

# MEDIATION AND DYNAMICS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF NARRATIVE FICTION

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Adam Lively, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

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## ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary thesis, an exercise in post-classical narratology that draws on “second-generation” cognitive science, phenomenology and semiotics, argues for *mediation* and *dynamics* as the basis of the experience of reading narrative fiction. Chapter One, “Narrative Mediation”, presents the case for seeing the primary form of narrative signification as being a triadic *mediation* (as opposed to a dyadic “communication”) involving not just the parties to the communication but also their joint attention on (and intentions towards) the *object* of their communication. The narratological implications of this triadic view (which draws on recent discussions in developmental and evolutionary psychology) are explored through readings of the *Decameron* and *Don Quixote*, and through a discussion of the semiotics of “character” in fiction. Chapter Two, “Narrative Contexture”, draws out the *functionalist* implications of this view of narrative language, arguing that the interaction of reader and narrative text is characterized by a dynamic, “non-linear” systematicity in which the non-linearity is constituted by the *polyfunctionality* inherent to language. This dynamic systematicity is termed, following the Czech structuralist Jan Mukařovský, its *contexture*.

One of the most important features of the contexture is its holistic appeal, through the “aesthetic function”, to the entirety and open-endedness of the perceiver’s *experience*. Chapter Three, “Narrative Disclosure”, identifies this *experientiality* as a key feature of modern fiction, and puts forward the argument that both the experience *of* and the experience (“representations of consciousness”) *in* modern narrative involve the bringing to awareness of a fundamental process of phenomenological “disclosure” whereby the world is manifested in consciousness. This “bringing to awareness” through semiotic mediation is illustrated through readings of Lewis Carroll and John Updike, and of narratives by Georges Rodenbach and W.G. Sebald which incorporate photographs into the text.

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## INTRODUCTION

If the object of analysis is indeed to illuminate the conditions of existence – of production – of the text, it is not done, as people often say, by reducing the complex to the simple, but on the contrary, by revealing the hidden complexities that are the *secret* of the simplicity.

G rard Genette (1980, 137-8)

This thesis explores the complexities involved in the existence of the narrative text at three principal levels. In the first place, it calls into question the “communicational” model that has traditionally dominated narrative theory and puts forward instead a model of narrative as a form of semiotic *mediation*. In the second place, it suggests that the linear aspect of narrative – the unfolding of the story – can only be understood, paradoxically, by incorporating the concept of a non-linear, “vertical” dimension to narrative, for it is only through the concept of such a non-linear systematicity that one can grasp narrative *dynamism*. And in the third place it proposes that the *experience* of reading narrative fiction can best be understood in terms of the process of phenomenological “disclosure” whereby the world is manifested in consciousness.

My exploration of these “secret” complexities is intended to provide a *theoretical framework* for a particular approach to narrative fiction that combines phenomenology, semiotics and what is sometimes referred to as “second-generation” cognitive science. There is a clear theoretical narrative that connects the three parts of the thesis, from the concept of “joint attention” presented in Chapter One, through the dynamic “systematicity” of narrative in Chapter Two, to the exploration, in Chapter Three, of the process of phenomenological “disclosure” involved in the

experience of reading narrative fiction. Yet I hesitate to call this narrative a “theory”: the terms “Mediation”, “Contexture” and “Disclosure” with which I head the three parts have a more systematic interrelation with each other than would be conveyed by describing them loosely as “themes”, yet they do not pretend to demarcate exhaustively the field, as would a set of categories in a theory. They could, alternatively, be thought of as “dimensions”, or as “units” (as opposed to categorical “elements”) in Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s description of his method in *Thought and Language* (1934):

We tried a new approach and replaced analysis into elements [*element*] by analysis into units [*edinitsey*]. Units are products of analysis that correspond to specific aspects of the phenomena under investigation. At the same time, unlike elements, units are capable of retaining and expressing the essence of the whole being analysed. (Vygotsky 1986 [1962], 211)

I have used the term theoretical “framework” – rather than a term such as “dimensionality” – in order to point to the practical function that the terms are intended to serve as a heuristic for analysing, in particular, historical changes in the forms of narrative fiction. Some instances of this will occur during the course of the thesis’ main three chapters, and I will address further the question of the avenues for future research opened up by my approach in the Conclusion. In this Introduction, meanwhile, I will offer a synoptic survey of some of the main features of the thesis, beginning with a brief schematic summary of its argument, then moving on to a discussion of the interdisciplinarity of the thesis’ theoretical terms of reference, and finally discussing its scope of historical and literary reference. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, I have reserved an ordered breakdown of the various subsections that make up each of the three chapters for the head of that particular chapter.

## ***A Brief Schematic Outline of the Argument***

Chapter One, “Narrative Mediation”, considers the process of semiosis, of signification, that underlies the reading and writing of narrative fiction. The account of this process that I propose differs in significant ways from the view, dominant in narratology in both its “classical” and “post-classical” phases, that the process of semiosis underlying the reading and writing of narrative fiction is captured in the paradigm of linguistic communication originally laid down by Saussure (1959 [1915]). This paradigm conceives of semiosis as a dyadic chain whereby a Sender sends a Message to a Receiver:

Sender → Message → Receiver

This basic model informs such chains of dyadic relations as the following, familiar from classical narratology:

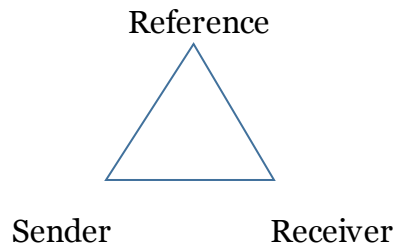
Author → Implied Author → Narrator → Narratee → Implied Reader → Reader  
(Chatman 1978, 151)

In the basic model of Sender → Message → Receiver, the message is encoded and decoded according to rules systematic to the language or wider culture: this is the paradigm of semiosis that underlies French structuralism of the 1960s and 1970s and that has informed both classical narratology and many of its post-classical extensions.

What is excluded in this model is any mention of the *reference* or *object* of the communication – that is, the thing or things that are being referred to both by the Sender and the Receiver (and by the Message that passes between them). By contrast, the model that I propose for the semiosis underlying the reading of



narrative fiction replaces the dyadic model with a triadic model that includes the contextual reference of the communication:



This model is conceived of as what Charles Peirce referred to as a “genuine triad”, in the sense that a connection between any two points of the triangle is only possible *via* the third.<sup>1</sup> The receiver’s access to the reference is mediated by communication from the sender, and the sender’s by the communication s/he sends to the receiver. And the communication between sender and receiver is mediated by the attention that they share towards the reference. The key term here is *mediation*: the sign *mediates* between sender, receiver and reference. Throughout this thesis, with misgivings, I reserve the term “communication” for the dyadic model described in the previous paragraph, and exclusively use the term “mediation” for the triadic model I have sketched above as its alternative.

I support this triadic view of signification as *mediation* with evidence from developmental psychology for the importance of “joint attention” in the acquisition and development of language. In particular, I focus on how the process of joint attention is deeply implicated in the development of narrative as a form of discourse

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<sup>1</sup> “A *Sign*, or *Representamen* [...] stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. The triadic relation is *genuine*, that is its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations.” (Peirce 1955, 99-100)

understood and used by the young child: narrative is born out of the joint attentional situation and is created to be itself an object of joint attention. Furthermore, as I show in the course of Chapter One, it develops in its written form (as “narrative fiction” in the sense that I am using the term) by reproducing within itself multiple embedded versions of the joint attentional situation. As I attempt to demonstrate, thinking of narrative as a form of joint attentional mediation sheds light on aspects of narrative fiction that have been elided by, or proved problematic for, the traditional narratological approach based on a dyadic Saussurean model. The three such aspects I focus on are (a) the differences between oral and written narrative, (b) the embedding of one narrative within another, and (c) the realization of “character”.

Chapter Two addresses the question of the reader’s experience of the narrative as a dynamic, cumulative process. Here the key term that I introduce is that of *contexture*, which I draw from the Czech structuralist Jan Mukařovský. The *contexture* is a dynamic and cumulative structure motivated, in Mukařovský’s formulation, by the *polyfunctionality* of language – that is, by the fact language can (simultaneously) serve different purposes, can act as a vehicle for varied and concurrent intentionalities. Though Mukařovský does not use these terms, I argue that the *contexture* can be thought of as what dynamic systems theorists call a “state space” – that is, an n-dimensional space made up of all the possible states of the system (in this case, the possible functions of the language): it is this state space that constitutes the *non-linearity* of the system.

One of the possible functions of language, according to Mukařovský (and fellow members of the Prague Linguistic Circle such as Roman Jakobson), is the “aesthetic function”. The aesthetic function is not synonymous with Art – indeed, along with his contemporaries such as John Dewey (1934) and twenty first-century

phenomenologists such as Mark Johnson (2007), Mukařovský regards it as having deep and vital roots in everyday experience – but in works of art the aesthetic function is the “dominant” of the system. There are many different kinds of language system, according to Mukařovský – systems for communicating scientific ideas, for example, or for everyday oral communication – corresponding to different dominant functions. But what marks out the verbal work of art – and makes it, of all the possible systems, a *contexture* – is this dominance of the aesthetic function. The aesthetic function does two things: it orients the sign towards the *whole* of which it is a part; and it orients this *whole*, the contexture, to the *whole* of the existence of the perceiver of the sign.

In my extension of Mukařovský’s ideas, through applying them to narrative fiction, the dynamic, processual character of the contexture (which Mukařovský conceived, at least in theory, in phenomenological terms) is made explicit in the concept of *series* – that is, the experience of temporal and sequential patterns. In cognitive science, such patterns go under names such as “image schemata” or “motor schemata” (see below). In narrative theory, Menakhem Perry (1979) talks about different kinds of “orderings”, while Meir Sternberg (1992) and Raphaël Baroni (2007) analyse different patterns of dynamic tension such as *curiosity* and *surprise*. In the concept of the *series* these different conceptions of dynamic sequencing are brought together and combined with Mukařovský’s concept of the *contexture* – that is of a non-linear system in which the aesthetic function is dominant. In order to do this, it is necessary to conceptualize a dynamic system in which the state space is made up not of (potential) discrete states, but of concurrent series. Music, I argue, provides a model for such a conceptualization, and I point in particular to Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff’s (1983; Jackendoff 1987) cognitive theory of music,

which provides analogues in particular for the kinds of narrative tension that Sternberg and Baroni describe. The musicality of the text, as Barthes (1974 [1970]) suggests, lies in the non-linear (“tabular”) concurrence of its series (“codes”).

The third part of the theoretical framework uses the phenomenological concept of *disclosure* to address the question of experientiality in modern (nineteenth- and twentieth-century) narrative fiction. Here, crucially, I am concerned both with the representation of experience *in* narrative and with the reader’s experience *of* narrative. Where the first part of my theoretical framework drew attention to the capacity of printed discourse to multiply within itself ever more complex differentiations of context and attentional framing, this third part focusses on how these resources (including, for example, the deployment of graphic punctuation) have been used by modern narrative fiction to bring to awareness – to realize, that is, in the experience of reading – the relation between different levels of consciousness. In particular, I argue, modern fiction articulates a cyclical relation between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness – between, in the terms of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, “core” and “extended” consciousness (Damasio 1999, 195-200).

This cyclical dynamic involved in the evocation of consciousness in modern narrative fiction can be described, I show, either in third-person” or first-person (phenomenological) terms. In third-person terms it can be described as an oscillation between expressive and representational elements, between internal and external views. In first-person, phenomenological terms it can be described as a process of mutual *disclosure* as between subjectivity and objectivity that brings to awareness the embodied nature of consciousness.

## ***The Interdisciplinarity of the Thesis***

This thesis is thoroughly *interdisciplinary*. C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, in the Preface to *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), provide the following justification for interdisciplinarity:

There are some who find difficulty in considering any matter unless they can recognize it as belonging to what is called “a subject” and who recognize a subject as something in which, somewhere at least, Professors give instruction and perhaps Examinations are undergone. These need only be reminded that at one time there were no subjects and until recently only five. (Ogden and Richards (1946 [1923], vii)

In thirty, fifty or a hundred years’ time, one can safely predict, the geography of the humanities, and their relation to the sciences, will not look as they look today. New subjects emerge out of interdisciplinarity: narratology, born out of the conjunction of literary theory/criticism and structuralist semiotics, is being transformed not only by its confluence with the study of narrative in other media (Ryan 2004; Meister 2005; Ryan and Thon 2014), but by its contact with other fields – most notably for this thesis, with the cognitive sciences (Crane and Richardson 1999; Herman 2003a; Richardson 2004; Zunshine 2012). And the cognitive sciences themselves do not constitute a discipline, but, so to speak, an inter-discipline, originating as they did in the post-war period in a confluence of Psychology, Linguistics, Artificial Intelligence, Neuroscience, Philosophy and Anthropology (Gardner 1985).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The internal geography of the “cognitive sciences” has changed considerably since the early 1990s as a result of the turn to “embodied” and “enactive” approaches to mind and advances in neuroscience: where the original cognitive revolution (sometimes known simply as “cognitivism”) had Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Psychology and (Chomskyan) linguistics at its core, developmental and evolutionary psychology and neuroscience today have a greater salience. Thompson (2007, 10-12) uses the term “embodied dynamicism” to draw attention to the importance for the enactive approach of “dynamic systems” theory. An important example of the emergence of new forms of interdisciplinarity within the cognitive sciences is the growth since the 1990s of “consciousness studies” as a field (see Chapter Three, subsection 1.1, below).

Four disciplinary traditions contribute to my exploration of the mediation and dynamics of narrative fiction – Post-classical narratology, Second-Generation Cognitive Science, Semiotics and Phenomenology:

1) *Post-classical Narratology*

The transition from classical to post-classical narratology can be characterised as one between, on the one hand, an approach to narrative that analyses the *text* in terms of its underlying *structure*, and, on the other hand, an approach to narrative that looks to *contexts* as motivating *processes* of reception and meaning-formation. Angsar Nünning has given a detailed summary in tabular form of the range of differences between classical and post-classical narratology (Nünning 2008, 243-4).<sup>3</sup> Of his distinctions, the following are most relevant in the context of this thesis:

Structuralist ('classical') Narratology	New ('postclassical') Narratologies
text-centered	context-oriented
main focus on closed systems and static products	main focus on open and dynamic processes
"features", "properties" of a text as main object of study	the dynamics of the reading process (reading strategies, interpretive choices, preference rules) as main object of study
ahistorical and synchronous	historical and diachronous in orientation
a (relatively) unified (sub)discipline	an interdisciplinary project consisting of heterogeneous approaches

An inventory of the right-hand side of this table captures some of the main features of the approach taken here. The joint attentional approach of Chapter One places *context*, in the form of intersubjective mediation, at the heart of narrative

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<sup>3</sup> On the differences between classical and post-classical narratology, see also Herman 1997, where the term was first coined.

signification. In Chapter Two I examine in detail some closed and open forms of *systematicity* and *process* in relation to narrative, and propose a conception of the systematicity of narrative fiction that draws on dynamic systems theory. In both Chapters Two and Three I am concerned with what Nünning calls “the dynamics of the reading process” – in Chapter Two from the third-person perspective of the systematicity of narrative fiction, and in Chapter Three from the first-person perspective of the phenomenology of the reading experience. The approach taken here is also thoroughly “diachronous” in that it is based on a *genetic* approach – that is, an approach that sees structures as snapshots of genetic, cumulative processes (see Chapter One section 1.1). These processes are not just historical (on which, see the discussion below), but also evolutionary, developmental and at the level of the unfolding of the individual phenomenon. The *interdisciplinarity* of my approach lies in its bringing together narratological concerns (for example, embedded narrative; the construction of character; narrative linearity and non-linearity; experientiality in narrative fiction) with, as I shall now outline, an approach to the mind and its interaction with the narrative text that draws on second-generation cognitivism, semiotics and phenomenology.

## 2) *Second-Generation Cognitivism*

The original cognitive revolution had had at its heart the notion that perception and cognition consist in the manipulation, on the model of algorithmic digital computation, of mental, symbolic representations of the world and its objects.<sup>4</sup> The various strands of second-generation cognitivism, by contrast, share an

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<sup>4</sup> The *locus classicus* for such an analysis is David Marr’s account of visual perception and the construction of the three-dimensional object through discrete “levels of representation” (“primal sketch”, “2½D sketch”, “3D model”) (Marr 2000 [1982]). Ray Jackendoff, in *Consciousness and the*

opposition to the idea, inherent in this classical cognitivist view, that there is a Cartesian divide that can be made between the physical object and its mental representation. The philosopher Mark Johnson, in his *The Body in Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason* (1987), calls this view “objectivism” – that is, the view that

[t]he world consists of objects that have properties and stand in various relations independent of human understanding [. . .] [that] there is a rational structure to reality, independent of the beliefs of any particular people, and correct reason mirrors this rational structure. (Johnson 1987, x)

According to the second-generation cognitivist, by contrast, mental processes cannot be abstracted from the body of which the brain is inextricably a part, or from the wider contexts in which they take place, such as interactions with the physical environment, with other minds, and with external cognitive and cultural tools.

This Second-Generation view of cognition is sometimes referred to with the mnemonic “4E cognition” – that is, “embodied”, “enactive”, “embedded” and “extended” (Menary 2010). An example of embodied cognition, which will play an important part in the account of the dynamic dimension of narrative in Chapter Two (subsection 2.2.), is the role played by “image schemata” in language and thought. Image schemata such as SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, CONTAINER, CENTRE-PERIPHERY and SYMMETRY are, in the words of Beate Hampe, “*directly meaningful* (‘experiential’/ ‘embodied’), *preconceptual* structures, which arise from, or are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects”: these structures “exist as *continuous* and *analogue* patterns

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*Computational Mind* (1987) compares these “levels of representation” with parallel representational structures for the perception of language and music (see Chapter Two, subsection 2.3.).



*beneath* conscious awareness” (Hampe 2005a, 1; emphasis in original).<sup>5</sup> This formulation of the concept of image schemata also reflects the notions of enactive (Varela *et al* 1991) and embedded (or “situated”) (Robbins and Aydede 2009) cognition – that is, of cognition’s being constituted not by static representations, but by dynamic contexts of on-going action. According to the enactive view, the nervous system is an “autonomous dynamic system” that “actively generates and maintains its own coherent and meaningful patterns of activity”: it “does not process information in the computationalist sense, but creates meaning” (Thompson 2007, 13).

In Chapter One (subsection 3.3), in the context of a discussion of the notion of character, I look at how contemporary cognitive narratology continues to be influenced by objectivist assumptions whereby characters are seen as idealized objects or entities with attributes that form the basis of mental representations. What is missing in this view is acknowledgment of the intrinsic importance of the *process* by which any such representation is arrived at. (A key component of this process, I argue, is constituted by the complex, embedded forms of joint attentional *mediation* made possible by written and printed narrative.) Narrative should be seen fundamentally as a *process* rather than a representation: in the words of Viktor

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<sup>5</sup> Hampe is here summarising definitions from two of the original advocates of the concept of “image schemata” – George Lakoff (1987) and Mark Johnson (1987). Modern use of the term can be traced back to Kant: in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the “schema” is described as a “mediating representation” between transcendental categories and phenomena (see especially the chapter “Of the Schematism of the Pure Conceptions of the Understanding” (Kant 1934 [1787], 117-220). It is to be distinguished from the *image*, for Kant, in that while the image is an object of experience, the schema is “without any empirical content [. . .] and yet must on the one side be *intellectual*, and on the other *sensuous*” (Kant 1934[1787], 117). Rather than being an object of experience, the schema manifests itself in the process of “schematism”, a procedure of the “imagination” whereby the object is related to a pure conception through its delineation as a “schema”. “This schematism of our understanding in regard to phenomena and their mere form,” writes Kant, “is an art, hidden in the depths of the human soul, whose true modes of action we shall only with difficulty discover and unveil” (Kant 1934 [1787], 119).

Shklovsky which I use as an epigraph for Chapter Two, “[a]rt is a device for experiencing the process of becoming: that which has already become is of no importance for art” (quoted in Perry 1979, 41). This enactive and processual (as opposed to representationalist) view is developed in the body of Chapter Two, in the form of the concept of “series” – that is, sequences of phenomena (for example, the unfolding of schemata, or the movement of different forms of narrative tension such as suspense or curiosity) that make up the experience of narrative text’s *dynamism*.

To return to the four “E’s” of “second-generation” cognitivism: extended cognition refers to the idea that mental processes do not take place simply within the confines of the skull, but, rather, are extended across external vehicles or cognitive artefacts that play an (inter)active part in shaping cognition (Hutchins 1995; Rupert 2009; Menary 2010b). In this thesis, the notion of the extended mind is manifested in the active part played by *semiotics* and different forms of *semiosis* in bringing to awareness particular aspects of narrative (its situated quality, for example (Chapter One), or its experiential aspect (Chapter Three)): as I.A. Richards suggests at the opening of *Principles of Literary Criticism*, a book is a “machine to think with” (Richards 1960 [1924], “Preface” (n.p.)). I turn now to this semiotic aspect of my argument.

### 3) *Semiotics*

Two aspects of the argument put forward in this thesis draw on semiotics. In Chapter One, narrative signification is derived from a general theory of the origins of sign-use in current developmental and evolutionary psychology: this theory centres on the concept of “joint attention” (Scaife and Bruner 1975; Moore and Dunham 1995; Tomasello 1999; Eilan *et al* 2005). Though the concept of joint attention has

much to say about the origins and function of language, it applies to all human sign-use: when applied to the study of narrative, it can elucidate aspects of narrative that escape theoretical approaches derived from a purely linguistic, oral model. Thus in Chapter One I show how the writing and printing of narrative offers affordances for multiple levels of joint attentional embedding (that is, making a joint attentional situation the object of framing acts of joint attention): this capacity for internal differentiation of embedded joint attentional situations, I argue, plays a crucial part in the development of “character” in fiction. In Chapter Two, where I discuss the linear and non-linear facets of narrative, I make a link between, on the one hand, the idea (famously put forward by Edgar Allan Poe) that a short story springs from (or is directed towards) an image, and, on the other hand, the semiotics of the photograph (Chapter Two subsection 3.1). The connection is possible, I argue – against Lessing’s famous division between the temporal and spatial arts (Lessing 1984 [1766]) – because, on the one hand, the photograph is not “timeless”, but has different concurrent temporalities contained within it, and, on the other hand, because the short story has a spatial, imagistic and ekphrastic quality. This sub-theme of the relation between narrative and photography continues in the last chapter (subsection 3.2), where, in the context of a discussion of the relations between expressive and representational forms of discourse, I consider the use of photographs in works by W.G. Sebald and Georges Rodenbach. In both cases – in the case of the imagistic notion of the short story and of the incorporation of photography into narrative fiction – a semiotic perspective is adopted that goes beyond the oral communicative model.

In Section 4 of Chapter One, I draw out the implications of the joint attentional approach for the semiotics of narrative fiction. In particular, I draw

attention to historical alternatives to Saussure's dyadic model of communication in the form of triadic models (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923]; Bühler 1990 [1934]) that situate the sign in relation not only to the participants in the act of communication, but also with respect to the reference of the sign – in other words, in relation to the sign's intentionality towards, action upon, or interactivity with, a context: language, according to this view, is a tool, an instrument – and as such, it can simultaneously serve different functions. This, simultaneity of function, this *polyfunctionality*, as it is developed by the Prague structuralists, forms the basis of the concept of a non-linear dimension to narrative put forward in Chapter Two: any individual segment of narrative may stand at the confluence of multiple streams of intentionality: a description in a novel of a man entering a building, for example, may tell us about the kind of man he is (his social class, for example, his occupation, his looks), it may tell us about the kind of building it is, how it fits into the social and physical geography of the city. But at the same time it may be serving a different function – for example it may be set up, in context, to arouse the reader's curiosity, to create narrative tension: What is the man going to do inside the building? What will he discover?

Roland Barthes gestures towards this kind of non-linearity at the beginning of *S/Z*, where he discusses the interrelation between the five codes by which he analyses Balzac's *Sarrasine*. "The five codes," he writes, "create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)" (Barthes 1974, 20). At another point he describes the text as being "comparable at every point to a (classical) musical score" (28), as being "polyphonic", as being endowed by the five codes "with a kind of plural quality" (30). "The classic text," he writes, "is actually tabular (and not linear), but its tabularity is vectorised, it follows a logico-

temporal order” (30). Barthes develops these thoughts no further. But they indicate a direction that had already been taken earlier by the Prague structuralists, especially Mukařovský, who had evolved a concept of systematicity that was able to account for the “vectorization” of the “tabularity” of the text (in other words, for the interdependence of linear and non-linear dimensions) in a way that Barthes’ fragmentary and impressionistic comments were unable to do.

A key concept in Chapter Two, which I draw from the Prague structuralists, is that of the aesthetic function in relation to language and other signs. According to Mukařovský, in a piece of discourse in which the aesthetic function is dominant (such as a narrative fiction, for example), there is an increase in the polyfunctionality of the language subsumed under the aesthetic function: this is because whereas a purely representational use of language directs attention towards specific aspects of reality, the aesthetic function is oriented towards the *whole* of the subject’s (that is, the reader’s or perceiver’s) existence. A natural consequence of this expansion in point of view is a greater latitude as to the functions that may be conceived: a dominance of the aesthetic function increases the polyfunctionality of the language over which it operates.

