single text world.

(Werth 1999: 225)

Precisely how long the action in a new location should ‘move on’ before it can be considered an autonomous situation is never made clear, however. Werth provides no further detail on how the differentiation between text world and extended deictic sub-world might be made.

Indeed, Text World Theory is unique in its specification of deictic alternation as a world-forming element. Unlike epistemic and attitudinal worlds, which have obvious theoretical roots in logic and possible worlds semantics, deictic sub-worlds have no apparent precursor in any other ‘worlds’ framework. A possible reason for this is suggested by the numerous problems which arise from Werth’s inclusion of deictic shifts as separate worlds, many of which seem to be associated with his choice of terminology. According to the hierarchical structure of Text World Theory, *sub*-worlds can be seen as conceptual detours which have a sub-ordinate relationship to the central text world. However, even short stories may contain dozens of deictic displacements and novels may contain many hundreds. Under Werth’s approach, the opening scene of every narrative would have to be regarded as the main text world for that discourse. All subsequent deviations from the world-building parameters of that world are then sub-

worlds of one sort or another. But is this how literary texts are really structured? Surely readers rarely encounter texts whose opening lines remain as some sort of central reference point through to the novel's end. Werth's vague acknowledgement that there may be numerous text worlds of equal status presented in the course of a narrative falls considerably short of a satisfactory explanation of this common, if not universal, discourse feature. Similarly questionable is Werth's account of entity displacement as a further deictic sub-world building element:

Just as it is possible to set up alternative times and alternative places within a single text world, it is also possible to set up alternative (sets of) entities (characters or objects). As with split locations, the different sets of entities can be co-equal – attention is equally divided between the various sets. Or we can have a main set and a subsidiary set.

(Werth 1999: 227)

The suggestion here that an entirely separate conceptual structure is needed in order for the reader to shift his or her focus from one set of textual entities to another seems somewhat extreme. Indeed, Emmott's (1997) alternative choice of terminology in her theory of narrative comprehension, already briefly mentioned in section 3.2.1 above, provides an interesting alternative explanation.

We have already seen how Emmott's account of the processes of binding and priming allows for the fact that readers may hold information about more than one context at a time, yet have their attention directed to just one situation in particular. Instead of 'worlds', Emmott discusses deictic structure in terms of 'frames' and at no point specifies that one particular type of frame should be considered as superordinate to any other. Thus, while instances of epistemic distancing or the expression of a particular attitudinal stance may cause obvious remote situations to be constructed in the minds of readers, they are nonetheless able to track the countless scene-changes and character movements enacted during the course of a narrative without having to refer to an overarching conceptual hierarchy. This is the process known in Emmott's terms as



‘frame-switching’, by which the reader simply ‘ceases to directly monitor one frame and starts monitoring another’ (Emmott 1997: 147). The viability of incorporating this area of Emmott’s framework into a modified version of Text World Theory is explored in section 4.3.0 of this thesis. With the basic methodological foundations of Werth’s own version of the text world model now established, however, section 3.4.0 now goes on to examine the typical practical use to which Werth put his framework during his lifetime.

### **3.4.0 Narratological Perspectives**

Following the exposition of the central tenets of Text World Theory presented in the preceding sections, in the remainder of this chapter I provide a practical demonstration of Werth’s typical text world approach to discourse study. Both the preliminary and extended applications of Text World Theory to Paul Auster’s (1992) *The Music of Chance* which follow not only offer an example of Werth’s model at work, but also begin the further evaluation, which forms the focus of the latter half of this thesis, of the advantages and limits of Werth’s approach. Section 3.4.1 provides an initial illustration of the three levels of Text World Theory detailed in this chapter so far, through the text world analysis of the opening paragraph of *The Music of Chance*. As already mentioned in section 1.1, Auster’s novel can be seen to be situated at the most realist extreme of the cline of Absurd novels examined during the course of this thesis. It relates the story of Nashe and Pozzi, two characters who form an unlikely alliance as gambling partners following a chance meeting by the side of a deserted road. Nashe gives Pozzi the financial backing necessary for him to take part in a high-stakes poker game with two eccentric millionaires, Flower and Stone. Pozzi loses the game and the pair find themselves heavily in debt to their challengers with no means of repayment. Their only

escape from this predicament is to become employees of Flower and Stone and contracts of employment are swiftly drawn up. Nashe and Pozzi are set to work building a wall of ten thousand stones, two thousand feet long and twenty feet high, in the grounds of the millionaires' mansion.

The absurd themes present in Auster's work have received a considerable amount of literary critical attention (see, for example, Bernstein 1995, Bruckner 1995, Chénétier 1995, Little 1997, Wesseling 1991). However, despite the obvious correlations between the absurdity of the plot of *The Music of Chance* and that of the Greek myth at the heart of Camus' (1975) *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Auster retains a realist structure throughout this particular narrative, which also follows a chronological progression from start to finish. *The Music of Chance* thus fits comfortably into Weinberg's (1970: 10) category of 'more realistic than stylized' Absurdism. To return to Weinberg's explanation of her terminology, already discussed in section 1.1, she states:

These novels are informed by a vision of absurdity and have at their centre a passive, rationalistic, or hopelessly ineffectual victim-hero, dominated by his situation rather than creating or acting to change it. They have a more or less realistic surface, with somewhat surrealistic elements. Realism of detail, rather, underscores the madness of the world, its grotesque comedy.

(Weinberg 1970: 11)

The thematic absurdity, yet relatively unchallenging structure, of Auster's novel renders it a particularly useful text upon which to base the initial exemplary text world analyses below. As also already discussed in section 1.1, the novels examined in Chapter Four of this thesis are, by contrast, situated further along the cline of literary experimentalism and provide the more challenging literary data necessary for the rigorous testing of the boundaries of Text World Theory which forms the focus of that section of the thesis.

Following the illustrative application of Text World Theory to a short extract from *The Music of Chance* in section 3.4.1, section 3.4.2 then begins the verification of Werth's claims to be fundamentally a *discourse* linguist, dealing not only with real, extended texts, but also with the context surrounding their production and interpretation. Werth's criticisms of possible worlds semantics, cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, previously set out in Chapter Two, can thus be re-assessed according to his own attempts to broaden Text World Theory beyond the analysis of sentence-level phenomena. The only extended application to which Werth put his text world framework during his lifetime, namely the analysis of extended metaphor in literary texts, is therefore outlined in section 3.4.2. Section 3.4.3 then goes on to provide a practical test of the benefits and boundaries of such an approach to discourse study in the examination of the metaphorical undercurrents running throughout the whole of *The Music of Chance*.

### **3.4.1 A Preliminary Text World Analysis**

We have already seen, in section 3.1.1 above, that the discourse worlds of written communication are usually split, with the real author and real reader of a text occupying separate spatio-temporal points. As such, neither participant has direct access to the immediate surroundings of the other. In cases of written correspondence between people who are familiar with each other, the participants may make fairly accurate assumptions about the nature of the discourse world their co-participant inhabits. The less familiar the participants are, however, the less accurate these assumptions are likely to become. In the case of a novel like *The Music of Chance*, for example, the contents of the author's discourse world may only be guessed at by the majority of readers, taking clues either from the current text or from other biographical information available in their

wider, cultural surroundings (see Booth 1961). Similarly, although Paul Auster may have had some idea, particularly about the readership he expected to receive the novel at the time of its first publication, this would most likely have been limited to a fairly vague hypothesis, again based on general information. Nevertheless, the preconceived ideas that the participants have about one another form a substantial part of the background knowledge that each of them brings to the discourse event (see Figure 3b above), having the potential to influence directly both the writing and the interpretation of the text. As Werth notes, 'the immediate situations, respectively, of writing and reading are presumably less important in such cases than the shared baggage of cultural assumptions, general knowledge etc.' (Werth 1995a: 55). We have already seen in section 3.1.3 how the principle of text-drivenness allows the reader to differentiate which parts of that general knowledge will be needed in order to process and understand the discourse at hand.

The logistics of analysing the discourse world surrounding the production and interpretation of a novel are further complicated by the necessary involvement (except where an author is extremely unpopular) of a multiple readership as one half of the discourse-participant relationship. Each of the resulting multiple reader-situations can be considered as an entirely separate language event with its own unique discourse world. Even on those rare occasions where several readers may be reading a text in the same place at the same time (in certain classroom situations, for instance), each reader will have a distinct conceptualisation of the immediate surroundings, based on their individual knowledge and experience. Opinions and expectations of the author, for example, may differ greatly from reader to reader, depending on the nature and frequency of previous encounters with their work. (The frame-based structure by which

this experience is stored and then deployed during the discourse has already been discussed in sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 above.)

Section 1.2 of this thesis outlined the practical and theoretical reasons why the analyses undertaken in the course of this thesis focus on only one out of the multitude of possible readings of each text. However, it is also important to note that, as with the majority of novels, I did not read *The Music of Chance* in one sitting. As a result, the spatio-temporal signature of the discourse world I temporarily occupied with the implied author of the text varied several times before the discourse was completed. Indeed, it could be argued that each change of my scenery constituted a new discourse world, due to the potential of my environment to affect my interpretation of the text. The discourse world of any given author, too, will usually vary spatially and temporally in the same way, again with the same potential influence on the text being created. Even focusing attention on one particular reading of *The Music of Chance*, then, does not avoid the presence of not one but countless discourse *worlds*.

The complexities identified here raise the question, once again, about the validity of Werth's use of face-to-face conversation as a template for the discourse worlds of all other communication types. Not only is there considerable discrepancy between the structure of a conversation world and that of the multiple participant-worlds involved in the production and reception of a novel, but the split nature of those worlds also renders any notions of a 'joint venture' (Werth 1995a: 51) of discourse unstable. In order to explore this possibility further, let us consider the opening paragraph of *The Music of Chance*, reproduced below, and its associated discourse world:

For one whole year he did nothing but drive, traveling back and forth across America as he waited for the money to run out. He hadn't expected it to go on that long, but one thing kept leading to another, and by the time Nashe understood what was happening to him, he was

past the point of wanting it to end. Three days into the thirteenth month, he met up with the kid who called himself Jackpot. It was one of those random, accidental encounters that seem to materialise out of thin air – a twig that breaks off in the wind and suddenly lands at your feet. Had it occurred at any other moment, it is doubtful that Nashe would have opened his mouth. But because he had already given up, because he figured there was nothing to lose anymore, he saw the stranger as a reprieve, as a last chance to do something for himself before it was too late. And just like that, he went ahead and did it. Without the slightest tremor of fear, Nashe closed his eyes and jumped.

(Auster 1992: 1)

According to Werth's framework, then, the separate events of Paul Auster's creation and the reader's reception of this text constitute a unified discourse. As I have already mentioned above, however, the majority of readers will have no direct access to the immediate situation(s) surrounding Auster during his writing of the novel. Instead, they must rely on their immediate surroundings, including their background knowledge, upon which to base an understanding of the discourse. Although previous experiences of other Paul Auster texts, stored alongside other propositional and functional knowledge-frames, may affect the precise structure of the mental representation the reader constructs, the only real connection they have with Paul Auster is the text of *The Music of Chance*. They are not able, as in face-to-face conversation, to make inferences based on Auster's body language and tone of voice, to ask questions or to clarify any misunderstandings. In this sense, the reader is unable to negotiate the Common Ground of the discourse with the text's author in the same way as if the participants were communicating face-to face. Nevertheless, Werth argues that all readers will enter into written discourse with the same expectations of co-operation from their co-participant as those set out by Werth (1999: 49-50) (see also section 3.1.1 above), at least insofar as they can expect to be able to construct a coherent text world in which the propositions advanced will make complete sense. (This concept is explored in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.)

For the moment, however, let us return to the opening lines of *The Music of Chance*, which establish the initial deictic boundaries of the reader's text world. The simple past construction, 'he did nothing but drive', in the first line of the passage signals that the text world has a past time-zone and, although no precise year is mentioned, my cultural knowledge enables me to infer that the story is set in the twentieth century or later from the reference to driving. Knowledge of the fact that Paul Auster is a contemporary writer will also further aid that deduction. The same reference, of course, also allows us to assume that there is a car present in the text world, as well as the other explicitly mentioned object, 'money'. The first line of the narrative also narrows the possible geographical location of the text down to 'America', and nominates a male character, 'he', as present. The first proper noun to occur in the text, 'Nashe', allows that initial third person pronoun to be chained to its single referent. The second character introduced into the narrative, 'the kid who called himself Jackpot', is then easily identifiable as a separate textual entity by the same reference-chaining process (see section 3.2.1 above). The fact that both of these characters are referred to in the third person also makes clear the presence of a separate narrator. However, no further details are offered about the identity or characteristics of this textual persona. In such cases, the reader might assume that the narratorial voice is a textual manifestation of the real author and may even use the information and opinions expressed in the text to enhance their mental picture of this inaccessible discourse world co-participant (for further discussion see Booth 1961 and Toolan 2001: 64-68) .

The structure of the emerging text world of *The Music of Chance* can be translated into diagrammatic form. Figure 3k below shows each of the world-building elements identified so far – time (t), location (l), characters (c), and objects (o) – in the world-

building section of the diagram, marked WB. The numerous function-advancing propositions also expressed in the text are represented in the function-advancing section of the diagram, marked FA. We should note that the diagram allows a useful distinction to be drawn between those function-advancers which are actions, events or processes, signified by vertical arrows, and those which are metonymies or predications made about the characters, signified by horizontal arrows. This particular schematisation can be seen to follow Halliday's (1985) differentiation between material processes on the one hand and relational processes on the other. In terms of Werth's sub-categories of function-advancers, represented in Figure 3h above, those function-advancing elements relating actions and events (i.e. Nashe driving, Nashe meeting the kid, Nashe taking a chance) are all plot-advancers, while the further detail provided by the specific location and the kid's name can be classed as scene-advancing and person-advancing, respectively.

<b>TEXT WORLD</b>	
<b>WB:</b>	t: Twentieth Century or later l: America c: Nashe, the kid o: money, car
<b>FA:</b>	Nashe ↓ drives → across America ↓ meets the kid → named Jackpot ↓ takes a chance

*Figure 3k. The Initial Text World of The Music of Chance*



The information carried by the main function-advancing propositions in the passage is incremented into the Common Ground of the discourse. The ease with which this happens will depend on the reader's assessment of each proposition's individual truth value. As we have already seen in section 3.1.3 above, this is a context-sensitive discourse world process and its results will depend on the perceived reliability of the author of the text. However, as we have already seen, the reader has no direct access to their co-participant in this particular discourse situation. Other sources of information must therefore be relied upon in order for the reliability of the text to be established. As I have already mentioned above, the narratorial voice (the implied author) is likely to form the reader's main point of reference in the construction of an opinion on (the real author) Paul Auster's reliability. Furthermore, the high degree of *authority* attributed to *authors* in contemporary society in general is evident in the shared etymological roots of those very terms. This, coupled with the fact that *The Music of Chance* describes a fictional world, unfamiliar to the reader, means that the reliability of the reader's co-participant may be easily accepted and the function-advancing propositions identified above can be incremented into the Common Ground relatively effortlessly. There are, however, a number of other propositions contained in the opening paragraph of *The Music of Chance* whose truth values are less straightforwardly assessed, requiring a sub-world to be constructed in the mind of the reader.

The first sub-world forming proposition occurs when the time signature of the text world changes from the simple past, initially constructed in the first sentence, 'For one whole year he did nothing but drive', to the past perfect, 'He hadn't expected it to go on that long', in the second. In terms of the tense and aspect system described in section 3.2.1 and illustrated in Figure 3g above, the RT in the first instance is the same as the

ET, whereas in the second instance the ET precedes the RT. This temporal alternation constitutes a basic flashback for which, as we have seen in section 3.3.3, Werth insists a deictic sub-world must be created. In this case, the flashback lasts only for the duration of a single sentence, as Nashe's state of mind at a previous point in history is recalled. Although the exact date of the alternative time zone is not specified, we can assume from the preceding reference to 'one whole year' and the following reference to 'three days into the thirteenth month' that the state of affairs described in the sub-world is situated approximately one year before that of the main text world.

A second sub-world, this time epistemic in nature, occurs with the sentence, 'Had it occurred at any other moment, it is doubtful that Nashe would have opened his mouth'. The protasis portion of this conditional construction (see section 3.3.2 above) describes a theoretical situation, remote from actuality, in which Nashe's meeting with the kid happens at another moment. The apodosis portion of the conditional can then be seen to take the role of function-advancer in that remote world, as also discussed in section 3.3.2 above. In this case, it describes the unrealised event of Nashe keeping his mouth shut. The epistemic distance of this function-advancer from the main text world is further exaggerated by the additional presence of an epistemic modal within the apodosis, in the form of an adjectival construction, 'it is doubtful that'. Indeed, if we consider all instances of epistemic modality to be sub-world forming, as suggested in section 3.3.2 above, we can see that this particular conditional construction actually creates one epistemic sub-world embedded within another. Figure 31 below illustrates this complex conceptual structure and shows the increasing epistemic distance created between the main text world and each subsequent sub-world.

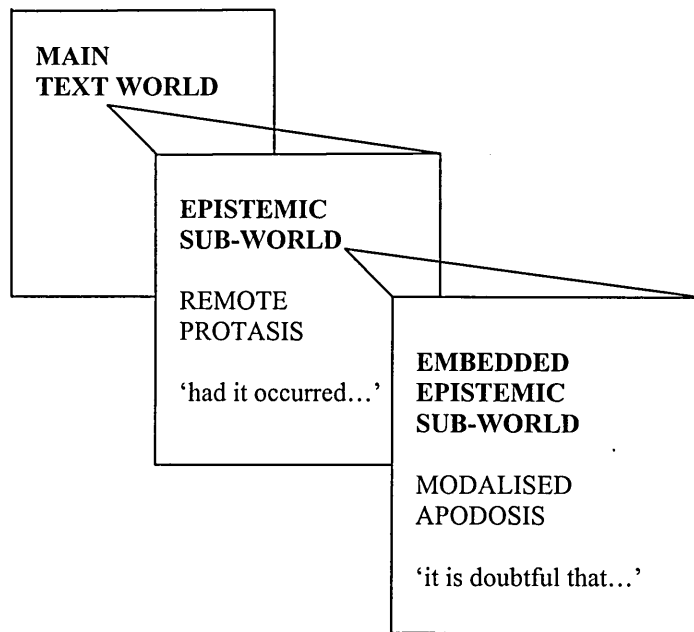


Figure 31. Embedded Epistemic Sub-World

Further examples of exaggerated epistemic distance can be found elsewhere in the opening paragraph of *The Music of Chance*, namely with the inclusion in the passage of what Uspensky (1973) and Fowler (1986) refer to as *verba sentiendi*, or words denoting thoughts, feelings and perceptions. In the extract under analysis, these words occur as Nashe's state of mind is revealed to the reader by means of the omniscient narrator:

He hadn't *expected* it to go on that long, but one thing kept leading to another, and by the time Nashe *understood* what was happening to him, he was past the point of *wanting* it to end... because he had already *given up*, because he *figured* there was nothing to lose anymore, he *saw* the stranger as a reprieve, at last a chance to do something for himself before he was too late.

(Auster 1992: 1, my emphasis)

Fowler (1986) differentiates between this type of *internal* narration and that which describes events *external* to any participating character's consciousness. He further divides internal narration into Type A: a highly subjective mode of mainly first-person narration, characterised by extensive use of modality and *verba sentiendi*, and Type B: in which events are portrayed from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, also characterised by extensive use of *verba sentiendi*. The extract from *The Music of*

*Chance* above fits into the latter of these two categories and is, of course, an example of indirect thought representation. It has already been argued, in section 3.3.3 above, that indirect thought creates an epistemic sub-world which is only character-accessible, since the validity of its contents are not verifiable by the reader. The extract from *The Music of Chance* appears to support this hypothesis and is all the more interesting for the fact that one of the insights into Nashe's inner thoughts is actually embedded within the deictic sub-world of the flashback identified earlier. This conceptual structure is illustrated in Figure 3m below, along with each of the other worlds identified so far.

Figure 3m adheres, for the most part, to Werth's own notation (Werth 1999: xvi-xvii), with the main text world outlined in bold and the surrounding rounded frames depicting each of its related sub-worlds. The origins of those sub-worlds are contained within the function-advancing section of the main text world and are again represented as rounded frames. From this diagram, we can see clearly that the first description of Nashe's thoughts presented in the extract (illustrated at the top of Figure 3m) is taking place within the past time-zone of the flashback. The origin of the flashback is shown in the main text world as an FBK frame and the origin of the indirect thought world is shown as an IT frame within the flashback. Since Werth does not acknowledge the epistemic sub-world forming properties of indirect thought, the IT notation is my own addition to the theory. The second instance of indirect thought in the passage is also represented, with its origins in the main text world clearly marked. The final sub-world, arising from the conditional construction 'had it occurred at any other moment', is shown at the bottom of Figure 3m. Its point of origin is marked in the main text world as an IF frame, following Werth's own notation. Once again, the further epistemic sub-world embedded within it is clearly discernible in the diagram. In this case, the embedded world arises as

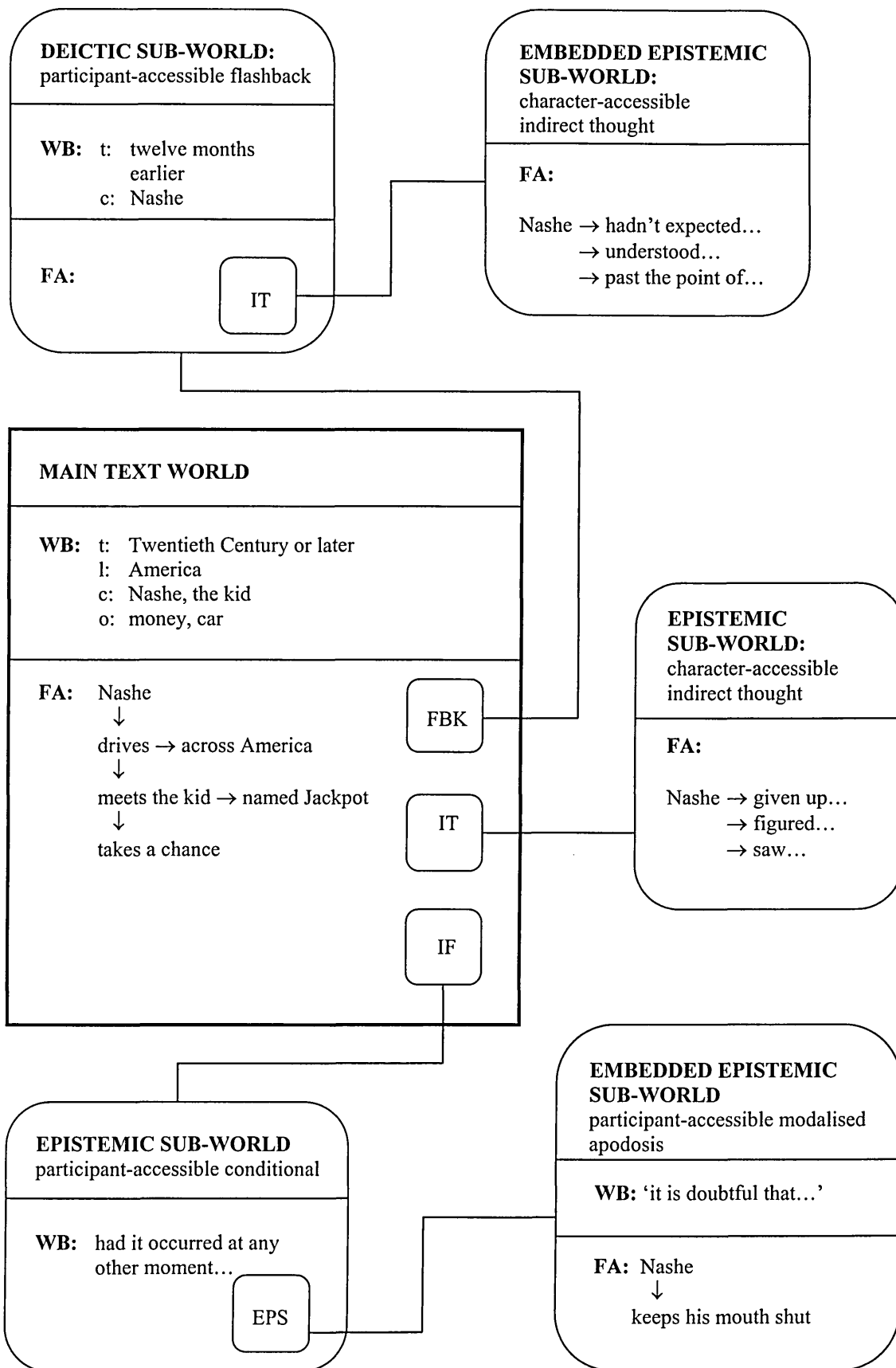


Figure 3m. The Opening Paragraph of The Music of Chance

a result of the modalised form the apodosis portion of the conditional takes and is shown in the diagram as an epistemic modal frame (EPS). Once again, Werth's failure to account for the sub-world forming properties of such modalised propositions, discussed in section 3.3.1 above, means that this notation is my own addition to Text World Theory. A final conceptual level, relating to the metaphorical constructions contained within the opening paragraph of *The Music of Chance*, is not represented in Figure 3m. This type of sub-world is discussed in sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 below.

### **3.4.2 Extended Metaphor**

So far, the discussion of Text World Theory has been limited to an explanation of the basic mechanics of the framework, presented in the first half of this chapter and illustrated by the text world analysis of a short extract from *The Music of Chance* above. The aim of this section of the chapter is to explore the wider uses to which Werth put his text world framework during his lifetime. As already mentioned in section 3.4.0 above, Werth claims to have devised a Cognitive Discourse Grammar capable of accounting not only for real, extended texts, but also for the context surrounding their production and interpretation. The most obvious attempt by Werth to achieve this aim can be identified in his analysis of extended metaphor in literary texts (see Werth 1994 and 1999: 313-335).

Werth (1994: 79) points out that traditional linguistic and philological accounts of metaphor (e.g. Nowotny 1965, Reddy 1969, 1973 and Richards 1936) have essentially been concerned with the mechanisms of single metaphors, usually contained within one sentence. While he acknowledges the broader, cognitive focus developed in more recent work on conceptual metaphor (initiated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson and

discussed in section 2.2.3 above), Werth also argues that Lakoff and his colleagues are nonetheless still limiting their analyses to sentence-level phenomena. He criticises Lakoff and Turner's (1989) supposedly global analysis of a William Carlos Williams poem as 'rather atomistic' (Werth 1994: 84) and, furthermore, he states:

I believe that there *are* real differences between literary and everyday metaphor (although I would agree that the basic machinery and constraints are the same). One of these differences is the occurrence of *sustained metaphor* through a single text... Another difference, I believe, stems from a difference in what *impels* the producer of a literary metaphor as opposed to the producer of ordinary metaphor.

(Werth 1994: 84, original emphasis retained)

While Werth agrees with Lakoff and Johnson's explanation of the production of ordinary metaphor, where the speaker will employ language from familiar, often physical areas of experience in order to express abstract concepts and ideas, he argues:

[Lakoff and Johnson's account] fails to explain a great deal of poetic metaphor, unless one wishes to argue that poets' thoughts are always so ineffable that they have to use the language of directly experienced phenomena to express otherwise inexpressible concepts. This may be true in some, perhaps many, cases. However, there are also many cases where the metaphor is simply used to make the expression more striking (the 'flowers of rhetoric' approach), and many other cases where using a metaphor allows the topic to be viewed simultaneously from more than a single perspective.

(Werth 1994: 84)

Werth argues that, in the cases he describes above, metaphor is not so much forced on the producer because of the poverty of the language but is, rather, a question of poetic choice. He suggests that literary texts contain sustained metaphorical undercurrents which can extend throughout the discourse and which contribute to the reader's understanding of the 'gist' of the text. These undercurrents, or 'megametaphors', manifest themselves as numerous and varied surface metaphors. In turn, Werth argues, these 'micrometaphors' accumulate to form an identifiable, overarching structure in the same way that function-advancing propositions can be seen to reveal indirectly the macrostructure of the text.

Werth proposes a theory of literary metaphor to show the following:

- (i) *Metaphor is participant-accessible*
  - (ii) *The relationship between source and target domains*
  - (iii) *The ground of the relationship*
  - (iv) *Any megametaphors*
  - (v) *The ability to switch back and forth between source and target domains.*
- (Werth 1999: 324)

Characteristics (ii) to (v) here seem reasonable and fairly self-explanatory. Werth argues that any theory of literary metaphor should comprise sufficient notation to show the basic domains of the conceptual mapping process, point (ii), as well as the common properties which make them comparable, point (iii), and the basic human ability to switch between domains, point (v). His text world approach would also reveal the sustained metaphorical undercurrents contained within a text, point (iv). The first of Werth's specifications, however, is considerably more problematic. Werth argues that all instances of metaphor in literature set up a conceptual space, separate from the main text world, which is necessarily participant-accessible. He explains:

In terms of the text-worlds approach, metaphor is essentially a participant-accessible phenomenon. What it does is to provide a sub-text which sheds light on the topic of the discourse, and the one who provides this sub-text is usually the author, and not a character. Of course, it is possible to put metaphorical language into the mouth or thoughts of a character, but I can think of no coherent instance where we would need to postulate a metaphor which was opaque to its originating world, hence character-accessible.

(Werth 1999: 323)

Yet this rationalisation does not appear to fit with any of Werth's previous explanations of the accessibility of character-initiated sub-worlds. Despite Werth's insistence to the contrary, surely the same logical rules should apply to metaphor sub-worlds as apply to sub-worlds created as a result of other linguistic structures?

This contradiction appears to be a direct result of the inconsistent explanation of the sub-world forming properties of speech and thought constructions that Werth provides, already identified and discussed in section 3.3.3 above. In that section, I suggested that both direct and indirect speech form sub-worlds which are participant-accessible, the



former being deictic and the latter epistemic, but that the sub-worlds created by direct and indirect thought, again deictic and epistemic respectively, are only accessible by the characters that create them. Any metaphorical language *spoken* by characters would thus set up an embedded sub-text freely accessible by the participants, but a metaphor which forms part of a character's *thoughts* would create a sub-text verifiable and accessible by that character alone. These problems, along with my suggested solution, are discussed further in the following section of this chapter, as part of the analysis of the metaphorical undercurrents present in *The Music of Chance*. The aim of section 3.4.3 is to provide an evaluative, as well as illustrative, extended Text World Theory analysis along the same lines as those undertaken by Werth (1994 and 1999). (As already noted in section 1.0, Werth's own applications of Text World Theory are limited to the examination of short extracts of texts, similar to the exemplary analysis presented in section 3.4.2 above.) The further development of that initial investigation which follows is intended as a more rigorous test of Werth's methodology, comprising an application of Werth's framework for the analysis of extended metaphor to the entire novel of *The Music of Chance*, rather than to a few selected paragraphs.

### **3.4.3 *The Music of Chance***

The linguistic analysis of any lengthy text in its entirety presents obvious logistical problems regardless of the methodological framework being employed. In such an extended study, it seems reasonable to expect that, while one's exploration of a text should be as thorough and exhaustive as possible, certain editorial choices will need to be made in the presentation of results and findings. These choices are most defensible when made according to the considered aims and objectives of the study at hand. Thus, Werth's own text world analyses of short, written texts can be seen to be consistent with

the introductory nature of the majority of his work, while my own further exploration of the respective usefulness and limits of Text World Theory demands more extensive analyses. The reported findings of those analyses, however, must remain accessible to the wider academic community and therefore be reasonably reader-friendly. The discussion of *The Music of Chance* which follows, then, is based on a detailed analysis of the metaphorical undercurrents present within that text, the results of which are only selectively presented. This selection is based on the hypothesis discussed above that individual metaphors accumulate to form a sustained sub-text to the main world-building and function-advancing components of the text world, informing the reader's understanding of the 'gist' of the novel. Thus, the metaphors chosen for detailed examination below, from the multitude contained within the whole of *The Music of Chance*, are those clustered around the central plot-advancing events, with the aim of discovering what, if any, additional meaning they bring to the text.

To begin our survey of the conceptual structure of *The Music of Chance*, let us return to the text's opening paragraph, reproduced here for the reader's convenience:

For one whole year he did nothing but drive, traveling back and forth across America as he waited for the money to run out. He hadn't expected it to go on that long, but one thing kept leading to another, and by the time Nashe understood what was happening to him, he was past the point of wanting it to end. Three days into the thirteenth month, he met up with the kid who called himself Jackpot. It was one of those random, accidental encounters that seem to materialise out of thin air – a twig that breaks off in the wind and suddenly lands at your feet. Had it occurred at any other moment, it is doubtful that Nashe would have opened his mouth. But because he had already given up, because he figured there was nothing to lose anymore, he saw the stranger as a reprieve, as a last chance to do something for himself before it was too late. And just like that, he went ahead and did it. Without the slightest tremor of fear, Nashe closed his eyes and jumped.

