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Postclassical Narratology

Approaches and Analyses

EDITED BY

JAN ALBER AND MONIKA FLUDERNIK



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Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction
JAN ALBER AND MONIKA FLUDERNIK 1

PART I.

Extensions and Reconfigurations of Classical Narratology

1 Person, Level, Voice: A Rhetorical Reconsideration
RICHARD WALSH 35

2 *Mise en Cadre*—A Neglected Counterpart to *Mise en Abyme*.
A Frame-Theoretical and Intermedial Complement to
Classical Narratology
WERNER WOLF 58

3 Large Intermental Units in *Middlemarch*
ALAN PALMER 83

4 Mediacy, Mediation, and Focalization: The Squaring of
Terminological Circles
MONIKA FLUDERNIK 105

PART II.

Transdisciplinarity

5 Directions in Cognitive Narratology: Triangulating Stories,
Media, and the Mind
DAVID HERMAN 137

6	Hypothetical Intentionalism: Cinematic Narration Reconsidered JAN ALBER	163
7	Sapphic Dialogics: Historical Narratology and the Sexuality of Form SUSAN S. LANSER	186
8	Narrators, Narratees, and Mimetic Desire AMIT MARCUS	206
9	Narratology and the Social Sciences JARMILA MILDORF	234
10	Postclassical Narratology and the Theory of Autobiography MARTIN LÖSCHNIGG	255
11	Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration HENRIK SKOV NIELSEN	275
	Contributors	303
	Index	307

1

RICHARD WALSH

Person, Level, Voice

A Rhetorical Reconsideration

My purpose in this essay is to critique the concept of narrative voice from the vantage point of a rhetorical model of fictive representation. In its core sense, narrative voice is concerned with the narrating instance, the various manifestations of which are usually categorized in terms of person and level. These distinctions provide for a typology of narrating instances which is conventionally understood within a communicative model of narration—a model in which the narrating instance is situated within the structure of narrative representation, as a literal communicative act (that is, as a discursive event that forms part of a chain of narrative transmission). By adopting a rhetorical approach to voice, I am proposing to invert the hierarchy of that relationship between structure and act. From a rhetorical standpoint, narrative representation is not conceived as a *structure* within which a communicative model of narrative acts is implied, but as an act itself, the performance of a real-world communicative gesture—which, in the case of fictional narrative, is offered as fictive rather than informative, and creates, rather than transmits, all subordinate levels of narration. Such a perspective upon narrative representation exposes the fundamental incoherence of the standard communicative model, and establishes the need for some basic distinctions between different senses of voice in narrative theory.

My argument, then, begins by demonstrating the incoherence of the representational typology of narrative voice as embodied in the communicative model of the narrating instance. This demonstration focuses upon the elementary categories of person and level that articulate this typology; its claim

is that it is not possible to sustain the distinction between these two categories in representational terms, and their collision results in contradiction. I go on to show that a rhetorical model of instance, reverting to Plato's distinction between diegesis and mimesis and the recursive principle it embodies, can accommodate the range of narrative possibilities more coherently and simply. By elaborating upon the principle of recursiveness in representation I demonstrate the need for a distinction between narrative voice as instance and as idiom; closer attention to the function of voice in free indirect discourse and focalization establishes a further distinction between idiom and a third sense of voice I term interpellation; finally, a return to my overarching rhetorical frame of reference clarifies the distinction between this third sense and the sense of voice as instance with which I began.

The key premises for the whole discussion, for which I have argued elsewhere, are the conception of narrative representation as rhetorical in mode, and as semiotic (rather than narrowly linguistic) in scope.¹ I comment further upon these issues in the discussion that follows, so here I will only indicate the forms in which they arise. The rhetorical orientation of my argument straightforwardly appropriates Plato's emphasis upon the act of narrative representation as either diegesis or mimesis (the poet either speaking in his own voice, or imitating the voice of a character); I merely draw out the recursiveness implicit in that formulation, and discriminate between its legitimate scope as a model of agency and the rather different issue of rhetorical effect. The semiotic nature of narrative representation is asserted here in my insistence upon the (generally acknowledged) metaphorical nature of the concept of voice, and my efforts to take the full measure of that fact in respect of other narrative media (principally film, but also the cognitive medium of mental representation). These two premises share the common definitional assumption that stories, of whatever kind, do not merely appear, but are told.

Stories do not emerge circumstantially out of phenomena: they exist as stories by virtue of being articulated (always admitting that this may be a private, internal act of representation as well as a public, social one). The immediate implication is that narration in its primary sense is never merely narrative transmission but narrative representation—that is, the semiotic use of its medium. Narrative transmission applies not to the telling of a story (as if it pre-existed as such), but to the merely reproductive mediation of a prior discourse. In fiction, transmission is an element of the rhetoric of *represented* telling—that is, representing an intra-fictional narrative discourse as if you were transmitting an extant discourse. Acts of narrative representation, in

1. See especially chapters 1 and 6 of *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (Walsh 2007).

other words, are themselves among the possible objects of narrative representation: one of the things a story may be about is the telling of a story. The crucial point, however, is that this recursive possibility, however prominent in fiction, does not account for fictionality itself: the *effect* of narrative transmission is a subordinate and contingent product of the rhetoric of narrative representation.

The dominant narratological sense of voice, that which bears upon the narrating instance, is Gérard Genette's. One of the main sources of confusion around the concept of voice is that Genette's version of the metaphor does not draw upon the sense of voice as vocalization, but upon its grammatical sense (active or passive voice): "the mode of action [. . .] of the verb considered for its relation to the subject"—the subject here being not only the person who carries out or submits to the action, but also the person (the same one or another) who reports it" (1980: 213). It is no less metaphorical for that—indeed, Genette acknowledges that his appropriation of linguistic terminology throughout *Narrative Discourse* shows most figurative strain at just this point (31–32). But the range of Genette's metaphorical vehicle is quite distinct from that of the more general, or more intuitive, usage; a major consequence being that many of the concerns that fall naturally under voice for other theorists are addressed separately by Genette. So free indirect discourse, for many the key issue in discussions of voice, is treated under mood in Genette's scheme. The chapter on mood is also where he presents the crucial concept of focalization, which for theorists following Franz Karl Stanzel is inextricable from the broader notion of mediacy—that is to say voice in Genette's own sense, as narrating instance. Given these terminological and taxonomical discrepancies, it is perhaps all the more striking that both theorists explicitly privilege language as the paradigmatic, if not intrinsic, medium of narrative instantiation. Genette makes this axiomatic: he refers to media such as film and the comic strip as extranarrative, "if one defines narrative *stricto sensu*, as I do, as a *verbal* transmission" (1988: 16).