The term function is used by the Prague structuralist Mukařovský in a different sense from the way it is used, for example, by the Parisian structuralist Barthes:

The end of all structuring activity [. . .] is to reconstitute an ‘object’, in such a fashion as to manifest in this reconstitution the rules of function (the “functions”) of this object. The structure is thus made into a simulacrum of the object, but a simulacrum which is directed, interested, since the imitating object makes something appear which remained invisible, or if one prefers, unintelligible in the natural object. (Quoted in Magliola 1977, 85-6)

A function, for Barthes, is a rule governing the internal operation of an ideal object (a “simulacrum”): in terms of the analogy famously made by the Russian Formalists, the function is like the role that a particular part plays in a machine. For Mukařovský, by contrast, the function represents a particular mode by which language mediates between self and world. These terms *self* and *world* are phenomenological in orientation, and it is the influence of phenomenology (specifically, of Husserl) that (as I shall explore in Chapter Two subsection 1.1.) marks the crucial difference in conceptions of semiotics, function and system between the Prague and Parisian versions of structuralism.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4) *Phenomenology*

As I show in Chapter Two (subsection 1.1.), the phenomenological orientation of Prague structuralism enabled its development of an open and non-linear notion of structure or system: the openness of the system consisted in the system’s acting as a mediation between self and world, while the non-linearity (I am using here a term that is not used by the Prague structuralists themselves) consisted in the simultaneity of potential modes (functions) that that mediation could take. The difference between the Prague and Parisian versions of structuralism in this respect can be traced back to the basic difference between phenomenological and Parisian structuralist conceptions of the sign – and this comes back to a difference between, on the one hand, a dyadic conception of semiosis as a Saussurean “speech circuit” between the sender and receiver of a message, and, on the other hand, a triadic

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<sup>6</sup> This influence is also mediated by the influence of Husserl on Karl Bühler, particular in terms of Husserl’s notion of language as a “sense-conferring act” (Bühler 1990 [1934], 10-13, 72-80): Bühler, was, in turn, an important influence on Mukařovský. Robert Innis, summarizing Bühler’s conception of language as a form of *action*, writes: “As dependent on *acts*, in the Husserlian sense, language refers us back to the constituting acts of consciousness as conditions of sense, for without these acts – as acts of meaning, of intending, of abstracting – the ‘dead’ material of the language sound or mark cannot be endowed with sense” (Innis 1982, 17).

conception that sees the sign as mediating the triangle of sender, receiver and referent. This, for example, is how Paul Ricoeur, in a 1969 lecture, distinguishes between the “differential value” of the lexical entry for a word, and its “meaning” as it emerges in a sentence:

In the sentence we experience language not as an object, not as a closed system, but a mediation [. . .] We recapture here the essential function of language, which consists of saying something about something. In the sentence and through the sentence language escapes [transcends] itself towards what it says. It goes beyond itself and disappears and dissolves into its intentional referent. (Quoted in Magliola 1977, 82)

As Robert Magliola argues, while Parisian structuralism excises both referent and subject from the closed system of signifier-signified, “for the phenomenologist, meaning (in and through language) arises from the action, or more precisely the interaction, between self and world” (Magliola 1977, 83).

This connection between semiotics and phenomenology, broached by the Prague structuralists, is one that runs through this thesis. At the beginning of Chapter One (subsection 1.1.), in the context of preparing the ground for my view of narrative as a form of intersubjective mediation, I invoke the concept of “internalization” developed in the 1920s and 1930s by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky – that is, the idea that much mental functioning and consciousness consists in the playing out in the internal, intrasubjective domain of relations that had initially presented themselves in the external, intersubjective domain. To use the term employed by evolutionary psychologist Merlin Donald, humans have, as between biology and culture, “hybrid” minds (Donald 2001, 12):

The main difference between apes and us is culture, or more specifically symbolic culture, which is largely outside, not inside, the brain box. Culture

distributes cognitive activity across many brains and dominates the minds of its members. (149)

A continuing refrain in both Chapter One and Chapter Three is that changes in semiotic technology, such as the transition from oral to literate narrative (the “technologizing of the word”, in Walter Ong’s (1982) phrase), brings to awareness or brings to consciousness aspects of language and mind that had previously been latent (or, to use a term popular with the Prague structuralists, un-“actualized”).

Thus in Chapter Three (subsections 2.1 and 2.2) I argue that the semiotic potentialities of print (and of the integration of print with photography (subsection 3.2)) enable the actualization of cycles of subjectivity and objectivity analogous to the disclosure inherent in phenomenological experience – that is, the way that the intentionality of consciousness is always transcending, passing through and beyond, particular presentations of phenomena. The key potentiality of writing and print in this respect has its roots in the particular and paradoxical dynamic that it instantiates between interiority and exteriority. Walter Ong has argued that the spoken word has a particular and close relationship with interiority because it consists of sound, which has a unique capacity to make interiority manifest:

Sound [. . .] reveals the interior without the necessity of physical invasion. Thus we tap a wall to discover where it is hollow inside [. . .] To discover such things by sight, we should have to open what we examine, making the inside an outside, destroying its interiority as such. Sound reveals interiors because its nature is determined by interior relationships. The sound of a violin is determined by the interior structure of its strings, of its bridge, and of the wood in its soundboard, by the shape of the interior cavity in the body of the violin, and other interior conditions. (Ong 1967, 118)

The spoken word “moves from interior to interior” (125), and “[i]n all human cultures the spoken word appears as the closest sensory equivalent of fully developed interior thought” (138): thus, by enveloping an audience in this interiority, the



spoken word, the voice, “has a kind of primacy in the formation of true communities of men, groups of individuals constituted by shared awarenesses” (124). In addition, “[t]he interiorizing force of the oral words relates in a special way to the sacral, to the ultimate concerns of existence [. . .] ‘The letter kills, the spirit [breath, on which rides the spoken word] gives life’ (2 Corinthians 3:6)” (Ong 1982, 74-5; parenthesis Ong’s).

Writing and print, by contrast, are manifested by sight, which “situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance” (Ong 1982, 72). On the other hand, as Wolfgang Iser points out in *The Act of Reading*, a text is not an object in the sense that, say, a statue is an object – that is, something that we can take in at one view. There is a sense in which the reader is always travelling “inside” the text:

We always stand outside the given object, whereas we are situated inside the literary text. The relation between text and reader is therefore quite different from that between object and observer: instead of a subject-object relationship, there is a moving viewpoint which travels along *inside* that which it has to apprehend. This mode of grasping an object is unique to literature. (Iser 1978, 108-9)

A similar point is made by the phenomenological critic Georges Poulet:

[T]he extraordinary fact in the case of a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it; it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside [. . .] [W]hat I glimpse through the words are mental forms [that] do not seem to be of a nature other than my mind which thinks them. They are objects, but subjectified objects. (Poulet 1969, 55-6).

A recurring theme in this thesis, as regards the phenomenology of reading, is this potentiality of *written* narrative to instantiate different forms of oscillation between outside and inside, exteriority and interiority, subject and object: in Chapter One, we see it in the form of the embedding of narratives (whereby the “outside” of one narrative, the context of its narration, forms the “inside” of another narrative), and in Chapter Three we see it in the cycles of objectivity and subjectivity that characterise

experientiality in modern fiction. But as Walter Ong notes of interiority and exteriority, these terms

are not mathematical concepts and cannot be differentiated mathematically. They are existentially grounded concepts, based on experience of one's own body, which is both inside me (I do not ask you to stop kicking my body but to stop kicking *me*) and outside me (I feel myself as in some sense inside my body). The body is a frontier between myself and everything else. What we mean by 'interior' and 'exterior' can be conveyed only by reference to experience of bodiliness. (Ong 1982, 72-3)

Thus in Chapter Three (subsection 2.2.) I invoke in particular the embodied phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to describe the involutions of inside and outside, of subjectivity and objectivity, that characterise the "body" of the modern narrative fiction text.

### ***Scope of Historical and Literary Reference***

Although, as I have just indicated, I draw on recent theoretical and empirical work in the cognitive sciences and narrative theory, I am also concerned with re-evaluating approaches from the past. Significant shifts in ideas are characteristically accompanied by reassessments of the past and challenges to established canons: often these shifts provoke, or are provoked by, the (re)discovery or reassessment of figures who may have been neglected or marginalized. The awakening of interest in the scientific investigation of consciousness since the 1990s, for example, has been accompanied by a refreshed appreciation of the writings of William James (see, for example, Edelman 1992, 6, 36-37; Damasio 1999, 38-39, 287-89). Or one could point to the example of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), the discovery of whose writings by psychologists in the West in the 1960s (see Chapter One subsection 1.1) has played a

significant part in developmental psychology's moving beyond Piaget towards an appreciation of the social and cultural dimensions of cognition (Bruner 1986, 70-78).

Historical revisionism, similarly, is key to the vitality of humanities, as a counterweight to the tendency to build a field or discipline not on clearly articulated questions and problems, but on exegesis of, and extrapolation from, canonical schools and authors: the effect of this tendency is for the field to become defined, conservatively and tautologically, by the smooth progress and development of the tradition. In the case of narratology, this danger can be seen in the entrenchment of a well-worn path from Saussure and Propp to Parisian structuralism of the 1960s, and then on to

[p]ostclassical approaches [. . .] [which] encompass frameworks for narrative research that build on this classical tradition but supplement it with concepts and methods that were unavailable to story analysts such as Barthes, Genette, Greimas and Todorov during the heyday of structuralism. (Herman 2007a, 12)

I have attempted to avoid this trap by referring not just to theorists who are part of the tradition, but also to those who – either by reason of historical accident or intellectual incompatibility – have fallen outside it. There are two principal (and interrelated) examples of this in what follows: firstly, triadic (or what I call “situated”) semiotics as an alternative to the Saussurean model that has underlain classical narratology; and secondly, the distinctive version of structuralism that emerged from the Prague Linguistic Circle in the 1930s, a version in which a phenomenological orientation enabled the development of a conception of structure more open and dynamic than that to be found in the later Parisian structuralism that, again, has underlain classical narratology.

In Chapter One Section 4 I argue for the importance for narratology of semiotic theories, roughly contemporaneous with Saussure, that differ radically from Saussure in their *contextualism* – that is, their insistence that language has to be understood in terms of a “referential triangle” that links communication to its referential context. C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards’ *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) takes issue with Saussure for “neglecting entirely the things for which signs stand” (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 6):

A sign for de Saussure is twofold, made up of a concept (signifié) and an acoustic image (signifiant), both psychological entities. Without the concept, he says, the acoustic image would not be a sign. The disadvantage of this account is [. . .] that the process of interpretation is included by definition in the sign!  
(5)

Karl Bühler, too, in his *Theory of Language* (1934), rejects this automatic association that Saussure sets up between the binary pair of “acoustic image” and “concept”, describing it as “this most disastrous of all material fallacies” which confuses conventional association with “the *experience of meaning* itself” (Bühler 1990 [1934], 68; emphasis in the original). The latter, for Bühler, includes not just the social, conventional aspect on which Saussure focusses, but also the individual’s “meaning-conferring acts” (79): this concept, which Bühler draws from Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, he understands as the “different *acts of meaning* in which the ‘object we mean’ is constituted” (256). And behind both Bühler and Ogden and Richards stands Charles Peirce, for whom the sign “stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity”, this something for which it stands being the “object” of the sign (Peirce 1955, 99).<sup>7</sup> In Chapter One Section 4 I show how these

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<sup>7</sup> Peirce is not referred to by Bühler, but is an important influence on I.A. Richards and C.K. Ogden (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 279-90; see also Russo 1989, 116-17 for commentary on this relationship).

contextualist, instrumental conceptions of language support the view of narrative as being based on an intersubjective, triadic *mediation* between sender, receiver and narrative object, emerging from the joint attentional situation, rather than on a dyadic “communication” between sender and receiver.

The second principal revisionist strand in the thesis is the attention given to Prague structuralism of the 1930s and 1940s, and in particular to the work of Jan Mukařovský.<sup>8</sup> By historical accident, through the dominance of the French version of structuralism, this theoretical tradition has remained largely invisible to narratology and its relevance for narrative theory neglected, for as Jurij Striedter, a leading historian of the Prague Linguistic Circle, has noted: “compared with the strong impact Russian Formalism and its transformations have had in France, Czech literary Structuralism did not play any significant role in the development of French Structuralism” (Striedter 1989, 156-57; c.f. Galan 1985, 1-2). In Chapter Two (subsection 1.1) I show how the Prague structuralists developed a distinctive conception of literature as made up of interlocking and interacting autonomous dynamic systems, a notion quite different from the rigid, spatialized notion of structure that we find in the Parisian version of structuralism.

There is a direct link between the Prague School’s conception of dynamic systematicity and the triadic conceptions of semiosis outlined in Section 4 of Chapter One.<sup>9</sup> For the latter, by conceiving of language as a tool or instrument used for particular purposes (according to particular intentionalities) in particular contexts,

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<sup>8</sup> The “Prague Linguistic Circle” was inaugurated in 1926. Its members would come to include, in addition to Mukařovský, Roman Jakobson, Felix Vodička and René Wellek. Foreign scholars who addressed the Circle during the 1930s included Husserl, Boris Tomashevsky and Emile Benveniste. For historical overviews, see Galan 1985 and Striedter 1989.

<sup>9</sup> This link is reflected in the direct influence of Bühler on the Czech theorists (Innis 1982, 4; Galan 1985, 70-3).

paved the way both for language to be conceived *simultaneously* according to different functions through structures of embedding, and also for the functions of particular linguistic features to be seen as changing over time through recontextualization. Where Saussure envisaged a rigid demarcation between synchronic and diachronic aspects of language (and advocated a concentration by linguistics on the synchronic) the Prague structuralists envisaged “*no insurmountable barrier between the synchronic and diachronic methods, as claimed by the Geneva School [i.e. Saussure]*” (Prague Linguistic Circle 1982 [1929], 6; emphasis in original). As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, the Prague School’s integration of the diachronic and synchronic (the linear and “non-linear”) presaged in interesting ways the dynamic systems theories that support contemporary enactive approaches to cognition (Thompson 2007, 11).

To conclude this introduction to some of the principal features of the thesis, I will now take the Prague School’s conception of the dynamic systematicity of literary history as a framework for setting out and justifying the historical dimension of the thesis and its deployment of particular literary examples. For although the intention of the thesis is to set out a theoretical framework rather than provide a historical account, there is a strong diachronic aspect to the framework.<sup>10</sup> This diachronicity is implicit in the focus, established in Chapter One, on the constitutive significance of mediation for narrative: the changing form of mediation (writing, print, or the incorporation of images such as photographs) creates affordances for new forms of

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<sup>10</sup> This diachronic aspect is reflected loosely in the chronological progression of my literary examples, from Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1348-53) (Chapter One subsection 2.3) to W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001) (Chapter Three subsection 3.2.).

joint attention, and hence for recontextualizations that generate new forms of functionality. This by no means implies a technological determinism, for these mediating systems only express themselves as vehicles for concrete values: there is a genuine *interactivity* at work here between the evolution of the mediating system and the evolution of the wider cultural systems of which the mediating system forms part.

Before showing how this interactive dynamic works itself out in the examples I take during the course of this thesis, it is necessary first to say a word about this concept of interactive systematicity. In his essay “On Structuralism” (1946), Mukařovský identifies the key feature of structure as being motion:

That which endures is only the identity of a structure in the course of time, whereas its internal composition – the correlation of its components – changes continuously [. . .] [T]he hierarchy – the mutual subordination and superordination of components (which is only the expression of the internal unity of a work) – is in a state of constant regrouping. (Mukařovský 1946, 4)

Structure in the first instance refers to the individual work of art, but the character of structure as motion is only seen clearly when the individual work of art is placed in its proper historical, temporal context, where it refers both to what has been and what is to come: this means that “[e]very work of art, even the most ‘original’, [. . .] becomes part of a continuous stream passing through time” (Mukařovský 1946, 4).

This emphasis on literary evolution marks one of the most important initial divergences of Czech structuralism from Russian Formalism. The latter, with its focus on “devices” by which conventional perceptions are “de-automatized”, had emphasised the *discontinuity* of literary history, just as Saussurean linguistics tended towards a picture of language as a succession of synchronic states. In their collective “Theses” of 1929, the Prague Circle reject the separation of synchrony and diachrony,

pointing out that changes to a system are not necessarily arbitrarily imposed from without, but may reflect internal demands of the system itself (i.e. diachrony needs synchrony). Equally, however,

*neither can a synchronic description absolutely exclude the notion of evolution, for such a synchronic moment reflects the disappearing, present, and coming stages. Stylistic elements perceived as archaisms, as well as the distinction between productive and nonproductive forms, are evidence of diachronic phenomena which cannot be eliminated from synchronic linguistics. (Prague Linguistic Circle 1982 [1929], 6; emphasis in original)*

From this synchronic point of view, in other words, any individual work of art is a snapshot in which diachronicity, in the form of elements that look to the future and elements that look to the past, is an integral part of synchronicity. In Chapter Two I illustrate this paradoxical manifestation of the diachronic within synchronicity with the example of the photograph (subsection 3.1), and show how this extension of the Prague structuralists' notion of systematicity can illuminate "imagistic" or "ekphrastic" forms of narrative such as the short story (subsection 3.2.).

It is the tension between these various diachronic elements within the synchronic structure, according to Mukařovský, that creates the dynamism of the work of art. And it is for this reason that

[t]hough every work of art is in itself structure, the artistic structure is not a matter of the single work. It persists in time, passing in its flux from work to work and changing constantly in this process. (Mukařovský 1941, 71)

The dynamism of the individual work of art is thus due to the dynamism of the artistic system of which it is a snapshot (a particular literary genre, for example, or wider systems such as "the novel" or the "short story"). But in addition, these wider diachronic artistic systems that embrace the individual work cannot be treated in isolation from wider cultural and social systems:



In the history and theory of the arts [. . .] not the artistic structure itself but its relations to other phenomena, especially psychological and social ones, are treated as structural. The scholar takes each of the developmental series as a structure. As a structure, it is linked to other series, themselves structures, which together form structures of a higher order. (Mukařovský 1941, 70)

The picture that Mukařovský paints, therefore, is one of multiple interacting dynamic systems – or, to be more precise, of multiple dynamic systems that interact by virtue of being nested or embedded one in another.<sup>11</sup> The relationship, in other words, is not one simply of external influences, but of wider systems actualizing proclivities and dynamics inherent in the embedded system:

Every impulse originating in one series manifests itself in another as a fact of its immanent development. Thus, an impulse for change in art, even if it comes from the sphere of social action, can be instrumental only to the degree and in the direction necessitated by the previous stage in the development of art. (Mukařovský 1941, 70)

External influence, in other words, expresses itself as immanent development. To use a phrase that will recur throughout this thesis, the effect of changes in the enclosing system may be to “bring to awareness” or “bring to consciousness” hitherto unactivated potentials of the encompassed system.

This theoretical perspective, gleaned from Prague structuralism, can be used to characterize the impact of mediational changes on the development of narrative, and simultaneously serves as a framework for enumerating the literary examples

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<sup>11</sup> The distinction made above between Russian Formalism and Czech structuralism on the question of evolution and systematicity should be qualified here, for towards the end of the short-lived Russian Formalist movement we find, in the writings of Juri Tynjanov, ideas which point forwards towards later developments by the Prague theorists. In his essay “On Literary Evolution” (1927), Tynjanov writes: “The correlation of each element of a literary work, as a system, with others, and naturally, with the system as a whole, I term the element’s constructional *function* [. . .] The element simultaneously correlates: on the one hand, with the series of similar elements in other works as systems and [. . .] with other elements in its own system” (quoted in Shukman and O’Toole 1977, 33). As Peter Steiner comments: “Tynjanov considered systemic not only the organization of each level but the interrelations among the levels as well. Thus, the minimal system – the literary work – was a variable in the higher literary system, and in turn this system was a variable in the ultimate cultural system” (Steiner 1984, 114).

deployed in the course of the thesis. In Chapter One, I show firstly how in the predominantly oral context of the young child's interaction with others, there is a tendency for narrative to be detached from immediate context and to become the object of varied forms of joint attention (subsections 1.3 and 1.4). Then (in subsections 2.2. and 2.3.) I show how, in the historical domain, the transition to the writing of narrative actualizes and makes explicit this impulse towards recontextualization that I have pointed to in the ontogenetic domain: in subsection 2.2 this is done through a brief survey of critical and theoretical perspectives on medieval narrative, and in 2.3 through a focus on the complex structure of hierarchical, nonlinear (re)contextualization or "framing" that we find in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

"Print," Walter Ong writes, "both reinforces and transforms the effects of writing on thought and expression", accentuating "the shift from sound to visual space" (Ong 1982, 117):

Print situates words in space more relentlessly than writing ever did. Writing moves words from the sound world to a world of visual space, but print locks words into position in this space. (121)

Print erases vestiges of the utterance in the written manuscript: it creates a possibility for endless mechanical repetition and, through its wider dissemination and greater legibility, encourages solitary, silent reading (122). As I describe in Section 3 of Chapter One, these changes create possibilities for new and more elaborated forms of joint attention. My focus here is on *Don Quixote*, which among many other things is a narrative which explores at multiple levels the effects of print on those who read it. My argument is that, in Cervantes' novel, the mediation of print plays a crucial role in the emergence of *character* as a central node to the dynamics

of narrative joint attention: it becomes (like a “character” in the sense of a letter for typesetting) a *sign* – something that we both “read” and “read with”.

As noted above, the first two sections of Chapter Two are given over to a theoretical discussion of dynamism and systematicity in narrative fiction, and to an exposition of the concepts of “contexture” and “series”. In Section 3 I illustrate these concepts with a discussion of the short story in the “imagistic” form advocated and practised most famously by Edgar Allan Poe: here I focus for my principal example on H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Picture in the House” (1921). The development of the modern short story represents a special case, an intensification, of the relation between residual orality and print. On the one hand, one finds throughout the history of the modern short story, from Poe onwards, invocations of oral forms such as the anecdote, the dramatic monologue, the folk-tale etc.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Poe’s well-known definition of the short story as capable of being read at one sitting (“requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours for its perusal”) emphasises the impression made on the solitary consumer of the text, while his emphasis on the “preestablished design”, on the “picture” that is “painted” by the writer, suggests a fundamentally visual rather than aural conception of the reader’s role (Poe 1994, 61).

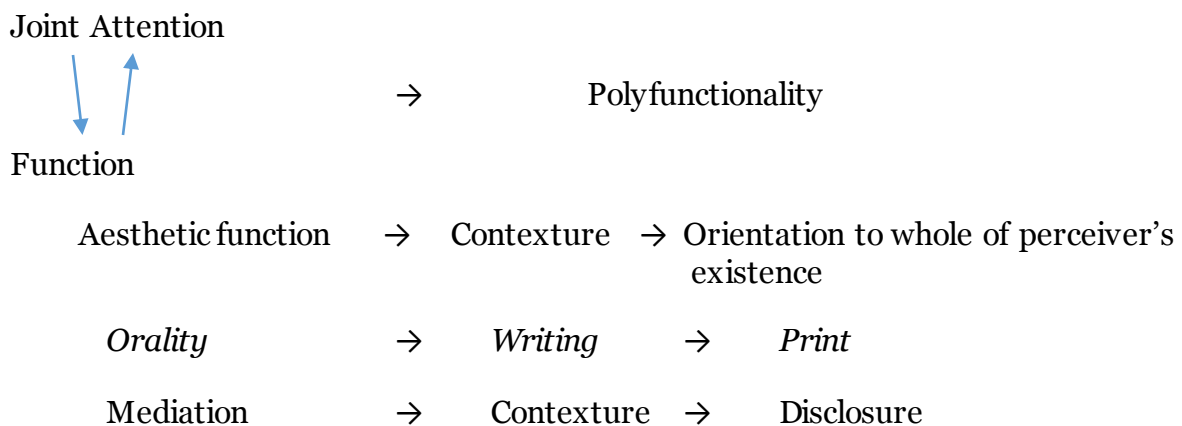
In my reading of Lovecraft’s “The Picture in the House”, I show how the extreme temporal compression of the short story’s *ekphrasis*, its “speaking out” of the image, throws into relief the concurrence of series, much as is done when a photograph captures as a single instant the multiple temporalities (clouds passing

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<sup>12</sup> This orality is marked in Poe’s stories, which are characteristically cast in the form of a first-person personal anecdote (“The Fall of the House of Usher”, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Purloined Letter” etc) or dramatic monologue (“The Tell-Tale Heart”). For a survey of the “oral” element in the history of the short story, see Shaw 1983, 82-113.

overhead, people walking down the street) that are concurrently unfolding around us in everyday experience: the modern short story represents a distinctly modern *visual*, ekphrastic mode of narrative that, drawing on the differentiation by function of experiential series, creates a dynamic structure in which temporal compression has squeezed the non-linearity into greater awareness.

Before moving on from this discussion of “contexture” – that is, the particular form of systematicity, such as narrative fiction, in which the aesthetic function is dominant – to an introduction to the historical context and literary examples in the explication of *experientiality* and *disclosure*, it would be useful to present a rough schematic summary of the stages we have gone through in the passage from joint attention to contexture, of how these stages are supported by developments in semiotic technology, and of how the final chapter of the thesis, on experientiality in narrative fiction, fits into this model:



The differentiation of *function* in the joint attentional situation is fundamental: it is based on language’s role in mediating to others differing forms of attention and intention towards the world. This differentiation of function leads to ever-greater flexibility in the use of language, and this *polyfunctionality* makes possible the development out of the aesthetic function (one of the functions that is differentiated

in the joint attentional situation) of the particular kind of language-system termed a “contexture”, in which the aesthetic function is dominant. The aesthetic function orients the sign to itself as a totality, and also, simultaneously, to the perceiver of the sign. Because the aesthetic sign has been to this extent decontextualized (it has created its own context – its *contexture* – by making of itself a *whole*), its orientation to the perceiver is less in regard to specific contexts than with regard, potentially at least, to the whole of the perceiver’s existence. This orientation to the whole of the perceiver’s existence in turn increases the affordances for polyfunctionality within the contexture: the wider the context in which the language is viewed, the greater the array of simultaneous functional values that can be assigned to the language. Finally, these transformations (which should be understood less as a causal progression or history than as representing levels of analysis)<sup>13</sup> are supported by changes in the semiotic mediating technology, from the forms of decontextualization of narrative available in purely oral settings (see Chapter One subsection 1.4) to the more radical decontextualization of writing (Chapter One Section 2) and the still more radical decontextualization and visualization made possible by print (Chapter One Section 3).

