Jakob Lothe

An Introduction

Narrative in Fiction and Film

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Preface

Narrative theory (or 'narratology') is an area of research that is experiencing rapid development. Narrative theory discusses central questions concerning human communication; it also investigates the conditions for, and form and content of, such communication. The stories studied by narrative theory take various forms. Our culture is based on different types of story: novels, films, television series, strip cartoons, myths, anecdotes, songs, advertisements, biographies, and so forth. All these tell stories—even though the stories may not necessarily be complete, and may be presented in many different ways.

Since the forms of story that surround us are so many and so varied, narrative theory is relevant not only to literary studies but also to subjects such as history, the history of religion, theology, social anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, and media studies. Crossing the borders between subjects, narrative theory thus brings to light a problem in the traditional establishment of discipline boundaries. For although it is often necessary to isolate a field of research or a particular problem in order to study it systematically, borders between subjects may be more arbitrary than we realize. The basis for this book is literary studies. Beyond formalism we may be, but we owe to formalism our understanding that literary texts are meaningful not just because of their 'content' but because of the totality of their verbal presentation. Narrative theory builds upon and extends this fundamental insight, and this is the basis for its contribution to literary studies. Additionally, as the book's title indicates, I wish to relate narrative theory to film: a different medium, but one that is a form of narrative (particularly the narrative fiction film). Of particular interest to a literary critic are 'film adaptations'—films that are based (more or less directly) on literary texts.

This book has a two-part structure. Part I provides an introduction to narrative theory. Although the discussion is oriented towards narrative fiction and centred on literary texts, the film aspect is brought into each chapter. Part II then analyses five prose texts by means of the narrative concepts (and theories associated with these concepts) introduced in Part I. I also comment on film adaptations of four of these texts, which are all central works in world literature.

In the period following the publication of the Norwegian version of this book in 1994, narrative theory has developed further. One striking feature of this development is the diversification of narrative theory: insights and terms from narrative theory are being used within critical trends that are not

primarily, or not only, concerned with the study of literary form and narrative structure. Examples of such trends are theories of reading, variants of new historicism, and post-colonial studies. While much is positive in these developments, there are also examples of the ignoring or marginalizing of insights from narrative theory as it has developed in our century from the Russian formalists onwards. In some contributions to post-colonial studies, for example, there is a tendency to reduce literary texts to relatively stable carriers of ideological positions. But this is to distort and simplify both narrative fiction and the narrative fiction film, which depend for their originality and significance as cultural documents on aesthetic form, and on the interplay of form and content. Although we live in an age of post-structuralism, it does not follow that insights accrued by formalist and structuralist critics, without whose contributions narrative theory would not exist, are irrelevant or useless. If, as critics now tend to stress, reading is a social activity that is influenced by the society beyond the author and reader, then it is important to study narrative texts as diverse manifestations of such social activity.

Another characteristic of recent developments is that, partly as a result of the decreased differentiation between fiction and history, narrative theory is being used to a greater extent in research which is not primarily (or not only) concerned with literature. The link between narrative theory and film studies has also been strengthened. Again, this kind of diversification suggests the continuing relevance of narrative theory—especially if, as the analyses in Part II aim to do, we understand narrative inclusively as a form of textual dynamics rather than as formalist schematization. Narrative is part of history, yet it also contributes to historical processes from within. Narrative is dynamic and changing, yet because the significance of its contribution to history and culture is inseparable from the way in which it is produced, narrative needs to be studied as form—as literary structure. It is to further investigation of this question that this book hopes to contribute.

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Narrative Communication

That a text is narrative implies that it verbally relates a story. Another term for this story-telling is *narrative communication*, which indicates a process of transmission from the author as addresser to the reader as addressee. A useful point of departure to enable us to discuss and analyse such narrative communication is what we call the *narrative communication model*. After the model has been presented, I shall comment on the different links it illustrates, with examples taken from narrative texts. I shall also relate the model to different narrative variants, to the term 'film narrator', and to central narrative concepts such as distance, perspective, and voice. First, however, some comments on narrative communication in film.

Film communication

From the previous chapter we will recall that the central concepts in the definition we gave of a narrative—time, space, and causality—are also important in the narrative fiction film. It is implicit in the premises of this book that film should be considered as a variant of narrative communication: the fiction film is narrative in the sense that it presents a story, but in contrast to literary fiction it communicates filmically.

What then is film communication? We first note its strikingly visual quality. A film holds us firmly in the optical illusion that images displayed in rapid succession (usually shot and projected at a rate of twenty-four frames per second) come to life. The intensely visualizing force of film is fundamental to the colossal breakthrough this art form has had in our century. If we then ask what film's visualizing force involves, we immediately touch upon a much-discussed topic in film theory, 'The visual is *essentially pornographic*', claims Fredric Jameson. Films 'ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body' (Jameson 1992: 1, original emphasis). The visualizing aspect of film gives it an oddly superficial nature. Film is formally 'light' in a way Philip Kauffman exploits thematically in his adaptation of Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984); the fiction film shows us an illusory real world that resembles to the point of confusion the world we know ourselves, a world into which we are free to peep for a couple of hours without participating.

Much of film's power to fascinate lies in the manner in which it combines the dimensions of space and time. The spatial dimension of film links it closely

to photography, on which film is totally dependent—and which it constantly violates. 'I liked', writes Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, 'Photography *in opposition* to the Cinema, from which I nonetheless failed to separate it' (Barthes 1982a: 3, original emphasis). In the terms of G. E. Lessing's classic aesthetic study *Laokoon* (1766), still photography—like the art of painting, which Lessing distinguishes from poetry—is a 'spatial' art form. In a photograph the elements exist simultaneously in space, whereas filmic elements reveal themselves to us sequentially. What characterizes film is this chaining of successive images, in which film's temporal dimension is superimposed on the spatial dimension in the photograph.

The special relationship between film and photograph has led such different film theorists as Rudolf Arnheim, George Bluestone, André Bazin, and Siegfried Kracauer to study film on the basis of its spatial and photographic elements. For a film theorist such as Sergei Eisenstein, on the other hand, time (succession) is primary in film. If one places emphasis on this temporal dimension, the linguistic and narrative aspects of film become absolutely central. As Gerald Mast puts it:

> Because cinema is a sequential process, it demands comparison with that other sequential human process which serves the purpose of either communication or art—namely, language. Just as verbal (or linguistic) structures can produce communication between a speaker and a listener, as well as works of art (novels, poems, and plays), the cinema can both communicate information and create works of art. The 'listener' (audience) can understand the statement of the 'speaker' (the film's director, producer, writer, narrator, or whoever). (Mast 1983: 11)

If we link film communication to linguistic communication in this way, with the French semiologist Christian Metz we can answer the question of what film communication is as follows: film is a complex system of successive, encoded signs (Metz 1974). 'Semiology' (or semiotics) means the study of signs, and the word is apt since film, while being a form of language, is a hybrid form in which the visual aspect dominates the verbal, and in which the signs become meaningful not only by virtue of themselves (whether they be spatial, temporal, or objects), but also through the film context into which they fit. Semiotics represents perhaps the most important theoretical point of contact between linguistic/literary studies and film. Yet interestingly, as Mast among others has pointed out, an influential semiotically oriented film theorist such as Metz is extremely cautious about drawing analogies between film and verbal language.

First, Metz reminds us, there is nothing in film that corresponds to the word (or morpheme, the smallest unit of meaning) in verbal language. The closest we get to the verbal-language notion of word in film is not the frame but the shot, i.e. 'one uninterrupted image with a single static or mobile framing' (Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 481). Metz finds that such a camera shot is at least as complex as a sentence, perhaps a paragraph. The minimal, indivisible

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unit in film is not 'horse' but 'Over there is a horse'—and then almost inevitably at the same time—'that is jumping', 'that is white', 'by the tree', and so forth. Second, Metz emphasizes that compared with verbal language film is a 'language' without a code. In verbal language we understand immediately what 'horse' means. The content of a camera shot is not fixed in the same way, but may on the contrary vary to the point of infinity. Thus, Metz argues, effective camera shots are complicated and original tropes, which work on the viewer through their kinetic energy (i.e. through the impression made on our senses) and through chaining with other filmic images.

Discussions (and conclusions) concerning film communication are easily marked by whichever aspect one chooses to emphasize within the enormous register of functions that film possesses. Many film theorists have seen a parallel between film and music and have found that film, like music, works through atmosphere, resonance, and rhythm. Since film is unique when it comes to reflecting the external, real world, one may maintain that the greatest (utilitarian) value of film lies here—something which perhaps makes one consider the documentary film as more important than the fiction film. But since film (through directors such as Luis Buñuel and Alain Resnais) may represent the unreal and logically impossible, one may equally claim that film is best suited to showing, for instance, dreams and fantasies. Finally, one may believe that the task of film is to combine as many as possible of the elements in the uniquely varied repertoire of functions that the medium possesses.

To sum up: on the basis of these brief comments we can state that although film communication clearly has points of contact with verbal communication, the film medium is very different from the verbal form of communication we meet in narrative texts. As I now proceed to present the narrative communication model, I must therefore stress that it refers to verbal language and not to film. On the other hand, although the *forms* of communication vary, film also communicates; and the differences between the ways in which these art forms operate can be just as critically interesting as their similarities.

The narrative communication model

The narrative communication model has been developed on the basis of different theories about language and narrative fiction. Theorists have designed the model in many versions (for a survey see Martin 1986: 153–6; cf. Onega and Landa 1996: 4–12). Yet most of them are concerned with central concepts such as author, narrator, narrative text, narratee, and reader. Constituent elements in the model can be traced right back to Plato and Aristotle. I shall be commenting on Plato's contribution later in this chapter, in the section on 'narrative distance'. As for Aristotle, he points out in the *Poetics* that 'as regards narrative mimesis in verse, it is clear that plots, as in tragedy, should be constructed dramatically, that is, around a single, whole, and complete action,

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with beginning, middle, and end, so that epic, like a single and whole animal, may produce the pleasure proper to it' (Aristotle 1995: 115, 1459a). Although the context of Aristotle's discussion is tragedy, he comments on narrative composition and progression. Moreover, Aristotle touches on the question of narrative communication when he praises the conveyance of language and thought in Homer's epics; and he places decisive weight on plot and artistic composition. Attaching great importance to form, Aristotle assumes that a work of art is not a random collection of elements. Such an assumption also informs the present work.

An important part of the foundation of the narrative communication model is brought to light in that section of *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk* in which Wolfgang Kayser discusses 'the structural elements of the epic world'. Here Kayser introduces the concept of 'die epische Ursituation': 'the epic proto-situation is this: a narrator tells some listeners something that has happened' (Kayser 1971: 349; my translation). This narrator, Kayser stresses, is at a distance from the story he is relating, and in Kayser's opinion this distance leads to a fundamental difference of genre between epic and lyric poetry. Such a generic distinction is not unproblematic, but the concept of distance is important in narrative theory and will be discussed in more detail. Kayser's notion of the epic proto-situation is helpful because it includes three of the links in the narrative communication model: the narrator, 'something that has happened' (i.e. the story the narrator relates), and the listener or 'narratee'. We note that all the links here refer to a narrative 'proto-situation', i.e. an 'original' narrative situation in which the story is told orally. The relationship between author and narrator is thus not captured by this definition, nor is that between the text and its reader. Himself aware of these limitations, Kayser in other contexts points out that the novelist is a writer who creates a fictional world, a world in which the narrator is included. By thus emphasizing that an author is something other than an oral narrator, Kayser distinguishes a constructive act of writing from an oral act of narrating. That this distinction also has important consequences for the text's reading is something Walter Benjamin brings out in his classic essay 'The Storyteller'. 'A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller,' observes Benjamin; 'the reader of a novel, however, is isolated' (Benjamin 1979a: 100). Benjamin implies that, although the distinction between storyteller, listener, author, and reader is general (typological), it is not unrelated to, or unaffected by, historical and cultural alterations. All the authors discussed in Part II of this book were acutely aware of the changing conditions of writing, narrative, and reading and listening.

Roman Jakobson's contributions to the narrative communication model usefully supplement those of Kayser. Jakobson was a central figure in Russian formalism and in the branch of structuralism represented by the Prague School. Much of Jakobson's research lies at the point of intersection between

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linguistics and poetics. Most relevant for my purposes is his model of verbal communication (Jakobson 1987: 66), a model he summarizes in the sentence 'The addresser sends a message to the addressee', and schematizes as shown in Fig. 2.1. This general model applies, Jakobson emphasizes, to all verbally communicative acts. For a message to be operative, he argues, it requires a *context* that is seizable by the addressee and that is either verbal or capable of being verbalized. Further, there is a need for a *code*, i.e. a system of norms and rules that is fully or at least partly common to the addresser and the addressee. Finally, the message requires a *contact*: 'a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication' (Jakobson 1987: 66).

The connection between this model and Kayser's epic proto-situation becomes clear if we replace addresser, message, and addressee by narrator, story, and listener. Obviously, these concepts do not necessarily correspond exactly. Jakobson's concept of addresser, for instance, is so general that it can include both author and narrator, and furthermore it refers most directly to spoken language. Jakobson links the model to six different ways of using language, six language functions, which may be summarized as follows:

1 *Referential function*: orientation towards the referent (cf. the context of the narrative text).
2 *Emotive function*: focus on the addresser (cf. author, writer, narrator).
3 *Conative function*: orientation towards the addressee (cf. listener, reader).
4 *Phatic function*: focus on the communication itself in order to establish, prolong or discontinue it (cf. narration).
5 *Metalingual function*: focus on the code (cf. the language, style, or genre of the narrative text).
6 *Poetic function*: 'the set (*Einstellung*) toward the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake' (Jakobson 1987: 69).

Of these functions one will be *dominant* according to Jakobson, thus playing a determining and shaping role with respect to the meaning of the message the addresser sends to the addressee. That one function is dominant, however, does not mean that the others are turned off: 'The poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function' (Jakobson 1987: 69).

	CONTEXT	
ADDRESSER	MESSAGE	ADDRESSEE
	CONTACT	
	CODE	

Figure 2.1

NARRATIVE TEXT

Historical → Implied → Narrator → Narratee → Implied → Historical
author   author   reader   reader

Figure 2.2

On the basis of these brief references to Aristotle, Kayser, and Jakobson I can now present the model of narrative communication shown in Fig. 2.2. Note the distinction in the model between the narrative text in the middle and the historical author (as a kind of addresser) on the one side and the historical reader (as a type of addressee) on the other. I shall now first situate 'narrative text' in a larger context and relate it to the two extreme points in the communication model. After that, by commenting on the other links in the model, I shall gradually approach the central concept of narrator.

Narrative communication through narrative text

As this model illustrates, the narrative text is fundamental to both narrative theory and analysis. Modern narrative theory would have been unthinkable without the focus on the literary text that has been characteristic of much literary criticism in this century, from Russian formalism onwards. Yet this kind of textual emphasis does not imply that the concepts of author and reader become unnecessary links in the communication model. As we shall see in Part II, we need them both in narrative analysis. Moreover, they relate narrative theory to other aspects of literary criticism and, more broadly, to different ways of reading literature.

Like language the narrative text creates meaning indirectly. In so far as narrative theory tends to isolate the text as its working area, it implies that literary meaning (and literary versatility of meaning) are established through verbal language, textual structure, and narrative strategies. For a theorist such as Roland Barthes the literary text has multiple meanings; thus the author's intention behind the text becomes difficult, and in one sense unnecessary, to determine (Barthes 1988). Here we are touching upon a controversial issue in literary theory that we cannot go into in greater depth. We note, though, that narrative theory tends to situate itself in an intermediate position in this debate. Narrative theory contends that narrative structures serve to constitute the text's meaning; it furthermore claims that these narrative structures can not only extend but also delimit the meanings which they themselves create. Thus narrative structures contribute to establishing what Umberto Eco in *The Limits of Interpretation* calls 'the rights of the text', and which he links both to a right to be interpreted and to a right not to be over-interpreted: 'The limits

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of interpretation coincide with the rights of the text (which does not mean with the rights of its author)' (Eco 1990: 7; cf. Eco 1992: 64). Part II of this book responds to the challenge to draw out by analysis some of the ways in which narrative texts can perform this double operation.

I use 'narrative text' synonymously with 'discourse'. The narrative text is the short story or novel we read, in which a series of narrative techniques and vari- ations is included. Yet while narrative theory is still text-oriented, it now puts more emphasis on, and takes a greater interest in, the outer links in the nar- rative communication model: the addresser as the writing author and the addressee as the reader. As both are part of history and of one or more cultural communities, the recent (re)orientation of literary theory towards history and context does not reduce the relevance of narrative theory. There is a sense in which the opposition between 'history' and 'narrative structure' is factitious, possibly even theoretically untenable. As Tzvetan Todorov argues, 'it is only on the level of structures that we can describe literary development; not only does the knowledge of structures not impede that of variability, but indeed it is the sole means we possess of approaching the latter' (Todorov 1981: 61).

Historical author and historical reader

The historical author is the man or woman who writes a narrative text, for example Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote *Don Quixote* and published the novel in two parts, the first in 1605 and the second in 1615, the year before his death. Correspondingly—at the other extreme of the model—the historical reader is the man or woman who reads, for instance, *Don Quixote*, whether in, say, Britain today or in Spain in the time of Cervantes.

Thus far the concept of author may seem clear and unambiguous. However, what actually is an author? The word does not only refer to a specific historical person but also to a *writer of a text*. Both the notion and concept of author are linked to the text (and its reading), not only to a personal biography. That authors themselves may also experience such a combination as problematic is exemplified in the short text 'Borges and I'. Here the narrator, who identifies himself as the historical person Jorge Luis Borges, wanders about in Buenos Aires experiencing distance from—almost a feeling of being in competition with!—the author Borges, whom he sees on show in bookshops and reads about in periodicals and so forth.

More important than such a difference, however, is the main distinction in narrative theory that we touch upon once we connect the concept of author with the writing of a text: the difference between the author *of* a text and the narrator *in* the text. This is how J. Hillis Miller puts it in connection with Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*:

A distinction must be made here, as always, between Virginia Woolf sitting at her desk with a blank sheet of paper before her, composing *To the Lighthouse*,

extending the line of words further and further out into the void of not-yet-written-on paper, and, on the other hand, the imagined and imaginary narrator of the novel. The latter is a different person, is located in a different place, and possesses quite different powers. (Miller 1990: 155)

This distinction between author and narrator, which is one of the most important in narrative theory, will become clearer when the concept of 'narrator' is explained below. As the quotation from Miller shows, the author stands in principle outside the literary universe he or she creates by means of language. A finished and published novel is much more sharply separated from the author than is the linguistic message from the addresser in Jakobson's communication model. I understand the author primarily as a writer, as the producer of the text of narrative fiction that forms the starting-point of the narrative analysis. This does not imply that there is not a crucial connection between the author and the text (the text does not arise by itself any more than it exists in a hermetically sealed room), but it means that this relationship is *indirect* and influenced by the sort of language and literary techniques the author uses.

The *historical reader* thus refers to the person who reads the text. As Wallace Martin comments, readers themselves are the most obvious source of variety in interpretation, since each and every one of them brings with him or her different experiences and expectations to the reading of narrative texts:

> Reader-response theorists emphasize an important point: narratives do not contain a definite meaning that sits in the words waiting for someone to find it. Meaning comes into existence only in the act of reading. But it is equally wrong to conclude that interpretation must therefore be 'in' the reader, regardless of the words on the page. In order to read them, we must know the language—the 'code' in Jakobson's communication model—though we need not be conscious of its complex rules. (Martin 1986: 160–1).

This is a sensibly nuanced view of the relationship between the text and its reading. 'Endless variety is possible in interpretation', notes Paul Armstrong, 'but tests for validity can still judge some readings to be more plausible than others' (Armstrong 1990: p. ix). The fact that interpretations may vary strongly from reader to reader does not mean that all are equally valid or important: here a narrative analysis can provide one basis for establishing interpretative validity.

Implied author and implied reader

So far I have made general comments on the narrative text, relating it to the author on the one hand and to the reader on the other. If we now enter the 'box' illustrating the narrative text in the communication model, we see that the two extreme links are called 'implied author' and 'implied reader'. Although the analyses in Part II do not make extensive use of these concepts,

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The concept of *implied author* was first introduced by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, a pioneer study in American narrative theory. Subsequently it has been used by, among others, Seymour Chatman, who points out that 'Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn' (Chatman 1978: 148, original emphasis). For Chatman, the implied author is in other words silent and without any voice. As Rimmon-Kenan rightly emphasizes in *Narrative Fiction*, this means that the implied author must be seen as a construct which the reader assembles on the basis of all the textual components. The implied author is best considered as 'a set of implicit norms rather than as a speaker or a voice (i.e. a subject). It follows, therefore, that the implied author cannot literally be a participant in the narrative communication situation' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 88). Although I share this view, I include the implied author in the narrative communication model. But I understand the concept in a particular way; as 'an image of the author in the text' (Genette 1988: 141) and as an expression of textual intention' (Chatman 1990: 104). The implied author then becomes practically a synonym for the ideological value system that the text, indirectly and by combining all its resources, presents and represents.

Like the implied author, the *implied reader* is also a construct, and just as the first is different both from the historical author and the narrator, so the second is distinguished both from the narratee and the historical reader. The concept of the implied reader takes us into the border area between narrative theory and theories of aesthetic response. A major representative of this area of study is Wolfgang Iser. For Iser, the literary work arises through the interplay, the *interaction*, between text and reader. The implied reader, who enters into this interaction, is a 'role' or a 'standpoint' which 'allows the (real) reader to assemble the meaning of the text' (Maclean 1992: 131). The implied reader is thus both active and passive: active by making the text meaningful, passive since the premises of the text's production of meaning are given in its discourse and narration. The author has, according to Iser, a certain control of the way in which we read, but this form of control is indirect and based on shared conventions which have matured over time—a repertoire of social, historical, and cultural norms regulating the manner in which fictional prose works and communicates. The meaning of a text arises in *productive tension* between the role or model reader the text presents and the historical reader's dispositions and interests. The implied reader's activity is very much a structuring process, in which we not least attempt to establish a connection between the text's 'blanks'. For Iser, fictional prose is characterized by such *Leerstellen*—points of 'suspended connectability in the text' (Iser 1980: 198) that need to be arranged

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Narrator and narratee

With these two concepts we have reached the 'centre' of the communication model—that part of the model that is most clearly related to 'the epic proto-situation'. We have already seen that narrator and narratee form two of the links in this 'original' communication model. (The third and final link, the story the narrator relates, has in the more complex model become 'narrative text'.)