(Auster 1992: 1)

Alongside the main text world and sub-world structures identified and illustrated in section 3.4.1 above, this passage also contains a number of metaphorical constructions. The first and most prominent of these relates to Nashe's chance meeting with the kid, which is compared to 'a twig that breaks off in the wind and lands at your feet'. The

metaphor which underlies this comparison, namely ACCIDENTAL ENCOUNTERS ARE TWIGS IN THE WIND, follows a basic *A IS B* structure, albeit extended across two sentences. It also appears that the metaphor constitutes a further representation of Nashe's inner thoughts, an interpretation which is supported by the predominantly Internal Type B narrative (see section 3.4.1) which surrounds it. Following this reading, the metaphor can be seen to be embedded within a character-accessible epistemic sub-world created by indirect thought representation. This structure can be presented in diagrammatic form, as shown in Figure 3n below, which once again follows Werth's (1999) notation. Here, the epistemic sub-world of Nashe's thoughts can be seen to extend from the main text world, which is outlined in bold. The metaphorical content of that sub-world comprises a further conceptual layer, related to the sub-text the metaphor creates.

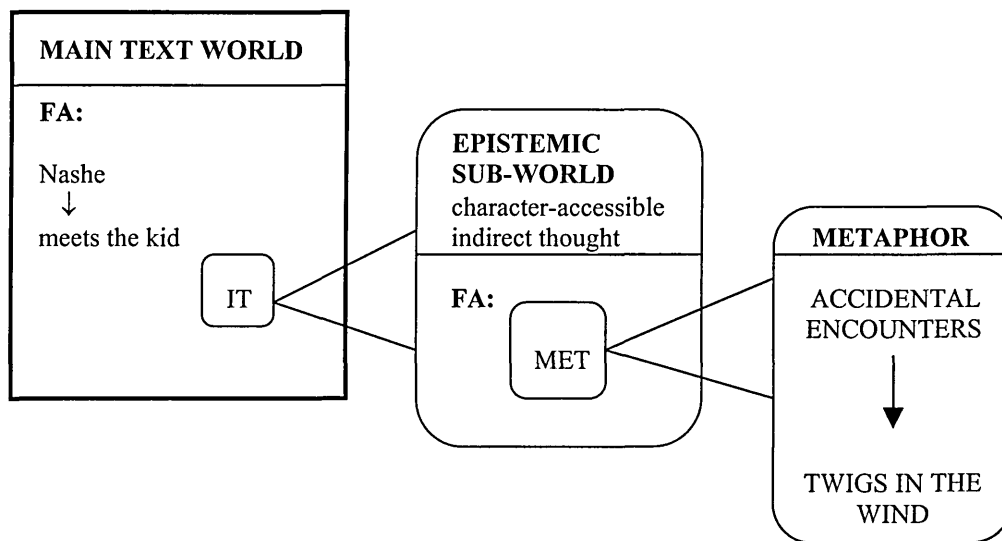


Figure 3n. Embedded Metaphor

The second obvious metaphorical sub-world in the extract is of similar structure to the first. Towards the end of the opening paragraph we are told, 'he saw the stranger as a reprieve', a metaphor which again allows us insight into Nashe's conceptualisation of

his meeting with the kid. In this case, the sub-text THE KID IS A REPRIEVE is embedded into the indirect thought epistemic sub-world shown to the right of the main text world in Figure 3m above. What is more, the reader may infer from this particular metaphor that, if Nashe sees the kid as a reprieve, he must understand the rest of his existence to be some form of punishment.

An extended metaphor is also identifiable in the opening extract, evident in the common theme shared by numerous connected micrometaphors present. The final sentence of the passage tells us, 'Without the slightest tremor of fear, Nashe closed his eyes and jumped'. This, of course, is not a literal description but instead relates Nashe's decision to pick the kid up as comparable to taking a blind leap. The RISK IS A PHYSICAL LEAP sub-text, however, is only one amongst many surface manifestations of an extended 'chance' metaphor:

Three days into the thirteenth month, he met up with the kid who called himself *Jackpot*. It was one of those *random, accidental* encounters that seem to materialise out of thin air – a twig that breaks off in the wind and suddenly lands at your feet... he figured there was *nothing to lose* anymore, he saw the stranger as a reprieve, as a *last chance* to do something for himself before it was too late. And just like that, he went ahead and did it. Without the slightest tremor of fear, Nashe *closed his eyes and jumped*.

(Auster 1992: 1, my emphasis)

As the Internal Type B narrative reveals more and more about Nashe's psyche, it becomes apparent that he conceptualises much of his life in terms of risks and gambles. The sustained metaphorical sub-text which underlies these mental mappings can be seen to develop throughout *The Music of Chance* into a LIFE IS A GAME OF CHANCE megametaphor, which will be discussed in greater detail later on in this section as further micro-occurrences are identified.

As the novel continues, the events which have led to Nashe's current situation are explained. The world-building and plot-advancing elements of the text tell us that Nashe

has a wife, who walked out on him following the death of his father. He also has a daughter, Juliette, whom he left living with his sister in Minnesota in order to begin travelling across America in a car bought with the inheritance money left to him by his father. The indirect thought representations which reveal the motivation behind Nashe's actions in the first portion of the novel, as well as his thoughts and feelings about events happening around and because of him, contain a good deal of metaphorical language. Predictably, Nashe rationalises complex, abstract emotions by mapping familiar, physical sources onto them. We are told, for example, that on seeing his daughter, Nashe felt 'the roof started to cave in on him' (Auster 1992: 4), but that the new family Juliette was now a part of was 'as solid as a rock' (Auster 1992: 5).

Here, two related underlying metaphors can be identified, firstly, as EMOTIONAL TRAUMA IS A COLLAPSING STRUCTURE, compared with EMOTIONAL STABILITY IS A SOLID STRUCTURE in the second instance. Further conceptualisation of emotional trauma through physical experience is apparent in the later description of Nashe's response to a break-up with a girlfriend:

... he knew she was right, but that didn't make it any easier to *absorb the blow*. After he left Berkeley, he was *stunned* by the anger and bitterness that *took hold of him*... he did not *recover* so much as *lose ground*, lapsing into a second, more prolonged period of suffering.

(Auster 1992: 18, my emphasis)

In this case, Nashe understands the pain of rejection and separation in terms of a physical fight. While both of these examples extend over more than one sentence, however, they do not qualify as *megametaphors* under Werth's criteria. He argues that megametaphors must comprise 'over-arching cultural images' (Werth 1994: 97). This somewhat vague specification presumably means that a metaphorical undercurrent must not only extend through an entire text but must also shed light on a theme of some wider cultural significance in order to be eligible for Werth's 'mega' prefix. We can only

guess at the sorts of themes which might fall into this category, since Werth offers no further explanation. Indeed, it is perhaps noteworthy that Werth's reworking of his 1994 article on extended metaphor into chapter eleven of his 1999 monograph involves a removal of his comments on the necessary cultural significance of megametaphorical structures. For this reason, I will follow the later of Werth's approaches throughout the rest of this thesis.

A more prevalent metaphor, one perhaps more worthy of megametaphor status, is revealed in the surface metaphors which cluster around Nashe's conceptualisation of freedom in the first half of the novel. Alongside the plot-advancing event of him deserting his daughter and extended family, we are told that, once on the road, Nashe '*carried no burdens*, was *unencumbered* by even the slightest particle of his former life' (Auster 1992: 12, my emphasis). The RESPONSIBILITY IS A PHYSICAL BURDEN metaphor expressed here might lead one to expect that Nashe's new-found liberation would bring him greater satisfaction. However, the metaphors relating to Nashe's freedom are, on the whole, extremely negative, as shown in the following extract:

After that second night, Nashe realised that he was *no longer in control of himself*, that he had *fallen into the grip of some baffling, overpowering force*. He was *like a crazed animal, careening blindly from one nowhere to the next*, but *no matter how many resolutions he made to stop, he could not bring himself to do it*. Every morning he would go to sleep telling himself that *he had had enough, that there would be no more of it*, and every afternoon *he would wake with same desire, the same irresistible urge to crawl back into the car*. He wanted that solitude again, that *nightlong rush* through the emptiness, that rumbling of the road along his skin.

(Auster 1992: 6-7, my emphasis)

In this passage, freedom is described in terms of drug addiction, with Nashe as the animal-like addict. The FREEDOM IS AN ADDICTION sub-text extends beyond a single cluster of surface metaphors, however, and becomes *megametaphorical* as it stretches throughout the first half of the novel:

... he had *fallen in love* with his new life of freedom and irresponsibility, and once that happened, there were *no longer any reasons to stop*.

Speed was of the essence, *the joy of sitting in the car and hurtling himself forward* through space. That became *a good beyond all others, a hunger to be fed at any price*. Nothing around him lasted for more than a moment, and as one moment followed another, it was as though *he alone continued to exist*. He was *a fixed point in a whirl of changes, a body poised in utter stillness as the world rushed through him and disappeared...* once he put his foot down on the gas and started driving, the music would *carry him into a realm of weightlessness*.

(Auster 1992: 11-12, my emphasis)

Although this description of Nashe's addicted, semi-hallucinatory state might appear positive, this possible interpretation is negated by the resurfacing of the LIFE IS A PUNISHMENT metaphor, identified earlier in the text:

For the rest of July, he continued to wander, spending as much time in the car as ever before, on some days daring himself to *push on past the point of exhaustion*: going for sixteen or seventeen straight hours, acting *as though he meant to punish himself into conquering new barriers of endurance*.

(Auster 1992: 19, my emphasis)

The persistence of this particular metaphor seems to be connected to Nashe's guilty conscience, particularly since we are also told that Nashe is 'ashamed of himself for having enjoyed it so much' (Auster 1992: 7) and feels 'grubby and depressed' (Auster 1992: 19) after one of his marathon driving sessions. These elements combine to suggest that the addictive rush that freedom gives Nashe has a seedy, shameful side and is, on the whole, a negative sensation.

The arrival of Pozzi (as we later learn the 'kid' is called) appears to reconnect Nashe with his previous role as a father and family man. The developing relationship between the two men forms another sustained metaphorical strain, as the following extracts show:

The shirt was so large on Pozzi that he almost drowned in it. The cloth dangled halfway down his legs, the short sleeves hung over his elbows, and for a moment or two it looked *as if he had been turned into a scrawny twelve-year-old boy*. For reasons that were not quite clear to him, *Nashe felt moved by that*.

(Auster 1992: 24-25, my emphasis)

Nashe noticed a shift in his feelings toward Pozzi. *A certain softening set in...* for all his wariness, he sensed *a new and growing impulse to watch out for him, to take on the role of Pozzi's guide and protector...* Once *a man begins to recognize himself in another*, he can no longer look on that person as a stranger. Like it or not, *a bond is formed...* there was little he could do to stop himself from *feeling drawn to this lost and emaciated creature*.

(Auster 1992: 49, my emphasis)

Although the metaphor NASHE IS A FATHER/POZZI IS HIS SON surfaces regularly throughout *The Music of Chance*, however, it is questionable whether it could be considered culturally significant or allegorical enough to qualify as a central megametaphor of the text. The LIFE IS A GAME OF CHANCE metaphor, for example, is both more frequent and more universal, raising its head once more as Nashe rationalises his feelings towards Pozzi:

Pozzi was simply *a means to an end, the hole in the wall* that would get him from one side to the other. He was *opportunity in the shape of a human being, a card-playing spectre* whose one purpose in the world was to help Nashe *win back his freedom*... The important thing was to *remain calm, to rein in his excitement and convince Pozzi that he knew what he was doing*... he instinctively felt that he had *to keep the upper hand, to match the kid's bravura with a quiet unflinching confidence of his own*... That was the surest way to control the situation: *to keep the kid off balance, to create the illusion that he was always one step ahead of him*.

(Auster 1992: 36-38, my emphasis)

Once again, Nashe understands his position in his relationship with Pozzi through gambling metaphors and, in the latter half of this extract, he plans to manage the balance of power between them by using poker-game tactics of bluff and deceit.

Nashe finally decides to back Pozzi and the two of them go to Flower and Stone's mansion to play poker. A variety of negative metaphors are used to describe Nashe's initial impressions of his opponents and their surroundings. Following a tour of the mansion, which includes a visit to Flower's hoard of historical 'treasures' and Stone's scale model of a city (the 'City of the World', as he calls it), we are told that the two men are 'no more than *grown-up children, half-wit clowns* who did not deserve to be taken seriously' (Auster 1992: 87, my emphasis). It is interesting to note, however, that Flower and Stone's wealth and their resulting freedom to pursue their individual eccentricities are entirely the result of a gamble, a win on the lottery.



As Pozzi settles down to play cards with the millionaires, the game of poker becomes an actual, rather than metaphorical, event and, as such, is described through a new set of metaphors:

The three of them played cautiously, *circling like boxers in the first rounds of a fight*, testing each other with *jabs and head-feints*, gradually *settling into the feel of the ring*... He was hoping for *an early blowout, a massacre*, but in the first two hours Pozzi merely *held his own*, winning about a third of the pots and *making little if any headway*... any number of times he was *forced* to fold after betting on the initial three or four cards of a hand, occasionally using his bad luck to bluff out a *victory*... Fortunately the bets were rather low in the beginning... and that helped keep the *damage* to a minimum... Nashe could see the other two begin to sag, as if *their wills were buckling*, visibly *giving way to the attack*... one look at the table was enough to tell Nashe that everything had changed, that *tremendous battles had been fought* in his absence... *they seemed to have him on the run, pushing hard to break his confidence, to crush him* once and for all... *he was turning into a corpse* before Nashe's eyes.

(Auster 1992: 93-99, my emphasis)

The POKER IS WAR metaphor is used extensively throughout the lengthy description of the game which dominates the central section of the novel. As defeat looms, this narrative line is pursued to its logical, medical conclusion:

Pozzi had been given *an emergency transfusion*, but that did not mean he was going to *live*. He would *pull through the present crisis*, perhaps, but the *long-term prospects* were still cloudy, *touch-and-go* at best. Nashe had done everything he could, however, and that in itself was a consolation, even a point of pride. But he also knew that *the blood bank was exhausted*... Nashe assumed he was *dead*... the hand was *alive and well*... If Pozzi won, he would be *off and running* again... Nashe could not help feeling a bit let down. Not so much for the king, perhaps, but for the absence of another heart. *Heart failure*, he said to himself.

(Auster 1992: 100-102, my emphasis)

Pozzi blames his loss of nerve on the fact that Nashe leaves the room in the midst of battle to wander around the mansion, where he takes a closer look at the 'City of the World' shown to him briefly earlier in the day. It depicts, in painstaking detail, an entire modern city, complete with shops, houses, model people and, most fascinating to Nashe, a model prison:

Nashe found himself concentrating almost exclusively on the prison. In one corner of the exercise yard, the inmates were talking in small groups, playing basketball, reading books; but then, with a kind of horror, he saw a blindfolded prisoner standing against the wall just behind them, about to be executed by a firing squad. What did this mean? What crime had this man committed, and why was he being punished in this terrible way? For all the warmth and sentimentality depicted in the model, the overriding mood was one of terror, of dark dreams sauntering down the avenues in broad daylight. A *threat of punishment* seemed to hang in the air – *as if the city were at war with itself, struggling to mend its ways* before *the prophets came to announce the arrival of a murderous, avenging God*.

(Auster 1992: 96, my emphasis)

It seems that Nashe's first impressions of Flower and Stone have been misguided, as this description introduces a sinister note to the atmosphere in the mansion. The recurrence of the punishment theme suggests that Nashe conceptualises his own situation as comparable to that depicted in the model. He sees himself as the 'City of the World', his guilty conscience surfacing once more, this time exaggerated to biblical proportions (emphasised in the extract). Nashe's realisation serves to highlight further the literalisation of the LIFE IS A GAME OF CHANCE megametaphor that has occurred. Nashe's persistent mapping of gambling and chance onto the events of his life has now developed to the point where his freedom *actually* depends on the results of a poker game.

Nashe's darkest fears are confirmed when he and Pozzi are forced to pay heavily for their defeat, left with no choice but to sign contracts of employment with Flower and Stone in order to pay off the substantial cash sum borrowed from them to finance the final stages of the poker game. The adjusted balance of power is made clear in the following description of Flower's demeanour:

Flower leaned back in his chair, puffed on his cigar for several minutes, and studied Nashe and Pozzi as though he were seeing them for the first time. His expression made Nashe think of a **high school principal sitting in his office with a couple of delinquent kids**. His face did not reflect anger so much as puzzlement, as if he had been presented with a philosophical problem that had no apparent answer. A **punishment** *would have* to be meted out, *that was certain*, but for the moment he seemed to have no idea what to suggest. He didn't *want* to be **harsh**, but neither did he *want* to be too **lenient**. He *needed* something to fit the **crime**, a **fair punishment** that would have some **educational value** to it – not punishment for its own sake, but something creative, something that would **teach the culprits a lesson**.

(Auster 1992: 105, my emphasis)

What is interesting about this passage is that it begins with an indirect representation of Nashe's impressions of Flower sitting in his chair and then slips in and out of Flower's own thoughts on the situation. The sections of the narrative which signal Nashe's point of view are underlined in the extract above, whereas the *verba sentiendi* which mark the

switch into Flower's consciousness are shown in italics. The two separate epistemic sub-worlds which arise from this narrative structure each contain their own embedded metaphor layers, shown in bold in the passage. Particularly striking is the fact that the source/target structure of each character's metaphorical mapping is identical (FLOWER IS A HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/NASHE AND POZZI ARE DELINQUENTS). Indeed, it could be argued that this cross-consciousness correspondence adds an extra degree of credibility to the propositions expressed in Nashe's inner thoughts. The reader may now be more willing to trust Nashe's judgement, to increment his thoughts into the Common Ground of the discourse, having witnessed their correlation with an external source.

Nashe and Pozzi embark upon their mammoth wall-building task, guarded by the ominously-named Murks. The enforced nature of their incarceration is brought home to them by a late-night walk around the nine-foot high barbed wire fence that encircles the grounds, confirming that there is no escape from the mansion. The theme of freedom remains dominant throughout, as both Nashe and Pozzi struggle to come to terms with their predicament. As in the first half of the novel, Nashe's thoughts seem to fluctuate between viewing freedom as a prize, something to be 'won back' (Auster 1992: 116), and struggling with his persistent guilt about his days on the road:

The days passed, and even though there was rarely a moment when they were not together, he continued to say nothing about what truly concerned him – nothing about *the struggle to put his life together again*, nothing about how *he saw the wall as a chance to redeem himself in his own eyes*, nothing about how *he welcomed the hardships of the meadow as a way to atone for his recklessness and self-pity*.

(Auster 1992: 127, my emphasis)

Presiding God-like over Nashe's salvation, of course, are Flower and Stone. Nashe's image of himself as a part of their 'City of the World' is also repeated:

Sooner or later, Nashe thought, there would be a new section to represent where he was now, a scale model of the wall and the meadow and the trailer, and once those things were finished, two tiny figures would be set down in the middle of the field: one for Pozzi and one for himself. The idea of such extravagant smallness began to exert an almost unbearable fascination over Nashe. Sometimes, powerless to stop himself, he even went so

far as to imagine that *he was already living inside the model*. Flower and Stone would look down on him then and he would suddenly be able to see himself through their eyes – *as though he were no larger than a thumb, a little gray mouse darting back and forth in his cage*.

(Auster 1992: 178, my emphasis)

This recurring metaphor emphasises not only Nashe's helplessness but Flower and Stone's sinister power over both him and Pozzi. Any doubts over their dominance are expelled when an attempted escape by Pozzi one night leads to his being dumped back outside the caravan the following morning, beaten nearly to death. Murks takes Pozzi away soon afterwards, he claims to a hospital, although Nashe does not see or hear of Pozzi again. On the last night of Nashe's term of imprisonment, the wall completed and his debt paid in full, Murks takes him to a local bar to celebrate. They go in Nashe's car, which Flower and Stone gave to Murks immediately after the poker game, and on the way back to the mansion Nashe asks if he may drive. Although 'happier than he had been in a long time' (Auster 1992: 214), in a final act of rebellion against the controlling force of Flower and Stone, Nashe drives the car at full speed into the path of an oncoming truck.

### 3.5 Review

The initial sections of this chapter provided a detailed exposition of each of the layers of Werth's Text World Theory. Firstly, those elements which play an essential role in the discourse world surrounding the participants in a language event were set out; from the co-operative principles which inform the pragmatic behaviour of both speaker and listener (or writer and reader), to the deployment of knowledge and previous experience during the discourse process. A number of problematic areas of Werth's model of the discourse world were also identified, including the complexities arising from the occurrence of split discourse worlds and the as yet unanswered questions surrounding Werth's emphasis on the necessarily co-operative relationship between the participants

in *all* language situations. The text world constructed by the participants in order to process and understand the discourse at hand was then also examined in detail. This mental representation was shown to have a twofold structure, made up of world-building elements and function-advancing propositions.

With the basic parameters of the text world thus established, sections 3.3.0 to 3.3.3 detailed the various types of sub-world which may arise as a discourse progresses. Again, a number of problems with Werth's typology of sub-worlds were identified. In particular, an unsatisfactory account of modality in Werth's model was noted and an alternative grouping of his categories of 'attitudinal' and 'epistemic' sub-worlds under a new, all-encompassing heading of 'modal sub-worlds' was suggested. In section 3.3.3, a further inconsistency was detected in Werth's use of the hierarchical term deictic *sub-world* as a means of describing a switch in the spatial or temporal focus of the text world. It was argued that Werth's notion of a main text world, established at the beginning of a discourse and then retained as a central reference point to which all subsequent worlds are subordinate, would seem inappropriate considering the multitude of temporal and spatial shifts enacted in most extended discourses. Possible solutions to this and all the other flaws identified during the course of this chapter, are explored in detail in the text world analyses in Chapter Four.

As a precursor to those investigations, the preliminary analysis of the opening paragraph of *The Music of Chance*, presented in section 3.4.1 above, provided an introductory demonstration of each level of Text World Theory at work. The structure of the initial text world of *The Music of Chance* was discussed, with both the world-building and function-advancing elements identified and laid out in Figure 3k. A number of sub-

worlds were also identified, arising from a flashback, a conditional construction and an instance of indirect thought. Both the flashback and the conditional had further conceptual layers embedded within them. The flashback was shown to comprise a representation of Nashe's inner thoughts at an earlier point in history, creating a character-accessible, embedded sub-world at an increased epistemic distance from the main text world. It was also suggested that, since the apodosis portion of the conditional construction was modalised, it too created an embedded epistemic world. Both of these complex structures are shown in Figure 31.

The analysis of the rest of *The Music of Chance* in section 3.4.3 followed the same methodological lines as those extended analyses attempted by Werth (1994 and 1999). With a focus on sustained literary metaphor, the metaphorical constructions clustered around the central plot-advancing elements of the text were identified and discussed. The Internal Type B narrative ensured that the majority of the metaphor sub-worlds created were embedded into the sub-worlds of Nashe's inner thoughts and were, as such, only character-accessible. However, the reader's trust of Nashe's judgement, and of the truth of the propositions expressed in his thoughts, was reinforced by an incident in the middle of the novel where Nashe's conceptualisation of events is shown to correspond with those of another character. *The Music of Chance* thus presents Nashe's life through his own eyes. Through the use of metaphorical language it portrays an emotionally damaged and troubled man, escaping his pain by driving aimlessly across America. Freedom is a major preoccupation for Nashe, who both enjoys the emotional and physical high it brings him and suffers from a relentless guilty conscience over the responsibility he has abandoned in favour of his life of liberty. This information is

revealed to the reader through the recurrence of a FREEDOM IS AN ADDICTION metaphor throughout the first half of the novel.

Nashe also compares much of his life to gambling and taking risks, evident in the presence of a second megametaphor, LIFE IS A GAME OF CHANCE. This attitude not only leads him to pick up a strange young man by the side of a road, but to entrust the last remnants of his inheritance to the kid's card-playing ability and to risk everything on his winning a game of poker with Flower and Stone. The game itself can be seen as a literalisation of the metaphor, as Nashe and his companion, Pozzi, lose their freedom as a result of their defeat. Nashe's thoughts on Flower and Stone vary throughout the second half of the novel, his initial impression of them as harmless eccentrics giving way to fear and resentment once the men become his captors. Nashe sees himself as a helpless, but guilty convict in their 'City of the World', paying his debt for his addicted past. However, *The Music of Chance* is not a moral tale. Instead of celebrating his final release, Nashe denies its significance, choosing to commit suicide rather than accept freedom as a gift from Flower and Stone.

The 'gist' of *The Music of Chance*, then, cannot be argued to be simply a sum of its constituent metaphorical parts. Rather, it is a necessary combination of text and sub-text. The metaphors and megametaphors identified in section 3.4.3 give no real idea of what the novel is about unless considered together with the world-building and function-advancing components of the text. The FREEDOM IS AN ADDICTION metaphor, for example, is meaningless without some idea of who thinks or speaks it, when, where and in what context. A valid criticism of Werth's own work on extended metaphor could then be that he not only limits his analysis to short extracts from longer texts

(which could later reveal further mutating, fluctuating or developing metaphors), but that he also shows little concern for the text-world mechanisms, detailed throughout the initial sections of this chapter, at work alongside the metaphorical constructions in the text.

Indeed, it could be further argued that Werth's work on extended literary metaphor contains so little use of the main components of the text world framework as to raise the question of whether it can still be considered as an application of Text World Theory at all. Despite Werth's criticisms of Lakoff and his colleagues (discussed in section 2.2.0 above), the methodology he uses to analyse literary metaphor, the same methodology followed in section 3.4.3 above, differs almost imperceptibly from the original conceptual metaphor framework. Indeed, the only real variation, namely the application of the conceptual model to a complete discourse, is achieved by Werth to only a limited degree, hence the stated aim of the current chapter to provide a more extensive application. The analysis of further, and more experimental, literary texts in Chapter Four is based on a more text-world focussed approach which, while retaining a critical awareness of extended metaphorical sub-texts, will provide a more precise test of the main tenets of the Text World Theory framework. The aim of the chapter is to explore the contribution that a fully-integrated Text World Theory approach can make to our knowledge of both the poetics of the texts under analysis and the conceptual processes involved in our readings of them.



## 4.0 Preview

The study of Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance* in Chapter Three provided an example of the approach to literary analysis typically followed by Paul Werth. It was shown that while an emphasis on extended literary metaphor may reveal a number of interesting narratological undercurrents sustained throughout a text, such ventures make little use of the complex methodological structures devised by Werth in his Text World Theory framework. As such, they cannot be considered an adequate test of the model's efficacy and, in section 3.5, I advocated a fully-integrated text world approach as a means towards that end. This chapter is intended as just such an analysis. As explained in Chapter One, four Absurd novels have been selected as Text World Theory case studies. The complex narratological structure of each novel provides a significant challenge to Werth's framework, allowing a full exploration of the scope of Text World Theory to be undertaken in the course of the following analyses. A number of resulting modifications to Text World Theory are also suggested throughout the course of this chapter.

### 4.1.0 *The Third Policeman*

To begin this chapter's exploration of the text worlds of Absurd prose fiction, I will be examining Flann O'Brien's (1993) novel *The Third Policeman*, originally published in 1967. (Parts of this analysis have previously appeared in Gavins 2000.) In keeping with the majority of abundant critical opinion on the text (see, for example, Booker 1991, Doherty 1989, Kemnitz 1985 and Spencer 1995), Clissman (1975: 152) argues that

O'Brien's central concern in the novel is 'reality viewed through the medium of scientific and philosophical concepts'. This perspective, she argues,

tends to lead to the world of the absurd... which [O'Brien] had created out of fragments of philosophy, ideas of the Celtic otherworld and the topsy-turveydom of Sterne.

(Clissman 1975: 181)

The structure of O'Brien's 'world of the absurd', however, is not explained beyond this brief list, since Clissman, once again in keeping with the majority of critics, limits her 'analysis' of *The Third Policeman* to a heavily descriptive appraisal of the text from a purely literary critical standpoint. Simpson's work (1997 and 2000) is a notable exception to this rule, employing a stylistic methodology to examine the discursive incongruities contained in the text. Simpson's findings are explored in detail later on in this section. Apart from his analyses, however, current understanding of the stylistic mechanisms at work within *The Third Policeman* remains relatively slight and its conceptual structure is as yet entirely uncharted.

Compared to the opening of *The Music of Chance*, that of *The Third Policeman* offers the reader little deictic detail with which to begin establishing the temporal and spatial boundaries of the text world:

Not everybody knows how I killed old Mathers, smashing his jaw in with my spade; but first it is better to speak of my friendship with John Divney because it is he who first knocked old Mathers down by giving him a great blow in the neck with a special bicycle-pump which he manufactured himself out of a hollow iron bar. Divney was a strong civil man but he was lazy and idle-minded. He was personally responsible for the whole idea in the first place. It was he who told me to bring my spade. He was the one who gave me the orders on the occasion and also the explanations when they were called for.

(O'Brien 1993: 7)

The novel is narrated in the first person, constituting an Internal Type A narrative in Fowler's (1986) terms, which have already been discussed in some detail in section 3.4.1 above. The 'I' of the extract quoted here, then, provides the main perspective through which both the world-building and function-advancing elements of the text world are focalised. This focaliser is also, by necessity, a character in the text world of

*The Third Policeman*. In Text World Theory terms, of course, the thoughts and perceptions of characters are not ‘accessible’ to the reader, who is unable to verify their contents for truth and reliability (see section 3.3.0). Indeed, this claim was supported by the analysis of *The Music of Chance* in section 3.4.3 above. That novel’s narration is different from that of *The Third Policeman*, however, in that its omniscient narrator occasionally switches from the main focaliser Nashe’s point of view to those of other characters. O’Brien’s text, on the other hand, remains focalised through a single perspective from start to finish, with no additional narratorial presence being made evident. This difference is one between what Genette (1980) terms ‘fixed’ and ‘variable’ internal focalisation, a difference which Text World Theory seems unable to account for.

Werth (1999) pays only minimal attention to the issue of focalisation in fiction in general. Exploring the similarities between his text world approach and Bockting’s (1995) frame-based approach to characterisation in the novels of William Faulkner, he offers a brief analysis of the narrative voices contained within *The Sound and the Fury*:

... we can regard the character frames of Benjy, Quentin and Jason as both building up representations of their inner worlds, and also as providing vantage points from which commonly experienced events are viewed... Our privilege as readers is to be able to experience separate ‘realities’ vicariously. Within each text world, then, the details of characterisation perform a world-building function, while the observation of events is function-advancing.

(Werth 1999: 333)

Werth also discusses Bockting’s distinction between ‘memories as words’ and ‘memories as feelings’ contained within Faulkner’s character monologues. He explains:

The ‘memories as words’ part represents the character’s version of his own and other people’s actions, including their spoken activity; the ‘memories as feelings’ part represents the character’s own inner landscape. It seems reasonable, then, to think of the ‘memories as words’ events as representing more or less public situations in which the character was present, while the ‘memories as feelings’ represent the play of emotions in the character, and as such are essentially private. It therefore makes good sense to think of the latter as character-accessible sub-worlds, since their content and significance are inaccessible (in the sense discussed) to the participants.

(Werth 1999: 334)

It is unclear from this discussion what logical status Werth considers 'memories as words' to have and whether a character's representation of common events can be accessed and judged for accuracy by the participants. However, since *The Third Policeman* shares the same Internal Type A structure as Faulkner's text, the monologic nature of which means that each of its separate narrative sections is also fixed with a single focaliser, it would seem reasonable to place the two novels in the same category. The readers of O'Brien's text will also be unable to verify the truth status of the events described within it, rendering the narrative of *The Third Policeman* as a solely character-accessible sub-world under Werth's framework. What type of sub-world is again unclear, although one might hazard a guess at focalised narration falling into the 'epistemic' category, due to its close relationship with indirect thought representation (see section 3.3.2 above).

Yet is this a satisfactory conclusion to draw? It seems unlikely that with a fixed narration, where the only access route to the text world is through the perspective of a character, the reader might resist incrementing the contents of that focaliser's mind into the Common Ground simply for lack of adequate evidence of its truth status (see Searle 1975 for a related discussion). It would seem far more probable that typical reader behaviour, when faced with such a text, would be to build a text world based on the information presented by the main narrator, regardless of whether that happens to be a participating character or not. In such a case, two previously separate levels of Text World Theory might be seen to conflate. The world created by the focalised narration, which can be identified as an epistemic modal sub-world under the modified Text World Theory framework suggested in section 3.3.2, would be taken by the reader as the main text world. In the opening paragraphs of *The Third Policeman*, then, the text

world layer of Werth's framework remains redundant, as the reader builds a focalised world according to the details filtered through the main character's perspective. Figure 4a below illustrates this conceptual structure.