In Chapter Three I explore the effect on the experience of narrative – and in particular the experience of the experience *in* narrative – of this radical decontextualization and visualization made possible by print. In terms of the literary sources I call upon, there are three aspects to my presentation: (1) In subsection 1.2 I turn to children’s literature (where we find the visual and sensori-motor interaction

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<sup>13</sup> In Chapter One subsection 1.1 I discuss the notion of *genetic* analysis, as put forward by Vygotsky. A key point about genetic analysis is that it is cumulative rather than simply causal: any stage of development retains within itself the previous stages. It is in this sense that the stages outlined above represent levels of analysis more than links in a causal chain.

of the reader with the text-as-object foregrounded), and consider the presentation of consciousness in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. *Alice in Wonderland* is a book of "pictures and conversations", and throughout Carroll's narrative, as I illustrate, Alice's endless dialogue with herself, her stream of consciousness, is articulated, with an elaborate use of punctuation and other graphic marks, as a *picture*. (2) In the following subsection, 1.3, and in subsection 2.1, I set out the arguments for regarding Free Indirect Discourse as a distinctly *written* form of discourse, and link this with its pivotal role in articulating the process of phenomenological disclosure through cycles of subjectivity and objectivity, expression and representation: these cycles, I argue, are characteristic of the experience both *of* and *in* modern narrative fiction. 3) Finally, in Section 3 I turn to the role of the *image* in modern narrative fiction's "experientiality" – firstly (subsection 3.1) in the sense of the use of verbal imagery (that is, some form of metaphorical translation) to evoke "pre-reflective" consciousness, and secondly (subsection 3.2) in the actual use of photographic images in narratives by Georges Rodenbach and W.G. Sebald, where the photograph becomes not just a documentary verification or representation but a form of subjective *expression*. In both cases, I argue, the affordances offered by developments in semiotic technology play a crucial part. And both cases provide good examples of Mukařovský's concept of interacting autonomous cultural systems. In the case of the use of verbal imagery for evoking pre-verbal experience, a familiar feature of poetic language (imagery) is given new meaning by being channelled through a new cyclical narrative dynamics operating between the "expression" and "representation" of consciousness. In the case of the use of the photograph, technological changes enabling the close conjunction of photograph and text create affordances for fruitful interaction between the distinct semiotic systems of the text

and photograph. W.G. Sebald's narratives serve as an eloquent reminder that narrative fiction, from a semiotic point of view, can never be confined purely to the level of linguistic "communication": new forms of *mediation* (writing, print, the incorporation of photographs) substantially change what language *is* and is capable of.

The thesis, then, draws on a broad historical range of literary examples, from Boccaccio to W.G. Sebald. These examples have been chosen to illustrate both particular aspects of the overall theoretical model and also the dynamic, diachronic nature of the model itself. Thus the earliest examples (Boccaccio, Cervantes) are those which illustrate, in a literary context, the foundational nature of joint attention for narrative. In Chapter Two I turn to the post-Edgar Allan Poe short story, exemplified here by H.P. Lovecraft's "The Picture in the House", as a striking instance of the emergence from this joint attentional dynamic of complex forms of non-linear systematicity. Here, particular characteristics arise out of the specific historical context of the encounter between, on the one hand, an imagistic conception of the short story as a form, and, on the other hand, a distinctively modern photographic consciousness. But as I indicate in the Conclusion, the model of a non-linear simultaneity of series that we find instantiated here in a particularly marked form is one that has traction over a much wider historical domain of literary narrative. In Chapter Three, on the other hand, I turn to a feature distinctive to nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary narrative: the foregrounding of experientiality. While the elevation of consciousness and perceptual experience to a central, structuring role in narrative discourse may in part have origins that lie

outside the literary system itself,<sup>14</sup> the forms in which it is expressed – in particular, the emergence of a phenomenological series cumulatively integrating subjective and objective perspectives – are made possible by the dynamics of joint attention and non-linear systematicity outlined in the previous two chapters. The choice of particular examples is thus intended to illustrate the dual aspects of continuity and evolution inherent in the model itself.

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<sup>14</sup> On this wider context for the concern with consciousness in modernist narrative – a context that lies beyond the scope of this thesis – see Judith Ryan 1991.



## CHAPTER ONE. NARRATIVE MEDIATION

In the Introduction to *Narrative Discourse* (1972), Gérard Genette distinguishes between three different “aspects of narrative reality”: 1) the *story*, which is “the signified or narrative content”, 2) the *narrative*, which is “the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself”, and 3) the *narrating*, which is “the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place” (Genette 1980 [1972], 27). The terms in which Genette casts the distinction between 1) and 2), between the “narrative” (the textual *signifier*) and the “story” (the conceptual *signified*) signals his debt to Saussure. In his *Course in General Linguistics* (1915), Saussure initially uses the terms “sound-image” and “concept” for *signifier* and *signified*: “[t]he linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image” (Saussure 1959 [1915], 66). The relationship between the concept and the sound-image is purely “psychological”, since the sound-image is “not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses” (66). The association between any particular signifier and signified is arbitrary not in the sense that it is a matter of individual choice, but in the sense that it is “unmotivated”, having “no natural connection with the signified” (69). In place of any natural (e.g. iconic) connection, there is the connection forged by social convention, embodied in the total linguistic system in which that particular association of concept and sound-image is embedded. That total linguistic system, Saussure calls the *langue*.<sup>15</sup>

These then, are the Saussurean terms by which Genette wishes the distinction between his first two aspects of narrative to be understood: the *story* is the signified,

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<sup>15</sup> For a fuller discussion of Saussure’s concept of *langue*, and of the differences between Saussure’s model of language and the approach taken in this chapter, see Section four, below.

and the *narrative* or *narrative discourse* the signifier. But his third aspect, the *narrating*, introduces a different element. This would seem to belong to what Saussure called *parole* (speech), as opposed to *langue* (language) – that is, a concrete speech-act performed in a specific context. Saussure was clear that *langue* and *parole* should be kept quite separate by semiology, with *langue* forming the main focus of attention and *parole* (the “executive side”) playing a subsidiary role (Saussure 1959 [1915], 66). But for Genette the two are linked as two prongs of a triad, with *narrative* or *narrative discourse* at its apex: “As narrative, [narrative discourse] lives by its relationship to the story that it recounts; as discourse, it lives by its relationship to the narrating that utters it” (Genette 1980 [1972], 29).<sup>16</sup>

These distinctions form the basis of Genette’s separation of “Mood” and “Voice” as categories of analysis. Mood is “[n]arrative ‘representation,’ or, more exactly, narrative information” (162), while “Voice” refers to the “generating instance” or “enunciating” of that information (213): the analysis of “Mood” looks at how, for example, narrative “information” is filtered through “distance” (162-64) or “focalization” (189-98), while “Voice” directs the analyst towards such issues as the role of the “narrator” (255-59) and the relationship between different narrative “levels” where one “narrating instance” is embedded in another (227-37). The distinction between “Mood” and “Voice” is the distinction between

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<sup>16</sup> Far from giving narrating/*parole* a secondary role, in his book of second thoughts, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette displaces *narrative* from its primary role as “mediator” between the other two: it is now the *narrating* that is primary, with “the narrative act initiating (inventing) *both* the story and its narrative, which are then completely indissociable” (Genette 1988 [1983], 14).

the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator?* – or, more simply, the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?* (186)

In his essay “Person, Level, Voice: A Rhetorical Reconsideration” (2010), Richard Walsh characterizes Genette’s distinction in terms of the difference between “communicative” and “rhetorical” models of narrative, and questions whether they are compatible in the way that Genette tries to make them. In the “communicative model” (Genette’s “Mood”), “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),” whereas the “rhetorical” model “invert[s] the hierarchy of that relationship between structure and act” such that “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” (Walsh 2011, 35).

We have here, then, a paradoxical relationship whereby that which was “inside” the communicative act considered as “representation” (i.e. the narrating instance) can become, in the rhetorical act, the “outside” of a “represented” communicative act:

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 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. (Walsh 2011, 36-37)

This strange inter-relation of “inside” and “outside” in narrative fiction is a recurrent theme in this thesis: in this present chapter I pursue it with reference to “stories about the telling of stories” (taking Boccaccio’s *Decameron* as an example) and

character (referring especially to *Don Quixote*), while in Chapter Three it is discussed with reference to the narrative representation of consciousness and experience, and to the relationship between those narrative representations and phenomenological “disclosure”. An important part of my argument in both chapters is that the semiotic technology of visually representing language through writing and print plays a key role in engineering this inversion whereby the communication of information becomes the inside of an act of representation.

Walsh’s approach to this paradox is through the recursive possibilities of Plato’s distinction between *diegesis* and *mimesis*, which can be seen as “two hierarchical modes of fictive representation” (41). “Fictive” refers here to the “rhetorical gesture of fictionality” that constitutes the fictional narrative and that, ultimately, consists in an act of representation (41). This “rhetorical gesture”, though necessarily made up of words, is semiotic rather than merely linguistic (fictions can take on many different forms of mediation): “as rhetoric it is necessarily communicative; as a gesture it is semiotic, but not intrinsically linguistic” (45). In this chapter I pursue the second of these two avenues of investigation opened up by Walsh: towards the semiotic, trans-linguistic basis of narrative fiction. As a gesture, narrative is not confined by, to put it in Saussurean terms, the “codes” of *langue*, but belongs, as Walsh puts it, to the “real world”: it points beyond language itself. Contrary to Saussure, language is *motivated* by contexts that transcend the language. In this chapter I present an account of narrative signification – Walsh’s “gesture of fictionality” – rooted in the idea that context is not an add-on extra to language: language, I argue, is *intrinsically* contextual in a way that has important implications

for the ways writers produce and readers understand and respond to fictional narrative.<sup>17</sup>

For Genette, as we have seen, the questions “who speaks?” and “who sees?” are distinct: *language* and *vision* are separable. Yet from a semiotic point of view – regarding language, that is, as a kind of sign – the separation may not be that sustainable. Karl Bühler (to whose contextualist or “situated” semiotics I will return below, in Section five of this chapter) points out in his *Theory of Language* (1934) that in the etymology of “the usual words for signs [,] [. .] words such as *Zeichen* (sign), σήμα (sign), δείξις (pointing), *signum*, *seign*[,] [. .] two factors that are originally registered are ‘brightness, visibility’ or ‘to make bright and visible’ on the one hand and ‘to make evident, to draw attention to’ on the other”: Indo-European words for “sign” characteristically refer to “a showing (or a revealing) of things to the viewer, or the other way round, leading the viewer (the viewing gaze) to the things” (Bühler 1990 [1934], 44). These etymologies suggest that language and perception may have a closer, intrinsic connection than Genette supposes. Language, according to this wider semiotic view, is not a code, but a form of *mediation*: something *through* which things are revealed, or *by means of which* (as an *instrument* or *tool*) people are guided to look at them. It is this view of language as a form of *mediation* that informs the approach to narrative fiction taken throughout this thesis.

“Mediation”, I argue, is both intrinsic to narrative and has deeply informed the way that it has developed in the written and printed forms of narrative fiction. In subsection 1.1 I introduce the concept of mediation as it is presented by Russian

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<sup>17</sup> The contextual account of signification in this chapter leads, in Section 4 and in Chapter Two, to an *instrumental* or *functional* view of language. In Chapter Two, on the basis of this functional perspective, I suggest the concept of the “aesthetic function” as a possible alternative to Walsh’s “fictionality”.

psychologist Lev Vygotsky: Vygotsky's view of language as a mediating *tool* will become important for the functional view of language that I develop in Section 4 of this chapter and in Chapter Two. I also introduce two further ideas from Vygotsky that inform, more immediately, the discussion of "joint attention" that is to follow: the concepts of *genetic analysis* and *internalization*. The concept of joint (or shared) attention has acquired great importance in developmental and evolutionary psychology, referring to the kind of intersubjective communication that takes place, for example, between infant and carer as they jointly interact with objects (Scaife and Bruner 1975; Bruner 1983; Moore and Dunham 1995; Tomasello 1999, 2008; Eilan *et al* 2005). In recent years, for example in the work of Vera Tobin, Todd Oakley and David Herman, researchers have begun to recognize the significance of this interactional dynamic for literary narrative.<sup>18</sup> In subsection 1.2 I outline how the joint attentional triad of infant, carer and object has been shown to be crucial for the acquisition of language (Scaife and Bruner 1975; Bruner 1983; Moore and Dunham 1995). In reviewing this literature, and, in subsection 1.3, the literature on the use of narrative by young children, I will argue that the narratives of very young children have a peculiarly intimate relationship with the dynamics of joint attention. In the first place they bring this dynamic to a new level of awareness by making it explicit

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<sup>18</sup> Herman's (2013) focus is on how joint attention grounds the *intentionality* of narrative, such that stories become psychological tools for organizing experience into "intentional systems" (a term that he adopts from philosopher Daniel Dennett). There are significant overlaps between Herman's approach and that taken in this thesis, notably in his instrumentalist view of narrative (drawing on the work of Lev Vygotsky) as a psychological *tool* (Herman 2013, 228-30): in this context, Herman draws attention, as is done in this chapter, to the important role played by contextualized, embedded narrative (263-81). Vera Tobin connects joint attention to the notion of "conceptual blending" that has emerged from cognitive linguistics, examining how modernist texts disrupt such blends (Tobin 2008) and how printed texts operate as objects of joint attention (Tobin 2014): there is a significant congruence between the model of narrative communication offered in this chapter and Tobin's argument that "readers of published texts function in many ways more like overhearers than addressees" (Tobin 2014, 179). Tobin and Todd Oakley have extended the joint attentional approach to a consideration of the manipulation of perspective in film narrative (Oakley and Tobin 2012). Also pursuing a broadly joint attentional perspective, John Sutton and Evelyn Tribble have explored the role of "[e]mbodied interaction and mutual alignment" between characters in Lloyd Jones' novel *The Book of Fame* (Sutton and Tribble 2014, 146).

through language. And secondly, as I explore in subsection 1.4, these narratives become “symbolic objects” through themselves being re-contextualized and hence subjected to further quasi-recursive acts of joint attention. It is in this way, I argue, that the constitution of the narrative representation should be understood: as a process of *mediation* between parties in which the mediation takes the form of a sharing of attention on an object (real or conceptual).

In Section Two I explore how, through writing and print, the affordances for acts of joint attention, inherent in narrative from its oral origins, are extended and deepened through the narrative’s further decoupling from the oral situation, and through its spatialization, in the form of *text*: through these processes inherent in textualization, narrative becomes an object for joint attention in a sense beyond that explored in subsection 1.4. In subsection 2.1 I found this approach in the ideas of media theorists such as Walter Ong and David Olson concerning the impact of literacy on cognition and consciousness: my discussion of this impact begins, in subsection 2.2, with a brief overview of the textual “framing” of narrative (that is, the *writing in* of context) in medieval literature. Then, in subsection 2.3, I illustrate these affordances for joint attention offered by writing through readings from a celebrated example of Medieval “frame narrative”, Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1349-53). This analysis of *Decameron* aims to evoke how, by means of writing, mediation through joint attention becomes a process that does not merely frame the narrative, but is folded into it in such a way that it motivates the action itself.

In Section 3 I extend the discussion of joint attention to the question of character: here, my principal text is Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. Following an introduction, in subsection 3.1, to the joint attentional textual framing of *Don Quixote* – framing, that is, as a *book* that is compiled from different sources and

*printed* – in subsection 3.2 I describe how, through this deeply ambiguous joint attentional prism, Cervantes builds a complex and dynamic perspectival structure based on different and interacting acts of joint attention. It is out of this dynamic joint attentional structure, I argue, that fictional character emerges as what one might call (as with the textual framing of the whole narrative) a semiotic *prism* – something that we both “see” (a conceptual “object” to which attributes can be given) and at the same time something that we see *through* or *with*. These considerations lead, in subsection 3.3, to a discussion of the *mediation* and *motivation* of character-representations in narrative fiction. René Girard (1965) and Rick Altman (2008) have highlighted the importance for the development of the novel of what Girard calls “mediated desire” – that is, motivations that are motivated by (mediated *through*) the motivations of others: representation in this perspectivalist context is never simply a dyadic relation of subject and object, but is, rather, an intersubjective *mediation*. This perspective from the history and theory of the novel leads, firstly, to a critique of the objectivist or representationalist assumptions behind some recent narratological accounts of fictional minds, and, secondly, to a link between the perspective suggested by Girard and Altman, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the concept of joint attention, expanded here to embrace the notion of joint *intentionality*: the link between mediation and desire embodied in the notion of character involves a bringing-to-awareness of the substrate of *shared intentionality* inherent in all human communication. This emphasis on the importance of the motivation inherent in mediation – on the enactive quality of representations – is ultimately what differentiates the approach taken here from purely representational cognitive accounts of fictional narrative.



In the final section of the chapter, I highlight two historical formulations of the semiotics of language that are congruent with the triadic, mediating dynamic of joint attention: in the theories of C.K Ogden and I.A. Richards (1946 [1923]) and Karl Bühler (1990 [1934]) we find a contextualist and instrumental approach to language that diverges fundamentally from the dyadic “speech-circuit” model of Saussure that has informed structuralist narratology. In both *The Meaning of Meaning* and Bühler’s *Theory of Language*, this triadic view of language as a form of mediation and instrumentality leads to a conception of the *polyfunctionality* of language. This polyfunctionality will become important for my argument for a non-linear dimension to narrative in Chapter Two.

## **1. Joint Attention and Narrative**

### **1.1 A Vygotskian Approach**

I begin my exploration of joint attention and its importance for narrative by making explicit the concept’s indebtedness to the sociocultural approach to mind developed in the 1920s and 1930s by Lev Vygotsky: the discovery in the 1960s by psychologists in the West of the writings of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) has played a significant part in shifting psychology towards an appreciation of the social and cultural dimensions of cognition (Bruner 1986, 70-78). As has been highlighted by James Wertsch, three basic principles underlie Vygotsky’s approach to mental life (1991, 19-43):

1) *Genetic Analysis*. This is the principle that “it is possible to understand many aspects of mental functioning only if one understands their origin and the

transitions they have undergone” (Wertsch 1991, 19). As Vygotsky writes in *Mind in Society*:

To encompass in research the process of a given thing’s development in all its phases and changes – from birth to death – fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for “it is only in movement that a body shows what it is.” Thus, the historical study of behavior is not an auxiliary aspect of theoretical study, but rather forms its very base. (Wertsch 1991, 20 quoting Vygotsky 1978, 65)

Any mental phenomenon is *situated* in the context of a developmental process. Or rather, mental phenomena are situated within developmental processes, for a key part of Vygotsky’s genetic analysis is that developmental processes occur simultaneously at different levels, across different time frames: these levels constitute *genetic domains* (Wertsch 1991, 20-5). Vygotsky’s own empirical research was concentrated on ontogenetic development, but equally important for genetic analysis are the domains of phylogenesis, sociocultural history and “microgenesis” (the unfolding or “development” of individual mental processes over very short time frames). In the past twenty years, this concept of viewing processes as taking place simultaneously across different time frames has emerged as a key feature of the *dynamic* or *complex systems* approach to cognition. The dynamic dimension of narrative, and its relation to systematic complexity, will be explored in Chapter Two.

2) *The social origin of mental processes*. This is the principle that mental processes are founded not simply on capacities of the individual, but are the result of processes of internalization whereby interactions with others are absorbed to form the basis of mental processes in the individual: “Each function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level: first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (Vygotsky 1978, 57). Vygotsky’s conception of internalization

does not envisage a simple transference of social speech, nor a simple isomorphism between external social processes and internal psychological processes (Wertsch and Stone 1985, 166). It involves, rather, a process of transformation that enables relations that had been played out externally with reference to another to be turned inward – to be played out now with reference to the self. It is in this way that “intermental” functions (involving interactions with others) become “intramental” mental functions (of the individual).<sup>19</sup> In developing the theory that individual mental functioning represents an “aggregate of internalized social relations”, Vygotsky was influenced by Marx (Wertsch 1991 25-6), and there are also clear parallels with the theory of the “dialogic” nature of thought and discourse being developed simultaneously in Russia by Mikhail Bakhtin (Wertsch and Stone 1985; Wertsch 1991).

A highly significant instance of this process of internalization, for Vygotsky, is that stage in child development which Piaget termed “egocentric speech” – that is, the tendency of children between about three and seven years of age to talk to themselves. Piaget, who had been the first to recognize the significance of the phenomenon, defined egocentric speech in *The Language and Thought of the Child*, as language which is “for oneself, which is not intended for others” (quoted in Wertsch and Stone, 172): egocentric speech, in Piaget’s conception, was an external, physiological manifestation of the young child’s asocial, egocentric thought, and thus a phenomenon that was destined to atrophy with the child’s increased socialization.

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<sup>19</sup> Henceforth I follow Wertsch in using “intermental” and “intramental” – rather than “interpsychological” and “intrapsychological” (as in Vygotsky 1978), or “interpsychic” and “intrapsychic” (as in Vygotsky 1986) as translations for *intersikhicheskii* and *intrapsikhicheskii* (Wertsch 1991, 26).

For Vygotsky, by contrast, the movement was in the opposite direction, from socialization to individualization:

In our conception, egocentric speech is a phenomenon of the transition from interpsychic to intrapsychic functioning, i.e., from the social, collective activity of the child to his more individualized activity [. . .] (Vygotsky 1986, 228)

A number of observations and experiments supported this claim. He found, for example, that egocentric speech occurs characteristically in the presence of others, rather than when the child is alone, and that placing the child with a group of deaf-and-dumb children or children who spoke a different language also reduced the propensity to egocentric speech: egocentric speech had a clear social dimension (Vygotsky 1986, 231-3). He also examined the linguistic properties of children's egocentric speech and compared them to the properties of "inner speech", finding in both a tendency towards a specific form of abbreviation: that of "omitting the subject of a sentence and all words connected with it, while preserving the predicate". This "tendency towards predication", Vygotsky argued, was a "basic form of syntax of inner speech" that could be seen in embryo in the child's egocentric speech (Vygotsky 1986, 236). Through making connections between observations such as these, Vygotsky traced the trajectory whereby the social language of the child is subject to a process of individualization, becoming first the egocentric speech of the child before going fully "underground", morphing into that inner speech by which mechanisms of control and regulation that had been played out on the social plane, with reference to others, are now played out internally, with reference to the self.

3) *The centrality of mediation to human mental functions.* Another observation concerning the egocentric speech of children to which Vygotsky attributed significance was children's propensity to use it, in particular, when solving

problems (Vygotsky 1986, 30; Vygotsky 1978, 25-6). In the paper “Tool and Symbol in Children’s Development”, Vygotsky presented evidence that, contrary to the influential research of Wolfgang Köhler, which had emphasized parallels between the practical, technical intelligence of apes and young children, *language* plays a key part in the practical intelligence of young children, giving it a quite different character from that of apes (Vygotsky 1978, 19-30):

Children, with the aid of speech, create greater possibilities than apes can accomplish through action. One important manifestation of this greater flexibility is that the child is able to ignore the direct line between actor and goal. Instead, he engages in a number of preliminary acts, using what we speak of as instrumental, or mediated (indirect), methods. In the process of solving the task the child is able to include stimuli that do not lie within the immediate visual field. (Vygotsky 1978, 26)

Thus “symbolic activity”, for Vygotsky, had “a specific *organizing* function that penetrates the process of tool use and produces fundamentally new forms of behavior” (Vygotsky 1978, 24). Symbolic activity had this capability for restructuring perception and cognition because of its *reversibility*, whereby the same sign can have meaning for both parties in a communication. In “Consciousness as a Problem in the Psychology of Behavior” Vygotsky highlighted the significance of the fact that a word can be both stimulus and response, writing that “[a] heard word is the stimulus, and a word pronounced is a reflex producing the same stimulus”: the internalization of symbols in the form of language - thinking *through* language - enables thought to turn back on itself, to “possess [experiences] in object form (stimulus) for other experiences” (quoted in Lee 1985, 76. C.f, Gillespie 2007, 683). In this way language becomes a tool of thought.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Vygotsky’s formulation of the *universality* of a close interpenetration of language and thought in development is open to the charge of cultural bias. Wertsch cites the example of research carried out in the 1980s, in which the performance of Australian aboriginal children of desert origin on a series of

## 1.2 Joint Attention: Perspective and Dynamics

Joint Attention is an intersubjective mental process involving interaction both with another mind and with an object (which itself may be physical, or itself mental and symbolic). First identified and described in the context of developmental psychology (Scaife and Bruner 1975; Bruner 1983; Moore and Dunham 1995),<sup>21</sup> it has also been explored in an evolutionary context (Tomasello 1999) and in contexts of adult interaction (Eilan *et al* 2005). The basic developmental phenomenon of joint attention, here described by Michael Tomasello, has been widely observed:

Six-month-old infants interact dyadically with objects, grasping and manipulating them, and they interact dyadically with other people, expressing emotions back and forth in a turn-taking sequence [ . . . ] But at around nine to twelve months of age a new set of behaviors begins to emerge that are not dyadic, like these earlier behaviors, but are triadic in the sense that they involve a coordination of their interactions with objects and people, resulting in a referential triangle of child, adult, and the object or event to which they share attention. (Tomasello 1999, 62)

As an early indicator of the onset of this “Nine Month Revolution”, the child will, during joint attentional episodes, alternate its gaze from the object to the parent/carer’s eyes, monitoring the attention that the parent/carer is giving to the object (Tomasello 1995, 110-11; Baldwin 1995, 134). Such interactions involve, crucially, a “tuning in” to the intentionality of the adult, a developing understanding

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visual memory tasks was compared with that of European “white” Australian children. The aboriginal children consistently outperformed the European children on these tasks, with the European children apparently hampered by reliance on verbal mediation such as rehearsing lists of verbal labels (Wertsch 1991, 31). Such examples do not invalidate Vygotsky’s characterization of the fundamental processes involved, but merely caution against a hasty and universal application of them.

<sup>21</sup> As we shall see, the concept of joint attention is congruent with Vygotsky’s ideas concerning the socio-cultural origins of cognition. An early formulation of the concept of joint attention was put forward by Heinz Werner and Bernard Kaplan (1963), who use the phrase “primordial sharing situation” for “early forms of interaction which have the character of ‘sharing’ experiences *with* the other rather than of ‘communicating’ messages *to* the Other” (Werner and Kaplan 1963, 42).

that in contexts of joint attention, intentionality is directed not just to the object, but to the other's intentionality to the object. (As Vygotsky writes: "The path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person" (Vygotsky 1978, 30).) It is at this age, and in the context of such joint attentional episodes, that children start using "proto-imperatives" (pointing) and "proto-declaratives" (showing) which seek to change the other's intention towards the object to one of attention to it, or towards a particular aspect of it (Tomasello 1995, 110-11; Tomasello 1999, 62).

