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❧ Gérard Genette

FICTION & DICTION

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ITHACA AND LONDON

ing replaced by the "I-Origo" of the characters. Nelson Goodman characterizes this same function, in logical terms, as consisting of monadic or "unbreakable one-place predicates":[27] a description of Pickwick is nothing but a description-of-Pickwick, indivisible in the sense that it relates to nothing outside itself.[28] If "Napoleon" designates an actual member of the human race, "Sherlock Holmes" and "Gilberte Swann" designate no one outside Doyle's text or Proust's; these are designations that turn back on themselves and do not leave their own sphere. The text of fiction does not *lead* to any extratextual reality; everything it borrows (and it is constantly borrowing) from reality ("Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street," "Gilberte Swann had dark eyes," and so on) is transformed into an element of fiction, like Napoleon in *War and Peace* or Rouen in *Madame Bovary.* The fictional text is thus intransitive in its own way, not because its utterances are perceived as intangible (they may be, but these are cases of collusion between fiction and diction), but because the beings to which they apply have no extratextual existence, and the beings refer us back to the utterances in a movement of infinite circularity. In both cases, owing to thematic absence or rhematic opacity, this intransitivity constitutes the text as an autonomous object and its relation to the reader as an aesthetic

[27] Nelson Goodman, "Fictions," in *The Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), sec. 1, chap. 5, quotations from 21–26.

[28] This obviously applies to Dickens's description of Pickwick, which serves in fact to *constitute* Pickwick by pretending to "describe" him. Later descriptions (or depictions) produced by commentators or illustrators are for their part transitive and verifiable inasmuch as they are paraphrases of Dickens's own description. On these questions, which have been abundantly debated in modern philosophy, see Thomas Pavel, "Fictional Beings," in *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), chap. 2, and the texts to which he refers.

the speech acts she performs as a character in her story. "Marcel," the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, addresses his prospective reader as seriously as Marcel the character addresses the Duchess of Guermantes.[7] The person whose "seriousness"—that is, whose illocutionary engagement—could be problematic is not Marcel the narrator but rather Proust the author. But I say "*could* be problematic," in the conditional, for in fact here (in the text of *A la recherche du temps perdu*) *no* speech acts belong to Marcel Proust, for the good reason that Marcel Proust never takes the floor; he is always "pretending," as Plato had already put it, to be Marcel or someone else, no matter how the narrative content may happen to relate to the biography, the life and opinions, of its author. Thus, from the point of view that concerns us here, we are just as entitled to set aside the discourse of first-person fictional narrative as to set aside that of fictional characters themselves; and there are sound reasons for doing so.

The only task that remains, then, is to describe the pragmatic status of *impersonal* or third-person narrative, which narratologists for various good reasons call *heterodiegetic* (the narrator is not one of the characters)—provided, however, that we are dealing with an *extradiegetic* narrative, that is, a first-degree narrative produced by a narrator-author who is not herself, like the narrator-authors of the *Arabian Nights*, in-

[7] Searle declares somewhat ambiguously that Conan Doyle "is not simply pretending to make assertions, but he is *pretending to be* John Watson . . . making assertions" (*Expression and Meaning*, 69), which might imply that there is a *double* pretense here: Doyle pretending to be Watson, and Watson pretending to make assertions. I think it may be more accurate to say that there is only one pretense: Doyle's (or Proust's), and that Watson's assertions (or Marcel's) are (fictionally) serious. I presume that this is what Searle in fact thinks, for his phrase "is not simply" indicates rather that the second pretense (pretending to be someone else) is stronger than the third-person pretense (simply pretending to assert).

ence of detailed scenes, dialogues reported literally and *in extenso*, and lengthy descriptions as indexes of fictionality.[17] Nothing in all this is impossible or prohibited (by whom?), properly speaking, in the case of historical narratives, but the presence of such devices tends to exceed the bounds of plausibility ("How do you know that?") and thereby (I shall return to this point) gives the reader an impression (a justified impression) of "fictionalization."

Frequency

The use of iterative narration—which is, in the strict sense, a phenomenon of frequency—is in broader terms a way of accelerating the narrative: acceleration by means of an identifying syllepsis of events posited as relatively similar ("Every Sunday . . ."). By this token, it goes without saying that there is no more reason for factual narrative to rule out the use of this device than for fictional narrative to do so, and the way factual genres such as biography—including autobiography—use it has been noted by specialists.[18] Unless we follow Philippe Lejeune's advice and consider Proust's massive recourse to iteration, especially in *Combray*, as an indication that he is imitating the characteristic features of autobiography, that is, as a case in which fictional narrative is borrowing from factual narrative—or perhaps more precisely in which *one* type of fictional narrative (the pseudo-autobiographical novel) is borrowing from *one* type of factual narrative (authentic auto-

[17] Whether in dialogue form or not, scenes slow the pace, and descriptions constitute narrative pauses, unless they are attributed to a character's perceptions, and such attribution also counts, for Hamburger, as an index of fictionality.