The redundant text world level is shown at the top of the diagram, with the fixed focalised narration (FOC) emerging from it. Since, as Bockting (1995) has shown, a focalised narration is made up of more than simply indirect thought representation, this notation is a necessary new addition to Werth's framework. The initial focalised narrative world is only briefly established by the clause 'Not everybody knows', however, and, thus, has predictably limited world-builders. The passage is then complicated by the epistemic modal construction also contained within the opening clause. The modal lexical verb 'know' signifies that the function-advancing details of the murder which follow belong in an even more remote sub-world at a further epistemic distance from the world in which 'not everybody' exists. This world is shown to the immediate right of the focalised world as an epistemic modal world construction (EPS). Again, this notation is my addition to Text World Theory, made according to the modifications to the framework suggested in section 3.3.2 of this thesis. The first clause of the opening passage also contains a change in tense, from the present continuous 'knows' to the simple past 'killed'. This is a deictic alternation, a flashback, which shifts the reader's focus to a separate time-zone; the first time-zone being the narrator's here and now and the second being a previous time when a murder took place. As indicated in the diagram, it is this embedded, modalised sub-world which forms the main world of the narrative.

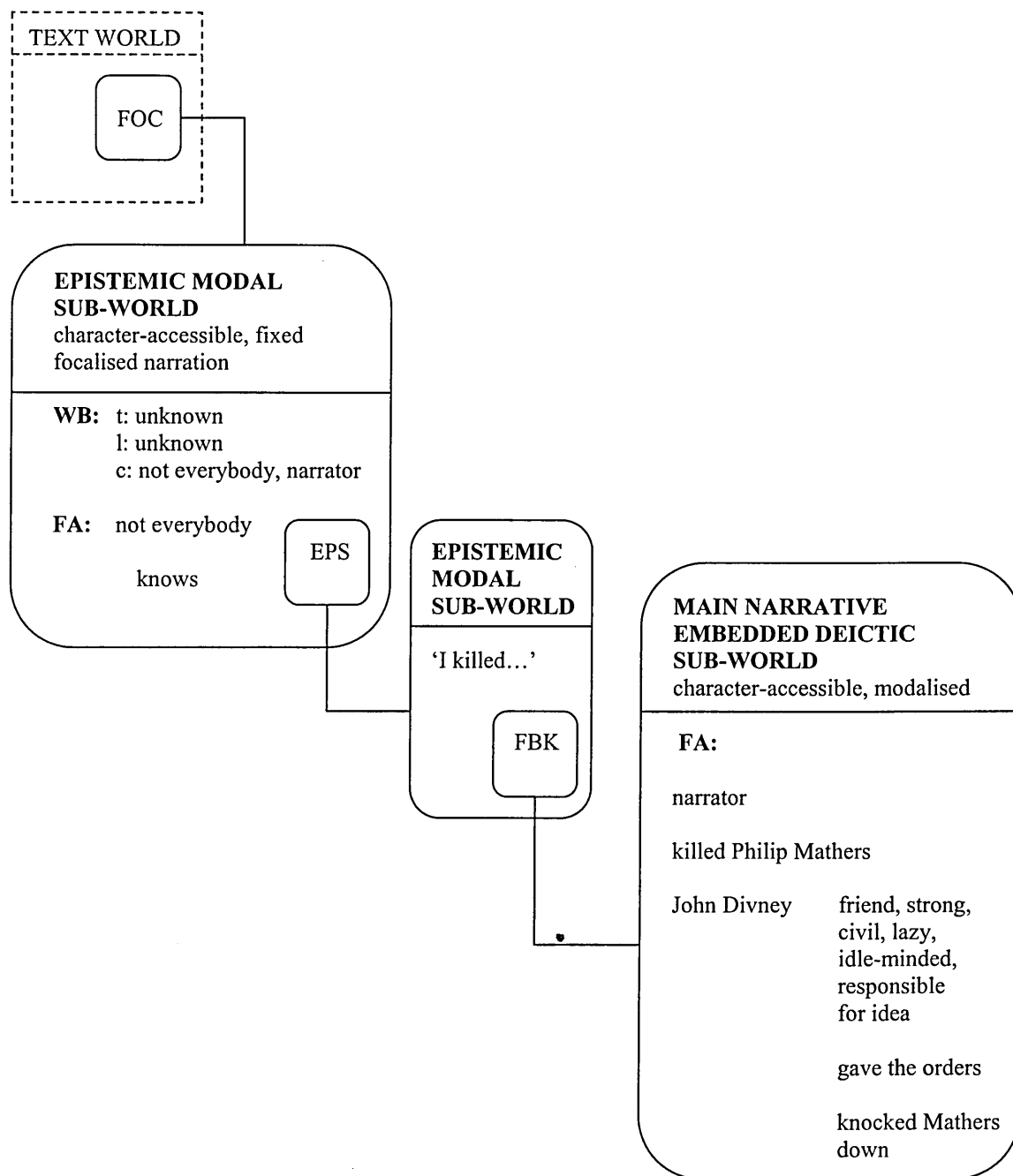


Figure 4a. *The Opening Passage of The Third Policeman*

Figure 4a also makes clear how each of the factors described above contributes to the construction of an introduction based on somewhat shaky conceptual foundations. This is a predominantly function-advancing passage, holding few clues to the spatio-temporal setting of the events described, presented at considerable epistemic distance by

a narrator whose reliability is impossible to gauge. Such vague beginnings are not unusual in narrative fiction; the majority of novels give little away in their first few lines, drawing the reader in and often raising many more questions than they answer. What is unusual about *The Third Policeman*, however, is how little the novel's clarity improves as the narration progresses.

The remainder of Chapter One continues chronologically, providing a detailed account of the narrator's personal history along the same heavily function-advancing lines as the novel's opening paragraph. The narrator describes his early upbringing and schooling away from home, the death of his parents and the subsequent appointment, in his absence, of a man named John Divney as caretaker of their pub. The narrator's relationship with Divney on his return home from school develops from initial distrust, through extreme intimacy (as he takes to following and even sleeping with Divney, in order to keep an eye on his movements), to an eventual conspiracy. To rescue themselves from the financial ruin which looms as a result of Divney's mismanagement of the pub, the two men plan to rob and murder a local retired cattle-trader, Mathers. They wait for the old man at the side of a country road near his home, hit him over the head and steal his black money box.

As the narrator murders Mathers with a spade, however, Divney runs away with the black box, telling his co-conspirator that he has hidden it under the floorboards in Mathers' own home. It is during the narrator's later return to that scene, to recover his share of the newly-acquired fortune, that the conceptual structure of his narration undergoes a dramatic transformation:

Without stopping to light another match I thrust my hand bodily into the opening and just when it should be closing about the box, something happened.

I cannot hope to describe what it was but it had frightened me very much long before I had understood it even slightly. It was some change which came upon me or upon the room, indescribably subtle, yet momentous, ineffable. It was as if the daylight had changed with unnatural suddenness, as if the temperature of the evening had altered greatly in an instant or as if the air had become twice as rare or twice as dense as it had been in the twinkling of an eye; perhaps all of these and other things happened together for all my senses were bewildered all at once and could give me no explanation.

(O'Brien 1993: 24)

The declarative tone which has characterised the storytelling up to this point is suddenly replaced with one of confusion and uncertainty, articulated through an array of epistemic modality. With no clear idea of what has happened to him, the narrator relies on perceived changes in his physical environment to describe his bewildering predicament, expressed modally in such phrases as '*as if* the daylight had changed', '*as if* the temperature had altered' and '*as if* the air had become twice as dense'. Furthermore, the narrator shows little trust in what his senses are telling him, adding '*perhaps* all of these and other things happened' and admitting 'all my senses were bewildered all at once and could give me no explanation'.

This new narrative structure is comparable to that identified at work within Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* (1950) by Simpson (1993: 51-53). In a development of both Fowler's (1986) and Genette's (1980) models of narrative viewpoint, Simpson divides all narrative fiction into two main categories. The first of these, Category A, covers all those narratives narrated in the first person by a participating character. This category can be seen to correspond to Genette's (1980) notion of 'homodiegetic' narration. Category B, on the other hand, covers third person narratives narrated by a non-participating, disembodied narrator. This can be seen to correspond to Genette's (1980) category of 'heterodiegetic' narration, although Simpson divides such texts into two further modes. The 'reflector mode' (Simpson 1993: 55) relates to those stories which are focalised; narrated from the internal perspective of one of the characters. The 'narratorial mode' (Simpson 1993: 55), on the other hand, relates to those stories told



from a ‘floating’ viewpoint which remains external to the characters’ consciousnesses. Some narratives, of course, shift from narratorial to reflector mode and back again by the use of an omniscient narrator, who may enter and leave the minds of characters at any point during the course of the text. We have already seen above how some texts, like *The Third Policeman*, may remain with a single focaliser throughout, whereas some, like *The Music of Chance*, may alternate between the perspectives of a number of different textual entities.

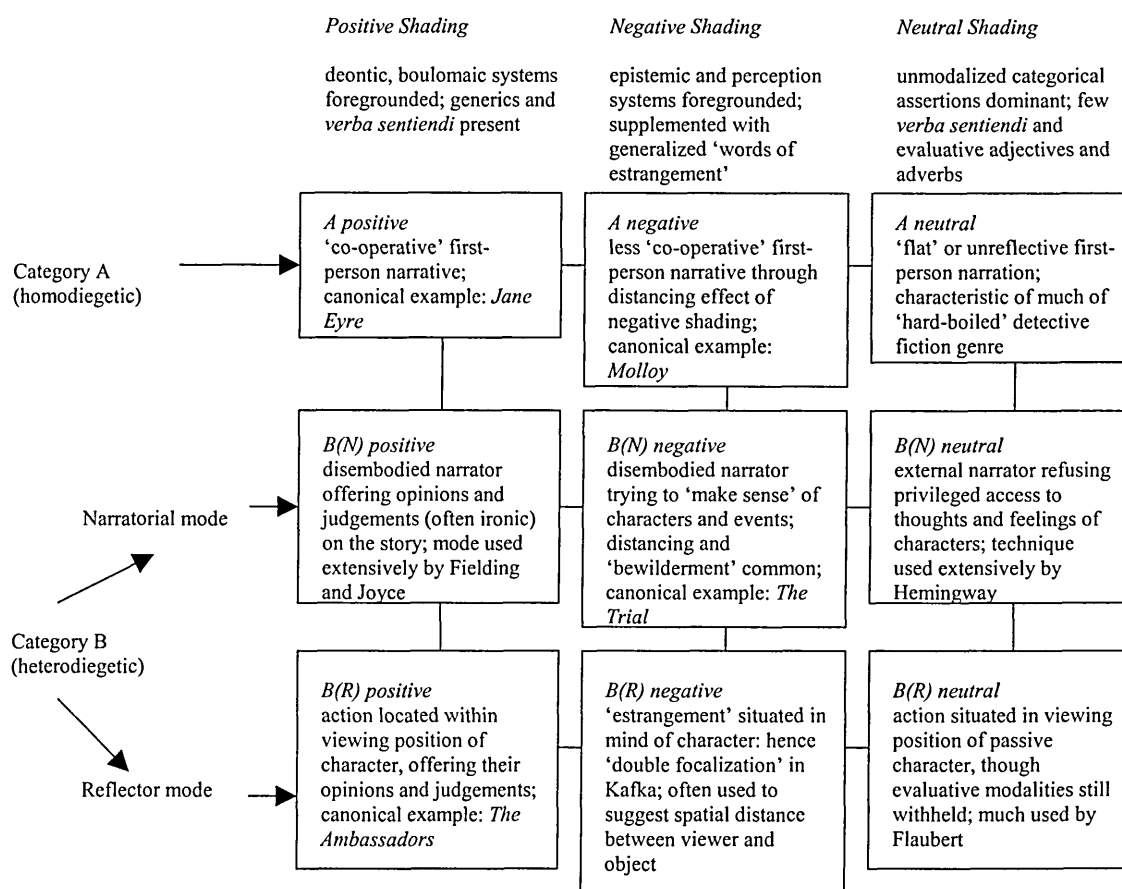


Figure 4b. Simpson’s (1993) *Modal Grammar of Narrative Fiction*

Figure 4b above (reproduced from Simpson 1993: 75) illustrates Simpson’s categories, along with his final distinctions between the various possible modal ‘shadings’ of narrative fiction. As can be seen from the diagram, ‘positive’ modal shading is typified

by the foregrounding of deontic and boulomaic modal systems and the presence of *verba sentiendi* (see section 3.4.1 above). Negatively-shaded narratives, on the other hand, foreground epistemic and perception modal systems and often contain a substantial amount of ‘words of estrangement’ (see Uspensky 1973 and Fowler 1986). This results in what Simpson (1993: 75) describes as a ‘less co-operative’ feel to the narration. Finally, ‘neutral’ narratives are made up solely of categorical assertions and are marked by the absence of narratorial evaluation in general.

These categories allow Simpson to categorise frequent shifts in the narrative of *Molloy*, between a subjective, first person, Internal Type A narration and a more externalised, Type D narration, in Fowler’s (1986) terms, more specifically as the result of the text’s fluctuating modal structure. Under Simpson’s modal grammar of narrative fiction, *Molloy* typifies a negatively-shaded, category A structure. The narrative of *The Third Policeman* can be seen to be constructed along similar lines, expressing confusion and uncertainty through the foregrounded use of epistemic and perception modality. In Text World Theory terms, these modal structures add another conceptual layer to the text world structure shown in Figure 4a above. The narrator’s perceptions form a series of epistemic modal sub-worlds, embedded within the deictic sub-world of the main narrative and shown in Figure 4c below. The contents of the initial deictic world, of course, are already embedded and character-accessible. The new narrative layer, then, is not only positioned at an epistemic distance yet further from the reader’s here-and-now, but it also has its contents explicitly doubted by the narrator in the modalised world shown at the very bottom of Figure 4c.

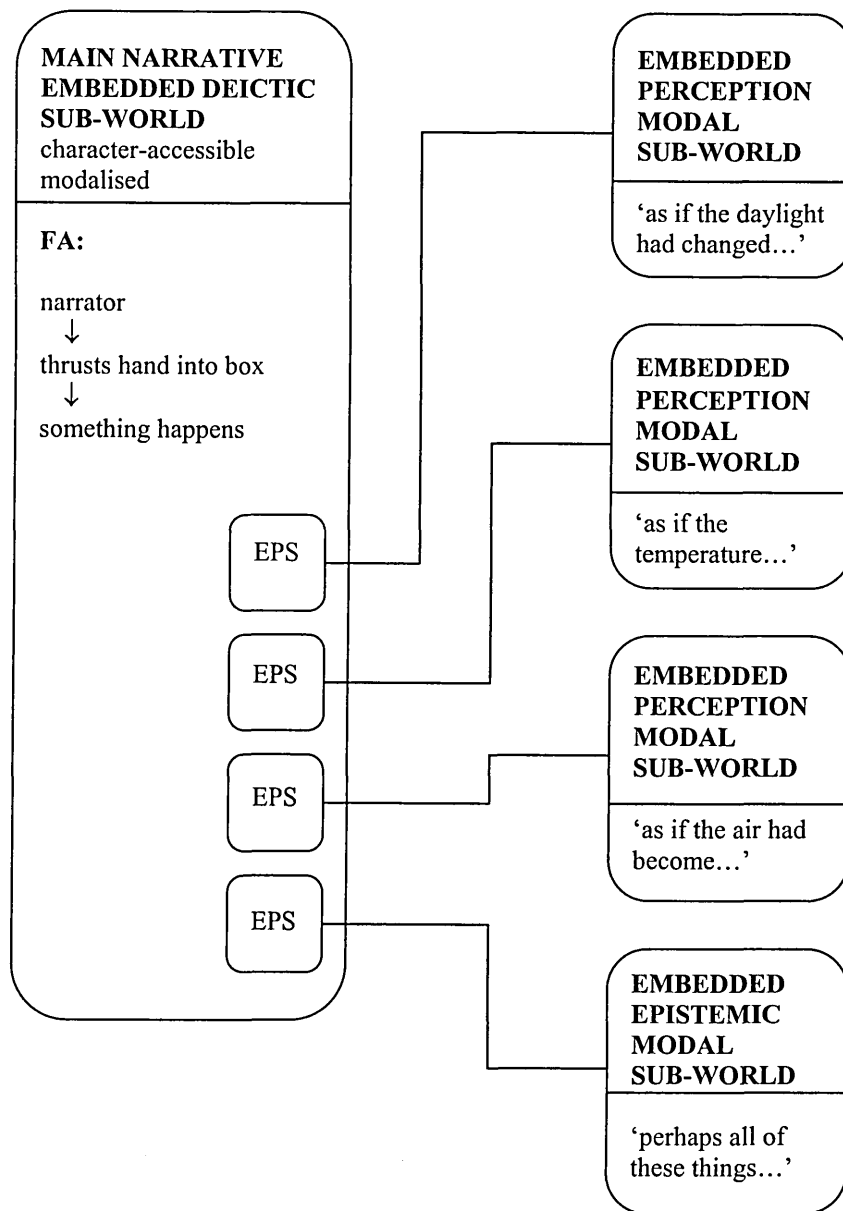


Figure 4c. *Embedded Modal Worlds in The Third Policeman*

The questionable reliability of the narrator’s perspective continues to be foregrounded as he becomes increasingly distressed by his confused state, upset not least by the sudden appearance of a mysterious figure:

In the darkest corner of the room near the window a man was sitting in a chair, eyeing me with a mild but unwavering interest. His hand crept out across the small table by his side to turn up very slowly an oil-lamp which was standing on it. The oil-lamp had a glass bowl with the wick dimly visible inside it, curling in convolutions like an intestine. There were tea things on the table. The old man was Mathers.

(O’Brien 1993: 26)

The narrator is somewhat comforted, however, by the simultaneous appearance of a second odd presence, this time internal rather than external.

In my distress I thought to myself that perhaps it was his twin brother but at once I heard someone say:

*Scarcely. If you look carefully at the left-hand side of his neck you will notice that there is sticking-plaster or a bandage there. His throat and chin are also bandaged.*

(O'Brien 1993: 26, original emphasis retained)

The narrator concludes that, since these words seem to come from deep inside him, they must be the voice of his soul. The modality of his description fluctuates once more:

Never before had I believed or suspected that I had a soul but just then *I knew* I had. *I knew* also that my soul was my senior in years and was solely concerned for my own welfare. For convenience I called him Joe. I felt a little reassured to *know* that I was not altogether alone. Joe was helping me... *I decided* in some crooked way that the best thing to do was to *believe* what my eyes were looking at rather than to place my trust in a memory. *I decided* to show unconcern, to talk to the old man and to test his own reality by asking about the black box which was responsible, if anything could be, for each of us being the way we were. *I made up my mind* to be bold because *I knew* I was in great danger. *I knew* that I would go mad unless I got up from the floor and moved and talked and behaved in as ordinary a way as possible.

(O'Brien 1993: 26-27, my emphasis)

As if to pre-empt any doubts about his dependability, the narrator expresses a renewed decisiveness through his use of epistemic modality. All traces of previous confusion are removed. This self-confidence is not long-lived, however, once Mathers' ghost enquires about the narrator's name:

I was surprised at this question. It had no bearing on my own conversation but I did not notice its irrelevance because I was shocked to realize that, simple as it was, I could not answer it. *I did not know* my name, *did not remember* who I was. *I was not certain* where I had come from or what my business was in that room. I found *I was sure of nothing* save my search for the black box. But I knew that the other man's name was Mathers, and that he had been killed with a pump and spade. I had no name.

(O'Brien 1993: 32, my emphasis)

Here, the modality of the narration shifts again, as the narrator reveals that, despite his earlier assertions of his trust in his own judgement, he lacks the basic knowledge of his own name. The 'distancing effect' (Simpson 1993: 75) of this negatively-shaded structure undermines the reader's faith in the narrator's reliability once again.

Nevertheless, based on expectations of co-operation mapped directly from the discourse world level, the majority of readers will probably persevere with their efforts to

construct a solid and coherent text world from the narrator's erratic and untrustworthy commentary. They are encouraged along this path by the intermittent presence of footnotes running alongside the main narrative which, on first impressions, seem to add weight to the narrator's authority. The footnotes all relate to the work of de Selby, an eccentric scientist and philosopher, in whom the narrator claims to have an intellectual interest. At one point during his conversation with the narrator, for example, Mathers' ghost makes the bizarre suggestion that all human beings have a 'colour', which he claims is determined by the colour of the prevailing wind at the time of their birth. The ghost explains:

'A record of this belief will be found in the literature of all ancient peoples.<sup>4</sup> There are four winds and eight sub-winds, each with its own colour. The wind from the east is a deep purple, from the south a fine shining silver. The north wind is hard black and the west is amber. People in the old days had the power of perceiving these colours and could spend a day sitting quietly on a hillside watching the beauty of the winds, their fall and rise and changing hues, the magic of neighbouring winds when they are inter-weaved like ribbons at a wedding.'

(O'Brien 1993: 34)

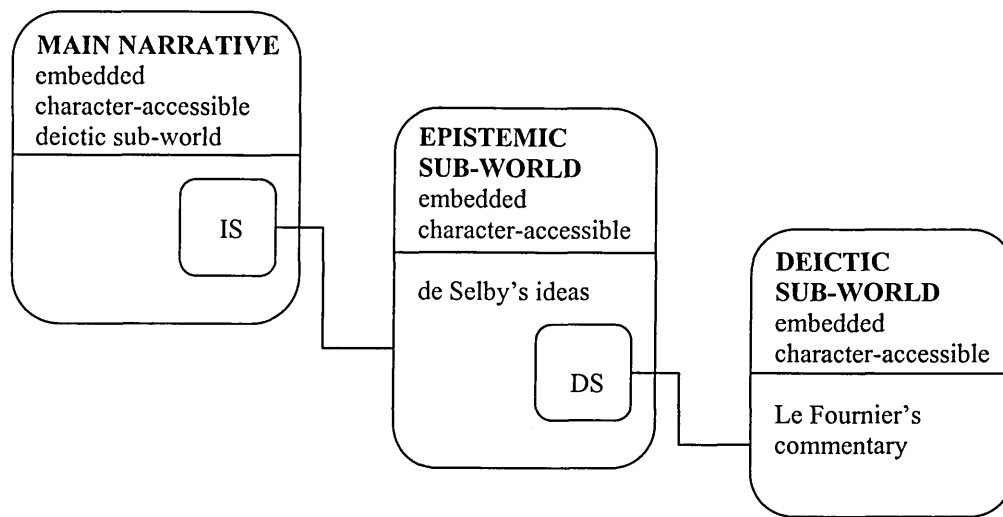
The numbered reference in this speech can be traced by the reader to the following narrator's footnote:

<sup>4</sup> It is not clear whether de Selby had heard of this but he suggests (*Garcia*, p.12) that night, far from being caused by the commonly accepted theory of planetary movements, was due to accumulations of 'black air' produced by certain volcanic activities of which he does not treat in detail. See also p.79 and 945, *Country Album*. Le Fournier's comment (in *Homme ou Dieu*) is interesting. 'On se saura jamais jusqu'à quel point de Selby fut cause de la Grande Guerre, mais, sans aucun doute, ses théories excentriques – spécialement celle que nuit n'est pas un phénomène de nature, mais dans l'atmosphère d'un état malsain amené par un industrialisme cupide et sans pitié – auraient l'effet de produire un trouble profond dans les masses.'

(O'Brien 1993: 33)

The format in which this information is presented is recognisable, from existing frame-knowledge of similar texts, as that of academic prose; a genre one might normally expect to convey reasonably reliable and authoritative information. Indeed, the narrator provides a neat summary of de Selby's ideas, complete with additional quotes from a suitably obscure (and untranslated) French critic and full references to the work of both de Selby and his commentator. The ridiculous content of the footnote, however, is the

reader's first clue to the myth of authority being created through its form, a confidence trick which can be further exposed with the help of Figure 4d below.



*Figure 4d. The Narrator's Footnotes in The Third Policeman*

The diagram shows how, once again, an embedded epistemic sub-world is formed, this time from the indirect speech contained in the narrator's footnotes. Since the world of the main narrative is also embedded and, thus, already twice removed from the initial text world, the real epistemic value of the narrator's footnotes can be seen to be negligible. At such a conceptual distance from the reader's reality, the reliability and truth of its contents are utterly inaccessible and unverifiable. Furthermore, the narrator's quotes from Le Fournier are, like all direct speech, also sub-world forming and, thus, yet more remote from the reader's reality.

The narrator eventually leaves Mathers' house and ghost, and sets out on a quest to retrieve the black box. His first stop is a police barracks where Mathers has told him he will find a group of police officers – Sergeant Pluck, Sergeant MacCruiskeen and a third, more elusive policeman, Sergeant Fox – all of whom are blessed with the gift of

‘wind-watching’. The narrator reasons that anyone with such knowledge and talent will have no problem in telling him where his money box is hidden. On his arrival at the barracks, however, he is greeted by a peculiar sight:

As I approached, the house *seemed* to change its appearance. At first, it did nothing to reconcile itself with the shape of an ordinary house but it became uncertain in outline like a thing glimpsed under ruffled water. Then it became clear again and I *saw* that it began to have some back to it, some small space for rooms behind the frontage. I gathered this from the fact that I *seemed to see* the front and back of the ‘building’ simultaneously from my position approaching what should have been the side. As there was no side that I could *see* I thought the house must be triangular with its apex pointing towards me but when I was only fifteen yards away I *saw* a small window *apparently* facing me and I *knew* from that that there *must* be some side to it.

(O’Brien 1993: 55, my emphasis)

Once again, the abundant perception modality sub-worlds created in this passage (shown in emboldened italics above) suggest a deep-seated uncertainty which belies the positive epistemic modal worlds also present (shown underlined in bold above).

Nevertheless, the narrator courageously enters the barracks and is greeted by a large, red-faced man, Sergeant Pluck, who asks, ‘Is it about a bicycle?’ This enquiry is unlikely to be out of place in the reader’s frame-knowledge of the police and their likely responsibilities and interests. As such, it presents little challenge on first impressions. However, though the narrator immediately answers ‘no’, the conversation continues as follows:

‘Are you sure?’ he asked.

‘Certain.’

‘Not about a motor-cycle?’

‘No.’

‘One with overhead valves and a dynamo for a light?’

‘No.’

‘In that circumstantial eventuality there can be no question of a motor-bicycle’...

‘Tell me,’ he continued, ‘would it be true that you are an itinerant dentist and that you came on a tricycle?’

‘It would not,’ I replied.

‘On a patent tandem?’

‘No.’

‘Dentists are an unpredictable coterie of people,’ he said, ‘Do you tell me it was a velocipede or a penny-farthing?’

‘I do not,’ I said evenly.

(O’Brien 1993: 57-58)

As remarkable as the Sergeant's bizarre pursuit of the conversation beyond his co-participant's first negative response is the narrator's complicity in this highly infelicitous exchange. At no point does he signal any desire to bring the interaction with the Sergeant to a close, protesting no further against its pointlessness than his minimal negative turns.

The structure of the passage is one repeated on a number of occasions throughout the course of the novel. One of these, also an exchange between the narrator and Sergeant Pluck, is analysed in detail in Simpson (1997):

He was frowning so heavily with wrinkles which were so deep that the blood was driven from his face leaving it black and forbidding.

Then he spoke.

'Are you completely doubtless that you are nameless?' he asked.

'Positively certain.'

'Would it be Mick Barry?'

'No.'

'Charlemagne O'Keeffe?'

'No.'

'Sir Justin Spens?'

'Not that.'

'Kimberley?'

'No.'

'Bernard Fann?'

'No.'

'Joseph Poe or Nolan?'

'No.'

'One of the Garvins or the Moynihans?'

'Not them.'

(O'Brien 1993: 104)

The Sergeant continues his search through a further sixteen names before concluding the narrator's failure to match any of his suggestions to be 'a nice pancake' (O'Brien 1993: 105). Simpson (1997: 75) notes that the Sergeant uses a total of twenty-one elicitation-reply structures, all of which produce the same response from the narrator. He also points out that there is one stage in the transaction where the elicitation-reply structure is broken:

'That is an amazing piece of denial and denunciation,' he said.  
He passed the red cloth over his face again to reduce the moisture.  
'An astonishing parade of nullity,' he added.



'My name is not Jenkins either,' I vouchsafed.

(O'Brien 1993: 104)

As Simpson observes, the Sergeant appears to be slowing down here, possibly even ending the search:

Yet the protagonist initiates a new exchange himself with the remark 'My name isn't Jenkins either.' This, in fact, functions to re-trigger the name-search and the Sergeant begins the next exchange with renewed vigour. The protagonist seems just as committed to the search as his interlocutor, as he is the one who provides the discursial signal for the verbal torture to recommence.

(Simpson 1997: 76)

The narrator, then, is not only complicit in but actively encouraging of the infelicitousness of this particular transaction. In Text World Theory terms, the Sergeant's pursuit of the topic beyond his co-participant's first negative response in both of the examples quoted above violates all of our frame-based expectations of how such an encounter should proceed. The narrator's behaviour then compounds the damage and adds to the now mounting evidence of his possible psychosis.

Once again, however, the focalised nature of the narration means that the reader has no choice but to continue in his or her attempt to construct a solid and coherent text world based on the information presented through the protagonist's perspective. This enterprise is aided in the latter sections of the novel by an increase in the world-building detail offered by the text. The Sergeant and narrator leave the police barracks and set off on a trek 'going where we are going', as the Sergeant puts it, and in a direction that is in 'the right direction to a place that is next door to it' (O'Brien 1993: 80):

It was a queer country we were in. There was a number of blue mountains around us at what you might call a respectful distance with a glint of white water coming down the shoulders of one or two of them and they kept hemming us in and meddling with our minds. Half-way to these mountains the view got clearer and was full of humps and hollows and long parks of fine bogland with civil people here and there in the middle of it working with long instruments, you could hear their voices calling across the wind and the crack of the dull carts on the roadways. White buildings could be seen in several places and cows shambling lazily from here to there in search of pasture.

(O'Brien 1993: 80)

Although the characters' purpose may be unclear, this passage is perhaps one of the most heavily descriptive in the entire novel, providing enough deictic and referential information for the reader to build a richly detailed mental representation of their surroundings. The geographical details of the characters' immediate situation are particularly clearly established, with not only 'a number of blue mountains' nominated as present in the text world but also additional details such as 'a glint of white water coming down the shoulders', 'humps and hollows and long parks of fine bogland', as well as a number of 'white buildings' and 'roadways'. Several animals and people are also referred to and a number of reference chains (see section 3.2.1) are formed between the nominated entities and the various predications made about them (the pronominal link between 'the civil people' and '*their* voices', for example).

Readerly patience is also encouraged by the recurrent pre-empting of any doubts in the protagonist's reliability as a focaliser by the narrator himself. At one point during their travels, for example, Sergeant Pluck relates the following story:

'Michael Gilhane', said the Sergeant, 'is nearly sixty years of age by plain computation and if he is itself, he has spent no less than thirty-five years riding his bicycle over the rocky roadsteads and up and down the hills and into the deep ditches when the road goes astray in the strain of the winter. He is always going to a particular destination or other on his bicycle at every hour of the day or coming back from there at every other hour. If it wasn't that his bicycle was stolen every Monday he would be sure to be more than half-way now.'

'Half-way to where?'

'Half-way to being a bicycle himself', said the Sergeant.

(O'Brien 1993: 86)

The Sergeant goes on to explain that the process of transformation from human to bicycle results from a gradual 'interchange of atoms', similar to that which takes place when a bar of iron is struck by a hammer or other blunt instrument. He goes on:

'The gross and net result is that people who spend most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles over the rocky roadsteads of the parish get their personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycles... you would be surprised at the number of people in these parts who nearly are half people and half bicycles.'

(O'Brien 1993: 88)

The narrator responds to this bizarre logic as follows:

I *knew* the Sergeant was talking the truth and if it was a question of taking my choice, it was possible that I *would have to* forego the reality of all the simple things my eyes were looking at.

(O'Brien 1993: 89, my emphasis)

The affirmative epistemic modality with which the narrator here admits his acceptance of the Sergeant's reasoning over what his own perceptions are telling him is, I would argue, somewhat disconcerting for the reader. However, his acknowledgement of the dubious foundations of the Sergeant's reckoning is enough to reassure the reader, temporarily at least, of the narrator's own good sense and sanity.

Indeed, sufficient appeasement of the reader by such means can be seen to be the key to the success of the final twist in the tale of *The Third Policeman*. The narrator's quest eventually brings him full circle, back to the scene of Mathers' murder and inside the walls of the old man's house. There, he meets a gruesome and mysterious figure:

The great fat body in the uniform did not remind me of anybody that I knew *but the face at the top of it belonged to old Mathers*. It was not as I had recalled seeing it last whether in my sleep or otherwise, deathly and unchanging; it was now red and gross as if gallons of hot thick blood had been pumped into it. The cheeks were bulging out like two ruddy globes marked here and there with straggles of purple discolouration. The eyes had been charged with unnatural life and glistened like beads in the lamplight.