Joint attention crystalizes in the form of the use of signs – facial expressions, gestures, sounds, and language. Two aspects of signs, as they emerge from the joint attentional situation, are of particular importance: their *perspectival* quality and *dynamic* context:

1) *The perspectival quality of signs*

Joint attention establishes the basis for *reference*, the initial "labelling" that is the basis for later language development (Bruner 1983, 67-88). As Werner and Kaplan write in the early version of a theory of joint attention:

[W]ithin [the] primordial sharing situation there arises *reference* in its initial, nonrepresentational form [. . .] [T]he act of reference emerges not as an individual act, but as a social one: by exchanging things with the Other, by touching things and looking at them with the Other. (Werner and Kaplan 1963, 42-3)

At this level, words "point" to things, but the pointing is done not with reference to the object, but with reference to another person:

When children hear new language addressed to them [. . .] they must determine not the adult's intention to the object, as many theories of reference assume, but rather the adult's intention with respect to their attention. Reference is not directed to an object but to a person. (Tomasello 1995, 115)

“The problem of how reference develops,” as Bruner writes, “can [. . .] be restated as the problem of how people manage and direct each other’s attention by linguistic means” (Bruner 1983, 68).<sup>22</sup>

Language thus emerges out of a pre-linguistic “referential intersubjectivity” (Bruner 1983, 122), based on an understanding that the adult has a form of attention towards the object that is distinct from the child’s, and that the purpose of a particular behaviour (the use of a gesture such as pointing, for example, or the uttering of a word) is to communicate that form of attention to the child, with the intention of changing the child’s form of attention to the object. The use of these signs or symbols has that quality of reversibility whose importance Vygotsky had highlighted:

To acquire the conventional use of a linguistic symbol, the child must be able to determine the adult’s communicative intentions (the adult’s intention towards her attention), and then engage in a process of role reversal imitation in which she uses the new symbol toward the adult in the same way and for the same communicative purpose that the adult used it toward her. (Tomasello 1999, 116)

Gestures such as pointing and showing share with language this quality of intersubjectivity. Where language is different, however, is in its increased *perspectival* quality. Linguistic symbols do not merely refer to an object, but imply, with increasing specificity and sophistication, perspectives or construals of the object: “The perspectival nature of linguistic symbols multiplies indefinitely the specificity with which they may be used to manipulate the attention of others” (Tomasello 1999, 107).

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<sup>22</sup> “The essence of sign use consists in man’s affecting behaviour through signs” (Vygotsky 1978, 54).



The theory of “cognitive grammar” developed by Ronald Langacker, as Tomasello points out, bears out this perspectival view of language. According to Langacker, grammatical constructions are “imagic in character”: they always imply a construal of the situation in that “[w]hen we use a particular construction [ . . . ] we thereby select a particular image to structure the conceived situation for communicative purposes” (Langacker 1991, 12). The reading of sequences of sentences such as the following highlights the effect on construal of grammatical construction:

Joe broke the window.

The window was broken by Joe.

It was Joe who broke the window.

It was the window that Joe broke. etc

Use of different grammatical constructions such as actives and passives imply different configurations of “figure” and “ground” (or “trajector” and “landmark”, as Langacker revises *gestalt* terminology): syntactical structures have a symbolic meaning independent of their content.<sup>23</sup>

For Vygotsky, too, the use of language is deeply intertwined with “construal”, understood as a particular structuring of the perceptual field. The simple act of reference, of “labelling”, in itself produces such a fundamental restructuring:

[L]abelling is the primary function of speech used by young children. Labelling enables the child to choose a specific object, to single it out from the entire situation he is perceiving. Simultaneously, however, the child embellishes his first words with very expressive gestures, which compensate for his difficulties in communicating meaningfully through language. By means of words children single out separate elements, thereby overcoming the natural structure of the sensory field and forming new (artificially introduced and dynamic) structural centers. The child begins to perceive the world not

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<sup>23</sup> Langacker’s concept of “construal” - and in particular its dynamic, constructivist character - will be explored further in Chapter Two (subsection 2.2) in relation to the concept of narrative “series”.

only through his eyes but also through his speech. As a result, the immediacy of “natural” perception is supplanted by a complex mediated process; as such, speech becomes an essential part of the child’s cognitive development. (Vygotsky 1978, 32)

As Vygotsky pointed out, this view accorded with Wolfgang Köhler’s finding that, in performing practical tasks, the perceptual field of apes was more predetermined, and less liable to voluntary alteration, than was the case with humans (31). The myriad possibilities that language affords for variation in perspective-taking (variation along language’s “paradigmatic” axis, for example) enable the developing child to abstract from the given perceptual situation in a way which is unavailable for the ape (Tomasello 1999, 120-1):

[A]s the child internalizes a linguistic symbol - as she learns the human perspectives embodied in a linguistic symbol - she cognitively represents not just the perceptual or motoric aspects of a situation but also one way, among other ways that she is aware, that the current situation may be attentionally construed by ‘us’, the users of that symbol. (Tomasello 1999, 126)

The developmental process of “acquiring” language is thus not a matter of learning “codes”, but of internalizing, in a new, semiotic form, that capacity for variation of perspective and construal afforded by the joint attentional situation (Tomasello 1999, 125-26).

## 2) *The Dynamic Context of Linguistic Signs*

Language is acquired in the context of coordinated sequences of actions by child and carer. Jerome Bruner (1983) has pointed to the importance of standardized reciprocal exchanges between infant and carer: these “formats” may take the form, initially, of games of “peekaboo” or of handing objects back and forth, accompanied by words and vocalizations that underline the pattern and rhythm of the exchange. Crucially, once the format is established, the variable elements that constitute the

format can become the object of play. Roles can be swapped, or objects, or disruptive surprises can be created by withholding an object on the point of handing it over. “While the overall game became routinized,” as Bruner summarizes his observations of these infant-carer exchanges, “the constituents that made it up were forever being varied: utterances, prosody, pause length, whatever” (Bruner 1983, 51). In games of passing and hiding objects, we see the basic face-to-face dyadic relation supplemented and partially subsumed by “a rich triadic person-person-object style of play” (Trevarthen and Hubley 1978, 211). Such play involves, crucially, a tuning in to the intentionality of the adult; the infantile “joke”, for example, involves a “sharing of pattern and coincidence in intentionality, i.e. the formation of a climax or paradox in mutual intentionality” (Trevarthen and Hubley 1978, 189). As the child develops and is integrated more fully into the physical and social world around it, these formats will take more varied and practical forms – meal-time formats, for example, or greeting or farewell formats. The particular construals of the perceptual situation take place in a dynamic context of unfolding interactive, intentional sequences, in what Tomasello calls “the flow of social interaction” (Tomasello 1999, 112): they emerge as part of what Katherine Nelson terms “event representations” of sequences of actions directed at particular goals (Nelson 1996, 16-17).

To sum up, the process of symbol-formation, as it emerges, initially, in the context of joint attention between young children and carers, has two principal aspects – a *perspectival* aspect, whereby the symbol is used to direct attention to a particular construal of the perceptual situation, and a *dynamic* context, an *intentionality* whereby language is always embedded in a flow, in a sequence of (inter)actions (and words) directed towards a goal. Both aspects are inherent in the pre-linguistic joint attentional situation, but are made increasingly explicit, are

brought more strongly to awareness, to consciousness, by the progressively more sophisticated capacities for differentiation and specification contained in signs such as gesture and, above all, language.

### **1.3 Joint Attention and the Beginnings of Narrative**

What role, then, does narrative play in this process whereby language emerges from the dynamic, perspectival and triadic context of the joint attentional situation? The answer will depend in part, of course, on one's definition of narrative. If narrative is defined as a *story*, in the sense of a representation of a sequence of events with an internal structure (in Aristotelian terms, with a beginning, a middle and an end), then children cannot be said to have attained narrative "competence" till, typically, between five and seven years of age (Engel 1999, 158-59). But this is a highly restrictive view of narrativity in children. As Judy Dunn points out, children are avid consumers of narrative long before that: "The power of narrative to hold children's interest is evident from early in the second year. By two years old, as many parents know, children are frequently excited and moved by stories" (Dunn 1988, 141). They also produce "narrative". Susan Engel (1999) gives the following (from a transcribed dialogue between two four-year-olds) as an example of the kind of discourse that is left out of purely plot-based definitions of narrative:

Wasn't that funny, Harry, yesterday when Lizzie slipped in the mud?  
Hahahahaha. She had mud all over her pants and she looked like she pooped in her pants. Hahahahaha. And she really looked like a poopy head. Hahahahaha. And she looked like a poop on the face. She looked like a shcmoop on the face. Hahahahaha. (Engel 1999, 72)

As Engel observes, although this may not have any clear narrative "structure" (and quickly digresses into word-play), "[i]t nonetheless conveys an experience (albeit

elliptically described) occurring in space and time, and it suggests the author's view of the event, a meaning to the story. It has a narrative voice" (Engel 1999, 72).

Indeed one could go further and assimilate this exchange between four-year-olds to Labov's structure of conversational narrative. The opening sentence ("Wasn't that funny, Harry, yesterday when Lizzie slipped in the mud?") provides, in Labov's terms, both an "orientation" and "evaluation": the speaker places the narrative in a space and time different from that of the discourse ("yesterday when Lizzie slipped in the mud") and indicates with regard to the thing being framed ("Wasn't *that* funny") what aspect is to be attended to jointly by the speaker and Harry ("Wasn't that *funny*"). (This latter form of frame – the "evaluation", the *point* of the story, its meaning – continues through the narrative in the form of the interjections of laughter.) These "framings", by tense and by orienting and evaluative language, make of the narrative an object that is removed from the immediate situation and can figuratively be "held up" for inspection from a particular point of view (in this case its "funniness").

Vivid and detailed evidence of both the narrative ability of an even younger child – and of the child's internalization of narrative (its transformation into a mode of thought) – is provided by a research project that was conducted in the 1980s, when a group of developmental psychologists, including Bruner, studied tapes and transcriptions of the bed-time and nap-time monologues of a little girl, Emily. (These tapes had been made over a fifteen-month period from the ages of 21 months 7 days to 36 months 9 days, and the results of the research were published in the volume *Narratives from the Crib* (Nelson 1989).) Emily's monologues, spoken after her mother or father had left the room, are clear examples of what Piaget called "egocentric speech". The recordings also included the before-lights-out dialogues

with the adult, but there was a marked difference between Emily's monologues and these dialogues: "[Emily's] dialogic and monologic utterances," as Carol Feldman observes, "differ vastly in the richness of their pragmatic and narrative marking [. . .] [O]nce the lights are out and her parents leave the room, Emily reveals a stunning mastery of language forms we would never have suspected from her dialogic speech" (Feldman 1989, 100).

An important feature of this unexpected "mastery of language forms" was the use of narrative: "sequential narrative accounts", as Katherine Nelson, observes, had a "central role in Emily's monologues" (Nelson 1989b, 42). Children's first encounter with narrative characteristically takes the form of carers' verbal commentary on, or retrospective summary of, routine events and sequences such as getting dressed, meal-times, travelling outside the home, bed-time etc. These "scripts" tutor the child both in how to negotiate the physical and social world and in the meaning of language. "[R]aw experiential material," as Engel writes, "is mediated from the start by parents' use of storylike language to translate the world for their children" (Engel 1999, 33). This type of narrative features strongly in Emily's monologues, beginning with mastery of basic sequencing with connectives such as "when" and "then". But early on we also find these routine scripts being transcended in striking ways. This is Emily at 22 months, moving swiftly both from just such an iterative script ("when Daddy [. . .] then Daddy") to a projection into the future ("next year"):

when Daddy come then Daddy get Emmy  
then Daddy wake Emmy up  
then, then . . . then Carl come play  
Emmy not right now  
Emmy sleep, Emmy sleep(ing) . . .  
next year, next year Carl come  
and the baby come. (Bruner and Lucariello 1989, 84)

The movement here is one not just from the iterative present to the future, but from the routine and habitual to the singular and affectively salient (the anticipated birth of a younger sibling).

In their contribution to *Narratives from the Crib*, Jerome Bruner and Lucariello show how, during the course of Emily's third year, her narratives develop along four "dimensions" of narrativity. *Sequencing* begins with the use of simple connectives (and/then), and develops both through the use of more complex connectives (when/before/after) and, most notably, through causal connectives (because/so). *Canonicity* – the degree to which an action or event is registered as usual/appropriate or unusual/inappropriate – develops from markers of simple frequency (e.g. the unusual marked by "one time") to markers of necessity (things have "gotta" be a certain way) or appropriateness (things are "supposed to be" a certain way). The "breaching" of canonicity characteristically takes the form of the thwarting of a goal. *Perspective*, the expression of a stance towards what is being represented in the narrative, is conveyed through a variety of linguistic means, such as by time-frames (e.g. past tense), by markers of uncertainty (maybe) or affectivity ("Danny wasn't frightened when the clown came down"), by epistemic markers ("I don't know"), or by "metacommentary" which differentiates between the standpoint of the narrator and that of protagonists in the narrative. During Emily's third year there are particularly sharp increases in the frequency of markers of affectivity, epistemics and time perspective (Bruner and Lucariello 1989, 80-94). Lastly, Bruner and Lucariello posit a dimension of *intentionality*, whereby the relation between actions and originary intentions is marked: this aspect of narrativity is slow to manifest itself in development, and instances of it are rare in Emily's monologues (Bruner and Lucariello 1989, 82, 88).

Developmental psychologists have differed in their definitions of “narrative” or “narrativity” (Nelson 1996, 185-89), but these differences are ones of emphasis rather than differences as to the fundamental components of narrative. Some approaches emphasize the linear structure of narrative, its “story grammar”, while others emphasize its experiential or perspectival quality. As Susan Engel points out, these differences in emphasis generate somewhat different versions of the developmental history of narrative, since, as we have seen, children’s use of the experiential markers of narrativity develop earlier than their ability to construct a “story” (Engel 1999, 70-1). But for all the differences of emphasis, there is a consensus that narrativity has two principal aspects: the linear sequencing of events and some perspective on or construal of those events. For Katherine Nelson, “narrative structure has two essential dimensions: temporality (its syntax), theme or meaning (its semantics)” (Nelson 1996, 189). Bruner has formulated the distinction in terms of two simultaneous “landscapes” of narrative - a “landscape of action” and a “landscape of consciousness” (Bruner 1986, 14). It is this dual character that, for Bruner, makes narrative a distinctive mode of knowing the world, one that both plays a vital role in the child’s cognitive and emotional development and is quite distinct from the paradigmatic mode characteristic of propositions and logical relations. Narrative does not make propositions about objects, but explores “the vicissitudes of human intentions” (16).

There is, then, an isomorphism between narrative, on the one hand, and, on the other, the process of sign-formation in the joint attentional situation: both manifest *perspectival* and *dynamic* aspects. But in narrative, the perspectival variation and enactive sequencing inherent in symbolization are brought to awareness in a new way, through being made subject to further differentiations and



through reintegration within new dynamic frameworks. Thus narrative recapitulates, at a higher level, the process of symbol-formation in the joint attentional situation: it rehearses, one might say, the genesis of meaning.

#### **1.4 Narrative as an Object of Joint Attention**

Narratives offer affordances for re-contextualization, for becoming an object that can itself be subjected to different kinds of (joint) attention. As Rukmini Bhaya Nair writes, narrative is “a dynamic structure that converts ‘talk’ into ‘text’. Its function is to make some parts of a communicative loop or chain [. .] both detachable and iterable” (Nair 2003, 5). Susan Engel has drawn attention to the way the adult’s narrativization of the child’s experience creates a symbolic object for the joint attention of adult and child:

When the parent [. .] describes experience, she is creating an object of contemplation and inviting her child to share in this contemplation. As the mother describes an excursion she and the child have recently made together, she is painting a verbal canvas. Having finished, she stands back and invites her child to consider it with her. Now they not only have the verbal painting (the story), but they can look again and again at it, comment on it, even change it in the light of new understanding. (Engel 1999, 118-9)

As Katherine Nelson has pointed out, listening to tapes of Emily’s monologues rather than merely reading transcripts reveals how, even alone in her bed, she creates a paralinguistic “framing” for her narratives that recapitulates and internalises this social iterability:

It is notable that a highly salient characteristic of Emily’s first crib monologues at 21 months was her use of an appropriated ‘story voice’ to mark her nascent narratives, with raised pitch and extended contours, easily differentiated from the ‘play voice’ that she used in discourse with and around her toys. (Nelson 1996, 193)

These observations, she concludes, are evidence that “prosody and other metalinguistic markers set narrative off from other types of discourse for the child” (Nelson 1996, 193).

Sometimes marking them with these paralinguistic framings, Emily returns to particular stories repeatedly, over periods of weeks, as though rehearsing them in her mind. In what Carole Feldman calls “problem-solving” narratives (Feldman 1989), she uses narrative as a way of turning thought back on itself, generating internal micro-narratives (as introduced by the phrase “If they don’t come” in the example below) out of the “maybes” and “I don’t knows” that she experiences as she negotiates the world around her:

Today, it’s beau-, it’s night time it’s dark out. [sings] It’s a beautiful day. Tomorrow it’s going to be . . . day. Tanta day.<sup>24</sup> Tanta day. All the kids come just home. Carl, Carl, Carl, Danny, Lance . . . Janet. I don’t (know) about Lance or Jack. I know Janet and Carl (kids). Carl and Danny. Danny and Carl and Janet come. I don’t (know) about Lance . . . and um . . . Jackie. If they don’t come Lance and Jackie maybe they, maybe their mommy and daddy won’t work. [etc] (Feldman 1989, 117)

The perspectival “framings” afforded by epistemic markers (“maybe, “I don’t know”) and temporal shifts (“Tomorrow it’s going to be”) create a distancing effect, allowing the narrative to become an object susceptible to repetition and variation.<sup>25</sup> For Bruner and Lucariello, Emily’s increasing sophistication in differentiating a variety of perspectives, both on and within the narrative, demonstrates the important role that narrative plays in emotional development: narrative serves a crucial “cooling” function for Emily in that it distances her thought and language from immediate

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<sup>24</sup> “Tanta day” refers to a day when Emily is looked after by her grandmother (“Tanta”).

<sup>25</sup> According to the developmental, “genetic” approach offered here, there is no such thing as “pure” repetition since developmental time is irreversible and any repetition is re-contextualized in the light of fresh understandings. On the importance of the notion of “irreversible time” for an approach to psychology that emphasises the active role of semiosis, see Rosa 2007, 217-8 and Abbey 2007, 362-3.

affect and action. Through contemplating it as a narrative object that can be placed in different lights, Emily “cools” the potentially troubling relation between events in the world around her and what she feels or knows about them (Bruner and Luciarriello 1989, 76).

As children grow older, they encounter and use narratives in wider varieties of context. In *The Beginnings of Social Understanding* (1988), Judy Dunn examined how pre-school children’s modes of understanding others are shaped by “the affective tension in the relationships between siblings and between parent and child”: in the second and third years, language develops in the hothouse of family life, with its “continuing discussion and attribution of blame and responsibility” (Dunn 1988, 181, 179). In these circumstances, as Jerome Bruner has elaborated on Dunn’s observations, “[n]arrative accounts [. . .] are no longer neutral. They have rhetorical aims or illocutionary intentions that are not merely expository but rather partisan, designed to put the case [. . .] in behalf of a particular interpretation” (Bruner 1990, 85). Older children, exposed to wider social worlds beyond the family, may discriminate between genres of narrative appropriate to different contexts. Narratives between peers, for example, may differ from those with different categories of adult, and these may differ again from narratives produced as an accompaniment to symbolic play with toys. Narrative “competence”, in sum, cannot be abstracted from the situation in which it is elicited:

[A] child may convey deep personal feelings about himself in a conversation with a parent about a past experience and yet not be able deliberately to create a story about those feelings to share with others. (Engel 1999, 20)

Narratives are produced and experienced within “contexts of use” (Sutton-Smith 1986, 67-68); inherent to them is a recursive contextualism:

[A]ny single narrative is contingent on a wider set of narratives (a narrative context in which it is embedded) [. . .] To look at [. . .] a narrative outside of a wider narrative context, or a narrative context outside the social traditions, history, and practice of a group of people is both misleading and pointless. (Gee 1991, 3)

This is the problem for psychologists taking the experimental path to investigate children's narrative: in the laboratory, the only motivation to narrativize is the request of the experimenter, whereas in everyday life the contextual motivation not only gets a story going but shapes its content (Hudson and Shapiro 1991, 123).

The shaping of narrative by its contextual motivation can be seen clearly in the way that socio-cultural expectations of what constitutes a "good story" are grounded in conceptions of the social function of narrative - what stories are *for*. Shirley Brice Heath's classic study of language use in neighbouring black and white communities in the American south illustrates the point vividly (Heath 1983). In the first place it should be noted that what has been said above about narrative's iterability through paralinguistic ritualization is borne out by Heath's observation of how, in both communities (though in different ways), children experienced narratives as framed in particular ways. In the black community of Trackton, storytelling took place out on the street and was open to any child who could hold an audience through such techniques as emotional evaluation of the story, alliterative language play, gestures, sound effects and voices:

All these methods of calling attention to the story and its telling distinguish the speech event as a story, an occasion for audience and story-teller to interact pleasantly, and not simply to hear an ordinary recounting of events or actions. (Heath 1983, 171-2)

In the white (and strongly religious) community of Roadville stories were also framed, but in quite a different way: license to tell stories was strictly regulated by

social hierarchy, and children were not expected to tell stories in front of adults unless specifically requested to (Heath 1983, 149-58). Within these frames, the narratives themselves were shaped by perceptions as to the purpose of story-telling. In Roadville, where the influence of Biblical parables was strong, the stories characteristically took the form of narratives of mishaps (often told “against” the speaker him-/herself) leading to a moral or message at the end that pointed to the possibilities for future improvement.<sup>26</sup> Only “factual” stories were tolerated, exaggeration was frowned on, and narratives were shaped by the expectation that the purpose was “to reaffirm group membership and behavioral norms” (Heath 1983, 184). In Tracton, by contrast, the purpose of stories was seen as being to entertain and “to intensify social interactions” (Heath 1983, 166). Stories characteristically “assert[ed] individual strengths and powers” and “use[d] reality only as the germ of a highly creative fictionalized account” (Heath 1983, 184).<sup>27</sup>

Narrative, then, is *inherently* contextual, its contextual character inscribed deep into its internal, textual qualities. Social values and norms are internalized as types or genres of story. (With these generic structures then offering affordances for repetition (and hence variation).) And the differentiation of internal perspectives – for example the projected subjectivity of a protagonist (which may be an autobiographical self) – draws the listener in, co-opting him/her as the interpreter of represented subject-object relations. Here, narrative recapitulates in myriad different ways the symbol-forming, meaning-making dynamic of the joint attentional scene. In the joint attentional situation, “[t]he path from object to child and from child to

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<sup>26</sup> Heath cites an example of a woman’s anecdote about how she ruined some baking by gossiping on the telephone, which concludes: “Guess I’ll learn to keep my mind on my own business and off other folks’.” (Heath 1983, 151-2)

<sup>27</sup> On cross-cultural comparison of styles of oral narrative see Gee 1991, 8-17; Hicks 1991, 58-59.

object passes through another person” (Vygotsky 1978, 30), while in narrative the path from object to listener passes through the narrative’s projected subjectivities, its perspectives and embedded construals.

## **2. Writing and the Narrative Object**

In Section One we saw how narrative, generated originally by the joint attentional situation, itself becomes an object of joint attention through decontextualization and recontextualization. In this section I consider the difference that *writing* makes to these processes. In order to do so, for reasons I give in subsection 2.1, I shift from the ontogenetic domain that formed the focus of Section One to the domain of socio-cultural history: this is where *literature* enters my argument. In subsection 2.1 I highlight how theorists of literacy such as David Olson have pointed to the need to recover the *context* of oral language – its “illocutionary force” – as a key driver of the development of written language (and hence of literate consciousness). In subsection 2.2 I adopt this perspective in reviewing some observations on the nature of medieval narrative. Already, in subsection 1.4 above, we have seen that oral narrative is, paradoxically, both profoundly and inherently contextual, in the sense of bearing traces of its context deep in its texture, and at the same time open to decontextualization and recontextualization through repetition. Here, in subsection 2.2, we see, in the characteristic forms of medieval narrative, the interaction of this dynamic with the dynamic identified in subsection 2.1 towards an incorporation, a writing-in, of context. In subsection 2.3 I show how Boccaccio’s *Decameron* exemplifies the complex architecture of joint attentional perspectives

that can be generated by this drive towards the in-folding of contexts. One feature of this process is the paradox involved in telling a story about telling a story, involving as it does a strange recursive topology whereby the external becomes internal and *vice versa*: the affordance that written narrative offers for this dynamic topology will become important in Chapter Three.

## **2.1 The Impact of Writing**

One of Vygotsky's immediate concerns in psychological research – in line with the importance he ascribed to *mediation* in mental processes – was with the effects of literacy on cognition and consciousness. This issue was a real and pressing practical one in the context of post-Revolutionary Russia, with its vast illiterate peasant population.<sup>28</sup> But the lines are harder to draw in most modern societies, where oral and written discourses are mutually implicated at many levels. As David Olson has argued, in a literate culture, “literate thought” is a part of oral communication (Olson 1994, 281).<sup>29</sup> The development of young children's speech draws on episodes of joint attention with carers to simple texts such as single-word board books or picture-books. Later in development, speech absorbs language from television or cinema, which involves written scripts and treatments. Adult speech, in particular settings, takes up elements from a variety of written genres and styles of discourse (journalistic, bureaucratic, political/ideological). And, of course, the influence runs in the other direction too, as what Bakhtin called the “primary” or

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<sup>28</sup> For a summary of the research into the impact of literacy on cognition conducted by Vygotsky's pupil Alexander Luria, see Ong 1982, 49-57.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter Three subsection 2.1 for further discussion of “literate thought”.