[18] See Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 114.

biography). But this hypothesis, which is highly plausible, brings us back to a phenomenon of exchange between the two types whose examination I prefer once again to postpone.

Mode

Most of the textual indices that characterize narrative fiction, according to Hamburger, are quite naturally concentrated in the category of mode, since all of these "symptoms" refer to a single specific feature, namely, direct access to the characters' subjectivity. This relation, incidentally, does away with the paradox of a poetics that rejoins the Aristotelian tradition (defining literature essentially through the thematic feature of fictionality), but from the standpoint of an apparently formalist definition of fiction: the features of the fictional narrative are indeed of the morphological order, but these features are only *effects* produced by the fictional nature of the narrative, that is, by the imaginary nature of the characters that constitute its "I-Origo." If narrative fiction alone gives us direct access to the subjectivity of another person, this is not by virtue of some miraculous privilege; it is because that other person is a fictitious being (or *treated* as fictitious, in the case of a historical figure such as Napoleon in *War and Peace*). That person's thoughts are *imagined* by the author while he is pretending to report them: one's guesses are unerring only in the case of something that one is in the process of *inventing*. Hence the presence of "indexes" such as verbs attributing thoughts and feelings to third parties with no requirement that the attribution be justified ("What do you know about it?"); the internal monologue; and, most characteristic and most effective of all, for in the extreme case it permeates the discourse in its entirety, referring it insidiously to the con-

freely shift the emphasis between the "narrator-*I*" and the "hero-*I*"[19] (the fluctuation is manifest in *A la recherche du temps perdu*). Philippe Lejeune, who has been refining his initial diagnosis of indiscernibility from one book to the next, now views this alternative as at least a possible index ("It is only a matter of a dominant tendency"), pointing to a distinction between authentic autobiography, which further accentuates the "voice of a narrator" (example: "Je suis né à l'extrême fin du XIXe siècle, le dernier de huit garçons" [Edouard Bred, *Mes Écoles*, 1977: "I was born at the tail end of the nineteenth century, the last of eight boys"]), and pseudo-autobiographical fiction, which tends to "focus on the experience of a character" (example: "Le ciel s'était éloigné d'au moins dix mètres. Je restais assise, pas pressée" [Albertine Sarrazin, *Astragale*, 1965: "The sky had lifted at least thirty feet. I sat there, not moving"]).[20] Here we have a quite legitimate extension to personal narrative of the internal focalization that is a typical criterion of fictionality.

Voice

The characteristics of narrative voice boil down essentially to distinctions of time, "person," and level. It does not seem to me that the temporal situation of the narrative act necessarily differs in fiction from its manifestations elsewhere: retrospective narration is also common in factual narrative (it is the

[19] Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

[20] Philippe Lejeune, "Le pacte autobiographique (bis)" (1981), in *Moi aussi* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); Albertine Sarrazin, *Astragal*, trans. Patsy Southgate (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 5.

Beuve to Thibaudet, from Proust to Richard, critics have manifestly considered style too serious a matter to be entrusted, as an autonomous object, to the monopoly of stylisticians—and a theory of style that had the goal, or the result, of constituting it as such would surely be making a mistake. But this does not imply that *every* theory of style is useless and objectless: on the contrary, nothing seems to be needed more in this field than a definition that—among its other functions—would keep us from making such a mistake by clarifying the nature of the relations between style and the other aspects of discourse and signification.

The theory of style is not stylistics,[3] and especially not literary stylistics—a field that takes some pains, as we have just seen, to avoid defining its object. But its premises can be found in a different scholarly tradition, inspired by Saussurean linguistics and illustrated early in this century by Charles Bally. Its object, as we know, is not so much individual originality or innovation as the potential resources of the common language,[4] but the important thing, so far as we are concerned, lies not in that difference of field, which may have been overestimated, but in the effort at conceptualization, however relative, that this tradition manifests.

[3] "Spitzer is more a practitioner than a theoretician—and in that respect he is a stylistician in the deepest sense." Georges Molinié, *La stylistique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 29.