I am suggesting instead that a narrating instance may be considered as any particular use of any medium for narrative purposes. Narration, on this view, is essentially a representational act, not just a verbal one. Voice in Genette's sense, as instance, is a figure for agency in narration: I take that to be as inherently a part of film and drama as it is of the novel, and as crucial to understanding the rhetorical import of narratives in those media. Seen in this light the voice metaphor is in no way specific to language, and neither are the main concerns that Genette addresses under this heading: person and level. (Tense, Genette's other concern under the heading of voice, is clearly specific to language unless taken more broadly as an index of the temporal rela-

tion between represented narrations and the events they narrate; but see the following discussion of his comments upon the intrinsic “homodiegeticity” of present-tense narration.) Genette is himself quick to point out the strict irrelevance of the linguistic category of person in the traditional distinction between first- and third-person narration: the basis for his own distinction between homo- and heterodiegetic narration, as well as the distinction of level between extra- and intradiegetic narration, is the relation between the narration and the represented world of the story (I am leaving aside auto-diegetic, which is just a subset of homodiegetic; and metadiegetic, which is just second-degree intradiegetic). I want to suggest, however, that even these distinctions, whilst undeniably useful, are not finally well founded in terms of their own theoretical premises.² This points us towards a somewhat different paradigm in which the salient fact is simply the recursive possibility that a narrating instance may represent another narrating instance; or in Plato’s terms, that narrative diegesis may give way to narrative mimesis.

It is clear that any narration, whether first-person or third-person (as these terms are generally understood) may incorporate the event of another act of narration, at a second level. Conversely, any narration, at whatever level, may equally well be first-person narration or third-person narration. The categories of person and level appear to be clear and distinct; the classification of a narrative discourse in either respect is not determined by its classification in the other. Whence the possibility of such four-part typologies of narrators as Genette’s (Figure 1.1), in which the categories of level and person respectively define the horizontal and vertical axes (person, here, is “relationship,” since Genette rejects the traditional terminology). Genette’s more analytic terminology makes it clear that the category of person is not really about the choice of personal pronouns, but rather a matter of the status of the narrative act. The dominant issue for the “relationship” distinction seems to be an epistemological one: with what kind of authority does the narrator speak? That of omniscient or impersonal detachment from the events related? Or that of an interested witness to those events? With regard to level, on the other hand, the dominant issue seems to be ontological: from which world does the narrator speak? Ours? Or the world of another narrative—the world of the *Arabian Nights*, or of the *Odyssey*? What Genette’s terminol-

2. To clarify the scope and purpose of my argument here, it is worth noting that I do not want to suggest that Genette’s typology lacks analytical value, or to diminish its significance to narrative theory ever since the publication of *Narrative Discourse*. My claim is simply that it is *logically* incoherent, and therefore should not finally be taken as an account of the representational logic of fictional narrative, but as a testament to the fictive rhetoric that produces and frames the *appearance* of such a logic.

LEVEL: RELATIONSHIP:	<i>Extradiegetic</i>	<i>Intradiegetic</i>
<i>Heterodiegetic</i>	Homer	Scheherazade
<i>Homodiegetic</i>	Marcel	Ulysses

Figure 1.1. from *Narrative Discourse* 248 (simplified)

ogy also implies, however, is that the categories of person and level do share a common frame of reference, with respect to which all four of his terms are defined: that is, the notion of *diégèse*, or story world.

Genette's term *diégèse* does not relate to the Platonic term, diegesis, but to a distinction originating in film theory between the diegetic universe (domain of the signified) and the screen universe (domain of the signifier). So a *diégèse* is the universe of the events represented by a given narration. Despite this subordination of *diégèse* to narration, Genette's classification of narrative levels assigns each narrating instance to the diegetic level that includes it, so that the first level of any narrative is necessarily extradiegetic.³ Well then, is the extradiegetic a diegetic level? Genette needs it to be such, because the primary narrating instance may be fictional, and so represented (as with Marcel's narration, or Pip's, or Huck's). At the same time he also needs it not to be diegetic, because the primary narrating instance is directly addressed, he says, to "you and me" (1980: 229).⁴ The equivocal status of the extradiegetic level serves to evade the infinite regress of diegetic levels that must result from the assumption, fundamental to the communicative model, that every narrating instance is literal with respect to the events represented—that it is ontologically continuous with the world on which it reports (this is simply a precondition for narrative transmission). Such an assumption dictates that if the events are fictional, the report is fictional, and therefore must itself be represented; but the representation of *that* fictional event must then also be fictional—and so we face the prospect of an endless series of implicit narrators. This conception of narrative mediacy as literal (irrespective of whether

3. Note that extradiegetic narration is defined in relation to the most inclusive, or first-level, *diégèse*, not in relation to the main action of the narrative. So Marlow relates the main action of *Heart of Darkness*, but his narration is intradiegetic, represented as taking place during a long night on the sea-reach of the Thames, waiting for the tide to turn. The point is that Genette's taxonomy of narration is a structural one, rather than a rhetorical one.