“simple” speech genres of oral discourse are re-contextualized into the “secondary” or “complex” speech genres of written discourse (Bakhtin 1986, 61-3).

Given this deep mutual implication of speech and writing in modern literate societies, it is necessary – in order to unpick the particular contribution that the cognitive technology of writing makes to narrative – to turn from the developmental to the historical domain. Anthropologists (Goody 1968, 1987; Olson 1994) and evolutionary psychologists (Donald 1991, 2001) have been prominent proponents of the view, generalized by media theorists from the 1960s (McLuhan 1962, Ong 1982), that internalizations of different forms of mediation such as oral or written language restructure cognition and consciousness in different ways.<sup>30</sup> Olson (1994), for example, draws on the studies of Roy Harris (1986) and Albertine Gaur (1987) to argue that the origins of writing do not lie merely in the representation of speech: writing systems were created “not to represent speech, but to communicate information. The relation to speech is at best indirect” (Olson 1994, 67).<sup>31</sup> The adaptation of independently-evolved systems of graphic representation to the representation of language (an adaptation that can be seen, for example, in transitional forms such as hieroglyphics, with their mixture of logographic and phonographic signs (79-80)) resulted in language itself being seen, being brought to consciousness, in a new way:

[W]riting systems provide the concepts and categories for thinking about the structure of spoken language rather than the reverse. Awareness of linguistic

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<sup>30</sup> For a critique of this tradition see Harris 1989, and, for a reply to this critique, Menary 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Olson’s view contrasts with the orthodoxy that held in linguistics for much of the twentieth century. According to this orthodoxy, “[w]riting is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks” (Leonard Bloomfield quoted in Crystal 1997, 180). This view of writing as merely derivative of and dependent on speech was shared by Saussure, for whom writing was the “graphic representation of language” rather than language itself (Saussure 1959, 23-4; c.f. Derrida 1976 [1967]).



structure is a product of a writing system not a precondition for its development. (68)

Thus, for example, the concept of generative syntax can be traced back to Mesopotamian counting systems – to the crucial shift from a system that represents three sheep with three tokens to a system that represents them with two tokens, one denoting sheep and the other denoting the number (72). The encounter between writing and language

*allowed language to be seen as composed of words related by means of a syntax.* Writing thereby provides the model for the production of speech (in reading) and for the introspective awareness of speech as composed of grammatical constituents, namely, words. (77; emphasis in the original)

It is writing, Olson claims, that “is largely responsible for bringing language into consciousness” (xviii).

There is one important element of oral language that, according to Olson, is not easily accommodated in written form: this is its *illocutionary force* (89). Writing removes language from an immediate context that might help determine whether, for example, a given sequence of words is intended as a promise or a threat. As Wolfgang Iser observes in *The Act of Reading*:

The parting of the ways between literary and ordinary speech is to be observed in the matter of situational context. The fictional utterance seems to be made without reference to any real situation, whereas the speech act presupposes a situation whose precise definition is essential to the success of that act. (Iser 1978, 63)

Where illocutionary force can be expressed in the oral representation through voice and gesture, its written representation requires the development of new vocabularies and concepts (“he *insisted*”) (Olson 1994, 107-8). Olson notes, as an example of the effect on a language of widening and deepening literacy, the massive borrowings that

occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from Latin into English, a conspicuous part of which consisted of “speech act and mental state verbs” – words such as “assert” (1604), “concede” (1632), “contradict” (1570), “criticize” (1649), “explain” (1513), “infer” (1526), “predict” (1546) and “suggest” (1526) (108).<sup>32</sup>

The recovery of words’ illocutionary force becomes “a fundamental problem in reading”, according to Olson, “and specifying it a central problem in writing” (93) – hence the development of hermeneutics and rhetoric as arts/sciences of the *written*. Writing’s overcoming of this deficiency compared with spoken language involves its bringing-into-consciousness a previously latent aspect of language. And this bringing-to-consciousness has far-reaching consequences:

The history of literacy [. . .] is the struggle to recover what was lost in simple transcription. The solution is to turn non-lexical properties of speech such as stress and intonation into lexical ones; one announces that the proposition expressed is to be taken as an assumption or an inference and whether it is to be taken metaphorically or literally. But in making these structures explicit, that is representing them as concepts and marking them in a public language, those structures themselves become objects of reflection. That is what makes possible what we may think of as literate thought and literate discourse. (111)

Drawing on the theories of Eric Havelock (1982) and Bruno Snell (1960) on the “literate revolution” in fourth-century B.C. ancient Greece, Olson traces the concepts of modern western epistemology back to this textual revolution whereby the word becomes a thing, a conceptual object that can be reflected on at different times and from different points of view.

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<sup>32</sup> For an application of Olson’s and Donald’s theories to early modern literary narrative, see Hart 2011.

## 2.2 The Realization of Narrative Context

This imperative towards making context explicit can be seen in written narrative in the birth of the “narrator” as an explicit, thematized figure. The narrator in written narrative is on the surface a sign of continuity with oral traditions, but it is also – in its very markedness, its becoming-explicit – a sign of the important transformation demanded by the passage from the immediacy of speech to the decontextualized language of writing:

With the development of self-conscious tellers in non-traditional, written narratives [. . .] [t]he disparity between the narrator’s view of the characters and their views of themselves and each other, which is a constant in fiction, is augmented by a disparity between the narrator’s view of the story and the audience’s view of it. In any written narrative [. . .] there will be at least a potential, and usually an actual, ironic disparity between the knowledge and values of the author and those of his narrator. The traditional oral narrative consists rhetorically of a teller, his story, and an implied audience. The non-traditional, written narrative consists rhetorically of the *imitation*, or *representation*, of a teller, his story, and an implied audience. (Scholes et al 2006 [1966], 52-3)

In Medieval literature, the most obvious case of such thematization of the narrator and narrating is the tale- or novella-collection, in which stories are brought together by being represented as told by different characters occupying a framing situation or narrative: Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (mid-C14th), Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (late C14th), John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (late C14th) and Christine de Pizan’s *The Book of the City of the Ladies* (early C15th) are among the most well-known examples. Robert J. Clements and Joseph Gibaldi list fifty-five “principal novella collections” from Italy, France, England and Spain ranging in date from the mid-fourteenth to mid-seventeenth century (Clements and Gibaldi 1977, 229-31). Both Katherine Gittes and Clements and Gibaldi have described the influence of Arabic examples in the appearance of the frame narrative in medieval European literature

(Clements and Gibaldi 1977, 37-40; Gittes 1991, 21-67): the most famous of these narrative framings is Scheherazade's delaying of her execution by the sadistic Shariar in the late C13th *Thousand and One Nights*, but we find this model in other Eastern texts that were disseminated in Europe such as the *Seven Viziers* or *Sindibad-nama* (Clements and Gibaldi 1977, 38).<sup>33</sup>

These framed collections of narratives involve a significant paradox. As Viktor Shklovsky points out in his *Theory of Prose*, while they ostensibly celebrate the power and scope of orality, they are conceived, and only possible, as text. Devices such as that whereby Scheherazade delays her execution – or similar delaying framing situations in *The Seven Viziers* and the Mongol story collection of Buddhist origin, the *Ardzhi Barzhi* – “are confined,” Shklovsky observes, “to the domain of written literature.” (Shklovsky 1991 [1929], 66).<sup>34</sup> Clements and Gibaldi similarly highlight the “two faces” of the structure set up by a “*cornice*” or “framing-narrative” in Medieval novella-collections: “the tales framed by the various novelistic cornices employed from Boccaccio down through Giraldi and Marguerite de Navarre to Basile

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<sup>33</sup> According to Gittes, the “frame narrative” represented a distinctively Arabic contribution that was added to a literary tradition that Arabic culture had inherited from the Indian sub-continent, represented by large collections of tales such as the *Panchatantra* (C5th BC) (Gittes 1991, 9-19); c.f. Clements and Gibaldi 1977, 37-40). In the European appropriation of this tradition, most famously in Boccaccio and Chaucer, we find, firstly, an elaboration of the framing narrative and its characterization of the internal narrators and listeners, and, secondly, correspondences and resonances (both between individual tales and between individual tales and the framing narrative) that serve to impart forms of architectural unity to the whole. Gittes analyses this transition from Arabic to European forms of the frame tale in terms of a tension between Arabic notions of open-endedness and limitlessness, embodied in Arabic mathematics and architecture, and European (ultimately Greek) notions of symmetry, geometry and closure (Gittes 1991, 21-55).

<sup>34</sup> Although in his *Theory of Prose* Shklovsky points to this broad historical significance of the framing story, in terms of the relation between orality and textuality, in his own study of *The Decameron* he plays down the significance of the *cornice* and “sees no artistic unity in what he calls ‘the separate parts of the *Decameron*’” (Potter 1982, 68 quoting Viktor Shklovsky, *Lettura del Decameron: Dal Romanzo d'avventura al romanzo di carattere* (Translated by Alessandro Ivanov (Il Mulino, Bologna, 1969) 196.

and María de Zayas are simultaneously printed on paper for one to read as well as fictively recited by a storyteller” (Clements and Gibaldi 1977, 5-6).<sup>35</sup>

The making-explicit of context that we find in the framed tale-collection (where the tales are represented as told on a particular occasion for a particular purpose) is only one way in which narrative is held up at a distance, is framed, in medieval literature. In his survey of medieval narrative, Tony Davenport lists the following principal types of “narrative voice”:

the authoritative controlling voice of the preacher who becomes an omniscient narrator; less obtrusive versions of the tale-teller interpreting an acquired tale and sharing its interest with the audience, where the narrating voice may almost disappear but for the occasional ‘as the book says’ or ‘as I in town herde’; the autobiographical first-person narrator of dreams and supernatural experiences; the fictional storytellers who present narrative in a voice assumed by the poet in a kind of ventriloquism. (Davenport 2004, 53-4)

In all these cases the contextual situation of narrative is made explicit and foregrounded. In the first case, the preacher holds up his narrative as an *exemplum*, an illustration embedded in an extradiegetic discourse such as a sermon (Davenport 2004, 55-67). The second of Davenport’s categories captures an aspect of medieval narrative antithetical to modern conceptions of creativity: the perception of narrative not in terms of what we would think of today as “invention”, but in terms of the interpretation of existing texts. Medieval narrative “is nearly always based on ‘borrowed’ plot material” (Davenport 2004, 210). Eugène Vinaver, among others, has highlighted this interpretative dimension of the great Arthurian romance cycles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In expanding the Arthurian canon, authors such as Chrétien de Troyes drew on a “vast store of exotic traditions, written and oral”: the

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<sup>35</sup> Another layer to the complex relationship between orality and literacy in medieval literature is constituted by the fact that at this time silent reading was still a rarity: characteristically, texts would be read out loud, either to oneself or to others (Coleman 1996).

skill of the poet lay not in making things up, but in bringing out the meaning of what was already there (Vinaver 1971, 16-17).<sup>36</sup> According to Clements and Gibaldi, the medieval novella collections were informed by “the rhetorical view that *inventio* (from *invenire*, to come upon) entails the ‘discovery’ and subsequent ingenious reworking of already existent materials” (Clements and Gibaldi 1977, 13).<sup>37</sup> We even find the same “double level of discourse” (Davenport 2004, 44), the same presentation and interpretation of a narrative through a narrative, in Davenport’s penultimate category — the first-person dream narrative — for these too are “framed narratives which offer the reader two related but separate states of understanding, the waking consciousness of a first-person narrator figure, often given an apparently autobiographical identity, and the reporting of a dreamer figure” (Davenport 2004, 53-4).<sup>38</sup>

In all these cases stories are not simply “communicated”: they are *held up*, they are *presented* as objects for interpretation by author and audience – in other words, by a joint, intersubjective attention. That joint attention of author and reader is directed not just at the story itself, but also at the manner of its telling, or the possibilities for its interpretation. Evelyn Vitz, in a critique of the applicability of structuralist, “classical” narratology to medieval narrative, has argued that in the

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<sup>36</sup> As the author of the *Livre des Rois* writes: “The story is chaff, the meaning wheat; the meaning is the fruit, the story the branch” (quoted in Vinaver 1971, 17).

<sup>37</sup> Pier Massimo Forni writes that for Boccaccio, *inventio* “has to do with the *provenance* and *production* of texts. Where does the author *find* the *novella*? How? How does he retrieve it from the storehouse of written or oral traditions?” (Forni 1996, 3)

<sup>38</sup> Citing Genette’s analysis of “narrative levels” in *Narrative Discourse*, Davenport points out how the medieval dream narrative complicates and problematizes the distinction between an “extradiegetic” and “intradiegetic” narrator: there is, he writes, a “doubleness” about these narrators that places them both within and outside the dream (Davenport 2004, 44).

latter, narrative elements cannot be treated in isolation from “the broader rhetorical *discours* of a text”:

This bracketing-off procedure is especially impoverishing with respect to medieval literature, where *why* the story is being told - for what purpose, to what audience - is often [. . .] crucial [. . .] (Vitz 1989, 8)

Medieval narrative can thus be said to have a characteristically *situated* quality. In the transition from orality to writing, illocutionary force is made explicit, and the acts of narration and interpretation made manifest. As Davenport writes of the *Canterbury Tales*:

Chaucer [. . .] turns his pilgrims into critics as well as narrators and it is through the dynamics of the process of narrating and recording audience response that Chaucer creates his complex layers of narrative illusion. (Davenport 2004, 250)

This making-explicit of illocutionary force, this folding-in of context into text, creates new opportunities for the exercise of the basic narrative dynamic of joint attention. The transition to the writing of text – and the consequent manifestation of context within the text – multiplies indefinitely the possibilities for recursive re-contextualization, opening up new fields of expression for the generative power of that dynamic.

### **2.3 Joint Attentional Structures in Boccaccio’s *Decameron***

Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1349-53) exemplifies this process, returning as it does, again and again, to the paradoxes whereby a story can find “within” itself the “outside” of another story (and so on), or can be repeated (recontextualized) so that its “outside” becomes the “inside” of a different story, a different context (and so on). At the centre of the text’s various “levels” – the hinge around which they revolve – is an idealised vision of joint attention: the figure of the ten young women and men

seated in a circle and each telling a story, every day for ten days. But this idealised vision of communal contemplation and entertainment is itself framed by the story of the young people's escape from plague-stricken Florence: this is a narrative which, in contrast to the idealization that it encloses, is characterised by a grittily documentary description of disease and social breakdown.<sup>39</sup> And this narrative is in turn framed by prefatory material in which Boccaccio, the author, addresses his readership concerning the nested narratives he is about to recount.<sup>40</sup>

This nesting of levels of joint attention is a process that reaches down from the framing *Cornice* into the substance of the tales themselves: more than simply a formal pattern, it becomes a generative principle of narrative. Many of the stories in the *Decameron* are stories about stories – stories in which the pivot-point of the narrative is the telling of a story, the speaking of a particular phrase, even the uttering of a single word. In such cases, the re-telling of a story in a different context is more than just a re-framing: the relation with context becomes an interactive one, whereby the re-telling itself changes the nature of the context, encompassing and altering that which had previously framed it.<sup>41</sup> Such stories make up the entirety of the First Day, and the theme is made explicit on the Sixth Day, when the young

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<sup>39</sup> In interpretative terms, Boccaccio scholars have read the transition from plague to storytelling world in different ways: Joy Hambuechen Potter, drawing on anthropology, sees it as a “liminal” rite of passage, a social ritual of cleansing and renewal (Potter 1982, 11-40); Thomas Stillinger reads it in terms of a transition and complex interplay between metonymy and metaphor, “a double perspective [ . . . ] which seals the *Decameron* as a paradoxical object, both a mathematically complete totality and a space of boundless play” (Stillinger 2004, 50); Richard Kuhns has drawn a connection between Boccaccio's design for the *Decameron* and the contemporary artistic form of the fresco (Kuhns 2005, 29-52).

<sup>40</sup> Including the various forms of prefatory and interpolated “authorial” material, Joy Hambuechen Potter has identified five distinct levels of formal “framing” making up the *cornice* of the *Decameron* (Potter 1982, 120-51).

<sup>41</sup> “[I]n the *Decameron* not only is action often a product of speech, but speech can be the only action of narrative interest. More precisely: ‘comedic rhetoric, technique of discourse, the articulation of a dialogue, may mark the turning point of a plot or define the nature of a plot or define the nature of a character; but they also constitute at times the essential structural nucleus of a story.’” (Forni 1996, 89; quoting Mario Baratto, *Realtà e stile nel Decameron*)



people are instructed by their “Queen” for the day to tell stories concerning “those who, on being provoked by some verbal pleasantry, have returned like for like, or who, by a prompt retort or shrewd manoeuvre, have avoided danger, discomfiture or ridicule” (Boccaccio 1972 [1353], 481). In the third story of the first day (I3), a rich Jewish moneylender, pressed by the Sultan of Egypt to say “which of the three laws, whether the Jewish, the Saracen, or the Christian, you deem to be truly authentic”, gets out of the tricky situation by telling the Sultan the story of a man who distributes as a bequest to his three sons and their heirs a valuable ring and two identical duplicates, and hence ensures that it will never be known who was the favoured one. The telling of the story effectively re-contextualizes the original question. We find the same pattern of narrative re-contextualization as a means of turning the tables on those in a position of power in I7, where a petitioner opens a Duke’s purse by telling him the story of how a wealthy abbot, in a moment of revelation, repents of his miserliness.<sup>42</sup> And in III3 the re-contextualization of narrative is given ridiculous physical form in the person of a friar who acts as an unwitting go-between, a vehicle, for an adulterous liaison, relaying narratives of pretended protestation that are received (and intended to be received by the original sender) as narratives of invitation.<sup>43</sup>

The celebrated first tale in the collection – the tale of the false saint, Ciappelletto – illustrates both this thematic concern with the re-contextualization of utterances, and the way in which the *Decameron*’s layers of textual framing, rather

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<sup>42</sup>“Day I may be seen as a sustained lesson in the power of wit to reform delinquent authorities who would not tolerate direct criticism from their subordinates.” (Marcus 1979, 27)

<sup>43</sup> Pier Massimo Forni has drawn attention to the way in which the humour of many of Boccaccio’s tales arises from such processes of realization, whereby abstract ideas or metaphors are actualized (and thus rendered ridiculous) by being translated into physical terms (Forni 1996, 57-88).

than being merely an ornament, interact to ironic and ambiguous effect with perspectives embedded deep in the narrative itself. The “rubric” (the short authorial, textual intervention that heads each of the tales) gives a bald summary of the plot:

*Ser Cepperello deceives a holy friar with a false confession, then he dies; and although in life he was a most wicked man, in death he is reputed to be a Saint, and is called Saint Ciappelletto.* (Boccaccio 1972 [1353] 68)

With the beginning of the narration proper, this authorial framing is superseded by the frame constituted by the shared knowledge and perspective of the narrator and his audience (the young people seated in the circle). Pier Massimo Forni has analysed how the introductions with which each storyteller begins his/her tale characteristically contain a tension between rhetorical elements which “situate the content of the stories within a context of normalcy” and elements which signal what is unexpected, new (*nuovo*, from which *novella* is derived) (Forni 1996, 44).

In the case of this opening tale, the narrator, Panfilo, begins by telling of a wealthy merchant, Musciatto Franzesi, who, finding himself overwhelmed by commitments, appoints a notary called Ciappelletto to act as his agent on some business he has in Burgundy. As Forni observes, Panfilo’s presentation of the initial situation “discreetly underlies the normality of the occurrence” from the shared perspective of narrator and audience (Forni 1996, 44):

But finding that his affairs, *as is usually the case with merchants*, were entangled here, there, and everywhere [. . .] (Boccaccio, 1972 [1353], 69 (emphasis added))

As against this, there are rhetorical elements that foreground what is remarkable about what is to be told – and that also, in doing so, establish a construal, a possible interpretation, of the narrative material that is to follow. In the case of this first tale, this opening orientation towards the material is particularly extended. Panfilo tells

his audience that he is going to tell them “of one of His marvellous works”, and then attempts, in knotted, tortuous language, to show that the story he is about to tell – the story of a thoroughly evil man who comes to be mistakenly venerated as a saint – in fact (and contrary to first appearances) supports a belief in Divine Providence. There is, thus, both a context of normalcy, of a world in which merchants are known to behave in certain ways, and (to use Labov’s term) an orientation to something new – an orientation which involves, in turn, a directing of attention towards an aspect, a construal, of the material.

Panfilo tells how Ciappelletto – a murderer, blasphemer, rapist, robber, glutton and drunkard (in fact “perhaps the worst man ever born” (Boccaccio 1972 [1353] 71)) – is sent to Burgundy by the merchant and lodges in the house of two Florentine brothers who know of his reputation. Soon after arriving at the brothers’ house he falls ill, and, overhearing the two brothers discuss their fears that his death will bring disgrace on their house (either because he would die unconfessed, or because he would confess and thereby reveal their guest’s true nature), announces to them that they have no need to worry: they should go ahead and send for a friar, and he will “set yours affairs and my own neatly in order” (Boccaccio 1972 [1353] 73). The friar – a pious and respected priest – arrives to take the confession, and the brothers, not trusting Ciappelletto to keep his word, hide behind a partition to listen. According to custom, the friar asks the man a series of questions: Has he ever committed the sin of lust? Of gluttony? Of avarice? Has he ever lost his temper? Has he borne false witness? The dying man is diffident and modest in his replies. He is reluctant to answer the first question, lest he “sin by vainglory”, but eventually admits that he is “a virgin as pure as on the day I came forth from my mother’s womb”. The pattern is repeated with the other questions: against the resistance of

the dying man's modesty and the exacting moral standards he applies to himself, the friar draws out a story of the man's life - a story of a blameless life in which the sins are so trivial that they merely serve to highlight the virtue that surrounds them. The climax of the scene comes when the dying man bursts into tears, eventually admitting that once, when he was a little boy, he cursed his mother (Boccaccio 1972 [1353] 73-8). At the man's funeral, the friar tells the congregation Ciappelletto's story "with a torrent of words that the people of the town believed implicitly." When the service is over the people throng round the body, tearing clothes from it: "and those who succeeded in grabbing so much as a tiny fragment felt they were in paradise itself." The story of the dead man's virtue is passed on and repeated:

The fame of his saintliness, and of the veneration in which he was held, grew to such proportions that there was hardly anyone who did not pray for his assistance in time of trouble, and they called him, and call him still, Saint Ciappelletto. Moreover it is claimed that through him God has wrought many miracles, and that He continues to work them on behalf of whoever commends himself devoutly to this particular saint. (Boccaccio 1972 [1353] 81)

Through re-contextualization, Ciappelletto's false confession is amplified, its reverberations rippling out even to the here-and-now of the narrator Panfilo and his audience ("and they called him, and call him still, Saint Ciappelletto").

Franco Fido, following the observations of Mario Baratto, has pointed to the comic effect in the story of "speeches that grow in concentric circles around the bed of the dying, and then dead, notary" (Fido 2004, 62). It is precisely this "nested" structure - by which narrative interactions between two parties are themselves recursively narrativized, are contextualized or recontextualized by being subject to another layer of joint attention - that imparts to the tale as a whole an ambiguity and

interpretive instability.<sup>44</sup> At each level, the communicative situation of the next level (a narrative, a conversation, a confession, a sermon) is held up as an object of attention and interpretation. The relationship between the levels is not directly “communicative”, but interpretative. The cognitive process whereby the reader moves between the levels does not involve dyadic relations between codes and meanings, but, rather, triadic interpretations of dyadic communications.

Thus in progressing through the story, the reader passes through a succession of contextualizations and re-contextualizations: the textual framing of the narration; the narrator Panfilo introducing and narrating his tale to his listeners; Ciappelletto overhearing the Florentine brothers discussing their dilemma; the Florentine brothers overhearing Ciappelletto’s confession to the friar; the reader and Panfilo’s listeners overhearing the friar’s address to the parish congregation. Millicent Marcus has described the sequence in terms of a scale of deception and demystification:

Panfilo stands midway between two diametrically opposed publics: the deceived parish within the story, and the demystified reading public. The narrator knows the lie of Ciappelletto’s sainthood, yet he insists on seeing that forgery as proof of divine benevolence. Though Panfilo is aware of one level of deception, he is still the dupe of a kind of logic which insists on reading divine motivation into all human events. (Marcus 1979, 19)

But this progression through levels of joint attentional framing is not a straightforward linear one. There is also a non-linear, destabilizing oscillation between inside and outside that is an important part of the tale’s openness and indeterminacy. The heart of the tale is the celebrated comic scene of Ciappelletto’s confession. Listening to the confession are the Florentine brothers, who are amazed by the insouciance with which he deftly hoodwinks the friar:

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<sup>44</sup> Fido (2004, 60-64) has described the rich tradition of critical interpretation that this ambiguity has engendered.

[T]hey were so amused that every so often they nearly exploded with mirth, and they said to each other:

“What manner of man is this whom neither [. . .] fear of the death which he sees so close at hand, nor even the fear of God, before whose judgement he knows he must shortly appear, have managed to turn from his evil ways, or persuade him to die any differently from the way he has lived?” (Boccaccio 1972 [1353] 79).

As Marcus has observed, this innermost circle of the Ciappelletto story projects back, beyond the tortuous justifications of the narrator, to “the demystified perspective” of the reader (Marcus 1979, 22). The “outside” of the tale’s many layers of joint attentional re-contextualization is to be found, too, at its very “inside”.