As Rimmon-Kenan puts it, the narrator is 'the agent which at the very least narrates or engages in some activity serving the needs of narration . . . the narratee is the agent which is at the very least implicitly addressed by the narrator' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 88–9). If the narrator explicitly addresses one or more narratees, the narrative situation in one sense resembles that of the oral proto-situation. As we shall see in Part II, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* provides a particularly interesting example of such a narrator and such narratees. Yet as *Heart of Darkness* also illustrates, this kind of resemblance is superficial because in fictional prose texts narrative communication is generally more complex, varied, and indirect than it is in oral narrative. When in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) the narrator exclaims, 'Reader, I married him' (p. 473), the meaning of 'reader' approximates to that of narratee as explained here. In this case, then, the narratee is explicitly addressed, and this kind of address tells us something about Jane as narrator (and, by implication, about Charlotte Brontë as author). Correspondingly, that the narratee in Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942) is just implied serves, in conjunction with other textual signals, to indicate the narrator's fundamental loneliness. In some texts, if the narratee is only addressed implicitly, his or her function may approach the role of the implied reader.

As I have already emphasized, the narrator in a narrative text must be clearly distinguished from the author of the text. The narrator is an integral part of the fictional text written by the author. The narrator (or the combination of narrators) is a narrative instrument that the author uses to present and develop the text, which is thus constituted by the activities and functions that the narrator performs. Gerald Prince defines the narrator as follows: 'The one who narrates, as inscribed in the text. There is at least one narrator per narrative, located at the same diegetic level as the narratee he or she is addressing' (Prince 1991: 65). By 'diegetic level' Prince means 'the level at which an existent event, or act of recounting is situated with regard to a given *diegesis* . . . [i.e.] the (fictional) world in which the situations and events narrated occur' (Prince 1991: 20, original emphasis). Prince's use of the word 'inscribed' about the narrator is useful since it so clearly brings out that the narrator is a part of

the diegesis: he is in the fictional text while also helping the author to constitute and communicate it. (Note that 'diegesis' can also be used synonymously with narration.)

If we say that the narrator is an important narrative instrument for the author, there can be no doubt that the concept of narrator is useful and productive of insights in narrative analysis. 'The narrator', argues Mieke Bal, 'is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts' (Bal 1997: 19). Much of the reason for the key position held by the concept of narrator in narrative theory lies in the text's narration aspect: the narrator is the narration instance within the narrative text. This function is crucial to the production of fictional prose, yet it brings to light a problem that Paul de Man (1979: 139) has put his finger on: if we give the narrator qualities such as personal identity and creative skills, we have in a way done nothing but introduce a new concept of author. It needs to be stressed, therefore, that the narrator is a part of the narrative text (as the communication model also makes clear), and that he does not exist outside the linguistic structure which constitutes him. Having said this, I hasten to add that the function of the narrator as a 'narrative instrument' is most clear in narrative texts in which he serves as a 'pure' narrator, i.e. without at the same time being an active character in the plot. This brings us to the distinction between two main types of narrator.

Third-person and first-person narrator

Since the concepts of third-person and first-person narrator are most readily definable in relation to each other, I shall start with a quotation from Franz Stanzel:

The contrast between an embodied narrator and a narrator without such bodily determination, that is to say, between a first-person narrator and an authorial third-person narrator, accounts for the most important difference in the motivation of the narrator to narrate. For an embodied narrator, this motivation is existential: it is directly connected with his practical experiences, with the joys and sorrows he has experienced, with his moods and needs . . . For the third-person narrator, on the other hand, there is no existential compulsion to narrate. His motivation is literary-aesthetic rather than existential. (Stanzel 1986: 93)

In addition to being a narrator, the first-person narrator is in other words *active in the plot*, i.e. in the dynamic shaping of the text's action, events, and characters. The third-person narrator is on the other hand outside or 'above' the plot, even though he is also in the text. Since he does not participate in the action, the function of the third-person narrator is more purely communicative. It is on the contrary typical for the first-person narrator to combine the functions of narrator and character.

The transitions between these two main variants of narrator may be unclear. For instance, a third-person narrator may well link the presentation

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to characters in the plot (as when the third-person narrator in *The Trial* does so with K.). Yet the distinction between third-person and first-person narrator is an important one—not only theoretically but also in analysis. Tzvetan Todorov has emphasized that 'there is an impassable barrier between the narrative in which the narrator sees everything his character sees but does not appear on stage, and the narrative in which a character–narrator says "I". To confuse them would be to reduce language to zero. To see a house, and to say "I see a house," are two actions not only distinct but in opposition. Events can never "tell themselves": the act of verbalization is irreducible' (Todorov 1981: 39).

As the use of the personal pronoun 'I' shows, Todorov justifies the distinction between third-person and first-person narrator not only existentially (like Stanzel), but also linguistically/grammatically. As a basis for this distinction these two criteria supplement each other. For it is often the *combination* of first-person pronoun and active plot engagement that marks the narrator as first-person. In other words a third-person narrator can also use the 'I' reference without having to enter into the action as a participant. This was quite normal, not least in the nineteenth-century novel. Consider the first paragraph of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Karamazov Brothers* (1879–80): 'Aleksei Fyodorovich Karamazov was the third son of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, a landowner of our district, extremely well known in his time (and to this day still remembered in these parts) on account of his violent and mysterious death exactly thirteen years ago, the circumstances of which I shall relate in due course' (p. 9). We note that the narrator here places one of the characters in 'our district' before going on just afterwards to refer to himself as 'I'. Such an opening may seem to indicate a first-person narrative. However, this 'I' is not individualized, it does not participate in the action, and overall the novel's narrative method is third-person. A slightly different variant that was common in the nineteenth century is to position the narrator temporarily among the characters, in order, so to speak, to provide a personal anchorage point for the third-person narration. Examples of this variant are observable in Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Wilhelm Raabe, but the best known is in the opening of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). Here the narrator is first introduced as a classmate of Charles. However, he soon withdraws completely from the action, something which is crucial for Flaubert's development of a variant of third-person narrative in which the events are peculiarly autonomized. Developing a narrative method which prefigures that of James Joyce (see Chapter 6), Flaubert makes his third-person narrator record the events and then communicate them to the reader without evaluating them in the manner of, for example, a narrator in a novel by Balzac.

The question of the personal pronoun not only applies in this case to the marking of a narrator as third-person or first-person, but also moves over to the question of how a third-person narrator can or should be identified. As we

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shall see below (in the analysis of the second part of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*), one may refer to a third-person narrator as 'she', 'he', or 'it'. The problem is that even if the third-person narrator is also in principle distinct from the author, she/he/it can nevertheless express opinions, viewpoints, feelings, and so forth that are not neutral with respect to gender. In this book I choose to refer to the third-person narrator as 'he' (where 'he' refers to a narrative tool or instrument), while in discussions of literary texts I use 'she' of the narrator if the author is female, and 'he' if the author is male. A related problem is that although we may refer to the third-person narrator as he/she/it, there is a sense in which all narrative situations (within the narrative communication model) presuppose a first-person narrator. There is no simple solution to this problem, partly because the alternatives to 'third-person narrator' also have terminological drawbacks ('external' narrator is easily misunderstood as meaning that the narrator is outside the fiction; 'authorial' narrator may suggest too close a relationship between narrator and author).

However, the analyses in Part II suggest that my use of the term third-person narrator has a heuristic justification. First, it enables us to distinguish between two main types of narrator. Second, although the identity of the third-person narrator is unclear, the term does indicate that the narrator is outside the action (but within the fiction), and that he/she/it is an indispensable narrative instrument in the service of the author as writer.

The choice between a third-person or first-person narrator is not necessarily a definitive choice the author must make before he or she sets about writing. We may well have both a third-person and a first-person narrator in the same text. One of the best examples of how thematically productive such a combination of narrators can be is William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). In this modernist novel, the first three parts are told by three very different narrators who are also main characters, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason respectively. The final part has a third-person narrator who is outside the action he presents (but whose perspective is interestingly related to that of Dilsey, a Black servant in the Compson household).

It is also possible to combine these two main variants in a short narrative text. 'Tiger', a short story by the Norwegian author Sissel Lie, opens thus:

She awakens while it is still night, sees unclear shadows in the room that she knows will disappear with the morning light, presses her eyelids together to make these shadows less dangerous. With the morning light the sun shines straight onto the red dress hanging on the cupboard door, and the fear releases its grip. An amulet against evil spirits. She imagines a woman quite unlike herself to whom she will give the role of author. She is to write about the dress.

I had written the first lines of a short story, but something happened, I did not get any further . . . (p. 7, my translation)

The important thing here is not so much the metafictional (i.e. fiction-revealing) elements at the beginning of the second paragraph as the sudden

transition from a third-person narrative situation to a first-person one. (That the element of metafiction is used to *motivate* the transition is another matter.) We cannot assume that 'I' is identical with the author. As author, Sissel Lie constructs both narrative situations, the third-person as well as the first-person one. The two narrative variants mutually influence each other in the short story, just as they do throughout the collection of stories of which it is the first.

The characteristics of both the third-person and first-person narrator will become clearer when I relate these terms to concepts such as narrative level, distance, perspective, and voice below, and when in Part II I analyse examples of texts with both main variants. However, let us first see how an author can alternate between first-person and third-person narrator from one novel to another. Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (1890) opens thus: 'It was in those days when I wandered about hungry in Kristiania [the name of Oslo in 1890], that strange city which no one leaves before it has set its mark upon him . . .' (p. 3). The text immediately characterizes itself as first-person—communicated by an anonymous 'I'—a narrator who wants to relate something he has experienced and who therefore, we suspect, will become both narrator and main character. What this narrator is called, we do not yet know (and are in fact never told), but, even here at the beginning, his narrative appears to have what Stanzel calls 'existential' motivation. That the novel's focus will be on the main character during a difficult period is something we sense as we relate the keyword 'mark' in the first paragraph to the very first word that we read: the title-word 'hunger'.

See now how Hamsun opens his next novel, *Mysteries* (1892):

> In the middle of the summer of 1891 the most extraordinary things began happening in a small Norwegian coastal town. A stranger by the name of Nagel appeared, a singular character who shook the town by his eccentric behaviour and then vanished as suddenly as he had come. At one point he had a visitor: a mysterious young lady who came for God knows what reason and dared stay only a few hours. But let me begin at the beginning . . . (p. 3)

We first note a detail: as in *Hunger* Hamsun ends the first paragraph with an ellipsis—successive dots that as blanks (to use Wolfgang Iser's term) typographically mark the narrative situation for the further presentation of the events. However, while in *Hunger* we immediately link the narrator's voice to the 'I' we meet in the very first line, the first paragraph in *Mysteries* rather indicates a difference and distance between the narrator and the stranger who turns up in the town. As Atle Kittang puts it:

> The differences apply first and foremost to the narrative form. True enough, *Mysteries* is also a work in which the inner life of the main character is in focus. Nagel is the text's central consciousness, and central sequences take us into his mental processes in a way that prefigures the techniques of the modern psychological novel (inner monologue, 'stream of consciousness'). Yet by choosing the third-person

advantage for the narrator 4 [handwritten marginal note]

form, Hamsun opens the way for an interplay between first-person and third-person instances that one only finds pale glimpses of in *Hunger*. The independent narrator's voice makes it possible to establish a level of insight outside the main character and thereby to pass judgements, mark distance. (Kittang 1984: 73, my translation)

While it is necessary to emphasize this difference in narrative communicative form between the two novels, it must be pointed out that the third-person position of the narrator in *Mysteries* does not in itself make him 'objective' or his assessments 'right'. As we read our way through the text, the third-person narrator's perspective seems to approximate to the perspective of the social surroundings made mysterious by Nagel, and we cannot therefore be quite sure that his account is reliable. Still, this problem does not make the distinction between first-person and third-person narration unnecessary. Hamsun's innovative use of a third-person narrator is on the contrary decisive both for the structure and for the formation of thematic tensions in *Mysteries*.

Reliable and unreliable narrator

Unless the text happens to provide indications to the contrary, the narrator is characterized by *narrative authority*. By way of illustration let us take the same example that Wayne Booth uses at the beginning of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*: 'There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil' (Job i: 1; all biblical quotations are taken from the Authorized Version). This is the first sentence of the book of Job, a text in the Old Testament. We do not know who the author of the book of Job was, nor do we know with any certainty when the book was written (probably c.600 BC). A striking feature of the text's beginning, however, is the storyteller's narrative authority. As Booth points out, here we get at one stroke the kind of information about Job that we never obtain about people we know ourselves, not even our most intimate friends. Yet it is information that we must accept without question if we are to grasp the story that is to follow' (Booth 1983: 3). All those who know Job will know that the development of the plot is wholly dependent on the moral quality of the life led by the main character: it is precisely the fact that Job loses everything he owns without having done anything wrong that makes his situation so desperate and conflict-provoking. The essential point, however, is not what sort of person Job is, but the fact that we as readers so directly and without reservation accept the narrator's valuation of him. The narrator, Booth stresses, has an 'artificial authority' (Booth 1983: 4). This demonstrates how strongly our attitude to narrative texts is influenced by conventions, i.e. customary notions and expectations that are so ingrained that we do not (or only to a partial extent) think about them. A fundamental convention in narrative fiction is that we believe the narrator, unless the text at some point gives us a signal *not* to do so.

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If the text does give such signals, the narrator's authority may be undermined and the narrator becomes *unreliable*. The borderline between reliable and unreliable narrator may be blurred. For instance, even an unreliable narrator can give us necessary information. Yet the fact that he is unreliable will reduce the trust we place in this information (and to an even greater degree the trust we place in the narrator's evaluation of the information). How does a narrator betray the fact that he is unreliable? Let us stick to the notion that as a starting-point he is reliable, that he has the 'artificial authority' the narrative function ascribes to him. Each narrative act has its own features and characteristics, and features that may indicate a narrator's unreliability include:

1   The narrator has limited knowledge of or insight into what he is narrating.
2   The narrator has a strong personal involvement (in a way that makes both his narrative presentation and evaluation strikingly subjective).
3   The narrator appears to represent something that comes into conflict with the system of values that the discourse as a whole presents.

Often these three factors will mutually affect each other. By 'system of values' I mean the text's ideological orientation, i.e. the combination of those viewpoints, priorities, evaluations, and criticisms we can read out of the text as a narrative language system. Such a value system is seldom 'simple' in the sense that it can be summarized in a few sentences. The concept is related to the term *thematics*: the most significant problems and ideas that the text (as fictional discourse) presents and explores. The thematics of the texts analysed in Part II are complex and multi-faceted, and this kind of thematic richness comes not least from the narrative technique through which the fictional content is generated and presented.

The text's value system is linked to what I have called textual intention, a concept related to that of the implied author. When a narrator becomes unreliable, a form of communication is established between the implied reader and the implied author, 'above' the narrator. We can illustrate this in Fig. 2.3. Seymour Chatman, who presents this diagram, comments that 'the broken line indicates the secret ironic message about the narrator's unreliability' (Chatman 1990: 151). Two examples will serve to substantiate these theoretical comments.

I have said that the first three parts of *The Sound and the Fury* are told by
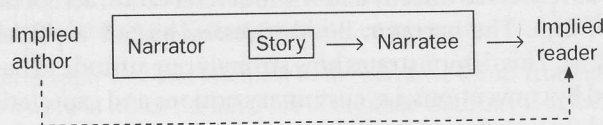

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Film narrator

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three very different narrators, while the narrative position in the fourth and final part is third-person. What becomes apparent as we approach the end of the novel (and becomes even clearer when we read it again) is that the third of the first-person narrators, Jason, is unreliable. Why? The reasons are complicated and can be linked to all three characterizing features of the unreliable narrator. Yet the most important reason why Jason becomes unreliable lies in the contrast that arises between his judgements and views on the one hand, and those we can read out of the novel's fourth part on the other. For in *The Sound and the Fury* this concluding, third-person narrative instalment is instrumental in establishing the text's value system, which—even though it is far from simple—manifests itself as radically different from the system of values for which Jason stands.

If we go from Faulkner to an author whose narrative experiments Faulkner carried further, Joseph Conrad, we meet in the latter's *Under Western Eyes* (1911) a novel which even in its own title announces the limited perspective the narrator has on the events he is to report. The narration in *Under Western Eyes* is first-person, and the narrator's limited perspective signals that his account is potentially unreliable. Conrad presents the whole novel, apart from the title and an accompanying 'motto', as told by an English-language teacher. Working in Switzerland, the teacher comes into contact with a group of Russians, including the novel's main character. What makes us sceptical about this narrator, on whom we are wholly dependent as readers, is that although he proclaims how little he understands of Russia and eastern Europe (both culturally and historically), he narrates, and generalizes, in a manner that presupposes great knowledge and insight. Thus the narration undermines its own authority, while paradoxically presenting themes that are more complex than the narrator realizes. Since the novel's title in this connection appears as an ironic commentary on the novel's narrator, we can relate it to the implied author of *Under Western Eyes*. We can do the same thing with the motto, which is an inaccurate quotation from the novel's own text.
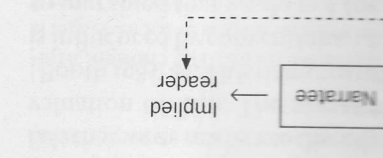
Film narrator

Is the concept of narrator critically productive for film? I believe it is, but I emphasize at once that the film narrator is very different from the literary narrator. From the section on film communication above, we recall that in the 1960s Metz and other film theorists attempted to apply linguistic principles to the study of film. However, as Chatman comments, Metz soon realized that 'film is not a "language" but another kind of semiotic system with "articulations" of its own' (Chatman 1990: 124). Film narration is an economic and effective system. As John Ellis puts it in *Visible Fictions*, film narration balances 'familiar elements of meaning against the unfamiliar: it moves forward by

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Narrate → Implied reader

a succession of events linked in a causal chain' (Ellis 1989: 74). The concept of *film narrator*, as it is used here, refers primarily to David Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) and Seymour Chatman's *Coming to Terms* (1990).

Bordwell believes that film has narration but no narrator: 'in watching films, we are seldom aware of being told something by an entity resembling a human being . . . [Therefore film] narration is better understood as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story. This presupposes a perceiver, but not any sender, of a message' (Bordwell 1985: 62). In other words, at the same time as he sees narration as completely central in film communication, Bordwell bases his theory on what the *viewer* does when she or he sees a film. As Chatman has pointed out, Bordwell thus accords priorities and works in a manner reminiscent of reader-response theorists. Bordwell's theory of film narration is also interestingly related to Boris Eikhenbaum's assertion that understanding a film is 'a new kind of intellectual exercise' (Eikhenbaum 1973: 123). Bordwell's viewer is not passive but actively participating: on the basis of an indeterminate number of visual and auditory impressions the viewer first constructs connected and comprehensible images and then a story. There is no doubt that the emphasis Bordwell puts upon the viewer's active role is critically illuminating, and so are his comments on narration. Yet as Edward Branigan has observed in *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (1992: 109–10), since Bordwell, in his discussion of film narration, uses a number of metaphors which can also be attributed to the film narrator, the difference between the two terms is perhaps less obvious than it appears to be at first sight.

'Film', writes William Rothman in *The 'I' of the Camera*, is 'a medium limited to surfaces, to the outer, the visible . . . [And yet film is] a medium of mysterious depths, of the inner, the invisible' (Rothman 1988: p. xv). It is to Bordwell's credit that he has given theoretical grounds for this fundamental paradox in the way in which film functions. From a literary perspective it is interesting that his theory is based on the Russian formalists' distinction between *fabula*, *syuzhet*, and *style*. Even though Bordwell understands these terms in a particular way (partly because he uses them to construct his own theory, partly because he applies them to film), their relevance illustrates an important point of contact between film theory and narrative theory (a point of contact strengthened by Bordwell's use of Genette).

For Bordwell, 'the *fabula* (sometimes translated as "story") . . . embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field . . . The *syuzhet* (usually translated as "plot") is the actual arrangement and presentation of the *fabula* in the film' (Bordwell 1985: 49, 50). Crucial to Bordwell's theory is that the *syuzhet* of film, as he sees it, only presents a small part of the total *fabula*, which is an implicit structure the viewer supports through assumptions and inferences. As the

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third component, style refers to the systematic use of cinematic devices. In contrast to *syuzhet*, which for Bordwell is a general characteristic of narrative, style is medium-specific (and, in film, thereby more technical).

By means of these three concepts Bordwell then presents his definition of film narration: 'the process whereby the film's *syuzhet* and style interact in *the course of cueing and channeling the spectator's construction of the fabula*' (Bordwell 1985: 53, original emphasis). This definition activates and builds on all the three elements Bordwell collects from Russian formalism. Yet Chatman finds that

It is a little unclear how this process occurs, whether it is internal to the viewer—in which case style and *syuzhet* 'interact' only within her perception and cognition—or whether there is some kind of interchange between the screen and the viewer. If the latter, then 'narration' at least partly inhabits the film—in which case, we can legitimately ask why it should not be granted some status as an agent. (Chatman 1990: 126)

Bordwell's theory is remarkably comprehensive and broadly persuasive, yet it is indeed difficult to imagine that a film is 'organized' without being 'sent'. Film as an effective communication system presupposes some form of 'sender' (the fact that this sender is composed of many links and may be impossible to identify is another matter). Therefore it makes more sense to say, as Chatman does, that the viewer reconstructs the film's narrative than to say that he or she 'constructs' it. This does not mean that all viewers reconstruct alike, but it indicates that film narration both lays a foundation for recon-struction and governs it—somewhat in the same way that the narration in verbal prose governs the reading process.

The concept of 'film narrator' becomes critically helpful set against this the-oretical background. Understood as a complex form of communication, film, like verbal prose, has a sender. Again, in both media, no matter how different they are, it is useful to differentiate the concept of sender into (implied) author and narrator. For films as for novels,

we would do well to distinguish between a *presenter* of a story, the narrator (including the narrator), and the *inventor* of both the story and the discourse (that is, the implied author—not as the original cause, the original biographical person, but rather as the principle within the text to which we assign the inventional tasks. (Chatman 1990: 133, original emphasis)

Chatman illustrates this distinction with Alain Resnais's *Providence* (1977). The first half of this film presents the fantasies of the main character, the age-ing author Clive Langham. Gradually it dawns on the viewer that the film's voice-over is in this case in charge of the images passing across the screen. These fragmentary images show more or less hypothetical drafts of the novel Langham is trying to write. The point is that in these fantasies that the film visualizes for us, it is the voice of Langham that determines what we see, not

some impersonal 'narration'. Thus Langham functions here as a kind of first-person narrator, what Chatman with Genette calls a 'homodiegetic' narrator. Later on in the film this narrator disappears, and an 'impersonal' (third-person) narrator takes over the narration. Yet, according to Chatman, both are 'introduced by the overriding intent of the film, the implied author' (Chatman 1990: 13).

Let us summarize the argument so far. Film communication involves a presentation which is primarily visual, but which in addition also exploits other channels of communication. The superordinate 'instance' that presents all the means of communication that film has at its disposal we can call the film narrator. Guiding the viewer's perception of the film, the film narrator is the film-maker's communicative instrument. We will recall that this kind of function is something the literary third-person narrator may have. The great difference is that while the qualities of the third-person narrator are also 'human' in the sense that he communicates verbally (gives information, comments, and generalizes), the film narrator differs in that he is a heterogeneous mechanical and technical instrument, constituted by a large number of different components.

