

**INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**

**OF THE NARRATIVE**

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The narratives of the world are without number. In the first place the word "narrative" covers an enormous variety of genres which are themselves divided up between different subjects, as if any material was suitable for the composition of the narrative: the narrative may incorporate articulate language, spoken or written; pictures, still or moving; gestures and the ordered arrangement of all these ingredients: it is present in myth, legend, fable, short story, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, painting (Carpaccio's Saint Ursula, for example), stained glass windows, cinema, comic strips, journalism, conversation. In addition, under this almost infinite number of forms, the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of the narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed a people without narratives; all classes, all social groups have their narratives and very often the taste for these narratives is shared by men of different, even opposing cultures! The narrative scores division into categories of good and bad literature: transcending national, historical, cultural barriers, the narrative is there where life is

Should this universality of the narrative lead one to conclude that it is without significance? Is it so general that we can say nothing about it, only describe, specifically, a few of its variations, as do the literary histories, from time to time? But these variations, how can they be encompassed, on what basis can they be distinguished, recognised? How can the short story be compared with the novel, the story with the myth, drama with tragedy (it has been done a thousand times) without reference to some standard? This standard is implied in any remark about the most specific, the most historical of narrative forms. It is, therefore, quite legitimate, far from renouncing any claim to be able to discuss the narrative, that people should, periodically, have considered the narrative form (since Aristotle); and it is not surprising that students of structure should make of this form one of their first preoccupations: is it not, for them, always a problem of encompassing the infinite number of words in order to arrive at a description of the "tongue [langue] of which they are the issue, and from which they can be engendered? In the face of the infinite number of narratives, the multitude of points of view from which they can be discussed (historical, psychological, sociological, ethnological, aesthetic etc.), the analyst finds himself in much the same position as Saussure in the face of the heterogeneous nature of language and seeking to extract from the apparent anarchy of the messages a principle of classification and basis of description. To confine ourselves to the present, the Russian Formalists, Propp, Levi-Strauss, have taught us to recognise the following problem: either the narrative is simply a hotch potch of events, in which case it can only be discussed by relying on the art, the talent or the genius of the narrator (the author) - all mythical forms of chance<sup>2</sup>- or it shares with other narratives a structure which can be analysed, however much patience that may require; there is a deep gulf between the most complex product of chance and the most simple conscious construction, and no one can construct (produce) a narrative, without reference to an implicit system of units and rules.

Where does one look for the structure of the narrative? In

narratives, of course.. All narratives? Many commentators who admit the idea of a narrative structure cannot reconcile themselves to following the example of the experimental sciences in their literary analysis. They boldly suggest the application of a purely inductive method to study the narrative, beginning with all the narratives of one genre, one period, or one society and thence proceeding to the outline of a general pattern. This implies a Utopian view of man's interest. The science of linguistics itself, which has only three thousand languages to encompass does not attempt this; wisely, a deductive method has been adopted and since then it has really established itself and forged ahead even succeeding in predicting facts still to be discovered.<sup>3</sup> What about narrative analysis confronted by millions of narratives? It must adopt a deductive process; first it must formulate a hypothetical pattern of description (what American students of linguistics call a "theory" [theorie], and thence come down gradually, from the starting point of this pattern, towards the examples of narratives which at once conform with and differ from the pattern: it is only at the level of these conformities and differences that it will rediscover, now provided with a unique tool of description, the multiplicity of narratives, their historical, geographical, cultural diversity.<sup>4</sup>

In order to describe and classify the infinite number of narratives, therefore, it is necessary to have a "theory" (in the pragmatic sense mentioned above) and the first task is to search for and to outline this theory.<sup>5</sup> The elaboration of this theory can be greatly facilitated if one follows a pattern which will provide one with first terms and first principles. At the present stage of research it would seem reasonable to adopt as a basic pattern for the structural analysis of the narrative the science of linguistics itself.

## 1. THE LANGUAGE [LANGUE] OF THE NARRATIVE

### 1. Beyond the Sentence

It is a well known fact that linguistics stops at the sentence: it is the last unit which it feels qualified to deal with; if, in fact, the sentence, being an orderly arrangement and not a series, cannot be reduced to the sum of the words of which it is composed, and thereby constitutes a primary unit, an utterance, on the other hand, is just the sum of the sentences of which it is composed: from the point of view of linguistics there is nothing in discourse which is not found in the sentence: "The sentence", says Martinet, "is the smallest segment which is perfectly and integrally representative of the discourse". Linguistics, therefore, would never deal with an object superior to the sentence for beyond the sentence there are only other sentences: when he has described the flower, the botanist does not go on to describe the bouquet

It is, however, evident that the discourse itself (as a set of sentences) is organised and as a result of this organisation appears as the message of another higher language than that studied in linguistics: the discourse has its units, its rules, its "grammar": beyond the sentence, and composed solely of sentences, the discourse could easily be

the object of a second linguistic science. This linguistics of the discourse has long been possessed of a resounding name: Rhetoric; but, due to a historical trick, as rhetoric passed into the field of belles-lettres, and the study of belles-lettres became divorced from the study of language, it has recently become necessary to look at the problem afresh: the new linguistics of discourse has not yet been developed, but it has, at least, been postulated by the students of linguistics themselves. This fact is not without significance: although it constitutes, in itself, an autonomous study the discourse must be examined using linguistics as the starting point; there must be formulated a working hypothesis for an analysis which is a tremendous task and has to deal with an infinite amount of material. The most reasonable idea would be to postulate a homological relationship between sentence and discourse, insofar as it is likely that the same formal organisation governs all semiotic systems, whatever their content and their dimensions: the discourse would be regarded as a big "sentence" (the units of which need not necessarily be sentences), just as the sentence in certain respects, is a little "discourse". This hypothesis fits in well with certain propositions of contemporary anthropology: Jakobsen and Levi-Strauss have pointed out that the human race can be recognised by the ability to create secondary systems, "propagating systems" [demultiplicateurs], (tools used to make other tools, dual articulation of language, taboos on incest to allow the proliferation of families) and the Soviet student of linguistics Ivanov, assumes that artificial languages could only be acquired after a natural language: the important thing for man being the ability to use several systems of meaning, the natural language helps in the elaboration of the artificial languages. It is, therefore, quite permissible to postulate a "secondary" relationship between sentence and discourse - a relationship which we will describe as homological, in order to respect the purely formal nature of the interchanges.

The general language of the narrative is obviously only one of the idioms offered to the linguistics of discourse<sup>10</sup>, which, in consequence, is subjected to the homological hypothesis: structurally the narrative has some of the characteristics of sentences without ever being reduced to being the sum of a number of sentences: the narrative is a big sentence just as every statement [phrase constative] is in some sense the outline of a little narrative. Although they possess certain important unique features, there are found in the narrative, enlarged and altered in proportion, the chief features of the verb: tense, aspects, moods, persons; moreover, the "subjects" themselves, which are put in opposition to the verbal predicates, do not fail to follow a sentence pattern [modele phrastique]: the typology of actants proposed by A.J. Greimas<sup>11</sup> finds in the multitude of characters of the narrative the elementary functions of grammatical analysis. The homology suggested here does not have a purely heuristic value: it implies identification between language and literature (insofar as it is a sort of privileged vehicle for the narrative): it is now hardly possible to conceive of literature as an art totally divorced from any relationship with language, as soon as it has been used to express an idea, passion or beauty;

(continued)



language walks hand in hand with the discourse reflecting its own structure: does not literature, today conspicuously, make a language of the very conditions of language?<sup>12</sup>

## 2. The Levels of Meaning

From the outset linguistics provides the structural analysis of the narrative with a decisive concept, for, taking into account straight away what is essential in any system of meaning, that is its organisation, it allows one to, at the same time, state how a narrative is not a simple sum of propositions and to classify the huge mass of elements which go to make up a narrative. This concept is that of a level of description [niveau de description].<sup>13</sup>

It is a well-known fact that a sentence can be described, linguistically, at several levels (phonetic, phonological, grammatical, contextual); these levels are related hierarchically, for, if each has its own units and its own correlations, necessitating an independent description for each one, no level can, on its own, be meaningful: each unit which belongs to a certain level only takes on a meaning if it is integrated into a higher level: a phoneme, although it is perfectly possible to describe it, is meaningless in itself; it only shares in a meaning if it is integrated into a word; and the word itself must be integrated into the sentence.<sup>14</sup> The theory of levels (as set out by Benveniste) provides two types of relationships: distributional (if the relationships are on the same level), integrative (if they are taken from one level to another). It follows from this that the distributional relationships are not sufficient to give meaning. In order to carry out a structural analysis it is necessary, first of all, to distinguish several modes of description and to place these modes in a hierarchical (integratory) perspective.