4. Richardson mentions a number of canonical modern texts for which it is unhelpful to take this literalistic view of the extradiegetic narrative situation (2001b: 700–1); many more examples could be added.

or not the narrative is fictive) means that each act of narration, and the *diégèse* to which it belongs, must be part of one continuous line of narrative transmission through which that narration is channeled. If narrative mediacy is always transmission, the communicative model of narrative levels allows for no point of ontological discontinuity.⁵

The category of person, as re-articulated in Genette's distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, also has a problematic relation to *diégèse*. In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette notes two circumstances in which the apparently heterodiegetic status of a narration can be compromised by a degree of "homodiegeticity" (1988: 80). The effect occurs in present-tense narration and the narration of historical fiction. Present-tense narration, by foregrounding the narration's contemporaneity to diegetic events, pulls towards a sense of the narratorial perspective as that of a witness, who would therefore be part of the *diégèse* (Genette cites the last chapter of *Tom Jones* among his examples). The narration of a historical novel, on the other hand, by virtue of its claims to historicity, undermines our sense of the narrative's discrete diegetic universe and consequently the narrator comes to figure as a quasi-homodiegetic "subsequent witness," in Genette's phrase (1988: 80). As these examples make clear, in the communicative model *diégèse* is not conceived of merely as an effect of signification, but as an ontological notion; and the category of person comes down to a relation of identity or non-identity between the narrator and some member of the story universe, the complete set of states of affairs posited by the narrative. Accordingly, the category of person has no place except within the ontology of fiction: non-fictional heterodiegetic narration becomes meaningless. That is to say, the distinction of narrative person depends upon ontological discontinuity (cp. Genette 1993: 54–84; Cohn 1999: 109–31).

5. Genette, of course, does not believe that fictions are true. He offers his own account of the ontological break between author and narrator required by his model, in an essay on John Searle's pretended speech act account of fiction (Genette 1993: 30–53). The thrust of his argument is that the authorial act of pretending to assert is also an indirect speech act instituting a fictional world, the world within which those same pretended assertions are the true assertions of a narrator. Genette's appeal to indirect speech acts is a good move, I think (because it is a move towards a rhetorical model); his retention of Searle's pretence account is not. The essential feature of Searle's account is that a pretended assertion has no illocutionary force (that is what, for Searle, renders the falsehood of fictions unproblematic). The occasion for an indirect authorial speech act, therefore, does not even arise; no speech act at all, direct or indirect, is seriously performed. Yet Genette requires the pretence formula, as a basis for the structural role of extradiegetic narration. Accordingly the only serious speech act available, and the only candidate for the indirect institution of a fictional world, is the narrator's—which is within the world in question. This is the same logical paradox as I have been describing, recast in a different form. See Walsh (2007: 74–78).

So, within the communicative model, the concept of level disallows ontological discontinuity, because it is understood as a chain of literally transmitted narratives; but the concept of person depends upon ontological discontinuity, because otherwise there can only be homodiegetic narration. The crunch comes when these contradictory implications of person and level meet in the extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator. Genette's example in Figure 1.1 is Homer, which is rather evasive; elsewhere he also offers the narrator of *Père Goriot*. This narrator, he says, unlike Balzac himself, "knows" (with scare quotes) the events of the narrative as fact (1980: 214). If we take the claim literally, it aligns with the logic of narrative levels and the principle of ontological continuity, but contradicts the designation of this narrator as heterodiegetic. If we do not take it literally, Genette forfeits his rationale for distinguishing between this narrator and Balzac; and in terms of the communicative model such a heterodiegetic narrator would have to mediate the narration of a further narrator who does indeed know the events of the narrative as fact—and so we founder upon an infinite regress of narrative levels. The collision between person and level, as I have articulated it here, follows from the communicative model's ontological notion of *diégèse* as story world and its literal model of narrative transmission. And it should be clear that the problem of ontological discontinuity is simply the problem, in this model's terms, of fictionality itself. The problem arises in the first place, then, because of the logical priority the communicative model grants to the *products* of fictive representation.

This is a mistake avoided by the most venerable alternative to the communicative account of person and level, Plato's distinction between diegesis (the poet speaking in his own voice) and mimesis (the poet imitating the voice of a character). Such a distinction characterizes the *act* of fictive representation, and taken as a typology of narration it identifies a single salient feature: the recursive possibility that a narration may represent another narration. It makes the cut, in other words, between Genette's extradiegetic heterodiegetic category (diegesis) and all the others (mimesis). A typology of narration based upon Plato's distinction, then, recognizes two hierarchical modes of fictive representation, which may be a matter of information (diegesis) or of imitation (mimesis). In fictive diegesis, the information is offered and/or interpreted under the real-world communicative regime of fictionality, in which an awareness of its fictive orientation is integral to its rhetoric. In mimesis the imitation is specifically of an act of narration, so accordingly the informative function of diegesis is performed at one remove. The rhetorical gesture of fictionality, however, remains attached to the act of imitation itself. Note that this act is an imitation of a discursive form of narration, not of a

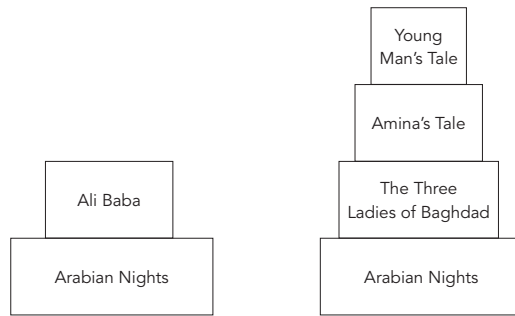


Figure 1.2. from “Stacks, Frames and Boundaries,” 880 (simplified)

specific, notionally prior narrative act—it is a representational rather than reproductive use of the medium. The non-fictional version of this recursive structure would indeed be the transmission of an extant narrative; that is quotation, not mimesis. The two features of this model of fictive narration that I want to emphasize, then, are first that the fictive rhetorical gesture is always present, and always attached to the actual communicative act; and second that the recursive capacity of the model is subordinate to this fictive rhetoric, but also defined in terms of communicative acts. The permutations of this relation between fictionality and narrative information can accommodate the range of narratorial possibilities identified by Genette’s typology in Figure 1.1, whether the diegesis mediates a mimesis of non-fictional narration (Ulysses), or of fictive narration (Scheherazade); or whether the mimesis is coextensive with the narrative itself (Marcel).

In order to draw out the implications of this view of fictive communication and its capacity for recursiveness, I shall invoke Marie-Laure Ryan’s interesting alternative to the narrative-level model of recursiveness, which is the concept (borrowed from computer science) of the stack. The metaphor, she explains, refers to a stack of trays in a cafeteria: “The stack is supported by a spring, and the top tray is always level with the counter. When a customer puts a tray on the top of the stack, the structure must be pushed down in order to make the top tray even with the counter; when a tray is removed, the structure pops up, and the next tray on the stack is lifted to counter level. Being on top of the stack and level with the counter makes a tray the ‘current tray’” (1990: 878). She illustrates the idea with an example representing the tales within tales of the *Arabian Nights*, as in Figure 1.2.