Chatman (1990: 134–5) presents this diagram (Fig. 2.4), which shows 'the multiplexity of the cinematic narrator'. The film narrator is the sum of these and other variables. A number of them (like the camera) are absolutely fundamental to film communication, while others (like off-screen sound) may be more or less important depending upon which film the diagram is related to. (Some of these concepts are so technical that I shall define them: *mise-en-scène* is all the elements—lighting, furniture, costumes, etc.—that are placed in front of the camera to be filmed; 'straight cut' means to move directly over from one framing to another, while 'fade' (or 'dissolve') is to superimpose one filmic image on another, so that the first one gradually disappears while the second comes into focus. For a helpful glossary of film terminology see Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 477–82.)

As this diagram illustrates, it is the *viewer* (not the film) who constructs such a 'narrative synthesis'. Much of the challenge to the film author lies in presenting the various elements that together form the film narrator in such a way that the viewer experiences all of them as necessary and thematically productive. The elements of film communication must be consistent in the sense that they provide the viewer with a foundation on which to construct the film narrator, and thus the film story. 'Voice-over' is one of the many elements that constitute the film narrator: a voice outside the film image. Sarah Kozloff stresses in *Invisible Storytellers* that all three constituents in the term 'voice-over narration' are fully operative. *Voice* determines the medium: we must hear somebody speaking. *Over* applies to the relationship between the sound source and the images on the screen: the viewer cannot see the person speaking at the time of hearing his or her voice. *Narration* is linked to the content
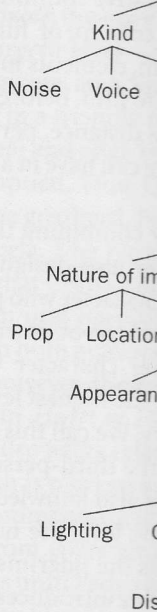
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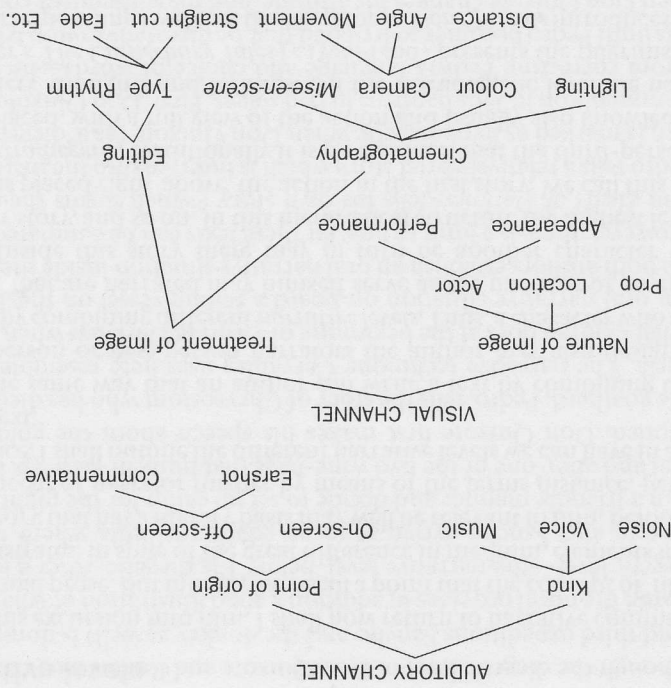convention, in Part II I sh
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of what is said: somebody communicates a story—introduces, supplements, and comments on what is shown visually (Kozloff 1988: 2–3). The female voice-over in Gabriel Axel's *Babette's Feast* illustrates all these three characteristics of voice-over and furthermore exemplifies the narrative distance that may obtain between the voice-over and the action that is shown on screen (see Chapter 4).

Now if the film narrator is as complex and fragmented as Fig. 2.4 shows, who then is the film *author*? While writing a novel is normally something done by a single individual, a narrative fiction film is usually so expensive and so technically complicated that it can only be realized through a complex production process in which many of the links are 'co-creative'—the author of the script, the producer, actors and actresses, photographers, etc. The main reason why the *director* is usually regarded as the film's 'author' is that he or she not only has overall responsibility for according priorities and co-ordinating the activities that are part of the production process, but also functions creatively in relation to the screenplay and the thematics of the film. In keeping with this convention, in Part II I shall consider, for example, John Huston as the 'author' of *The Dead* because he is the film's director and clearly left his creative imprint on it.

AUDITORY CHANNEL
Kind   Point of origin
Noise Voice Music   On-screen Off-screen
Earshot Commentative

VISUAL CHANNEL
Nature of image   Treatment of image
Prop Location Actor   Cinematography   Editing
Appearance Performance
Lighting Colour Camera *Mise-en-scène*   Type Rhythm
Distance Angle Movement Straight cut Fade Etc.

Figure 2.4

narration is linked to the content
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Narrative levels

After this excursion into film, I shall now return to narrative communication in fictional prose. But initially we recall a point that the concept of 'film narrator' illustrates: in spite of the great difference in medium, elements in a narrative theory that has a literary basis may well be relevant to film. Before refining the concept of narrator further by means of the terms distance, perspective, and voice, I shall outline the different narrative levels we can have in a fictional prose text.

In the same way that an author can write a text by combining the use of third-person or first-person narrators the author may also design the discourse by combining different *narrative levels*. Thus, a character who performs actions that are narrated may himself serve as the narrator of an embedded story. Inside this story there may in turn be another character who tells another story, and so on. In this hierarchical structure the highest level is that which is placed right 'above' the action in the first story. We call this narrative level *extradiegetic*. Traditionally it is on this level that the third-person narrator is placed, with a full view of the action and usually also knowledge of the characters' thoughts and feelings. On the extradiegetic level the narrator in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (*c*.1390–1400) presents the pilgrims, and it is on a corresponding level that the narrator in *Don Quixote* introduces the main character:

> The age of our gentleman bordered upon fifty years. He was of a robust constitution, spare-bodied, of a meagre visage; a very early riser, and a keen sportsman. It is said his surname was Quixada, or Quesada (for in this there is some difference among the authors who have written upon this subject), though by probable conjectures it may be gathered that he was called Quixana. But this is of little import to our story; let it suffice that in relating it we do not swerve a jot from the truth. (p. 23)

'Our story' points to the dominant level of action in the novel, the *diegetic* level which the third-person narrator (on the extradiegetic level) presents but does not participate in. Since all narrators are by definition part of texts, the narrator is clearly entitled to refer to his own presentation as 'the truth'. Here we again touch on the question of narrative authority: because the brilliant idea from which Cervantes develops his novel turns on Don Quixote's madness, it becomes crucial to the fiction's sustainability that the reader believes in the account the narrator gives of the hero's daredevil actions. Thus it is far from a matter of chance that the narration at the beginning of the novel establishes a series of parallels between the narrator's evaluation of Don Quixote *as* mad and actions apparently confirming his madness. For similar reasons the diegetic level, with Don Quixote laboriously riding Rocinante in the Spanish landscape, is presented in graphic detail.

Yet although the diege[...]
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fiction, however, there is a[...]
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the sultan, thus: Sir, will yo[...]
this satisfaction? With all [...]

Yet although the diegetic level of Don Quixote and Rocinante (and on the second and third expeditions Sancho and the donkey as well) is dominant in *Don Quixote*, the novel provides in addition a good illustration of what we call a *hypodiegetic level*—the narrative level 'below' the diegetic. After a long day Don Quixote and Sancho arrive at some goatherds' huts where they are received in a friendly manner and decide to set up camp for the night. After a good meal and after 'one of the two wine-bags that hung in view' (p. 85) have been emptied, Don Quixote first makes his speech about the golden age, before the goatherd, Pedro, tells the story of Chrysostom who has died of love for Marcela. The narrative technique Cervantes uses here resembles struc- turally what Conrad does at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* when he con- structs an oral narrative situation on board a sailing vessel on the Thames. Although both authors establish an oral narrative situation inside the written fiction, however, there is a limit to how far these texts can be compared. While Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* tells his own story (which forms the diegetic level), Pedro tells a relatively brief story which is inserted into the main action and which is marked as hypodiegetic when Don Quixote (as a 'diegetic char- acter') comments on it. This happens in two stages. First, Don Quixote cannot refrain from correcting Pedro's language and choice of words—he goes on doing this until Pedro becomes so irritated that he threatens to stop telling the story. Then Don Quixote changes his attitude, and his subsequent comments are encouraging rather than critical.

There are also other features of the inserted stories in *Don Quixote* that relate the hypodiegetic level to the diegetic. Such a feature is linked to the por- trayal of characters, as when Dorothea turns up again on the diegetic level after she has previously been introduced on the hypodiegetic. As Viktor Shklovsky has shown, these inserted, short-story-like hypodiegetic texts enrich and com- plicate the novel's plot (Shklovsky 1973: 104–5). This applies not least to the longest embedded text, 'The Novel of the Curious Impertinent' (pp. 310–57), in which the main character Anselmo appears as a contrast to, and partly as analogous to, Don Quixote. When the hypodiegetic level operates in this way, Genette speaks of a thematic function. Broadly, a hypodiegetic narrative can have this function, an explanatory function, or a function which takes the form of a more independent contribution to the plot. In *Don Quixote* these functions blend, partly because the thread of action in *Don Quixote* revolving round Don Quixote and Sancho is not particularly strong and the hypodiegetic narratives serve to supplement it. The classic example of hypodiegetic narrative in world literature is *The Arabian Nights' Enter- tainments*. Just before daybreak, Scheherazade, who has just been asked by her sister to tell 'one of those pleasant stories you have read,' addressed herself to the sultan, thus: 'Sir, will your majesty be pleased to allow me to give my sister this satisfaction? With all my heart, answers the sultan. Then Scheherazade

bid her sister listen, and afterwards addressing herself to Schahriar, began thus . . . ' (p. 17). Scheherazade's life is directly dependent upon her ability to narrate, and the only condition her stories (which constitute the text's hypodiegetic level) must satisfy is to retain the king's attention. In *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, the hypodiegetic level dominates in terms of quantity. Yet since Scheherazade has to continue narrating in order to survive, this kind of imbalance is redressed by the obvious need for many stories that the diegetic level provides.

Narrative distance

The distinction between third-person and first-person narrator actualizes the terms 'distance' and 'perspective', which both require a more detailed explanation. The concept of distance has a long history which can be traced right back to the third book of Plato's *Republic*. Here Plato sees narrative as 'execute[d] . . . either by simple narrative or by narrative conveyed by imitation (*mimesis*) or by both' (Russell and Winterbottom 1998: 29). Although Plato has difficulty in identifying the specifically epic (or narrative) by means of these categories, they are relevant to the concept of distance since the first variant—'simple narrative'—is more distanced and mediated than the second—'imitation (*mimesis*)'. For Aristotle, this distinction is partly neutralized since his understanding of *mimesis* is different from that of Plato. Aristotle uses *mimesis* to refer to literature in general, and he appears to assume that the concept is familiar and unproblematic. In spite of his use of other concepts, however, Aristotle distinguishes between epic and dramatic literature in a manner reminiscent of Plato: 'There is . . . a third distinction—in the *mode* of mimesis for these various objects. For in the same media one can represent the same objects by combining narrative with direct personation, as Homer does: *or* in an invariable narrative voice; *or* by direct enactment of all roles' (Aristotle 1995: 35, 1448a).

The classical tradition was not very much concerned with the question of narrative discourse, but in our century Plato's distinction has been reactualized through the conceptual pair *telling* versus *showing*. This pair of concepts is associated with the American novelist Henry James and the critic Percy Lubbock. In *The Craft of Fiction* (1921), Lubbock argues that it is practically a precondition for the art of the novel that the action be *shown*, and not told. This assertion (which not only systematizes but also simplifies the more sophisticated views of Henry James) is repudiated by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Since, for Booth, the art of narration is primarily *telling*, the concept of distance again becomes important.

Commenting on the *telling–showing* debate, Genette emphasizes that 'no narrative can "show" or "imitate" the story it tells. All it can do is . . . give more

or less the *illusion of mimesis*—which is the only narrative mimesis . . . [because] narration, oral or written, is a fact of language' (Genette 1980: 164). As a contribution in support of narrative fiction as *telling*, this criticism is aimed not only at Lubbock but partly also at Aristotle's understanding of *mimesis* as representation of 'people in action' (Aristotle 1995: 33, 1448a). Genette emphasizes that 'mimesis in words can only be mimesis of words. Other than that, all we have and can have is degrees of diegesis' (Genette 1980: 164). 'Degrees of diegesis' means for Genette (and Booth) degrees of narrative distance—both between the author of a narrative text and the text itself (as a linguistic structure), and between the text's narrator(s) and the events/characters in it.

The concept of distance reveals a fundamental characteristic of narrative fiction (and in particular the novel): if narrative fiction is unusually flexible and can present events and conflicts with great intensity, it constitutes itself through a series of distancing means. In his classic essay 'Psychical Distance', Edward Bullough in 1912 defined distance as the quality through which expression becomes aesthetically valid.' Distancing means the separation of personal affections, whether idea or complex experience, from the concrete personality of the experience' (Bullough, quoted in Hayman 1987: 19). By 'distancing' Bullough means a generalizing or objectivizing process: the writing activity which (through literary devices and strategies) can create an aesthetic product of more general interest. Combined with Genette's understanding of 'narrative mimesis', Bullough's concept of distance, as David Hayman presents it in *Re-forming the Narrative* (1987), provides a basis for a tripartite division of the concept. The term 'distance' now refers particularly to the relationship between the narrator and the events/characters in the narrative text.

1   *Temporal distance.* As we shall see in Chapter 3, narration in fictional prose is normally retrospective. This involves a temporal distance between the act of narration and the events that are narrated. Such a temporal distance is often a motivating factor for the narration, but it may be less clear when the narrative act begins. Let us go back to the beginning of Hamsun's *Hunger.* In the first paragraph, which ends with an ellipsis, the act of narration is clearly retrospective: 'It was in those days when I wandered about hungry in Kristiania . . .' (p. 3). This is how the second paragraph opens: 'Lying awake in my attic room, I hear a clock strike six downstairs. It was fairly light already and people were beginning to walk up and down the stairs.' Here we not only have a transition from past to present; the tenses are important to *show* the transition. It is as if the first-person narrator is carried into, or back to, what he is to relate. For the reader this has an intensifying effect, while also reducing the temporal distance that the first paragraph indicates.

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. . . *fiction.* Since, for Booth, the art
. . . cept of distance again becomes
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. . . give more . . .

2 *Spatial distance.* Temporal distance is often combined with distance in space, i.e. a distance between the narrative situation and the place where the (main) events unfold. In Part II we shall see that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* marks both temporal distance (an unspecified time-span between Marlow's act of narration and the experiences he relates) and spatial distance (the distance between 'civilized' London and 'primitive' Africa). However, as the inverted commas in the parentheses suggest, even a great distance may be reduced and problematized. Although *Hunger* and *Heart of Darkness* are very different novels, in both narratives the ways in which suspense is generated involve variations of both temporal and spatial distance.

3 *Attitudinal distance.* This variant is the most complex—not only because it is connected with the different levels of insight of the narrator and the characters in the text, but also because the concept of distance here functions more metaphorically and is more closely related to interpretation. By 'attitude' I understand the narrator's level of insight, judgements, and values. Attitudinal distance is a useful concept in order to discuss, and perhaps clarify, the relationship between the narrator and the characters. It may also be a helpful term in discussions of the narrator's position and function in relation to the intention and value system of the text.

Attitude may in other words refer to characteristic features of a character as well as of the narrator, whether the narrator be third-person or first-person. For even if a third-person narrator is outside the action, he may nevertheless express opinions about the characters, judge them, and so forth. In addition, particularly if the narrator is unreliable, an attitudinal distance may arise between the narrator and the implied author (as an abstract entity representing the text's overall intention). Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is a ready example. Jason's attitudes, which involve contempt for his brothers Benjy and Quentin and a generally egoistic and cynical view of life, contrast both with the subsequent third-person narration (in which the narrator's attitude is associated with, and curiously influenced by, that of Dilsey) and with the two preceding first-person parts. In addition to characterizing Jason, this form of double contrast contributes to establishing him as an unreliable narrator.

A narrative text that marks distance in attitude may in the next instance complicate this distance through *narrative sympathy.* This may be achieved in several ways. An example of a character who is presented sympathetically in a novel in which the third-person narration is consistently distanced and ironic is that of Stevie in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907). Like Faulkner's Benjy Compson, Stevie is mentally retarded. Sympathy for Stevie is established partly through the plot (he becomes the

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Irony As *The Secret Agent* illustrates, attitudinal distance is often related to irony. This is a complex concept which I shall only comment on briefly here, though I shall return to it in the discussions of 'The Dead' and *To the Lighthouse*. Part of what makes the concept of irony so complex is that it is not only defined as a rhetorical term or a figure of speech. It can also be understood more philosophically; as an existential experience of distance between the outer world of reality and man's ability to comprehend it— including experiencing the fact that language (on which we are dependent to be able to think and comprehend) cannot reach beyond itself. In what follows I shall use the concept of irony in a rhetorical sense (even though the philosophical implications necessarily come into play to a certain extent).

We can distinguish between verbal irony, stable and unstable irony, and dramatic irony.

Verbal irony was traditionally classified as a *trope*, i.e. a figurative expression on a par with metaphor (see p. 131) or metonymy (see p. 187). It is an utterance in which the speaker (the person who is speaking or writing) actually means something quite different from what she or he in fact says directly. A literary example of verbal irony is the first sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813):' 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife' (p. 1). An ironic impli-cation here is that unmarried women strive to catch rich men. Another impli-cation is that men with good fortunes do not necessarily share the surface sentiments of the narrator's utterance.

Stable and unstable irony is a distinction developed by Wayne Booth in *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974). *Stable irony* is what we have if we (through the narrator and the shaping of the discourse) presents the reader with an asser-tion or a position that gives a firm basis for subverting the surface meaning. In *The Secret Agent* we have stable irony in the narrator's presentation of the anarchists in London: their rhetoric is unveiled as pompous since nothing comes out of it, their politically 'progressive' ideals are compromised by naïve brutality (such as the killing of Stevie). Here we can bring in D. C. Muecke's explanation of irony as a 'two-storey phenomenon' (Muecke 1969: 19), in which there is always opposition or distance between the ironist (Conrad's third-person narrator) on the top floor and the irony's victims (the anarchists) on the ground floor.

Unstable is used of irony if the basis for subverting the surface meaning or the alternative to this meaning becomes uncertain. In this case, what we usu-ally call *ironic regression* occurs: layer upon layer of irony that complicates the reading by making all judgement, choice, and ranking of priorities difficult,

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not to say impossible. Samuel Beckett's novel trilogy—*Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1958), and *The Unnamable* (1960)— illustrates unstable irony: each time the reader thinks he or she has found a point of orientation in this fiction (and in the next instance perhaps an explanatory model for it), it is undermined by new narrative variations and thematic complications. In *Malone Dies* (Beckett's own English version of *Malone meurt* (1951)), for example, Beckett frustrates the reader by making Malone the first-person narrator, the main character, and the author of inserted, constructed stories. Malone claims that for him the characters in the stories are fictitious, and that he tells about them—writes about them with an ever shorter pencil—in order to entertain himself while he is waiting to die:

> I think I shall be able to tell myself four stories, each one on a different theme. One about a man, another about a woman, a third about a thing, and finally one about an animal, a bird probably. I think that is everything . . . Perhaps I shall not have time to finish. On the other hand perhaps I shall finish too soon. (p. 7)

Just the same the transitions become unclear between these stories, which form a kind of hypodiegetic level of action, and the sober (but perhaps also desperate) account of Malone's own death process. *Malone Dies* does not have a plot in the usual sense. The most certain event in the novel is that the main character dies—which the title of the book has already announced, but which the main character as first-person narrator ironically enough cannot report himself. The novel's narration gradually approaches a zero point it never reaches.

Dramatic irony. The unstable irony in *Malone Dies* is ascribable to a series of narrative, structural, and thematic elements in which dramatic irony is also included. Such irony involves a situation (in a play or a narrative) in which the spectator or reader gains knowledge that a character in the drama or narrative text does *not* possess. The lack of such knowledge usually causes the character to act 'mistakenly' (i.e. against his or her own interests) without knowing this; she or he will then also without realizing it say things that prefigure the ending (the disaster). The Greek tragedies provide classic examples of dramatic irony, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (*c*.425 BC). Oedipus can see, but he does not see what he has done until he is told by the blind Tiresias. This is typical dramatic irony, which here can also be called *tragic*. The dramatic irony is never this clear in Beckett's *Malone Dies*, in which (in my reading of the novel) it can be detected in the paradoxical parallels between Malone's 'constructed' characters and himself.

Narrative perspective

When we relate the narrator's attitudinal distance to his level of insight and judgements, we imply that he 'sees' the events he relates in a special way, and

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that the way in which he sees and judges the events and characters has consequences for how he presents them. This feature of narrative communication is associated with the linguistic term *deixis*, which refers to all those elements of language that have a specifically demonstrative function. Examples of such words are the, *this*, *that*, *here*, *there*, *now*, *I*, *you*, *tomorrow*, *yesterday*. None of these words can be understood properly unless we bring in 'the point of orientation' (both in space and time) of the person (addresser) uttering them. If we go from the linguistic level of word to narrative discourse, here too narrator's (or addresser's) point of orientation is often crucial to how we understand the text. We call this point of orientation the narrative *perspective*. Even in the first sentence of *Hunger*—"It was in those days when I wandered about hungry in Kristiania"—several words and tenses have a demonstrative function: 'in those days', 'I', and 'in Kristiania'. They signal that the narrative perspective is linked to a character, that the narration is probably first-person, that the perspective is distanced and retrospective, and that the story-events have perhaps been decisive for the main character.

Even if the concept of perspective can be anchored linguistically, these comments show that narrative perspective has functions that go beyond the linguistic ones. One reason for this is that perspective is linked to the utterances of the narrator or character. Such individual utterances contribute to constituting narrative discourse as translinguistic and pragmatic (Bakhtin 1982; cf. Todorov 1984: 24). Utterances are further related to the viewpoints, judgements, or experiences of the narrator or character. This enables us to determine more precisely the concept of perspective according to what aspect of it is important in a given narrative text. Perspective is a question of what makes a narrative presentation probable (or improbable) and distinct from other (alternative) presentations. The narrative perspective will also, in different ways and to a varying degree, appeal to the perspective of the narratee or reader.

'The phenomena that compose the fictive universe are never presented to us "in themselves" but from a certain perspective' (Todorov 1981: 32). Narrative perspective is not only a matter of the narrator's visual perception of events and characters, but also of how he or she experiences, judges, and interprets them. Mieke Bal puts it this way: 'Perception depends on so many factors that striving for objectivity is pointless. To mention only a few factors: one's position with respect to the perceived object, the fall of the light, the distance, previous knowledge, psychological attitude towards the object; all this and more affects the picture one forms and passes on to others' (Bal 1997: 142).