These levels are working processes.<sup>15</sup> It is natural, therefore, that as it proceeds, the science of linguistics tends to multiply them. The analysis of speech can, as yet, work only on the most rudimentary levels. According to its rules, rhetoric had assigned to discourse at least two <sup>planes</sup> of description: dispositio and elocutio.<sup>16</sup> Nowadays, in his analysis of the structure of the myth, Levi-Strauss has already specified that the units which constitute the mythic discourse (mythemes [mythemes]) only take on meaning because they are collected into groups and these groups themselves combine with each other;<sup>17</sup> and T. Todorov, taking up the distinction made by the Russian Formalists, proposes working on two main levels, themselves subdivided: the story (the plot), comprising a logical system of actions and a "syntax" of characters, and the discourse, comprising the tenses, aspects and the moods of the narrative.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the number of levels proposed and however one defines them it is beyond doubt that the narrative is a hierarchy of modes. Understanding a narrative is not just following the thread of the story, it is also recognising the "stages", projecting the horizontal sequences of the narrative "thread" on its own implied vertical axis; to read (listen to) a narrative is not just to pass

from one word to another, it also means passing from one level to another. If the reader will excuse a form of apologue here: in Poe's The Stolen Letter, he analysed precisely the failure of the Chief of Police who was powerless to recover the letter: his investigations were perfect, he said, "within the bounds of his own special function": he searched everywhere, he completely "saturated" the level of the "search"; but, in order to find the letter, which was protected by his crudity of action, he needed to pass to another level, to substitute the mind of the concealer for that of the policeman. In the same way, the "search" carried out on a horizontal collection of narrative relationships, no matter how completely, is valueless unless it is combined with a "vertical" examination: the meaning is not at the end of the narrative, it cuts through it in cross section; potentially as easy to find as The Stolen Letter, the meaning will equally elude a purely unilateral search.

Much more exploration will still be necessary before it is possible to fix the levels of the narrative. Those which will be proposed here constitute a provisional outline, the advantage of which is, as yet, almost exclusively didactic: they allow one to locate and to group the problems without conflicting with the few analyses which have already been carried out.<sup>19</sup> It is proposed that one should distinguish in the narrative three levels of description: the level of the "functions" (in the sense of the word as it is used by Propp and Bremond), the level of the "actions" (in the sense in which Greimas uses the word when he speaks of characters as actants [those who perform actions]) and the level of the "narration" (which is, loosely, the level of the "discourse" in Todorov). It should be remembered that these three levels are linked together according to a progressive method of integration: a function only has meaning when it is placed in the general action of an actant; and this action itself receives its ultimate significance from the fact that it is narrated, placed in a discourse which has its own code.

## II THE FUNCTIONS

### 1. To Determine the Units

Since all systems consist of a combination of units, the categories of which are known, the first essential is to divide up the narrative and to determine the sections of the discourse which can be assigned to a small number of categories; in a word, the smallest narrative units must be defined.

In accordance with the integrative perspective defined above, the analysis cannot be satisfied with a purely distributional definition of the units: from the outside the meaning must be the criterion of the unit: it is the functional nature of certain sections of the story which make them units: from this comes the name "functions" which we have given to these primary units. Since the

Russian Formalists<sup>20</sup> any section of the story which appears as the of a correlation has been recognised as a unit. The essence of any function is its seminal quality which enables it to plant in the narrative an element which will develop later, on the same level or even on another level: if, in Un Coeur Simple, Flaubert informs us at a certain moment, apparently casually, that the daughters of the sous-prefe of Pont-l'Eveque had a parrot, it is because the parrot is now to assume an important role in the life of Felicite; the utterance of this detail (whatever its linguistic form) constitutes a function, or narrative unit.

Is everything in a narrative functional? Does everything, down the smallest detail, have a meaning? Can the whole narrative be divided up into functional units? It will be seen, there are probably several types of function, since there are several types of correlation. This does not alter the fact that a narrative is never composed only of functions: everything in a narrative, to a greater or lesser degree, has significance. This is not a question of art (on the part of the narrative), it is a question of structure: what is noted in the order of the discourse is, by definition, of note: even when a detail appears utterly without significance, devoid of any function, it still must have a function, if only to establish absurdity: everything is meaningful or nothing is. In other words it could be said that art does not recognise simple noise [bruit] (in the informational sense of the word)<sup>21</sup> it is a pure system, there is never a lost unit<sup>22</sup>, however long, loose thin the thread which links it to one of the levels of the story.<sup>23</sup>

The function is obviously, from the linguistic point of view, a unit of content: it is "what is<sup>24</sup> meant by" an utterance which distinguishes it as a unit of function<sup>24</sup>, not the way in which it is said. If I am told (in Goldfinger) that James Bond saw a man of about fifty etc., the information includes two functions at one, two functions of different degrees of importance: on the one hand the age of the character is integrated into a portrait (the "usefulness" of which, for the rest of the story, is not nil, but diffuse and delayed) and on the other hand the immediate meaning of the utterance is that Bond does not know his future interlocutor: the unit implies therefore a very strong correlation (beginning of a threat and need to identify). In order to determine the primary narrative units it is, therefore, necessary never to lose sight of the functional nature of the sections being examined, and to admit in advance that this functional nature will not conflict hopelessly with the forms which we recognise traditionally in the different parts of the narrative discourse, (actions, scenes, paragraphs, dialogues, interior monologues etc.), still less with the "psychological" categories (behaviour, feelings, intentions, motivation, rationalisations of characters).

In the same way, since the ["langue"] of the narrative is not the ["langue"] of articulated language - although often accompanied by it - the narrative units will be largely independent of the linguistic units: of course it is possible for them to coincide but only occasionally, not systematically, the functions will be represented sometimes by higher un-



than the sentence (groups of sentences of different sizes, as far as the whole work) sometimes lower (the syntagm, the word, and even, in the word, certain literary elements);<sup>25</sup> when we are told that when Bond is on guard in his office at M15 and the telephone rings, "Bond picked up one of the four receivers", the four constitutes a whole functional unit in itself, since it refers to an essential concept on which the whole story is based (that of developed bureaucratic technique); in fact the narrative unit is not here the linguistic unit (the word) but only its connoted value (linguistically, the word four never means "four"); this explains how certain functional units can be of a lower order than the sentence, without ceasing to belong to the discourse: they exceed the limits not of the sentence, to which they remain materially inferior, but the level of denotation, which, like the sentence, belongs specifically to the domain of linguistics.

## 2. Classification of Units

These functional units must be divided up into a small number of categories. If one wants to determine these categories without recourse to the material of the contents (psychological material for example), it is necessary to again consider the different levels of meaning: some units have as correlates units of the same level; but, in order to cover others it is necessary to proceed to another level. Thus, from the beginning, one finds two main categories of functions, some distributional, the others integrative. The former correspond to Propp's functions, which have been notably taken up by Bremond, but which we are examining here in much greater detail than these authors; it is for these that the name "function" will be reserved (although the other units are also functional [connected with functions]); the example is a classic one since Tomachevski's analysis: the purchasing of a revolver has as its correlate the moment when it will be used (and, if it is not used, the notation becomes a sign of an impulsive action etc.); picking up the telephone has as its correlate the moment of hanging up; the entry of the parrot into Felicite's house has as its correlate the episodes when it is stuffed and when it is worshipped etc. The second main category of units, those which are integrative in , comprises all the indications [indices] (in the very general sense of the word)<sup>26</sup>; the unit refers, therefore, not to a complementary and consequent act, but to a more or less diffuse concept, which is, however, essential to the meaning of the story: indications of personality concerning the characters, information relating to their identity, notations of "atmosphere", etc.; the relationship between the unit and its correlate is not, therefore, distributional (often several indications refer to the same signified feature and their order of appearance in the discourse is not necessarily relevant), but integrative; in order to understand "what purpose is served" by a notation of indication [notation indicielle] it is necessary to pass to a higher level (actions of



the characters or narration), for it is only there that the indication is fulfilled; the power of the administration which is behind Bond, indicated by the number of telephones, indicates nothing about the sequence of actions in which Bond engages in receiving the communication; it only takes on its significance at the level of a general typology of the actants (Bond is on the side of order); the indications, as a result of the, to some extent, vertical nature of their relationships, are truly semantic units, for, in contrast with the "functions", properly speaking, they refer to a signified feature, not to an "operation"; the sanction of the Indications is "higher", sometimes even outside the explicit syntagm (the "personality" of a character can never be named but is continually being indicated), it is a paradigmatic sanction; in contrast, the sanction of the "Functions" is always only "further on", it is a syntagmatic sanction.<sup>27</sup> Functions and indications recall, therefore, another classical distinction: the Functions imply metonymic relata, the Indications metaphoric relata; one corresponds to a functionality of doing, the other to a functionality of being.<sup>28</sup>