These are snapshots of the stack at two different points in the narrative—the “Tale of Ali Baba” and the “Young Man’s Tale.” The diagram is offered as a representation of distinct ontological realms within the narrative, but it

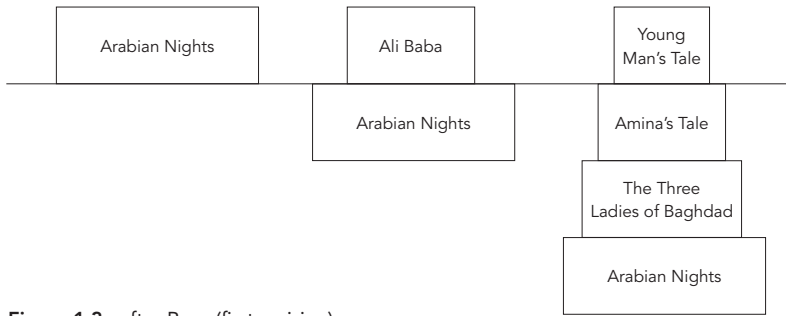


Figure 1.3. after Ryan (first revision)



Figure 1.4. after Ryan (second revision)

works equally well as a representation of distinct narrative acts; and as a diagram of recursive narration it is something we can work with. But first of all, as drawn it does not really capture the most suggestive feature of the stack metaphor as Ryan herself glosses it, which is the notion of the “current tray” at counter level. That would suggest the arrangement in Figure 1.3, in which anything below counter level is beneath our threshold of attention at a given point (I have added a snapshot of pure diegesis to clarify the idea).

But now I want to revise the model, because although intermediate layers of narration may be occluded while we attend to the current narration, I have argued that the fictive rhetorical gesture of the diegesis is not. So we need to adjust the counter level, and represent the buoyancy of the stack as in Figure 1.4.

The actual communicative act here, *The Arabian Nights*, has a fictive orientation that is necessarily apparent at all times, even when it is not the direct focus of our attention; whereas any narrative levels (or degrees of recursion) in between the diegesis and the current narration are virtually effaced. Not absolutely effaced, because it is open to us at any moment to wonder, for example, whether the current story is likely to interest King Shariah as much as Sheherazade needs it to (which refers us, even during the “Young Man’s Tale,” to the telling of “The Three Ladies of Baghdad”). So these levels are collapsed, latent contexts of the current narrative situation. This is as true of recursive narrative structures in which the intermediate levels of narration

are all non-fictive with respect to each other. So, in *Frankenstein*, we attend to the monster's narration in its own right, not as Walton's written record of Victor's oral relation of that narration. This is not at all to say that we do not cross-reference between the monster's narration and information gleaned from our attention to these framing narrative acts when they are current; nor does it exclude our response to thematic connections between levels, which is provided for by our continual awareness of Mary Shelley's fictive rhetoric.⁶

The collapsed intermediate levels in this diagram are a mark of the insubstantiality of narrative transmission as conceived in the communicative model. One of the merits of the most prominent alternative to Genette's typology of narration, Stanzel's typological circle, is that it registers this insubstantiality (Figure 1.5).

The category of figural narrative treats the perspectival mode Genette called internal focalization as integral to narrative mediacy, which implies a salutary disregard for the communicative model's commitment to a literal mode of transmission. Internal focalization is inherently an imaginative alignment of the narration with a character perspective: its assimilation, under the heading of mediacy, within the same typology as diegesis (the authorial situation) and mimesis (the first-person situation) implies the equally imaginative status of the latter's recursive structure. Both are contingent devices of the rhetoric of fictive narration, and neither entails a commitment to the literal logic of narrative transmission that leads the communicative model astray. On the other hand, the figural narrative situation cannot be homologous with Stanzel's other two categories in the sense that they are with each other, precisely because the character perspective is not part of any communication. Unlike first-person narrative, figural narrative is not a recursive representational doubling of the narrative act that characterizes authorial narrative. The same blurring of conceptual boundaries occurs within a different paradigm when Mieke Bal proposes to incorporate focalization into the recursive hierarchy of embedded narration. She notes that, as a criterion of recursiveness, "the two units must belong to the same class" (43), but then defines the relevant class, too broadly, as "subject-object relations" (45), which effaces the key difference between narration and focalization—that is, communication. So too with the figural narrative situation: its assimilation to the same class as diegesis and mimesis disregards the intrinsically communicative nature of narration. The figural narrative situation cannot be reconciled with communication, not even self-communication, since it definitionally involves

6. The concept of voice as idiom is also illuminated by this characteristic strategy, in the Gothic novel, of embedding multiple layers of narration—as we shall see below.

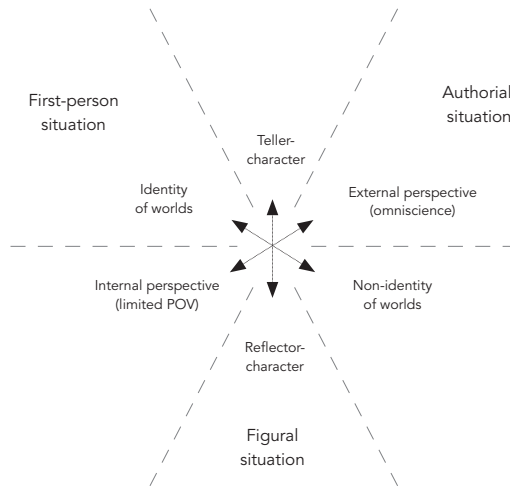


Figure 1.5. from *A Theory of Narrative* xvi (simplified)

a disjunction between narration and character perspective. Monika Fludernik aptly describes the figural narrative situation as “non-communicative narrative” (1994: 445), which captures its incompatibility with the literal logic of the communicative model. But from a more inclusive rhetorical point of view, non-communicative narrative is a contradiction in terms; and it is only from a rhetorical point of view that any parity between (represented) narrative transmission and character perception can be countenanced in the first place. Figural narration, from this perspective, is simply a rhetorical option available to diegesis; one that exploits fiction’s imaginative freedom from the literalism of the communicative model just as some features of first-person narration do, but without the recursive structure of mimesis.