Perspective, then, indicates the vision through which the narrative elements are presented. As Bal shows, it covers both the physical and the psychological points of perception . . . [but not] the agent that is performing the action of narration (Bal 1997: 143). Because it is possible for both a narrator and a

character 'to express the vision of another', perspective needs to be distin-guished from 'the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that vision' (Bal 1997: 143). (Bal uses the term 'focalization', which I reserve for film, in a way that broadly corresponds to 'perspective'.)

Let us illustrate what we have said so far with two examples from *The Stories of Eva Luna*, a collection of short stories by Isabel Allende. This is how 'Walimai' begins:

> The name given me by my father is Walimai, which in the tongue of our brothers in the north means 'wind'. I can tell it to you, since now you are like my own daughter and you have my permission to call my name, although only when we are among family. The names of persons and living creatures demand respect, because when we speak to them we touch their heart and become a part of their life force. (p. 86)

Walimai is the short story's main character. He is also a first-person narrator: he consistently uses I-reference and is the most important player in the plot. If we bring in the concept of narrative perspective, we can better see how Walimai's two main functions (as the main character and a first-person nar-rator) are combined, and how they function thematically. Even in the first sentence several of the words indicate narrative perspective, 'Walimai', 'tongue', 'our brothers', 'in the north'. The text rapidly and demonstratively establishes a time dimension, a temporal difference between before and now (and between three generations: father, Walimai, daughter). Furthermore, by repeating the main character's name that the title has already announced, it signals that this name not only identifies a character but also marks respect both for this character and for the group of people (the Indian tribe) to which he belongs. Such an indication of respect (for other people and other cultures) may suggest that in other contexts respect is lacking. We have a feeling that this short story will give us examples of precisely such a shortcoming, and thus perhaps dramatize problems of power and freedom. Several of the effects of this opening depend on Walimai's status as a first-person narrator. The perspective of the short story is influenced by the first-person narrator's perceptions, yet textual perspective (which here approximates to a variant of textual intention) also informs the narrator's judgements and experiences. For they are not only his—they are also related to his father, anchored in his culture, and influenced by 'the tongue of our brothers in the north'.

Now consider the first sentence of another short story from *The Stories of Eva Luna*, 'Phantom Palace': 'When five centuries earlier the bold renegades from Spain with their bone-weary horses and armour candescent beneath an American sun stepped upon the shores of Quinaroa, Indians had been living and dying in that same place for several thousand years' (p. 201). While the first-person narration in 'Walimai' links up with that of Allende's novel *Eva*

Luna (1987), the narrative method of 'Phantom Place', as in most of the short stories in this collection, is third-person. Yet the fact that the narrator in this case is outside the action, which she observes without participating in it, does not mean that the narrative perspective is neutral. The first sentence not only establishes a distinction between 'before' and 'now'; it also links before to the natives and now to the European immigrants. Put another way, temporal distance is linked with spatial distance; and while the past is related to the Indians, the present is linked to the Spaniards. This linking of temporal and spatial distance marks an attitudinal distance: the narrator distances herself from the invading Europeans, while she sympathizes with the Indians and the shores of Quinaroa. It is difficult, and hardly desirable either, to read the short stories in *The Stories of Eva Luna* in total isolation from one another. A point of contact, both narrative and thematic, between the two stories considered here is that the third-person narration which serves to establish the perspective in 'Phantom Palace' gives greater weight to the perspective of 'Walimai' as a first-person narrative.

As Genette was the first to point out, it is necessary in the analysis of prose fiction to distinguish between the two questions *who sees?* and *who tells?* The first question comes under the heading of discourse, and can be linked to the concept of perspective as explained above. The second comes under that of narration, and is related to narrative voice and speech presentation. Discussions of 'point of view' have often overlooked this important distinction. The term 'point of view' is confusingly imprecise as it may alternately refer to both perspective and voice. Although in much narrative theory perspective has come to indicate both narrator and vision, the two narrative agencies actually supplement rather than duplicate each other. Thus it can be fruitful to study the relationship, whether it be stable or variable, between perspective and narration in the text. Take James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1915). After the novel has opened by presenting the beginning of a fairy-tale-like story. His father told him story as follows: 'His father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face' (p. 3). The narrative voice is that of the narrator, who is third-person and outside the action. Yet the perspective is *Stephen's*—it is ascribed to the main character as a child, to Stephen's retrospective experience of the oral narrative situation when his father told him stories.

Generally speaking, the narrative perspective may be either 'external' or 'internal' in relation to the story the discourse presents. An *external* perspective can be associated with a third-person narrator who 'sees' the events without participating in them (cf. the last Allende example). This does not imply that an external narrative perspective is necessarily stable throughout the text. It may well vary, and such changes are often linked with variations in distance. An illustrative example of such perspectival variation is a short story by

Nadine Gordimer, 'Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?' In common with Isabel Allende, Gordimer contrasts two cultures with each other, one white and one black. A white woman meets a black man, but what in another place might have been a meaningful encounter in this short story becomes a confrontation marked by fear—fear of the other, but at the same time fear of oneself. The narrative perspective, which is external and related to the third-person narrator, associates itself with the perspective of the white woman as she perceives the situation. Yet this orientation towards the woman, which to begin with has elements of sympathy, is modified towards the end through a clear marking of distance:

> She was trembling so that she could not stand. She had to keep on walking, quickly, down the road. It was quiet and grey, like the morning. And cool . . . Why did I fight, she thought suddenly. What did I fight for? . . . The cold of the morning flowed into her.
> She turned away from the gate and went down the road slowly, like an invalid, beginning to pick the blackjacks from her stockings. (p. 20)

The narrative voice in this text remains stable; as in the example from Joyce's *Portrait* it is the narrative perspective that varies. This perspective is first informative and soberly observant, then seems to approximate to the vision of the female main character, only to distance itself finally from her.

The varying, external perspective is associated with the third-person narrative of this short story. In first-person narration too the perspective may at times give the impression of being external. An example from Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942):

> Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know. I had a telegram from the home: 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely.' That doesn't mean anything. It may have been yesterday.
> The old people's home is at Marengo, fifty miles from Algiers. I'll catch the two o'clock bus and get there in the afternoon. Then I can keep the vigil and I'll come back tomorrow night. (p. 9)

The voice speaking here belongs to the novel's main character. In so far as the narration is first-person, the narrative perspective is basically linked to the main character. Yet at the same time Camus tries various ways of separating or distancing this perspective from that of the main character, Meursault. For example, the title-word 'outsider' (*étranger*) not only applies to Meursault as a stranger in the world and to his immediate family (for instance, he shows no sign of sorrow over his mother's death), but also invites us to understand Meursault as a stranger to himself. Is this perhaps why he later kills the Arab, apparently for no other 'reason' than the bright sunlight on the beach?

If the narrative perspective is *internal*, the point of orientation will as a rule be linked to a character. The reader has no choice but to see the fictional events

with the eyes of this character, and will therefore in principle more easily accept the vision she or he presents. A characteristic example of internal perspective is Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), a novel with first-person narration. In this novel the perspective is closely, and lastingly, linked to Jane as narrator and main character. Her internal perspective influences, and in part governs, how the reader judges Jane, Mr Rochester, and the other characters.

Such internal perspective is common in first-person narratives such as *Jane Eyre*. Yet although in such texts perspective is associated with the narrator, it is not identical with, or limited to, the narrator's voice. For example, in the first chapter of Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997) the first-person narrator draws attention to perspective by attempting to see himself from above: 'I see us from three hundred feet up, through the eyes of the buzzard we had watched earlier, soaring, circling and dipping in the tumult of currents: five men running silently towards the centre of a hundred-acre field' (p.1). The visualizing force of this sentence owes something to the perspectival modulation it incorporates; more indirectly, it also suggests that the narrator may regard his own narration as unsatisfactory or too partial. We can also have internal or person-oriented perspective in novels with third-person narrators, such as Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and, as we have seen above, Joyce's *Portrait*.

In narrative fiction perspective is related to distance, voice, and different variants of third-person and first-person narrator. Inspired by Boris Uspensky (1973) Rimmon-Kenan systematizes the concept of perspective by dividing it into a perceptual, a psychological, and an ideological facet. If, as the analyses in Part II suggest, such a systematization is difficult to carry out in critical practice it is because the different aspects of perspective continually blend and modify one another in narrative discourse. What Rimmon-Kenan's systematization clearly shows is that perspective is something more than 'perceptual viewpoint'. It is partly for this reason that the concept of perspective is preferable to that of 'focalization' in discussions of fictional prose.

In film, however, focalization is an indispensable term, even though the concept of perspective can be usefully applied to the film medium too. Once we connect focalization with film we think of the film camera. From the diagram illustrating the film narrator (Fig. 2.4) we will recall that the camera is only one of the many elements that constitute the cinematic narrator. Yet the camera has a special place among the narrative devices of film because of its diverse methods of focalization. The camera decides not only what the viewer sees, but also how long and for how long and what we see. Among the factors that govern the orientation of the camera in relation to the filmed object are distance and level—whether the camera is far away from or close to the object being filmed, and whether it films it 'from below' (low

angle) or 'from above' ('bird's-eye perspective'). However, such focalization components are not only combined with one another, they also become more complicated as the camera only exceptionally focuses stably on objects that are at rest. Moreover, the camera itself is often in movement (partly because it will be moved during filming, but mostly through advanced zoom techniques and technically sophisticated panning and tilting camera movements).

In *Narrated Films* Avrom Fleishman points out that discussions about films often have a tendency to 'personify' the camera, as I also do when I say that the camera 'decides' what we see. Fleishman reminds us that although this is partly correct, it is also misleading since the camera is steered by the cinematographer and (more indirectly yet just as importantly) by the film's director (Fleishman 1992: 3). A film in which camera focalization is clearly related to the perspective of the main character is Henning Carlsen's *Hunger* (1966), an adaptation of the Hamsun novel to which I have already referred. As Lars Thomas Braaten shows in *Filmfortelling og subjektivitet* (Film Narrative and Subjectivity), we can see the film's mobile framing, including variations of camera focalization, as a filmic equivalent to the subjectively personal perspective that permeates Hamsun's novel. Several of the points made in Braaten's analysis of Carlsen's *Hunger* are associated with the concept of subjective camera movement (Braaten 1984: 87–9; cf. Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 245). For instance, the camera focalizes over the shoulder of the main character (Per Oscarson) on a sheet of paper on which he is writing. The viewer understands this as a key image:

> It is here that we most closely approach what he is actually up to and why he is lingering by the railings on the bridge. He is writing, making notes on his little sheet of paper. There is fine thematic logic in the fact that this subjective camera setting is held for as long as eight seconds, while the others, as has been mentioned, are only kept for a couple of seconds, as short and involuntary penetrations of his field of attention. Yet we can see from his hand movements that there is also something nervous and unconcentrated about this writing activity . . . (Braaten 1984: 89, my translation)

In Carlsen's *Hunger* such close-ups have a characterizing function not only by virtue of themselves but just as much through the relationship between the near and that which is at a distance. Together with montage, this kind of spatial interplay (typically combining long shots and close-ups, as in the helicopter sequence in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*) is fundamental to the structure of the narrative fiction film. For example, in the classic film made by the Lumière brothers, *Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895), we see the workers in front of the factory gate at a distance; here, as in Orson Welles's *The Trial*, the use of long shots makes the viewer see the people on the screen as moving figures without any real identity. In the introductory scene in

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Carlsen's *Hunger* too, the narrative distance associated with long shots is striking. Yet as Bræten points out, an important difference from the Lumière film is that, in Carlsen's film, this kind of narrative distance is contrasted with the subsequent close-ups. Using camera focalization combined with a variety of other filmic means, film brilliantly visualizes both what is distant and what is near, and it can present not only external but also internal perspective.

Voice and speech presentation

Even Plato, as we recall, in his day attempted to answer the question of *who tells* in a narrative text. Narrative communication in fictional prose involves distance, a form of distance which (greatly simplified) arises through the combination of two factors. First, the use of a narrator is in itself a means of distancing, partly since he or she is the narrator *in* the text while the author *writes it*, partly since the words the narrator uses can only imitate other words (and cannot, like drama, show action). Second, the signifying linguistic structures in fictional prose have a tendency to 'break free' from the external world of reality to which fiction stands in an indirect relationship.

Since all literary prose exists linguistically (as writing), it is not possible to imitate or show directly the events or the physical phenomena that the text says something about. If the narrator has a distancing function, he thereby also acquires a communicative function. Even when the narrative text presents direct speech, a narrator 'quotes' what a character says so that what is 'shown' is further communicated to the reader (sometimes also filtered through a narrative frame'). We can distinguish between *narration* and *speech*. The narrative function is linked to the narrator. Speech is what the characters utter, and this speech is then presented by the narrator. In some texts of narrative fiction (for example Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) a first-person narrator both participates in (part of) the plot and then communicates it. Generally speaking, the first-person narrator often has a key function in the presentation of speech.

Having established that in narrative fiction all speech is communicated, and that the crucial distinction is between various degrees and kinds of narration (rather than between 'telling' and 'showing'), I present a progressive scale from 'purely' narrative speech presentation to 'purely' mimetic. The following presentation is indebted to the progressive scale suggested by Brian McHale (1978: 258–9), and to Rimmon-Kenan's helpful survey in *Narrative Fiction* (1983: 109–10). I use McHale's examples, which are all taken from Dos Passos's novel trilogy *U.S.A.* (1938). (The following scale is somewhat simplified compared to those presented by McHale and Rimmon-Kenan.)

1 *Diegetic summary*: a short report of a speech act, without any specification of what was said or how it was said, for example:

> When Charley got a little gin inside him he started telling war yarns for the first time in his life. (*The Big Money*, 295)

2 *Indirect content paraphrase (or indirect discourse)*: a summary of the content of a speech event, without any account being taken of the style or form of the 'original' utterance:

> The waiter told him that Carranza's troops had lost Torreón and that Villa and Zapata were closing in on the Federal District. (*The 42nd Parallel*, 320)

3 *Free indirect discourse*: grammatically and mimetically in an intermediate position between indirect and direct discourse (more about this variant below):

> Why the hell shouldn't they know, weren't they off 'n her and out to see the goddam town and he'd better come along. (*1919*, 43–4)

4 *Direct discourse*: a 'quotation' of a monologue or dialogue in the text. This creates the illusion of 'pure mimesis', although the 'quotation' is communicated and stylized:

> Fred Summers said, 'Fellers, this war's the most gigantic cockeyed graft of the century and me for it and the cross red nurses.' (*1919*, 191)

5 *Free direct discourse*: direct discourse without conventional orthographic cues. This is the typical form of first-person interior monologue:

> Fainy's head suddenly got very light, Bright boy, that's me, ambition and literary taste . . . Gee, I must finish *Looking Backward* . . . and jez, I like reading fine (*The 42nd Parallel*, 22, Dos Passos's ellipses)

If orthography and syntax are in complete disarray, free direct discourse may take the form of a stream of consciousness. The classic example of such a speech presentation is the last sixty pages of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), a textual segment practically without punctuation, in which Joyce lets the female main character, Molly, present her thoughts through first-person narration. A short excerpt:

> yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes . . . (pp. 931–2)

Free indirect discourse

Of these variants of speech presentation narrative theory has taken a particular interest in what we call free indirect discourse (corresponding to the German *erlebte Rede* and the French *style indirect libre*). The reason for this interest can in part be inferred from the survey given above: since free indirect discourse is placed in the middle of the scale of speech presentation, it reflects in a unique way *both* the narrator's voice and the voice of the person

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speaking. However, although free indirect discourse is usually explained as a linguistic combination of two voices, this phenomenon is not 'purely linguistic' because it can also have important literary effects, both narratively and thematically.

How can we identify free indirect discourse in the fictional text we are reading? Let us look at three discourse variants of the same sentence:

1 *Direct discourse*: 'She said: "I like him!"' (present).
2 *Indirect discourse*: 'She said that she liked him' (past).
3 *Free indirect discourse*: 'She liked him!' (past).

As we can see, free indirect discourse (like indirect) has third-person reference and the past form of the verb 'like'. Yet by leaving out the reporting verb and the conjunction 'that', the utterance approximates to or 'slides' towards the quotation which direct discourse cites. Thus, free indirect discourse falls linguistically and narratively midway between direct and indirect discourse: rendering the content of a figural mind more obliquely than the former, more directly than the latter (Cohn 1983: 105).

Since free indirect discourse can communicate both the speech and thoughts of a character, we can differentiate this concept by means of the terms *free indirect speech* and *free indirect thought*. These two concepts cover the two main variants of free indirect discourse. I have already given a non-literary example of free indirect *speech*, a literary example of free indirect *thought* which I shall discuss in more detail in Part II is the narrative presentation of how K. is stopped by the priest when he wishes to leave the cathedral in the penultimate chapter of *The Trial*: 'He had almost got clear of the pews, and was nearing the empty space between them and the door, when for the first time he heard the priest's voice. A powerful, well-trained voice. How it rang through the expectant cathedral!' (p. 234). The last two sentences are both free indirect thought. If we are unsure whether we have free indirect discourse here, we can 'test' the first of the two sentences. As indirect discourse it would run: 'He thought that the priest's voice was powerful and well trained'; as direct discourse: 'He thought: "The priest's voice is powerful and well trained"'. We notice that the fact that K. *hears* the priest's voice contributes to identifying this sentence as free indirect thought. If free indirect thought is even more clearly marked in the following sentence (the final one in the quotation), it is because the effect of free indirect discourse is reinforced here by the exclamation mark.

This example from *The Trial* illustrates the fundamental ambiguity that is characteristic of free indirect discourse. It confirms Dorrit Cohn's point that 'narrated monologue [Cohn's term for free indirect discourse] is at once a more complex and a more flexible technique for rendering consciousness than the rival techniques' (Cohn 1983: 107). Who is speaking here, the narrator or the character? This question, which is essentially linguistic and may appear

simple and delimited, rapidly flows together with other questions in a narra-
tive text such as *The Trial*: who has control, authority, power? What does it
involve to have these things, what are the consequences of *not* having them?
The path is short from narrative observation to thematic discussion.

3

Narrative Tir

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3
Narrative Time and Repetition

Time is a fundamentally important category for human beings, but the concept of 'time' is so diffuse that it is practically impossible to define. Part of what makes the concept of time so complex is that it is linked both to the physical world and to our perception of the world (and thereby of ourselves). Furthermore, our perception of time *varies*. An indication of how difficult the problem of time is to tackle from a philosophical angle is that one of the factors that creates this variation is precisely the age in which we live. The perception of time in agricultural communities of the European Middle Ages, for example, was different from ours if only because of the way in which work was conditioned by the changing seasons. Our own experience of time is influenced and changed by the rapid developments within such fields as information technology and the mass media. Literature provides a continual response to these changes, which means that questions of time are often included as part of the thematics in literary texts.

This chapter covers four main subject areas. Since narrative time cannot be separated from narrative space, I shall start with some comments on the concept of space. After that I shall outline the most important variants of time as presented in narrative fiction, before giving a brief discussion of the concept of time in relation to film. The last part of this chapter deals with repetition in narrative fiction and film.

Narrative time and narrative space

Since the concept of time is linked to both the physical world and our perception of the world, it is also related to *narrative space*, i.e. the fictional universe which the text presents through its narrative discourse. If this chapter puts more emphasis on narrative time and repetition rather than on narrative space, this is not because the latter concept is unimportant but because narrative theory has developed more terms and distinctions when it comes to narrative time than it has for narrative space. Typically, however, in order to be adequately understood these terms need to be seen in the context of narrative space.

In narrative texts the spatial dimension stands out most clearly in connection with the theme of travel. Of the texts I analyse in Part II, this is best illustrated in *Heart of Darkness*. The dominant space here is the vast African continent, but

since the narrative structure takes the form of a journey that the narrator, Marlow, makes from Europe to Africa, the 'European space' also comes into play—narratively, structurally, and thematically. The fact that the journey takes place at sea and on the river we can identify as the Congo indicates that we can see sea/water/river as a third, more neutral and mediating space, inserted between Europe (powerful, dominant, 'civilized') and Africa (oppressed, exploited, 'primitive'). In theoretical terms Morten Nøjgaard formulates this point as follows: 'A journey, which can of course take place in inner space, is the expression of a strong spatialization of the experience of time and is therefore well suited to expressing the complex of problems associated with our realization of ourselves, which is fundamental to narrative texts' (Nøjgaard 1976: 194, my translation). Now of course narrative space is not dependent on the fact that the characters in the story actually travel, either physically or metaphorically. My reason for mentioning the travel motif in particular is that it illustrates the close relationship between narrative space and narrative time. Broadly, it can be stated that even if the spatial dimension is not equally important in all narrative texts, it often plays a crucial part. This applies especially if specific parts or characteristics of the narrative space influence and shape the characters, who normally appear in space and are thus also spatial elements of a kind.

In order to discuss how narrative space is presented in verbal fiction, it is important to know of the distinction between 'story space' and 'discourse space'. *Story space* is the space containing events, characters, and the place or places of the action as it is presented and developed in the discourse (i.e. as plot). It is elements from story space that we build on when we construct the story on the basis of the text we are reading. (Edward Branigan uses the term 'story world' (Branigan 1992: 33–6) synonymously about film.) *Discourse space* is the narrator's space. This can assume different forms and need not be indicated in the text at all, but it is in principle distinguished from story space. Again *Heart of Darkness* is a ready example, for in this short novel (or 'novella') the discourse space is in practice physically defined through the narrative situation with Marlow as a first-person narrator on board a sailing vessel on the Thames. Yet although the discursive space of *Heart of Darkness* seems to be sharply divided from the novella's story space, one of the effects of Marlow's narration is to destabilize this apparently safe distinction and to bring the two spaces closer to each other.

The relationship between narrative time and narrative space suggests that an author of fiction must use different forms of presentation according to whether she or he wishes to depict what the universe and the objects in it look like, or tell what happens to objects in the universe. On this basis Nøjgaard distinguishes between three forms of presentation:

1 *Narration*: as purely temporal presentation (i.e. only presentation of movements—'action' in the traditional sense).
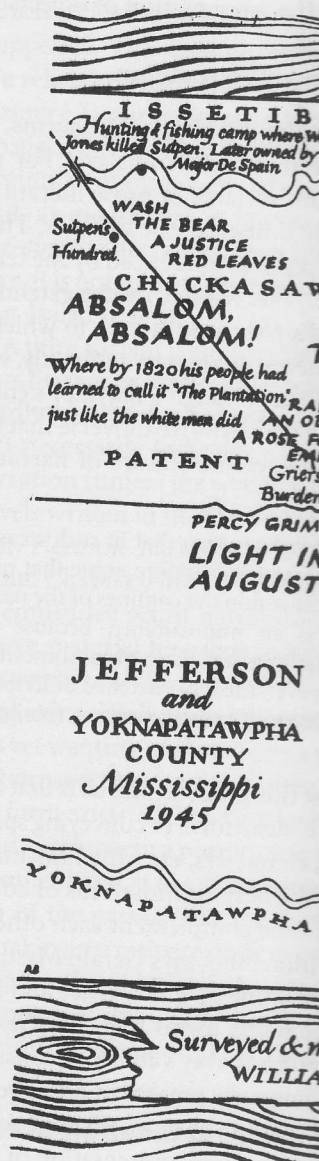
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2   *Description*: as purely spatial presentation (i.e. presentation of objects in space disconnected from the aspect of time).
3   *Comment*: which is neither spatial nor temporal presentation.