These two main categories of units, Functions and Indications, should make possible a certain classification of narratives. Some narratives are strongly functional (for example, folk tales) and some others are strongly indicational (for example, "psychological" novels); between these two extremes there exists a whole range of intermediate examples depending on their historical background, society, genre. But this is not all: within each of these main categories it is immediately possible to recognise two sub-divisions of narrative units. To return to the category of Functions, its units are not all of the same "importance"; some constitute real hinges in the narrative (or parts of the narrative); others only "fill up" the narrative space between the function hinges: let us call the former cardinal functions (or nuclei) and the latter, because of their complementary nature, catalysises. For a function to be cardinal it is sufficient for the action to which it refers to open (or maintain, or close) an alternative route on which the progress of the story depends, that is, to introduce or terminate some uncertainty; if, in a part of the narrative, the phone rings, it is equally possible that it might or might not be answered, either of which occurrences would take the story along a different path. Between two cardinal functions it is always possible to distribute secondary notations which will collect around one nucleus or another without modifying the essential nature of the alternative course: the space which separates "the phone rang" and "Bond picked up the receiver" can be saturated with a multitude of tiny incidents or pieces of description: "Bond went towards the desk, lifted a receiver, put down his cigarette", etc. These catalysises remain functional, insofar as they are correlated with a nucleus, but their

functionality is diminished, unilateral, parasitic: the fact is that here it is a matter of a purely chronological functionality (what is being described is what separates two moments in the story) while the link which unites two cardinal functions is invested with a double functionality, at the same time chronological and logical: the catalysts are only consecutive units, the cardinal functions are at once consecutive and dependent. Everything leads to the thought that, in fact, the mainspring of narrative activity is the confusion of the consecutive and the dependent [consequence], what comes after being read in the narrative as if it is caused by; if this were the case the narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy of post hoc ergo propter hoc, which could even be the motto of Destiny, of which the narrative is only the "language"; and this "crushing" of logic and temporality is accomplished by the framework of the cardinal functions. These functions may, at first sight, appear quite insignificant; they are distinguished not by the spectacular (the importance, size, variety or strength of the stated action) but by their quality of risk: the cardinal functions are the moments of risk in the narrative; between these points of alternatives these "despatchers", the catalyses form zones of safety, rest, luxury this luxury is not without use however: from the point of view of the story, it must be repeated, the catalyses can have a weak but not a non-existent function: were it completely redundant (in relation to its nucleus) it would not share any the less in the economy of the message, but this is not the case: an apparently expletive notation always has a discursive function: it accelerates, delays, restarts the discourse, it summarises, anticipates, even sends off course<sup>29</sup>; what is noted always appearing of note, the catalysis is constantly arousing the semantic tension of the discourse, is always saying: there has been, there will be meaning; the constant function of the catalyst therefore, whatever the circumstances, is a Phatic one (to us Jakobsen's term): it maintains the contact between the narrator and the narratory [narrataire]. One might say that a nucleus cannot be suppressed without altering the story, but nor can a catalysis be suppressed without altering the discourse. As for the second main category of narrative units (the indications), an integrative category the units found in it have in common the feature that they cannot be saturated (completed) except at the level of the characters or of the narration; they are, therefore, part of a parametric<sup>30</sup> relationship, the second implicit form of which is continuous, extended to an episode, a character or a complete work; however, it is possible to distinguish in it indications or perly speaking, by reference to a personality, a feeling, an atmosphere (suspicion, for example), a philosophy and pieces of information which serve to identify, to locate in time and space. To say that Bond is on guard in an office, the open window of which reveals the moon amidst great rolling clouds, is to indicate a stormy summer night, and this deduction itself forms an indication of atmosphere which relates to the heavy climate, giving warning of an action as yet unknown. The indications, therefore, always include these implicit signified features; the pieces of information on the other hand do not, at least on the level of the

story: they are purely pieces of data, the significance of which is immediately apparent. The indications imply a deciphering process: for the reader it is a matter of learning to recognise a personality, an atmosphere; the pieces of information [informants] provide ready made knowledge; their functionality, like that of the catalysises, is therefore weak but not non-existent: whatever its "deadness" in relation to the rest of the story, the information (for example the exact age of a character) serves to authenticate the reality of the referent (object referred to), to anchor the fiction in reality: it is an operation for realism [opérateur réaliste] and by this token, possesses an incontestable functionality, not at the level of the story but at that of the discourse.

Nuclei and catalysises, indications and informations (again the names scarcely matter), such it seems, are the primary categories into which will be divided the units of the level of functions. Two remarks are necessary to complete this classification. In the first place, a unit may belong to two different categories at once: to drink a whisky (in an airport departure hall) is an action which can act as a catalyst to the (cardinal) notation of waiting but it is also, at the same time, the indication of a certain atmosphere (modern, relaxed, remembered etc.): in other words, certain units can be mixed. As a result of this a whole game can be played with the economy of the narrative; in the novel Goldfinger, Bond, before searching his adversary's room, is given a master key by his colleague: the notation is a pure (cardinal) function; in the film this detail is altered: Bond, with a joke, takes a bunch of keys from an unprotesting chamber-maid; the notation is no longer purely functional but also indicational, relating to Bond's personality (his casualness and his appeal to women). In the second place, it must be pointed out (something which will be taken up again later) that the four categories just discussed may be divided up in a different way, following more closely the pattern of linguistics. The catalysisis indications and informations have, in fact, a common characteristic: they are expansions, in relation to the nuclei: the nuclei (as will be shown shortly) form complete groups of a small number of finite entities, they are governed by a system of logic, they are at once necessary and self sufficient: given this framework, the other units come in to fill it out according to a method of proliferation, which is, in theory, infinite; this is just like the sentence made up of simple propositions infinitely complicated by means of repetition, padding etc. Like the sentence the narrative can be subjected to an infinite process of catalysis. Mallarmé attached such importance to this type of structure that he used it for his poem "Jamais un coup de des" which can be considered with its "knots" and "bellies", its "knot words" and "lace words" as the coat of arms of any narrative - any language.

### 3. The Syntax of the Functions.

In what way, according to what "grammatical structure" are these different units linked together through the course of the narrative syntax? What are the rules which govern the combination of the functions? The informations and the indications can be freely put into combination among themselves: this is illustrated for example, by the portrait which juxtaposes civil status and traits of character.



A simple relationship of implication unites these catalyses and nuclei: a catalysis necessarily implies the existence of a cardinal function to which to attach itself, but not in a reciprocal attachment. As for the cardinal functions, they are united in a relationship of joint responsibility: a function of this sort depends on another of the same sort, and the relationship is interdependent. This last relationship must be examined for a moment: first because it defines the very framework of the narrative (any expansions can be suppressed, but not the nuclei); secondly because it is the principle concern of anyone trying to establish the facts about narrative structure.

It has already been pointed out that, by its very structure, the narrative institutes a confusion between consecutive and consequent [dependent], time and logic. It is this ambiguity which constitutes the central problem of the syntax of narrative structure. Is there, behind the time pattern of the narrative, a logic that is outside time? Even recently this point divided researchers. Propp, whose analysis opened up the way to present studies, holds absolutely to the unshakeable principle of chronological order: in his view time is reality, and for this reason it seems to him essential to establish the story in time. However, Aristotle himself, in contrasting tragedy (defined by the unity of action) and history (defined by the plurality of the actions and the unity of time) was already assuming the primacy of logic over chronology.<sup>32</sup> This is what is being done by contemporary researcher (Levi-Strauss, Greimas, Bremond, Todorov) who would doubtless subscribe (however much they might differ on other points) to Levi-Strauss's proposition "The order of chronological succession is absorbed into an atemporal matrix structure".<sup>33</sup> The present analysis in fact tends to "dechronologise" the continuity of the narrative, to "relogify" it, to subject it to what Mallarme, talking about the French language, called "the primitive moulds of logic."<sup>34</sup> Or, more exactly - at least we hope so - the task is that of trying to give a structural description of the chronological illusion; the logic of the narrative must account for the time sequence of the narrative. It could be said, in other words, that the temporality [time structure] is only a category of structure in the narrative (discourse), just as in language, time only exists in the form of a system; from the point of view of the narrative, what we call time does not exist, or at least only exists in a functional way, as an element of a semiotic system: time does not belong to the discourse, properly speaking, but to the referent; the narrative and language only recognise a semiological time structure; the "real" time is only a "realistic", referential illusion, as is shown by Propp's commentary, and it is thus that structural description should treat it.<sup>35</sup>

What then is this logic which binds the principle functions of the narrative? This is what researchers have been trying to establish and what has caused, up to now, the most argument. We shall return therefore to the contributions of A.J. Greimas, Cl. Bremond and P. Todorov, which are published in this edition, and which deal with the logic of the functions. All the chief directions which research



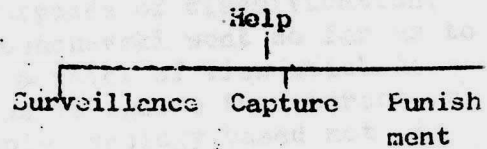
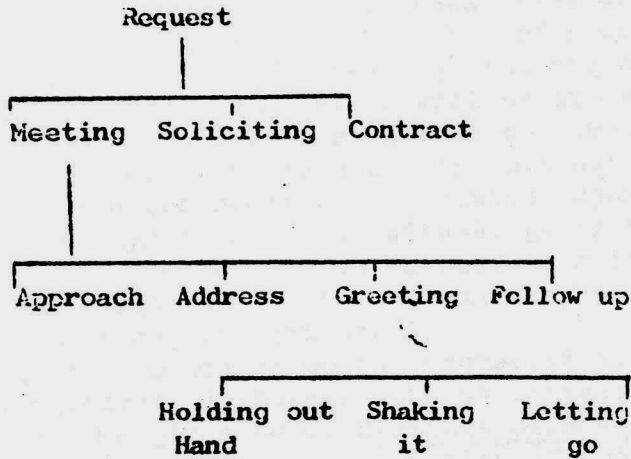
has taken appear, set out below by Todorov. The first (Bremond) is the most properly logical: it involves reconstituting the syntax of the human behaviour set in action by the narrative, retracing the path of the "choices" to which, at each point in the story, a certain character is fatally subjected<sup>36</sup> and thereby to expose what one might call a logic of energy<sup>37</sup> since it takes possession of the characters at the moment they choose to act. The second direction is linguistic (Levi-Strauss, Greimas): the essential preoccupation of this method is to find, in the functions, paradigmatic contrasts, these contrasts co forming to the Jakobsonian principle of the "poetic" [poetique], being "stretched out" throughout the fabric of the narrative (we shall see here the new developments with which Greimas corrects or completes the paradigmaticism of the functions). The third direction, outlined by Todorov is somewhat different since it sets the analysis at the level of the "actions" (that is, the characters), attempting to establish rules by which the narrative combines, varies and alters a certain number of basic predicates.