The categories of person and level, as conceived in the communicative model, are logically incompatible with each other, then, and we can only make sense of fictive narratives (and narratives within narratives) in terms of a rhetorical paradigm more akin to Plato’s distinction between diegesis and mimesis and the recursive options it accommodates. This rhetorical paradigm involves awareness of fictionality at all times as an integral part of our interpretation of fictions, so that recursive narratives do not at any point harden into discrete ontological facts with logical implications beyond the rhetorical focus of the particular case. Fictionality is a rhetorical gesture: as rhetoric it is necessarily communicative; as a gesture it is semiotic, but not intrinsically linguistic. This is important for two reasons. Firstly it accounts for a problem that exercises Genette in his discussion of *La Chute*, which (because of its

resemblance to dramatic monologue) he is tempted to say has no extradiegetic level (1988: 89); as well as the analogous issue of the status of *interior* monologue, over which Stanzel and Dorrit Cohn disagree—Cohn sees it as direct discourse, Stanzel as pure reflector mode (Cohn 1981: 169–70). These problems arise because of an assumption that the fictive diegesis, to be diegesis at all, must be a linguistic act—so that if there is no overt narration to the reader, there is no diegesis. But communication is the semiotic use of media: as long as the character discourse is understood as represented, not transmitted, the fictive act of the diegesis is manifest. The second reason for insisting upon a semiotic frame of reference is already apparent from the way these two problem cases border upon drama: it is that a rhetorical model of fictionality as a communicative gesture recognizes no categorical boundary between fictions in language and fictions in other media. So whereas the model of mediacy presented by Stanzel embodies a tradition in which mediacy is an indirect form of representation, and its antithesis is the direct, immediate presentation of drama, or film, I am claiming instead that mediacy is a property of media; and that the distinction between, for instance, fiction and drama is not a distinction between indirect and direct form, but between different semiotic means of representation: in one case symbolic (language), in the other iconic (*mise en scène*, performance, etc.).⁷

There is an inherent possibility for any representational medium to represent an instance of its own use: for example, a film that represents the filming of a series of events (e.g. *The Blair Witch Project*, in which the whole film takes the form of documentary footage shot by the hapless characters; or *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in which a relationship between two actors parallels that of their characters in the film they are making). Such recursive possibilities are rarely realized in the extradiegetic instance of a film, though the film-within-a-film is common enough. By contrast, the equivalent in linguistic fiction encompasses the whole range and history of homodiegetic narration, as well as intradiegetic narration (whether homo- or hetero-); that is to say, the whole order of narrative mimesis in Plato's sense. The reason, presumably, is that verbal narration is a native human faculty, whereas cinematic narration is a sophisticated technological extension of human narrative powers. On the other hand, the private, internal faculty of narrative articulation (that is, self-communication) may as readily be cognitively perceptual as lin-

7. Note that the language within dramatic performance is itself represented, and subordinate to the iconic function of the medium. My position here takes up the possibility of a trans-media model of narrative raised by Manfred Jahn (2001: 675–76) and Brian Richardson (2001a: 691), though emphatically not by postulating the agency of a dramatic (or filmic) narrator, for the reasons I first set out in "Who Is the Narrator?" (1997).

guistic—as, for example, in dreams or memories. Techniques of literary narration that strive to represent this mental faculty (interior monologue, stream of consciousness) can be seen as straining at the limits of their medium, and depend upon the establishment of certain representational conventions; their filmic equivalents—representations of dream narratives, for example—are accommodated more straightforwardly by the medium (it is notable that dreams figure prominently in the early history of film).⁸ The prominence, in verbal fictions, of the mimetic paradigm (that is, of the narrating instance as a product of representation) may account for a *non sequitur* that seems to underlie the communicative model. Represented narrations are theorized (modeled) in terms of actual narrations—a perfectly appropriate interpretative strategy (though theory often extends it well beyond its legitimately rhetorical scope by insisting upon a systematic logical equivalence that is by no means inherent in the analogy, and sometimes obfuscatory); then, by a kind of back-formation, actual narrations of fiction are themselves modeled as represented narrations—a move that requires some such hypothesis as a default narrator and a dummy representational frame. A trans-media sense of narrating instance can be a helpful corrective here if we reflect upon the redundancy of treating film in that way; as if there were any theoretical dividend to be gained from regarding the discourse of every fiction film not as the film itself, but as something ontologically framed and mediated by the film (the discourse of a filmic narrator, communicating as fact the narrative of the film, through the medium of film, yet being only a formal inference from the fictionality of the film).⁹

By viewing the narrating instance as a representational act, then, I am affirming two things. Firstly, that the most elementary and irreducible distinction among narrating instances is not symmetrical but hierarchical, corresponding to Plato's distinction between diegesis and mimesis as, on the one

8. Richardson's discussion of memory plays (2001a: 682–83) provides further support for this observation.

9. This is essentially David Bordwell's point in *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985), where he argues for a view of filmic narration as the set of cues from which the viewer constructs the fabula, but denies that narration implies a narrator (1985: 62). His emphasis upon the viewer's understanding of the representational product inevitably slights the communicative process, however, and arises from problems with the notion of fictionality that Bordwell does not explore, despite the prominence of "fiction" in his title. Edward Branigan does discuss communication in the context of fictionality, though preferring to "remain neutral" (1992: 107) on the merits of communication models. He finds himself caught between, on the one hand, a sense of agency in narration—he himself speaks of "an implicit extra-fictional narration [. . .] the 'voice' of an 'implied author'" (91)—and, on the other hand, the "anthropomorphic fiction" of a narrator (108–10). On this question, see also Jan Alber's contribution in this volume.