(O'Brien 1993: 189, original emphasis retained)

Although the creature also speaks with the voice of Mathers, he introduces himself as Sergeant Fox, the elusive third policeman. The following exchange takes place between the two men:

'I thought you were dead!'...

'That is a nice thing to say,' he said, 'but it is no matter because I thought the same thing about yourself. I do not understand your unexpected corporality after the morning on the scaffold.'

'I escaped,' I stammered.

He gave me long searching glances.

'Are you sure?' he asked.

Was I sure? Suddenly I felt horribly ill as if the spinning of the world in the firmament had come against my stomach for the first time, turning it all to bitter curd.

(O'Brien 1993: 189)

Should the reader's mental representation, painstakingly constructed over the course of the novel, manage to withstand the strain of this extraordinary encounter, the narrator's next visit, back to the pub and to Divney himself, ensures the collapse of even the most concrete conceptual foundations.

The narrator returns home to find Divney and a woman named Pegeen Meers, who Divney had once talked of marrying, together in the kitchen with a small boy he has never seen before. Pegeen is pregnant and also appears to have aged considerably since the narrator last saw her. Divney too appears to have aged and 'had grown enormously fat and his brown hair was gone, leaving him quite bald' (O'Brien 1993: 201). Although Pegeen and the boy seem to not even notice his entrance, Divney's reaction to the narrator is extreme:

He turned lazily towards the open door, half-rose and gave a scream which pierced me and pierced the house and careered up to reverberate appallingly in the vault of the heavens. His eyes were transfixed and motionless as they stared at me, his loose face shrunk and seemed to crumble to a limp pallid rag of flesh. His jaws clicked a few times like a machine and then he fell forward on his face with another horrible shriek which subsided to heartrending moans... He sobbed convulsively where he lay and began to cry and mutter things disjointedly like a man raving at the door of death. It was about me. He told me to keep away. He said I was not there. He said I was dead. He said that what he had put under the boards in the big house was not the black box but a mine, a bomb. It had gone up when I touched it. He had watched the bursting to bits of it from where I had left him. I was dead. He screamed to me to keep away. I was dead for sixteen years.

(O'Brien 1993: 203)

The narrator, then, has been dead since Chapter Two of the novel. More specifically, he has been dead since 'something happened' as he reached for Mathers' money box under the floorboards on page 24. The cognitive effect of this revelation lacks a descriptive term under the Text World Theory model. However, an approximate explanation of how a reader might deal with the challenge of a disintegrating text world such as this can be found within Emmott's (1997) framework for narrative comprehension.

Some of the similarities between Emmott's model and Text World Theory have already been outlined in section 3.2.1 and section 3.3.3 above. It was explained there that Emmott's term for a reader's mental representation of a fictional discourse, a 'contextual frame', can be considered as equivalent to Werth's notion of a text world. Characters may be 'bound in' or 'bound out' of the contextual frame as they enter and leave. Such occurrences result in what Emmott (1997: 142) terms 'frame modification', where the participant set of the frame alters yet our monitoring assumptions about other characters remain the same. Emmott also specifies a further type of frame change: a 'frame switch', where the reader ceases to monitor one contextual frame and begins monitoring another. The frame to which the reader's focus switches may either be a completely new frame or, in the case of a 'frame recall', may simply involve a return to a previously constructed context. In either case, this type of change can be seen to be roughly equivalent to Werth's notion of deictic sub-worlds, involving an alternation of time or place. This correlation is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.0 below.

Emmott notes that the success of each of the frame changes described so far depends on the reader responding to textual signals in the correct manner:

... it is possible that readers may occasionally 'miscue' on these signals and fail to change context. This may be due to inattentive reading but on occasions it might be because the signals to change context are not clear or because there are conflicting signals.

(Emmott 1997: 160)

In such instances, Emmott argues, readers are forced to *repair* their mental representation of the discourse, replacing the erroneous contextual frame with the correct one. Although Emmott's terminology is restricted to frame change failures alone, the notion of frame repair in general seems to provide a useful means of discussing the cognitive effect of *The Third Policeman*. Where the majority of Emmott's examples involve fairly minimal deictic or referential miscues, O'Brien

employs what Michel Charolles (1983, 1989) has termed a ‘garden-path’ narrative strategy as the central structure of his novel. The reader does not simply lose track of the movements of a particular character or miss a textual signal to change frames, but is deliberately misled into constructing a complex and highly detailed mental representation of the text based on false information. The revelation that the narrator has been dead throughout the course of the last one hundred and fifty pages forces a major re-evaluation, not only of the current contextual frame, but of one’s understanding of the entire novel. I would suggest that the reader must carry out considerable *world repair* if anything is to be salvaged from the wreckage of the text world of *The Third Policeman* at all. With our suspicions of narratorial unreliability confirmed, the quest for the black box can be re-interpreted as one man’s ghostly journey through an absurd and hellish landscape; a journey which seems destined to last far beyond its sixteen years as the narrator, joined by the recently deceased Divney, finally returns to the police barracks and to the familiar greeting of Sergeant Pluck – ‘Is it about a bicycle?’

#### **4.1.1 Analysis Review**

From the outset, the narrative of *The Third Policeman* offers little in the way of comprehension aids to its struggling reader. Indeed, the process of attempting to resolve the novel’s incomprehensibility may be part of many readers’ enjoyment of the text. The slight world-building information with which the story opens has been shown to increase only marginally throughout the course of the rest of the novel, with a far heavier emphasis being placed on the function-advancing events that propel the story forwards. These details are presented through a fixed focaliser, who takes the shape of a participating character, narrating in the first person. Under Werth’s framework, the worlds created from this perspective would be classified as epistemic sub-worlds which

are only character-accessible, since the reader has no means of verifying their contents for truth and reliability. I have shown, however, that the absence of any additional omniscient narratorial presence in *The Third Policeman* results in the text world layer of Werth's framework being rendered redundant, as the sub-world of the focalised narrative remains dominant throughout the text. I therefore raised a question over whether the logical categorisation of the narrative as only 'character-accessible' under Werth's approach is an adequate account of the only available source of information upon which the reader must build their mental representation of the discourse. A further question also arises, once again, over Werth's choice of terminology. Should the focalised world upon which the entire narrative is based still be referred to as a *sub-world*, since it represents the inner workings of a character's mind, or does this hierarchical term once again present a misleading picture of the real structure of the narrative? These questions will be addressed in further detail over the course of the following sections of this chapter.

The reader's acceptance of the focaliser's perspective as the main text world for *The Third Policeman* is by no means straightforward, however, since his reliability is continually undermined throughout the course of the novel. The narrator has been shown to participate in, and even actively encourage, highly infelicitous discourse and explicitly questions the reliability of his own perceptions on a number of occasions. Furthermore, the modality of his narration has been identified as fitting into the negatively-shaded mode of Simpson's (1993) category A narratives. The epistemic and perception modality typically abundant in these forms express confusion and uncertainty and make it difficult for the reader to form a consistent mental picture of the narrator's point of view. Although external confirmation of the ideas of the narrator of

*The Third Policeman* is offered in the form of academic notes on the work of the philosopher De Selby, the text world analysis presented above has exposed the true epistemic value of these footnotes to be negligible. Figure 4d above illustrates the exaggerated distance from the reader's here and now at which the narrator's notes are actually situated.

I have suggested, however, that the exclusive reader/focaliser relationship encourages the reader's attempts to construct a coherent text world from the information presented. Indeed, *The Third Policeman* can be seen to rely heavily on this bond, since the novel's final twist would be impossible without it. The delayed announcement of the narrator's demise confirms our suspicions about the unreliability of his focalisation and threatens the stability of the mental representation constructed up to this point. I used Emmott's (1997) framework for narrative comprehension to suggest that the reader is then forced to repair the world of *The Third Policeman*, re-interpreting it as a darkly humorous ghost story in order to preserve the precarious structure of its text world. The following section of this chapter continues the exploration of the ideas and questions raised above, paying further attention to the implications that focalised narrations hold for Werth's approach to discourse study and his notions of hierarchical world-structure in particular.

#### **4.2.0 The Mustache**

In this section of the chapter, I will be examining the conceptual structure of Lanie Goodman's American-English translation of the novel *La Moustache* by Emmanuel Carrère (1998). It is important to clarify from the outset, however, that the conclusions I draw as a result of my study are not in any way intended as an account of the conceptual structures contained within the original French version of the text. The analysis which



follows is not concerned with issues of literary translation, but with the text worlds of Goodman's edition, *The Mustache* [sic], alone. To date, no major critical work on either version of the story has been published, although reviewers of *The Mustache* have described the novel variously as 'excruciating... [a novel which] sets forth the casual swiftness with which one's tenuous grip on reality can be lost forever' (Hawthorne 1997) and 'an allegory of the larger brutality which confronts our time: the narcissism which fails to flower into a new wholeness' (Couteau 1988).

Like both Auster's *The Music of Chance* and O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, the narrative structure of *The Mustache* progresses chronologically and appears, at least from its opening paragraphs, to be building its main text world along realist lines:

"What would you say if I shaved off my mustache?" Agnes, who was on the living room couch, flipping through a magazine, laughed and replied, "That might be a good idea."

He smiled. Small islands of shaving cream sprinkled with little black hairs were floating on the water's surface in the bathtub, where he had been lingering. His beard was heavy and grew back quickly, which meant he had to shave twice a day if he didn't want to have a five o'clock shadow. In the evening this unpleasant chore became a moment for relaxation, he'd be careful to use the shower to run the bathwater, so the steam wouldn't cloud the mirrors surrounding the tub. He'd prepare a drink, kept within arm's reach, then lavishly spread the shaving cream on his chin, going back and forth with the razor, making sure not to come too close to his mustache, which he would later trim with a scissors [sic].

(Carrère 1998: 149-150)

The description of this fairly unremarkable domestic scene provides the reader with substantial world-building information. Once again, although the exact time of the story is unspecified, we may assume, according to Ryan's (1991) principle of minimal departure, that the events portrayed are unfolding against a contemporary background. Indeed, the opening paragraph quoted above presents little challenge to this supposition, with none of its composite objects (a couch, a magazine, a bathtub and so on) or its characters (an unnamed male character and a female, Agnes) appearing out of place in our knowledge frames of everyday contemporary domestic existence.

The construction of a coherent text world based on these deictic and referential foundations is complicated only by the occurrence of a handful of sub-worlds in the passage. The first of these springs, in fact, from the very first line of the novel, which happens to contain two connected instances of direct speech. As already discussed in section 3.3.3, this initial exchange between the two characters can be seen to inject some present tense discourse into the past tense narrative, a temporal shift which forms an associated deictic sub-world. Further deictic alternations also arise later on, as the male character's daily shaving rituals are described. Once again, a temporal shift occurs as we are told, 'Upon waking, before his shower, he quickly performed this task in front of the mirror, as a series of mechanical gestures, without ceremony'. This description and that of evening shaving which follows it both depict worlds that are temporally separated from the main text world. These worlds are also habitual in nature, representing a series of events that have happened on a daily basis up until the present point. Insight into how the main character views these activities is provided by the access granted to his inner thoughts and motivations:

For better or for worse, this evening *rite* had an important place in his daily *equilibrium*, like the one and only cigarette he allowed himself after lunch, ever since he'd stopped smoking. Since the end of his adolescence, the *calm pleasure* that he drew from this *ritual* hadn't changed; his work schedule had even accentuated it, and when Agnes affectionately made fun of the *sacred aspect* of his shaving sessions, he answered only that they were, in fact, his form of *Zen exercise*. It was the only time he had left for *meditation*, *self-knowledge*, and the *spiritual world*, given his trivial but consuming activities as a young, urban professional.

(Carrère 1998: 150, my emphasis)

Here, the italicised micrometaphors can be seen to combine to produce an extended SHAVING IS ZEN EXERCISE metaphor running throughout the passage. The daily act of shaving emerges as one of central importance in the protagonist's life, as the ritualistic nature of this simple task is emphasised through repeated reference to its calming, meditative qualities. The same Zen metaphor could even be argued to be evident in the opening description of 'small islands of shaving cream' floating on the surface of the

protagonist's bath water. Foregrounded as the only metaphorical description in the entire paragraph, the comparison of the spots of foam to 'islands' echoes the theme of peaceful isolation.

Such information contributes to the increasingly detailed portrait of the main male character which is beginning to emerge. In Simpson's (1993) terms, discussed in section 4.1.0 above and set out in Figure 4b, *The Mustache* constitutes a Category B narrative in the 'reflector' mode, since it is written in the third person, with the unnamed male character providing the fixed perspective through which both the world-building and function-advancing elements of the text world are focalised. Once again, in Text World Theory terms, the worlds created from this perspective are only character-accessible, as the reader is unable to verify their contents for truth and reliability. Once again, however, the fixed nature of the narration means that the point of view of the reflector of the fiction forms the reader's only access route to the world-building and function-advancing elements of the discourse. Just as in *The Third Policeman*, two levels of Text World Theory can be seen to conflate as an epistemic modal sub-world forms the main world of the narrative, leaving the text world layer of the framework essentially redundant.

I suggested in section 4.1.1 above that the dominant nature of many focalised worlds might lead us to question the viability of Werth's classification of these conceptual structures as *sub-worlds*. This terminology would seem to suggest that, in the case of *The Mustache*, for example, despite the fact that the narrative remains focalised through a single point of view for the duration of the entire novel, the worlds that are constructed according to that point of view are still in some way subordinate to the now

redundant text world. With evidence to the contrary now found in both *The Third Policeman* and *The Mustache*, the *sub-* prefix will now be dropped from all references to modal worlds for the remainder of this thesis. Thus, two modifications to Text World Theory which I have suggested in the course of this study can now be fully integrated, both with each other and with the thesis as a whole. The first, put forward in section 3.3.2, brings together all instances of epistemic, boulomaic and deontic modality, along with conditional constructions, hypotheticals, indirect thought representation and focalised narration (previously separated into the categories of ‘attitudinal’ and ‘epistemic’ sub-worlds under Werth’s approach) under the all-encompassing term of ‘modal sub-worlds’. The second modification, suggested here, drops the *sub-* prefix from that classification in recognition of the possibility that any one of the types of modal world listed may constitute a substantial part of a particular text, rendering Werth’s original terminology entirely inappropriate.

To return to the opening paragraphs of *The Mustache*, then, the deictic alternations identified above can be seen to be embedded into an existing focalised modal world. This world initially presents the reader with few surprises, progressing coherently and cooperatively and allowing easy construction and development. Agnes’ subsequent departure to buy groceries, however, advances the novel’s plot to a new level, though this shift is by no means immediately apparent in the unremarkable nature of her actions. With his wife gone, the protagonist ponders their recent conversation and the possibility of surprising her on her return:

... what if, when she came back upstairs, he surprised her by actually shaving off his mustache? She’d declared five minutes ago that it might be a good idea. But she couldn’t have taken his question seriously, not anymore than usual. She liked him with a mustache, and besides, so did he, although after all this time he was no longer accustomed to a clean-shaven face; there was really no way of knowing. In any event, if they didn’t like his new look, he could always let his mustache grow back. It would take ten to fifteen days, and at least he would have had the experience of seeing himself differently.

(Carrère 1998: 151-152)

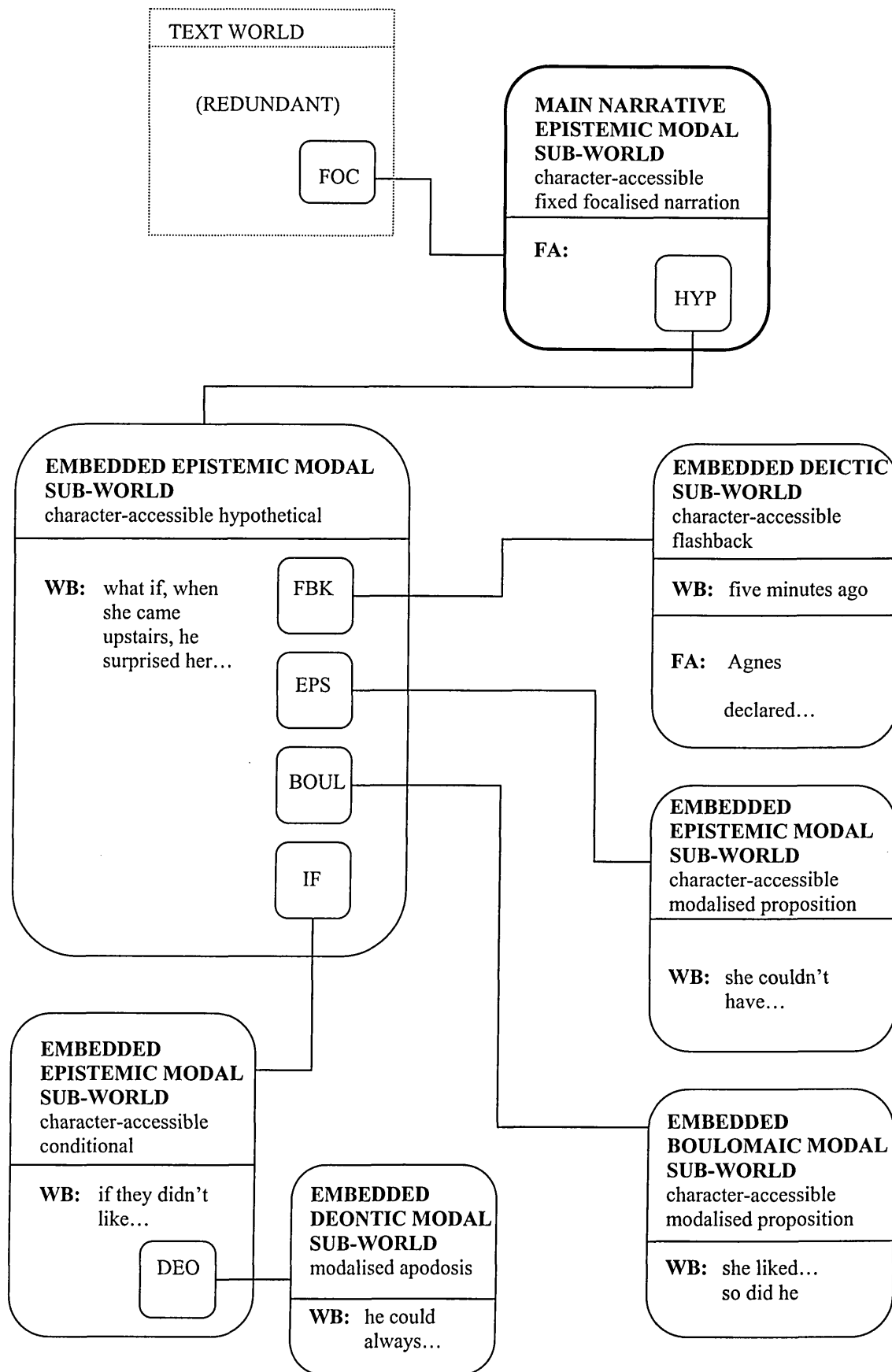


Figure 4e. *Embedded Worlds in The Mustache*

Figure 4e above shows the complex conceptual structure which develops around this passage. The epistemic modal world which makes up the main body of the narrative is shown emerging from the redundant text world layer as a focalised world, marked FOC in the diagram. A second epistemic world, a hypothetical situation, is then embedded within the FOC world, as the protagonist considers what might happen if he were to shave off his moustache to surprise his wife. The origins of this world are marked in Figure 4e as HYP. The character's thoughts then flash back to Agnes' comments some minutes ago that shaving might be a good idea, creating another embedded world, shown in the diagram as an FBK frame. The next sentence then contains some strong epistemic modality, as the protagonist decides that Agnes '*couldn't* have taken his question seriously', producing an embedded epistemic modal world, marked EPS. Further modality, this time boulomaic, is also evident in the sentence which follows, as we are told of both Agnes' and the protagonist's fondness of his moustache. This is shown in the diagram as a BOUL frame, which is another new addition to Text World Theory notation I have developed. Finally, the conditional construction 'if they didn't like his new look, he could always let his mustache grow back', creates an epistemic modal sub-world, shown as an IF world embedded in the central hypothetical frame. As with many conditionals, the apodosis portion of the construction is modalised, signified in this case by the deontic modal auxiliary 'could'. This sets up a further embedded sub-world, marked in Figure 4e, under my modified Text World Theory notation, as a DEO world within its containing IF frame.

At the end of this prolonged contemplation, the protagonist finally shaves off his moustache; another apparently unremarkable act, the eventual repercussions of which are only darkly hinted at as he awaits his wife's return 'with the distressing feeling that

he was in a dentist's waiting room' (Carrère 1998: 155). His unease increases when Agnes' reaction to his new appearance fails to fit in with any of the hypothetical situations he has imagined while soaking in the bath. She simply unpacks her shopping, turns off the stereo and the two of them leave for dinner at some friends' house, without her even mentioning the change. As the couple arrive at Serge and Veronique's building, an extended episode of free indirect thought allows the reader an additional insight into the protagonist's increasingly irritated and confused state of mind:

Why was she pretending not to have noticed anything? Was it so she could retaliate with her own surprise to the one he'd arranged for her? But that was precisely what was so strange: she hadn't seemed surprised at all, not even for a second to regain her composure and put on a straight face... Of course, one could claim that he'd warned her, she'd even said laughingly that it would be a good idea. But that had obviously been in jest, a false answer to what was still, to his way of thinking, a false question. It was impossible to imagine that she'd taken him seriously, that she'd gone to do her errands and said to herself, He's in the middle of shaving off his mustache. When I see him, I'll have to pretend as if it were nothing. On the other hand, her sangfroid was even less believable if she'd been expecting it. In any case, he decided, hats off to her. Nice job.

(Carrère 1998: 158-159)

Once again, a series of worlds are embedded within one another as the character struggles to understand his wife's behaviour. Hypothetical worlds, for example, are created by the character's wondering, 'Was it so she could retaliate', as well as by his admission that, 'one could claim that he'd warned her'. A number of modalised worlds also occur, created, for example, by the epistemic modality in the assertion that an earlier comment by his wife 'had *obviously* been in jest...'.

A series of further remote worlds are then posited:

Serge and Veronique were going to laugh, first at his new look, then at the practical joke Agnes had played on him, they'd laugh at his nervous irritation, which he planned to acknowledge, sparing no details, making himself look as if he were in a fog, and ridiculously grouchy, playing tit for tat.

Unless...unless his opponent, who never ran out of ideas, was one step ahead of him and intended to let Serge and Veronique in on it... He imagined her in the middle of coaching Serge and Veronique at that moment, Veronique chortling with laughter, on the verge of hysteria from trying to act natural.

(Carrère 1998: 159-160)

The first of these possible worlds is a hypothetical future situation (beginning ‘Serge and Veronique *were going to laugh*’) with different spatial and temporal parameters from those of its originating world. It is also considerably more detailed in its construction than those which formed the protagonist’s initial reaction to his wife’s unexpected conduct. The same can be said for the further deictic alternation which follows it, embedded in the hypothetical construction ‘Unless... unless his opponent, who never ran out of ideas, was one step ahead of him’. As the protagonist goes on to imagine his wife coaching Serge and Veronique in their apartment, the reader’s focus is allowed to relocate temporarily to a separate, but concurrent scene, with the time-signature of the spatial shift matching that of the world from which it has sprung (see section 3.3.3 above).

In the end, Serge and Veronique’s behaviour during dinner seems to support the latter of the two hypotheticals contained within the extract above, as they too fail to mention any change in their friend’s appearance. Their conduct triggers a shift in the modality of the focalised narration:

Serge and Veronique were in rare form. No supporting glances, no ostentatious display of discretion, they looked him straight in the eye, just as usual... During dinner the four of them talked about skiing, work, mutual friends, new films, so naturally that the joke began to lose its novelty, like those near-perfect pastiches that look so like the original that they generate more respect than gaiety. The game was played so well that the pleasure he’d anticipated was spoiled... Despite the implicit tension that this impeccably crafted joke produced as the evening wore on, he felt sad, like a child who, during a family dinner held in honor of his prize for outstanding achievement, wants the conversation to center only on this, and suffers because the adults don’t constantly refer back to it but speak of other things.

(Carrère 1998: 161)

The abundant hypothetical wonderings of the previous passages are gone and the protagonist’s opinions are presented in an epistemically non-modal form (‘Serge and Veronique *were in rare form*’, ‘The game *was played*’, and so on). His conclusions are obviously drawn – this is a joke, a game. Also, once again, the thoughts and feelings of



the focaliser form a sub-text to the main narrative, as we are told that the joke is ‘like those near-perfect pastiches’, losing its appeal and making him feel ‘like a child’.

As the evening draws to a close and, despite his frequent provocations, the protagonist realises that ‘there would be no denouement, that the gag had stopped right there’ (Carrère 1998: 163), his earlier irritation and confusion returns. During the car journey home, he finally confronts his wife:

She should understand that it didn’t amuse him anymore, that he wanted to discuss it calmly. He forced himself to continue in the tone of an adult trying to reason with a stubborn little girl, and declared emphatically, “The best jokes are the shortest ones.”

“What joke?”

“Stop it.” He cut her off with a brusqueness that he instantly regretted. He began again, more gently, “That’s enough.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Please stop, I’m asking you to stop it.”

He was no longer smiling, and neither was she.

(Carrère 1998: 165)

The argument quickly escalates as Agnes refuses to admit that she has been playing a joke on her husband. It is during this extended fight that the significance of the fixed nature of the narration becomes most apparent. Because the reader’s entire experience of the narrative of *The Mustache* so far has been filtered through the perspective of the main male character, contrary to Werth’s claims, the reader is encouraged to accept the information he presents as fact and construct their mental representation of the story accordingly. Thus, during the following exchange, the reader’s empathy is firmly directed towards its focaliser as their only point of access to that world:

He grabbed her by the shoulders, overcome by trembling and by the contraction of her muscles. Her bangs hid her eyes; he pushed them aside, exposing her forehead, took her face into his hands, ready to do anything to stop the pain. She stammered, “What’s this story about a mustache?”

“Agnes,” he murmured, “Agnes, I shaved it off. It’s not important, it’ll grow back. Look at me, Agnes. What’s going on?”

He repeated every word gently, almost crooning as he caressed her, but she moved away again, with the same wide-eyed stare as she had had in the car; it was the same thing all over again.

“You know very well that you never had a mustache. Stop it, please.” She was screaming. “Please. It’s ridiculous, please, you’re scaring me, stop it. Why are you doing this?” Her voice trailed off in a whisper.

(Carrère 1998: 170)

The reader sees Agnes' distress entirely from her husband's point of view, since no representation of her inner thoughts is offered. Agnes' mind remains closed off and the focalisation remains securely fixed with the main male character. The omniscient narrator can also be seen to be complicit in the creation of this effect, since it provides no external evaluation of the protagonist's representation of events, as would be seen in a narrative in the narratorial mode, in Simpson's (1993) terms (see Figure 4b above).

It could be argued that the discrepancy between how Agnes seems to see the text world and how her husband has presented it to the reader is significant enough to act at least as a *reminder* to the reader of the essentially character-accessible status of the narration so far. At one point Agnes even telephones Serge and Veronique to verify her case. However, though her obstinacy may begin to raise questions about the protagonist's reliability in the mind of the reader, the fact remains that he must be trusted as sole focaliser if a text world for this story is to be built and maintained. Furthermore, the continuing, complicit silence of the omniscient narrator adds to the reader's confidence, since one might reasonably expect some sort of warning if the perspective of the main character was at fault in any way. Such trust is bolstered yet further by the production of the protagonist's own 'evidence' to support his claims. He hunts out some photographs of his and Agnes' last holiday in Java, in which he describes himself as appearing 'dressed in a batik shirt, his hair stuck to his forehead with sweat, smiling and mustached' (Carrère 1998: 174). Agnes simply hands the photos back to him, asking him, 'What do you want to prove?' (Carrère 1998: 174). Once again, the reader is encouraged to ignore the obvious ambiguity of this response by the protagonist's own acceptance of it as confirmation of his own perspective.

The empathetic connection between the protagonist and the reader continues to be strengthened by the provision of numerous extended metaphors through which the character conceptualises his increasingly disturbing situation:

He had *made the first move, surrendered completely*... He who *yields* first is the smartest, he repeated to himself... he slipped into bed, took her into his arms, both relieved that she'd *surrendered* and worried about his modest *victory*... What could he say to her? To stop this farce and go back to a *crossfire* of misunderstandings?... This time, once again, she was *one step ahead, securing her advantage* by making a reasonable offer that put him *on the defensive*... he'd be admitting *defeat*... He'd have to refuse this *ordeal*, abandon this fruitless *terrain*, and move on to another where he would have the *advantage*, a possibility of *control*... Might as well *surrender*, wait for it to pass.

(Carrère 1998: 165-174, my emphasis)

Abundant evidence of a developing ARGUMENT IS WAR megametaphor runs throughout the description of the focaliser's lengthy fight with his wife. Indeed, this sustained undercurrent continues well into the next morning, when he wakes to find Agnes gone for the day and attempts to rationalise the events of the previous evening:

Why in the world did she have to invent such ridiculous excuses? Such *tactics* bewildered people, and what's more, she'd boast about them after the fact, telling everyone she could. But if one of the *victims* reminded her of these confessions, she'd answer yes, she did it often, but not this time... They thought they were lending themselves to a game among themselves, one of those private jokes that they were accustomed to playing, and not the first *serious skirmish* in a kind of conjugal *guerrilla warfare*.

(Carrère 1998: 178: 181, my emphasis)

Still smarting from the night before, the protagonist not only compares the argument with his wife to a war but also firmly positions Agnes as the aggressor in that battle and himself as the victim. Again, the exclusive reader-focaliser relationship encourages sympathy with this point of view.

The protagonist remains confident in his perspective for most of that morning. The access granted to his inner thoughts reveals his conviction that Agnes has organised a conspiracy against him, a cruel practical joke in keeping with her mischievous personality. The protagonist's only uncertainty is his wife's motives for playing such a trick, but the modality of the majority of this section of the narrative remains categorical:

He stepped out of the tub, shook himself off, and *decided to forget* the whole incident. He promised himself that *he wouldn't reproach her*, even if there was cause to do so. No, *there wouldn't be any cause. The case was closed. They wouldn't speak of it again.*

(Carrère 1998: 182, my emphasis)

Once again, the protagonist's decisiveness is expressed through epistemically non-modal constructions. On his arrival at work, however, a note of anxiety begins to re-surface. None of his work colleagues mention the change in his appearance and, once again, he begins to hypothesise about their possible reasons:

*Had Agnes called them too?* Ridiculous, especially since *he couldn't imagine that* Jerome or Samira, who were bogged down with work, would allow anyone to explain the roles that they'd have to play in an idiotic joke. *Unless, strictly out of necessity, they might have said, "All right",* and wouldn't give it another thought, *but upon his arrival, surely they would have shown their surprise. Was it simply that they didn't notice anything?*

(Carrère 1998: 184, my emphasis)

The protagonist constructs a number of hypothetical worlds here (italicised), some with a stronger epistemic commitment attached to them than others (compare 'they *might have said*' with '*surely* they would have shown their surprise'). This fluctuation provides a reminder of the real logical status of the narration and can be seen to be reminiscent of the confused, negatively-shaded narrations of *Molloy* and *The Third Policeman*, discussed in section 4.1.0 above. The conspiracy theory is also becoming less and less convincing the more people are drawn into the situation. The focaliser's own admission of this, I would argue, creates further epistemic distance between him and the reader.

As if in answer to the possibility of an increasingly doubtful reader, the protagonist returns home and rummages through his dustbin, searching for the discarded remains of his moustache. He finds it and confronts Agnes again. Her reaction is as ambiguous as it was to his presentation of their holiday photos, as she comments that he has shown her, 'Hair... hair from your mustache. What do you want me to say?' (Carrère 1998: 194). Initially, her husband appears reassured of his own vindication, as he storms out of their

bedroom and spends the night on the sofa. By morning, however, following a passionate reconciliation with Agnes, it seems that his true state of mind has changed little:

... the first part of the day went by without any incident. If things were actually what they seemed, he was suffering from hallucinations, maybe on the verge of a nervous breakdown. It would be better not to tell anyone, to avoid encouraging sympathetic whispers behind his back like, "Poor guy, he's going off the deep end..." The whole business would be settled, he was sure of it, as long as it didn't get spread around, didn't follow him into the office, wasn't heard among the clients – his reputation as a sick person, a reputation he'd have a hard time getting rid of afterward. So he guarded himself from committing any sort of blunder.

(Carrère 1998: 201)

Acute insecurity and paranoia are now evident, once again in the occurrence of a series of conditional constructions (for example, beginning 'If things were actually as they seemed...'), each setting up a hypothetical modal world in which the focaliser is mentally ill. Such explicit doubts may lead many readers to begin a re-evaluation of their mental representations of earlier scenes in the novel; another example of the strategies of world-repair which I put forward in section 4.1.0 above.