The complex perspectivalism of the first story sets a tone by which the rest of the book is intended to be read. Tzvetan Todorov, in *Grammaire du Décaméron*, calls this interaction between internal and external perspectives the “problème du témoin”: “Boccaccio,” he observes, “is always concerned to introduce a character, often a secondary character, who serves as a witness, and with whom the reader can identify” (Todorov 1969, 15). In the story of Ciappelletto, the two Florentine brothers play exactly this role of an internal witness who is also a stand-in for an external observers at a higher textual level. These internal witnesses constitute a problem for Todorov because they lie outside his structuralist analysis of the tales’ story grammar. This self-imposed restriction means that Todorov puts aside the *cornice* entirely and treats the tales as freestanding narrative entities.<sup>45</sup> The same is true – in a different way, and from a quite different theoretical perspective – of Wayne C. Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth is at pains to show how Boccaccio’s narratives are shaped by the demands not of mimesis but of rhetoric: hence the importance of

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<sup>45</sup> “The material to be analysed will not, strictly speaking, be the *Decameron* as a book, but the hundred stories which it contains: none of the problems posed by the framing will be taken into consideration here” (Todorov 1969, 13).

the evaluative commentaries which preface the tales and lay out the terms by which the narrative is to be understood (Booth 1983 [1963], 15). Rhetorical, narratorial particularity, he argues, is the hallmark of the *Decameron*:

Boccaccio's artistry lies not in adherence to any one supreme manner of narration but rather in his ability to order various forms of telling in the service of various forms of showing. (16)

Citing Erich Auerbach's well-known critique of the *Decameron* in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Booth observes that "[t]he standards of judgment change so radically [. . .] that it is difficult to discern any figure in Boccaccio's carpet" (15). Booth's purely rhetorical approach, which places great weight on the figure of the "narrator", means that the *Decameron* becomes – as it does for Todorov, though for quite different reasons – a splintered, broken work.

The dimension that is missing in Booth's analysis is the *presentation* of the rhetoric, the embedding of it in a context which makes it, itself, an object of joint attention. The tendency of this perspectivalism is towards the undermining of any fixed viewpoint. Thus Millicent Marcus has argued that Boccaccio's approach to narrative "implies more a *way* of interpreting than the *end results* of that interpretation" (Marcus 1979, 5). The key to this new "way of interpreting", according to Marcus, is an open-endedness achieved through the generation of a "new, non-dogmatic fictional space" for the narrative – a space that makes room for ironic reworkings of the medieval *exemplum* tradition:

[P]rior to Boccaccio, prose narrative was used to exemplify eternal, fixed truths [. . .] Fictions were always pressed into the service of external dogma, and the narrative word was seen as a vehicle of the divine order it exemplified. But Boccaccio makes a radical break from this exemplary tradition, freeing his stories from any absolute interpretive systems, and clearing a new, non-dogmatic fictional space [. . .] The author must disabuse his public of the

tendency to interpret stories in exemplary terms by making the *exemplum* discredit itself. (Marcus 1979, 11-12)<sup>46</sup>

In Book XIV of *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, a defense of fiction and poetry that he wrote after the *Decameron*, Boccaccio describes how stories have meanings that transcend their purely linguistic, textual properties (their “surface”):

There was never a maundering old woman, sitting with others late of a winter’s night at the home fireside making up tales of Hell, the fates, ghosts, and the like - much of it pure invention - that she did not feel beneath the surface of her tale, as far as her limited mind allowed, at least some meaning - sometimes ridiculous no doubt - with which she tries to scare the little ones, or divert the young ladies, or amuse the old, or at least show the power of fortune. (Boccaccio 1956 [1360-74] quoted in Marcus 1979, 4)

Boccaccio is concerned here with the *process* of meaning rather than its end result. As developmental psychologist John Shotter has observed, meanings “[cannot] exist independently and in isolation from the processes in which they are produced as a human activity [. . .] ‘[M]eaning’ is best thought of as a verb, not a noun” (Shotter 1978, 46).

But as Marcus’s description of a new interpretive “space” reminds us, there is a non-linear aspect to this process of meaning-making, an aspect constituted by re-contextualization, by the embedding of action or narration in different forms of joint attention. It is precisely this non-linear aspect that is missing in the accounts of Todorov and Booth – both of whom, in different ways, are committed to essentially linear approaches: in Todorov’s case, the linearity of narrative “syntax”; in Booth’s case the linearity of a dyadic communication between narrator” and listener/reader.

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<sup>46</sup> Marcus is here summarizing the argument of Salvatore Battaglia, *Giovanni Boccaccio e la riforma della narrativa* (Liguori, Naples, 1969).



### **3. Joint Attentional Semiotics and the Prism of Character**

In Section Two I was concerned with how the *writing* of narrative offers affordances for recursive embedding, for a non-linear architecture to the narrative. In this section I bring this perspective to bear on the development of character. In particular, I take as a case study *Don Quixote*, tracing in particular how character and action are mediated by a dense system of interacting perspectives. This approach to *Don Quixote* is not new, of course, but what I hope to demonstrate is the congruence of this Cervantine criticism with the joint attentional approach developed in the first two sections of this chapter. In subsection 3.1 I show how the frame of *Don Quixote* differs importantly from that of the *Decameron* in that the context incorporated into the text here is not the oral telling of stories but the *reading* and looking at manuscripts and books: this frame seeps deep into the substance of the narrative, not least in the person of Don Quixote himself. In subsection 3.2 I aim to demonstrate the profound *intersubjectivity*, the *mediation*, of perception in *Don Quixote*: indeed, I suggest, the relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the spine of the narrative, represents a distinctly joint attentional drama, composed as it is of the consonances and dissonances within their shared perceptions of the events unfolding around them. In subsection 3.3 I look at how this concept of mediated perspective has been carried forward in the work of René Girard and Rick Altman, and also highlight its divergence from purely objectivist views of character.

#### **3.1 From Manuscript to Print: The Case of “Don Quixote”**

If the *Decameron* is a book that enacts the passage from orality to writing, *Don Quixote* is one that is concerned above all with the dissemination of writing through print. In the former, the central figure is that of the oral narrator; in the

latter, it is that of the solitary reader. Don Quixote himself springs to life directly out of his private reading of chivalric romances: we learn little about his life before the moment, nearing the age of fifty, when he is overcome by bibliomania. And that bibliomania involves, crucially, the desire not just to imitate what he has read, but also that he himself should be read about and become famous in the same way. Before setting out on his first expedition, he invokes the “sage” who will one day write his history:

As our brand-new adventurer journeyed along, he talked to himself, saying: ‘Who can doubt that in ages to come, when the authentic story of my famous deeds comes to light, the sage who writes of them will say, when he comes to tell of my first expedition so early in the morning [. . . ]’ (Cervantes 1950 [1605/15], 36)

Along with the shield, lance and helmet that will become physical symbols of his new identity, he selects pseudonyms for himself and for his horse: his actions are to be inscribed as something to be read by others. Indeed, he is introduced not just as a reader, but as someone who has considered writing romances himself, and “[n]o doubt he would have done so, and perhaps successfully, if other greater and more persistent preoccupations had not prevented him” (32). Quixote is a creature of reading – of the reading he has done, and of the reading he anticipates (correctly, though not quite in the way he imagined) will be done *of* him. To use the term that Cervantes employs, the history of Don Quixote is not a fully presented biographical life, but a “*caso*” – a “case” of reading.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> As Edward Dudley writes: “[T]he focus [. . .] is the case/story of his madness. The narrative opens with the protagonist’s decline into madness and closes with his recovery. There is no interest in the life of the person who becomes Don Quixote but only in the case of his madness and the telling of the tale of the case” (Dudley 1997, 123).

It is not just the story of Don Quixote that it is a story about reading: the same is true of “the story of the story” (Dudley 1997, 195) – the story of how, through various acts of interpretation, translation and compilation, by a variety of “authors”, “translators” and “narrators”, the “history” of Don Quixote comes to take the form of a book.<sup>48</sup> This story is one that seems to begin straight-forwardly enough:

In a certain village in La Mancha, which I do not wish to name, there lived not long ago a gentleman – one of those who have always a lance in the rack, an ancient shield, a lean hack, and a greyhound for coursing.  
(Cervantes 1950 [1605/15], 31)

Here, surely, we have a “narrator” in command of his materials – with direct access to the people, places and events he describes; with the ability to mediate those things to his audience (like the narrators in the *Decameron*) by orienting them according to their frames of reference (“one of those who . . .”); with a narrator’s prerogative of selection from his materials (“which I do not wish to name”). But at the end of Chapter Eight, at the climax of Don Quixote’s battle with the Basque, there is a crisis in the “story of the story” with the appearance of a new character, an “author of this history”.

But the unfortunate thing is that the author of this history left the battle in suspense at this critical point, with the excuse that he could find no more records of Don Quixote’s exploits than those related here. It is true that the second author of this work would not believe that such a curious history could have been consigned to oblivion, or that the learned of La Mancha could have been so incurious as not to have in their archives or in their registries some documents relating to this famous knight. So, strong in this opinion, he did not despair of finding the conclusion of this delightful story and, by the favour of Heaven, found it, as shall be told in our second part. (74-5)

The next chapter then begins:

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<sup>48</sup> “The story of the story underwrites all of Don Quixote’s adventures like the invisible attraction of a rarely seen planet” (Dudley 1997, 195).

In the first part of this history we left the valiant Basque and the famous Don Quixote with naked swords aloft [. . .] At this critical point our delightful history stopped short and remained mutilated, our author failing to inform us where to find the missing part. This caused me great annoyance, for my pleasure from the little I had read turned to displeasure at the thought of the small chance there was of finding the rest of this delightful story. (75)

This “I” then tells how he goes off in search of other sources, and discovers in a street market in Toledo an Arabic manuscript, which, when a “Spanish-speaking Moor” begins to translate it for him, turns out to be an account of Don Quixote written by “Cide Hamete Benengeli, Arabic historian”. The remainder of the novel consists of the account by this “I” of an oral translation from the Arabic of Cide Hamete’s manuscript, which itself is a reading and gathering together of other sources.

This ambiguous transition has given rise to conflicting interpretations (Mancing 1982, 192-3). James Parr (1988), for example, offers an interpretation that adheres to classical narratological categories of “narrators” and “narrative levels”. According to this interpretation, the last paragraph of Chapter Eight marks a fundamental break in the narration. At this point, Parr argues, “the speaker of the first eight chapters falls silent” (Parr 1988, 10): this final paragraph of the chapter is an interpolation by a figure he calls the “supernarrator”. This “supernarrator” interrupts the “author” of the first eight chapters and introduces (through the reference to “the second author of this work”) a quite different voice who then takes over as the “narrator” who discovers the Cide Hamete manuscript and relates the rest of the story.<sup>49</sup> Parr’s belief that “[a] reasoned approach to the art of the *Quixote* must begin by identifying the narrative voices and then proceed to establish a hierarchy of

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<sup>49</sup> Parr adds that behind this “second author” the “supernarrator” continues to be present as an “anonymous editorial voice” that “decides when to begin and end chapters [. . .] [and] has added the chapter headings” (Parr 1988, 11).

authority among them” leads him to the view that “Cide Hamete” (or, more accurately, Cide Hamete’s text, his “history”) is “not to be taken seriously as a part of the fiction” because he is “not a narrator” (Parr 1988, 9). Because he is “never permitted to speak in his own voice” (22), he cannot be accorded a place in the hierarchy of voices.<sup>50</sup>

But it is possible to read the reference in the final paragraph of Chapter Eight to the “second author” in a different way. For Carroll B. Johnson (1990) there is a continuity in the narration. The term “second author”, according to Johnson, is merely a self-reference. (And in the next, final sentence of the chapter this “narrator” is thus merely referring to himself in the third person.) This “narrator” is, then, identical to the “I” of the opening of the next chapter, where the “narrator” has reverted to the first person to describe himself. According to this interpretation, the term “second author” does not mean “coming second” in a linear sequence, but rather something more like “secondary”, in the sense of “dependent on”, an “interpreter of” – secondary, that is, in a non-linear rather than linear sense (Johnson 1990, 51).

Johnson’s interpretation, which is more elegant and parsimonious than that of Parr, has an implication that he doesn’t, however, explore. It is true, as Parr points out, that there is a shift in the narration with the last paragraph of Chapter Eight. But it is not a switch between one “narrator” and another: it is the action of a reader putting down a book (and then going out into the streets to look for another one). According to this reading of the passage, the reference in the first sentence to

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<sup>50</sup> This exclusion seems perverse in view of the frequency with which Cide Hamete’s text is mentioned by the narrator (often to praise it, occasionally to criticise or mock it), and in view of the associations that are suggested between Cide Hamete and the “sage enchanters” whom Don Quixote imagines to be manipulating his perceptions.

“this history” (i.e. to the one that breaks off in the middle of the battle with the Basque) is merely to one of the many sources that this reader has already alluded to as having been consulted by him.<sup>51</sup> If, then, a “narrator” is defined as having privileged, unmediated access to the diegetic world, then Johnson is mistaken in describing the “I” who announces himself in the opening sentence of the novel as a “narrator”: he is, rather, a reader who reports on his reading. Indeed, in this sense there can be said to no “narrator” in *Don Quixote* at all – there is merely a reader who (a) in the first eight chapters reports on his reading of various different sources, including the truncated manuscript; (b) surfaces briefly as an active agent at the beginning of Chapter Nine, when he goes out in search of new reading material; and (c) thereafter reports on his reading of Cide Hamete’s manuscript, as mediated by the Moorish translator. The “narrator” of *Don Quixote* does not narrate events (though of course for long stretches he may seem to): he narrates a reading of texts. *Don Quixote*, as Edward Dudley has written, “is constituted as a product of reading, and the identifying activity of the narrator is that of a reader of texts” (Dudley 1997, 119).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In the second paragraph of Chapter One we read: “They say that his surname was Quixada or Quesada – for there is some difference of opinion amongst authors on this point” (31). And in the following chapter: “There are authors who say that the first adventure he met was that of the pass of Lapice. Others say it was the windmills. But what I have been able to discover of the matter and what I have found written in the annals of La Mancha, is that he rode all day [...]” (Cervantes 1950 [1605/15], 37).

<sup>52</sup> Dudley argues that this interpretive dimension of *Don Quixote*, by which “narration” and reading/interpretation are mutually involved, connects the novel with the “hermeneutics of romance” in ways that go beyond the merely parodic: chivalric romance involved the “translation” of originally Celtic tales, and the “quest” of the hero is paralleled by the quest for an authentic source for the story. (Dudley 1997).

### 3.2 Leaping off the Page: Ekphrasis and Character in *Don Quixote*

*Don Quixote*, then, is resistant to reading in terms of narrators transmitting information. Rather, it is a form of *writing* – one that represents a form of attention to an object (Cide Hamete’s manuscript, for most of the book) that is shared between the writer, his Arabic translator and, through the mediation of print, the reader:<sup>53</sup> it is a *description* of an object, a manuscript. This joint attention on, and description of, the *object* is foregrounded:

On the first sheet was a very life-like picture of Don Quixote’s fight with the Basque. Both were shown in the very postures the story describes, with swords aloft, the one covered by his shield, the other by his cushion, and the Basque’s mule so life-like that you could tell from a mile off that it was a hired one. (Cervantes 1950 [1605/15], 77)

Don Quixote leaps off the page by a process of *ekphrasis* – the “speaking out” of the object. Under the form of attention and language directed towards it, the description made of it, the object “speaks forth” in its own “voice”: it shakes off the inertia of objecthood and joins the lived temporality of the thoughts and language of those who are attending to it.<sup>54</sup> In Part One, Cervantes literalizes this process around the long

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<sup>53</sup> The theme of joint attention on textual objects is pursued throughout the novel – most obviously in the scenes in Part One in which the merits of chivalric romance literature are debated (the burning of Don Quixote’s library (Part 1 Chapter 6); the discussion between the innkeeper and the priest (Part 1 Chapter 32); the discussion between the priest and the canon (Part 1 Chapters 47 and 48)), and, in Part Two, the various discussions between readers of the published Part One and the false continuation of it by “Avellaneda”. A related form of “textuality” – one in which ekphrasis takes the form of action – can be seen in the many scenes in which characters, in order to humour or deceive Quixote, re-enact *topoi* from chivalric romance. These re-enactments begin in the very first expedition, when the first innkeeper knights Don Quixote (Part 1 Chapter 3). The principle such episode in Part One is the extended ruse by which the priest and the barber (co-opting Dorothea as “the princess Micomicona”) “enchant” Quixote and lure him back to his village (Part 1 Chapters 37, 46, 47, 49 and 52). In Part Two, such re-enactments dominate Quixote’s stay in the castle of the Duke and Duchess (Part 2 Chapters 31-41, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52 and 55-7).

<sup>54</sup> Mario Klarer has noted that usage of the term “ekphrasis” has narrowed since its classical origins: “According to the rhetorical handbooks of late Antiquity, the term “ekphrasis” (Latin *descriptio*) subsumed any verbal description of visual phenomena, including depictions of battles, plagues, fortifications, funerals and artefacts [...] In contrast [...], contemporary word and image scholarship defines the term as a literary description of real or imagined pieces of art” (Klarer 2005, 133). By contrast, contemporary usage is typically in terms of a literary description of a real or imagined pieces of art: ekphrasis has come to be seen as a form of self-reflexivity – a “double representation”, the verbal representation of a visual representation. In aligning the term ekphrasis with the concept of

series of embedded narratives that begins with the Goatherd's story of the unrequited passion of the dead Chrysostom for Marcela (Part One Chapter 12) and continues through Cardenio's story of his thwarted love for Lucinda (Part One Chapters 24 and 27); Dorothea's tale, which interlinks with that of Cardenio, of her betrayal by Don Ferdinand (Part One Chapter 28); the story of "Princess Micomicona" (Part One Chapter 30); "The Tale of Foolish Curiosity" (Part One Chapters 33-5); and the tale of the escape of the Christian captive (Part One Chapters 39-41). In each of these cases, with the exception of the "Tale of Foolish Curiosity" (a "found manuscript"), the narrative "speaks out", crossing the line from narrative "object" to living presence:<sup>55</sup> either it is one of the protagonists of the tale who stands before the listeners as narrator, or one of the characters from the tale subsequently appears in the diegetic world.<sup>56</sup> Marcela, the cold-hearted *femme fatale* of the goatherd's tale, steps forward at Chrysostom's funeral to defend herself before a hostile crowd (Part 1 Chapter 14); Cardenio, Dorothea, Lucinda and Don Ferdinand are reunited and reconciled to their rightful partners (Part 1 Chapter 36); the Christian captive is reunited with his Moorish protector and lover Zoraida (Part 2 Chapter 47). When Don Quixote makes

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joint attention, I am reverting to the older, broader conception of the term, which focusses on the joint construction by writer and reader, through words, of (visually perceived) objects, rather than restricting those objects to artistic representations. (The latter case can be accommodated within the model I propose by seeing the representational quality of the object as a further, "nested" level of joint attention within the joint attention summoned by the verbal ekphrasis.) David Herman has argued that "the area of overlap between narrative and description can [. . .] be substantial" since "descriptive and narrative functions can be fulfilled by one and the same textual structure – and reciprocally, many different structures can serve, say, a descriptive function – depending on the particularities of communicative contexts" (Herman 2009, 89-90).

<sup>55</sup> In the ironic digression that opens Part 2 Chapter 44, the one exception to this rule, the "Tale of Foolish Curiosity", is reported as having been picked out by Cide Hamete as an example of his habit in Part One of "resort[ing] to short tales [. . .] which are, in a sense, separate from the story" – an indulgence which, reluctantly, he announces himself to be foregoing in Part Two.

<sup>56</sup> The sense of these characters being narrative "objects" which have come to life is supported by the generically "fictional" nature of the embedded tales, which draw on familiar *topoi* from pastoral literature and Byzantine romance.



contact, literally, with the anguished, self-lacerating Cardenio, the moment is marked by silent, deep communion:

Don Quixote [. .] advanced to embrace him, and held him for some time clasped in his arms, as if he had known him for a long while. The other [. .] after allowing himself to be embraced drew back a little and, placing his hands on Don Quixote's shoulders, stood gazing at him, as if to see whether he knew him [. . .] (191)

Cardenio's antics in the mountains inspire Don Quixote to "imitate Amadis, and to act here the desperate, raving, furious lover" (203): direct contact with the quasi-fictional Cardenio releases his creative energies.

This *ekphrasis*, this "speaking out" of a narrative, textual object, is echoed at the beginning of Part Two when Quixote and Sancho themselves, as physical, embodied beings, are encountered by those, such as the Bachelor Sampson Carrasco, who have hitherto known them only as "characters" in a book. Just as Quixote clasps Cardenio in his arms, so Sampson Carrasco goes down on his knees before the "real" Don Quixote and says: "Give me your hands, your Mightiness, Don Quixote de la Mancha" (486). Of these physical encounters between Don Quixote and his readers, Richard Predmore writes: "Nowhere in the novel is the illusion of Don Quixote's and Sancho's autonomous reality more successfully sustained than in the opening chapters of Part II. Here most convincingly knight and squire seem to stand outside the book that gave them life" (Predmore 1967, 12). As we shall see below, the process of *ekphrasis* by which Don Quixote leaps forth from the printed page into the hands of Sampson Carrasco suggests to the reader, through the embedded perspective they momentarily share, the way the reader will make more "real" still the "real" Don Quixote.

Thus characters in *Don Quixote* can spring to life by a process of ekphrasis: the object “speaks out” through the linguistically mediated joint attention, the description, directed towards it. But characters in *Don Quixote* are not just the objects of joint attention: they are also, simultaneously, subjectivities that subject further objects (including other characters) to episodes of joint attention with the reader/writer and other characters. The central image of *Don Quixote*, captured in Picasso’s famous sketch, is that of the *hidalgo* and Sancho Panza ambling side-by-side down the road on their mounts, deep in conversation. The narrative moves from one adventure (such as the famous battle with the windmills) to another, but in terms of length of text these descriptions of action are dwarfed by the debates between Don Quixote and his squire as to the meaning and significance of the events they are witnessing and taking part in.<sup>57</sup> (As a crude indication of this, a significant number of the chapter headings advertise not an incident or piece of action but “the Pleasant Conversation”, “the sensible conversation”, “the delectable Conversation” etc between the two characters.)<sup>58</sup> During these dialogues, both Quixote and Sancho attempt to align each other to their own particular interpretation of the events. Quixote looks at them in terms of how they can be accommodated within the *topoi* of chivalric romance (battles with giants, rescuing damsels, righting wrongs etc), and of how discrepancies between “reality” and these *topoi* can be explained by the machinations of “enchanters”. Sancho, by contrast, argues the case for “reality”, and for his master’s “madness” in believing such things. These episodes of joint attention between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, directed at the characters and events that

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<sup>57</sup> Diderot’s “Cervantine” novel *Jacques the Fatalist* (1765-80) extends this *topos* of the mobile dialogue between master and servant.

<sup>58</sup> The quotations here are from the chapter headings to Part 1 Chapters 10, 19 and 31. See also the headings to Part 1 Chapters 18 and 49 and Part 2 Chapters 3, 7, 42, 43,

they meet along the way, is a constant thread running through the novel from the beginning of Quixote's second expedition (Part 1 Chapter 7), when Sancho is persuaded to ride with him, to their final journey back to their village at the end of Part Two. As Howard Mancing has observed, "[t]he most important single event in Cervantes' novel, after the original exposition, is the introduction of Sancho Panza" (Mancing 1982, 49).<sup>59</sup> The relationship between the views of events of Quixote and of Sancho do not remain fixed in the archetypal relation outlined above, but are dynamic and interactive.

One form that this interactivity takes is through the narrative's aligning of the reader's view with the views of Quixote and Sancho taken together as a single perspective, creating moments of ambiguous common-ground where the phenomena are equally susceptible to Quixotic or common-sense interpretation. This can be seen if we compare, as Carroll Johnson has done, the points of view expressed in the windmill scene (Part 1 Chapter 8) with the way the adventure of the nocturnal religious procession and the corpse (Part 1 Chapter 19) is introduced (Johnson 1990, 92-3). At the beginning of the former episode we are told straightforwardly that "they caught sight of some thirty or forty windmills, which stand on that plain" (Cervantes 1950 [1605/15], 68). By the time of the adventure of the corpse, things are becoming more uncertain:

[T]hey saw coming towards them on their road a great number of lights, which looked more like stars in motion than anything else [. . .] The squire checked his ass, and Don Quixote his horse, and they stopped still, peering attentively to make out what it could be. (142-3)

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<sup>59</sup> In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom writes: "[T]he loving, frequently irascible relation between Quixote and Sancho is the greatness of the book, more even than the gusto of its representation of natural and social realities" (quoted in Bandera 2006, 177).

Such occasions will multiply as the novel goes on, and as the deceptions practiced on them create “realities” that seem to anticipate Don Quixote’s chivalric imaginings.<sup>60</sup>

But there is a larger sense in which the joint attention between Quixote and Sancho towards the world around them unfolds in a dynamic and interactive manner: this is the process, long noted and analyzed by commentators, by which during the course of the novel Quixote becomes “sanchified” and Sancho “quixoticized” (Segre 1979 181-6). In Part One Sancho quickly internalizes Quixote’s chivalric language and thought (Mancing 1982, 72-80) – it is he, for example, who comes up with the appropriately chivalric moniker of “Knight of the Sad Countenance” for his master (Part 1 Chapter 19). In Part 2 it is Sancho who will, in his own mind, achieve the goal that constitutes his stake in the pair’s collective chivalric goal, when he is granted his longed-for “governorship of an isle” (Part 2 Chapters 45, 47, 49, 51).