It is not a matter of choosing these working hypotheses; they are not in competition but concurrent, moreover fully elevated. The only addition which we will suggest here concerns the dimensions of the analysis. Even if one sets aside the indications, informations and catalyses, there still remains in a narrative (especially if one is dealing with a novel, and not a short story) a large number of cardinal functions; many of these cannot be controlled by the analyses quoted, which have so far worked on the main articulations of the narrative. However, it is necessary to presume a sufficiently detailed description to account for all the units of the narrative. Of its smallest segments the cardinal functions, let us remember, cannot be determined by their "importance", but only by the (doubly implicative) nature of their relationships: a "telephone call", however trivial it seems, on one hand comprises, in itself, several cardinal functions (ringing, lifting the receiver, speaking, hanging up), and on the other hand, taking it as a whole, it must be possible to connect it, at least by degrees, to the main articulations of the anecdote. The function covering of the narrative imposes an organisation of stages of which the basic unit can only be a small group of functions which will be called here (after Cl. Bremond) a sequence.

A sequence is a logical succession of nuclei linked to each other by interdependent relationships:<sup>38</sup> the sequence opens when one of its terms has no dependent antecedent and closes when another of its terms has no dependent successor. To take a trivial example, ordering a drink, receiving it, drinking it, paying for it: these different functions form what is obviously a closed sequence, since it is impossible to have something preceding the order or following the payment without stepping outside the homogeneous whole of "Drink". The sequence in fact can always be named. Determining the main functions of the short story, Propp, then Bremond, have already been led to name them (Deceit, Betrayal, Struggle, Contract, Seduction etc.); the naming process is equally inevitable for trivial sequences, what one might call "micro-sequences", those which form the finest threads of the narrative fabric. Are these namings solely in the province of the

analyst. In other words are they purely meta-linguistic? It would seem so, for they deal with the code of the narrative, but it is possible to see them forming part of a metalanguage within the reader (listener) himself, who grasps each logical succession of actions as a nominal whole: to read is to name, to listen is not only to perceive a language but also to construct it. The sequence titles are quite analagous to the cover words of translating machines which cover acceptably a great variety of meanings and nuances. The language of the narrative, which is in us, immediately comprises these essential Pubrics: the closed logic which forms the structure of a sequence is indissolubly linked to its name: any function which inviolates a seduction imposes, from the moment of its appearance, in the name which it causes to emerge, the whole process of the seduction, such as we know it from all the narratives which have formulated within us the language of the narrative.

However slight its importance, being composed of a small number of nuclei (that is, in fact, of "dispatchers"), the sequence always comprises moments of risk, and it is this which justifies its analysis: it might seem derisory to call the sequence the logical succession of minute acts which form the offer of a cigarette (offering, accepting, lighting, smoking); but what is important is that at each of these points, an alternative, and therefore a freedom of choice of direction [liberte de sens] is possible: du Pont, James Bond's colleague offers him a light from his cigarette-lighter, but Bond refuses, the meaning of this refusal is that Bond instinctively fears the gadget is booby-trapped<sup>39</sup>. The sequence is therefore, one might say, a logical threat unit [unite logique menacee]: this is what justifies it a minimo. It is also based on a maxime: enclosed in these functions, subsumed under a name, the sequence itself constitutes a new unit, ready to function simply as another, larger sequence. Here is a univo-sequence: Hold out one's hand, shake it, let go; this greeting becomes a simple function: on one hand it has the role of an indication (du Pont's softness and Bond's repugnance), and on the other hand it is the term of a vido sequence, denoted by Meeting, the other terms of which (approach, pause, challenge, greeting, consolidation) can, themselves, be micro-sequences. A whole network of subrogations thus gives a structure to the narrative, the smallest matrices to the largest functions. It is a matter here of course, of a hierarchy which remains within the level of functions: It is only when the narrative has been able to expand gradually, from du Pont's cigarette to the fight between Bond and Goldfinger, that the analysis of functions is terminated: the pyramid formed by the functions then attains the next level (that of the Actions). There is therefore, a syntax within the sequences and a (subrogating) syntax between the sequences. The first episode of Goldfinger thus takes in a sort of "Stein" effect:



This representation is obviously analytic. The reader perceives a linear succession of terms. But it is necessary to point out that the terms of several sequences might well overlap: sequence is not terminated when the initial term of a new sequence intervenes: the sequences are arranged in counterpoint,<sup>40</sup> from the point of view of functions the structure of the narrative is figural: this is how the narrative at once "holds" and "aspires". The overlapping of the sequences can only, in fact, be permitted to cease, within a work, by a phenomenon of radical rupture, if the several tightly composed blocks (or "Ste...") which form it, are somehow recovered at the higher level of the Actions (characters): Goldfinger is composed of three functionally interdependent episodes, since on two occasions their functional ste... cease to communicate: there is no sequential relationship between the swimming pool and Fort Knox episodes, but there is still a relationship on the level of the Actions, since the characters (and in consequence, the structure of their relationships) are the same. One recognises here the epic ("collection of multiple fables") the epic is a narrative broken at the level of functions but united at the level of actions (this can be demonstrated in the *Odyssy* or Brecht's drama). It is therefore, necessary to place on top of the level of functions (which provides the major part of the narrative syntagma) a higher level, from which, gradually, the units of the first level derive their meaning, and this level is the level of Actions.

### III

#### The Actions.

##### 1. A Structural Definition of the characters.

In Aristotelean poetics the ration of character is secondary, entirely subordinate to the ration of action: it is possible says Aristotle, to have fables without "characters" but not characters without fables. This view was taken up by the classical theorists (Vossius).<sup>41</sup> Here, the character who, till then, was only a name, the agent of an action, took on a

psychological consistency, became an individual, a "person"; in short, a fully constituted being, without doing anything, even before acting<sup>42</sup>; the character ceased to be subordinated to the action, suddenly took on a psychological essence; these essences could be classified, the clearest example of this being the list of stock characters of the bourgeois theatre [theatre bourgeois] (the coquette, noble father etc.). Since it first appeared, structural analysis has been most reluctant to deal with the character as an essence, even for purposes of classification; as T. Todorov reminds us, in this edition, Tomachevski went so far as to deny the character any narrative importance, a point of view which he later came to modify. Without going so far as to ignore the characters in this analysis Propp reduced them to a simple typology based not on psychology but on the actions they perform (giver of the talisman, accomplice, villain etc.).

Since Propp the character has always posed the same problem in structural analysis of the narrative: on one hand the characters (whatever name one gives them: dramatis personae or actants [those who perform an action]) form a necessary plan of description, outside which the smallest related "actions" cease to be intelligible, so that, in fact, one might say that it is impossible to have a narrative without "characters"<sup>43</sup> or at least without "agents"; but on the other hand these very numerous "agents" cannot be described or classified in terms of "people" [persons] whether one considers the "person" as a purely historical form restricted to certain genres (true, those best known to us) and in consequence make exception of the case (a very extensive one) of all narratives (folk tale contemporary texts) which admit of agents but not of people; or whether one claims that the person is always only a critic's rationalisation imposed in our time on what are, in fact, simple narrative agents. Structural analysis, which is always very careful to avoid defining characters in terms of psychological essences, has striven, up till now, through diverse hypotheses, which will be found reflected in some of the contributions which follow, to define the character not as a "being" but as a "participant". For Cl. Bremond, each character can be the agent of sequences of actions proper to himself (Deceit, Seduction); when one sequence implies two characters (as is usually the case), the sequence has two perspectives, or, if you prefer, two names (what is Deceit for one is the process of being deceived [Dupere] for the other); in short, each character, even the secondary ones, is the hero of his own sequence. Todorov, analysing "psychological" novel (Les Liaisons Dangereuses) takes as his point of departure not the character-people [personnages-personnes] but the three main relationships in which they are involved, and which he calls basic predicates (love, communication, help); these relationships are subjected in the analysis to two sorts of rules: of derivation [dérivation] when it is a question of rendering an account of other relationships and of action [action] when it is a question of describing changes in these relationships in the course of the story: there are many characters in Les Liaisons Dangereuses but "what is said about them" [ce qui on dit] (their predicates) can be classified. Finally, A.J. Greimas has proposed that the characters of the narrative should be described and classified,



not according to what they are, but according to what they do (hence the name actants), insofar as they form part of three great semantic axes, which moreover are also found in the sentence (subject, object, adjectival complement, adverbial complement [complement d'attribution, complement circonstanciel]) and which are communication, desire (or quest and proof,<sup>44</sup> as the parts of the axis go in pairs, so the infinitely large world of the characters is also subject to a paradigmatic structure (subject/object, giver/receiver, helper/opposer) projected throughout the course of the narrative and as the actant defines a category its part can be fulfilled by different actors, mobilised according to the rules of multiplication, substitution or subtraction [carence].