Determined to keep his fears from his friends and colleagues, the protagonist seeks an objective, external opinion by approaching a young woman in the street. He pretends, somewhat unconvincingly, to be blind and unsure whether the identity card he is carrying is his own. He asks the woman to verify whether the man in the photograph is wearing a moustache:

"Of course," the young woman said once again, and he felt her slipping the rectangle of folded cardboard between his outstretched fingers. "Well," he insisted, putting all his cards on the table, "I don't have one!"

"Yes, you do."

He started to tremble, and opened his eyes without thinking. The young woman continued to push the empty carriage, without even looking at him. She wasn't as young as he'd thought from far away. "Are you really sure," he quavered, "that in this photograph I have a mustache? Look again." He waved the identity card in front of her nose to incite her to answer, but she jerked her hand away and suddenly screamed, "That's enough! If you keep it up, I'm going to call the police!"

(Carrère 1998: 209)

This time, the protagonist does not miss the ambiguity of the exchange, furthering the distance between himself and the reader by again admitting the possibility of a number of interpretations:

... he kept on running all the way to the Place de la République, went into a café, and collapsed in a booth, out of breath... He forced himself to reconstruct the exact content of the confrontation... He'd been unable to tell whether she was referring to the photo or to him as well, since he'd been standing right in front of her. But maybe she considered a mustache to be the black fuzz that during the last two days had started to grow on his upper lip. Maybe she didn't see that well. Or maybe he'd dreamed it, he'd never shaved off his mustache, it was still there, nice and thick.

(Carrère 1998: 209)

Such paranoia has now become so prevalent in the text of *The Mustache* that it is worth examining how the worlds created by this narrative voice have been structured in more detail. Figure 4f below shows how, on his arrival in the café, the protagonist's thoughts flash back to his meeting with the young woman on the street as he attempts to reconstruct his conversation with her. This is shown as an FBK world embedded within the epistemic modal world of the main focalised narrative. A series of hypotheticals then follow, marked HYP in Figure 4f, as the character considers a number of possible interpretations of the young woman's response to his questions.

The diagram makes clear the epistemic distance of this mental activity from the reader's discourse world. As I have already mentioned, in the first half of the novel the exclusive reader-focaliser relationship diverts the reader's attention from the logical inaccessibility of the main body of the narrative. As the story progresses and the protagonist becomes increasingly paranoid, however, his admissions to his own mental instability present a serious threat to any trust previously placed in his perspective by the reader. This does not mean, however, that the information provided by the focaliser necessarily ceases to be incremented into the Common Ground of the discourse. However paranoid and deluded the protagonist may prove to be, he remains the reader's only point of access to the world-building and function-advancing elements of the text.

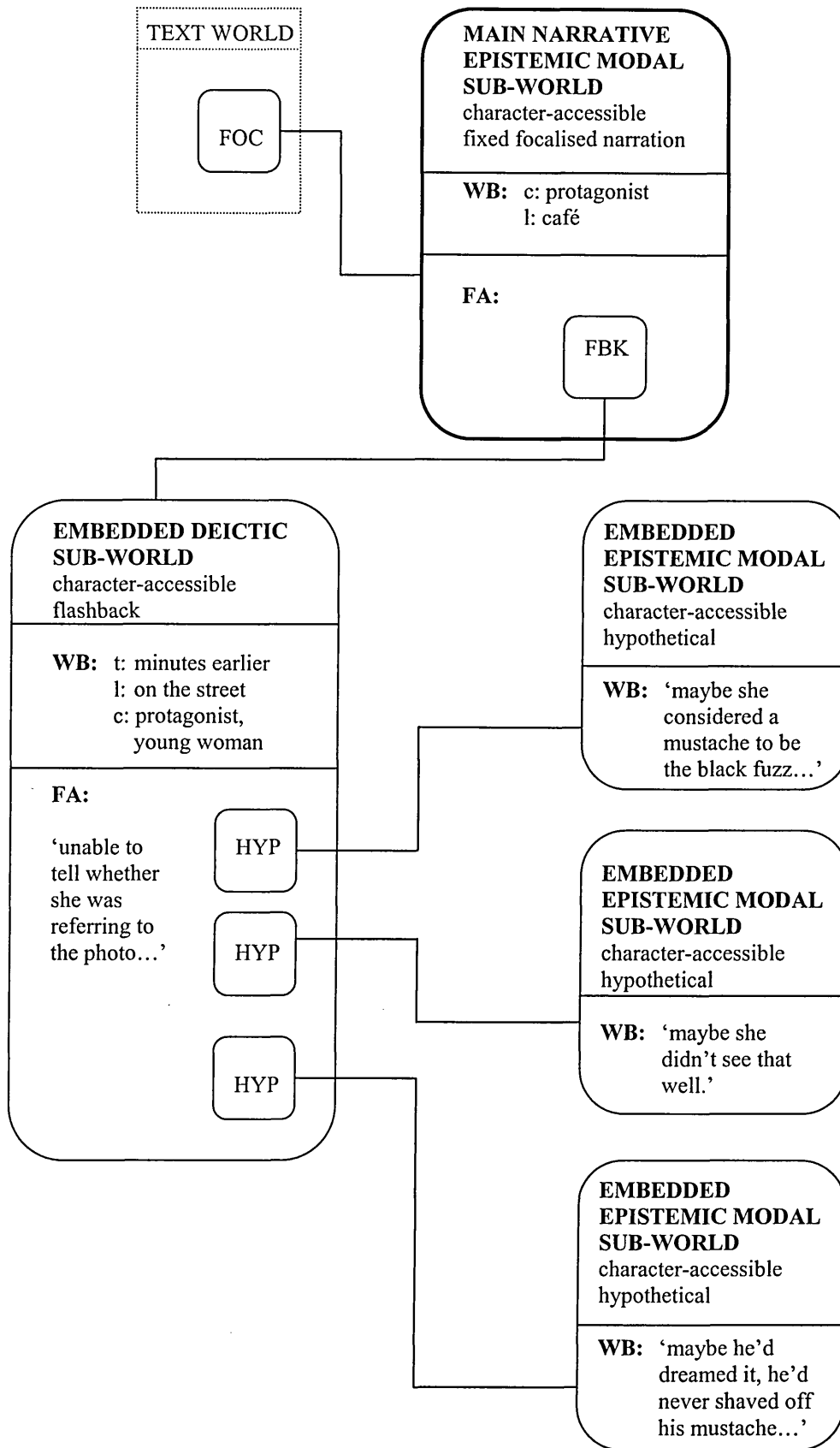


Figure 4f. The Paranoid Narrative Voice in The Mustache

It seems likely, then, that many readers may continue to sympathise with his distress and consider the numerous hypotheses he now presents as perfectly possible explanations for his situation.

Eventually, the protagonist decides to interpret the young woman's response to his questions as supporting his original belief that he used to have a moustache. His opinion does alter, however, on Agnes' role in the current confusion. He decides that it is, in fact, *she* who is mentally ill and he resolves to help her in any way he can, planning a quiet dinner out for them both later that evening. The modality of the narrative also shifts accordingly:

He vacillated between anger and a nauseating tenderness for Agnes, poor Agnes, his wife, Agnes, totally fragile, delicately put together, a sly fox, with a fine line between an active mind and the irrationality that had begun to consume her. In retrospect, the warning signs had made themselves clear: her flamboyant dishonesty, her excessive appetite for paradoxes, the stories on the phone, the brick walls, the radiators, the double personality, so sure of herself during the day, in the presence of a third person, and sobbing in his arms at night, like a child. He should have interpreted these warning signs earlier... he'd be there, always, and he'd always help her to be herself. He'd have to continue to behave that way, solid as a rock so she could lean on him. He couldn't let himself be thrown off track and get involved in her craziness; otherwise it would be a lost cause.

(Carrère 1998: 210-211)

The protagonist's conviction of his wife's instability is shown in his use of perception modality, 'the warning signs had made themselves *clear...*', and his sense of duty in the deontic modality of the final sentences: '*He should have* interpreted these warning signs earlier', '*He'd have to* continue to behave that way', '*He couldn't* let himself be thrown off track'. Whether the reader now shares this point of view is debatable.

Further questions are raised by the events which take place during dinner, where the protagonist had planned to broach the subject of Agnes getting treatment for her mental illness. As he presents his identity card while paying for their meal, Agnes snatches it from him and scratches the photograph until the spot on his face where his moustache



would be is completely removed. She then hands it back to him, accusing him of having defaced the card by drawing a moustache on with a black marker. Throughout the ensuing fight the protagonist sticks to his conviction that Agnes is crazy, even explaining the black mark left by the photograph on her finger as having been put there deliberately before they went out. The modality of his narrative remains categorical as he attempts to deal with what he perceives as Agnes' elaborately destructive madness. The following disturbing exchange, however, may force the reader into further re-evaluation and world-repair:

“The photos,” he said.  
“What photos?”  
She took a sip of coffee, slowly, looking at him from over the curved rim of the cup.  
“The ones from Java.”  
“We’ve never been there.”...  
“What about the other photos?”  
“You really want to see them?”  
She shook her head, as if reproaching herself for acquiescing to such childishness, but got up, went into the bedroom, and came back with a heap of color prints, which she placed on the floor... in every single one he was wearing a mustache. He held one out to her.  
“All I want to hear you say is that I don’t have a mustache in this picture. Then I’ll stop.”  
She sighed.  
“Say it,” he insisted, “So that at least it’s clear.”  
“You don’t have a mustache in that picture.”  
“Or in any of the others?”  
“Or in any of the others?”  
“Fine.”  
He rested his head on the back of the sofa and closed his eyes. It was, in fact, clear; all he could do now was be treated.

(Carrère 1998: 238)

In a sudden epistemic turnaround, the protagonist puts his trust entirely in his wife’s perspective and concludes that *he* must be suffering a mental breakdown. The potential pitfalls of incrementing the contents of a character-accessible world, laid out by Werth, are thus realised, as the focaliser suddenly accepts a version of his reality that he has fervently resisted up until this point. So why, then, should any reader pursue this deluded narrative any further?

Once again, I would argue that Werth’s logical distinction between participant- and character-accessibility is simply not adequate to account for the way that many readers

might process this text. It seems difficult to believe that entire sum of propositions contained within the character-accessible narrative of *The Mustache* have simply been ‘stored for possible future processing’, as Werth (1999: 213) argues. Rather, the exclusive relationship so intimately constructed between the reader and the focaliser in a fixed focalised narration diverts our attention from the true logical status of the text so successfully that a text world can be built on even the shakiest of conceptual foundations. Hence in *The Mustache*, despite the mounting evidence of the focaliser’s unreliability, despite the epistemic distance created by his own admissions of insecurity and his final acceptance of his insanity, the empathetic relationship with the reader may nevertheless still prevail, even as the text world continues to disintegrate yet further.

Agnes offers to call her husband’s parents and cancel a lunch they had planned:

“While you’re at it,” he said, “Don’t you want to cancel with Serge and Veronique? I’d prefer it.”

No answer. He repeated his request, certain that she wouldn’t protest. In his state, the need for solitude was perfectly natural. Agnes was standing behind him, near the sofa; the neutrality of her voice alerted him, as her silence wore on, he understood.

“Cancel with whom?”

Everything was falling apart. He made an effort to articulate, emphasizing each syllable.

“Serge and Veronique Scheffer, our friends. With whom we had dinner on Thursday, when all of this started... You don’t know Serge and Veronique, is that what you’re telling me?”

She shook her head.

(Carrère 1998: 239-240)

His panic rising, the protagonist asks his wife to confirm the existence of a number of their other friends, his profession, her name, her profession and finally:

“You phoned my parents ten minutes ago to say we wouldn’t be going to lunch, right?”

He sensed her hesitation.

“I phoned your mother, yes.”

“But we were supposed to have lunch at my parents’, like we do every Sunday, isn’t that right?”

“Your father died,” she said, “last year.”

(Carrère 1998: 242)

This final revelation proves to be the final straw for the protagonist, and he leaves the apartment and heads for his parents’ house. He arrives in the street where he believes they live, only to discover that he cannot remember in which building or on which floor.

This downward spiral eventually leads the protagonist to the airport, where he picks a flight at random and flees to Hong Kong. This dramatic geographical change is matched by a change in narratorial style, as the dizzying pace of the highly function-advancing Paris narration is replaced by a much slower world-building in the Far East:

Nathan Road, the big, noisy avenue adjacent to his hotel, was illuminated like the Champs-Élysées at Christmastime. The traffic was flowing beneath arches of red lanterns with dragons on them. He walked aimlessly in the dense, indifferent crowd; there was a slightly stale odor of steamed vegetables, and at times, dried fish. Farther down, the stores became more luxurious. They mostly sold electronic equipment tax-free, and a large number of tourists were doing their shopping. He finally reached the end of the avenue, where there was a large square that opened onto the bay. Extending along the other side was a shimmering chaos of skyscrapers set against the side of a mountain, its peak obscured by the night fog.

(Carrère 1998: 272)

Though the surrounding streets of Hong Kong are full of hustle and bustle, the protagonist seems to have discovered a new form of inner tranquillity, signified by a striking reduction in mental activity. He considers the problems he has left behind him relatively infrequently, slipping quickly into his calm but highly-structured new lifestyle. His days become based around routine: sleeping, waking, shaving, swimming and repeated trips across the harbour on the local ferry. This new Zen-like state brings with it, when contemplation is entered into, a philosophical sense of perspective on the events that have happened to him:

... he knew he was of sound mind; most crazy people were convinced of the same thing, nothing could make them change their minds, and he was aware that in the eyes of society a misadventure like his could only signify lunacy. But in reality, he now perceived that everything was more complicated. He wasn't crazy. Neither were Agnes, Jerome, or the others. It was just that the order of the world had been thrown out of whack, it was both abominable and discreet, it had passed unnoticed by everyone but him, which put him in the position of being the only witness to the crime, which consequently had to be fought. Besides, in his case, nothing suspicious was going on anymore, and for that matter, nothing was in its right order; decidedly, rather than the padded cell, he'd take the monotonous, dreary, but voluntarily chosen reprieve of life on the ferry.

(Carrère 1998: 283)

The protagonist's opinions are presented either in epistemically non-modal categorical assertions (*'He wasn't crazy'*, *'nothing was in its right order'*, and so on) or with positive epistemic commitment (*'he knew he was of sound mind'*), backed up with

perception modality (*'he was aware', 'he now perceived'*). The protagonist thus appears at ease with his fate: a solitary but solid existence, a regained sense of control.

Yet the roller-coaster ride of *The Mustache* is far from over, as the protagonist discovers on his return to the hotel one afternoon:

On the board where he usually left it, his key was missing. The receptionist, an old Chinese man whose wispy frame was draped in a large white nylon shirt, said to him, smiling, "The lady is upstairs," and he felt a chill go down his sunburned back.

"The lady?"

"Yes, sir. Your wife. Didn't she like the beach?"

(Carrère 1998: 313)

He enters his room to find Agnes laying on the bed, suntanned and reading a magazine, chatting as though she had been there with him the whole time. In the horrific sequence which follows, not a single embedded sub-world occurs, not a hint of thought or contemplation. The protagonist simply makes his way to the bathroom, takes out his razor and slowly, methodically slices off his entire face, bleeding to death 'appeased by the certitude that now it was over, everything was back in place' (Carrère 1998: 318).

#### **4.2.1 Analysis Review**

The Text World Theory analysis of *The Mustache* in section 4.2.0 above has shown the narrative structure of the novel as initially developing along realist lines; progressing cooperatively and chronologically, providing the reader with abundant world-building and function-advancing information. As such, *The Mustache*, like *The Music of Chance*, could be seen to fit into Weinberg's (1970: 10) category of 'more realistic than stylized' Absurdism. The 'hopelessly ineffectual victim-hero' (Weinberg 1970: 10) of Carrère's novel struggles to rationalise two dramatically conflicting world-views: his own and that of his wife and friends. Indeed, textual evidence that the protagonist might share such a view of himself has been identified in his conceptualisation of his recurring

fight with his wife through a sustained ARGUMENT IS WAR megametaphor. A series of metaphors connected by an extended Zen theme have also been detected, surfacing at various points in the text, through which the protagonist understands his own mental stability or lack thereof.

The application of Text World Theory has also allowed the predominant sense of panic and paranoia in *The Mustache* to be traced to the abundant conditional and hypothetical modal worlds in which the protagonist's worst fears are constructed and played out. The reader's possible identification with these fears, however, was less easy to account for under Werth's framework. Once again, it has been argued that the logical notions of participant- and character-accessibility, which form the basis of the sub-world layer of Text World Theory, do not provide a sufficient explanation of the structure of many fictional texts. The narrative of *The Mustache*, like that of *The Third Policeman*, remains fixed with the perspective of the main male character throughout. The protagonist's consciousness, then, forms the reader's only access route to the world-building and function-advancing elements of the text. As such, even though this filtered narration actually constitutes an epistemic sub-world which is only character-accessible under Werth's framework, the reader has little choice but to accept its contents as a reliable representation of events.

This fact, along with the supporting evidence found in the analysis of *The Third Policeman* and presented in section 4.1.0 above, can be seen to justify the further modifications to Text World Theory put forward in this section. The dominance of the focalised world which forms the main body of the narrative of *The Mustache* has been argued to present a serious challenge to Werth's classification of such conceptual

structures as *sub*-worlds. As a result, I have now dropped the hierarchical *sub*- prefix from the description of all modal worlds. Indeed, I have argued that the reader's dependence on the protagonist's point of view is not only inevitable but essential to the progress and development of the story of *The Mustache*. I have shown that the exclusive reader/focaliser relationship promotes such a strong sense of empathy as to divert the reader's attention from the character-accessible status of the narration. Commitment to the task of constructing a coherent mental representation of the protagonist's increasingly surreal and disturbing world is thus ensured, as the pursuit of understanding is carried beyond reason into terror and despair. Section 4.3.0 now goes on to examine a third Absurd novel in order to explore further the viability and wider implications of the modifications to Text World Theory put forward in this chapter so far.

#### **4.3.0 *Slaughterhouse-Five***

*Slaughterhouse-Five* follows the life of Billy Pilgrim, a New York optometrist who serves as a chaplain's assistant in the United States army during World War Two. Billy is taken prisoner by German soldiers in 1944 and is held in an underground meat locker (the eponymous 'Slaughterhouse-Five') in Dresden, where he survives the Allied bombing of the city. During that same year, Billy also becomes 'unstuck in-time' (Vonnegut 1991: 17) and begins to experience life without chronological order, visiting and re-visiting episodes from his past, present and future, apparently at random. What is more, during one of these episodes, in 1967, Billy is kidnapped by an alien race from the planet Tralfamadore. He is placed in a Tralfamadorian zoo, where he is displayed alongside another earthling, former movie starlet Montana Wildhack. During their captivity, Billy and Montana fall in love and have a child. Billy also develops a close

friendship with the Tralfamadorians and is particularly affected by their philosophical opinions on life and death, of which he himself becomes an advocate on his eventual return to Earth.

The main bulk of literary criticism on *Slaughterhouse-Five* appeared in the period immediately following the novel's publication, being at its most abundant in the late 1960s and 1970s. For the most part, this work is united in its recognition of the Absurd content of the text (e.g. Giannone 1977, Ketterer 1978, Schatt 1976, Somer 1973, Wood and Wood 1973), with Billy Pilgrim described as suffering from 'heartsickness and deadened spirit' (Giannone 1977: 96), but nonetheless proving himself to be 'a hero who can survive with dignity in an insane universe' (Somer 1973: 230). A number of critics have also paid particular attention to Vonnegut's use of science fiction in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and its possible connection to the existential themes present in the text. Ketterer (1978), for example, offers the following hypothesis:

Characteristically, science fiction presents a universe without God, a universe in which men aspire to be gods. Such a universe can easily slip into the sort of absurdist universe which we often appear to live in... my essential point is that man's philosophical position in an absurd cosmos is one that translates freely into science fiction, as does the concomitant human reaction of black humour... A sense of the absurd makes possible the humorous science fiction of Kurt Vonnegut and prevents it from being classified as fantasy... absurdist science fiction belongs among those works which present the present world in other terms by virtue of an extreme philosophical reinterpretation of the nature of reality.

(Ketterer 1978: 82-83)

Wood and Wood (1973) echo this opinion, viewing science fiction as 'primarily social criticism, usually veiled in the remoteness of time and space' (Wood and Wood 1973: 136) Furthermore, they argue that Vonnegut 'uses the absurdity of time travel to reflect the absurdity of the universe in which Billy Pilgrim is bouncing around' (Wood and Wood 1973: 155).

More recently, Cordle (2000) has linked the absurdity of Billy Pilgrim's plight with the unconventional structure of the narrative:

Vonnegut seems to be playing with the notion that human life is both determined and meaningless: events are fixed in advance, but there is no meaning or direction to the changes that take place over time.

Because he is investigating this possibility, it is entirely appropriate that he should shun a traditional narrative form that invests human lives with a significance they do not have.

(Cordle 2000: 176)

Unfortunately, Cordle provides little textual evidence to support this argument, yet the narrative oddities he mentions here are easily identifiable in the opening paragraphs of the novel, which appear as follows:

1

ALL THIS HAPPENED, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really *was* shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really *did* threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. And so on. I've changed all the names.

I really *did* go back to Dresden with Guggenheim money (God love it) in 1967. It looked a lot like Dayton, Ohio, more open spaces than Dayton has. There must be tons of human bone meal in the ground.

I went back there with an old war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare, and we made friends with a cab driver, who took us up to the slaughterhouse where we had been locked up at night as prisoners of war. His name was Gerhard Muller. He told us that he was a prisoner of the Americans for a while. We asked him how it was to live under Communism, and he said it was terrible at first, because everybody had to work so hard, and because there wasn't much shelter or food or clothing. But things were much better now. He had a pleasant little apartment, and his daughter was getting an excellent education. His mother was incinerated in the Dresden fire-storm. So it goes.

(Vonnegut 1991: 1)

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this opening is the emphasis it places on the truthfulness of what is to follow, foregrounded by the italicised verbal auxiliaries in 'was shot', 'did threaten' and 'did go'. There are a number of other features in the passage, however, which appear to contradict this stress. More specifically, the emphasis placed on actuality by the italicised auxiliaries seems at odds with the qualification of the opening categorical assertion, 'All this happened', with the adverbial phrase, 'more or less'. The modality of the second sentence of the same paragraph is a further inconsistency, as the narrator's epistemic commitment to the truth status of the narration is weakened yet further as we are told that, 'The war parts, anyway, are *pretty much* true' (my emphasis).



Nevertheless, although the first person narrator remains nameless throughout the text, many literary critics (e.g. Chabot 1981, Klinkowitz 1982, Matheson 1984) have made the assumption that the 'I' in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a direct textual counterpart of the real-world Kurt Vonnegut. This may be due, in part, to the textual exaggerations identified above, but may also be encouraged by the narrator's explicit and repeated references to the text at hand:

I would hate to tell you what this lousy little book cost me in money and anxiety and time. When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a masterpiece or at least make me a lot of money, since the subject was so big.

(Vonnegut 1991: 2)

The use of the proximal deictic, '*this* lousy little book', can be seen to create a conflation of two separate levels of Text World Theory, since it nominates an item in the discourse world (i.e. the book that the reader is reading) as also present in the text world. If the text of *Slaughterhouse-Five* spans two conceptual levels, then, it seems reasonable to assume that its real-world author also has a text world counterpart, taking the form of the narrative voice. Such an assumption is further supported by the additional details the narrator adds about his life as the chapter progresses. He describes, for example, his education in Chicago, his work for General Electric in New York and his relationship with his publisher, Seymour Lawrence. Any one of these details may correspond with the reader's existing frame-knowledge of Kurt Vonnegut. A number of other characters and locations are also introduced which many readers may recognise as having real-world counterparts. The narrator describes himself, for example, as 'a writer on Cape Cod' and Bernard O'Hare as 'a district attorney in Pennsylvania' (Vonnegut 1991: 3). He describes their trip to Dresden in detail, his subsequent decision to write a book about his war experiences, as well as his meeting with O'Hare's wife, Mary, to

whom he makes a promise that he will write an unglamourised account of World War Two, without ‘a part for Frank Sinatra or John Wayne’ (Vonnegut 1991: 11).

The resulting initial text world of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, then, is one which departs only minimally from the real world. Its world-building elements are either clearly defined, with some dates and locations being explicitly mentioned, or are otherwise easily inferred from existing background knowledge. Although the narrator’s exact temporal location is not specified, for example, it seems reasonable to assume that, if he is a textual counterpart of the author of the novel, his present tense assertions refer to 1969, the year *Slaughterhouse-Five* was written in the real-world. It could also be argued that many readers’ trust in those assertions will be greatly increased by the narrator’s association with a discourse world entity. As already discussed in section 3.4.1, a real-world author is likely to occupy a far higher position on Werth’s scale of perceived authority, shown in Figure 3d above, than a fictional character would normally be expected to hold. However, such issues of authority and reliability are complicated in *Slaughterhouse-Five* by the fact that the narrator, as well as being a counterpart of one of the discourse world participants, is also a participating character in the story unfolding in the world of the first chapter.

Once again, Simpson’s (1993) modal grammar of narrative fiction, set out in section 4.1.0 above, provides a systematic means of discussing such narrators. The opening chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five* fits comfortably into Simpson’s Category A, since it has, like *The Third Policeman*, a first person narrator who also happens to be a participating character. It is less clear, however, which type of modal shading the chapter exhibits. The *verba sentiendi* normally associated with a positive narration are

occasionally present, as the narrator reveals, for example, that Mary O'Hare had trained as a nurse, 'which is a *lovely* thing for a woman to be' (Vonnegut 1991: 9, my emphasis). At another point he also makes reference to the Biblical tale of Sodom and Gomorrah, telling how Lot's wife looked back at the crumbling cities as she fled God's wrath and was immediately turned to a pillar of salt. Here, the narrator comments, 'I *love* her for that' (Vonnegut 1991: 16, my emphasis). On the whole, however, there is little evidence of the foregrounding of either deontic or boulomaic modality. Rather, the irregular scattering of emotive phrases is balanced by an overall lack of narratorial evaluation, which, it might be argued, gives the text a neutral shading. However, if we return to the opening paragraphs of the novel, quoted at the beginning of this section, it is possible to identify some quite conspicuous negative features also present in the text. There, the reader may recall, the narrator revealed how the mother of a German cab-driver was 'incinerated in the Dresden fire-storm'. He then adds some rather extreme 'words of estrangement' as he comments, 'So it goes' (Vonnegut 1991: 1). A more detailed analysis of this phrase, which is repeated exactly one hundred times throughout the course of the novel, is provided later in this section. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note the further shift into negative shading its presence in this passage creates.

This fluctuating modality, of course, bears a strong resemblance to that identified both by Simpson (1993: 51-53) in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* and in the text of *The Third Policeman* in section 4.1.0 above. Simpson claims that such modal structures communicate 'uncertainty, bewilderment and alienation' (1993: 53). Indeed, the narrative of *Slaughterhouse-Five* complicates yet further as the novel moves into Chapter Two. The first chapter of the text closes as follows:

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore.  
I've finished my war book now and the next one I write is going to be fun.  
This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt. It begins like this:  
*Listen:*  
*Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.*  
It ends like this:  
*Poo-tee-weet?*

(Vonnegut 1991: 16)

Despite the fact that the current chapter was headed '1' (rather than 'Preface' or 'Introduction', for example) and has featured two 'old war buddies' and their memories of Second World War Dresden, the narrator states explicitly here that his 'war book' has not yet begun. Chapter Two then opens as follows:

LISTEN:

BILLY PILGRIM has come unstuck in time.

Billy has gone to sleep a senile old widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

He says.

Billy is spastic in time, he has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows which part of his life he is going to have to act in next.

(Vonnegut 1991: 17)

If the narrator is to be believed, then, the repeated first lines of Chapter Two signify the 'real' start of the story, which begins in the manner of a face-to-face conversation at the discourse world level. The opening phrase, 'Listen', foregrounds the narrator's cross-world existence and suggests an immediacy to a communication which, as discussed in section 3.4.1 above, is necessarily split between the author's discourse world and the discourse world of the reader. We are then told that 'Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time'. The present perfect tense of this function-advancer indicates that, despite the introduction of a new character, Billy Pilgrim, no change has occurred in the temporal setting of the text world. Since no variation in its spatial parameters has been mentioned either, Billy can be assumed to exist and be 'unstuck in time' in the same world as the narrator. This is confirmed later on in the passage when the narrator switches to the

simple present and states that 'Billy is spastic in time... he is in a constant state of stage fright' (Vonnegut 1991: 17).

Apart from an instance of indirect speech, which is discussed in more detail later in this section, the opening lines of Chapter Two lack any other textual feature that would, according to Werth's framework, cause a new world to be built. Yet the passage contains a number of other elements that alter the structure of the text world dramatically. The first person narration used throughout Chapter One, for example, has disappeared and the story is now being told from a perspective external to the main character's consciousness. This takes the new chapter into Simpson's (1993: 55) Category B, narratorial mode, since the narrator no longer appears to be participating directly in the function-advancing events being described. Indeed, the narrator's role is transformed into one of external observer for almost the entire remainder of the novel, as the narrative of *Slaughterhouse-Five* retains its focus on the character of Billy Pilgrim for the next one hundred and seventeen pages. No further reference is made to such initial world-builders as Bernard O'Hare, Seymour Lawrence and Cape Cod during all that time. Furthermore, the switch in the focus of the text world is accompanied by the introduction of science fictional time travel and a corresponding disruption in the temporal structure of the narrative as a whole. As already mentioned above, the central time-zone of Chapter One can easily be identified as 1969; the year of the novel's creation. Although a number of deictic alternations occur throughout the course of the chapter, as the story flashes back to the narrator's time as a student, for example, each of these sub-worlds eventually reverts back to the temporal parameters of the original text world. From Chapter Two onwards, however, the narrative's default time-zone becomes more and more difficult to pinpoint.

In the opening paragraphs of Chapter Two, quoted above, for example, the narrative makes three temporal shifts in the space of just half a dozen lines, as Billy Pilgrim is described as travelling in time from 1955 to 1944 and again to 1963. Following this series of brief time leaps, the narrative settles down for a short while, as Billy's personal history is briefly but chronologically explained in the simple past tense: from his upbringing in New York, to his enrolment in and eventual honourable discharge from the U.S. army, to his later business success and the accidental death of his wife in 1968. The narrative then flashes back to Billy's experiences during the Second World War and the event of his coming 'unstuck in time' while on manoeuvres in South Carolina in 1944:

Billy had stopped in the forest. He was leaning against a tree with his eyes closed. His head was tilted back and his nostrils were flaring. He was like a poet in the Parthenon.

This was when Billy first came unstuck in time. His attention began to swing grandly through the full arc of his life, passing into death, which was violet light. There wasn't anybody else there, or any thing. There was just violet light – and a hum.

And then Billy swung into life again, going backwards until he was in pre-birth, which was a red light and bubbling sounds. And then he swung into life again and stopped. He was a little boy taking a shower with his hairy father at the Ilium Y.M.C.A. He smelled chlorine from the swimming pool next door, heard the springboard boom.

(Vonnegut 1991: 31)

Figure 4g below shows the various worlds created by the time leaps in this passage, numbered and arranged according to the non-chronological order in which they appear in the text.

As already discussed in section 3.3.3 above, under Werth's framework the deictic parameters first created in any text subsequently occupy a superordinate position in the narrative structure as a whole. Any variation of these temporal or spatial parameters creates a sub-world which, the terminology suggests, may be considered to be in some way sub-ordinate to or dependent upon its originating world. Each of the worlds, shown in Figure 4g below, would therefore be categorised as sub-worlds of the main text world established in Chapter One of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. This system for the classification of

deictic shifts in narrative fiction can be seen to share many of the problems identified in Werth's categorisation of modal worlds, discussed in the preceding two sections of this chapter. To view the spatial and temporal parameters of the initial world of *Slaughterhouse-Five* as superordinate to all those alternations that follow seems similarly inappropriate, considering the virtual disappearance of that initial world for the vast majority of the novel. As already mentioned above, many of the characters and locations that formed the deictic foundations of Chapter One are not referred to again. Rather, it is Billy's time leaps that form the main bulk of the narrative, each one transporting the reader further and further away from the spatial and temporal text world boundaries established at the beginning of the novel. For this reason, they are represented in the diagram as rectangular text worlds in their own right, rather than as the rounded-edged sub-worlds specified in Werth's (1999: xvi-xvii) taxonomy.