hand, a first-degree act of narrative representation (Genette's extra-heterodiegetic narration), and on the other hand, a second-degree narrative representation of a narrative representation (extra-homodiegetic narration, and all intradiegetic narration, homo- or hetero-). Second-degree narrative representation is more prevalent in linguistic media than others, but in any case encompasses all circumstances in which the need arises for a second sense of voice, as represented idiom, in conjunction with the sense of voice as narrating instance, because such narrative mimesis encompasses all circumstances in which the instance is itself an object of representation. Secondly, I am affirming the importance of a distinction between narrative representation and narrative transmission. Properly speaking, media cease to function transmissively (i.e. as technological conduits for independently semiotic content) as soon as they themselves become semiotic—which is to say, here, representational. So it is possible in non-fiction for a narrating instance to be transmitted within a framing instance (for example when a historian quotes an eye-witness account, or when a literary biography quotes from the work of its subject), but within fiction the appearance of such hierarchies of transmission is itself a product of representational rhetoric. The various transgressions of level that Genette classifies as metalepsis, whether foregrounded or incidental, are answerable only to that rhetoric: their significance is to be evaluated in relation to the discernible import of the representational discourse, rather than to the iron law of non-contradiction. Apart from the pragmatic, contextual circumstances of actual communication (including actual fictive communication), the structure of narrative instantiation does not exist except as a product of representation, and the logic of represented narrative transmission has no priority over the rhetorical emphases of the representational act itself. Narrative theory and interpretation, then, must avoid the temptation to impose the coherence of a systematic logical structure upon the process of narrative representation, which is contingent and inherently protean in its rhetorical emphasis and focus, direction and misdirection. In reading through the *represented* structure of narrative transmission, narratologists should take care not to mistake interpretative strategies for theoretical paradigms.

Where voice is used as a metaphor of idiom in narrative theory, it is a way of bringing to the fore the mimetic dimension of the narrative discourse; its capacity for representing the discourse of another. The represented discourse concerned may itself be a narrating instance, or it may be a discursive act of another kind; it may imply a particular discursive subject, or it may be a generic representation. The defining feature of voice in the sense of idiom is that it is always objectified, as the product of a representational rhetoric; and in this respect it is crucial to keep it distinct from voice as instance. The

temptation is to apply the sense of voice as idiom equally to represented discourses and first-degree narrative discourse, or diegesis, because intuitively, narrative language does not only represent voices, but also exhibits voice. In rhetorical terms, however, the function of voice in these two discursive contexts—diegesis and mimesis—is quite different. It is true that we are likely to focus upon a similar range of phenomena whether we attend to qualities of voice in narrative diegesis or in a represented discourse; but the significance of these phenomena for narrative interpretation is radically distinct in each case. When attending to voice in diegesis we are attending to rhetorical means (which may or may not be intentional, but are certainly authorial); whereas in attending to voice in represented discourses we are attending to rhetorical effects—even where these take the form of represented rhetorical means, as for example in the case of a represented narrating instance (Humbert Humbert's, say). So in diegesis, questions of voice bear upon the significance we attribute to the represented events, the narrative object; whereas mimetic voice (which I am calling idiom) invites evaluation of the character whose discourse it represents—the discursive or narrative subject. It is easy to see why the notion of voice as idiom might seem applicable to all discourse, but it is also apparent, I think, that such usage strains the range of a single concept, given this disparity of rhetorical emphasis. In fact, the case in which both senses of voice are applicable (that of a represented narrating instance) does not obscure the difference between them, but highlights it. A narrative told by a character, considered as idiom, contributes to the job of characterization; considered as instance, it contributes to the job of narration. In *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael's narration considered as idiom tells us about Ishmael; as instance it tells us about Ahab and the white whale. Most of the time there is no incompatibility between these two functions, though the emphasis varies widely from case to case; but fictions can include embedded narratives for reasons that have nothing to do with characterization, and in fact the latter may be an undesirable distraction. In such cases idiom defers to instance: this is commonplace in film, where a character's narration typically progresses in quick succession from diegetic verbal discourse to voice-over, to impersonal filmic narration (*Citizen Kane*, for example, provides several variations on this technique); but consider also the gothic novel, where the function of elaborate narrative embedding often has much less to do with the narrating characters than with a generic strategy for bridging the gap between the reader's quotidian norms and the novel's extreme, imaginatively remote subject matter (a similar strategy, in fact, to the "friend of a friend" framework typical of urban legend). Perhaps the most extreme example is *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the story of which is in part relayed via a Shropshire clergyman,

Melmoth the Wanderer himself, the ancient Jew Adonijah and the Spaniard Monçada to the student John Melmoth. Furthermore, these various narrating instances span about 150 years; yet there is little attempt to distinguish the idiom of any of them.

Even within narratives in linguistic media, voice is used in senses ranging from the almost literal, for representations of oral discourse, to metaphorical applications so far abstracted from orality that the term becomes virtually interchangeable with vision: but throughout this spectrum the notion of voice enshrines an assumption that the distinctive features of a discourse afford an insight into an enunciating subject—that voice is expression. Indeed this assumption provides the whole rhetorical basis for the representational evocation of voice that I am categorizing as idiom: the point of representing a character's idiom is very much to invite inference about that character's subjectivity. Inference of this kind, however, is a much more hazardous and less obviously relevant undertaking when the notional voice is not objectified, as in narrative diegesis. In this case, many of the discursive features commonly embraced by voice are equally, and perhaps better, understood as style: by *style* I mean discourse features understood in their relation to meaning, as conceived within the field of stylistics, rather than as the expression of subjectivity. This substitution makes it easier to recognize that there is no inherent expression of authorial subjecthood—no authentic self-presence—in such discursive features; nor indeed is there inherently a singular authorial subject, either in linguistic media or (more self-evidently) in non-linguistic media. Of course stylistic analysis also relates discourse to ideological import, and this intimates another sense of voice that remains usefully applicable to narrative diegesis, but which relates narrative rhetoric to the constitution of a subject position, rather than to an originary subject as such. I shall return to this distinction later.