As Cesare Segre has observed, despite their physical separation (Quixote remains in the palace of the duke and duchess), Sancho and Quixote are never as close as during this episode when Sancho takes governorship of his isle (Segre 1979 181-6). It is Sancho who gets to put into practice Quixote’s chivalric wisdom (embodied in the *Mirror for Princes* that Quixote writes for him (Part 2 Chapters 42-43, 51)), while Quixote is on an opposite trajectory, one of a nagging, melancholy skepticism that will begin to undo his chivalric dreams even before their cataclysmic defeat at the hands of the Knight of the White Moon (Part 2 Chapter 64). Before he

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<sup>60</sup> The problem of “reality” in *Don Quixote* has been treated by Richard Predmore, who has analyzed in detail the proliferation throughout the text (and in connection with a range of characters, not just Quixote and Sancho) of linguistic markers of perceptual and epistemological uncertainty such as *parecer* (“to seem”, “to appear”) (Predmore 1967, 57-83). Predmore is following in the footsteps of the “perspectivist” critical approach to *Don Quixote*, associated above all with Américo Castro and Leo Spitzer, which emphasises the way in which Cervantes’ ambiguous text is composed of multiple viewpoints (Close 1978, 255).

sets out for his “isle” Sancho voices his suspicion about the deception being practiced on them by the duke and duchess, and tells Quixote that on his journey he will see if he can “discover any other sign to confirm or dispel my suspicion”:

“So you must, Sancho,” said Don Quixote, “and inform me of all you discover about the matter [...]” (747)

In a subsequent letter to Sancho, Quixote returns to this subject of deception, and links it, if only by conjunction, to his own restlessness in the gilded cage of the Duke and Duchess’ palace, despite (or perhaps because of) it being the place where all his dreams of acclamation as a true knight-errant seem to be being realized (801).<sup>61</sup>

The shifting dynamic of joint attention between Quixote and Sancho is itself often embedded in the joint attention that others are paying to them. In scenes such as the debate at the inn about whether the barber’s basin is really Mambrino’s helmet (Part 1 Chapter 44), this embedding of perspectives achieves a comic-baroque complexity – a complexity, however, that can be reduced to a collision between three distinct groups:

- those who are falsely adopting quixotic speech and behaviour in order to deceive Quixote and Sancho
- Quixote and Sancho themselves – who, as indicated above, move in relation to one another as a unit, on a spectrum of credulity and skepticism
- others who witness the interaction of these two joint perspectives, i.e. see apparently sane people adopting the same perspective as a seeming madman and his sidekick

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<sup>61</sup> Another area where we see an emerging common ground between Quixote and Sancho – this time on the credulous rather than sceptical end of their mental spectrum – links Quixote’s anxieties concerning his dream in Montesinos’s cave with Sancho’s belief in the reality of their journey on the “flying horse” Clavileño. After Sancho’s “quixotic” description of his experiences, Quixote goes up to his squire and whispers in his ear: “Sancho, if you want me to believe what you saw in the sky, I wish you to accept my account of what I saw in the Cave of Montesinos. I say no more” (735).

The beginnings of this process of embedding can be seen in the very first expedition, before Sancho has joined Quixote, when the innkeeper at the first inn acts as a mediator between Quixote's fantasies and the quotidian reality around him.<sup>62</sup> Further affordances for Quixote's chivalric view of the world are provided by Sancho's supposed visit to Dulcinea and by the extended ruse by which the priest and the barber (co-opting Dorothea as "Princess Micomicona") "enchant" Quixote and lure him back to his village.

It is in the context of this latter deception that the debate over Mambrino's helmet takes place, with the priest, the barber and the others who are deceiving Quixote taking Quixote's side against the astonished second barber and various onlookers who have happened on the scene. Sancho Panza is aligned with Don Quixote because he wants the barber's pack-saddle, claiming that it is a horse's harness. But this alignment is not unequivocal – when challenged on the pack-saddle, Don Quixote admits that "It looks like a pack-saddle to me" and attributes the confusion to the "enchantment" that is directing events at the inn. Don Ferdinand, who is in league with the priest and the barber in their deception of Don Quixote, begins to take a secret vote among those present on whether the pack-saddle is a horse's harness, but the laughter that this move engenders soon turns to fighting as the argument continues among the various factions: "So the whole inn was full of tears, shouts, screams, amazement, fear, alarm, dismay, slashings, punches, blows, kicks and effusions of blood" (407). Ironically it is Don Quixote, the original cause of the discord, who raises his voice to call for peace, claiming that they are all the victims of the "enchantment" that has overtaken the "castle".

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<sup>62</sup>The innkeeper Gornemont's mediating role in this episode (which culminates in his crucial "knighting" of Quixote) has been explored in depth by Edward Dudley (1997, 142-50).

The debate and fighting over the barber's basin in Part One is an early and spectacular instance of the way in which the people Don Quixote meets "become contaminated by his madness" (Bandera 2006, 282).<sup>63</sup> In Part Two, the Duke and Duchess' elaborate trickery and mockery of Don Quixote and Sancho lead them to adopt the very patterns of behaviour that they had set out to ridicule:

In fact Cide Hamete says that he considers the mockers were as mad as their victims, and the Duke and Duchess within a hair's breadth of appearing fools themselves for taking such pains to play tricks on a pair of fools. (916)

When he is being led through the streets of Barcelona, a passer-by cries out:

"The devil take Don Quixote de la Mancha! [. . .] If you had been mad in private and behind closed doors you would have done less harm. But you have the knack of turning everyone who has to do with you into madmen and dolts." (871)

Never mind that the Duke and Duchess and all the others who act "madly" in order to deceive Don Quixote are supposedly doing so in the name of "sanity": Cervantes offers a pragmatic view according to which thoughts and ideas are judged according to their consequences in the form of the further thoughts or behaviour that they engender. It is this ceaseless pragmatics – whereby real actions engender fictional interpretations, which themselves become real actions – that underlies the opalescence between fiction and reality in *Don Quixote*:

Every real conflict is a potential piece of poetic fiction, and every poetic fictional conflict carries with it the possibility of becoming real, that is to say, of being taken for real, of being imitated in real life. (Bandera 2006, 250)

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<sup>63</sup> The same metaphor is used by René Girard in his discussion – which will be returned to below – of mediated or "triangular" desire in *Don Quixote*: Don Quixote's imitation of Amadis of Gaul – whereby Amadis becomes his *mediator*, to whom he has surrendered the choosing of the objects of his desire – is an "ontological sickness" that is "contagious" (Girard 1965, 96-8).

This interpretive energy running through Cervantes' novel, born of the dynamics of joint attention, bears out Terence Doody's general observation on the modern novel that "[i]n a linguistic medium, interpretation is the basic, or the principal, or perhaps the only form of action that finally counts" (Doody 1998, 105). Events are immediately swallowed up by interpretations – and interpretations themselves are events. (The originary event of the narrative – Quixote's madness – is itself an event that is simultaneously an interpretation (Quixote's reading of the romances).) The battle in the courtyard of the inn over the barber's basin is a striking comic figuration of this process whereby interpretation and fiction become – and hence *are* – themselves fact and reality.<sup>64</sup>

### **3.3 Two Views of Character: Mediated Desire vs Objectivity**

Characters, then, are embedded subjectivities of the narrative. They present an "outside" that can be described as an object – "objectively": in the intertextual world of *Don Quixote* it can be their very status as textual/semiotic objects that, through processes of joint attention and ekphrasis, can lead to their animation. But simultaneously they present an "inside" whereby, through that character, attention is directed towards specific objects. In *Among Other Things: A Description of the Novel* (1998), Terence Doody draws attention to this Janus-faced quality of character through his argument that (to quote the title of one of his chapters) "A Character Is Also a Sign" (Doody 1998, 92). He points out that, etymologically, "character" denoted a *sign* – "a distinctive mark impressed,

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<sup>64</sup> Javier Marías, a contemporary Spanish novelist also much concerned with the power of interpretation in narrative, writes: "[R]eal life [...] bears a closer relation to films or literature than is normally recognized and believed. It isn't, as people say, that the former imitates the latter or the latter the former, but that our infinite imaginings belong to life too [...] [I]maginings are already facts [...] (Marías 2006, 16)



engraved, or otherwise formed” – long before it became “a description, delineation or detailed report of a person’s qualities”. Later definitions of character such as “the face of features betokening moral qualities”, he argues, are extrapolations of that first sense:

It is hard to defend character as a substance, when historically it has always been a sign. Not a human being, but a mark in language to represent human qualities” (Doody 1998, 104-5).

For Doody, therefore, character is a sign in that it is both “something we read and something we read-with” (Doody 1998, 104). Characters, above all, read other characters – and, indeed, it is in the interaction with other characters that character emerges in the mind of the reader. This “character” is both subject and object:

As an act of interpretation or of reading, character has [. .] both an active and a passive aspect. Passively, it is the sum of attributes, motives, beliefs, and behaviors which we interpret in one another. Actively, it is the principle behind our own attributes, motives, beliefs, and behaviors which gives us the ability to make our interpretations as we do, and thereby be interpreted ourselves by others. Our characters read and are read by other characters. (Doody 1998, 105)

The recognition and attribution of “character” or “characteristics” in another, whether in fiction or reality, is thus simultaneously a self-attribution and self-definition. As in the disastrous/heroic case of Don Quixote, a reader’s own character may be molded by his or her reading of fictional characters.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> This self-definition by the reader inherent in the text’s attribution of character is recognised in rhetorical criticism’s concept of the “mock” or “implied” reader. For Walker Gibson, for example, the persuasive force of the “mock reader” (seen most nakedly in “subliterary genres crudely committed to persuasion, such as advertising and propaganda”) raises ethical and existential questions for the reader: “For the student, the problem of what mock reader – or part of a mock reader – it is proper for him to accept, and what to reject, involves the whole overwhelming problem of learning to read and learning the enormously difficult job of becoming the mock reader of *Paradise Lost*, or *Antigone*, or Wallace Stevens. The student’s hesitation is no more than a part of a larger question that possibly no teacher can presume to answer for him: Who do I want to be?” (Gibson 1996 [1950], 156, 160).

This interactional, intersubjective quality to character is highlighted by the concept of “mediated desire” that René Girard develops in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1965). In mediated desire, character is determined by the internalizing of the desires of others: choice of the object of desire is relinquished to another, the mediator. To take the example that forms Girard’s starting point (his other main texts are from Stendhal, Dostoevsky and Proust), Don Quixote takes as his model the figure of Amadis of Gaul, whom he vows to emulate in all things (Girard 1965 [1961], 1).<sup>66</sup> Action (Don Quixote’s setting off on his adventures) is engendered by interpretation, character by the reading of another character. A similar emphasis on the importance of mediation for character is to be found in Rick Altman’s account, in his *Theory of Narrative* (2008), of what he calls “single-focus” narratives – that is, narratives that for the most part follow a single character through time:<sup>67</sup> such narratives commonly begin with the protagonist being provoked to pursue the object of his desire by a catalyst such as a teacher, a tempter or Girard’s “mediator” (Altman 2008, 147-54).

Two themes emerge from the “triangular” approach to character taken by Girard and Altman: *mediation* and motivation or *desire*. In the first place, their accounts underline how “representations” are always *mediated* and how objects cannot be disentangled from their mediation: Don Quixote sees the world as he

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<sup>66</sup> As has been shown above, Don Quixote, with a typically “Cervantine” twist, is in fact doubly inspired to set out on his first expedition – not just by the example of Amadis, but by his imagining himself reading the future account that will be written of his own adventures.

<sup>67</sup> Altman distinguishes between “single-focus” narratives (e.g. the saint’s life, the *bildungsroman*); “dual-focus” narratives, in which the narrative switches, for different purposes, between two characters or sets of characters (e.g. the romantic comedy, the Western); and “multiple-focus” narratives, in which the narrative switches between a large number of characters in order to emphasise their joint participation in or dependence on a supra-personal event or principal (e.g. battle or crowd scenes (Book 2 of *War and Peace*, the opening of Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris*) and sociologically- or politically-motivated panoramas (Zola)).

imagines Amadis of Gaul saw it; the “writer” of *Don Quixote* sees Don Quixote as he describes Cide Hamete as seeing him; the reader sees Cide Hamete’s manuscript through the “writer” of *Don Quixote*’s description; and so on. The reader also sees the secondary characters – from Sancho Panza through to the Duke and Duchess in Part II – in relation to Quixote. Specifically, these secondary characters are seen, in a reflective turn, *through the representations* that they make of Quixote: in single-focus narratives, as Altman shows, the tendency is for the perspectives of secondary characters to reflect back on the protagonist. (Not for nothing does Quixote’s nemesis in Part II go under the *nom de guerre* “The Knight of the Mirrors”.) The protagonist’s search for self-definition, according to Altman, characteristically takes a narcissistic turn whereby others are viewed as aspects of the self: desire for the opposite sex, for example, comes to represent “veiled narcissism, a thinly masked desire for selfhood and transcendence” (Altman 2008, 120). In single-focus narratives, the “narrator”, too, is caught in the magnetic field of the protagonist’s subjectivity:

[T]he narrator of *Pride and Prejudice* appears to have accepted voluntary submission to the whims of Miss Elizabeth Bennett, following her wherever she goes [. . .] [The narrator] seems less like the creator of a story, or even the objective recorder of history, than the amanuensis of the heroine [. . .] By usurping the dominant position in the following-pattern, the protagonist becomes the subject in relationship to whom all other characters and things remain objects. (Altman 2008, 122-3)

As we have seen, single-focus narratives, in Altman’s account, begin with the protagonist breaking away – geographically and/or psychologically – from the world of stable values that had been affirmed in dual-focus narratives. One feature of this process of breaking-away and self-creation is a desire to tell one’s own story, to become the “author” of one’s own destiny (Altman 2008, 121-2), just as Don Quixote vows to “write” his own story through deeds that will be read (about) by future generations, invoking the sage who will one day write his history (and thereby

invoking the notion that he himself is the “author” on whom the narrator depends) (Cervantes 1950 [1605/15], 36).

In addition to this perspectivalism, the accounts given by Girard and Altman also underline that perspectives – “representations” – are *motivated*, are inextricably connected with intentionality or *desire*. According to Altman, it is the single-focus protagonist’s desire – the *choice* he makes to break away from the stable world of dual-focus narrative – that motivates not only the representations that he makes, but also the representation that is made of him, the framing that is made of him: “the narrator’s decision to follow the protagonist to the near exclusion of others clearly reveals the force and function of the central character’s desire” (Altman 2008, 121-2). It is what one might call this “desire for the desire” that motivates the representation of “Don Quixote” (i.e. the novel *Don Quixote*): without the fascination that the “case” of Don Quixote holds for writer, reader and other mediators (including the characters in the story) – without, that is, their desire for his desire – there would be no novel. Perspectives, or “representations”, are not merely bundles of information, but embody a certain intentionality towards the object: a representation (i.e. a semiotic object available for joint attention) communicates, as an integral part of the perspective that it offers, an intentionality, a desire, directed at the object.

The construction of character, then, involves an *active* engagement with what Wolfgang Iser (1978) calls the “shifting viewpoints of the narrative”. It demands not just a passive reception and processing (“decoding”) of information, but an

*interaction* whereby the intentionality of the reader changes.<sup>68</sup> In this context it is worth recalling Terence Doody's account of the two faces of character as sign:

As an act of interpretation or of reading, character has [. .] both an active and a passive aspect. Passively, it is the sum of attributes, motives, beliefs, and behaviors which we interpret in one another. Actively, it is the principle behind our own attributes, motives, beliefs, and behaviors which gives us the ability to make our interpretations as we do, and thereby be interpreted ourselves by others. Our characters read and are read by other characters. (Doody 1998, 105)

As I shall now show, it is this second, (inter)active aspect that is underplayed in some recent cognitive accounts of fictional character-construction that draw on concepts of "Theory of Mind" (Zunshine 2006; Vermeule 2010).

Like Alan Palmer's (2004) exploration of the "fictional mind", these models focus on the construction of "characters" through various forms of mental representation – for example, the ascribing of particular properties (beliefs, states of mind, intentions) to another mind. The form of these representations is propositional, and their function is to provide causal explanations for the current behavior – and predictions concerning the future behavior – of others. "Theory of Mind" (ToM) (or "mindreading") is the label that has become current among cognitive psychologists to describe the capacity to ascribe states of mind, beliefs and intentions to others. According to the influential account of Simon Baron-Cohen

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<sup>68</sup> In *The Act of Reading* (1978), Wolfgang Iser characterizes the development of the novel since the eighteenth century in terms of an increase in this interactivity, through an ever-greater multiplicity of, and differentiation between, perspectives. In the eighteenth century "character perspectives [. .] were organized in a hierarchical pattern, with the hero at the apex and the minor characters below" (Iser 1978, 203-4). The interposition of a reliable, omniscient narrator represented an elaboration of this basic hierarchical structure (204). The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by contrast, saw a "levelling" of these hierarchies – through the emergence of the "unreliable" narrator, for example – with the reader required to make greater and more frequent shifts between textual perspectives: "[T]he reader's viewpoint became less clearly oriented, which meant correspondingly greater demands on his own structuring activity. With this multiple combination of equal-ranking perspective segments, patterns of interaction became a good deal more open" (205).

(1995), ToM is a distinct and innate module of the human brain whose impairment with autism causes difficulties with recognizing the mental and emotional states of others. The healthy deployment of a functioning ToM can be seen in children who pass (generally around the age of four) a “false belief” test involving recognizing the (false) beliefs held by others.<sup>69</sup> There are two competing versions of ToM – “Theory Theory” and “Simulation Theory”. The former holds that “mindreading” involves reference to a body of folk psychology – a “theory” concerning the relationship of beliefs, states of mind and intentions. “Simulation theory”, which has drawn on the discovery of “mirror neurons” for support, involves the idea that the representation of other minds takes the form of “off-line” simulations that allow one to project oneself into the situation of the other.

In her application of the notion of Theory of Mind to fiction, Lisa Zunshine pays particular attention to the embedding of mental representations in one another. She highlights the significant difference between, on the one hand, sequences such as “A gave rise to B, which resulted in C, which in turn caused D, which led to E, which made possible F, which eventually brought about G, etc.,” and, on the other hand, sequences requiring the attribution of states of mind, such as, “A wants B to believe that C thinks that D wanted E to consider F’s feelings about G” (Zunshine 2006, 29).<sup>70</sup> The latter kind of sequence requires more cognitive effort –

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<sup>69</sup> In one common version of this test, the child being tested observes “Mary” put a toy in a hiding place and then leave the room. In Mary’s absence, someone else comes into the room and moves the toy to a different hiding place. The children are asked where Mary will look for the toy when she comes back in. Passing the test involves recognising that she will look not where the toy actually is, but where she (falsely) believes it to be.

<sup>70</sup> On the subject of these two sequences, Zunshine quotes Uri Margolin’s Reader’s Report: “[The] reason for the difference is that the first [sequence] is linear or sequential, unfolding step by step with all the members being on the same level, while the second is hierarchical and simultaneous and needs to be grasped in its totality or unpacked in reverse order of presentation” (Zunshine 2006, 170). The importance of the relation between linear and non-linear sequences for fictional narrative will be explored below in Chapter Two.

but, Zunshine argues, it also represents an evolutionary adaptation that is crucial to human sociality: she illustrates its importance in fictional narrative with a wide range of instances (including Virginia Woolf and Nabokov), but her examples gravitate towards the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (especially Samuel Richardson and Jane Austen).<sup>71</sup>

Zunshine adopts the term “metarepresentation” (that is, a “representation of a representation”) for the kind of relation that makes up the second sequence:

[A] metarepresentation consists of two parts: The first part specifies a source of representation, for example, “I thought . . .,” or “Our teacher informed us . . .” The second part provides the content of representation, for example, “. . . that it was going to rain,” or “. . . that plants photosynthesize. (Zunshine 2006, 47)

Monitoring the sources of representations (“source-tagging”) is of crucial importance for characters in, and readers of, fictional narratives. Thus, for example, Don Quixote, according to Zunshine, suffers from “a selective failure of source-monitoring”:

He takes in representations that “normal” people store with a restrictive agent-specifying source tag such as “as told by the author of a romance” as lacking any such tag. He thus lets the information contained in romances circulate among his mental databases as architectural truth, corrupting his knowledge about the world that we assume has hitherto been relatively accurate. (Zunshine 2006, 75).

The perspective that Zunshine offers on mental representations (by readers of characters, and by characters of other characters (and of *their* mental representations) is a detached, third-person one, in which the only connection between observer and object are the “streams of information” (60) that form the

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<sup>71</sup> A similar historical bias can be detected in Blakey Vermeule 2010.

basis of the representations. This Cartesian view of mental life, as something apart and of a different kind from the world, and in which the world is only “represented”, is well-captured in a formulation that she quotes from Uri Margolin:

[S]ince we cannot but conceive of narrative agents as human or human-like, it is a basic cognitive requirement of ours that we attribute to them information-processing activities and internal knowledge representations. (Zunshine 2006, 78 quoting Margolin 2003, 284)

In *The Embodied Mind* (1991), one of the earliest and most influential proposals for an enactive view of cognition, Francisco Varela and his colleagues define classical cognitivism thus:

cognitivism consists in the hypothesis that cognition – human cognition included – is the manipulation of symbols after the fashion of digital computers. In other words, cognition is *mental representation*: the mind is thought to operate by manipulating symbols that represent features of the world or represent the world as being a certain way. (Varela et al 1991, 8)

As philosopher Mark Johnson has characterized it, this “representational theory of mind”, characteristic of “first-generation”, computational cognitivism, is based on the claim that “the ‘mind’ operates on ‘internal representations’ (ideas, concepts, images) that can re-present (and thereby ‘be about’) external objects and events” (Johnson 2007, 112).

Arguing against these representationalist versions of how minds understand each other, Shaun Gallagher points out that “[t]here are good reasons [. . .] to view beliefs as dispositions that are sometimes ambiguous even from the perspective of the believer. To have a belief is not to have an all-or-nothing mental representation, but to have some more-or-less-complete set of dispositions to act and to experience in certain ways” (Gallagher 2006, 214). Alan Palmer, in *Fictional Minds*, in part adopts this enactivist, non-Cartesian perspective, pointing out the importance in



fictional narrative of a blurring between thought and action (such that, for example, thought becomes a form of mental action, or action becomes the physical expression of thought): “The more the distinction between fictional mind *and* action is blurred, the more it can be seen that the real object of study is the mind *in* action” (Palmer 2004, 131-7). But his account is placed in a theoretical framework that is third-person and representational rather than first-person and phenomenological: character is described as “a non-actual being who exists in a possible world and who can be ascribed physical, social and mental properties” (Palmer 2004, 38). Fictional minds are constructed with the help of mental frames such as the “continuing consciousness frame” (175-83) which enables the reader to link up different appearances of the character in the text to construct “the whole of a character’s various perceptual and conceptual viewpoints, ideological worldviews, and plans for the future considered as an individual narrative that is embedded in the whole fictional text” (15).<sup>72</sup>

It is precisely this kind of propositional, objectivist knowledge that is tested in the “false belief” test for “Theory of Mind”. But as Shaun Gallagher points out, although the ability to articulate this kind of knowledge marks a significant stage in development, “[p]rior to this, [. . .] the basis for human interaction and for understanding others has already been laid down by certain embodied practices – practices that are emotional, sensory-motor, perceptual, and non-conceptual” (Gallagher 2006, 223-4). From soon after birth, babies imitate facial expressions – a

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<sup>72</sup> The notion of character as “embedded narrative” has also been put forward by Marie-Laure Ryan (1991), and an earlier allusion to the idea can be found in Tzvetan Todorov’s essay “Narrative Men” (1967): “[A] character is a potential story that is the story of his life. Every new character signifies a new plot” (Todorov 1977, 70). In *Social Minds in the Novel* (2010) Palmer abandons the term “embedded narrative” in favour of “cognitive narrative” for fear of confusion with the use of the term for “framed” narratives (Palmer 2010, 12). It is precisely this “confusion” that is pursued in this chapter, with the claim that the same cognitive/semiotic processes of joint attention underlie both phenomena.

form of “primary intersubjectivity” (Trevarthen 1979) in which “[t]here is [. . .] a common bodily intentionality that is shared across the perceiving subject and the perceived other” (Gallagher 2006, 225). Long before the acquisition of language, infants are also able to imitate gestures, to follow the direction of another’s look, and to engage in a number of other activities that manifest a perception of the other’s bodily movements as intentional, goal-directed actions and of the other as an independent agent – a form of “body-reading” rather than “mind-reading” (226-7).

The most ubiquitous of such actions and gestures is pointing, which in Western societies children begin to engage in around the ages of 11-12 months. Pointing is used in a wide variety of contexts, but classic accounts identify two basic types of motivation: (1) imperative (requesting things) and (2) declarative (sharing experiences and emotions). Michael Tomasello has modified this classic account by positing three “general classes of social intention or motive” behind pointing:

- (1) sharing (they want to share emotions and attitudes with others);
  - (2) informing (they want to help others by informing them of useful or important things); and
  - (3) requesting (they want others to help them in attaining their goals)
- (Tomasello 2008, 123)

What Tomasello wishes to highlight in this classification of motivations behind pointing by human infants is the element of *cooperation*, of “helping” and “sharing” that underlies them all: it is this cooperative principle, he argues, that marks the crucial evolutionary step from primate to human gestures, and that underpins all human communication, including language (c.f. Grice 1957, 1975). Primate gestures such as ritualized “intention-movements” (e.g. raising arms to initiate play) or “attention-getters” (e.g. slapping the ground) are individually learned behaviors that elicit desired responses in the other (Tomasello 2008, 20-30). When they interact

with humans, primates learn new gestures if these gestures produce desired responses from the humans – most notably, they quickly learn (without specific training) to point to out-of-reach food (34-5). But significantly, the use of pointing by primates with humans is limited to this imperative motivation, for what primates crucially lack, according to Tomasello, is the sense of cooperation, of shared attention and intentionality towards objects, that one finds in human pointing: primate gestures remain at the level of a dyadic interchange of signals between individuals, rather than, as we find in the human case, an intersubjectivity based, triadically, on a common ground of shared attention and intentionality.

Thus in tracing back the origins of our pre-conceptual, pre-representational understanding of others, we find ourselves back in the joint attentional situation which was identified, at the beginning of this chapter, as the birthplace of narrative: the intersubjectivity that is distinctively human, and that forms the basis of human “cooperative communication”, finds its most characteristic expression in what Jerome Bruner calls, in his thesis concerning two distinct modes of thought, the “narrative” mode of thought (Bruner 1986). Where the “paradigmatic” mode of thought “attempts to fulfill the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation”, employing “categorization or conceptualization” (Bruner 1986, 12), narrative deals with “the vicissitudes of human intentions” (16). Whether it be in the shared tension-and-release of a “proto-narrative” such as withholding-and-releasing an object or playing peekaboo, or in a verbal narrative recounting a breach in a habitual chain of events, these experiments in the “vicissitudes of human intentions” both presuppose and dramatize the sense of shared intentionality that is the basis of all human communication.