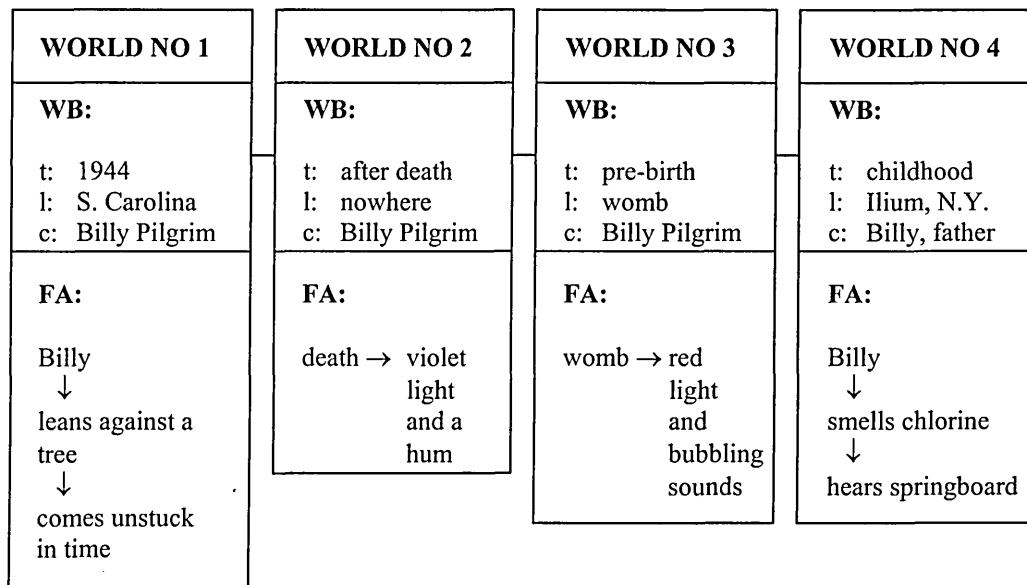


Figure 4g. Billy Pilgrim's Time Leaps

I have also suggested in section 3.3.3 that Emmott (1997) may once again provide a possible alternative terminology for this type of world structure. I argued that her notion

of a 'frame switch' (Emmott 1997: 147-158) does not carry the same hierarchical connotations as Werth's sub-worlds and, as such, would appear to offer a more accurate description of the temporal shifts so far identified in the narrative of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. As Emmott explains:

Within a frame, time may move at different speeds... the presence of the characters can be assumed until the text mentions their departure, despite the different speeds at which time moves. For practical purposes, then, this can be classed as a single temporal setting... Sometimes, however, time will move in such a way that the reader cannot expect the same grouping of characters to be there any longer. The narrative may move backwards in time or there may be a leap into the future (e.g. the following day, week, month, or year) which suggests that the frame that has been monitored may no longer be primed and that it may be necessary to switch to a new frame.

(Emmott 1997: 150)

This description of a simple switch of temporal focus, without the need to relegate the new subject of attention to a subordinate position within the narrative structure, seems to offer a more precise account of the multitude of time leaps that Billy Pilgrim undergoes during the course of the novel. Indeed, given the substantial flaws so far identified in Werth's 'deictic sub-world' category, both in this section and in section 3.3.3 above, it would seem wise to replace it entirely with the less problematical term *world-switch*, in a direct development from Emmott's (1997) model. This new category would encompass all those spatial and temporal alternations originally grouped under Werth's 'deictic sub-world' heading, together with any instances of direct speech or direct thought representation. The main advantage of the new 'world-switch' category over Werth's original terminology, however, would be its capacity to account for readers' ability to follow shifts in the temporal and spatial settings of a narrative without having to refer to an overarching conceptual hierarchy.

As *Slaughterhouse-Five* continues to track Billy Pilgrim's erratic journey through time and space, it becomes clear that time is a central thematic, as well as structural, concern



in the novel. As Billy explains in a letter written to the *Ilium News Leader* on his return to Earth:

‘The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only *appears* to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, have always existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent the mountains are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It’s just an illusion that we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever.’

(Vonnegut 1991: 19-20)

Billy appears to have been greatly affected by his experiences with the Tralfamadorians. Indeed, it would seem that he has even gone as far as adopting a Tralfamadorian view of the world himself, as one of the most famous sequences of the novel demonstrates. Billy is at home in Ilium on the night of his daughter’s wedding. It is 1967, he is forty-four years old and about to be kidnapped by a flying saucer. Because he is unstuck in time, Billy knows that this is about to happen, having already experienced this and every other moment in his life. He is having trouble sleeping and goes downstairs into his living room, turns on his television and watches a film about American bomber planes in the Second World War:

American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards, sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen. They did the same for wrecked American bombers on the ground, and those planes flew up backwards to join the formation.

The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes. The containers were stored neatly in racks. The Germans below had miraculous devices of their own, which were long steel tubes. They used them to suck more fragments from the crewmen and planes. But there were still a few wounded Americans, though, and some of the bombers were in bad repair. Over France, though, German fighters came up again, made everything and everybody as good as new.

When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals. Touchingly, it was mainly women who did this work. The minerals were then shipped to specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground, to hide them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again.

(Vonnegut 1991: 53-54)

The narrative switches to reflector mode (see section 4.1.0 above) for the duration of this episode, with the narrator briefly taking advantage of his omniscient ability, entering the mind of the main character and describing the film from Billy's inverted perspective. According to the modifications to Text World Theory suggested in the preceding sections of this chapter, this instance of focalised narration creates an epistemic modal world which, while only 'character-accessible' under Werth's framework, is the reader's only means of access to the text world at that point. The reader must therefore also construct their initial mental representation of the film in reverse, creating a world whose backwards function-advancing transforms a story of death and destruction into one of protection and peace. Only a retrospective act of world repair (see section 4.1.0) will reveal the original violence of the bombers' mission.

A number of other textual features can be identified in *Slaughterhouse-Five* which, along with the fluctuating modality and temporal disruptions so far discussed, may place a further strain on the reader's ability to process and understand the text. Billy's time leaps vary greatly in length and detail and do not appear to be caused by any particular common element. However, those worlds whose development is most frequently restricted are generally those situated in Second World War Germany. The following description of Billy's train journey to Dresden as a prisoner of war provides a typical example:

To the guards who walked up and down outside, each car became a single organism which ate and drank and excreted through its ventilators. It talked or sometimes yelled through its ventilators, too. In went water and loaves of blackbread and sausage and cheese, and out came shit and piss and language.

Human beings in there were excreting into steel helmets, which were passed to the people at the ventilators, who dumped them. Billy was a dumper. The human beings also passed canteens, which the guards would fill with water. When food came in, the human beings were quiet and trusting and beautiful. They shared.

Human beings in there took it in turns standing or lying down. The legs of those who stood were like fence posts driven into a warm, squirming, farting, sighing earth. The queer earth was a mosaic of sleepers who nestled like spoons.

Now the train began to creep eastward.  
Somewhere in there was Christmas. Billy Pilgrim nestled like a spoon with the hobo on Christmas night, and he fell asleep, and he traveled in time to 1967 again – to the night he was kidnapped by a flying saucer from Tralfamadore.

(Vonnegut 1991: 51)

Once again, the narration switches to reflector mode for the initial section of this episode. However, this time the reader is not afforded a closer insight into Billy's thoughts and feelings, but is placed at a greater epistemic distance from him as the boxcar in which the prisoners are travelling is described from the perspective of the German guards. Even when the narrative switches its focus back from this epistemic modal sub-world to the inside of the boxcar, it takes on an estranged, negative modal shading. With the exception of a single *verba sentiendi*, 'beautiful', in the last line of the second paragraph, the passage is overwhelmingly distant, with the superordinate term 'human beings' being repeatedly used to refer to Billy and his fellow prisoners. Furthermore, compounding the reader's difficulties in constructing a coherent mental representation of Billy's inner thoughts and feelings, just as the text world focuses in on the sleeping protagonist, he is transported to an entirely separate location, some twenty years in the future.

In places, the reader's estrangement from the main character is increased yet further by interjections from the narrator which explicitly question Billy's sanity and reliability as a Reflector of the fiction. The opening paragraphs of Chapter Two, quoted again here for the reader's convenience, provide a typical example:

LISTEN:

BILLY PILGRIM has come unstuck in time.

Billy has gone to sleep a senile old widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

He says.

Billy is spastic in time, he has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows which part of his life he is going to have to act in next.

(Vonnegut 1991: 17)

Having begun an apparently neutral presentation of Billy Pilgrim's predicament, made up solely of categorical assertions, the narrator qualifies his report by subordinating the information initially presented to the reporting clause 'he says'. As a result, the description of Billy's time travels is, like all indirect speech, relegated to an epistemic modal world. The inaccessibility of that world is further emphasised by the repetition of the reporting clause in the next sentence, which is also foregrounded through its graphological isolation.

*Slaughterhouse-Five* offers only occasional glimpses into the mind of its main character, as the narrator remains steadfastly fixed outside Billy's consciousness for the majority of the novel. Not only do the frequent leaps from world to world make any identification with the protagonist almost impossible, but the extreme contrast between those situations that are juxtaposed as a result exaggerates the narrative's disorienting effect:

The naked Americans took their places under many showerheads along a white-tiled wall. There were no faucets they could control, they could only wait for whatever was coming. Their penises were shriveled and their balls retracted... Billy zoomed back in time to his infancy. He was a baby who had just been bathed by his mother. Now his mother wrapped him in a towel, carried him into a rosy room that was filled with sunshine... And then Billy was a middle-aged optometrist again, playing hacker's golf this time – on a blazing summer Sunday morning... Billy went momentarily dizzy. When he recovered, he wasn't on the golf course any more. He was strapped to a yellow contour chair in a white chamber aboard a flying saucer, which was bound for Tralfamadore.

(Vonnegut 1991: 60-61)

Here, the reader is faced with four separate text worlds, three of which depart only minimally from the real world, describing realistic situations which involve easily believable function-advancing events. The final world-switch, on the other hand, which takes Billy on board the Tralfamadoreans' flying saucer, can be seen as a massive departure from the real-world in comparison to the preceding three shifts. The reader of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, then, is forced to cope with two conflicting sets of world-rules at once: one set which appears to correspond to those governing the reader's own

discourse world, and one in which time travel and contact with alien life forms are possible events.

Many of the textual features identified in *Slaughterhouse-Five* so far could be argued to present a significant challenge to Werth's 'principles of discourse' (Werth 1999: 49-50, see also section 3.1.1 above). The notion that co-operation forms the basic underlying principle of all communication would seem to be undermined by the behaviour of the novel's author. According to Werth, readers should expect all discourses 'to be purposive, and to be efficient in prosecuting their purposes' (Werth 1999: 49). They should also expect that their co-participant will not introduce information into the Common Ground superfluously and that the Common Ground itself will be jointly and cooperatively negotiated. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, however, Kurt Vonnegut places a multitude of obstacles in his reader's path and would at least *appear* to be unconcerned with the 'efficiency' of his communication. The novel's frequent world-switches, along with its instances of backward narration and contrastive mix of realistic and science fictional content, can all be seen to complicate the world-building process. Furthermore, the frequently negative modal shading of the text and general lack of epistemic modal worlds relating to Billy Pilgrim's consciousness deny the reader access to the main character's thoughts and feelings and result in a somewhat two-dimensional text world structure. We have also seen how, at certain points, the narrator even calls the reliability of Billy's story into question, raising the possibility that the entire text may qualify as 'superfluous information'.

Yet, despite its structural anarchy, the world-wide popularity of *Slaughterhouse-Five* would appear to suggest that an uncooperative text such as this should not necessarily

be dismissed as *uncommunicative* on all levels. The challenging structure of Vonnegut's novel has not prevented countless readers and literary critics from processing and interpreting its contents and, indeed, may even have boosted its position within the contemporary literary canon. As already discussed in section 3.1.3 above, Text World Theory's fully-contextualised approach to discourse analysis offers the following explanation of how coherent text worlds may still be constructed from even the most minimal textual information:

In text-processing, each Current Proposition (CP) is linguistically interpreted, the final stage of which is the coherence mechanism which relates the 'raw proposition' to the inferencing mechanism and the knowledge-base, and specifically, knowledge of the accumulated CG. **Incrementation** then adds the current CP to the current CG, together with the additional 'annotation' of evoked knowledge.

(Werth 1999: 131, original emphasis retained)

Werth places far greater importance here on the interpretative ability of the reader, drawn from the background knowledge they bring with them to the language event, than on the communicative nature of the text itself. Thus, in the event of one of the discourse participants violating the principles of co-operation, the readerly process of inferencing fills any gaps in the information needed to construct a world, as meaning is sought out, or even created anew, wherever it may be lacking in the text (see Charolles 1983, 1989; de Beaugrande 1980; Eikmeyer 1989 and Stockwell 1992 for related discussions).

In the case of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, this inferencing process is aided by a number of textual clues to the possible reasons for the novel's taxing composition. A reported discussion between Billy Pilgrim and the Tralfamadorians, which takes place after Billy asks for something to read on his long trip across space, is one such incident which may throw some light on the chosen structure of the text:

Billy couldn't read Tralfamadorian, of course, but he could at least see how the books were laid out – in brief clumps of symbols separated by stars. Billy commented that the clumps might be telegrams.

'Exactly', said the voice.

'They *are* telegrams?'

‘There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you’re right: each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message – describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn’t any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time.

(Vonnegut 1991: 64)

As a collection of briefly constructed, disparate text worlds, assembled in no perceptible order, *Slaughterhouse-Five* appears to be based on a structure similar to that of the Tralfamadorian books described here. Furthermore, its predominantly negatively-shaded, estranged narrative also seems to share the Tralfamadorian texts’ ‘moral-free’ style.

Further evidence of a connection between the structure of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and that of the fictitious Tralfamadorian novels can be found in the narrator’s repeated use of the phrase ‘So it goes’. As already mentioned above, this expression appears a total of one hundred times during the course of the novel. The following description of Billy’s experience of the Allied bombing of Dresden provides a typical example:

He was down in the meat locker on the night that Dresden was destroyed. There were sounds like giant footsteps above. Those were sticks of high-explosive bombs. The giants walked and walked. The meat locker was a very safe shelter. All that happened down there was an occasional shower of calcimine. The Americans and four of their guards and a few dressed carcasses were down there, and nobody else. The rest of the guards had, before the raid began, gone to the comforts of their own homes in Dresden. They were all being killed with their families.

So it goes.

The girls that Billy had seen naked were all being killed, too, in a much shallower shelter in another part of the stockyards.

So it goes.

A guard would go to the head of the stairs every so often to see what it was like outside, then he would come down and whisper to the other guards. There was a fire-storm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn.

It wasn’t safe to come out of the shelter until noon the next day. When the Americans and their guards did come out, the sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everyone in the neighborhood was dead.

So it goes.

(Vonnegut 1991: 129)

The neutral report of the destruction of Dresden, told from the point of view of Billy Pilgrim and his fellow captives in the underground meat locker, is interspersed with the narrator's generic commentary. Not only does the description lack any epistemic modal worlds, through which the reader might gain some insight into the characters' internal responses to the attack, but the narrator's estranging catchphrase also appears to encourage an interpretation of the experience as unexceptional and inconsequential.

Since such a reaction is likely to conflict with many readers' frame-based knowledge of war and its effects on human beings (however second-hand that knowledge might be), the negative modal shading of the narrator's comments could be seen as a highly uncooperative communicative strategy on the part of the author. However, the wider context of the novel as a whole reveals both the origins of 'So it goes' and a corresponding alternative interpretation of its repeated use throughout the text:

'When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments. Now, when I myself hear that someone is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is "So it goes".'

(Vonnegut 1991: 20)

In this passage, Billy Pilgrim explains the Tralfamadorian perspective on life and death in a letter to the *Ilium News Leader* and, in doing so, presents the reader with a possible source of information from which to infer a cooperative meaning to *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Both Billy's letter and his literary discussion with the Tralfamadorians could be read as evidence, not of a troublesome, uncooperative author, but rather of an extended *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE IS A TRALFAMADORIAN NOVEL* metaphor running throughout the text.

An examination of each interjection of 'So it goes' throughout the narration confirms that the phrase does indeed always appear following incidents of violence and death:



At each place was a safety razor, a washcloth, a package of razor blades, a chocolate bar, two cigars, a bar of soap, ten cigarettes, a book of matches, a pencil, and a candle.

Only the candles and the soap were of German origin. They had a ghostly, opalescent similarity. The British had no way of knowing it, but the candles and soap were made from the fat of rendered Jews and Gypsies and fairies and communists, and other enemies of the state.

So it goes.

(Vonnegut 1991: 69)

The phrase even accompanies the description of Billy Pilgrim's own demise:

At that moment, Billy's high forehead is in the cross-hairs of a high-powered laser gun. It is aimed at him from the darkened press box. In the next moment, Billy Pilgrim is dead.

So it goes.

(Vonnegut 1991: 104)

Rather than impeding the joint negotiation of a Common Ground, then, the disjointed structure and negative modal shading of *Slaughterhouse-Five* can be seen to provide an additional, megametaphorical layer to the text world. When read as micro-metaphorical, surface manifestations of an overarching *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE IS A TRALFAMADORIAN NOVEL* metaphor, these features allow the reader to infer that the aliens' philosophy on life, death and literature is shared, not only by Billy Pilgrim, but also by the narrator. Furthermore, such a revelation could also be seen to expose the existence of a closer relationship between Billy and the narrator than may originally have been suggested by the negatively-shaded, estranged narration. In particular, the doubt cast by the narrator on the reliability of Billy's story would seem to be contradicted by his subsequent adoption of a phrase used by the aliens Billy claims to have met.

Furthermore, the mapping of the narrator's apparent sympathetic connection with Billy Pilgrim onto the author himself is encouraged, in the final chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, by the re-emergence of some of the main world-building elements of the novel's initial text world:

Robert Kennedy, whose summer home is eight miles from the home I live in all year round, was shot two nights ago. He died last night. So it goes.

Martin Luther King was shot a month ago. He died, too. So it goes.

And every day my government gives me a count of corpses created by military service in Vietnam. So it goes.

My father died many years ago now – of natural causes. So it goes. He was a sweet man. He was a gun nut, too. He left me his guns. They rust.

On Tralfamadore, says Billy Pilgrim, there isn't much interest in Jesus Christ. The Earthling figure who is most engaging to the Tralfamadorian mind, he says, is Charles Darwin – who taught that those who die are meant to die, that corpses are improvements. So it goes.

(Vonnegut 1991: 154)

The start of this passage signals yet another dramatic world-switch, from the zoo on Tralfamadore (the scene of the preceding text) to 1969 Cape Cod. The narration also shifts back to the Category A, reflector mode in which it opened and the re-appearance of textual entities with real-world counterparts (Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jesus Christ, Charles Darwin) minimises the departure of the closing pages of the novel from the parameters of the reader's discourse world. This final reconnection with reality provides a timely reminder of the factual basis of many of the events described in the novel, adding greater authority to the narrator's account. Furthermore, the strong affiliation between the author and the narrator makes this a two-way process. Just as the narrator's perceived reliability may be increased by his association with a real-world entity, the author's own reputation as a cooperative discourse participant may be restored by his connection with his text world counterpart. However troublesome and demanding the narrator may appear on the surface, a fully-contextualised examination of *Slaughterhouse-Five* nevertheless reveals his communication of a truly alien perspective on the human condition.

#### **4.3.1 Analysis Review**

In the course of the preceding analysis, I have shown that *Slaughterhouse-Five* contains numerous textual elements that complicate the construction of a coherent mental representation of the world of Billy Pilgrim. In particular, the fragmented temporal and spatial structure of the narrative, as it follows Billy's frequent leaps through time and space, means readers must negotiate their way through a series of highly contrastive

worlds; some of which depart only minimally from the rules of the discourse world, and some of which involve the suspension of considerable disbelief. I have also argued that, since the world initially constructed in the first chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five* essentially disappears for the rest of the novel, Werth's 'deictic sub-world' category cannot be considered an appropriate description of the worlds which subsequently form the vast majority of the text. Just as the removal of the *sub-* prefix from the description of modal worlds was suggested in section 4.2.0, the term *world-switch*, developed from Emmott's (1997) related notion of a 'frame-switch', has been suggested in this section as an alternative categorisation of any change in the deictic signature of a world. This allows for a more accurate, non-hierarchical description of those shifts in the spatial or temporal focus of a world which do not involve the subordination of one world to another.

I have also shown that the behaviour of the narrator of *Slaughterhouse-Five* creates a number of further problems for the reader of the text. The modal shading of the narrative can be seen to fluctuate between apparently neutral reportage and a highly estranged, negative mode. In the neutral sections of the text, the reader is given no evaluative guidance in the interpretation of the actions and events unfolding in the story. Meanwhile, in the negatively-shaded parts of the text, the narrator's repeated use of the catchphrase, 'So it goes', following scenes of violence and death, challenges the reader's existing frame-knowledge on the effects of war and destruction in the real world. No insight is offered into the inner thoughts of the main character for the entire duration of the novel and, in places, the narrator can even be seen to cast serious doubt on the truth value of the story he is relaying to the reader. An emerging trend in the modal structures of Absurd prose can now be identified according to this evidence. It

would seem, both from Simpson's (1993) analysis of Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* and the analyses of *The Third Policeman*, *The Mustache* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* in this thesis, that the fluctuating modality associated with negatively-shaded narratives is a common feature of Absurd texts.

Despite his troublesome conduct, however, the narrator's association with a real-world entity, namely the author, adds to his perceived authority and encourages the inference of a cooperative meaning to the text. Even the most cursory examination of the content of *Slaughterhouse-Five* reveals a close correspondence between the structure of the novel and those written and read by the Tralfamadorian aliens which feature in its pages. Furthermore, *Slaughterhouse-Five* shares the Tralfamadorian texts' moral-free style, achieved through the fluctuating modality identified above, and the narrator's use of the 'So it goes' catchphrase is a further direct borrowing from the aliens. Each of these correlations adds to the validity of a reading of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in which the narrator's behaviour is interpreted, not as disruptive and uncooperative, but as the metaphorical communication of an objective, philosophical perspective on life and death. The final section of this chapter, however, examines a text for which the inference of cooperation and the construction of a coherent text world is even more problematical than for Vonnegut's novel, and which tests Werth's 'principles of discourse' (Werth 1999: 49-50) to their absolute limits.

#### **4.4.0 *Snow White***

The background knowledge of the reader of Donald Barthelme's (1996) *Snow White* (originally published in 1967) is immediately brought into play in the discourse process on contact with the novel's title. The majority of contemporary western readers will

recognise the proper name it contains, which subsequently acts as a header for a cultural knowledge-frame formed as a result of recurrent lifelong contact with both traditional and contemporary versions of a popular fairy tale. Many readers, then, will carry with them into the discourse world of their reading of Barthelme's text a considerable store of preconceived ideas of the sorts of world-building and function-advancing elements they might expect to find within its pages. The first paragraphs of the text, however, are unlikely to match most people's 'Snow White' prototype exactly:

**SHE** is a tall dark beauty containing a great many beauty spots: one above the breast, one above the belly, one above the knee, one above the ankle, one above the buttock, one on the back of the neck. All of these areas are on the left side, more or less in a row, as you go up and down:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

The hair is black as ebony, the skin is white as snow.

(Barthelme 1996: 9)

As well as containing some unconventional graphology, this introduction lacks the 'Once upon a time' opening typical of many fairy tales, beginning instead with a description of an unnamed female. Many readers will nevertheless be able to repair the passage's central reference chain, linking the third person reference that opens Barthelme's novel with the character of Snow White, perhaps aided in part by the direct borrowing of the Brothers Grimm's more familiar description of her: 'The hair is black as ebony, the skin is white as snow'.

This correlation aside, however, little else in the text which follows bears such a direct resemblance to any previous version of the Snow White story. For instance, seven men are mentioned on the page that follows that quoted above. The reader may infer from

their number that these characters fill the traditional roles of the seven dwarves. The men's names, however, are given, not as Sleepy, Happy, Dopey, Sneezy, Bashful, Grumpy and Doc, as in Walt Disney's adaptation of the fairy tale, but as Bill, Kevin, Edward, Hubert, Henry, Clem and Dan. A further deviation from tradition can be identified in the temporal setting of Barthelme's text. Although not explicitly mentioned, a contemporary backdrop can, once again, be inferred from certain culture-specific references. There is mention, for example, of a 'shower room' (Barthelme 1996: 10), a 'typewriter' (Barthelme 1996: 15), 'Chairman Mao' (Barthelme 1996: 22), 'Mars Bars' (Barthelme 1996: 27) and 'Charlton Heston' (Barthelme 1996: 27). Furthermore, the narrative structure of Barthelme's text can also be seen to deviate from the prototypical framework set by its predecessors. *Snow White* is divided into three main parts, each of which is further separated into numerous passages, varying in length from one line to several pages. The content of these sub-sections also ranges in form, from conversations to dreams, from extended speeches to letters, from mock questionnaires to public addresses by the President of the United States.

The majority of literary critics writing on *Snow White* (e.g. Coutrier and Durand 1982, Ditsky 1975, Klinkowitz 1991, Morace 1984, Trachtenberg 1990) devote at least part of their attention to certain linguistic incongruities also contained within Barthelme's text. Most, however, appear to lack the terminology necessary to discuss such features in any systematic or even comprehensible way, as demonstrated in the following fairly typical commentary:

... more central to the Barthelme version is the value of the story itself, recovering surprise available in the linguistic vitality of popular oral forms, a vitality, the novel suggests, that has been lost through self-conscious substitution of language for either feeling or understanding and through the consequent continuing need for novelty to insure interest.

(Trachtenberg 1990: 167)

An earlier stylistic analysis by McNall (1975), however, offers a more rigorous examination of the language of *Snow White*. The main focus of McNall's work lies in the identifiable patterns of lexical repetition in Barthelme's text. However, she also makes some mention of the characters' actions in the novel, or, rather, the lack of them.

She comments that

the speakers in *Snow White* are engaged characteristically in plans, meditations, speeches, sermons, fantasies... commonly they fail to bring these off. The plans do not materialize, the meditations do not lead to realizations, the speeches and sermons do not convince, and fantasies are, after all, fantasies.

(McNall 1975: 85-86)

McNall also notes that removing the novel's 'description assertions', which she defines as 'a sentence with the copula for main verb' (McNall 1975: 82), removes the greater part of the narrative; the vast majority of the text being made up of primarily mental and/or emotional activity. This observation remains relatively underdeveloped in McNall's essay, however, and thus provides a useful starting point for a Text World Theory analysis of *Snow White*.

McNall's comments on the peculiarity of action in Barthelme's text are drawn, in particular, from her examination of the following episode and its numerous consequences:

SNOW WHITE let down her hair black as ebony from the window. It was Monday. The hair flew out of the window. "I could fly a kite with this hair it is so long. The wind would carry the kite up into the blue, and there would be the red of the kite against the blue of the blue, together with my hair black as ebony, floating there. That seems desirable. This motif, the long hair streaming from the high window, is a very ancient one I believe, found in many cultures, in various forms. Now I recapitulate it, for the astonishment of the vulgar and the refreshment of my venereal life."

(Barthelme 1996: 86)

The first thing to note about this passage, quoted here in full, is the minimal world-building information it contains. The character of Snow White is apparently the only entity present, at a window nominated by a definite article, yet otherwise indistinct. Perhaps even more strangely, the reader is told the precise day on which the incident

takes place, but not the date or the hour. The only physical action in the passage takes place in its first sentence, as its function-advancing proposition tell us that ‘Snow White let down her hair’. The entire remainder of the episode is devoted to Snow White’s speech about her motivations for, and feelings about, her behaviour. The text world structure of the passage is represented in Figure 4h below, which makes evident the imbalance between the detail contained in the episode’s initial world, in which Snow White lets down her hair, and that contained in the world-switch created by her direct speech.

The originating text world, shown to the left of the diagram, can be seen to contain only one function-advancing proposition (‘Snow White let down her hair’), set against a minimalistic background, constructed according to the sparse world-building information provided. The speech world, on the other hand, contains not only Snow White’s direct assertion of her reasons for her actions (‘for the astonishment of the vulgar and the refreshment of my venereal life’), but also three further embedded modal worlds. The first of these is epistemic in nature and results from Snow White’s construction of a hypothetical situation in which she flies a kite in her hair. The origins of this world are shown in the diagram as an HYP frame embedded within the speech world. The second modal world, also epistemic, occurs as a result of the perception modality contained in her comment that such an event would ‘*seem* desirable’. This is shown in the diagram as the uppermost EPS frame in the speech world. The latter part of the same sentence, of course, consists of a boulomaic modal adjective, which creates a further embedded boulomaic modal world (BOUL). A final epistemic world is then constructed around Snow White’s comments on the cultural significance of what she has done, as she states that she *believes* the hair ‘motif’ to be ‘a very ancient one’. The



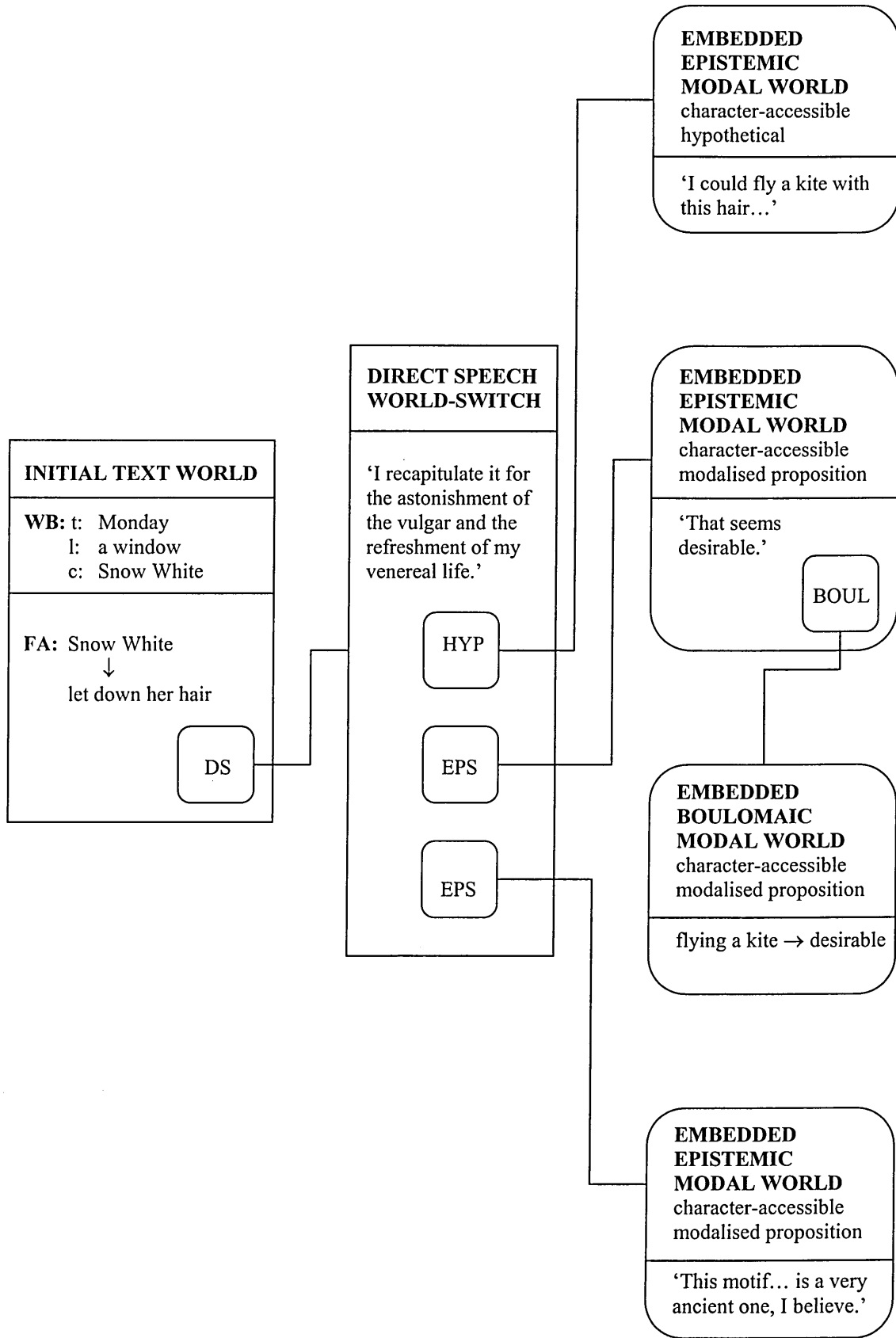


Figure 4h. *Embedded Worlds in Snow White's 'Hair Speech'*

motif is also, of course, one which belongs in an entirely different fairy tale, namely that of Rapunzel.