These three concepts have many points in common. The chief one it must be reiterated, is that of defining the character in terms of his participation in a sphere of actions, these spheres being few in number, typical, classifiable; that is why we have called the second level of description the level of Actions, despite the fact that it is the level of the characters: the word action should not be understood here in the sense of the little acts which go to make up the fabric of the first level, but in the sense of the great articulations of the praxis (desiring, communicating, struggling).

## 2. The Problem of the Subject

The problems raised by a classification of the characters of the narrative have not yet really been solved. Certainly there is agreement in the idea that the innumerable characters of the narrative can be subjected to rules of substitution and that, even within a work, one film may incorporate different characters<sup>45</sup>; on the other hand the notion of actants [modele actantiere] proposed by Greimas (and taken up from a different point of view by Todorov) seems to stand up to testing by a large number of narratives: like all structural models it is less valuable for its basic [canonique] form (a matrix of six actants) than for the controlled changes (subtractions, confessions, duplications, substitutions) to which it lends itself, giving rise to hopes of a typology of actants for narratives<sup>46</sup>; however, when the matrix is strong from the point of view of classification (as is the case with Greimas' actants) it is less successful from the point of view of the multiplicity of the participations; as soon as they are analysed in terms of perspectives and when these perspectives are respected (as in Bremond's description) the character system remains too fragmented; the reduction proposed by Todorov avoids both these difficulties, but it has so far been applied to only one narrative. It would seem that these difficulties may easily be dealt with. The real difficulty raised by the classification of the characters is the place (and, therefore, the existence) of the subject in any matrix of actants, whatever its formation. Who is the subject (the hero) of a narrative? Is there - or is there not - a privileged category of actors? One novel has accustomed us to accentuate, in one way or another, sometimes in a very indirect way (a negative way), one character more than the others. But this special case treatment [privilege] nowhere near covers all narrative literature.

Thus many narratives set in conflict, around some point of rivalry, two adversaries whose "actions" are, in these ways, made equal; the subject is then truly dual without any possibility of further reducing it by substitution; it is perhaps a current archaic form, as if the narrative, like certain languages, had also possessed a duality of persons. This duality is even more interesting in that it relates the narrative to the structure of certain (very modern) games in which matched opponents try to gain possession of an object put into the game by an umpire; this scheme recalls the matrix of actants proposed by Greimas and it is not surprising, if one considers that the game, being a language, springs from the same symbolic structure, as that found in language and in the narrative the game too is a sentence<sup>47</sup>. If therefore, the privileged category of actors is retained (the subject of the quest, the drive, the action) it is necessary at least to make it more flexible, subjecting this actant to the categories of the person, not the psychological but the grammatical person: once again it will be necessary to turn to linguistics in order to describe and to classify the mode of the action, whether it be personal (I/you) or apersonal (it), singular, dual or plural. It will be perhaps - the grammatical categories of the person (accessible through our pronouns) which will provide the key to the level of action. But as these categories can only be defined<sup>48</sup> in relation to the mode of the discourse, and not to that of reality, the characters, as units of the level of action, only find their meaning (their intelligibility) if they are integrated into the third level, that of description, which we shall call here the level of Narration (as opposed to the levels of Function and action).

## LV The Narration.

### 1. Narrative Communication.

Just as there is, within the narrative, an important exchange function (divided between a giver and a receiver), so, homologically, the narrative, as the object, is the central element of a communication: there is a giver of the narrative, and one to whom it is given. It is a well known fact that in linguistic communication I and you each presuppose the existence of the other; in the same way it is impossible to have a narrative without a narrator or without a listener (or reader). This notion is perhaps obvious, but has not been fully explored. Certainly the role of the originator of the narrative has been discussed in various terms (one studies the "author" of a novel without considering whether he is, in fact, the "narrator") but when one turns to the reader literary theorists are much more circumspect. In fact the problem is not the introspection of the narrator's motives, nor the effects the narration produces on the reader; it is to describe the code through which narrator and reader are signified in the course of the narrative itself. The narrators signs seem at first sight to be more easily visible and more numerous than those of the reader (a narrative says I more often than you); in fact the latter are just less obvious than the former; thus, every time the narrator ceases to "represent", relates facts of which he is perfectly aware, but of which the reader is ignorant, there occurs, by reason of absence [carence] a reading sign [signe de lecture] for there is no reason for the narrator to give himself information: Leo was the owner of this night club<sup>48</sup>, a first person novel informs us: this is a reader's sign, close to what Jakobson calls the function of communication. Lacking a system of classification we will, for the moment, leave aside the reception signs [signes de reception] (equally<sup>50</sup> important though they are), to say a word about the signs of narration.

Who is the originator of the narrative? Three concepts seem to have been stated so far. The first considers the narrative to be uttered by a person (in the fully psychological sense of the word); this person has a name, he is the author within whom there is a constant exchange between the "personality" and the act of a fully identified individual, who periodically picks up his pen to write a story: the narrative (particularly the novel) is only, then, the expression of an I which is external to it. The second concept regards the narrator as a sort of total consciousness, apparently impersonal, which utters the story from a superior standpoint, that of God<sup>51</sup>. The narrator is at once within his characters (for he knows everything that is going on inside them), and outside them (for he never identifies himself with one more than another). The third, and most recent concept (Henry James, Sartre) decrees that the narrator should limit his narrative to what can be observed or known by the characters: everything happens as if each character was, in turn, the originator of the narrative. These three concepts are equally at fault in that they, all three, see in the narrator and in the characters, real "living" people

(the inexhaustible power of this literary myth is well known), as if the narrative determined its own level of reference [niveau referentiel] (it is always a case of equally "realistic" concepts), but, at least from our point of view, narrator and characters are equally "abstract notions" [êtres de papier - beings of paper]; the (physical [matériel]) author of a narrative must, in no way, be confused with the narrator of this narrative; the narrator's signs are immanent to the narrative, and in consequence, are perfectly accessible to semiological analysis but to decide that the author himself (whether he advertises his presence, hides it, or effaces himself completely) has at his disposal signs which he distributes through his work, it is necessary to assume between the "person" and his language a signalotic relationship which renders the author a fully constituted subject and the narrative the instrumental expression of this fullness: this is a notion to which structural analysis cannot subscribe: who speaks (in the narrative) is not who writes (in life) and who writes is not who is.

In fact, the narrative, properly speaking (or the narrator's code) only recognises, like language, two systems of signs: personal and a-personal; these two systems are not necessarily marked by the linguistic features pertaining to the person (I) and the non-person (he/it); for example, it is possible to have narratives, or at least episodes, written in the third person and yet the real mode of which is the first person. How can one decide? All that is necessary is to rewrite the narrative (of the passage) transposing it from he to I: so long as this operation involves no alteration of the discourse except the actual changing of the grammatical pronouns, one can be sure that the discourse is in a personal system [un système de la personne] the whole of the beginning of Goldfinger, although written in the third person, is in fact, spoken by James Bond; for the mood to change it is necessary for such rewriting to be impossible; thus the sentence: "he noticed a man of about fifty, still with a youthful spring in his step etc", is perfectly personal, despite the he (I, James Bond, noticed etc.") but the narrative utterance "the clinking of the ice in the glass seemed to give Bond a sudden flash of inspiration" cannot be personal, because of the presence of the verb "seem", which becomes the sign of the a-personal (not the he). It is a certain fact that the a-personal is the traditional mode of the narrative, language having elaborated a whole system proper to the narrative (articulated on the aorist<sup>3/4</sup>) designed to efface the presence of the speaker: "In the narrative, says Benveniste, nobody speaks". Nevertheless, the personal mode (disguised to a greater or lesser degree) has gradually invaded the narrative, the narration being related to the hic et nunc of speech (this is the definition of the personal system); today it is noticeable that many narratives, among them some of the most flowing ones, mix within a very small space, often within a single sentence, the personal and the a-personal, for example this sentence from Goldfinger:



His

'eyes

personal

blue grey

a-personal

were glued to those of du Pont who did not know what expression to adopt

personal

for this fixed stare comprised a mixture of candour, irony, and self deprecation

a-personal

This process of mixing the systems is obviously regarded as a convenient device. This device can even be used to trick the reader: one of Agatha Christie's detective novels (Five Twenty Five) only preserves its secret by cheating about the person in which it is written: a character is described from within when he is already the murderer<sup>55</sup>: everything happens as if there was in the same character the consciousness of a witness, immanent to the discourse, and the consciousness of a murderer, immanent to the referent: only the abuse of a mixing of the two systems allows the mystery to be maintained. It is understandable, therefore, that at the other end of the literary scale, the strict maintainance of the chosen system becomes a necessary condition of the work - although the system cannot always be honoured right to the end.