Although this tripartite division is illuminating in theoretical terms, it may be difficult to use it as a structuring aid in narrative analysis. For we rarely meet these forms of presentation as pure variants in prose literature: they are usually connected and they mutually influence one another. Thus even a 'descriptive pause' is *narrated*, and as a result is influenced by the temporal presentation inherent in the narrative. This applies to the extended descriptive pause at the beginning of Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904), to which I refer below. It is also the case that most comments, at any rate indirectly, will be related to both narration and description. For although a narrator's comment is in discourse space, it is still included in the narrative universe that the author constructs. Nøjgaard says of this characteristic feature of narrative fiction:

> Only comment can occur in a pure form, but we have seen that in such a case it really falls outside the narrative universe . . . One may therefore argue that none of the three basic forms can occur in a pure form within the confines of the narrative universe. Pure temporal presentation is an impossibility, because any movement is necessarily a movement of something and takes place somewhere (a place which must be described). Conversely, even the most detailed description (e.g. in Balzac's novels) sees objects as existing in time, i.e. in movement. (Nøjgaard 1976: 151)

If we link the concept of space to film, the first thing that strikes us is that film *displays* space superbly. Since film projection is also a form of conveying space-constituting elements (place, events, milieu, characters, etc.) the film-maker traditionally puts a lot of work into finding the best location. This of course also applies to film adaptation. If space and time complement each other in fictional prose, the same is certainly true in film. Film, says Gerald Mast, 'is a truly space-and-time art; it is certainly the only one in which space and time play a fully equal role' (Mast 1983: 10). 'Different film forms', suggests Thomas Elsaesser, 'would seem to be determined by a film-maker's ability to construct space and time—the two dimensions simultaneously present in filmic representation—in a comprehensible manner' (Elsaesser 1994: 12). We shall return to the spatial dimension of film in the section on filmic presentation of time below.

Temporal relations between narration and story   In order for story events to be presented narratively it seems logical that they first must have 'happened', i.e. they must have been realized within the fiction. Still, the temporal relationship between narration and events in a story can vary, and we distinguish between four main variants.

The first and most important is *retrospective narration*. In this variant,

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which is clearly the most common, events in a story are related after they have happened. The distance between the act of narration and the events that are related varies from text to text. In Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) the distance is approximately fifteen years, in Kafka's *The Trial* (1914–15) it is unspecified, in Hamsun's *Mysteries* (1892) it is one year (measured from the beginning of the novel). Yet even though retrospective narration dominates—and, as mentioned, is in one sense the only possibility—we can also have *pre-emptive* narration. Even if this variant is seldom found in modern literature, it is not unusual in texts such as the Old Testament books of the prophets (e.g. Isaiah 11: 1–2).

A third variant is approximately *contemporary* with the story events. A ready non-literary example is the broadcasting of a football match on the radio. It is hardly possible for narrative fiction to be *so* contemporary, since the written text necessarily indicates a difference, and thus a distance, from the act of narration (unless the writer is writing about his or her writing). Finally, as in novels written in the form of letters or a diary, we may have *embedded* narration. Here the narrative acts change with the actions that are being talked about. Chapter 9 in Part I of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* can be said to form such an embedded act of narration. Here the narrator claims that he has lost the source material he needs to be able to continue the story: 'This grieved me extremely; and the pleasure of having read so little was turned into disgust to think what small probability there was of finding much that, in my opinion, was yet wanting of so savoury a story' (p. 74).

Retrospective narration, then, is found in most fictional prose. This narrative form exists, as Genette puts it, through a fundamental paradox: on the one hand, retrospective narration is temporally related to the story it is telling; on the other hand, it has an 'atemporal essence' since it does not give any impression of the passage of time. For Kate Hamburger, this paradox contributes to making narrative texts fictional: only in narrative fiction, she argues, do we accept without reservation a sentence such as 'Morgen war Weihnachten' ('Tomorrow was Christmas Eve'), which in everyday speech would be an illogical construction (Hamburger 1968: 53–72).

Time in fictional prose

In the analysis of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* in Part II I shall be discussing time as an important motif in fictional prose. Yet as this analysis shows, time is not only something authors write about: it is also a factor that constitutes both the story and the discourse. If on this basis I say that time in narrative fiction can be understood as the chronological relation between story and text, I have delimited the topic for this presentation, which takes Genette's *Narrative Discourse* as its basis by linking narrative time to three main terms:

1   Order (*ordre*): answers the question 'when?'
2   Duration (*durée*): answers the question 'how long?'
3   Frequency (*fréquence*): answers the question 'how often?'

Order   By 'order' we mean the temporal order of events in the story in relation to the presentation of these events in the narrative discourse. If a text is so narrated that it departs from the chronologically ordered story (as an abstraction that can first be assembled when we have read the whole text), there arises a type of difference which Genette calls 'anachrony', and which has two main variants: *analepsis* and *prolepsis*. To a certain extent these two terms correspond to 'flashback' and 'foreshadowing'. However, Genette's concepts are clearly preferable since they are more precise and more directly related to two complementary narrative variations.

Analepsis is an evocation of a story-event at a point in the text where later events have already been related, i.e. the narration jumps back to an earlier point in the story. This narrative variation, which is much more common than prolepsis, is divided by Genette into three types:

1   *External analepsis*: the time of the story in the analepsis lies outside and prior to the time of the main narrative (which Genette calls 'first narrative'). This means that the narration jumps back to a point in the story before the main narrative starts. For example, the Norwegian author Erik Fosnes Hansen's *Psalm at Journey's End* (1990) opens with a portrayal of Jason, the conductor of the orchestra on the *Titanic* and one of the novel's main characters, walking through the streets of London on 'April 10, 1912 . . . just before sunrise' (p. 7). At sunrise Jason stops:

> The sun rose. He put down his suitcase and violin and watched everything slowly changing, contours sharpening and deepening, the river acquiring colours.
>   He looked at the redness for a while.
> *
> 'It should be a little to the right below the sun.'
>   His father's voice.
>   'Will it be long?' That is his own voice, light, curious, a very long time ago, when he was ten. It all seems far, far away, and yet now it is coming closer. (p. 8)

While this analepsis is linked to, and in a certain sense motivated by, the red colour of the rising sun, it is clearly marked in the text—and at the same time it sets the pattern for similar analeptic variations later on in the narrative. (Actually, in this novel these analepses are so long that they aspire to be 'main narratives' in their own right.)

2   *Internal analepsis*: the narration goes to an earlier point in the story, but this point is inside the main story. A well-known example of this variant is provided by Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). After we have been told about later events in Emma's life, the third-person narrator presents an internal analepsis which gives a concise account of the time she spent in

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1   *External analepsis*
2   *Internal analepsis*
3   *Mixed analepsis*
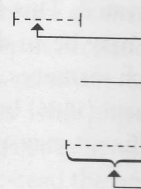
Figure 3.1

a convent (pp. 32–7). This [...]
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3   *Mixed analepsis* means that [...]
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...ra on the *Titanic* and one of the
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...nolin and watched everything slowly
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...ow it is coming closer.' (p. 8)

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...e third-person narrator presents
...se account of the time she spent in

a convent (pp. 32–7). This period lies *after* the day when Charles starts at a new school, which is the event Flaubert uses to begin his novel.

3 *Mixed analepsis* means that the time period covered by the analepsis starts before but leads up to or jumps into the main narrative. The sophisticated narrative technique in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) combines this variant with external analepsis. The novel presents a strange love story through a series of analeptic manoeuvres. Emily Brontë carries out these manoeuvres via two main narrators, Lockwood and Nelly Dean. The effect is partly to present the plot, and the love affair between Catherine and Heathcliff, as mysterious and romantic. Yet the novel's distanced plot (and thereby also its potentially threatening and unmasking elements) is brought closer to the reader through a curiously tentacular effect. The narration infiltrates the reader into the action, among other things through the ways in which the novel's apparently closed and limited space is destabilized in the narrative discourse. Emily Brontë achieves this effect not least through the way in which she combines external and mixed analepsis.

We can illustrate the three variants of analepsis as shown in Fig. 3.1. Internal analepsis is the most important of these variants. The third variant is relatively uncommon, while the first (external) variant often takes the form of a supplement to the main narrative. An internal analepsis may, according to how extensive it is and how it is designed, intervene in the main narrative and in extreme cases may also 'threaten' it. This applies in particular to the variant of internal analepsis that Genette calls 'heterodiegetic'. Whereas an internal 'homodiegetic' analepsis deals with the same line of action as the main narrative, a heterodiegetic analepsis deals with an action different from the content of the main narrative. The stories that Malone constructs in Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies* (1958) remind us of both these variants of internal analepsis.

Prolepsis is any narrative manoeuvre that consists in evoking in advance an event that will take place later. Prolepsis occurs much more seldom than analepsis, and most often in first-person narration. This anachronic variation also involves a narrative manoeuvre that represents a departure from the first,

Main narrative

1 External analepsis

2 Internal analepsis

3 Mixed analepsis

Figure 3.1

dominant narrative. Prolepsis is, in other words, the evocation of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been narrated. This form of narrative information can be extremely compressed; it may be so dense that we can hardly say that the prolepsis is 'narrated'. In such instances, as in the example from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) below, one or just a few words that later become particularly significant may acquire a proleptic quality.

A question actualized by this point concerns the connection between the number of prolepses we believe we can identify in a text and how well we know the text. This question exemplifies one aspect of the relationship between narrative presentation and reading. If we re-read texts such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, we probably find more prolepses than when we read the novel for the first time. One of the reasons for this is that in the reading process the transition between 'calling up' a later event (which we perhaps know already) and 'referring to' it in a pre-empting way is easily blurred.

Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927) provides an illustrative example of how prolepsis and analepsis can be combined. The special thing about this example is that, in the novel's first sentence, it immediately plays on both these variants of anachrony: 'On Friday noon, July the twentieth, 1714, the finest bridge in all Peru broke and precipitated five travellers into the gulf below' (p. 3). Few novels have a more fascinating beginning. At the same time that we as readers can see the five travellers in our mind's eye, plunging to their certain deaths, we sense that the novel's action will be concerned with precisely these five. Indeed, this turns out to be correct, for Brother Juniper, who witnesses the accident, feels himself compelled by what he has seen to attempt to answer the question: '"Why did this happen to those five?" If there were any pattern in a human life, surely it could be discovered mysteriously latent in those lives so suddenly cut off' (p. 6). In so far as the subsequent discourse develops from this question, we might say that most of the novel is analeptic in relation to the beginning. Yet in this long analepsis, which covers practically the whole book, the first sentence functions *proleptically*: as we know the whole time what is going to happen to the five characters, we interpret what we learn about them in the light of this knowledge.

A more debatable example of prolepsis ('debatable' because the prolepsis calls up a later event without identifying it) is to be found in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. At the beginning of this novel the third-person narrator focuses on Raskolnikov, the impoverished student in St Petersburg, who becomes the novel's dominant main character. In a way that marks great narrative economy the characterization of Raskolnikov starts immediately. The omniscient narrator comments that Raskolnikov has an embarrassing feeling of fear, and in a summary of his thoughts we read: '"To think that I can contemplate such a terrible act and yet be afraid of such trifles," he thought, and he

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to present each year in a chara[...]
may increase or decrease. The [...]

smiled strangely' (p. 1). This combination of thought summary and narrative comment is indicative of the direction of the whole novel. 'Terrible act' we can read as a prolepsis for the dominant act Raskolnikov performs a little later (but nevertheless relatively early): the double murder of the landlady and Lizaveta. To those who object that 'terrible act' at first reading is simply suspense-creating in a general sense and that the word only functions prolep-tically when we re-read the book, it must be conceded that this prolepsis, like several others in *Crime and Punishment*, is more obvious on a second reading. Still, it is supported here by other textual elements. For example, a little later it is qualified and repeated through words such as 'evidence' and 'real project' (p. 3), and *'the thing itself'* (p. 4) which is even italicized so that the prolepsis is typographically reinforced.

Duration To answer the question how long a narrative text 'lasts' is really impossible. For the only relevant yardstick is 'reading time'—something which varies from reader to reader. If we nevertheless say that story time and discourse time 'coincide' in what we call 'scene', this is based on conventional grounds; it is not because this necessarily *is* so. One reason why this conven-tion has developed is that a dialogue in a scene communicates language in language; we reckon that words in the text stand for words that were uttered in the story. Linguistic communication of non-verbal events may on the other hand be carried out narratively in many different ways, also with respect to time.

Since the passage of time cannot be measured, both Genette and Rimmon-Kenan sensibly take their starting-point in another relation that combines the text's temporal dimension with the text's spatial dimension. The story *lasts* so long, and its duration (which may be anything from a few minutes to many years) stands in a relationship to the *length* of the text that presents the story. Consider the short story 'The Father' by the Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. It is only a couple of pages long, yet in a manner reminiscent of Kafka's 'Before the Law' (which I shall be discussing in Chapter 5) this text presents, through the variant of third-person narrative Bjørnson employs, a whole life. At the opposite extreme to 'The Father' is a novel such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which the narrative discourse (that fills over 900 pages) presents a story which—true enough with innumerable digressions and complications—is limited to only one day.

Textual length, which is an integral part of an author's narrative technique, thus has an important temporal aspect. Genette proposes to use what he calls 'constant speed' as an imagined norm against which to measure different degrees of the passage of time. 'Constant speed' means that the ratio between how long the story lasts and how long the text is remains stable and unchanged, for example in the case of a novel which consistently uses one page to present each year in a character's life. On the basis of this norm the 'speed' may increase or decrease. The maximum speed is *ellipsis*, the minimum speed

is *descriptive pause*. Between these two extremes we have *summary* and *scene*. We can define these four concepts as follows:

1 *Descriptive pause*: narrative time = n, story time = 0; i.e. for a text segment ('n') there is zero story duration in the story. Such pauses are common in narrative fictional prose, and they can have many different functions. An example to which reference is often made is the extended descriptive pause at the beginning of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904). Here Conrad lets the third-person narrator depict the topography and analeptically sketch historical lines of development in the area where the action is to unfold, an unidentified country in Latin America. When we read the novel again, it is striking what great relevance this descriptive pause has to the subsequent events in the story and to the novel's thematics. Yet since we inevitably expect a *certain* progression in the story as we read, our patience and interest are really put to the test the first time we read the novel! Similarly, the reader of a very different kind of novel, Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* (1957), may be struck, or even irritated, by the way in which the narration centres on an apparently static constellation of characters and constantly refers to the same hour of the clock.

2 *Scene*: narrative time = story time. There are two things to remember when it comes to scenic presentation in prose fiction. First (as I have already mentioned), it is only *conventionally* that we can say that narrative time corresponds to story time. Second, a scene too is *narrated*. This applies also to texts in which the author mostly uses only dialogue (which is commonly regarded as the 'purest' form of scene). A ready example is Ernest Hemingway's short story 'The Killers' (1928):

'I'll have a roast pork tenderloin with apple sauce and mashed potatoes', the first man said.
'It isn't ready yet.'
'What the hell do you put it on the card for?'
'That's the dinner', George explained. 'You can get that at six o'clock.'
George looked at the clock on the wall behind the counter.
'It's five o'clock.'
'The clock says twenty minutes past five', the second man said.
'It's twenty minutes fast.' (p. 57)

As Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 54) notes, 'consisting exclusively of dialogue and a few "stage directions", the passage looks more like a scene from a play than like a segment of a narrative'. The third-person narrator's contribution is sparse, yet we note his presence in reported statements such as 'George looked at the clock . . .'. Novels written in dialogue include Denis Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* (1795) and (even more clearly) *Le Neveu de Rameau* (1805), and several books by the Spanish author Pío Baroja.

Extensive use of scenes may, but need not, result in a longer text. A text such as Bjørnson's 'The Father' illustrates that scenic elements are important in short prose t[...] presented through the sh[...] with his son just before he[...]

Fourteen days after that day f[...] in calm weather in order to [...] place under me', said the son[...] moment the loose floorboa[...] arms, utters a cry and falls int[...] up and sticking it out. But w[...] 'Wait a minute!' yells the fath[...] falls backwards, fixes his gaze[...]

Short though it is, the dial[...] intensive function a scene [...] the textual concentration [...] logue are linked together [...] person narrator is soberly [...] tory also promotes the tex[...]

3 *Summary*: narrative time i[...] is an extremely common [...] often combined. When we [...] three days and three nigh[...] this spot without taking an[...] lake for his son', we have a[...] shorter than the scene abo[...] longer.

4 *Ellipsis*: narrative time = 0,[...] there is zero textual space[...] *explicit ellipsis*: the text indi[...] as for example when the na[...] graph with the sentence 'Pe[...] (b) *implicit ellipsis*: Here no[...] tion in story time. Sometir[...] ways (for example by the c[...] orienting, since we do not [...] period of time the narratio[...] analepsis may provide the [...] Faulkner's *The Sound and* [...] least in the novel's first pa[...] justified (both narratively a[...] has no conception of 'norr[...] made an impression ten ye[...] and he also in fact moves ra[...] sions of time.

important in short prose too. The crucial turning-points in Thord's life are presented through the short dialogues which he has with the priest, and with his son just before he drowns:

> Fourteen days after that day father and son were rowing across the lake to Storliden in calm weather in order to talk about the wedding. 'This thwart is not safely in place under me', said the son, getting up to put it in the right position. At the same moment the loose floorboard on which he is standing slips; he throws out his arms, utters a cry and falls into the water.—'Grab the oar!' yelled his father, getting up and sticking it out. But when his son had made a couple of grabs, he stiffens. 'Wait a minute!' yells the father, and he rowed up to him. At that moment his son falls backwards, fixes his gaze on his father—and sinks. (My translation)

Short though it is, the dialogue in this excerpt illustrates the dramatic and intensive function a scene can have. Much of the effect here lies precisely in the textual concentration and in the way in which the three pieces of dia-logue are linked together with the narrative comments. That the third-person narrator is soberly informative rather than omnisciently explana-tory also promotes the textual concentration of this narrative.

3 *Summary:* narrative time is less than story time. Together with scene this is an extremely common variant in narrative fiction, and the two are often combined. When we read right after the scene I have quoted that 'For three days and three nights people could see the father rowing around this spot without taking any food or getting any sleep; he was dragging the lake for his son', we have a simple example of summary: this sentence is shorter than the scene above, but the story time to which it refers is much longer.

4 *Ellipsis:* narrative time = 0, story time = n; i.e. for some story duration ('n') there is zero textual space. We have two main variants of ellipses: (a) *explicit ellipsis:* the text indicates how much of the story time it jumps over, as for example when the narrator in 'The Father' introduces the final para-graph with the sentence 'Perhaps a year might have passed since that day,'; (b) *implicit ellipsis:* Here no direct indication is given of change or transi-tion in story time. Sometimes the transition may be made clear in other ways (for example by the context), but an implicit ellipsis can also be dis-orienting, since we do not know what has been left out or how long a period of time the narration has jumped over. In some cases a subsequent analepsis may provide the answer to these questions (or parts of them). Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* has many such implicit ellipses, not least in the novel's first part. In this case the ellipses are unusually well justified (both narratively and thematically): the mentally retarded Benjy has no conception of 'normal' or 'connected' time; for him an event that made an impression ten years ago may be just as close as the present day, and he also in fact moves rapidly and frequently between different dimen-sions of time.

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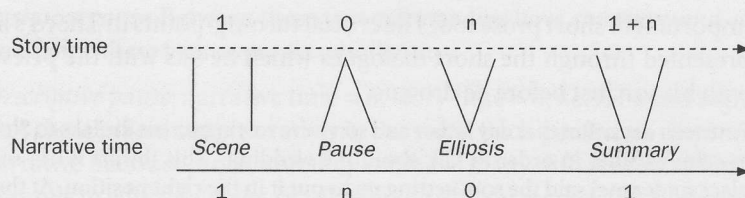
Figure 3.2

In the context of analysis, an implicit ellipsis is often more interesting than an explicit one. The ellipsis opens a chronological gap in the text, and for the reader it is a challenge to understand and explain what thematic effect the ellipsis has. Does it perhaps give an interpretative signal? This does not mean that all implicit ellipses *do* have a productive function—we may have to analyse the whole text to find out whether that is the case. Schematically, we can illustrate the four main variants in relation to 'constant speed' in a narrative prose text as shown in Fig. 3.2.

Frequency Frequency is an important temporal component in narrative fiction. For Genette, frequency refers to the relationship between how many times an event occurs in the story and how many times it is narrated (or mentioned) in the text. Thus frequency involves *repetition*, which in itself is such an important narrative concept that I shall discuss it in more detail below.

The relationships between story events and their narration in the text have three main variants:

1 *Singulative narration*: what 'happened' once is told once. This is the simplest and most common form of frequency. To this category also belongs a less common narrative phenomenon, namely telling several times what happened several times. Cervantes parodies this narrative method when in *Don Quixote* he lets Sancho tell the story of the fisherman who had to carry 300 goats in a boat and only had room for one at a time. When Sancho starts telling the story, it becomes clear that he is thinking of relating this event 300 times, corresponding to the number of trips the fisherman had to make.

2 *Repetitive narration*: what 'happened' once is told several times. This is an important narrative method in modern literature, though we also have examples that are much older. If we see the four gospels in the New Testament as 'one' story, we can say that they form a repetitive and self-consolidating narrative presentation of the life of Jesus. A modern master of repetitive narration is William Faulkner, especially in novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). In the latter novel the narration returns again and again to a specific story-event: that Henry Sutpen kills Charles Bon. Faulkner then links these repetitions to other

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Figure 3.3

narrative variations—of narrator, perspective, and passage of time. These variations create thematic complexity, among other things exploring how far-reaching (and different) the consequences of one single action may be. In *The Sound and the Fury* the relationship that three brothers have to their sister, Cathy, is in one sense comparable to Supen's killing of Bon. These brothers are all first-person narrators, each in his own chapter, yet they are very different both as narrators and as characters. The presentation of the 'same' story-events thus becomes different too. Altogether the variations of presentation, language, emphasis, and consequence are so great that we must ask ourselves whether it really *is* the same story-events which the repetitive narrations refer to.

3 *Iterative narration*: what 'happened' several times is told once. This variant can have different forms. For Genette, Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27) is a major example of iterative narration. This applies particularly to the first three main parts of this novel. The narrative text of *Combray* narrates 'not what *happened* but what *used to happen* at Combray, regularly, ritually, every day, or every Sunday, or every Saturday, etc.' (Genette 1980: 117–18, original emphasis). In Proust's fictional universe, this iterative narrative device has different forms and various thematic effects. Even in simple scenes Proust puts in iterative passages, which thus can have a generalizing effect. As well as being a significant part of the novel's overall structure, this narrative device also serves to engender and shape the content of *In Search of Lost Time*.