The letting down of Snow White's hair, which occurs about half way through *Snow White*, is followed by a number of episodes headed 'Reaction to the hair'. The following is a reproduction of one of them, in full:

*Reaction to the hair:* "Well, that certainly is a lot of hair hanging there," Bill reflected. "And it seems to be hanging from our windows too. I mean, those windows where the hair is hanging are in our house, surely? Now who amongst us has that much hair, black as ebony? I am only pretending to ask myself this question. The disgraceful answer is already known to me, as is the significance of this act, this hanging, as well as the sexual meaning of the hair itself, on which Wurst has written. I don't mean that he has written *on* the hair, but rather about it, from prehistory to the present time. There can be only one answer. It is Snow White. It is Snow White who has taken this step, the meaning of which is clear to all of us. All seven of us know what this means. It means that she is nothing else but a goddamn degenerate! is one way of looking at it, at this complex and difficult question. It means that the 'not-with' is experienced as more pressing, more real, than the 'being-with'. It means she seeks a new lover. *Quelle tragédie!* But the essential loneliness of the person must also be considered. Each of us is like a tiny single hair, hurled into the world among billions and billions of other hairs, of various colours and lengths. And if God does exist, then we are in even graver shape than we had supposed. In that case, each of us is like a tiny mote of pointlessness, whirling in the midst of a dreadful free even greater pointlessness, unless there is intelligent life on other planets, that is to say, life even more intelligent than us, life that has thought up some point for this great enterprise, life. That is possible. That is something we do not know, thank God. But in the meantime, here is the hair, with its multiple meanings. What am I to do about it?"

(Barthelme 1996: 98-99)

The structure of this passage can be seen to be greatly similar to that which caused it and is illustrated in Figure 4i below. Where Snow White's reflections on her hair took up five sentences, Bill manages to extend his to a total of twenty-three. Furthermore, Bill takes no physical action, apart from the speech itself, during the entire episode. The world-building elements of his text world are also even more minimalistic than those which defined Snow White's surroundings in the earlier passage. Since his remarks are directed at Snow White's hair, however, we can assume fairly safely that he is positioned within roughly the same spatial and temporal parameters as she was: below a window in their house, on a Monday.

Once again, far greater detail goes into the construction of the world of Bill's speech than that of his immediate location. Once again, the direct speech world-switch is followed by a further four embedded modal worlds. The first is created as a result of Bill's somewhat reluctant epistemic commitment to location of the window from which the hair is hanging, as he relegates his assertion, 'those windows where the hair is hanging are in our house', to a question; 'surely?' This qualification positions the information contained within Bill's initial statement at a greater epistemic distance, both from Bill and the reader, in an embedded epistemic modal world. A second modal world, also epistemic in nature, is then created as Bill goes on to speculate about the existence of God, in the conditional construction beginning 'And if God does exist...'. This protasis, of course, sets up a remote world in which the apodosis portion of the conditional ('we are in even graver shape than we had supposed... each of us is like a tiny mote of pointlessness, whirling in the midst of a dreadful free even greater pointlessness') is the case and, thus, constitutes the function-advancing element of that world. A similar construction forms the next remote world to be embedded in Bill's monologue, as he pursues a further hypothetical, 'unless there is life on other planets'. A final world is then created as Bill adds a modalised comment, expressing his opinion on the likelihood of the hypothetical situation he has constructed: 'That is possible'. The same state of affairs (life on another planet) is then recreated in a completely separate epistemic modal world, according to the speaker's altered epistemic commitment to it.

An emphasis on the speech of the characters, rather than on their actions or their surroundings, is typical of each of the 'Reaction to the hair' episodes. This feature is not, however, confined to these sections alone. Throughout *Snow White*, McNall points out, 'any act is given far less prominence than its problematical motives, and/or the

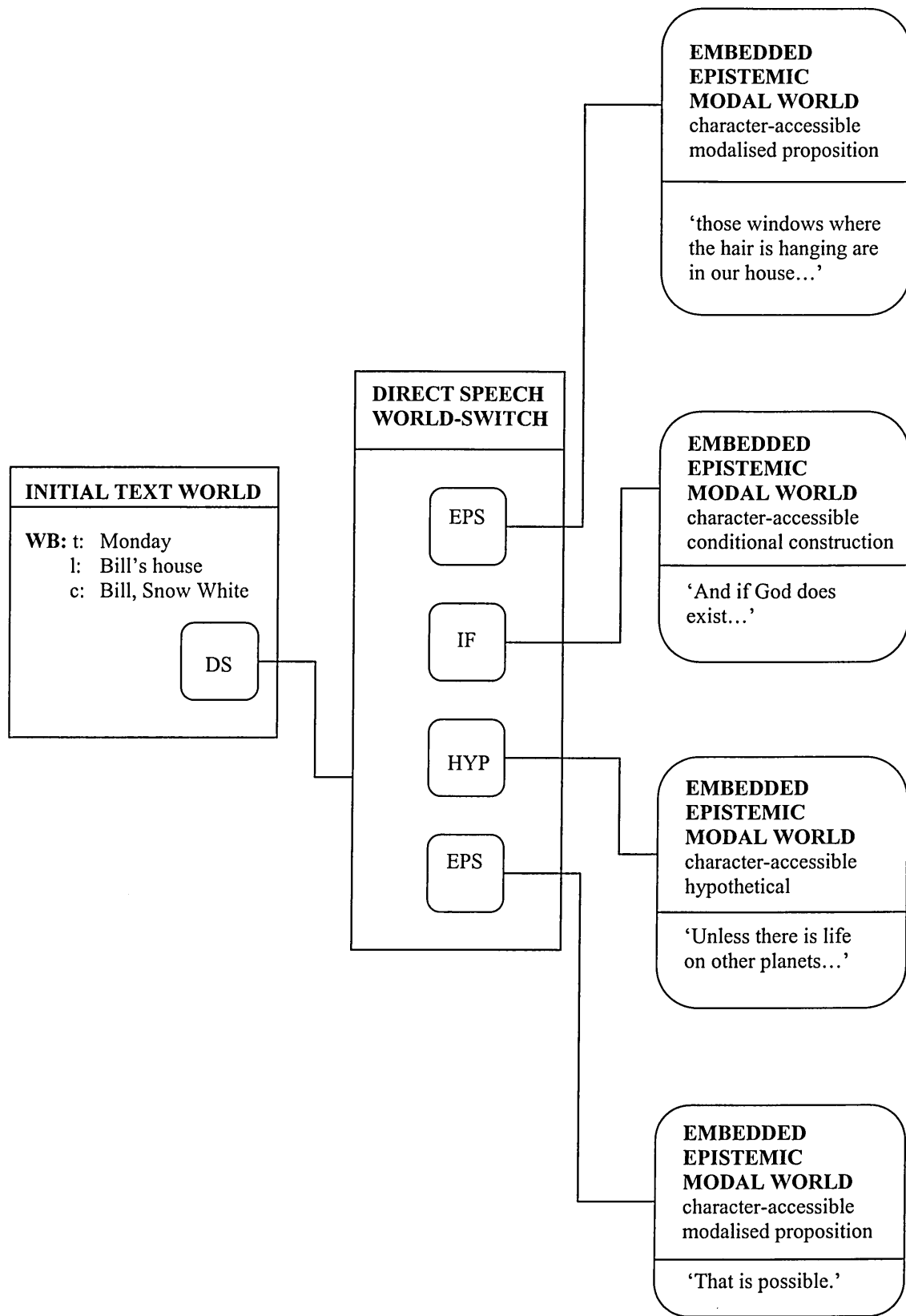


Figure 4i. Embedded Worlds in Bill's 'Reaction to the Hair' Speech

problematical reactions to it' (McNall 1975: 83). A later episode, for example, appears as follows:

*Lack of Reaction to the hair:* Dan sat down on a box, and pulled up more boxes for us, without forcing us to sit down on them, but just leaving them there, so that if we wanted to sit down on them, we could. "You know, Klipschorn was right I think when he spoke of the 'blanketing' effect of ordinary language, referring, as I recall, to the part that sort of, you know, 'fills in' between the other parts. That part, the 'filling', you might say, of which the expression 'you might say' is a good example, is to me the most interesting part, and of course it might also be called the 'stuffing' I suppose, and there is probably also, in addition, some other word that would do as well, to describe it, or maybe a number of them..."

(Barthelme 1996: 102)

Although categorised as a 'Lack of reaction to the hair', this description of Dan's speech does at least contain one physical action, as Dan pulls up boxes for his audience. Yet again, however, who exactly that audience is remains unspecified, as does the precise nature of their surroundings. The speech itself, however, continues far beyond those lines quoted above, as Dan muses, ironically, over linguistic 'stuffing' for a further two pages, creating numerous embedded modal worlds as he goes, making this one of the longest episodes in the entire novel.

Indeed, the vast majority of the text of *Snow White* is made up of its characters' verbal and mental contemplations. Almost the entire first half of the novel is devoted to the dwarves' speculations about what might be bothering the apparently depressed and dissatisfied Snow White, interspersed by her own commentary on the situation. Snow White has taken to writing poetry and also throwing tantrums, although the dwarves' main concern is her recent loss of sexual appetite. In an attempt to reawaken her interest in them, the dwarves purchase a fancy new shower curtain. The episodes relating to Snow White's thoughts and feelings, however, reveal that her attention has been distracted by another character, Paul. His role in the story is made clear in the following episode:

“I AM princely,” Paul reflected in his eat-in kitchen. “There is that. At times, when I am ‘down’, I am able to pump myself up again by thinking about my blood. It is blue, the bluest this fading world has known probably. At times I startle myself with a gesture so royal, so full of light, that I wonder where it comes from...”

(Barthelme 1996: 33, original typography retained)

Once again, Paul’s reflections on his princeliness extend somewhat further than the lines quoted here, which, once again, occur against deictic parameters that remain only minimally-constructed (‘in his eat-in kitchen’). Like all the other characters in the novel, Paul does not quite conform to the role ascribed him by previous versions of the Snow White fairy tale. He has no grand late arrival and, if he does own a white stallion, he certainly makes no mention of it. He remains, instead, sporadically present throughout the novel, often talking from either his kitchen or his bathtub.

However, Paul does, at least, manage to save Snow White from being poisoned by a character named Jane, who we may infer, if only from this attempted act, fulfils the role of the Evil Queen. Paul’s method of salvation, however, is somewhat less heroic than that used by his Walt Disney and Brothers Grimm counterparts:

JANE gave Snow White a vodka Gibson on the rocks. “Drink this,” she said. “It will make you feel better.” “I don’t feel bad, physically,” Snow White said. “Emotionally is another story of course.” “Go on”, Jane said. “Go on drink it.” “No I won’t drink it now,” Snow White said. “Perhaps later. Although something warns me not to drink it at all. Something suggests to me that it is a bad scene, this drink you proffer. Something whispers to me that there is something wrong with it.” “Well that’s possible,” Jane replied. “I didn’t make the vodka myself you know. I didn’t grow the grain myself, and reap it myself, and make the mash myself. I am not a member of the Cinzano Vermouth Company. They don’t tell me everything. I didn’t harvest the onions. I didn’t purify the water that went into these rocks. I’m not responsible for everything. All I can say is that to the best of my knowledge, this is an ordinary vodka Gibson on the rocks. Just like any other. Further than that I will not go.” “Oh well then”, Snow White said. “It must be all right in that case. It must be all right if it is ordinary. If it is ordinary as you say. In that case I shall drink it.” “This drink is vaguely exciting, like a film by Leopoldo Torre Nilson,” Paul said. “It is a good thing I have taken it away from you, Snow White. It is too exciting for you. If you had drunk it, something bad would probably have happened to your stomach. But because I am a man, and because men have strong stomachs for the business of life, and the pleasure of life too, nothing will happen to me. Lucky that I sensed you about to drink it, and sensed that it was too exciting for you, on my sensing machine in my underground installation, and was able to arrive in time to wrest it from your grasp, just as it was about to touch your lips. Those lips that I have deeply admired, first through the window, and then from my underground installation. Those lips that – ” “Look how he has fallen to the ground Jane!” Snow White observed. “And look at all that green foam coming out of his face! And look at all those convulsions he is having! Why it resembles nothing else but a death agony, the whole scene! I wonder if there was something wrong with that drink after all? Jane? Jane?”

(Barthelme 1996: 180-181, original typography retained)

Once again, this episode is quoted here in full, in order that the multitude of worlds embedded within it might be properly examined. In previous versions of the fairy tale, the scene of Prince Charming's rescue of Snow White, usually from a poison-induced sleep, forms the romantic climax of the story and is, thus, of central importance in the narrative as a whole. In Barthelme's adaptation, however, the episode is given no particular prominence over the rest of the novel. In its text world structure, at least, it is in no way distinct from the episodes which precede it.

Paul, Jane and Snow White are the only world-building elements in their own text world. No other objects or entities are nominated as present and the temporal and spatial parameters of the world remain similarly unspecified. Apart from the characters' speech, four main actions can be seen to propel the story forward in this episode: Jane gives Snow White a poisoned vodka Gibson on the rocks, Paul takes it from her, drinks it himself and then falls to the ground. Only one of these actions, though, is explicitly described in the passage: 'Jane gave Snow White a vodka Gibson on the rocks'. The reader must infer all the other plot-advancing information from what the characters say. The world-switch this speech creates is shown to the right of Figure 4j below, with the originating world shown to the left. Since the characters are all contained within the same spatio-temporal parameters and are interacting with one another, the focus of the text stays with the first switch made by Jane's introduction of a present tense command into the past tense narrative: 'Drink this'. Both Snow White's and Paul's speeches retain the same temporal signature as Jane's and, therefore, do not create further world-switches.

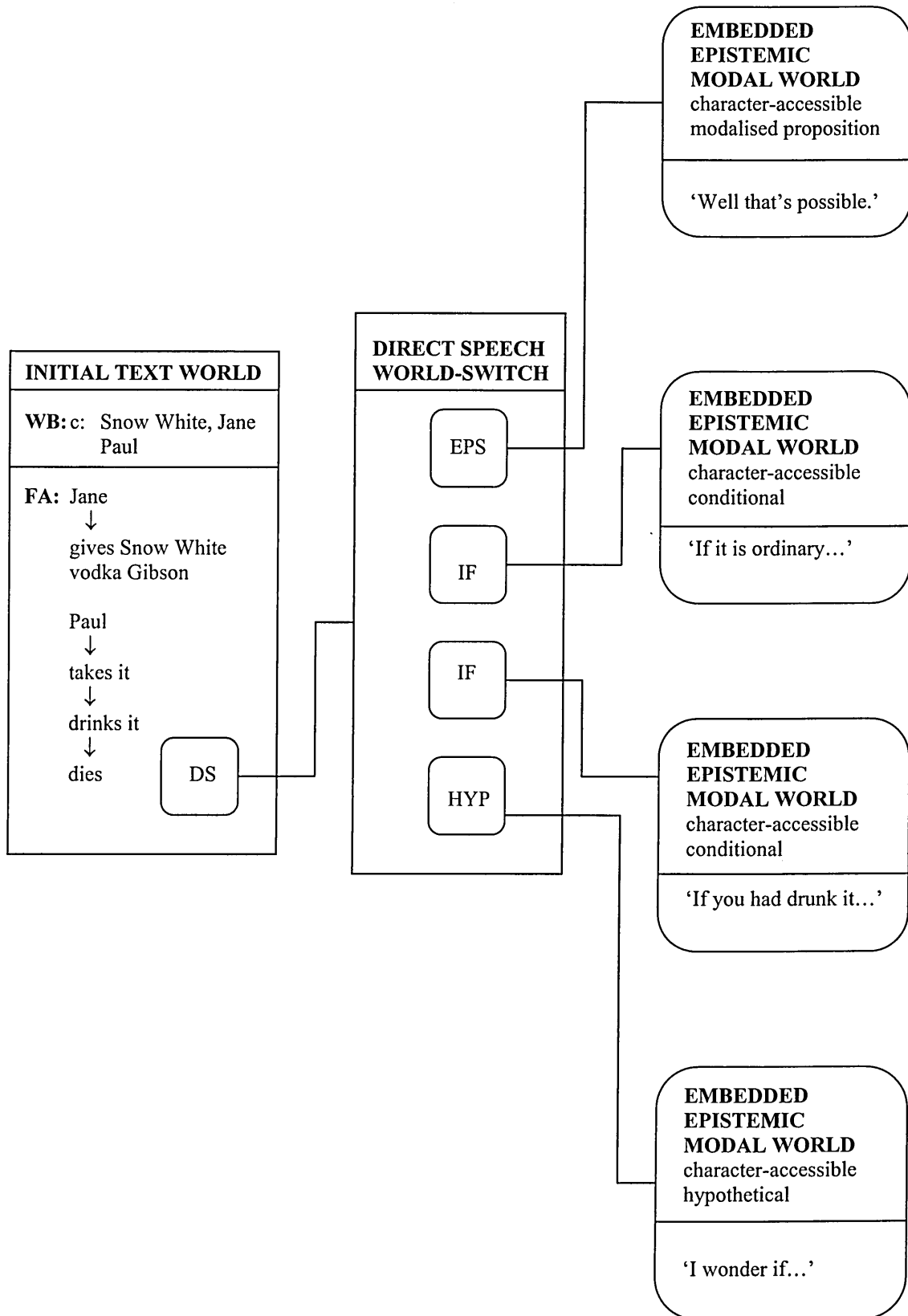


Figure 4j. Embedded Worlds in the Poisoning Scene



There are, however, a number of modal worlds embedded into the speech world, arising as a result of a number of modalised and conditional constructions. The first of these embedded worlds is epistemic in nature and occurs as Jane admits that the vodka she is offering may be poisoned: ‘Well that’s possible’. This world is shown in Figure 4j as an EPS frame embedded in the world-switch of Jane’s direct speech. Snow White then creates a second epistemic modal world with her conditional construction, ‘If it is ordinary as you say. In that case I shall drink it’. Paul then takes the drink from her, speculating on what might have happened to Snow White had he not, thus creating a further epistemic modal world with his own conditional construction: ‘If you had drunk it...’. As her prince writhes in agony in the final throes of death, Snow White closes the passage with a final epistemic modal world, arising from her speculation, ‘I wonder if there was something wrong with that drink after all?’

Each of the three diagrams presented in this section so far, Figure 4h, Figure 4i and Figure 4j, can now be compared directly with one another to reveal the strikingly similar structure of their separate text worlds. In each episode, an initial world is constructed according to minimal world-building information and containing similarly limited function-advancing actions or events. In each episode, far greater emphasis is placed upon the speech of one or more of the characters present, causing the imbalance between the left and right hand sides of each of the diagrams above. Though the title of Dan’s speech alerts us immediately to the static nature of his public sermon (‘Lack of reaction to the hair’), the reader might reasonably expect the remaining two example episodes to contain a substantial amount of action. The contrastive title of the ‘*Reaction to the hair*’ passage advertises it explicitly, while the poisoning scene draws on readers’ background knowledge of previous versions of the tale to lead them to expect a typical

action-packed climax here too. In both cases, however, a distinct *lack* of action, more in line with our expectations of Dan's episode, can be found. Despite textual claims of varying content, the text world structure of all three episodes is practically identical.

As I have already mentioned above, the prominence of speech worlds throughout *Snow White* means that, for much of the discourse process, the reader must rely on the characters to provide the world-building and function-advancing information necessary to construct a coherent mental representation of the text. On occasion, this proves to be a reasonably straightforward exercise, particularly when the characters make direct reference to their surroundings, as with Snow White's exclamations about Paul's collapse in the episode quoted above. At other times, the reader may have to work slightly harder to make inferences that will enhance the detail of their text world of *Snow White*. The inference made about Bill's proximity to Snow White during his 'Reaction to the hair' speech, discussed earlier in this section, is one such example. A great deal of the time, however, the characters offer practically no help in the construction of the reader's text world and can even be seen to actively complicate the process. In the following extract, Bill is defending himself in court, where he apparently stands charged with having delusions of grandeur. This has led Bill, the judge explains, to throw a six pack of beer through the windscreen of a car belonging to two complete strangers, named Fondue and Maeght:

"You cherished for those two, Fondue and Maeght, a hate." "More of a miff, your worship." "Of what standing, in the time dimension, is this miff?" "Matter of let's see sixteen years I would say." "The miff had its genesis in mentionment to you by them of the great black horse." "That is correct." "How old were you exactly. At that time." "Twelve years." "Something said to you about a horse sixteen years ago triggered, then, the hurlment." "That is correct." "Let us make sure we understand the circumstances of the hurlment. Can you disbosom yourself very briefly of the event seen from your point of view."

(Barthelme 1996: 165)

Bill's explanation of events is far from brief, however, and offers no clarification of either the significance of the black horse or the reasons behind his violent outburst at Fondue and Maeght, who remain similarly vague figures throughout the scene. Instead, in a manner reminiscent of *The Third Policeman*, the judge and Bill continue their exchange of bizarre neologisms (e.g. 'hurlment', 'disbosom', 'sensorium', 'cutaneous injurement', 'scoutmysteries', 'self-gratulation') for a further four pages, in a highly-infelicitous conversation without apparent aim or conclusion.

Bill and the judge are not alone in their linguistic eccentricity. The other characters, too, have a persistent habit of coining peculiar or meaningless words and phrases. At one point, for example, Snow White exclaims, 'I am tired of being just a horsewife!', a term which is subsequently also adopted by the dwarves:

*Additional reactions to the hair:* "To be a horsewife," Edward said. "That, my friends is my text for today. This important slot in our society, conceptualized by God as very nearly the key to the whole thing as Thomas tells us, has suffered in recent months and in this house a degree of denigration. I have heard it; I have been saddened by it. So I want today if I can to dispel some of these wrong ideas that have been going around, causing confusion and scumming up the face of the truth. *The horsewife!* The very base bone of the American plethora! *The horsewife!* Without whom the entire structure of civilian life would crumble!..."

(Barthelme 1996: 105)

Snow White's initial play on words, then, rapidly becomes a social institution in the hands of the rest of Barthelme's characters, one which Edward defends passionately in his lengthy sermon. Such appropriations, however, do little to aid the efficiency of the reading process, with the majority of the characters' coinages remaining obscure and unexplained following their initial use.

Faced with such impenetrable communication between the characters, the reader might reasonably expect clearer direction from *Snow White's* implied authorial voice. As we have already seen, however, the prominence of speech in the majority of the novel's

episodes means that the reader has very little contact with this omniscient textual entity. More often than not, the information he provides about the text world that contains Snow White, the dwarves, Paul and Jane is so scant that the reader must rely entirely on the references those characters make to their surroundings in order to form any coherent mental representation of them. On those rare occasions when the omniscient narrator does make an extended appearance, he has little to offer in the way of an explanation of the characters' incoherent ramblings:

**THE HORSEWIFE IN HISTORY**

**FAMOUS HORSEWIVES**

**THE HORSEWIFE: A SPIRITUAL PORTRAIT**

**THE HORSEWIFE: A CRITICAL STUDY**

**FIRST MOP, 4000 BC**

**VIEWS OF ST AUGUSTINE**

**VIEWS OF THE VENERABLE BEDE**

**EMERSON ON THE AMERICAN HORSEWIFE**

**OXFORD COMPANION TO THE AMERICAN  
HORSEWIFE**

**INTRODUCTION OF BON AMI, 1892**

**HORSEWIVES ON HORSEWIFERY**

**ACCEPT ROLE, PSYCHOLOGIST URGES**

**THE PLASTIC BAG**

**THE GARLIC PRESS**

(Barthelme 1996: 67)

This particular interjection, which appears to be part bibliographical list and part newspaper headline ('ACCEPT ROLE, PSYCHOLOGIST URGES'), follows an episode in which the dwarves attempt to glean some information from Snow White about a poem she has written. Rather than providing an objective external opinion on the subject of the dwarves' consternation (i.e. Snow White's discontentment with both her personal relationships and her wider social role), the narrator adopts the same

nonsensical discourse used by the characters, compounding potential processing difficulties rather than helping to alleviate them.

Such interruptions occur regularly throughout the text, often sharing the graphological distinctiveness of that reproduced above. On occasion, the information they offer can be seen to be of slightly greater use in the discourse process than that contained in the list above:

**PAUL HAS NEVER BEFORE REALLY SEEN SNOW WHITE AS A WOMAN**  
(Barthelme 1996: 156)

Here, at least, some insight, however brief, is allowed into the mind of one of the characters. More often than not, however, the reader is faced with an obscure list of apparently unconnected words or phrases:

**EBONY**  
**EQUANIMITY**  
**ASTONISHMENT**  
**TRIUMPH**  
**VAT**  
**DAX**  
**BLAGUE**

(Barthelme 1996: 101)

Despite sporadic instances of cooperative communication, the senselessness of repeated episodes like this one may undermine the trust of many readers in the reliability of the authorial voice.

There are numerous sections of *Snow White*, however, that are not filtered through the perspective of the omniscient narrator. The text frequently shifts from narratorial to reflector mode (see section 4.1.0), as certain episodes are narrated from the point of view of one of the characters:

THERE is a river of girls and women in our streets. There are so many that the cars are forced to use the sidewalks. The women walk in the street proper, the part where, in other cities, trucks and bicycles are found. They stand in windows too unbuckling their shirts, so that we will not be displeased. I admire them for that. We have voted again and again, and I think they like that, that we vote so much. We voted to try the river in the next town. They have a girl-river there they don't use much. We slipped into the felucca carrying our baggage in long canvas tubes tied, in the middle, with straps. The girls groaned under the additional weight. Then Hubert pushed off and Bill began beating time for the rowers. We wondered whether Snow White would be happy, alone there. But if she wasn't, we couldn't do anything about it.

(Barthelme 1996: 21, original typography retained)

The precise identity of the focaliser of this section of the text is unclear, since a proper name is not disclosed. The reader can, at best, narrow ten possibilities (Snow White, Paul, Jane and the seven dwarves) down to seven, assuming that, since they are referred to in the story by their proper names, the focaliser is not either Hubert, Bill or Snow White. The repeated use of second person nominative and possessive plural pronouns ('*We* have voted again and again... *we* vote so much... *we* slipped into the felucca carrying *our* baggage... *we* wondered whether Snow White would be happy... *we* couldn't do anything about it'), coupled with Hubert and Bill's apparent inclusion in that collective, suggests that the focaliser may be one of the dwarves. Beyond that, however, no further inference is possible. Furthermore, according to the modification to Text World Theory I have put forward in the preceding sections of this chapter, this passage, like all focalised narration, forms an epistemic modal world. As also already discussed above, the contents of this world, under Werth's approach, are only 'character-accessible'. Since the passage represents the contents of the mind of a character and since those contents cannot be assessed for reliability, the reader cannot increment them into the Common Ground without further evidence of their truth value.

As in *The Mustache*, however, such evidence is not forthcoming, as the narrative of *Snow White* slips in and out of various characters' perspectives, none of which are

explicitly endorsed by the omniscient narrator. Perhaps most prominent of all of these perspectives is that in which the identity of the focaliser is blurred yet further:

THEN we went out to wash the buildings. Clean buildings fill your eyes with sunlight, and your heart with the idea that man is perfectible. Also they are good places to look at girls from, those high, swaying wooden platforms: you get a rare view, gazing at the tops of their red and gold and plum-colored heads. Viewed from above they are like targets, the plum-colored head the center of the target, the wavy navy skirt the bold circumference... We are very much tempted to shoot arrows into them, those targets. You know what that means. But we also pay attention to the buildings, gray and noble in their false architecture and cladding.

(Barthelme 1996: 14)

The narrative voice of this passage is slightly different from that of the ‘river of girls’ description above, in that it remains in the second person throughout and makes no use of proper names, by which certain characters might be eliminated from the list of possible focalisers. This is a truly collective perspective. Furthermore, although it is not a focalisation with which the narrative of *Snow White* remains fixed for the entire duration of the novel, it nonetheless constitutes that which is most frequently used in the text. Compared to the unhelpful voice of the omniscient narrator, it also contains the most detailed and consistent world-building and function-advancing information offered outside the characters’ speech worlds. As such, the focalised epistemic modal world of the ‘we’ narration is comparable to the fixed focalisation identified in *The Mustache*. Despite its character-accessible nature, it nevertheless forms the basis of the majority of the reader’s incrementation of information into the Common Ground.

In the preceding analyses in this chapter, I have shown how, in such circumstances, the reliability of a focaliser and, thus, of the information he or she provides, may be assessed according to the same criteria by which the reliability of a fellow discourse participant is determined. Despite the logical ‘inaccessibility’ of the mind of the focaliser of *The Mustache*, for example, the reader is nevertheless able to gauge his approximate position on Werth’s ‘scale of authority’ (see Figure 3d above), both by

considering his behaviour and by comparing the version of events he describes with the speech and actions of other characters. Werth's sliding scale, though, is based on the social roles of *individuals*. Quite how one might assess the authority of several textual entities at once remains unclear. If we begin by comparing the versions of events put forward by the dwarves and those put forward by other characters, there are no apparent discrepancies. However, it is worth noting that the second person narration often relates episodes which no other entities were present to witness. There are also no dissenting voices within the collective, though, and no contradictions arise from the occasional input of first person narration, as in the 'river of girls' passage above. Rather, the multiple identity behind the 'we' narration is precisely what reinforces its authority. The perspectives and opinions of seven individuals are united in one voice, the confidence of which is further emphasised by its proclivity for generic statements: 'Clean buildings fill your eyes with sunlight, and your heart with the idea that man is perfectible'.

However self-assured the dwarves' narration may appear when examined in isolation, however, under Text World Theory's fully-contextualised approach to discourse study, the potential interaction between it and the rest of the novel must also be considered. Although the collective voice may always express itself clearly and confidently, the frequent lapses into incoherence made by its individual members in both subsequent and preceding episodes would seem at odds with such positivity. The reader's trust in the information put forward in such lucid passages as that quoted above, which are substantially furnished with world-building and function-advancing elements, may be undermined by the confused and chaotic ramblings of other sections of the text. Furthermore, though the second person narration may add authority to those passages in



which it is used, it also adds to a cumulative confusion of identity emerging throughout the rest of the novel:

“Informal statements                    the difficulties of owner-  
ship and customs                    surprises you by being Love  
exchanges                    paint it                    understanding brown  
boys without a penny                    I was                    bandit-head-  
gear                    And the question of yesterday wait-  
ing                    members                    clinging clear milk of  
wanting fever hidden                    melted constabu-  
lary                    extra innings of danger                    hides                    under  
the leg résumé clip chrome method                    decision  
of the sacred Rota                    muscular dream basket  
gesture                    Kiss the paper with it                    tufts                    more  
interesting than children                    painful texture of inter-  
esting children offensive candor                    lesion                    hang-  
ing mirror                    They only want window boxes  
moving with clean, careful shrubs                    Manner in  
which the penetration was                    Excited groans stifled  
under                    blankets upset                    A parliament of less-  
favored glass doors closed                    extra”  
(Barthelme 1996: 109)

This episode is one of several to appear in this graphologically fragmented style, without any indication as to who may be speaking or, indeed, thinking. Whichever character may be responsible, though, the apparently random collection of words and phrases represents a textual foundation upon which it is almost impossible to build a coherent text world. Some of the words used may act as frame headers for some readers and may, thus, cause a reactivation of mental representations of particular areas of their existing knowledge. Beyond this, however, it is difficult to see how the text could possibly be considered to be an example of efficient and purposive communication.

Nevertheless, such behaviour by a character still does not pose any threat to Werth’s notion of cooperation as a basic underlying principle of all discourse, since that character is not bound by the same ‘principles of discourse’ that bind the participants at the discourse world level. Only the author and the reader are expected to communicate in a fully cooperative manner under Werth’s framework. However, it is important to remember that the author is still responsible for the creation of those characters whose

speech, thought and actions present such challenges to the reader throughout *Snow White*. He is also both responsible for and inextricably linked to the authorial voice in the text. The tendency of that textual counterpart to confound and confuse the reader, with bizarre interjections of seemingly unconnected words and phrases, has already been discussed. Further processing problems may also arise from the following textual interruption:

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you like the story so far? Yes ( ) No ( )
2. Does Snow White resemble the Snow White you remember? Yes ( ) No ( )
3. Have you understood, in reading to this point, that Paul is the prince-figure? Yes ( ) No ( )
4. That Jane is the wicked stepmother-figure? Yes ( ) No ( )
5. In the further development of the story, would you like more emotion ( ) or less emotion ( )?
6. Is there too much *blague* in the narration? ( )  
Not enough *blague*? ( )
7. Do you feel that the creation of new modes of hysteria is a viable undertaking of the artist of today? Yes ( ) No ( )
8. Would you like a war? Yes ( ) No ( )
9. Has the work, for you, a metaphysical dimension? Yes ( ) No ( )
10. What is it (twenty-five words or less)?