This strictness - striven for by certain contemporary writers - is not necessarily an aesthetic essential; what is usually described as the psychological novel is normally distinguished by the mixing of the two systems and successfully utilises the signs of the non-person and those of the person; "psychology" - paradoxically - cannot remain within the confines of a system of persons, for in bringing the whole narrative solely to the mode of the discourse, or if you prefer, to the act of speech, it is the content of the person itself which is threatened: the psychological person (of a referential order) bears no relationship to the linguistic person, which is never defined by needs, aims or character traits, but only by its (coded) place in the discourse. It is this formal person which people strive to speak today; it is a matter of an important process of subversion (the public is under the impression that no one is writing "novels" any more) for it is an attempt to make the narrative pass from the order of statement [ordre constatif] (to which, up till now, it was confined) to the order of performance [ordre performatif] according to which the sense of a word is the act of which it is the issue<sup>56</sup>: today writing is not "recounting", it is saying that one is recounting and relating the whole referent ("what is said") to this act of speech [locution], this is why one section of contemporary literature is no longer descriptive, but transitive, striving to achieve in the word an immediacy so pure that the whole discourse is identified by the act in which it is delivered, the whole logos being reduced to - or extended to - a lexis<sup>57</sup>.

## 2. The Situation of the Narrative

The level of narration therefore is occupied by the signs of narrativity, the collection of features which reintegrate functions and actions into the narrative communication, articulated as the doer and receiver. Some of these signs have already been examined: in oral literatures one can distinguish certain recitation codes (metric formulae, presentational conventions), and it is clear that the "author" is not the person who invents the best stories but the person who best controls the codes, the use of which he shares with listeners: in these literatures, the level of narration is so clear-cut, its rules so strict that it is difficult to conceive of a "story" without the coded signs of the narrative ("once upon a time", etc.). In our written literatures the "forms of the discourse" have very soon been fixed (they are, in fact, signs of narrativity): classification of the author's ways of intervention outlined by Plato, taken up by Diomedes,<sup>58</sup> coding of the beginnings and endings of narratives, definition of the different styles of presentation (oratio directa, oratio indirecta with its inquit, oratio tecta)<sup>59</sup>, study of the "points of view" etc. All these elements are part of the level of narration. It is obviously necessary to add writing [l'écriture] as a whole, since its role is not to "transmit" the narrative but to display it.

It is in fact in a narrative display that the units of the lower levels are integrated: the final form of the narrative, as a narrative, transcends its content and its narrative forms (functions and actions). This explains why the narrational code is the final level possible for our analysis, without stepping outside the object narrative; that is, without breaking the rule of immanence on which it is based. The narrative can only, in fact, receive its meaning from the world which uses it: beyond the level of narration the world begins; that is to say, other systems (social, economic, ideological), the terms of which are no longer solely narratives but elements of other materials (historical facts, denominations, components, etc.). Just as linguistics stops at the sentence, the analysis of the narrative stops at the discourse: after that it is necessary to move to another semiotics. Linguistics calls this type of boundary, which has already been postulated - if not fully explored - a situation. Halliday defines the "situation" (related to a sentence) as a collection of unconnected linguistic facts;<sup>60</sup> Prieto as "a collection of facts known by the receiver at the moment of the semic act and independent of it."<sup>61</sup> In the same way one can say that any narrative is dependent on a narrative situation, a collection of conventions according to which the narrative is consumed. In so-called "archaic" societies the narrative situation is strictly coded;<sup>62</sup> alone, today, avant-garde literature still dreams of reading conventions, histrionic in the case of Mallarmé, who wanted a book to be recited in public according to a precise formula, typographic in the case of Butor, who wanted a book to be accompanied by his own signs. But, evidently, our society is trying, as far as possible, to get rid of the coding of the narrative situation: one loses

(continued)

count of the narrative processes designed to make the narrative seem more natural, pretending to give it a natural cause of existence and to "disintroduce" it: epistolary novels, supposedly discovered manuscripts, an author who meets the narrator, films which start the story before the credit titles. Reluctance to display its codes is a mark of bourgeois society and the mass culture which has developed from it: both need signs which do not appear to be signs. This is only however, a structural epiphenomenon: however familiar, however careless nowadays the act of opening a novel, or a newspaper, or switching on a television nothing can prevent the fact that this trivial act sets up within us, at a stroke and in its entirety, the narrative code which we shall need. The level of narration therefore, has a sort of ambiguous role: contiguous to the narrative situation (and sometimes even including it) it opens onto the world in which the narrative unwinds (is consumed); but at the same time, crowning the preceding levels, it closes the narrative, establishes it finally as the word of a language which forecasts and brings its own metalanguage.

## The Narrative System.

Language can be defined as the interplay of two fundamental processes: articulation or segmentation, which produces the units (this, according to Benveniste, is the form), integration, which collects these units into units of a higher level (this is the meaning). This dual process is also found in the language of the narrative; it also recognises processes of orientation and integration, form and meaning.

### 1. Distortion and Expansion.

The form of the narrative is, in essence, is marked by two powers: that of distending its signs throughout the course of the story, and that of inserting in these distortions unforeseeable expansions. These two powers seem to be freedoms, but the property of the narrative is precisely, to include these "deviations" in its language.<sup>65</sup>

Distortion of the signs exists in language, where Bally studies it, with regard to French and German;<sup>64</sup> there is distaxia [dystaxie], as soon as the signs (of a message) are no longer simply in juxtaposition, as soon as the (logical) linearity is disturbed (for example, the predicate preceding the subject). A notable example of dystaxia is encountered when the parts of a single sign are separated by other signs in the course of the message (for example the negation ne jamais and the verb a pardonné in the sentence: elle ne vous a jamais pardonné): the sign being split up, what is signified [signifiés] is divided among several signifiers [signifiants] separated from each other, and which cannot be understood if taken separately. It has already been pointed out at the level of function, this is exactly what takes place in the narrative: the units of a sequence, although they form a whole at the level of that sequence, can be separated from each other by units from other sequences: as has been remarked, the structure of the level of functions is fugue-like.<sup>65</sup> According to the terminology of Bally, who contrasts synthetic languages, where dystaxia predominates (such as German) and analytic languages, which should greater respect for logical linearity and mensura (such as French), the narrative would be a strongly synthetic language, based essentially on a syntax of dovetailing, and interlocking: each point of the narrative radiates in several directions at once: when James Bond orders a whisky while waiting for the plane, this whisky, as an indication, has a polysemic (polysemique) value, it is a sort of symbolic knot which unites several signified notions (modernity; wealth, leisure), but as a functional unit, the ordering of the whisky should, gradually, run through several stages (drinking, waiting, departure etc.) in order to find its final meaning: the unit "imprisoned in" (prise) the narrative as a whole, yet the narrative is only "viable" through the distortion and proliferation of its units.

Generalised distortion gives the language of the narrative its distinguishing mark: a phenomenon of pure logic since it is based on an often distant relationship and it establishes a sort of confidence in the intellectual memory, it is constantly substituting meaning for the simple copying of related events; in "life" it is unlikely that in an encounter the fact of sitting down would not immediately follow the



invitation to take a seat; in the narrative these elements, contiguous from a mimetic point of view, may be separated by a long succession of insertions belonging to totally different spheres of function: thus is established a sort of logical time, which bears little relation to real time, the apparent splitting-up of the units always being firmly maintained under the logic which unites the nuclei of the sequence. The "suspense" is obviously only a privileged or strained [exaspéré] form of the distortion: on one hand by maintaining an open sequence (by emphatic processes of delay and projection), it reinforces the contact with the reader, performs a manifestly phatic function; and on the other hand it presents the thread of an unfinished sequence, an open paradigm (if as we believe every sequence possesses two poles); that is to say, a logical upset, and it is this upset which is consumed with agony and pleasure (inasmuch as it is always, finally, repaired); the "suspense" is, therefore, a game played with the structure, designed to put it at risk and to glorify it: it constitutes a real "thrilling" of the intellect: by revealing the order (and no longer the series) in its fragility it fulfills the very idea of language: what appears the most pathetic is also the most intellectual: suspense captivates by means of the "mind", not the "emotions".<sup>66</sup>

What can be separated can also be filled in. Distended, the functional nuclei present intercalary spaces which can be filled in, almost to infinity; one can fill in the interstices with a large number of catalyses. Nevertheless, here a new typology may intervene, for the freedom of the catalyses can be governed according to the content of the functions (some functions are better exposed to the catalyses than others: waiting, for example)<sup>67</sup>, and according to the material of the narrative (the writing [écriture] has possibilities of diaeresis - and therefore of catalysis - far superior to those of films: it is possible to "cut" a gesture which is related more easily than the same gesture visualised)<sup>68</sup>. The catalytic power of the narrative has as a corollary its power of ellipsis. On one hand, a function (he ate a substantial meal) can omit all the potential catalyses which it implies (the details of the meal); on the other hand it is possible to reduce a sequence to its nuclei and a hierarchy of sequences to its highest terms, without altering the meaning of the story: a narrative can be identified, even if its whole syntagm is reduced to its actants and its main functions, as they result from the progressive assumption of the functional units<sup>70</sup>. In other words, the narrative offers itself to a summary (what was previously called the plot). At first sight, this is the case with all discourse: but each discourse has its own type of summary: the lyric poem for example, being simply the vast metaphor of one single signified notion,<sup>71</sup> to summarise it would be a process so drastic that it would annihilate the whole identity of the poem (in summary, lyric poems are reduced to the signified notions Love and Death). This results in the conviction that a poem cannot be summarised. On the other hand a summary of the narrative (it is carried out according to structural criteria) retains the individuality of the menage. In other words, the narrative is

(continued)

translatable without any basic damage being caused: what cannot be translated is only determined at the final level, that of narration: the signifying features of narrativity, for example, can, only with difficulty, move from the novel to the film, which only in exceptional cases recognises personal treatment; and the final layer of the level of narration, namely the writing, cannot pass from one language to another (or passes very badly). The translatability of the narrative results from the structure of its language; conversely, it should therefore be possible to distinguish this structure by distinguishing and classifying the (diversely) translatable and untranslatable elements of a narrative: the (present) existence of different and concurrent semiotics (literature, cinema, comics, broadcasting) should greatly facilitate this method of analysis.