For all forms of represented discourse, then, voice as idiom is a particular (idiosyncratic or typical) discursive evocation of character. It is worth insisting upon the correspondence between such rhetorical strategies in different media, in order to grasp the phenomenon at a representational level rather than a specifically linguistic level. The recursive model of represented voice that I have invoked suggests that the place to look for analogies would not be representations of verbal discourse in non-verbal media, but rather those cases where a medium is used to represent an instance of its own use. I have already suggested that the range of represented narrating instances in film might be taken to extend from fairly literal representations of the use of filmic apparatus to representations of the use of the medium's semiotic channels, as mimetic of cognitive narrative processes. On this basis represented narrating

instances, which occupy one part of the territory covered by the concept of voice as idiom, would include dream or fantasy sequences, as in the films of *Billy Liar* and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, both of which include filmic representation of their protagonists' day-dreams; but the same principle can be extended to other represented discursive and cognitive acts, including any point-of-view shot that represents the character's own distinct cognitive-perceptual subjectivity. A good example would be the recurrent shot, in *Once upon a Time in the West*, of a blurred figure approaching, which turns out to represent the memory of "Harmonica" (Charles Bronson): it is the perspective of his exhausted younger self (he has been struggling to support the weight of his brother, who has a noose around his neck) as Frank (Henry Fonda) approaches to torment him further by pushing a harmonica into his mouth as he is on the point of collapse.

The most inclusive applications of the term voice in narrative—those that are interchangeable with terms like vision—suggest the equal applicability of linguistic and perceptual metaphors for the concept, which is a helpful support for the proposal that the issue of voice should be placed in the context of representational rhetoric across all narrative media. The analogy with vision also relates directly to another prominent metaphor in narrative theory, which is focalization.¹⁰ But there is a crucial distinction between focalization and the discursive features that fall under idiom. Voice as idiom always constructs a distinct subject (even if generic), by virtue of its objectification—that is, its difference from the narrative diegesis (or a framing narrative mimesis) within which it is represented. Focalization, on the other hand, constructs a subject position only, which may or may not be aligned with a represented character (external focalization is precisely not character centred). When focalization is aligned with a character, its rhetorical means may very well be a representation of idiom. Consider the relation between free indirect discourse (FID) and internal focalization. FID is one of the privileged topics in discussions of narrative voice, and as represented discourse it falls within the scope of voice as idiom. It also necessarily implies internal focalization (however momentary), though the reverse is not true: internal focalization does not always involve FID, or any other representation of idiom. FID is a form of discursive mimesis, whereas focalization is a feature of narrative diegesis (not, I hasten to add, of narrative transmission: it is a product of representational rhetoric, not an information conduit). Where FID and internal focalization

10. Fludernik, discussing the relation between voice and focalization, argues for the theoretical redundancy of the latter (2001: 633–35). I find it helpful to retain it, however, as an aid to discriminating between the different senses of voice, which are often in play at the same time.

coincide, these are two sides of the same coin: the one oriented towards the represented discourse, the other towards the subject position constructed by that representation. The sense in which FID involves some kind of doubling of voice was encapsulated in the title of Roy Pascal's classic study, *The Dual Voice*, as well as in Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse, of which it is a very specific instance (I shall return to Bakhtin below). FID is a representation of the idiom—the objectified voice—of another, in neutral or parodic style, with sympathetic or ironic inflection, but in any case with a certain distance inherent in the fact that the representing act itself remains in the fore. The indices of the representational act persist within the representation itself in the form of temporal and perspectival markers (past-tense verbs, third-person pronouns) that correlate with the subject position implied by the narrating instance rather than that implied by the idiomatic voice. That is to say, the narrating voice inhabits FID not as idiom, but as instance (overtly; it also involves interpellation, as we shall see): FID is double-voiced only in the sense that it is a synthetic product of distinct senses of voice.¹¹

Whilst certain forms of focalization go hand in hand with representations of voice as idiom, such as FID, this is not the sense in which voice may be understood as applicable to focalization in general. As idiom, voice is an object of representation: it is offered up to the evaluative scrutiny of the narrative's audience, and so held at arm's length. There is a structurally intrinsic detachment, however sympathetic, to the rhetorical function of voice as idiom. Focalization in general, however, does not operate in this way: the perspectival logic of a representation is not manifested as an object, but as an implicit premise of the rhetorical focus of the representational act. That is to say, while voice as idiom serves to characterize a discursive subject as a more or less individuated object of representation, focalization as such functions indirectly, to establish a subject position only; one that may or may not coincide with a specific character, but which in any case is not an object of representation but a tacit rhetorical effect of the discourse's mode of representation of another object. Where a specific character is involved, it is possible to describe represented idiom as an effect of sympathetic or ironic detachment, and focalization as an effect of empathetic subjective alignment (as long as the term empathy can be understood as without evaluative preju-

11. The possibility of analogies for FID in other media raises interesting questions: consider the way Hitchcock represents the experience of vertigo in the film of that name, in the famous tower shot combining a zoom out and track in to maintain a constant image size, or frame range, in a view down a (model) stairwell. The device is mimetic of James Stewart's struggle to make sense of his perceptions, but as an overtly filmic technique—a simultaneous track and zoom—it is also part of the representational rhetoric of the diegetic narrative itself.

dice). The more general, abstract concept that applies to the latter effect, however, is interpellation. This is the term I am using to define the third sense in which voice is used in narrative theory and criticism.

Interpellation is the process by which an ideology or discourse "hails" and constitutes individuals as subjects (Althusser 1971: 162). Narration always involves perspectival choices, which necessarily carry with them some set of presuppositions, ranging from the physical (spatio-temporal), through the epistemological, to the ideological. This structure of presupposition may be aligned with a character, as in first-person narration and internal focalization, or it may not; but in every case the act of narrative comprehension requires an imaginative alignment between the reader (or viewer) and the implied subject position of the discourse. Such alignment may, to an extent, be conscious and qualified by reservations of several kinds; but to the extent that it is unconscious, it has the ideological effect of making the implied subject position seem to constitute the authentic selfhood of the narrative recipient.¹²

I have discussed the sense in which voice, as represented idiom, can be understood as a rhetorical means of characterizing the subject of represented discourse. It is a perfectly intelligible and modest figurative leap from there to a usage of voice that refers to the subject position implied by any discourse (represented or diegetic, aligned with a character or not). This is a distinct sense of voice not only because it need not be representationally embodied or owned by a character, or a narrating character, or indeed the author, but also because its scope extends well beyond the category of the discursive, or even the perspectival in any limited perceptual or cognitive sense (the domain of focalization), to become an organizing concept for ideology. Where the concept of voice is invoked in this sense, it seems to do quite various services for critical orientations ranging from Bakhtinian dialogics to identity politics. The figurative instability of the term itself is partly responsible, no doubt: it allows for uncertain fluctuation between a usage in which the ideological subject position is a discursive construct, and a usage in which it is an authentic manifestation of (subaltern) identity.¹³

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin identifies a range of double-voiced phenomena in narrative discourse, the dialogic nature of which is only brought out by a theoretical approach he describes as "metalinguistic"

12. The mechanism of presupposition underlying the interpellation of subjects has been explored by John Frow in relation to genre and Vološinov's concept of the literary enthymeme, or argument with an implied premise (Frow 1986: 77-78).