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11. Are the seven men, in your view, adequately characterized as individuals? Yes ( ) No ( )
12. Do you feel that the Author's Guild has been sufficiently vigorous in representing writers before Congress in matters pertaining to copyright legislation? Yes ( ) No ( )
13. Holding in mind all works of fiction since the War, in all languages, how would you rate the present work, on a scale of one to ten, so far? (Please circle your answer)  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
14. Do you stand up when you read? ( ) Lie down? ( ) Sit? ( )
15. In your opinion, should human beings have more shoulders? ( ) Two sets of shoulders? ( ) Three? ( )

(Barthelme 1996: 88-89)

This questionnaire appears about half way through *Snow White*, at the close of Part One of the text. Questions 3 and 4 may aid certain inferences already in process, confirming that Paul is intended to fill the traditional role of Prince Charming and that Jane is the wicked stepmother. This information aside, however, the majority of the questionnaire

is, at worst, nonsensical ('Is there too much *blague* in the narration?') or, at best, unrelated to the main narrative ('Do you feel that the Author's Guild has been sufficiently vigorous in representing writers before Congress...?', 'should human beings have more shoulders?'). Those questions that do relate to the reading of *Snow White* do so by foregrounding the fictionality of the text. When question 13 asks, 'how would you rate the present work, on a scale of one to ten', for example, emphasis is placed on the discourse world relationship between the reader and author. The author's potential ability, yet ultimate failure, to create rounded, believable characters and a coherent plot structure are thus also brought to the reader's attention.

While readers of *Slaughterhouse-Five* may have had to invest substantial processing effort in order to make sense of the information contained in the text, that effort is at least rewarded with the construction of a reasonably coherent, if somewhat fragmented, mental representation of the worlds of Billy Pilgrim. Barthelme's readers, on the other hand, are provided with considerably less world-building information than those of Kurt Vonnegut and must attempt to construct the greater part of their text world of *Snow White* based on information put forward in the speech and thought of some remarkably unreliable characters. Not only is the author responsible for populating his text with entities who are rarely either 'purposive' or 'efficient' in their communication, but he also employs an omniscient narrator who either abandons the reader entirely, offering no additional direction in the processing of the text, or makes active use of the same nonsensical discourse as the rest of the novel's characters. As such, *Snow White* would seem to fit Werth's description of a 'pathological case' (Werth 1999: 50, see also section 3.3.1 above), since one of the discourse participants, namely the author, appears

to be attempting to introduce certain propositions into the Common Ground superfluously.

Unlike in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, it is not always possible for the reader of *Snow White* to draw a metaphorical or otherwise cooperative inference from this violation of the 'principles of discourse'. Certain passages of the text, many of which have been examined in this section, offer no possibility whatsoever of the construction of an associated text world. Does Barthelme's text, then, represent a truly uncooperative discourse, or can the reader still recover some form of meaning, however abstract, from its pages? Although the novel does contain a substantial amount of fully-formed world-building and function-advancing elements, it is certainly possible that some readers might find the process of understanding *Snow White* arduous enough to abandon their reading of it all together. However, perhaps as many, if not more, readers will formulate an interpretation of the text in which its very uncooperativeness is viewed as an indirect communication in itself. The chaotic structure of *Snow White* can thus be thematised and mapped directly onto the reader's own experience of reality (see Turner 1997). Indeed, this truly megametaphorical mapping would seem to be at the core of the process identified by Weinberg (1970), by which 'the absurdity found in life is transcribed through surreal descriptions' (Weinberg 1970: 10).

#### **4.4.1 Analysis Review**

Although the title, and some of the characters, of Barthelme's *Snow White* may share their names with those of a popular fairy tale, my application of Text World Theory to the novel in section 4.4.0 has shown the extent to which its structure departs from such traditional narrative forms. In particular, though some of the original story's central

plot-advancing elements also remain (e.g. Jane's attempt to murder Snow White; Snow White's subsequent narrow escape), their focalisation through the questionable perspectives of the novel's characters transform a tale of family turmoil and romantic love into one of personal and social discontent. Furthermore, I have shown that the negotiation of a Common Ground according to the information presented in the text is far from straightforward, due mainly to the uncooperative behaviour of the reader's co-participant in the discourse world. The author of *Snow White* can be seen to reject persistently his obligations to communicate clearly and efficiently, as he creates both a troublesome textual counterpart for himself and numerous other text world entities with similarly uncooperative tendencies.

More specifically, the reader is provided with only minimal world-building information with which to establish the spatial and temporal parameters of the text world. Much of the time, this information must be inferred from references made by characters to their surrounding situation, since the omniscient narrator is particularly reluctant to divulge such details. Indeed, we have also seen that the vast majority of the text of *Snow White* is made up of the representation of characters' speech and thought. Very little physical action takes place in the text world and the greater part of the novel's function-advancing takes place within speech-initiated world-switches and embedded epistemic modal worlds. The contents of these worlds, though only 'character-accessible' under Werth's version of Text World Theory, must nevertheless form the basis of much of the reader's world-building process.

Our comprehension of *Snow White* is then further complicated by the fact that a great deal of what the characters say and think is, at best, long-winded and irrelevant

rambling and, at worst, utterly nonsensical. No additional guidance is offered by the authorial voice in the text, which often adopts the same senseless discourse itself and provides only minimal insight into the characters' feelings and motivations. Together with the persistent blurring of identity in *Snow White*, usually caused by the focalisation of the narrative through the collective perspective of the seven dwarves, these factors combine to produce a truly challenging narration which many readers may find impossible, or at least unsatisfactory, to process. However, it has also been argued that, for some readers, the complex and chaotic structure of the novel may actually form the basis of their interpretation of its meaning. A reading of *Snow White* as a cooperative text is still possible through the megametaphorical mapping of its structural absurdity onto the day to day experience of human existence.

#### **4.5 Review**

The four practical case-studies presented in this chapter have allowed the boundaries of Werth's Text World Theory framework to be explored in detail. Both the benefits and drawbacks of Werth's approach to discourse study have been discussed and a number of modifications to the original version of Text World Theory have been suggested. The findings of each of the preceding separate analyses are brought together in the next and final chapter of this thesis. The modifications to Werth's framework suggested during the course of these applications are also further formalised in Chapter Five. Finally, the wider practical and theoretical implications of both the proposed new Text World Theory model and the thesis as a whole are discussed in full.

## **5.0 Preview**

This chapter begins with a discussion of the main findings of the applications of Text World Theory to a series of Absurd novels, undertaken in Chapter Four. Section 5.1 below brings together the conclusions of each of the text world analyses, previously summarised separately in sections 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.3.1 and 4.4.1, in order to present a unified synopsis of the central conclusions of the present study. The section also includes a schematisation of the modifications to Text World Theory suggested throughout the course of this thesis. Section 5.2 then goes on to explore some of the directions in which the present project might be expanded and developed in the future, examining and discussing the ways in which other academic disciplines might benefit from the employment of a text world methodology. The thesis is concluded in section 5.3, which provides a final summary of the wider implications of this thesis.

## **5.1 Text World Theory Augmented**

The aim of the preceding chapter was to provide an extensive exploration of the benefits and boundaries of Werth's version of Text World Theory. It was argued in section 3.5 that the analyses of extended metaphor in literary texts undertaken by Werth himself (e.g. Werth 1994 and 1999) constituted only limited applications of the text world approach, both in terms of the areas of the theory actually utilised and in terms of the length of the texts examined. With these limitations in mind, I selected four Absurd novels for a full-length analysis using the complete range of methodological tools available in Text World Theory. As already explained in section 1.1, the chosen texts

can be seen to represent a cline of literary experimentalism, against which the analytical capabilities of Werth's framework can be properly assessed.

The first novel to be examined in Chapter Four was Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*. The initial world this text constructs immediately creates problems for Text World Theory. In section 4.1.0 I showed that the focalised nature of the narrative renders the text world level of Werth's framework essentially redundant, since the world-building and function-advancing elements of the text are presented through the perspective of one of the characters. Furthermore, because the narration of *The Third Policeman* is 'fixed', in Genette's (1980) terms, this point of view remains the reader's only point of access throughout the course of the novel. I therefore suggested that it seems unlikely that readers of the text would necessarily suspend incrementation of the information presented in the focalised world simply because of its character-accessible logical status (see section 3.3.0). Werth's classification of focalised narratives as 'sub-worlds' was also questioned, since this choice of terminology would appear to suggest that, despite their inevitable dominance in the text, such narratological structures still occupy a sub-ordinate position in Werth's conceptual hierarchy. Indeed, I went on to demonstrate that the reader/focaliser relationship in *The Third Policeman* is of central importance to the success of the novel's final twist. Finally, I proposed the term *world-repair* as a possible addition to Text World Theory. Drawn from Emmott's (1997) framework for narrative comprehension, this term provides the means to describe how readers might deal with such unexpected narratological developments.

The analysis of Emmanuel Carrère's novel *The Mustache*, in section 4.2.0, provided further justification for the removal of the *sub-* prefix from Werth's description of



worlds created by modalised propositions, indirect speech and thought representation, conditional constructions, hypotheticality and focalised narration. Once again, the perspective through which the world-building and function-advancing elements of the text are presented was shown to remain fixed for the duration of the entire novel. Although *The Mustache* is narrated in the third rather than the first person, the omniscient narrator makes no external judgement or comment on the focaliser's point of view. Simpson (1993) was shown to provide a useful classification of this type of narration as being in 'reflector' mode (see section 4.1.0 above). Once again, then, the text world level of Werth's framework remains redundant throughout the discourse process, as the character-accessible world of the main character's perspective forms the reader's only source of information upon which to build a mental representation of the text. I also showed that the maintenance of this exclusive reader/focaliser relationship is of equal importance to that developed in *The Third Policeman*, since, without it, the reader would be unable to sustain any sympathy for the main character's predicament. Were any of the other characters' perspectives represented, any number of the unanswered questions over the protagonist's mental stability that propel the story forwards might be settled at the outset, a change which would transform *The Mustache* into an entirely different literary experience.

Thus, based both on these findings and on the discussion of Werth's limited account of modality in section 3.3.2, I have modified Werth's categories of attitudinal sub-worlds and epistemic sub-worlds to create a new inclusive classification of *modal worlds*. This term covers all those conceptual spaces created by deontic, boulomaic and epistemic modality, conditionality, hypotheticals, the indirect representation of speech and thought and all instances of focalised narration. Crucially, this is a non-hierarchical term, in

recognition of the now proven fact that some remote or modalised worlds may occupy a dominant position in any given discourse, often extending throughout the course of an entire literary text, as has been demonstrated above.

My modifications of Werth's hierarchical terminology were further extended as a result of the text world analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* in section 4.3.0. Once again, the initial world constructed by the opening chapter of that novel disappears for almost the entire duration of the rest of the text, this time as a result of the main character's frequent leaps through space and time. Just as I suggested the term *modal worlds* as a non-hierarchical alternative to Werth's classification of remote sub-worlds, in section 4.3.0 the term *world-switch* was put forward as a new means of describing the frequent shifts in spatial and temporal focus which occur both throughout *Slaughterhouse-Five* and in countless other literary and non-literary texts. Once again, this modification to Werth's text world framework is a direct development from Emmott's (1997) discourse model, in which the term 'frame switch' is used to describe the same textual phenomenon. *Slaughterhouse-Five* presented further problems for Text World Theory, however, as a result of the apparently uncooperative behaviour of the novel's omniscient narrator. The frequently negatively-shaded narration was shown to create particular distance between the reader and the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, at times of great trauma, with the estranged commentary, 'So it goes', most often appearing after descriptions of death and violence. This textual feature was shown to complicate greatly the reader's construction and maintenance of a sympathetic relationship with the characters. The questions I initially raised in section 3.1.1 over Werth's insistence that all discourse is based on an underlying cooperative principle arose again at this point in the discussion. I argued, however, that, disturbing as the narrator's behaviour may be, it

does not constitute a significant threat to the reader's overall processing of the discourse. As was shown in section 4.3.0, it is possible for the reader to reach a metaphorical interpretation of the structure of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, rather than being forced to dismiss the text as an uncooperative form of communication.

Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, however, is somewhat more problematic. This highly experimental piece of fiction, analysed in section 4.4.0 above, was shown to provide the reader with only minimal world-building information upon which to construct a mental representation of the text. Once again, the novel is narrated mainly through the perspectives of the participating characters, whose contributions to the discourse have been shown to consist most frequently of existential ramblings which are, at best, long-winded and, at worst, utterly irrelevant. A persistent blurring of the identities of separate textual entities into a collective narratorial voice was also detected during the text world analysis of *Snow White*, as was the presence of an extremely uncooperative participant in the discourse world. I demonstrated that the textual counterpart Barthelme creates for himself provides little help for the struggling reader of the text, often compounding confusion with the interjection of nonsensical lists, questionnaires and statements. Nevertheless, a cooperative interpretation of even the heightened absurdity of *Snow White*, as a megametaphorical textual representation of the absurdity of life itself, was argued to be still possible.

The modifications I have made to Text World Theory over the course of this thesis are fully formalised in Figure 5a below, which shows both the new terminology suggested and its corresponding diagrammatic notation. The top section of the diagram relates to the 'world-switch' category and includes both spatial and temporal alternation in

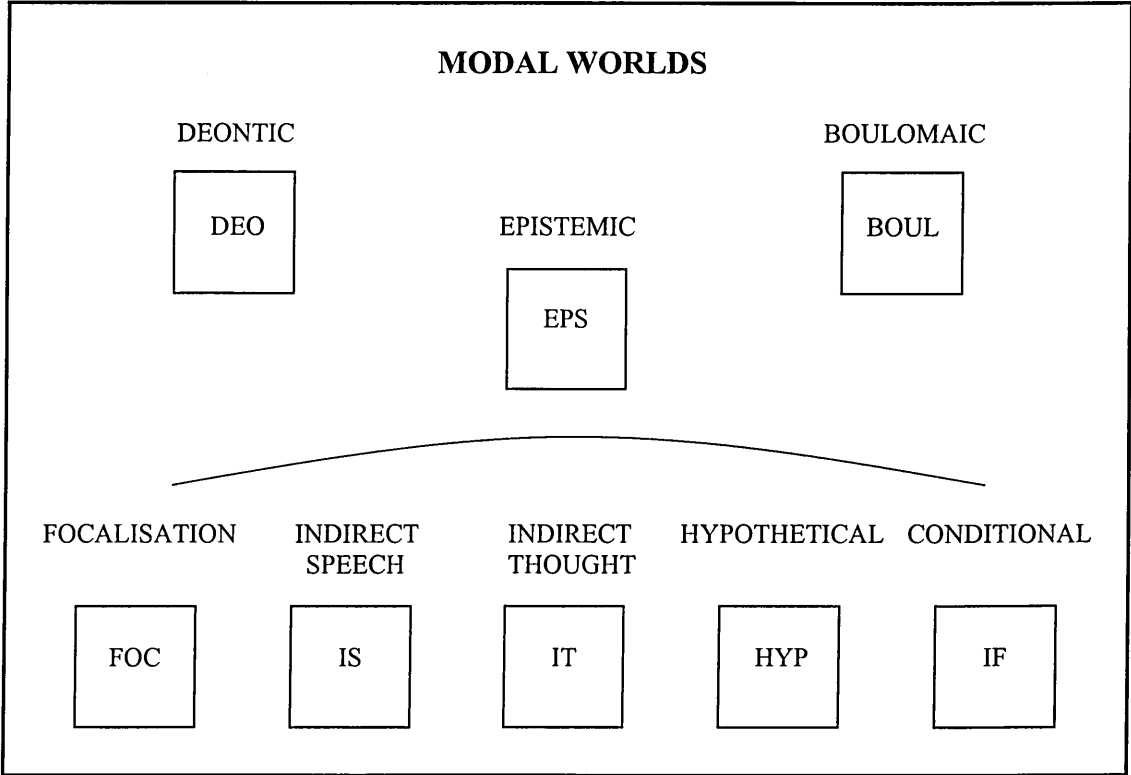
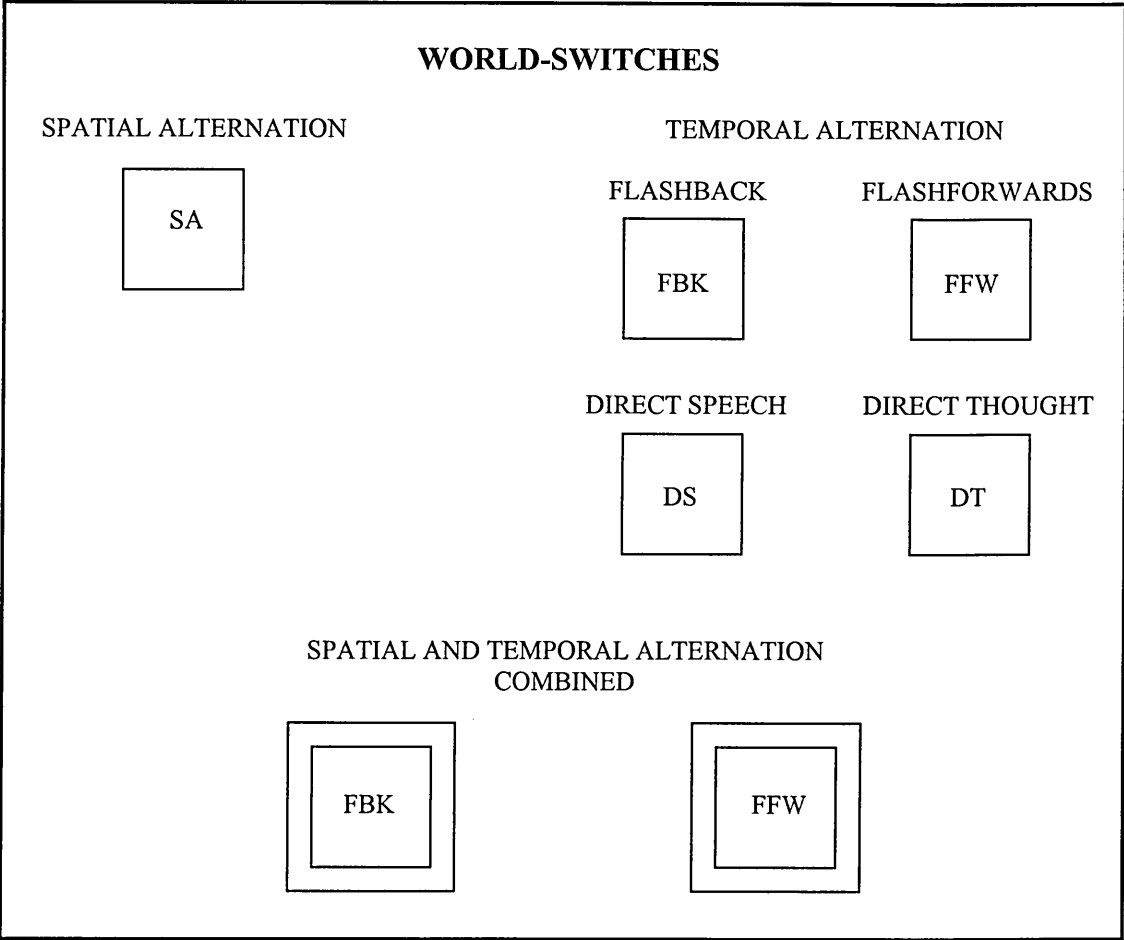


Figure 5a. Modifications to Text World Theory

various forms. Not all of the possible types of world-switch have been dealt with in detail in this thesis. Certain kinds of temporal switch, such as flashbacks (shown as FBK worlds in Figure 5a) and the direct representation of speech and thought (shown as DS and DT worlds, respectively), were discussed both in section 3.3.3 above and throughout the text world analyses in Chapter Four. My analysis of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in section 4.3.0 has also shown that it is possible for narratives to flash forwards as well as backwards in time. Such instances are given an FFW notation in Figure 5a. Alternations in just the spatial parameters of the text world, however, did not occur in any of the novels examined in that chapter. Such spatial world-switches are given the notation SA in Figure 5a. Furthermore, I noted in section 3.3.3 that many temporal alternations, whether flashbacks or flashforwards, will also involve a change in the spatial parameters of the text world. Indeed, almost all of the world-switches I identified in Chapter Four can be seen in retrospect to constitute a combination of spatial and temporal change. However, Werth's (1999: xvi-xvii) text world notation does not offer a means of signalling such dual world-switches. Figure 5a therefore contains a possible means of indicating combined alternations in both the spatial and temporal boundaries of text worlds in the future. The FBK and FFW worlds at the bottom of the world-switch section of the diagram have a double outline to show that the world-switch concerned has a different location in both time and space from its originating world.

The bottom section of Figure 5a contains all those worlds which can be classified as 'modal worlds' under the modified version of Text World Theory put forward in this thesis. Following the discussion of Werth's limited account of modality in section 3.3.2, those worlds which are created as the result of the use of deontic, boulomaic or epistemic modality are shown in the diagram as DEO, BOUL and EPS worlds,

respectively. As can be seen in Figure 5a, however, it is possible to divide the category of epistemic modal worlds yet further. The EPS notation applies only to instances of epistemic modalisation, including the use of perception modality, such as ‘she *must have been lying*’, ‘he *seemed* upset’, ‘they *might have been* arguing’, and so on. However, in my new Text World Theory framework I also allow the further specification of other textual manifestations of epistemic distance. As shown at the very bottom of Figure 5a, focalised narration (FOC), the indirect representation of both speech and thought (IS and IT), hypotheticals (HYP) and conditional constructions (IF) are each given their own separate form of notation under the modified text world approach. With each of the additions and changes made to Werth’s original version of Text World Theory now explained in full, section 5.2 below goes on to examine some of the ways in which the central proposals put forward in the present thesis might be developed further in future work.

## **5.2 Future Directions**

This thesis has provided the first detailed exploration of Text World Theory since Werth’s full account of his framework was originally published in 1999. It has taken the first steps towards establishing the advantages and limits of the text world approach to discourse study by testing the extreme boundaries of the approach first. My applications of Text World Theory to a selection of Absurd prose fiction have tried the farthest limits of Werth’s discourse model and made the initial modifications necessary for the text world approach to be utilised and further developed in the future. The resulting adapted framework, detailed in section 5.1 above, can be seen to have addressed and solved some of the most substantial problems identifiable within Werth’s initial methodology. It offers a broad outline of Text World Theory as a viable system for stylistic analysis.

The framework as it now stands links linguistic form with cognitive effects in a rich and complex way. Its approach is principled, yet does not fall into the hard formalist linkage of form and meaning. In this way, Text World Theory provides an explanatory framework that encompasses both the broad cultural readings of interpretative communities and individual interpretations. It might even be argued to provide a final realisation of the long-standing *discoursal* aspirations of preceding stylistic models. Perhaps above all else, however, Text World Theory offers a practical and systematic means of exploring language as a fully contextualised phenomenon.

Assessing Text World Theory's suitability as a means of examining more isolated linguistic features has remained beyond the parameters of the present project. Hidalgo Downing (2000), for example, uses only selected areas of Text World Theory to explore specifically the conceptual processes associated with instances of negation in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. In the present thesis, however, such concentrated analysis has been rejected in favour of a wider survey of the mechanics of Text World Theory as a whole. The applicability of Werth's model of discourse processing to areas of linguistic study other than stylistics also remains to be established. As already mentioned in section 1.0, Werth claims to have devised a methodological framework capable of accounting for *all* aspects of human communication. However, a full appraisal of the possible advantages the use of Text World Theory might have for such linguistic sub-disciplines as pragmatics, for example, or how the text world approach might be used to explain or describe phonological phenomena, or grammatical form, has been beyond the scope of this thesis.

Nevertheless, one body of work which would seem to present itself immediately as a potential positive beneficiary from the addition of a text world methodology is that which is typically associated with the discipline of critical discourse analysis (see, for example, Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996; Fairclough 1989, 1995a and 1995b; Fowler 1981, 1986 and 1991; Kress and Hodge 1979). The central focus of this area of linguistic study has consistently been the examination of *discourse*, in much the same sense as Werth defines that term: both the text and its related context of production and reception. In particular, critical discourse analysis is interested in the covert ideologies which control that contextual environment and, specifically, in revealing their manifestation in the popular texts of a given society. The methodological tools its practitioners have traditionally employed towards that end have been those offered within Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics. The consistent emphasis placed on the central importance of context in human language behaviour throughout Halliday's work gives systemic functional grammar an obvious appeal for those interested in the hidden ideologies at work within everyday communication. In practice, however, the deployment of the model, by both Halliday and the majority of critical discourse analysts, more often than not amounts to little more than the labelling of grammatical components in a particular text, since no systematic means is provided for the explanation of the wider contextual elements involved in the discourse situation.

Text World Theory, on the other hand, places the context surrounding a particular discourse situation at the very heart of its model of language production and processing. It specifies an inextricable link between the pragmatic and conceptual processes which govern the behaviour of the participants in the discourse world and those which inform the construction and maintenance of the text world. The fundamentally cognitive basis



of the text world approach offers the possibility of accounting for the social and cultural factors which underlie a particular communication as rigorously and accurately as those textual elements upon which the structure of the discourse itself is built. We can imagine a future 'critical text world analysis', then, beginning with a detailed examination of the main social and cultural components which make up the discourse world surrounding the production and interpretation of a particular text: a daily newspaper, for example. Like the discourse worlds of most written communication, this world would be split, with the participants most likely occupying separate spatio-temporal points. In a critical text world analysis, however, the exact nature of this split would be of central importance to the study, since it would define the precise points at which the producer and receiver of the text either differ or correspond. Thus, a text world methodology would allow the individual belief systems (the 'ideologies', in critical discourse analysis' terms) which influence and inform the behaviour of each of the participants in a discourse situation to form the essential starting point of the entire critical procedure.

A future critical text world analysis could conceivably concentrate solely on a comparative analysis of the individual nature of different types of discourse worlds, examining, for example, how the immediate situation surrounding the production and reception of a daily newspaper differs from that of a political speech, and to what eventual effect in both the text world and the discourse world. Perhaps even more productive, however, would be to trace the personal and cultural knowledge identified as a controlling factor in the discourse world through to its further manifestation at the text world level. It is at this conceptual layer that the majority of previous critical discourse analyses have been located, concentrating almost entirely on the stylistic

features of social discourse. Text World Theory, however, would allow the same close analysis of the textual characteristics of a particular social ideology but would situate the discussion firmly within a consistent terminology which links the text with its originating context. Werth's principle of 'text-drivenness' (see Werth 1999: 149-153 and section 3.1.2 above), of course, ensures the generation and maintenance of the bond between the participant's background knowledge and their experience of the discourse. It seems highly likely, then, that this specific area of the framework would form the central focus of any future amalgamation of Text World Theory with existing critical discourse practice.

Each of the text world analyses undertaken in the course of this thesis could quite easily be developed into critical text world analyses by a simple switch in emphasis from the examination of the stylistic features of the texts to a discussion of the nature of the discourse worlds which produced them. The parameters of this study, set out in Chapter One, however, have prevented the pursuit of this particular line in the present case. Nevertheless, the field of critical discourse analysis would seem a fertile ground upon which to base the further development and testing of Text World Theory, not least because of the apparent receptivity of some of its main proponents to new approaches and methodologies:

Textual analysis presupposes a theory of language and a grammatical theory, and one problem for critical discourse analysis is to select from amongst those available. I have referred at various points to systemic linguistics, which has a number of strengths from the perspective of CDA... While systemic linguistics is thus a congenial theory to work with, in the longer term critical discourse analysis should, as Kress has argued (1993), be informing the development of a new social theory of language which may include a new grammatical theory.

(Fairclough 1995a: 10)

For Fairclough, then, the selection of Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics as a methodological basis for the exploration of social discourse would appear to be based simply on the convenience of the approach at that time. Following more recent

developments in cognitive linguistics (detailed in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 above), however, it is possible that a more suitable, more context-centred, system for analysis has now evolved elsewhere.

It may be that, with further development, Text World Theory might offer some contribution to the ‘new social theory of language’ Fairclough deems necessary for the long-term development of critical discourse analysis. It offers a framework which is both broad enough to encompass a discussion of the socio-political factors at work within all human communication and detailed enough to account for the precise textual manifestations of those wider cultural relationships. Thus, a critical discourse practice based on Text World Theory would re-centre its analyses on the participants’ deployment of background knowledge and experience during a given discourse. It would examine the way in which the text-driven nature of that process allows the stylistic features of a particular text to be traced back to their originating ideology in this discourse world. It would discuss the distribution and location of the main function-advancers of a particular text world in relation to its participating characters, taking into account the means by which the reader’s epistemic distance from or proximity to a given piece of information is manipulated by their co-participant in the discourse. By these means, the development of a truly context-sensitive model for discourse analysis is a foreseeable possibility, as is the further evolution of Text World Theory into a more socially-conscious critical practice.

### **5.3 Thesis Review**

Section 5.2 above outlined some of the directions in which the work begun in this thesis might be further developed in the future, paying particular attention to the possible

benefits a text world approach might hold for the field of critical discourse analysis. However, the synthesis of these separate approaches to discourse study has remained beyond the parameters of the present project, as has the testing of Text World Theory against forms of human communication other than literary prose. Nevertheless, alongside the key objectives of the thesis, set out in section 1.0, a number of additional developments within the wider fields of both linguistic and literary critical practice can be seen to have also evolved during the course of the present project. This section will close the thesis with a final synopsis of some of these advances.

Firstly, the modified version of Text World Theory, which has been developed as a direct result of the detailed exploration and application of Werth's model over the course of the preceding chapters, can be seen to provide a rigorously tested and consequently improved methodology for the analysis of the stylistics of literary texts. As detailed in section 5.1 above, a number of problematic areas in the original version of Text World Theory have now been addressed, with solutions for each flaw proposed and assessed in turn. More specifically, key changes have been made to the model's handling of, among other things, modalised propositions, focalisation, spatial and temporal narrative shifts, participant co-operation and unreliable narration. Crucially, however, despite the identification of numerous imperfections in Werth's initial framework, none of the problems presented by the challenging linguistic data of *The Third Policeman*, *The Mustache*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Snow White* have proved insurmountable. Rather, Text World Theory has emerged as an adaptable and broad-ranging framework which, with a few minor adjustments, has offered numerous invaluable insights into the conceptual structures at work within the reader's processing of the selected texts.

Indeed, the application of Text World Theory to the Absurd novels in Chapter Four, originally intended to establish the boundaries of Werth's approach, has coincidentally also added to our understanding of certain key areas of literary criticism and narratology. The construction and maintenance of an empathetic relationship between the reader of a novel and its main focaliser, for example, has been shown to be of central importance to the success of a number of narratological devices. The creation of a substantial twist at the end of a novel, for instance, depends on the reader sustaining patience and interest throughout the preceding text (see section 4.1.0). The effective communication of a particular focaliser's mental state and the encouragement of sympathy for that textual entity has also been shown to be determined by the construction of a world in which only his or her thoughts and perceptions are presented to the reader (see section 4.2.0). In both cases, the reader's incrementation of the information presented in the epistemic modal world of the focalised narrative, often in spite of numerous discouraging signs, is essential to the success of the narrative feature in question.

The modification of Text World Theory to provide a more complete account of modality has also, in turn, added a cognitive dimension to that traditional area of linguistic and stylistic study. The occurrence of modalised propositions in literary texts has been shown to initiate the construction of an entirely separate conceptual space. Simpson's description of those texts which contain a high degree of fluctuation between epistemically modalised and non-modalised forms, as narratives of 'bewilderment, uncertainty and alienation' (Simpson 1993: 53, see also section 4.3.0 above), can now be more fully understood in terms of their construction of a multitude of remote conceptual spaces which many readers may find difficult to track and comprehend.

Indeed, the creation of a host of often conflicting modal worlds has emerged as a feature common to all of the texts examined during the course of Chapter Four. It seems increasingly likely, then, that further applications of Text World Theory to other examples of Absurd prose fiction might reveal the heavy concentration of modal worlds, compared with the frequently minimalistic world-building and function-advancing information provided at the text world level, to be a defining stylistic feature of this literary genre.

Although the analyses undertaken in the course of this thesis can by no means be considered a comprehensive survey of the stylistics of all Absurd literature, the application of Text World Theory to just a selection of novels here has proved productive enough to encourage further exploration of the text worlds of the Absurd in the future. Alongside Text World Theory's revelation of the prevalence of modal worlds in Absurd texts, detailed above, abundant world-switches, unreliable or uncooperative narration and a frequent need for world-repair have also been identified as key features of the Absurd discourse examined. The contribution Text World Theory has made to current understanding of this genre of literature, simply as a by-product of this thesis' main aims and objectives, would suggest that some significant results might be expected from the deliberate application of the framework to Absurdism as a whole. Furthermore, on the basis of the evidence presented within this thesis, Text World Theory would seem to offer a useful means of approaching the issue of literary genre in general, through the comparative analysis of the differing structures of the worlds created within the boundaries of individual generic types.

Throughout the course of this thesis my central intention has been to offer some contribution to the emerging field of cognitive poetics, already outlined in section 1.3 above. It is hoped that both the critical exposition and development of Werth's text world framework and the initial exploration into the stylistics of Absurd prose fiction undertaken during the course of this study might be seen to further the evolution of this academic discipline. At the very heart of both the present project and the ongoing task of cognitive poetics as a whole is the fundamental belief that the cognitive processes which govern our production and interpretation of literary texts also form the basis of our understanding of our everyday existence. It is hoped, therefore, that the deeper comprehension of the structure of Absurd literary worlds, reached over the course of the preceding pages, might also allow the absurdity of the real world to be at least a little more comprehensible.

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