## 2. Mimesis and Meaning.

In the language of the narrative the second important process is that of integration: what has been disjointed at one level (a sequence for example) is reunited, most often at a higher level (a sequence high in the hierarchy, the total signified feature of scattered indications, the action of a category of characters); the complexity of a narrative may be compared with that of an organigram, capable of integrating turnings back and jumps forward, or more precisely, it is integration, under various forms, which compensates for the apparently uncontrollable complexity of the units of a certain level: it is integration which acts as a compass to guide one through discontinued, contiguous and heterogenous elements (as they are given in the syntagm which recognises only one dimension: succession), if, like Greimas, one describes the unit of signification (that, for example, which permeates a sign and its context) isotopy, one can say that integration is a factor of isotopy: each (integratory) level gives its isotopy to the units of a lower level, prevents the meaning from "balling" [baller] which would certainly happen if one could not penetrate the displacements of the levels. However, integration of the narrative does not take place in a completely regular way, like a beautiful piece of architecture which progresses through a symmetrical network composed of numbers of simple elements to a few complex masses: very often one unit can have two correlates, one on one level (the function of a sequence) the other on another level (an indication referring to an actant); the narrative thus appears as a succession of immediate and immediate elements, closely dovetailed; dystaxia guides one to a "horizontal" reading, but integration superimposes on it a "vertical" reading: there is a sort of structural "figure-eight" like a constant game of potentials, the various falls [chutes] of which give the narrative its "tonus" or energy: each unit is perceived at a superficial level and in depth and this is how the narrative "works": by the interplay of these two processes the structure puts out branches, proliferates, comes to light - and pulls itself together again: the new thing is always regular. There is, of course, a freedom of the narrative

(just as there is a freedom for any speaker with regard to his language), but this freedom is literally "bounded": between the strict code of the language and the strict code of the narrative, there is formed a hollow in the sentence: if one tries to encompass a written narrative in its entirety, one can see that it moves from the most strongly coded point (the phonematic or even merismatic level) and unwinds gradually to the sentence, the extreme point of freedom of composition, then begins to tighten up again, moving from small groups of sentences (unicoo sequences) still very free, to the main actions, which form a strong and restricted code: the creativity of the narrative (at least in its mythical appearance of "life") would seem to be located between two codes that of linguistics and that of translinguistics. This is why it is possible to say paradoxically that art (in the romantic sense of the word) is a matter of utterance of detail, while imagination is control of the code: "in short", says Poc "it will be seen that the craftsman is always full of the imaginative and the really imaginative man is never anything but an analyst..."

It is necessary therefore, to look again at the realism of the narrative. Receiving a phone call in the office where he is on guard, Bond "thinks to himself", the author tells us: "communications with Hong Kong are always bad and always difficult to obtain". However, neither Bond's "thinking", or the poor quality of telephone communications are really the information being conveyed: this passage may give an impression of "vividness" but the real information is the location of the phone call, Hong-Kong. Thus, in any narrative, the imitation of life is a contingent quality: the function of the narrative is not to "represent", it is to provide a display which is still an enigma to us, but which can only be of a mimetic order: the "reality" of a sequence does not lie in the "natural" succession of the actions of which it is composed, but in the logic which is revealed in it, is risked and is satisfied: in other words, one might say that the origin of a sequence is not the observation of reality, but the need to vary and to surpass the first form which presents itself to man, repetition: a sequence is, essentially, a whole within which nothing is repeated: here logic has an emancipating value - and the whole narrative with it; it may be that man is constantly reinjecting into the narrative what he had known, what he has lived; at least it is in a form which, itself, has triumphed over repetition and established a pattern for the future. The narrative does not show, it does not imitate; the excitement which can take possession of us on reading a novel is not that of "something seen" (in fact we do not see anything), it is that of the meaning, that is of a relationship of a light order, which also possesses its own emotions, hopes, threats, triumphs: "what takes place in a narrative is from the referential (real) point of view literally "nothing"<sup>75</sup> "what happens is language itself, the adventure of language which is constantly being celebrated. Although little more is known about the origins of the narration than about the origins of language, one might reasonably assume that the narrative is

the contemporary of the monologue, which seems to have come after the dialogue; in any case, without wishing to force the phylogenetic hypothesis, it could be significant that it is at about the same time (the age of three) that the young of man "invents" at once, the sentence, the narrative and the Oedipus complex.



1. This is not the case, it must be noted, with poetry or the essay which depend on the cultural level of the consumer.
2. Of course there does exist an "art" of writing: it is the power to form narratives (messages) from the structure (code); this art corresponds to the notion of performance in Chomsky, and this notion is far removed from the romantic concept of an author's "genius".
3. The story of the Hittite g, postulated by Saussure and discovered, in fact, fifty years later in E. Benveniste: Problèmes de linguistique générale Gallinard, 1966 p.35.
4. Let us remember the present state of linguistic description: "...Linguistic structure is always relative, not only to the fundamentals of the corpus but also to the grammatical theory which describes these fundamentals" (E. Bach, An Introduction to Transformational Grammars, New York, 1964, p.29. And this from Benveniste (op.cit. p.119)...." it has been recognised that language should be described as a formal structure, but that this description demanded, to begin with, the establishment of adequate procedures and criteria and that, in short, the reality of the object was inseparable from the method used to define it.
5. The apparently "abstract" nature of the theoretic contributions which follow in this edition springs from a concern for methodology that of rapidly formulating concrete analysis: the formalisation is not a generalisation like the others.
6. But not essential (Cl. Bremond's contribution, for example, is based more on logic than linguistics)
7. "Reflexions sur la Phrase", in Language and Society (Mélanges Jansen), Copenhagen, 1961, p.113.
8. It goes without saying, as Jakobson has observed, that between the sentence and what is beyond it there are transitions: coordination, for example, can act beyond the sentence.
9. See especially: Benveniste, op. cit., ch.X - L.S. Harris: "Discourse Analysis", Language, 28, 1952, 1-30 - H. Rumbach: "Analyse Structurale d'un Poème Français", Linguistics 3, 1964, 62-83.
10. One of the tasks of linguistics of discourse would be to establish a typology for the discourse. Provisionally, it is possible to recognise three main types of discourse: metonymic (narrative), metaphoric (lyric poetry, learned discourse), enthymematic (intellectual discursive).

11. Cf. infra, III. 1.
12. Mallarmé's notion, formed at the time when he was projecting a work on linguistics: Language appeared as the instrument of fiction: it will follow the method of language (to determine it). Language reflecting itself. Finally, fiction seems to be the very product of the human spirit - it is language which sets at stake all method, and man is reduced to will. (Oeuvres Complètes, Pleiade, p.851) One remembers that for Mallarmé: "Fiction or poetry" (ib., p.335).
13. Linguistic descriptions are never monovalent. A description is not right or wrong, it is better or worse, more or less useful. (J.K.Halliday: "Linguistique Générale et Linguistique Appliquée", Études de Linguistique Appliquée, 1, 1962, p.12.
14. The levels of integration have already been postulated by the Prague School (see J.Vachek: A Prague School Reader in Linguistics, Indiana Univ.Press, 1964, p.468) and since taken up by many students of linguistics. It is, in our opinion, Benveniste who has provided the most illuminating analysis (op. cit., ch.X)
15. "In somewhat vague terms, a level can be considered as a system of symbols, rules etc. which are used to represent expressions" (E.Sach, op.cit. p.57-58)
16. The third category of rhetoric, inventio, did not deal with language: it concerned the res not the verba.
17. Anthropology structurale, p. 233
18. The present edition, infra: "Les Catégories du Récit Littéraire".
19. I have tried, in this introduction, to interfere as little as possible with current research.
20. See especially B.Tomachevski, Thématique (1925), in: Théorie de la Littérature, Senil, 1965 - A little later Propp defined a function as "the action of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the development of the story as a whole" (Morphology of Folktale, p.20). Here we see T.Todovov's definition ("The meaning (or function) of an element of the work is its power to enter into correlation with other elements of the work, and with the work as a whole"), and the contributions of A.J.Greimas, who comes to define the unit by its paradigmatic correlation, but also by its place within the syntagmatic unit of which it is part.