13. Susan Lanser's *Fictions of Authority* (1992) is a useful example of the politicization of voice from a feminist perspective. Lanser makes a clear distinction between voice in the sense I am calling idiom and a sense that equates with instance/interpellation, though she does not discriminate between the latter two senses.

(181). This is because double-voiced discourse is only perceptible as a feature of concrete, situated language use, from which the discipline of linguistics (including formal stylistics) is necessarily abstracted. Double-voiced discourse emerges, then, when the manifest voice of an utterance can be contextually understood to be in dialogue with some other, implicit voice. Voice in this second sense cannot be assimilated to voice as idiom, since it is not represented; or to voice as instance, since it is not even explicit.¹⁴ Its implicit nature, and the fact that it is not necessarily attributable to a particular subject, or even any specific discursive form, marks this out as a sense of voice that falls within the scope of interpellation. But clearly, since the dialogic interaction that interests Bakhtin is ideological (ideology being the unifying principle of the voice with which the discourse is engaged), the sense of voice that applies on the explicit side of the dialogue also finds its integrity in ideological terms, rather than as a set of formal discourse features, or the represented idiom of a particular subject. So Bakhtin describes Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* as double voiced in that the Underground Man's discourse throughout is not only oriented towards its objects, but also in dialogue with the anticipated response of another: "In each of his thoughts about [the world, nature, society] there is a battle of voices, evaluations, points of view. In everything he senses above all *someone else's will* predetermining him" (236). The ideological thrust of his own discourse is precisely to establish the autonomy and integrity of the subject position he claims for himself, yet the attempt itself involves him in an unresolvable dialogic vicious circle: "What he fears most of all is that . . . his self-affirmation is somehow in need of affirmation or recognition by another. And it is in this direction that he anticipates the other's response. . . . He *fears* that the other might think he *fears* that other's opinion. . . . With his refutation, he confirms precisely what he wishes to refute, and he knows it" (229). In other words, the Underground Man's discourse projects a subject position that is nevertheless unoccupiable. In general, Bakhtin's concept of polyphony necessarily dissociates voice from the individual subject; but without some other organizing principle the polyphony would be too diffuse a phenomenon to be conceptually useful—and in fact the notion of monologism, which Bakhtin retains, would be unintelligible. The organizing principle at work in Bakhtin's system is a concept of voice as the relative agglomeration of ideological significance, the

14. The need to discriminate between senses of voice is apparent in the conclusion to which Richard Aczel is led by a consideration of this specific Bakhtinian context: "Narrative voice, like any other voice, is a fundamentally *composite* entity, a specific *configuration* of voices" (1998: 483). If every voice is a configuration of voices, the term is being made to work too hard.

integrity of which is not (even in the most monological instance) to be found in the discursive subject as such, but in the projection of virtual subject positions: that is, in the mechanism of interpellation. By distinguishing between voice as instance and as interpellation, I am contrasting a sense of the term in which it represents the narrating agency of a particular individual or collective, with one in which it discursively insinuates an ideological nexus, a subject position with the potential to constitute a particular subject (represented or otherwise). Such a distinction, I think, provides for a politicized sense of voice in which the contextual production of situated political identities is at stake (to be engaged critically, recognized or resisted), without hypostasizing the concept as the authentic expression of such identities.

If my discrimination between the different senses of voice has any merit, it is the result of approaching the issue with two key assumptions in mind. First, an assumption that the senses of voice—instance, idiom and interpellation—need to be conceived in terms of representational rhetoric, and in particular the rhetoric of fictionality; and second, an assumption that the issues covered by the term voice are not exclusively linguistic, but also semiotic, and relevant across the whole range of narrative media. It seems to me that these premises are crucial, not only to expose the inadequacies of the communicative model of narration, but also to take us beyond it. I have insisted upon the metaphoricity of the notion of voice as the precondition for its range of application both within and beyond linguistic media, and the terms I have used to discriminate between senses of voice can only cover that range themselves by virtue of a certain amount of extension and extrapolation. So, I have used the term instance to refer to the sense of voice as an act of narrative representation, which is to say the sense in which the emphasis falls upon communicative agency in narration. I have suggested that the most fundamental distinction to be drawn within this category arises out of the inherent possibility of recursiveness in narration, whereby one narrating instance may represent another. I have shown how this distinction, which corresponds to the Platonic distinction between diegesis and mimesis, cuts across the fourfold typology of narrating instances Genette derives from his oppositions between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic, and intradiegetic and extradiegetic narration, and I have argued further for a rhetorical perspective upon narration that does not confuse representation with transmission. My use of the term idiom serves to group together senses of voice in which the emphasis falls upon the discursive subject as an object of representation—that is, where voice serves purposes of characterization. This definition provides for analogies between literary representations of voice and examples of mimetic recursiveness in other media. It has also allowed me to make a

principled distinction between represented voice and focalization (the latter being a form of my third category of voice, interpellation), and to distinguish the different senses of voice that apply in the notably complex case of free indirect discourse. Finally, I have used the term interpellation to refer to those respects in which voice relates to a representational subject position rather than to a represented or actual subject as such. Focalization, I have suggested, is a special, restricted case of voice in this sense, in which the subject position is defined in perceptual and cognitive terms. In the general case, the sense of voice as interpellation embraces more abstract, ideological constructions of a subject position, and I have shown how such a conception of voice can account for its use in the context of Bakhtinian dialogics. If nothing else, this analysis of the metaphor of voice in narrative theory shows that it has already gone a long way beyond words, and indeed that it is perhaps too richly suggestive for its own good. There is little to be gained from attempting to constrain the use of such a metaphor, but it is worth insisting upon the need for more nuanced distinctions; the terms I have suggested here—instance, idiom, and interpellation—offer one way of doing just that.

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