In the paradigmatic mode, Bruner writes, “arguments convince one of their truth”. A narrative, by contrast, “establishes not truth but verisimilitude” (Bruner 1986, 11). With the exception of certain highly specific situations (a psychology laboratory, perhaps, or the interview room of a police station) most human interaction is not of the third-person variety that involves propositions and inferences about the other’s beliefs, intentions and mental states: it is immediate and automatic, “read” directly from the actions of the other. The verisimilitude of narrative lies in its aligning of readers’ attention and intentionality with the various forms of attention and intentionality (embedded narratives, embedded perspectives) expressed within the text. It is in establishing these various alignments that the dynamic mechanism of joint attention plays a crucial role.

#### **4. Situated Semiotics**

In Section One, above, we saw how joint attention has an intrinsically *triadic* structure: in the case of the original joint attentional situation in ontogeny, the triad is composed of the child, the carer and the object, where the object is seen *through* the attention that the adult directs towards it, or, by reversal, the adult is directed to see the object *through* the intention or attention of the child (Rodríguez 2007). In Sections Two and Three, a recurrent theme was the inadequacy of conventional narratological categories of communication – based on a dyadic (“speech-circuit”) Saussurean model of oral communication – to account for important aspects of the text: the implication of these examples is that there is something more complex going on in the semiotics of the narrative text than is captured by the Saussurean model.

In this final section of the chapter I draw together these two strands by pointing, historically, to two conceptions of semiotics, belonging to the same period as Saussure, which have been overlooked by narratology and which are congruent with the triadic conception of the sign suggested by the account of joint attention: I am referring to C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) and Karl Bühler's *Theory of Language* (1934). Though there are significant differences between the approaches of the two books, as I shall outline, they share a contextual or situational view of language, in which language *mediates* between the producer of the sign, the receiver of the sign, and the "reference" that both producer and sign take the sign to be referring to (this reference could be a physical object, but could equally be another sign, such as a concept). In both cases, too, this mediation is seen as analogous to the way a tool mediates between, on the one side, the agent who handles the tool, and, on the other side, the material on which the tool is worked. And crucially, words, as tools, can serve different *functions*, just as a hammer can be used for different purposes: the functional model of language put forward by Karl Bühler, in particular, forms an important transition to the dynamic model of narrative (based as it is on the concept of *polyfunctionality*) which I put forward in Chapter Two.

Before turning to the theories of Ogden and Richards, and of Bühler, it would be useful to have a reminder of Saussure's model of linguistic communication. In Chapter Three of the *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure illustrates this model with a picture of the "speech-circuit" (Saussure 1966 [1915], 11):

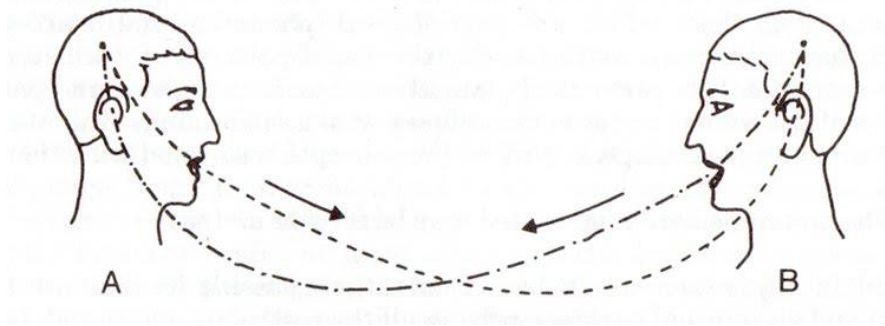


Figure 1

In A's brain, Saussure writes, a "mental fact", a "concept", "unlocks a corresponding sound-image in the brain". This process of translation between concept and sound-image (or as he will come to call them later, *signified* and *signifier*) Saussure describes as a "purely psychological phenomenon". It is followed by a "*physiological* process: the brain transmits an impulse corresponding to the image to the organs used in producing sounds." After the sound waves have travelled to the ear of B (by a "*purely physical* process"), "the order is reversed: from the ear to the brain, the physiological transmission of the sound-image; in the brain, the psychological association of the new image with the corresponding concept" (Saussure 1966 [1915], 11-12). If B speaks, the cycle is reversed. To clarify further this circuit, Saussure introduces a second illustration (Saussure 1966 [1915], 12).

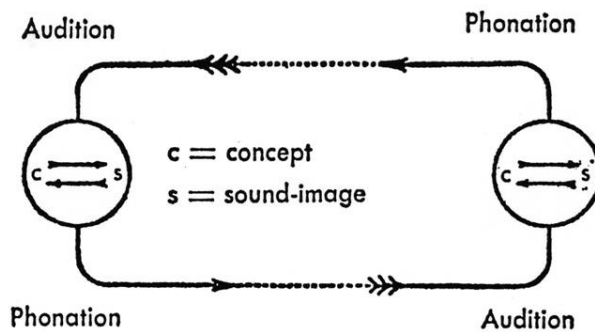


Figure 2

The circles in this diagram correspond to the “psychological parts” of the speech-circuit, which Saussure will later equate with *language (langue)*, as opposed to *speech (parole)*, which is equated with the “physiological” and “physical” parts of the circuit. The translations between concept and sound-image occupy a purely “psychological” domain between the physiological and physical domains on either side.<sup>73</sup>

Ogden and Richards’ *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) was an attempt to lay the foundations for a new “science of Symbolism” by sweeping away centuries of philosophical obfuscation about language, establishing the study of “meaning” instead on the grounds of the newly emerging behaviorist psychology.<sup>74</sup> As Richards’ biographer, John Russo, observes, *The Meaning of Meaning* is “many books in one”, wandering over a wide territory and amassing a variety of theories that do not always sit well with each other (Russo 1989, 110). But as he also points out, there is one over-riding theme that Ogden and Richards keep coming back to: this theme, as Russo summarizes it, is the idea

that words are not part of and do not correspond to things, but rather to thoughts and to emotions and feelings. They are neither signs for objects, nor events, nor universals and they cannot be fully defined by normative uses, proper and “essential” meanings, or grammatical categories. Language by convention can be fitted to a thing, a concept, a grammar, *to anything*, but it inevitably wriggles out from all restrictions. Words “mean nothing by themselves”: “It is only when a thinker makes use of them that they stand for anything.” Only context, that is, has meaning. (Russo 1989, 110; quoting Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 9-10)

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<sup>73</sup> There is a notable congruence between Saussure’s model and the model which underlies classical cognitivism. As in classical cognitivism, mental processes are sandwiched (in a “black box”) between physical inputs and outputs. Saussure’s second illustration anticipates the flow diagrams that would be developed by British psychologist Donald Broadbent in the 1950s, and that would become a staple of “computational” accounts of the mind.

<sup>74</sup> For background to, and a detailed reading of the book, see Russo 1989, 110-45.

In the passage quoted by Russo, Ogden and Richards go on to say that words are “instruments” which serve different “uses” or “functions” according to context (10). It is these notions of context and function that form the focus of our interest in Ogden and Richards’ work here.

Given this fluid and contextual view of meaning – and glancing back at the diagrams above, with their “concepts” and “sound-images” locked together in tidy mentalist boxes – it comes as no surprise that Ogden and Richards are dismissive of Saussure’s model:

A sign for de Saussure is twofold, made up of a concept (signifié) and an acoustic image (signifiant) [. .] Without the concept, he says, the acoustic image would not be a sign. The disadvantage of this account is [. .] that the process of interpretation is included by definition in the sign! (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 5)

Saussure’s answer to the problem of “meaning”, the problem of this “process of interpretation” that is included by definition in the sign, is the concept of “*la langue*” as opposed “*la parole*” – “language” (understood in a certain way) as opposed to “speech”. Scattered through Chapter Three of the *Course* is a long list of attributes for “*la langue*”: it is “a well-defined object” which can be localized “in the limited segment of the speaking-circuit where an auditory image becomes associated with a concept”; it is “the social side of speech, outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself,” and which “exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community”; it is “homogeneous”, a “system of signs that expresses ideas”, in which “the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images” (Saussure 1966 [1915], 14-15); it is “a self-contained whole and a principle of classification” (9); it is constituted by a “social bond” consisting of “the sum of word-images stored in the minds of all individuals”; it is a “storehouse filled



by the members of a given community” and a “grammatical system that has a potential existence in each brain, or, more specifically, in the brains of a group of individuals” (13-14).

For Ogden and Richards’, the concept of “*la langue*” is, considered as a guiding principle for the young science of semiology, “fantastic” (5). It represents, for them, a prime example of hypostatization, the obfuscatory turning of words into things, and they set about it with iconoclastic zeal: Saussure “obeys blindly the primitive impulse to infer from a word some object for which it stands, and sets out determined to find it.” He “does not pause [. . .] to ask himself what he is looking for, or whether there is any reason why there should be such a thing. He proceeds instead in a fashion familiar in the beginnings of all sciences, and concocts a suitable object – ‘*la langue*,’ the language, as opposed to speech” (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 4).

For Ogden and Richards, Saussure’s theory of signs, “by neglecting entirely the things for which signs stand, was from the beginning cut off from any contact with scientific methods of verification” (6). Rather than consign meaning to the abstract and nebulous realm of “*la langue*”, they locate it in a context of reference. Where Saussure sees meaning as arising purely from differences within *la langue* (“language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system” (Saussure 1966 [1915], 120)), for Ogden and Richards, meaning is embedded in perception and behaviour. In Russo’s summary of their approach, “the symbol is an absence that receives its meaning from its reference outward to the world. A symbol is *of* something; an emotive sign is *of* some feeling, attitude or unconscious trace” (Russo 1989, 139).

Language, in Ogden and Richards' conception, connects to the world of perception and behaviour in different ways. In the characterization by Russo that I have just quoted, he picks out the distinction they make between, on the one hand, the "symbolic" use of language, which makes "an act of reference" to a "referent" (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 11), and, on the other hand, to the "emotive" use, where words serve as "signs of emotions, attitudes, moods, the temper, interest or set of the mind in which the references occur" (223):

In speaking a sentence we are giving rise to, as in hearing it we are confronted by, at least two sign-situations. One is interpreted from symbols to reference and so to referent; the other is interpreted from verbal signs to the attitude, mood, interest, purpose, desire, and so forth of the speaker, and thence to the situation, circumstances and conditions in which the utterance is made. (223)

Ogden and Richards, as I will discuss in a moment, add other functions of language to these two, but their main focus throughout *The Meaning of Meaning* is on the symbolic (i.e. the "referential" (10) or "propositional" (74)) use. In the first chapter, titled "Thoughts, Words and Things" they depict diagrammatically the particular triangular relationship by which one passes, in the symbolic use, "from symbols to reference and so to referent" (i.e. from "Words" to "Thoughts" to "Things") (11):

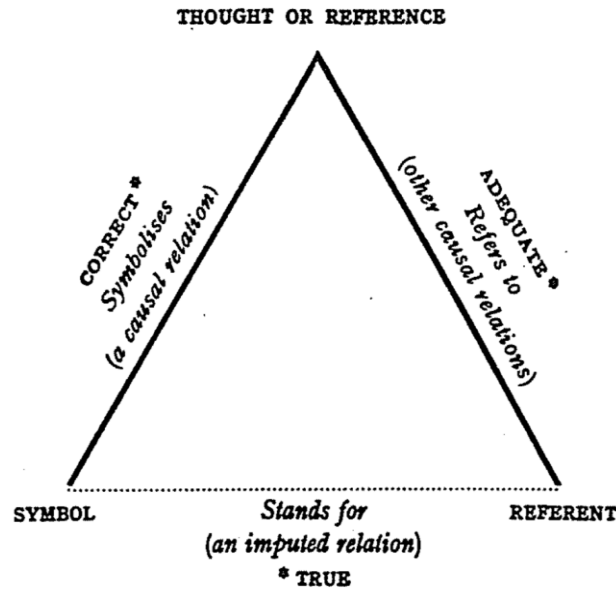


Figure 3

The references to “causal relations” on the left and right legs of this “Triangle of Interpretation” reflect the behaviorist viewpoint with which Ogden and Richards framed their theory. To take the left leg: the use of particular referential symbols (which Ogden and Richards define broadly, as “words, arrangements of words, images, gestures, and such representations as drawings, or mimetic sounds” (23)) is caused “partly by the reference we are making and partly by social and psychological factors – the purpose for which we are making the reference, the proposed effect of our symbols on other persons, and our own attitude” (10-11). And equally, on the part of the hearer, “the symbols both cause us to perform an act of reference and to assume an attitude which will, according to circumstances, be more or less similar to the act and attitude of the speaker” (11).

There is a clear congruence between this account of language and the account given by the joint attentional perspective (subsection 2.1). In the joint attentional situation, too, language mediates the triadic relationship between speaker, hearer and object in such a way that, through the words, the speaker causes the hearer both

to “perform an act of reference” to the object, and “to assume an attitude” toward the object “more or less similar to the act and attitude of the speaker”. In the words already quoted above, from Heinz Werner and Bernard Kaplan, “within [the] primordial sharing situation there arises *reference* in its initial, nonrepresentational form [. . .] [T]he act of reference emerges not as an individual act, but as a social one: by exchanging things with the Other, by touching things and looking at them with the Other (Werner and Kaplan 1963, 42-3).

Ogden and Richards’ “triangle of reference” also reflects the strong influence of Charles Peirce – or more accurately, the influence of a particular interpretation of Peirce (Russo 1989, 116-17). According to Peirce’s triadic, pragmatic semiotics, the *sign* (the *representamen*) and its *object* are represented as sign-and-object by a third term (the *interpretant*) that is itself a sign, either in another mind or in the same mind.<sup>75</sup> As Thomas L. Short puts it in his commentary on Peirce’s semiotic: “Significance [. . .] is a triadic relation wherein, in one respect, the sign mediates between object and interpretant and, in another respect, the interpretant mediates between sign and object” (Short 2007, 30). Diagrammatically, the triad can be shown thus:

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<sup>75</sup> A “sign”, for Peirce, may take an overt physical form, for example as a movement of the body or a word, but it may equally take the form of a thought.

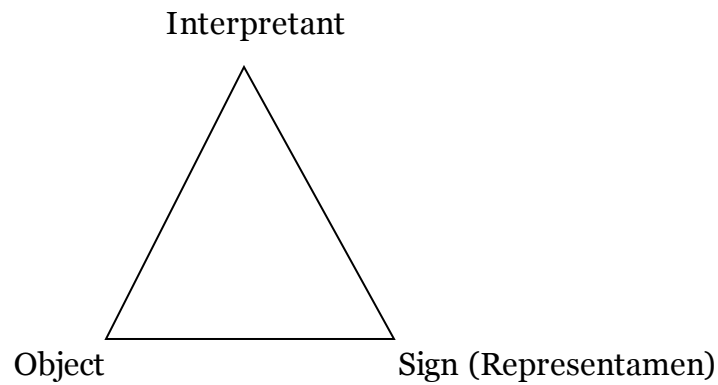


Figure 4

This is a genuine triad, in that it cannot be broken down into dyadic relations: the relationship between sign and object is only realized by the interpretant; the relationship between the interpretant and the object is mediated by the sign; and the sign is only a sign to the interpretant because it is a sign *of* something, an object.

In his early writings, Peirce stressed the intersubjective, “pragmatic” nature of this process. A sign, he writes in 1897, “is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign; or perhaps a more developed sign.” The sign does not stand for the object in all respects, but only “in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen” (Peirce 1955, 99). This “ground” is intersubjective, involving a kind of mediation through joint attention – it is a sense of “idea”, he writes,

very familiar in everyday talk; I mean in that sense in which we say that one man catches another man’s idea, in which we say that when a man recalls what he was thinking of at some previous time, he recalls the same idea. (99)

Through this intersubjective “ground” shared by the sign and its interpretant, the sign is able to perform its principle function of *mediation*. As Russo writes of the close dependence of Ogden and Richards’ ideas on those of Peirce: “[t]he triadic nature of sign interpretation in Peirce entails the principle of mediation: ‘A sign

mediates between the *interpretant* sign and its object'; even 'private' thinking involves the triadic process of mediation. [Ogden and Richards] everywhere insist on the mediation of thought or reference in the relation between words and things" (Russo 1989, 117).<sup>76</sup>

Ogden and Richards' "Triangle of Interpretation" represents only one function of language – the "symbolic" or "referential" function. In Chapter One of *The Meaning and Meaning*, as noted above, they make a basic distinction between this symbolic function and the "emotive" function, under which words serve primarily as signs of emotions or attitudes: it is for this basic distinction that *The Meaning of Meaning* is most well-known as regards the functions of language (Russo 1989, 121). But in a later chapter, "Symbol Situations", Ogden and Richards introduce a more nuanced "context theory of interpretation" (Ogden and Richards 1946 [1923], 209) that identifies, rather than just the "emotive" function, four main kinds of function in addition to the basic "symbolic" function: (1) There are "situations which derive from attitudes, such as amity or hostility, of the speaker to his audience": where these attitudes may be expressed in speech by manner and tone, in written language manner and tone are "replaced by the various devices, conventional formulae, exaggerations, under-statements, figures of speech, underlining, and the rest familiar in the technique of letter-writing" (224). (2) Words may also express the attitude towards the referent, the object: Ogden and Richards cite "aesthetic judgments" as an example (225). (3) The "structure of our symbols" may also be determined by "our *Intention*, the effects which we endeavor to promote by our utterance" (225). (4) A

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<sup>76</sup> As Russo points out, Peirce later in his career turned against the "subjective" or "psychological" interpretation of the process described above, coming to see it as fundamentally a process of logic, on which psychology was dependent. Ogden and Richards adhered to the earlier, "pragmatic" Peirce: *The Meaning of Meaning*, Russo observes, "suppresses Peirce's logic, while adopting Peircean concepts in semiotics towards the development of its own instrumental concept of language" (Russo 1989, 117).

symbol may reflect “the Ease or Difficulty” involved in calling it to mind: thus, to cite Ogden and Richards’ eccentric example, the difference between “I seem to remember ascending Mount Everest” and “I went up Everest” (225-26).<sup>77</sup>

Having introduced these varied functions, Ogden and Richards observe that “speech on almost all occasions presents a multiple, not a single, sign situation” (230): the reference of a symbol “is only one of a number of terms which are relevant to the form of a symbol. It is not even the dominant factor in most cases” (233). Any single reference may have any number of symbols which could accompany it, each expressing a different nuance of function (attitude towards the reference, for example, or towards the audience), and a single symbol may simultaneously fulfill more than one function (233-34). The effect of this “plurality of functions which language has to perform” – which means, for example, that “non-symbolic functions may employ words [. . .] in a symbolic capacity, to attain the required end through the references produced in the listener” – is a “plasticity of speech material under symbolic conditions” (226). *Context* is of key importance: as one’s interpretation moves from “simple symbols” (the single word) to “complex symbols” (sentences and wider stretches of discourse), the process is one of recursive recontextualization. All “discursive symbolization” involves a “weaving together of contexts into higher contexts”: interpretation of such complex symbols is of the same nature as that of

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<sup>77</sup> Russo notes that Richards would later expand on this list of functions. “By 1955 Richards had enumerated eight functions, all more or less simultaneously present within the stream of any given speech act” (Russo 1989, 120). “More than any other concept in *The Meaning of Meaning*,” he later observes, “the plurality of functions enriched all of Richards’ later criticism. It also anticipated aspects in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein and in the ordinary language philosophy of J.L. Austin” (Russo 1989, 137). With regard to the latter, Russo observes that “like Richards, Austin recognizes that linguistic functions operate simultaneously or with varying degrees of force” (720 n.100).

simple symbols “with the difference only that the members of these higher contexts are themselves contexts” (220).<sup>78</sup>

Having introduced these suggestive ideas of “plurality of functions” and “context”, Ogden and Richards return to their more basic distinction between symbolic and emotive uses of language, comparing it with the distinction between prose and poetry (235-42). Unfortunately, as Russo points out, this crude distinction subsequently dominated discussion of Ogden and Richards’ work (giving rise to ideological debates over “science” vs “poetry” etc), and “drew attention away from the instrumentality of language, the inner theme that develops most fully in the exposition of the functions” (Russo 1989, 120-21): Ogden and Richards are at their most impressive, Russo judges, “when they link their twin themes, instrumentality and contextualism” (132).

The path that we have traced in *The Meaning of Meaning* is from a contextualist, triadic view of signification to a concept of the multiplicity and simultaneity of linguistic functions. In Chapter Two subsection 1.1 I will discuss how the Czech structuralists developed this latter concept. First, though, I conclude this chapter by looking briefly at Karl Bühler’s *Theory of Language* (1934), not least because Bühler’s work provides a direct link, in terms of acknowledged influence, with the ideas of the Czech structuralists.<sup>79</sup> Bühler presents what he calls an “Organon” model of language, taking this term from Plato. In *Cratylus* a name is

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<sup>78</sup> Russo provides the following gloss on the account of “context” in *The Meaning of Meaning*: “The meaning of a word is only fully comprehended when it has been ‘contextualized,’ and meaning is found to be a complex function of its components. Instead of one or even a dozen meanings, numberless shades of meaning fall across the spectrum of a word. Or perhaps it is better to withhold the idea of a word’s meaning and say only that the context has meaning” (Russo 1989, 112).

<sup>79</sup> For Bühler’s influence on the Prague school see Galan 1985, 70-3 and Innis 1982, 4.



defined as a tool, an instrument (“*Organon*”) for informing another about something:

SOCRATES: Do we not give information to one another, and distinguish things according to their natures?

HERMOGENES: Certainly we do.

SOCRATES: Then a name is an instrument of teaching and of distinguishing natures, as the shuttle is of distinguishing the threads of the web. (Plato 1961, 426)

In Bühler’s gloss on Plato, language is “an *organum* for the one to inform the other of something about the things” (Bühler 1990 [1934], 30). Bühler then illustrates the idea with a diagram (31):

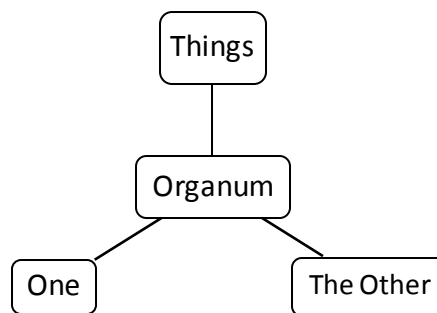


Figure 5

The simplest illustration of the model, Bühler writes, is the case when the “one” and the “other” share a sensory stimulus in the same perceptual field:

Thus for example: two people in a room – the one notices a drumming, looks to the window and says, “it’s raining” – the other, too, looks to the window, whether directly on hearing the expression or because his gaze is directed to it by looking at the speaker. That can happen, and then the process elegantly makes a full circle. If one wishes, the process can be repeated in this closed circle as on an endless screw [. . .] [I]f the incident has ample “appeal” to them (as a very apt expression has it), then they will indulge in observant probing and discussion of the affair in dialogue form. (32)

This situation is, then, precisely what we have described above in developmental terms as the joint attentional situation.

Bühler thus identifies three factors that come into play in any linguistic communication: the sender of the communication, the receiver, and the referent (the object/state of affairs/event(s) that are being talked about). Corresponding to these factors Bühler identifies three “semantic functions” of language depending on which of these factors the words are oriented to: the *referential* or *representative* function is oriented towards the object; the *expressive* or *emotive* function is oriented towards the sender; and the *appellant* or *conative* function is oriented towards the receiver (35):

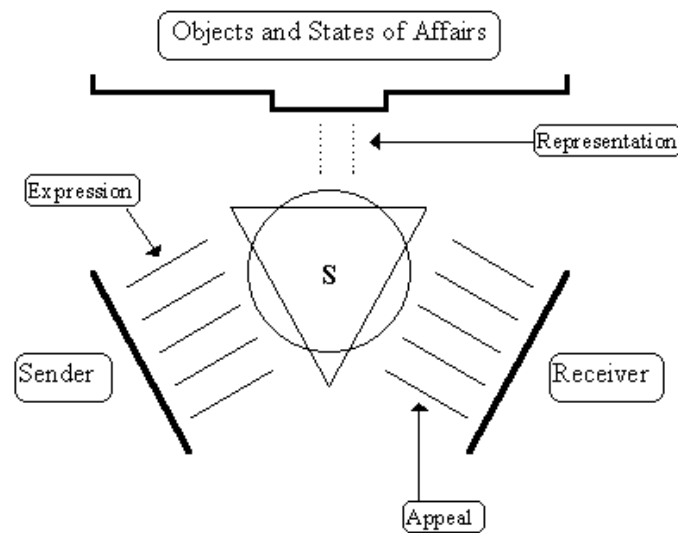


Figure 6

The sign (indicated by the circle S) encompasses these three facets or semantic functions of language, according to whether it functions as a *symbol* (in coordination with objects or states of affairs), as a *symptom* (an “index” of the state of the sender) or a *signal* (an appeal to the receiver “whose inner or outer behaviour it directs”) (35).

Thus Bühler’s notion of the functionality of language – its character as a tool, an “Organon” – arises directly out of his conception of it as a “mediating phenomenon” (37) in the triadic, joint attentional situation. But the important point

in the context of the argument I will develop in the next chapter (the argument that the triadic joint attentional semiotics I have described in this chapter create a non-linearity in narrative fiction) is Bühler's insistence that the three functions, these "largely independently variable semantic relations" (35), coexist rather than enjoy any kind of exclusivity. The representational function is dominant, for example, in science, and yet "[t]he chalk marks drawn by the mathematicians and logicians on the blackboard still contain an expressive residue" (39). Despite the ubiquity and obvious salience of this representational function (to which the bulk of Bühler's *Theory* is devoted), Bühler argues that the "appeal" is even more fundamental to human and animal communication, as can be seen in the way insects are able to alter their co-species members' behaviour through signals (38). Particular instances of language-use are "phenomena of dominance, in which one of the three fundamental relationships of the language sounds is in the foreground" (39). In section one of the following chapter I will examine how Jan Mukařovský and other members of the Prague Linguistics Circle developed Bühler's *polyfunctional* model of language, combining it with some ideas inherited from Russian Formalism, into a model of language as a dynamic, non-linear system.