21. Thus it is not only "life" which recognizes the existence of "crossed lines". "Crossed lines (that beyond which is invisible) can exist in art but as a coded element (Matteau, for example); as yet this "indistinction" is unknown in written codes: writing is fatally clear.
22. At least in literature, where the freedom of rotation (resulting from the abstract nature of articulate language) brings a much stronger responsibility than in "analogous" arts, such as the cinema.
23. The functionality of the narrative unit is more or less immediate (therefore apparent), depending on the level at which it acts: when the units are on the same level (in the case of suspense, for example), functionality is very sensitive, much less where the function is saturated on the narrational level: a modern text, not very strongly signifying in the field of the anecdote, only finds great force of meaning in the field of writing.
24. "The syntactical units (beyond the sentence) are in fact units of content" (A.J.Greimas, Cours de Semantique Structurale, cours rosetype, v.1. 5) - The exploration of the functional level, therefore, forms part of general semantics.
25. "One should not take the word as an indivisible element of literary art, treat it as the brick with which the building is constructed. It can be broken down into much smaller "verbal elements". (J.Tynianov, quoted by T.Todovov in Langages 6, p.18)
26. These designations, like those which follow, are only provisional.
27. This does not prevent finally syntagmatic display of the functions from being able to recover paradigmatic relationships between separate functions, as has been admitted since Levi Strauss and Greimas.
28. It is impossible to reduce the functions to actions (verbs) and the indications to qualities (adjectives), since there are actions which indicate, are "signs" of a personality, of an atmosphere etc.
29. Valery spoke of "dilatatory signs". The detective novel makes considerable use of these "red herring" units.
30. N.Russet. calls a parametric element an element which is constant throughout the course of a piece of music (for example the tempo of a Bach allegro, the monodic character of a solo).

31. In this edition, G. Genette distinguishes two sorts of descriptions: ornamental and significative. The significative description should obviously be linked to the level of the story and the ornamental description to the level of the discourse, which explains how it has long formed a perfectly "coded piece" of rhetoric: the descriptio or ekphrasis a very highly valued exercise of neo-rhetoric.
32. Poetics, 1459 a.
33. Quoted by Cl. Bremond, "Le Message Narratif", Communications No. 4, 1964.
34. Anant on livre (Œuvres complètes, Pleiade, p. 336)
35. In his own way, as always perceptive but underdeveloped, Valéry clearly stated the rules of narrative time: "The belief in time as agent and the conductor is based on the mechanism of the memory and that of the constructed discourse" (Tel Quel, II 348; we would underline this: the unison is, in fact, produced by the discourse itself.
36. This concept recalls an Aristotelean notion: the proairesis, the rational choice of actions to perform, establishes the praxis, which produces nothing distinct from the agent, contrasted with the poiesis in these terms, one might say the analyst is trying to reconstitute the praxis within the narrative.
37. This logic, based on the alternative (to do this or that) has the merit of accounting for the process of dramatisation of which the narrative is usually the base.
38. In the Lyngslevian sense of double implication: two terms presuppose each other.
39. It is quite possible to find, even at this very low level, a contrast, on a paradigmatic model, if not between two terms, at least between two poles of a sequence: the sequence offer of a cigarette extends by suspending it the paradigm Danger/Security (revealed by Cheglou in his analysis of the Sherlock Holmes cycle), Suspicion/Protection, Aggression/Friendliness.
40. This counterpoint has been forecast by the Russian Formalists who have outlined the typology: it recalls the principle "twisted" structures of the sentence (et. infra, V, I.)
41. Let us not forget that classical tragedy only recognises "actors," not "characters".



42. The "character person" holds sway in the bourgeois novel; in War and Peace Nicolai Rostov is, from the outside, a good sport, loyal, brave, fiery; Prince Andrei a thoroughbred, disillusioned etc: what happens to them illustrates their personality but does not form it.
43. If part of contemporary literature has attacked the "character" it is not in order to destroy it (an impossibility), but to depersonalise it, a totally different matter. A novel which is apparently without characters, like Drame by Philippe Sollers, completely obliterates the person in favour of the language, but nevertheless retains basically a game of actants, confronting the very action of the word. This literature still recognises a "subject", but this "subject" is henceforth that of the language.
44. Semantique Structurale, Larousse, 1966, p.128
45. Mythologie has largely accredited these condensing operations - Mallarmé said of Hamlet "There must be other characters, for in the ideal production everything moves according to a symbolic reciprocity of types, among themselves or related to a single figure". (Crayonne ... Theatre, Pleiade, p.301)
46. For example: narrations where the object and subject are fused into one character are narratives of the search for self, one's own identity (The Golden Age); narratives where the subject pursues a succession of objects (Anna Karenina) etc.
47. M. Eco's analysis of the James Bond cycle, later in this issue, refers more to the game than to language.
48. See the analyses of the person given by Benveniste in Problemes de Linguistique Generale.
49. Double bang a Bangkok. The sentence functions as a "wink" to the reader, as if one turned towards him. On the other hand, the sentence "Thus Leo had just gone out" is a narrator's sign, since it forms part of a reasoning process of a character.
50. In this issue, Todorov deals with the narrator's picture and the reader's picture.
51. When will someone write from the point of view of a heavenly joke, this is to say as God sees them? (Flaubert, Preface a la vie d'un ecrivain, Senil, 1965, p.91)

52. A distinction, which is all the more necessary, on the scale with which we are dealing, since historically, a considerable number of narratives are authorless (oral narratives, folk tales, epics handed down through generations etc.)
53. J.Lacan: "Is the subject of which I speak when I speak, the same as that which I speak?"
54. E.Benveniste, *op.cit.*
55. Personal mood "It even seemed to Barth that nothing seemed changed, etc." - The process is even more crude in The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, since the murderer openly says I
56. On the performative cf. *infra* T.Todorov's contribution - The classic example of the performative is the utterance: I declare war, which does not "state" or "describe" anything, but exhausts its meaning in its own utterance (in contrast with the utterance: the king has declared war, which is a statement and a description)
57. On the contrast of the logos and lexis, see the article by G.Genette.
58. Genus activum vel imitativum (is intrusion of the narrator into the discourse: drama for example); genus ennativum (only the poet speaks: maxims, didactic poetry); genus commune (mixture of the two types: the epic).
59. H.Sorensen. *Melanges Jansen*, p.150.
60. J.K.Halliday: "Linguistique generale et linguistique appliquee" in Etudes de linguistique appliquee, No. 1, 1962, p.6.
61. L.J.Prieto: Principes de Noologie, Mouton et Co., 1964, p.36.
62. The story, L.Sebag reminds us, can be spoken at any time in any place, but not the mythological narrative.
63. Valery: "The novel, in form, is close to the dream; both can be defined by the curious property: that all their digressions should belong to them.
64. Ch.Barry: linguistique generale et linguistique francaise Berne, 4th ed. 1965.

65. Cf. Levi - Strauss (Anthropologie Structurale p.256):  
"relationships which come from the same group can appear at distant intervals, when taken from a diachronic point of view" - A.J.Greimas insists on the separation of the functions (Semantique Structurale).
66. J.P.Faye, on Klossovski's Euphomet: "Rarely has a piece of fiction (or narrative) so clearly revealed that it must, of necessity, be: an experimentation of "thought" on "life" (Tel. L. I no. 22. p.88)
67. Waiting has, logically, only two nuclei : 1st, the act of waiting posited; 2nd; act of waiting satisfied or disappointed: but the first nucleus can be extensively catalysed, even to infinity (Waiting for Godot): again a game, this time an extreme case, with the structure.
68. Valery: "Proust divides - and gives us the impression of being able to do so indefinitely - what other writers have been accustomed to pass over.
69. Again, one must be specific according to the material: Literature has an uneven power of ellipsis - the cinema has not.
70. This reduction does not necessarily, correspond with the division of the book into chapters: it seems that, on the contrary, more and more, the role of the chapter is to institute a break, that is to say, suspense (a technique used in the novellette).
71. N.Ruwet ("Analyse structurale d'un poeme francais," linguistics no. 3, 1964, p.82): "The poem can be understood as the result of a series of changes applied to the proposition "I love you". Ruwet, here, rightly alludes to the analysis of paranoid delirium given by Freud concerning <sup>the</sup> Schreber (Five Psychoanalyses).
72. Here again there is no relationship between the grammatical "person" of the narrator and the "personality" (or subjectivity) given by a producer in his method of presenting a story: the camera - I (constant identification with what is seen by the character) is an exceptional phenomenon in this history of the cinema.
73. Le double assassinat de la rue Morgue, trans. Baudelaire.
74. G.Genette is right to reduce to the pieces of related dialogue (cf.infra); yet the dialogue always includes an intelligible function, and not mimetic.
75. Mallarme (Crayonne au Theatre, Pleiade, p.296)... "a dramatic work shows the succession of external actions without at any time having any reality and without, finally, anything happening.