Both in the case of Proust and of other authors, an iterative narrative presentation can refer to story-events which together constitute a process or a complex of problems. Similarly, the iterative narration in Conrad's *Nostromo* signals that although the novel depicts one revolution, has one silver mine and one North American capitalist and so forth, it points to representative features of the historical development of the South American continent.

Graphically we can illustrate the three frequency variants as in Fig. 3.3. A narrative text need not limit itself to only one of these frequency variants. Many combinations are possible, and a number of theorists claim that in modern literature the presentation of time is so varied and sophisticated that

Narration   Singulative   Repetitive   Iterative

Story   Event   Event   Repetitive events

Figure 3.3

Ellipsis   Summary

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n   1 + n

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it undermines any systematized account. However, this in itself does not render these categories invalid, and the different combinations of narrative time are most interesting precisely *as combinations* of the systematized variants presented here. This means that the concepts which are relevant for use in narrative analysis will vary from text to text. The narrative characteristics and problems in the literary text under consideration will determine what concepts it is fruitful to apply.

Narrative time in film

It follows from what I have said about film communication and the film narrator in the preceding chapter that in a film narrative time is presented rather than narrated. Yet as we will also remember from Chapter 2, I see such film presentation as a variant of narration, and the expression 'film narrator' indicates the complex communication instance for this narration. When Gerald Mast claims that space and time have equal roles in film, it is not least film's unique presentation of time that he has in mind. On the one hand, film presupposes space (a film displays in rapid succession a series of images, and each image is a spatial print); on the other hand, film imposes a temporal vector upon the spatial dimension of the image. Film complicates and changes the image's stable space by setting it in motion and adding sound, and by introducing sequences of images and combinations of events. The result is an extremely complex and captivatingly effective art form, but film does not become less space-'based' or less space-dependent even though it continually destabilizes and complicates the spatial dimension of the image.

These comments touch upon one of the most interesting discussions in film theory: what is often called the 'Eisenstein–Bazin debate'. For Sergei Eisenstein (the Russian director of several classic films, including *The Battleship Potemkin*, which I shall be discussing below) film does not communicate so much by displaying images as through the way in which these images are combined: 'two film pieces of any kind, placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition' (Eisenstein 1986: 14). This assertion, which is closely related to Eisenstein's montage technique, is countered by André Bazin, who argues that Eisenstein dubiously breaks up nature (the objective world of reality in which man is placed) into small pieces, both spatially and temporally. For Bazin, the value and human appeal of film lie primarily in presenting (and thus in a sense recreating) nature as 'whole' and 'complete'. Implicit in the arguments Bazin levels at Eisenstein there lies a conception of film as an art form in which space dominates. For Eisenstein it is on the contrary time that is more important, since film images can only be combined sequentially in the projection process.

If we link these views to my introductory comments on the presentation of time in film, both Eisenstein and Bazin seem to have good points. Yet Mast is right in saying that much of film's special appeal lies in

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Narrative repetition

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Think again of Bjørnson's 'The [...]
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the *cumulative kinetic hypnosis* of the *uninterrupted* flow of film and time. Because the art of cinema most closely parallels the operation of time, it imprisons the attention within a hypnotic grip that becomes steadily tighter and stronger (if the work is properly built) as the film progresses and it refuses to let it go until it has had its way.

(Mast 1983: 113, original emphasis)

Let us briefly look at the presentation of time in a film adaptation, the Russian director Lev Kulidzhanov's *Crime and Punishment* (1970). I shall limit myself to commenting on the way the film ends in relation to the ending of Dostoevsky's novel. In literary fiction as in film, beginnings and endings are extremely important: the beginning to arouse the interest of the reader/viewer, the ending to maximize the total effect of the aesthetic product on the person reading (the book) or seeing/listening to (the film). As readers of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* will remember, the ending of this novel is designed as an epilogue. That the place for this epilogue is Siberia establishes a sharp spatial contrast with the plot, which takes place in St Petersburg. Siberia is the place for Raskolnikov's new life; there begins 'a new story' (p. 527) which lies outside the novel's universe but which presupposes Raskolnikov's confession of the double murder of the landlady and Lizaveta.

Why does Kulidzhanov omit the epilogue? Since the film version he gives us of the main action is relatively accurate in relation to the novel's plot, and since Georgi Taratorkin (as Raskolnikov) and Innokenti Smoktunovsky (as Porfiry) both bring out essential conflicts and thematic tensions in the novel, it may come as a surprise that he has not attempted to transfer the epilogue to film at all. The most plausible reason is probably that Kulidzhanov, a member of the Communist Party and a loyal 'Soviet artist', found it difficult to reconcile the novel's Christian ideology (which is perhaps most explicitly expressed in the epilogue) with the official Communist one. The relevant point in our context is that, by leaving out the epilogue, Kulidzhanov not only distorts the novel's ideas but radically changes its presentation of time. Put slightly differently: the fact that the adaptation omits the epilogue narrows down the novel's story time in a manner which eliminates an essential spatial contrast (St Petersburg ↔ Siberia) and which furthermore, by toning down the irrational aspect of the discourse, reduces the dialectic in the pressure to confess that both Porfiry and Sonya exert on Raskolnikov.

Narrative repetition

What is told again in a narrative prose text does not for that reason become true, but it probably becomes more important. Narrative repetition, which is closely related to narrative time (but also to other textual elements such as events and characters), is an important constituent aspect of prose fiction. Think again of Bjørnson's 'The Father'. Four times Thord comes to the priest: first to baptize his son, then to have him confirmed, then to get him married,

and finally after his son has drowned. These visits constitute important stages in Thord's life, and they all contribute to presenting the drowning accident as a peripeteia-like climax. The effect of the repetitions is reinforced by the long story time which the concentrated narration spans, and the last repetition marks the end as final.

Of the many different forms narrative repetition takes, three are particularly clear. First, we may have repetitions of individual words (most often verbs, nouns, or adjectives), gestures, reactions, and so forth. The snow in 'The Dead' acquires a symbolic quality by being repeatedly referred to at important points in the text, and the same may be said of the lighthouse in *To the Lighthouse*. This form of repetition is often linked to characterization, as when Don Quixote is again and again described as 'mad'—both by the narrator and by those with whom he comes in contact. Such repetition can have a comic effect, but this effect may then be qualified through other narrative devices. For example, Don Quixote both confirms and complicates the picture drawn of him as being mad. Most clearly he seems to confirm his madness through his actions as a knight errant. Verbally he makes this most explicit in connection with the penance that he imposes on himself in Sierra Morena. Yet since in his ingenious narrative design Cervantes places the hero's proclamation of madness (pp. 213–30) *after* the speech Don Quixote makes on the golden age (pp. 86–7), the effect is different from what it would have been had the two passages changed places. For in his speech about the golden age Don Quixote appears far from mad; rather, he comes over as wise: he says things that are so surprisingly thought-provoking that the reader is startled when the narrator (who quotes the speech) expresses the view that 'this tedious discourse . . . might very well have been spared' (p. 87).

Second, a narrative text can repeat events or scenes in such a way that they appear alike, perhaps almost identical. Thord's visits to the priest in 'The Father' accord with this form—the fact that the pattern of action in the first three visits is very similar makes the variation in the fourth more dramatic. In *The Sound and the Fury* the narration in the first three parts circles around the same events. These events are ostensibly identical, but since they are variously presented and interpreted (through three very different narrators), Faulkner raises the question of whether they really are so.

Finally, if we extend our perspective from the single text to an author's works as a whole, we can see that many authors use again in later books characters, motifs, and events taken from what they have written before. Cedric Watts has introduced the term 'transtextuality' for this narrative variant (Watts 1984: 133). Such transtextuality does not mean the same as the concept of 'intertextuality' (which I shall be discussing in Chapters 4 and 7). Transtextuality is a more restricted concept for repetitions within a specific author's works, but it does not follow that these repetitions are simple or unambiguous. For example, Conrad's character Marlow is a narrator in four narrative

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texts, but the way in which he functions varies: Marlow as a narrator is thematically more productive in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Lord Jim* (1900) than in the later novel *Chance* (1913).

One reason for mentioning Conrad's Marlow as an example is to emphasize that the narrator has an absolutely central function in the design of all these three forms of repetition, whether he or she functions as a narrative instrument or as a personal conveyor of his or her own experiences. This does not mean, however, that the repetition itself need be directly linked to the text's narration; it can also be formed through other aspects of the discourse. Since these three forms of repetition are relatively clear, in the context of analysis it is often more important to show how they operate, and what their effects are, than to identify them. Even if a narrative repetition (on a par with other narrative devices and phenomena) must first be detected in the text, this is usually only the first step in an analysis. Although it is necessary to say that *The Sound and the Fury* has three first-person narrators, this observation does not become important unless it provides the basis for questions we can *then* pose: why four narrators instead of one? Why is one of them mentally retarded? Why a concluding third-person part after the three first-person ones? If Faulkner 'needs' all three narrators, then this has thematic implications. Do the repetitions of narrators—who, in part, relate the same thing, but in different ways and with changing emphasis—mean that repetition is a means of exploring how different characters experience time? Such questions are critically interesting to pursue in reading and interpreting *The Sound and the Fury*. That the novel does not provide simple or unambiguous answers to them is connected with the thematic complexity these questions lead us into. The novel's narrative method, of which repetition is an integral part, is crucial to the presentation of its thematics.

Repetition is one of the narrative concepts that most clearly has a content dimension. Whether the interpreter places greater weight on the narrative or the thematic aspect will among other things be dependent on the way problems are posed and what critical approach he or she uses. In any case, the narrative and thematic aspects of repetition are linked together in analysis. Rather than making repetition less relevant as a narrative concept, this illustrates the interplay of narrative and thematic dimensions in narrative fiction.

Platonic and 'Nietzschean' repetition In his *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), J. Hillis Miller investigates this 'double' dimension of repetition. Miller begins by referring to the three forms of repetition I have already presented. However, his own main distinction is between two *other* forms, which he calls the 'first' and 'second' forms of repetition. These two forms of repetition do not replace those mentioned above. Rather, they supplement the three first forms and contain elements from each of them. Furthermore, since they have an important content dimension they illustrate the close connection between narrative form and literary content.

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The history of Western ideas of repetition begins, according to Miller's short summary, with the Bible on the one hand and with Homer, the pre-Socratics, and Plato on the other. The modern history of ideas about repetition goes by way of Vico to Hegel and the German Romantics, to Kierkegaard's *Repetition* (1843), to Marx, to Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, to Freud's notion of the compulsion to repeat, to the aesthetics of modernism, 'on down to such diverse present-day theorists of repetition as Jacques Lacan or Gilles Deleuze, Mircea Eliade or Jacques Derrida' (Miller 1982: 5). The theorist Miller makes most explicit use of is the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. In Deleuze's *Logique du sens* (1969), two alternative theories of repetition are set against each other by way of opposing Nietzsche's concept of repetition to that of Plato:

> Let us consider two formulations: 'only that which resembles itself differs', 'only differences resemble one another'. It is a question of two readings of the world in the sense that one asks us to think of difference on the basis of preestablished similitude or identity, while the other invites us on the contrary to think of similitude and even identity as the product of a fundamental disparity. The first exactly defines the world of copies or of representations; it establishes the world as icon. The second, against the first, defines the world of simulacra. It presents the world itself as phantasm. (Deleuze 1969: 302, Hillis Miller's translation)

What Deleuze calls 'Platonic' repetition is grounded in an archetypal model which is untouched by the effect of repetition and of which all the other examples are copies. 'The assumption of such a world gives rise to the notion of a metaphoric expression based on genuine participative similarity or even on identity . . . A similar presupposition, as Deleuze recognizes, underlies concepts of imitation in literature' (Miller 1982: 6). Positing a world based on difference, the other, Nietzschean, mode of repetition assumes that each thing is unique, intrinsically different from every other thing. 'Similarity arises against the background of this "disparité du fond". It is a world not of copies but of what Deleuze calls "simulacra" or "phantasms"' (Miller 1982: 6). These phantasms are not grounded in some paradigm or archetype, but are ungrounded doublings which arise from differential interrelations among elements which are all on the same plane.

These two variants of repetition are not mutually exclusive. Quite the reverse: the second form is related to the first and can to a certain degree be considered as a reaction to it—indeed, in many narrative texts *both* forms can be traced. If so, one can then go on to discuss what the relationship between the two forms is like, and whether there are special reasons for alternation, if it occurs, to arise between them. Such questions can lead to interpretative results which are not only interesting in relation to repetition but which can also be linked to other features of the text under consideration.

Even if the narrative aspect is more immediately visible in the first three forms of repetition, it is also present in the two basic variants Miller discusses. As has been mentioned, the snow in Joyce's 'The Dead' becomes more

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important through the repetition of the word 'snow' at various points throughout the text. To begin with this appears as a simple variant of the first form of repetition presented above. Yet as we shall see in the analysis of 'The Dead', these repetitions gradually become integrated in complex narrative and thematic patterns. In particular it is the central dinner scene in this short story which actualizes both the first and second forms of repetition.

Repetition in film Is the concept of repetition relevant for film? It obviously is, and yet the form and the functions repetition has in films are in part radically different from those we find in prose fiction. Let us first note three general points before briefly relating them to Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) and Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

1 Through its own production process film constitutes itself as a series of repetitions. That the projector 'stops' each frame in front of a light source at a rate of twenty-four frames per second represents a mechanically repetitive process which is uninterruptedly maintained through an apparently unending series of images—right up to the point when the film is over. The tendency of human vision to see movement creates the optical illusion that constitutes film. Forms of repetition are closely connected with film's uncompromising progression from beginning to end.

2 Repetition in film is closely related to filmic presentation of time, and especially to *sequence*. Succeeding frames can be practically identical, but they can also be very different, without the action becoming jerky and fragmented on that account. The reason is, as the Frenchman Méliès discovered just before the turn of the century, that the repetitive presentation of frames that the film projector provides makes the action in the film contemporaneous and coherent, even if it in fact is not. From this discovery, which represented an enormous step forward from the first film experiments of Edison and Lumière, it was only a short distance to *animation* or the animated cartoon film.

3 Repetition is an aspect of film that contributes to giving the medium a narrative dimension, since narrative progression, which we can relate to the development of time and action, combines known elements (i.e. elements that have already been introduced and are thus repeated) with the introduction of new ones. On this level, filmic repetition can operate in ways that may be compared with repetition in verbal fiction (even though the filmic means here too will be different from the linguistic ones). We shall be seeing examples of this in Part II, most clearly perhaps in the analysis of John Huston's adaptation of Joyce's 'The Dead'. This analysis places weight on the symbolic qualities associated with the snow in the short story. The film creates something of the same effect by linking images of the falling snow with key dialogue excerpts spoken by the characters (actors) in the film.

Repetition is a constituent element in all narrative film. Both *Citizen Kane* and *The Battleship Potemkin* have so many effective variants and combinations of filmic repetition that I must limit myself to a few selected points for comment. In Orson Welles's film, the most interesting repetitions are related to the main character, Kane. Their overall effect is reinforced by the structural device of presenting a life story as retrospectively 'ordered', but with chronological progression of action centred on crucial turning-points in Kane's life. Thus, relatively early in the film, an image shows Thatcher with his parents discussing Kane's future; in the centre background of the *same image* we can see Kane as a boy playing outside the house. Welles's combined use of framing, deep-focus photography, and low-key lighting to achieve this effect is repeated at a later point in the film. Here the viewer sees and hears Leland and Bernstein discussing Kane's integrity, and how reliable he is in relation to the projects they are themselves involved in. In the background between the two we can see—less clearly than the first time, but nevertheless clearly enough—the outline of Kane as an adult reflected on the window.

An obvious effect of this device is to supplement diegetic sound: the outline of Kane visualizes and illustrates what the dialogue is about. The background outlines of Kane as a boy and as an adult serve to integrate sound and image, thus reinforcing Kane's position as the film's main character. This effect is not only structural but also thematic: is Kane perhaps more vulnerable and less
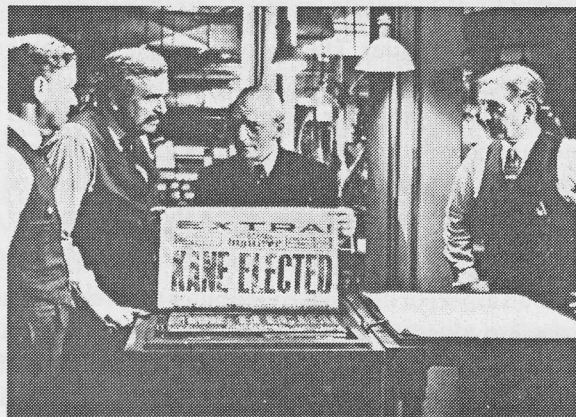
In Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, filmic techniques such as deep focus and low-key lighting are combined with elaborate forms of repetition and flashback (analepsis). The film starts with the dying Kane uttering the word 'Rosebud'. This name focuses the viewer's attention on Thompson's sustained attempt to reconstruct Kane's life in order to study his character traits.
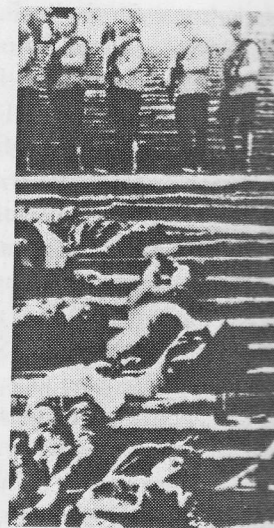
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dangerous than he appears to b[...] related to other aspects of the fil[...] Welles uses technical variants o[...] effect. Not only are the frami[...]

similar, with spaces between the characters to make room for the outline of Kane, but so is the use of camera angle and depth of field. Structurally as well as thematically, Welles's innovative use of the wide-angle, deep-focus lens is strikingly effective.

In Eisenstein's films as well, repetition is closely connected with other filmic means (and is therefore difficult to discuss in isolation). I shall briefly comment on the use of repetition in what Eisenstein himself called 'Act 4' of *The Battleship Potemkin*, the Odessa steps sequence. This deservedly famous sequence is the classic example of Eisenstein's montage technique. Generally speaking, montage describes how a film is assembled through editing. If montage refers to an approach to editing developed by Eisenstein and other Soviet film-makers of the 1920s, 'it emphasizes dynamic, often discontinuous, relationships beween shots and the juxtaposition of images to create ideas not present in either shot by itself' (Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 480). One constituent element of this particular montage sequence is that Eisenstein systematically integrates repetitive shots in other structural elements such as rhythm, contrast (mainly established through cross-cutting), and plot progression. For example, shot 1010 is an extreme close-up of a tsarist officer swinging a sabre across his shoulder. This shot is directly followed by shot 1011, which shows a woman with blood spurting from her right eye. As David Mayer points out, this image is logical: 'the woman has been slashed across the face with the sabre. The violent act, though unshown, is as real as if it were seen' (Mayer 1972: 11).

A different variant of montage is observable a few shots further on. In retaliation for the massacre on the Odessa steps, the battleship *Potemkin* bombards the tsar's military headquarters. Into the shots of this bombardment Eisenstein inserts three separate shots (on screen for just over two and a half seconds) of three marble statues: a sleeping lion, an awakening lion, and a standing lion. As Mayer notes, the image is striking but illogical. Together the shots of the lions 'form a stirring visual metaphor, the awakening anger of the Russian people' (Mayer 1972: 11). Yet although Eisenstein composes the shots of statues of lions so that they seem to come remarkably alive, this does not in itself reduce the effective contrast between this image and the repetitive shots of the people on the Odessa steps. Indeed one thematic effect of the image of the statues of lions is to invite the viewer to connect lions (as a classic image of human strength) with the strength of the revolutionaries in revolt. Following the low-angle shot (shot 1024) of the standing lion towering against the city there is a cut to the entrance gate, and as the panning camera dwells on all the dead bodies lying strewn over the steps the viewer is invited to compare them with the lion as a symbol of human strength. This kind of linking is logical and yet illogical— lifeless like the statues of lions, the bodies are those of human beings: victims of authoritarian violence. It is precisely this combination of different forms of montage which makes this sequence so exceptionally effective as film.

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If finally we look at the relationship between the five 'acts' in *Potemkin*, we note that here too Eisenstein combines repetition with plot progression in a manner that creates suspense. In an essay written in 1939 as an introduction to the film's original screenplay, Eisenstein considers repetition as a central filmic device: 'The action in each part [of the film] is different, but the whole action is permeated and cemented, as it were, by the method of double repetition' (Eisenstein 1988: 9). What Eisenstein understands by 'double repetition' is made clear by his own example:

In 'Drama on the Quarter-Deck' a handful of mutinous sailors—part of the battle-ship's crew—cry 'Brothers!' to the firing squad. The rifles are lowered. The whole of the crew joins the rebels.

In 'Meeting the Squadron' the mutinous ship—part of the navy—throws the cry 'Brothers!' to the crews of the admiralty squadron. And the guns trained on the *Potemkin* are lowered. The whole of the fleet is at one with the *Potemkin*. (Eisenstein 1988: 9)

An image of revolutionary strength, the *Potemkin* supplements and reinforces the function that the statues of lions have in the Odessa steps sequence. And yet the *Potemkin* is something much greater than the lions. The ship has a significant structural and thematic function throughout, and may perhaps be considered the film's main character. The ship does not only symbolize strength but strength created by man—a collective strength which in the film's ideology is related to both progressive and reactionary forces, with the 'good' forces as the stronger. (Here Eisenstein deliberately breaks with the historical origin of the film: the mutiny on the *Potemkin* during the failed revolution of 1905 was unsuccessful.)

If structures of repetition in *The Battleship Potemkin* are thematically formative at the level of detail, this point can also be made about the film as a whole. In film as in fictional prose, an aesthetic element becomes as a rule more important if it is repeated. While repetition may indicate stability and raise fundamental questions of identity, repetition in narrative discourse is closely related to those factors that make this discourse dynamic, i.e. those creating suspense and advancing the plot. A key word here is the *characters* in verbal fiction and film, for it is usually the characters who initiate or destabilize a fictional event. Events, characters, and characterization are the topics of the next chapter.

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Events, Characters, and Characterization

In fictional literature as in film, characters are characterized in many different and complementary ways. The characters are involved in the plot, and the actions they perform constitute a series of *events*. The first part of this chapter comments on such fictive events, which are then linked to the terms *character* and *characterization*. My main example is Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Relating these concepts to that of film adaptation, the last part of the chapter briefly discusses Gabriel Axel's adaptation of a short story by Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen), 'Babette's Feast'.

Events

In theory fictional events take place at the story level in a narrative text. The story is an abstraction—a chronologically ordered summary constructed from the discourse. An event is also abstracted from the text, and the same applies to the fictional characters. The difference between story and discourse usually becomes greater the longer and the more complicated the text is. Conversely, the difference is relatively small in short and simple stories. In the 'minimal story' which Prince presents, the narrative text is so short that story and discourse practically coincide: 'John was happy, then he saw Peter, then, as a result, he was unhappy.'