[4] The distinction between the "two stylistics" has been well established since Pierre Guiraud published *La stylistique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954). Guiraud calls the first one "genetic stylistics, or stylistics of the individual," and the second "descriptive stylistics," or stylistics of expression. The antithesis is awkward, to be sure, for the first is also descriptive, and it also considers style as a phenomenon of expression. The essential theme of the opposition lies, in fact, between the individual investment in literary works (Spitzer) and the collective potentialities of language (Bally). But the existence of this intermediate state constituted by collective styles does relativize that opposition.

way. Thus, without too much effort or artifice, we may find *nuit* typically Racinean, or Mallarméan, and so on, to the extent of seeing in its relative frequency a sort of stylistic index, just as we might say that the frequency of *hypallages* is an index of Proust's style, and just as Proust himself saw in Flaubert's use of the imperfect tense a characteristic feature of that writer's style. This sort of effect seems to me capable of illustrating a category of figurative exemplification that Goodman failed to note, namely, *metonymic* exemplification. Thus, I propose to add this category to the two Goodmanian notions of *exemplification* (literal) and *expression* (metaphorical) under the heading—which seems to me to fit in quite naturally (in a broadened Ballyan sense)—of *evocation*. If *nuit* is, let us say, Racinean—that is, if it evokes, for some people, (especially) Racine—it is not because it possesses that property literally the way [lõ] possesses the property of being brief, nor that it possesses the property metaphorically the way *nuit* possesses the property of being clear; it possesses the property metonymically through a privileged association (let us suppose) with Racine's work. But that is not to say that metaphorical exemplification is entirely inconceivable at this level. There is undoubtedly a touch of metaphorical exemplification in the effects of stylistic *imitation*, which are not limited to borrowing from an author (for example) one of his stylistic features, but which go to the extreme of inventorying these features, and which are thus ideally typical without being materially present in the corpus imitated. Thus, as we know, Proust was particularly proud of having included the adjective *aberrant* in his pastiche of Renan, for he judged the term "extremely Renanian," even though to his knowledge Renan had never used it: "Finding it in his work would take away from my pleasure in having invented it"—the invention being an example of a Renanian adjective. If Renan had actually used it,

it would merely be a *Renaneme*, whereas Proust's invention constitutes a genuine theoretical *Renanism*.[37]

I call these imitations that do not involve borrowing *metaphorical*, this time in a decidedly un-Goodmanian sense, by virtue of a typically analogic relation: the word *aberrant* is (for Proust) "like" Renan's writing without belonging to the corpus. The stylistic importance of such an effect is transparently clear: one cannot identify a style without bringing to light its *-emes*, and one cannot imitate it creatively—that is, bring it to life and make it productive—without moving beyond such competence to performance; one has to be able to invent its *-isms*. Every living tradition, and thus, to a large extent, all artistic evolution, goes through this process.

I say *artistic* in general because the categories used here are valid for all the arts, mutatis mutandis—and even if there are a lot of *mutanda* to *mutare*. The *Jupiter* Symphony exemplifies (among other things) the classical style, and expresses (among other things) majesty; Reims cathedral exemplifies Gothic art, evokes the Middle Ages, expresses (according to Michelet) the "breath of the spirit"; and so on. And the effects of imitation without borrowing[38] are omnipresent: we need only see how Debussy or Ravel invents Spanish music, or how Cézanne (to take his own word for it) paints "like Poussin out of the studio."

These relativizing parentheses are intended not to express a

[37] See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), chap. 14. Proust made the remark in a letter to Robert Dreyfus dated March 21, 1908. Marcel Proust, *Correspondance*, ed. Philip Kolb, 20 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970–92), 8:67.

[38] The borderline between the two techniques is less clear-cut than this formula suggests: one cannot imitate a style (even creatively) without borrowing its schemas so as to apply them to new cases, and one can say equally well that Ravel imitates Spanish music or that he borrows melodic rhythmic schemas from it.

consider it as an object."[74] But what Sartre reserved for poetic language is true of all discourse.

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As the reader will no doubt have understood, my intention here has not been to establish a new practice of stylistic analysis on the basis of a new definition of style. In a sense, the existing practice, among stylisticians such as Spitzer, and even more among critics when they apply themselves to the study of style, seems to me more faithful to the reality of style than are the principles of method or the theoretical declarations we have inherited from the discipline. And the only advantage of the definition proposed seems to me to be, in sum, that it is more applicable than others to the way in which Proust, for example, analyzed Flaubert's style: by asking not *where* and *when* "stylistic phenomena" appeared in his novels, but *what* style is constituted by the consistencies in his language use and what singular and coherent world view is expressed and transmitted by that very particular use of tenses, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. Such a "deforming syntax" cannot be a matter of isolated "details" whose identification would require the deployment of a sophisticated apparatus: it is indissociable from a linguistic tissue that constitutes the text's very being. I recall an exchange, in certain respects emblematic of this debate, between a stylistician and a critic at the Cerisy conference center. In a paper on the state of his discipline, Gérard Antoine had cited the celebrated formula of Aby Warburg, one that stylisticians might well take as their motto: "The good Lord is in the details." "I should say,

[74] Sartre, "What Is Literature?" 29. This obviously holds true for any representation, and above all for artistic representation: see Jean-Marie Schaeffer, preface to Arthur Danto, *La transfiguration du banal* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 17.