Although narrative theory has spent a great deal of time discussing how useful the concepts of story and event are, they are now as a rule considered to be absolutely necessary. One important aspect of the story is that it marks the text *as narrative*. For the story refers to the development of action, and it furthermore gives this development or change a temporal dimension. Time is a key word here; events are generally closely linked to narrative time. An event is an integral part of the action: it involves a change or a transition from one situation to another (cf. Prince's example), and this transition is usually caused or experienced by one or more characters. An event need not necessarily take the form of an external, dramatic action. To insist on any absolute distinction between state (as something static) and action (as part of a process) is difficult, for a process is usually composed of many complementary states and moments. As Mieke Bal has noted, two aspects of time are

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Let us briefly illustrate thes
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centuries of our era:

709.	Hard winter. Duke
710.	Hard year and defi
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712.	Flood everywhere
1054.	
1055.	
1056.	The Emperor Her
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Hayden White none the less
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relevant here: 'The events themselves happen during a certain period of time and they occur in a certain order' (Bal 1997: 208). To stress the temporal dimension of fictional events is not, however, to suggest that they are unrelated to space. On the contrary, fictional events can only happen in space—in the universe (be it Thomas Hardy's Wessex or William Faulkner's Yoknapataw-pha) constructed by the author through his or her use of language. Perhaps it is the energy associated with events which, combined with other factors, acti-vates the dimensions of both time and space. Henri Lefebvre finds that 'the relationships between force (energy), time and space are problematical. For example, one can neither conceive of a beginning (an origin) nor yet do without such an idea' (Lefebvre 1991: 22). Events, then, are related to both time and space; they are also, as Lefebvre implies, associated with various forms of repetition.

Let us briefly illustrate these theoretical comments with two extreme exam-ples. First we can look at an excerpt from a non-fictional narrative text, the *Annals of Saint Gall*, a list of events in Gaul during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries of our era:

709.   Hard winter. Duke Gottfried died.
710.   Hard year and deficient in crops.
711.
712.   Flood everywhere. . . .
1054.
1055.
1056.   The Emperor Henry died; and his son Henry succeeded to the rule.
1057.
1058.

(quoted in White 1990: 6–8)

Even though this text is very different from the short text 'With father in his suitcase', which I commented on in the introductory chapter, they are both on the verge of becoming narratives. The text above is unusually terse, it is a year-book in which many years stand entirely without comment. As Hayden White has pointed out, this list has 'no central subject, no well-marked beginning, middle, and end, no peripeteia, and no identifiable narrative voice' (White 1990: 6). What perhaps most strongly 'pulls' this text in the direction of a story is the seed of temporal representation that we can read out of the succeeding years and out of the comments alongside the year 1056. What is striking about this example in relation to the concept of event is how visible and strongly pre-sent certain types of event are, even in a text in which most other narrative characteristics are lacking.

Hayden White none the less concludes that this text presents a story because 'there is surely a plot—if by plot we mean a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole' (White 1990: 9). What makes this

text approach the form of an intelligible whole is the succession of dates. Note that, understood as a 'structure of relationships', plot is not identical with discourse. While discourse, put simply, is the text as it presents itself (with all its literary means, devices, and variations), plot refers to the way in which the events are combined, structured, and developed. As will be recalled from Chapter 1, plot has an important dynamic aspect. Paul Ricoeur finds that plot 'governs a succession of events in any story . . . [which] is *made out of* events to the extent that plot *makes* events *into* a story. The plot, therefore, places us at the crossing point of temporality and narrativity . . .' (Ricoeur 1981: 167; original emphasis). Such an understanding of plot implies a critical interest in, and focus on, the dynamics of narrative; this kind of critical interest informs, I hope, the analyses presented in Part II of this book. Moreover, defining plot in this way also indicates an interest in reading and in the relationship of reading and plotting—'that which makes a plot "move forward", and makes us read forward, seeking in the unfolding of the narrative a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress toward meaning' (Brooks 1984: p. xiii). As Frank Kermode has observed in *The Sense of an Ending*, all plots thus have something in common with prophecy, 'for they must appear to educe from the prime matter of the situation the forms of a future' (Kermode 1981: 83). The texts subjected to analysis in Part II provide rich illustrations of these characteristics of plot.

After having commented on the dramatic, external events in the *Annals of Saint Gall*, I shall make a long leap forward to a fictional text characterized by a striking *absence* of such events. This is how Alain Robbe-Grillet's 'The Beach' opens: 'Three children are walking along a beach. They move forward, side by side, holding hands. They are roughly the same height, and probably the same age too: about twelve. The one in the middle, though, is a little smaller than the other two' (p. 13). As the beginning of a short story (or a novel) there is nothing special about this example; what is exceptional is that *the whole text* is descriptively observant in this particular way—through a third-person narrator's recording, camera-like perspective. Suspense in this short story comes partly from expectations on the part of the reader (from reading other short stories) that something (dramatic) is soon going to happen. The fact that very little happens beyond the opening paragraph does not mean that this short story is devoid of events, but rather that the text limits itself to giving supplementary observations of the one event that the first sentence presents.

Functions of events   According to how it is presented in the discourse, an event can have different functions. These functions often become more complex when several events are combined with one another. By function I mean those properties of an event that give it one or more specific purposes, particularly in relation to the text's content aspect. Seen thus, functions of events are closely related to the characters in the text, for they usually set the action in

motion (are action-initiating) experiences.

In a pioneer work on narra 1928, Vladimir Propp links the he abstracts from almost 200 a function is 'an act of a cha significance for the course of t remain constant even if the examples that Propp provides:

1 A tsar gives an eagle to a kingdom.
2 An old man gives Súcenko kingdom.
3 A sorcerer gives Iván a little

The only constant element in th something he or she has receiv the participants in this event n teristics may vary from tale to important to study the events them and how they have been p

Such strong emphasis on ev theory, although the concepts o to be more important than was t self able to limit the number of nected with the fact that it is foll events are relatively similar. In l functions will be much greater, how many functions a given throughout the same text. A do of *Don Quixote* is to reveal the he bined with others, and in the n and comment on the pattern-e function we can call 'illustration the parody of the chivalric rom this epic sub-genre and the folk-

Kernels and catalysts   One fact tant is what consequences it has the plot. Often the presentatio important the event is—throug tition, or in other ways. In an i 1966, Roland Barthes distinguish is a 'cardinal function' which pro

motion (are action-initiating) on the basis of specific aims, wishes, desires, or experiences.

In a pioneer work on narrative theory originally published in Russian in 1928, Vladimir Propp links the concept of function to 'constant elements' that he abstracts from almost 200 Russian folk-tales. For Propp, the meaning of a function is 'an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action' (Propp 1968: 21). Functions can thus remain constant even if the performer's identity changes. Consider these examples that Propp provides:

1 A tsar gives an eagle to a hero. The eagle carries the hero to another kingdom.
2 An old man gives Súcenko a horse. The horse carries Súcenko to another kingdom.
3 A sorcerer gives Ivan a little boat. The boat takes Ivan to another kingdom.

The only constant element in these three events is that a person, with the aid of something he or she has received, is led to another kingdom. The identity of the participants in this event may change, and both their names and charac- teristics may vary from tale to tale. Therefore Propp insists that it is more important to study the events (i.e. *what* has been done) than who performs them and how they have been performed.

Such strong emphasis on events is not to be found in modern narrative theory, although the concepts of both event and character are now considered to be more important than was the case some years ago. That Propp finds him- self able to limit the number of functions to thirty-one (1968: 26–63), is con- nected with the fact that it is folk-tales he is studying, since here the patterns of events are relatively similar. In longer and more complex texts the number of functions will be much greater, and it will also be more difficult to determine how many functions a given event has. Event functions may also change throughout the same text. A dominant function of the events in the first part of *Don Quixote* is to reveal the hero's madness. Gradually this function is com- bined with others, and in the novel's second part many of the events qualify and comment on the pattern-establishing events in the first part. That the function we can call 'illustration of the hero's madness' is closely connected to the parody of the chivalric romances establishes a point of contact between this epic sub-genre and the folk-tale.

Kernels and catalysts One factor determining what makes an event impor- tant is what consequences it has for the characters and for the development of the plot. Often the presentation of an event will signal to the reader how important the event is—through the narrator's comments, by means of repe- tition, or in other ways. In an influential structuralist essay first published in 1966, Roland Barthes distinguishes between two main types of event. A *kernel* is a 'cardinal function' which promotes the action by giving the character one

or more alternatives to choose between; it can also reveal the results of such a choice. Barthes gives an illustrative, non-literary example: if the telephone rings, one can either answer it or let it ring. A *catalyst* accompanies and complements the kernel, but the action to which it refers does not 'open (or continue, or close) an alternative that is of direct consequence for the subsequent development of the story' (Barthes 1982b: 265). Before I answer the phone, I perhaps turn on the light, unlock the door, or wonder who is ringing.

Both kernels and catalysts may be more or less complex. In the first part of *Don Quixote* the attack on the windmills is a kernel event. Although we have our suspicions about the likely outcome, at this early stage we cannot be sure how Don Quixote will *react* to the outcome, and what new events his reaction will lead to. As a kernel the attack on the windmills is accompanied by various catalysts, such as Don Quixote's urging Rocinante into the fray and asking Dulcinea for help in the battle. Note that the way in which we understand a kernel event here means that it becomes more uncertain whether Don Quixote's subsequent attacks are kernels. For gradually we believe ourselves able to recognize in advance both the hero's pattern of action and pattern of reaction, something which is intimately connected with the parody of chivalric romances. Yet note too that in the novel's second part the concept of kernel is re-actualized, since to a higher degree the world around Don Quixote meets him on his own terms: the world around him acts as if it were mad, while the hero himself gradually becomes less mad.

The concept of character

The performing characters that narrative texts present are *fictional*. In literature they are part of a linguistically constructed fiction; in film they are indeed visualized for us, but they are nevertheless part of a complex film form with aesthetic devices and characteristics of its own. Both in literature and film the drawing of characters is based more on conventions than on unambiguous 'historical' references to 'real' people. This does not mean that fictional characters cannot be related to historical persons or to experiences from the reader's own life. Such contact is often crucial to what response and interest are aroused in the reader. Yet we do not expect the same of the fictional characters the author constructs as we do of historical people we know. There are a number of reasons for this, including literature's need to dramatize, concentrate, and intensify plot presentation. Much of the same applies to our expectations of characters in film, though it needs to be added that the viewer's expectations are influenced by film genre (as are the reader's by literary genre). Realistic Hollywood cinema, for example, asks us suspend our disbelief and to think of the film's plot as if it were real. This kind of request is made even though, as Richard Maltby points out in his reading of Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1943),

a cinematic narrative is temporally composed of a set of ellipses; it is a distillation of a series of events. . . . The coherent narrative, however, attempts to disguise the elliptical nature of its temporal construction by subordinating both the actual time of a depicted event and the real time experienced by the spectator in the cinema to the artificial, perceived time presented by the narrative. (Maltby 1998: 285).

Narrative theory has been relatively little concerned with the concept of character. This kind of relative toning down is nothing radically new. In the *Poetics* Aristotle places action above character: 'because tragedy is mimesis not of persons but of action and life; and happiness and unhappiness consist in action, and the goal is a certain kind of action, not a qualitative state: it is in virtue of character that people have certain qualities, but through their actions that they are happy or the reverse' (Aristotle 1995: 51, 1450a). For Aristotle, characters are primarily important as performers of actions and are subordinate to the action itself. His concept of *ethos* is more closely related to drama than to prose fiction. Moreover, *ethos* does not correspond directly to our 'character' as it refers to the (conventionally determined) qualities of a person that express an idea or a direction of intent. In modern narrative theory too, there has been a tendency to grant a lower priority to the concept of character. Inspired by Propp, A. J. Greimas, a major representative of French structuralism, thus links his central concept of *actant* (i.e. a fundamental role or a fundamental function) not only to characters but also to things (e.g. a magic ring) or to abstract quantities (e.g. fate) (see Greimas 1966).

Yet is it right to make characters subordinate to those fictional events which precisely *they* have initiated and constituted? This is a crucial point in discussions of characters in relation to other textual elements. The problem is already apparent in Aristotle, for although he ranks the action above the characters, several of the key terms in his *Poetics* (such as reversal and recognition, Aristotle 1995: 67, 1452b) are closely related to the concept of character. The problem is also observable in the work of such an influential theorist as Roland Barthes. While in his 1966 essay Barthes sees action as more important than the characters, in *S/Z* (1970) he gives the category of character its own category or 'code'—the 'semic' code he presents in a detailed analysis of Honoré de Balzac's short story 'Sarrasine' (1830).

Barthes's *S/Z* also makes clear the *narrative dimension* of the concept of character. This dimension manifests itself in several ways. An obvious example is the first-person narrator. Here the narrative presentation is given by a person who is also an actor in the plot (as the main character or as a minor character). Yet even if to a certain extent they coincide, the concepts of 'character' and 'narrator' refer to two different levels in the narrative text: the concept of character to the level of story, that of narrator to the level of discourse and narration. This difference helps to explain why 'character' has been a controversial concept in narrative theory: as is the case with 'history' and 'event', the concept of character is an *abstraction* based on various character

indicators in the discourse. In one sense this kind of abstraction is integral to the process of reading narrative fiction, especially fiction belonging to, or associated with, the strong tradition of realistic fiction in literature. As Hillis Miller notes in *Ariadne's Thread*, 'one of the powerful attractions of reading novels is the way the reading of a novel produces the powerful illusion of an even more intimate access to the mind and heart of another person than the reader can ever have in real life' (Miller 1992: 31). 'A character', continues Miller, 'is a carved design or sign . . . The word *character*, like the word *lineaments* and the word *person* (from the Latin word for mask) involves the presumption that external signs correspond to and reveal an otherwise hidden inner nature.' Yet as Miller also observes, the effect of encountering and knowing a character in a work of narrative fiction is an illusion, and while the plots of narrative fiction irresistibly invite us to construct mental images of its characters, narrative discourse can also (as we shall see in Part II) problematize 'belief in unitary selfhood' (Miller 1992: 31).

Miller's *Ariadne's Thread* is a forceful demonstration of the intricate ways in which our conception of character shapes, and is shaped by, our understanding of narrative. Another significant contribution to our understanding of fictional characters is James Phelan's *Reading People, Reading Plots*. Phelan's approach to the concept of character is different from Miller's. He begins by problematizing David Lodge's assertion, put forward in *Language of Fiction* (1966), that a character is an abstraction of verbal symbols. Lodge is not alone in holding such a view of the fictional character; on the contrary, his position is representative of a good deal of narrative theory. Now Phelan does not believe that Lodge's assertion is wrong, but that it is incomplete. As it is presented through verbal language, the concept of character has an artificial component that Phelan calls the *synthetic*—'part of knowing a character is knowing that he/she/(it?) is a construct' (Phelan 1989: 2). In addition he introduces two more components, the 'mimetic' and the 'thematic'. The *mimetic* component is linked by Phelan to the identifying activity we perform as readers when we switch from registering ('synthetic') characters to perceiving them as acting and thinking. The mimetic component, then, describes the activity we perform (as an integral part of the reading process) as we 'identify the concept implied in the phrase "this person"' (Phelan 1989: 2). The *thematic* component, a content component that builds further on this kind of identifying activity, is related to the reader's literary competence. Such competence is based on the ability we have to discuss questions such as: what is important and interesting about this character? To what extent is she or he representative, and what is the nature of the relationship between representativeness and individuality? Is the character credible and how does she or he develop/change throughout the text? Phelan finds that whereas the mimetic and thematic components may be more or less developed, 'the synthetic component . . . may be more or less foregrounded' (Phelan 1989: 3).

Consider this extract from Sun':

So the jailer heard the noise a window, stark naked, her belly When Dilsey was sick in her apron swelling out . . . (pp. 29

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Consider this extract from William Faulkner's short story 'That Evening Sun':

So the jailer heard the noise and ran up there and found Nancy hanging from the window, stark naked, her belly already swelling out a little, like a little balloon. When Dilsey was sick in her cabin and Nancy was cooking for us, we could see her apron swelling out . . . (pp. 291–2)

Relating the narration to Quentin's perspective as a somewhat detached first-person narrator, Nancy's swelling belly also occasions Quentin's transition back into the story's main plot. Pinpointing the child's characteristic fascination with visual details, this narrative variation accords nicely with Quentin's associative thought. Moreover, although the variation is essentially a narrative one, it serves to shape Quentin as a character, thus preparing the reader for greater specification and individualization of his role as a first-person narrator than ever afforded, for example, the anonymous narrator of Faulkner's short story 'A Rose for Emily': 'So father didn't look at me. I was the oldest. I was nine and Caddy was seven and Jason was five' (p. 294).

Enhancing Quentin's importance as a character in 'That Evening Sun', this kind of narrative identification strengthens what Phelan calls the mimetic component: it enables us to construct, from the narrative presentation in verbal fiction, a mental image of Quentin as a fictional character. As the borderline between Quentin's narrative functions and his significance as a character is blurred, his existential motivation to narrate becomes more noticeable. There is an odd affinity in this story between Quentin's urge to narrate and Nancy's insistence on telling the Compson children a story: 'She talked like her eyes looked, like her eyes watching us and her voice talking to us did not belong to her. Like she was living somewhere else, waiting somewhere else' (p. 302). Here as in Absalom, Absalom! (1936), an oral narrative situation is evoked (though not sustained)—thus signalling 'the significance of oral modes of narrative communication for sophisticated, written fictions' (Lothe 1997: 79).

Questions associated with Phelan's mimetic and thematic character components may be integrated in a narrative analysis (without the analysis thereby becoming any less a narrative analysis). If the analysis of character tends to become thematic only, it will have difficulty in mapping and discussing the various specifying and differentiating features (as they are shaped by the text) that characterize and distinguish the characters from one another. Character and plot are mutually dependent on each other. This becomes particularly clear if (as in the analyses in Part II) we relate the concept of character to progression. Progression refers to 'narrative as a dynamic event, one that must move, in both its telling and its reception, through time' (Phelan 1989: 15). A concept associated with plot, progression is related to the question of character development. What constitutes character are principles such as repetition,

likeness, contrast, and (logical) implication. Between them these and other devices of verbal discourse form the character's essential qualities and identity—'the character and the discourse are each other's accomplices' (Barthes 1974: 178). The question of character development can be related to E. M. Forster's concept of a 'round' character: a character who develops and changes, who may surprise us, and whose actions we cannot predict. Forster contrasts such a round character with a 'flat' one, i.e. a character who does not develop, and who therefore appears more as a type (Forster 1971: 75). Even if Forster's dichotomy oversimplifies things, it may still be useful as a starting-point for character analysis.

A particularly interesting example of a character who starts 'flat' and later becomes 'round' is Don Quixote. For in Cervantes's novel the main character gradually becomes more complex in spite of the repetitive pattern of action in the first part. Critics have related this development of the hero to the novel's *Entstehung*, i.e. how it was conceived and written down over many years. It seems clear that Cervantes at first wanted to write a much shorter text, an 'exemplary short story' about the travels of a fool who had lost his wits through reading too much chivalric literature, and who returns home after some dramatic experiences and burns the books. Gradually fundamental changes were to come about: the introduction of the Sancho figure and his incipient proverbial wisdom after the fifth chapter, the linking of the experiences in the first part with the dialogues between master and servant, the pushing of the central point over towards social and ideological problems, the knight's growing insight, his release from error, and finally his illness and death.

These changes so to speak 'pull' Don Quixote from being a 'flat' character to being a 'round' one. Don Quixote's function as a flat character is essentially linked to the parody of chivalric romances. For as the narrator strongly emphasizes, the hero's madness has a specific cause:

> You must know then, that this gentleman aforesaid, at times when he was idle, which was most part of the year, gave himself up to the reading of books of chivalry, with so much attachment and relish, that he almost forgot all the sports of the field, and even the management of his domestic affairs; and his curiosity and extravagant fondness herein arrived to that pitch, that he sold many acres of arable land to purchase books of knight-errantry . . . With this kind of language the poor gentleman lost his wits . . . (pp. 23–4)

As a 'madman' (p. 25) Don Quixote is a 'flat character' in the sense that he acts on the basis of an ideal world inspired by notions of chivalry, thus repeatedly colliding with the real world as it is constituted in Cervantes's fictional universe. The hero's madness serves to initiate action, and Cervantes stresses the difference between Don Quixote's imaginary world and the world as it really is (in the fiction). An example of such a marked difference is observable in the second chapter. After the narrator has stressed that Don Quixote's 'frenzy [was] prevailing above any reason whatever' (p. 29), he reports how Don

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Quixote, mounted on Rocinante and quoting from chivalric romances, 'began to travel through the ancient and noted field of Montiel' (p. 29). The narrator then comments: '(and true it is, that was the very field).' 'True it is' refers to the diegetic level of action, which forms a supporting centre in the novel's plot. Don Quixote's madness is so vividly realized and convincing because of the correspondence between the narrator's *assertion* that the hero is mad and the fact that the hero's actions seem to clearly *show* that he is (thus also indicating that the narrator is reliable). This madness is fundamental to establishing Don Quixote as a simple, 'flat' type: his madness introduces an element of mechanical repetition which enables us to imagine what his actions will or could be like (particularly after the pattern-setting confrontation with the windmills), and which contributes to making the figure comic. Yet although Don Quixote's madness is emphasized throughout the first part (by the narrator, by minor characters, and by the hero's own actions), the picture is at the same time gradually complicated. Don Quixote's speech about the golden age is such a modifying element—its surprisingly wise insights qualify and extend our picture of the hero, thus making him a 'rounder' character.

Characterization

In the extensive literature on Cervantes's masterpiece, discussions about the character of Don Quixote occupy a great deal of space. A. J. Close, for example, devotes roughly half of an introductory book (Close 1990: 53–108) on this novel to discuss the characters of Don Quixote and Sancho. His discussion illustrates an important point; although we can isolate the concept of character and discuss Don Quixote and Sancho in relative isolation from other textual elements, they are established as characters *through characterization*, i.e. through character indicators in the discourse. This means that the distinction between character (at the level of story) and characterization (at the textual level) is not absolute, something which the references to Don Quixote above also illustrate. Discussions of fictional characters become more convincing if they refer to, and are based on, characterization, for it is through such characterization that the characters are introduced, shaped, and developed.

We can distinguish between two kinds of character indicator in the text:

1   *Direct definition* means that a character is characterized in a direct, summarizing way—for instance by means of adjectives or abstract nouns. The persuasive power of such character definitions will vary, and it is as a rule greatest when the narrator who provides the definition appears as authoritative or omniscient. The perspective of literary history is interesting here: direct character definitions were more common in earlier (premodernist) fiction. This is how the narrator in the *Laxdæla Saga* (c.1250) introduces Gudrun Osvivsdottir:

Gudrun was their daughter's name, and she was the foremost of all women who grew up in Iceland, both in beauty and intelligence. She was so elegant and courteous that at that time the adornment that other women wore seemed merely childish in comparison with hers. She was more knowledgeable than other women and better at expressing herself in words; she was generous too. (p. 81; my translation)

We note the adjectives in this presentation and not least the use of the superlative ('the foremost'). Adjectives also have a characterizing function in *Don Quixote*: when the narrator presents the hero as mad, (p. 29), this is an example of direct definition. That Don Quixote himself (on the level of character in the same novel) defines himself as a knight is crucial to setting the plot in motion.

A special variant of direct definition is the *assigning of names* to characters. Of course, the names of characters *need not* have a characterizing function, but they *can* have (particularly in combination with item 2 below). Two well-known examples to be discussed in more detail in Part II are K. in Kafka's *The Trial* and Gabriel in Joyce's 'The Dead'. An interesting feature of both these examples is that the naming here complicates the characters' identities rather than determining them. This applies particularly to Kafka: both K. and Klamm (in *The Castle*) appear to be different both to different characters and at various stages of the plot. In pre-modernist literature the assigning of names often indicates more stable characteristic features. When a character in Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) is named M'Choakumchild this tells the reader something about his attitude to education. That the hero in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678–84) is called Christian is connected with the text's allegorical meaning, indicating 'that life as a Christian brings problems comparable to those experienced by Bunyan's pilgrim' (Hawthorn 1997: 139).

The persuasive power of direct definitions of this kind becomes as a rule greater if the definition is coupled with the other main type of characterization:

2   *Indirect presentation.* This form of characterization is the more important of the two main variants. It demonstrates, dramatizes, or exemplifies a given character feature rather than naming it explicitly. This other main type has several variants:

(a) *Action*: presentation either of a *single* action or of *repetitive* actions. An example of a single action is the double murder committed by Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. Now the reader will perhaps object that a double murder actually is *two* actions. Arguably, however, these two actions are so closely connected that we can see them as a dominant kernel event (framed by several catalysts).

Characterization through repetitive action is something of which *Don Quixote* provides many examples, most clearly through the hero's repeated attacks on what he believes to be enemies. Such rep-

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eitions of action will be more or less important according to textual position, thematic emphasis, what consequences they have, and so forth. In *Don Quixote* it is crucial, particularly in the first part, that the hero's pattern of action is mechanically repetitive, thus making the character comic by constantly confirming his madness. Not only does this have the cumulative effect of making the novel's first part into 'the book of madness', the comically repetitive events here also lay the foundation for the second part as 'the book of the cure' (Togeby 1957: 40). The comic aspect of Don Quixote's repetitive actions does not mean, though, that they are without any variation—there is a significant difference between attacking windmills (chapter 8) and trying to release galley slaves (chapter 22). This variation on a fundamentally mechanical action pattern also has a characterizing function: our understanding of the main character becomes qualified and refined, and the characterization of him is related to the transitions between different narrative levels (such as the hypodiegetic level with the speech about the golden age in chapter 20).

(b) *Speech.* What a character says or thinks—whether it be in dialogue, direct speech, or free indirect discourse—often has a characterizing function through both content and form. This becomes particularly clear when the character's speech is individualized and distinguished from the narrator's discourse. Again we can use *Don Quixote* as an illustration. While 'knight' is Don Quixote's own definition, his speech characterizes him throughout the novel. This applies both to what he says and to the way in which he says it (for example, all the phrases he adopts from chivalric romances and which thus enter into the parody of this genre). The characterizing function of Don Quixote's speech is further reinforced as it is contrasted with the narrator's discourse on the one hand and with Sancho's speech on the other. An example from chapter 23 (just after Don Quixote and Sancho have been bombarded with stones by the galley slaves they have set free):

Don Quixote, finding himself so ill treated, said to his squire:

'Sancho, I have always heard it said, that to do good to low fellows is to throw water into the sea. Had I believed what you said to me, I might have prevented this trouble; but it is done, I must have patience, and take warning from henceforward.'

'Your worship will as much take warning,' answered Sancho, 'as I am a Turk.' (p. 192)

(c) *External appearance and behaviour* are usually presented, and interpreted as the case may be, by the narrator or another character. The narrator's introductory presentation of Don Quixote provides an illustrative example: 'The age of our gentleman bordered upon fifty

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years. He was of a robust constitution, spare-bodied, of a meagre visage; a very early riser, and a keen sportsman' (p. 23).

(d) *Milieu.* External (physical/topographic) surroundings may variously contribute to the indirect presentation of a character. Take Raskolnikov's garret in *Crime and Punishment*. The fact that it is small and confined reinforces the main character's depressed and brooding mood. Raskolnikov's bed is not for sleeping and resting but rather functions as a rack of torture: 'He was lying on his back . . . seized with such a violent fit of shivering that his teeth chattered uncontrollably, and every limb shook' (p. 84).

A larger and more complex milieu can also influence characterization, whether it be Dostoevsky's St Petersburg, the Yorkshire moors of the Brontë sisters, or Dickens's London. In *Crime and Punishment* the city reinforces the confined and claustrophobic quality of the room Raskolnikov rents in the tenement. The city on the Neva—with Kamenny Bridge, Sadovaya Street, and the Haymarket—is strangely isolated from the surrounding Russia, while the milieu of the city is contrasted with Siberia in the epilogue.

Various elements of characterization are as a rule combined with one another in the discourse. The total picture we form of a character can be ascribed to many different signals in the text. Not working each on its own, these textual signals influence one another through the ways in which they are combined, and their characterizing effect is enhanced through narrative variation and repetition. Thus, elements of characterization such as those mentioned above are related to other constituent aspects of narrative literature. One such aspect is genre: that *Don Quixote* parodies the chivalric romance is important for the depiction of the main character. In a novel such as *Don Quixote*, characterization is subtly nuanced through a series of textual modulations in which numerous narrative means and devices are combined with one another, with aspects of plot, and with imagery and metaphorical patterns to produce a novel of extraordinary richness.

A crucial point in discussions of Don Quixote concerns the hero's madness—both what 'madness' means here, how 'mad' he is, and the relationship between his madness in the novel's first and second parts. Some critics have found that Don Quixote's pattern of behaviour is characterized by play-acting. His imaginative power is certainly very strong, and may possibly indicate a form of role awareness or role distance. A fundamental problem explored in *Don Quixote* concerns the incongruity between the fictional world of the chivalric romances (into which Don Quixote dreams himself) and Don Quixote's own world (as it is constructed in Cervantes's fiction). That this lack of compatibility results in actions that suggest Don Quixote is mad seems clear. Reasonably clear it is too that the novel's plot (and thus the form of mad-

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ness that initiates and complicates it) changes character in the course of the narrative, partly because the surrounding world to a greater degree meets the main character on his own terms and responds to him with various forms of counterplay. On the other hand, Don Quixote characteristically calls into question a contrastive pair such as mad/normal. The elements of play-acting in the main character's pattern of speech and action support such a qualifying process, which is shaped through a complicated narrative pattern. In Don Quixote, the narrative and thematic complexity of the novel as a genre is reflected in the main character's ever-increasing complexity. This kind of complexity is illuminated by M. M. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia:

Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel . . . is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. (Bakhtin 1982: 324; original emphasis)

The concept of heteroglossia is closely connected to Bakhtin's understanding of the novel as a *dialogic form*: a narrative in which different voices, forms of consciousness, and opinions are played out against each other without being united or ranked. For Bakhtin, both these concepts are *relational* since they define consciousness and identity in relation to other characters, values, and priorities (cf. Holquist 1990: 18–19). To read *Don Quixote* dialogically is to respond to its narrative complexity and thematic heterogeneity. This means, for example, becoming more critical of the narrator's categorical statements on the main character. For one dialogic feature of *Don Quixote* is that while the narrator to begin with shows great authority in his evaluation of Don Quixote, this authority is problematized (without the narrator's thereby becoming unreliable) through the hero's incongruous and gradually more complex patterns of speech and action. In all his madness Don Quixote becomes a sort of artist—perhaps even a symbol of the poet.

Events, characters, and characterization in film adaptation

Although all three key words for this chapter are relevant to film, the presentation of events and characters in film is radically different from that in literary fiction. In literary fiction events are shaped through a combination of narrative devices, plot and character components, and metaphorical patterns to which the reader is invited to respond as he or she works through the text. Film's surface character and unusual kinetic force cause filmic events to 'hit' the viewer in a completely different way; film events manifest themselves as definitive even as they are being visually presented to us—and then disappear. Similarly, in film as in fictional prose the concept of character is related to characterization, but the ways in which the characters are presented are

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...tion, spare-bodied, of a meagre
sportsman' (p. 23).

...phic) surroundings may variously
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...ment. The fact that it is small and
...racter's depressed and brooding
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...t was lying on his back . . . seized
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...tersburg, the Yorkshire moors of
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...astrophobic quality of the room
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strikingly different in the two media. When it comes to external features, for example, film can *show* them with sovereign conviction. Moreover, film can easily combine external features with characterizing patterns of speech and action—just think of characters such as Chaplin, a typical Western hero, or James Bond. On the other hand, a film cannot convey a character's thoughts, feelings, plans, and so forth in the way fictional literature can—partly because the film narrator's functions are so unlike those of the literary narrator. A systematic discussion of events, characters, and characterization in film is a large venture which cannot be attempted here. Instead I have chosen to link these concepts to a particular adaptation, while also relating them to other relevant concepts introduced above. First, however, I will make some more general comments on film adaptation; these comments will be supplemented in the discussions of four different adaptations in Part II.

To 'transfer' a work of art from one medium to another is in one sense impossible. We speak of 'filming a book' almost as if the characters in a novel could step out of the story and become actors in front of the camera, but this expression simplifies the complicated transformation involved. As Stuart McDougal puts it in *Made into Movies*: 'Every art form has distinctive properties resulting from its medium; a filmmaker must recognize the unique characteristics of each medium before transforming a story into a film' (McDougal 1985: 3). An adaptation makes great demands, even from the very starting-point, on those who perform in it. In addition to media-specific characteristics, other factors further complicate the transformation from one medium to another. One such factor is that since making a film is a technically complicated process, problems confronted during production can distract the film's creators from an aesthetic evaluation of the literary starting-point. This said, many directors (such as Welles, Huston, and Coppola) have created adaptations that demonstrate intimate knowledge of the literary text to which they respond as creative artists.

A young art form, in our century film has developed techniques, structural patterns, and a thematic range that have taken other media—literature, music, dance, the pictorial arts—hundreds of years to work out. For many people, film is the most vital and exciting of artistic media. It is interesting therefore that literature, both through drama and narrative fiction, has made and is still making significant contributions to the development of film. For example, Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1951) and *Ran* (1985) are both important films. Yet for many viewers *Ran* is the more engrossing because of the way in which it filmically responds to the plot and thematics of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1605), transforming Lear's three daughters into sons and transferring the plot's action from England to Japan in the seventeenth century.

Although *Ran* is only one of many examples of films inspired by drama, it is striking how many films (approximately one in three narrative fiction films) take as their starting-point a literary prose text, whether it be a short

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story or (more commonly) a novel. In 1926 Boris Eikhenbaum noted that 'the competition of cinema with literature is an undeniable fact of our present culture' (Eikhenbaum 1973: 126). This observation is even more valid today. But Eikhenbaum adds a point which is also still valid. Although, he acknowledges, film has its own methods, 'it needs material. It takes literature and translates it into filmic language'. It needs to be added, though, that since the interest and appeal of the 'material' of literature is in large measure ascribable to literary presentation, the narrative means and devices of a literary text may also influence the adaptation of it. As Eisenstein points out in a classic essay, narrative equivalents to the techniques of film composition are to be found in verbal fiction: 'Perhaps the secret lies in Dickens's (as well as cinema's) creation of an extraordinary plasticity. The observation in the novels is extraordinary—as is their optical quality' (Eisenstein 1992: 396). Adapting a literary text, even a director who believes that filmic techniques are *not* equivalent to literary ones will tend to search for forms of presentation which do justice to, and highlight the artistic quality of, the literary starting-point. We note that this characteristic of adaptation applies whether it be relatively direct (like John Huston's adaptation of Joyce's short story 'The Dead') or more indirect (like Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* in relation to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). One obvious yet important difference between adapting a short story and adapting a novel, however, is that with a short text as starting-point the adaptation can present the plot of the literary text in greater detail.

In an influential essay on adaptation, Dudley Andrew identifies three basic modes of relation between film and literary text. *Borrowing* means that the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text' (Andrew 1992: 422). Examples of this mode include numerous adaptations from Shakespeare and, in other art forms, adaptations from literature to music, opera, and painting. A key question here concerns artistic fertility, not the adaptation's 'fidelity' to the original text. *Intersecting* indicates a different attitude to adaptation: 'Here the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation' (Andrew 1992: 422). In one sense the concept of adaptation does not apply to intersecting, because what the viewer is presented with is rather 'a refraction of the original'. As examples of films in the intersecting mode, Andrew mentions Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964) and *Canterbury Tales* (1972). 'All such works fear or refuse to adapt. Instead they present the otherness and distinctiveness of the original text, initiating a dialectical interplay between the aesthetic forms of one period with the cinematic forms of our own period' (Andrew 1992: 423). The third mode concerns *fidelity and transformation*: 'Here it is assumed that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text' (Andrew 1992: 423).

Like André Bazin, who in *What is Cinema?* champions the intersecting mode, Andrew is sceptical about faithful transformations as they tend to 'become a scenario written in typical scenario form' (Andrew 1992: 423). One problem with this kind of tripartite distinction is that the points of transition between the three modes can be blurred, and one and the same adaptation can incorporate elements of more than one mode. Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, for example, could be seen as an example of borrowing as well as intersecting—it is an adaptation and yet in one sense it is not. Still, Andrew's survey of the range of adaptations is critically helpful, and his classification provides a possible starting-point for further discussion of the phenomenon as well as for analysis of individual films. Andrew rightly notes that we cannot dismiss adaptation since it is a fact of human practice. He follows Christian Metz and Keith Cohen in regarding narrative as the most solid link between verbal and visual languages. As Cohen puts it *Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange*, 'In both novel and cinema, groups of signs, be they literary or visual signs, are apprehended consecutively through time; and this consecutiveness gives rise to an unfolding structure, the diegetic whole that is never fully *present* in any one group yet always *implied* in each such group' (Cohen 1979: 92, original emphasis). As narrative codes function at the level of implication or connotation, they are 'potentially comparable in a novel and a film . . . The analysis of adaptation then must point to the achievement of equivalent narrative units in the absolutely different semiotic systems of film and language' (Andrew 1992: 426).

This observation can be related to a central point argued in Christian Metz's *Film Language*: 'Film tells us continuous stories; it "says" things that could also be conveyed in the language of words, yet it says them differently. There is a reason for the possibility as well as for the necessity of adaptations' (Metz 1974: 44). There certainly is, and yet we need to remember that the 'dynamics of exchange', as Cohen suggestively calls it, go both ways between fiction and film. There is no doubt that a film such as John Huston's *The Dead* has made many spectators aware of Joyce's *Dubliners*, thus (sometimes if not always) turning a viewer into a reader.

Film-makers' relationships to the literary texts they adapt vary very considerably. For example, while Francis Ford Coppola nowhere in *Apocalypse Now* (1979) records his indebtedness to *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad's novella was not credited until the release of Eleanor Coppola's documentary *Hearts of Darkness* thirteen years later), Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993) emphasizes the connection between the film and the nine short stories and one prose poem by Raymond Carver on which it is based. Carver's name features in the credits for the film, an edition of the stories and the poem has been published under the same title as the film and with an introduction by Altman, and the film's screenplay has been published with an introduction by Carver's widow, the writer Tess Gallagher. Although, presumably, this kind of explicit linking of

film and literature has made many viewers interested in Carver's fiction, it does not follow that Carver is more important for Altman than, say, Conrad is for Coppola. If, employing Andrew's terminology, we ask whether *Short Cuts* is borrowing or intersecting, a tentative response could be that, while aspiring towards intersection, the film actually contains elements of both modes. In his introduction to the book *Short Cuts*, compiled after the film was made, Altman writes that he looks 'at all of Carver's work as just one story, for his stories are all occurrences, all about things that just happen to people and cause their lives to take a turn' (Carver 1995:7). Thus, the film is based not just on Carver's short fiction but also on Altman's interpretation of Carver; and this interpretation, it could be argued, perhaps underestimates the ways in which Carver's short stories differ from one another structurally and thematically. To make this point, however, is not to suggest that the stories actually chosen by Altman do not provide a good basis for his innovative film. Although the film has been criticized for its tendency to melodrama in some sequences, it is a continually fascinating exploration of a variety of characters who lead ordinary lives and yet seem to be living on the edge, cut off from their social environments and struggling to communicate their emotions. In terms of film form, *Short Cuts* is notable for its extensive cross-cutting between one scene and another, thus activating, repeating, and modulating various facets of the Carver texts used as a vehicle for filmic presentation.

One interesting feature of Altman's *Short Cuts* is the manner in which Altman, ambitiously attempting to make nine separate short stories into one film, adapts not only third-person narratives but also stories in which Carver uses a first-person narrator. The most important of these is 'So Much Water So Close to Home'. If the thematic richness of this key text is generated in large part by the metaphor of water, it also depends on the female narrator's diverse functions. Now there is, as Brian McFarlane observes in *From Novel to Film*, 'only a precarious analogy between the attempts at first-person narration offered by films and the novel's first-person narration' (McFarlane 1996: 15). He finds that such attempts will usually be of two kinds, 'subjective cinema' and 'voice-over'. What Altman does is to explore the possibilities of subjective cinema, especially through cross-cutting and varied uses of camera angle. For example, the shots of the unidentified dead girl lying in the water while the men (including Stuart, the narrator's husband) are fishing activate film's voyeuristic aspect, accentuated by cross-cutting between the naked body and the fishing men. While in Carver's short story the reader's sympathy resides with the first-person narrator, in Altman's film one effect of the subjective camera is to dissociate the viewer's perspective from that of the fishing men, relocating it (unpleasantly but not morbidly) in the image of the dead body. This is a filmic achievement in its own right; it is also a filmic recreation of the short story's movement (on the level of plot as well as metaphor) towards identification of the narrator and the dead woman.

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Before turning to Axel's *Babette's Feast* I shall briefly comment on the beginning of Andrzej Wajda's *The Shadow-Line* (1976), a film illustrative of some significant problems of adaptation not observable in Altman's *Short Cuts*. Wajda's film is an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novella *The Shadow-Line* (1916). That the narrative of this text is first-person is consistent with the protagonist's 'compulsion to narrate' (Stanzel 1986: 93, cf. Lothe 1996a: 221). The narrative and thematic characteristics of the novella's beginning are closely associated with the kind of first-person narrative which Conrad employs. In Wajda's film, the narrator's identity is less clear, and his ontological status is consequently more uncertain. Wajda does, it is true, begin his film by focusing on the protagonist, whose first words are: 'This is not a marriage story. My action, such as it was, had more the quality of divorce, of desertion. For no good reason, I abandoned my ship. It was in an Eastern port, in Singapore.' Actually, the narrator does not (as we watch him on the screen) speak these words aloud, but comments—retrospectively, the viewer infers—on his own situation after having given up his berth. These voice-over comments, which correspond quite well with the relevant textual segment early in the novella, constitute only a small part of the film narration, however. If Conrad the author writes *The Shadow-Line* by making his first-person narrator speak, Wajda's film narrator is a heterogeneous, mechanical, and highly flexible instrument, constituted by a variety of techniques and performing diverse functions. The film narrator therefore needs to be distinguished from the voice-over Wajda uses at the beginning of the adaptation. Though important, such a technique is merely one component in a far more complex narrative communication.

Wajda's adaptation illustrates one of the most distinctive qualities of film: 'that every object that is reproduced appears simultaneously in two entirely different frames of reference, namely the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, and that as one identical object it fulfils two different functions in the two contexts' (Arnheim 1957: 59). The viewer thus encounters two major frames of reference in film, 'the space and time of a *screen* as well as (a sample of) the space and time of a *story world*' (Branigan 1992: 33, original emphasis). In Wajda's *The Shadow-Line*, the protagonist's opening words (the voice-over commentary quoted above) intitiate the space and time of the story world (i.e. the film's plot), whereas the filmic segments preceding them foreground the frame of reference associated with the screen. It does not follow that there is no connection between these two frames of reference. 'Light and sound create two fundamental systems of space, time, and causal interaction: on screen and within a story world. One of the tasks of narrative is to reconcile these systems' (Branigan 1992: 34). Watching the phenomenal appearances on the screen, the viewer attempts to relate them to possible functions in the story world. This, as Branigan shows, is a complicated process during which major changes can occur; particularly at the beginning of a film, it is often difficult to identify and

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interpret the key functions of the story world. The beginning of Wajda's adaptation further complicates this process as the opening shots of the film do not refer to the story world directly but instead present a succession of pictorial frames which photographically reproduce scenes of historical reality: a picture of a sailing ship, another picture of officers and crew on the deck of such a ship, and further shots showing pictures of sailing ships at rest in what appears to be a major nineteenth-century port. Thus while reading that this film by Andrzej Wajda is 'from the novel *The Shadow-Line* by Joseph Conrad', the viewer also watches the photographs over which this information is projected, wondering about their significance and relevance for the story that unfolds. One essential function of the photographs, as it turns out, is to support the film's transition from fictional narrative to autobiography, identifying the first-person narrator as Conrad as he is looking at family photographs sent him from Poland. In no way impairing the film's quality, this kind of generic transition furthers a filmic exploration of the autobiographical elements in Conrad's novella (subtitled *A Confession*).

Gabriel Axel's *Babette's Feast*

One critical asset of Andrew's distinction between three modes of relation between film and literary text is its implicit demonstration that the most 'faithful' adaptation is not necessarily the 'best'. Adaptation is first and foremost *film*; it is not a 'second-hand version' of a literary text. This point also applies to those adaptations that, like *Babette's Feast*, seem unusually accurate in relation to their literary starting-point. A possible story version of this text, taken from the collection *Anecdotes of Destiny* (1958), looks thus:

In a fishing hamlet in northern Norway lives a Dean with his two daughters Martine and Philippa. While the Dean is still living, his young and beautiful daughters are proposed to by two people 'from the great world outside Berlevaag' (p. 25). Lieutenant Loewenhielm and the singer Papin. Nevertheless they continue to live in the fishing hamlet, where after the death of their father they go on helping the poor and the infirm. Sixteen years later Babette Hersant comes to visit the sisters from Paris. Fourteen years again after this, in 1885, Babette is still living with them as a housekeeper and cook. That year Babette wins a large sum in a French lottery, but instead of going back to Paris she spends the money on arranging a feast to commemorate the priest's hundredth birthday on 15 December. Among the guests is Loewenhielm, now a general.

The fact that this story version is also valid for Axel's adaptation is a first indication that the film version's plot remains close to that of Blixen's text. The adaptation is precise not only in its presentation of the textual events but also in the filmic characterization of the text's main characters. Since the literary text in this case is a short story and not a novel, Axel can more easily transfer the plot's constituent elements to film. In the film as in the short story,