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An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*

Roland Barthes

THERE ARE COUNTLESS FORMS of narrative in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, *drame* [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings (in Santa Ursula by Carpaccio, for instance), stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds: [1] narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.

Are we to infer from such universality that narrative is insignificant? Is it so common that we can say nothing about it, except for a modest description of a few highly particularized species, as literary history sometimes does? Indeed how are we to control such variety, how are we to justify our right to distinguish or recognize them? How can we tell the novel from the short story, the tale from the myth, suspense drama from tragedy (it has been done a thousand times) without reference to a common model? Any critical attempt to describe even the most specific, the most historically oriented narrative form implies such a model. It is, therefore, understandable that thinkers as early as Aristotle should have concerned themselves with the study of narrative forms, and not have abandoned all ambition to talk about them, giving

* Originally published in *Communications*, 8 (1966), as "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits."

1 It will be recalled that such is not the case with either poetry or the essay, which rely on the cultural level of the consumer.

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as an excuse the fact that narrative is universal. And it is normal that structuralism, in the early stages, should have made narrative a primary concern. For is it not one of structuralism's main preoccupations to control the infinite variety of speech acts by attempting to describe the language or *langue* from which they originate, and from which they can be derived? Faced with an infinite number of narratives and the many standpoints from which they can be considered (historical, psychological, sociological, ethnological, aesthetic, etc.), the analyst is roughly in the same situation as Saussure, who was faced with desultory fragments of language, seeking to extract, from the apparent anarchy of messages, a classifying principle and a central vantage point for his description. To confine myself to the current period, the Russian formalists, Propp, and Lévi-Strauss have taught us to identify the following dilemma: either narrative is a random assemblage of events, in which case one can only speak of it in terms of the narrator's (the author's) art, talent, or genius—all mythical embodiments of chance;[2] or else it shares with other narratives a common structure, open to analysis, however delicate it is to formulate. There is a world of difference between the fortuitous, in its most complex forms, and the simplest combinative or obligatory scheme: for no one can produce a narrative without referring himself to an implicit system of units and rules.

Where then should we look for the structure of narrative? No doubt in the narratives themselves. All the narratives? Many commentators, who admit the idea of a narrative structure, are nevertheless reluctant to cut loose literary analysis from the model used in experimental sciences: they boldly insist that one must apply a purely inductive method to the study of narrative and that the initial step must be the study of all narratives within a genre, a period, a society, if one is to set up a general model. This commonsense view is, nonetheless, a naive fallacy. Linguistics, which only has some three thousand languages to contend with, failed in the attempt; wisely, it turned deductive, and from that day on, incidentally, it found its proper footing and proceeded with giant steps, even managing to anticipate facts which had not yet been discovered.[3] What then are we to expect in the case of the analysis of narrative, faced with millions of narrative acts? It is

2 There exists, of course, an art of the storyteller: it is the ability to generate narratives (messages) based on the structure (the code); this art corresponds to the notion of *performance* as defined by Chomsky, and it is far remote from the notion of authorial "genius," Romantically conceived as a personal, hardly explicable, secret.

3 See the history of the Hittite "a," postulated by Saussure and discovered in fact fifty years later, E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 35.

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obviously committed to deductive procedures; it is compelled to conceive, first, a hypothetical model of description (which American linguists call a "theory"), and then to proceed gradually from that model down, towards the species, which at the same time partake in and deviate from the model. It is only at the level of such conformities or discrepancies, and equipped with a single tool of description, that the analyst can turn his attention once more to the plurality of narrative acts, to their historical, geographical, and cultural diversity.[4]

In order to describe and classify the infinite number of narratives, one needs then a "theory" (in the pragmatic sense that we are here intending), and we must turn to the task of searching for one and sketching it out.[5] The working out of such a theory may be made much easier if we proceed from a model that can provide the initial terms and principles. In the current state of research, it seems reasonable to elect linguistics itself as a basic model for the structural analysis of narrative.[6]

I. The Language of Narrative

1. Beyond the sentence

As everyone knows, linguistics stops at the sentence; it is the last unit that falls within its scope; for if the sentence—being an order and not a sequence—is not reducible to the sum of its words, and constitutes therefore an original unit, an enunciation, on the other hand, is nothing but the succession of the sentences it contains. From the point of view of linguistics, there is nothing in discourse that is not matched in the sentence. "The sentence," writes Martinet, "is the smallest segment that is perfectly and systematically representative of discourse."[7] It follows that linguistics cannot conceivably adopt for

4 Let us keep in mind today's conditions of linguistic description: "Linguistic structure is always related not only to the data of the corpus, but also to the grammatical theory which describes these data" (E. Bach, *An Introduction to Transformational Grammars* [New York, 1964], p. 29). And also the following, from Benveniste (*Problèmes*, p. 119): "It has been recognized that language must be described as a formal structure, but that this description required, as a prerequisite, the establishment of adequate procedures and criteria and that, in the final analysis, the reality of the object was not separable from the method chosen to define it."

5 The apparent "abstract" character of the theoretical contributions found in *Communications*, 8 (1966), is due to a methodological preoccupation: that of rapidly formalizing concrete analyses: formalization is a generalization that differs from other generalizations.

6 But not indeed imperative (see Claude Bremond's contribution, based on logical rather than linguistic approach, in *Communications*, 8 [1966], 60-76).

7 "Réflexions sur la phrase," *Language and Society* (Copenhagen, 1961), p. 113.

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its object anything superior to the sentence, because beyond the sentence, all there can ever be is more sentences: having described the flower, the botanist cannot concern himself with describing the "bouquet."

And yet it is obvious that discourse itself (as an arrangement of sentences) is organized, and that, through this organization, it is perceived as the message of another "language," functioning at a higher level than the language of linguistics: [8] discourse has its units, its rules, its "grammar." Because it lies beyond the sentence, and though consisting of nothing but sentences, discourse must naturally be the object of a second linguistics. This linguistics of discourse has for a very long time had a famous name: *rhetoric*. But as a result of an intricate historical process, rhetoric was switched over to the humanities that had become separated from the study of language. It has become necessary, of late, to take a fresh look at the problem: the new linguistics of discourse has not yet developed, but it has been postulated by linguists themselves.[9] This fact should not be overlooked: although discourse constitutes an autonomous object of study, it must be studied from the vantage point of linguistics. If a working hypothesis is to be assigned to an analysis burdened with the enormous task of dealing with an infinity of materials, it is most reasonable to postulate a homologous relation between sentence and discourse, assuming that a similar formal organization encompasses all semiotic systems, whatever their substances or dimensions. Discourse would then be a large "sentence" (whose units do not necessarily have to be sentences) in the same way that a sentence, allowing for certain specifications, is a small "discourse." This hypothesis fits in well with certain propositions of current anthropology. Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss have pointed out that the human status could be defined as the ability to create secondary, "self-multiplying" systems (tools to make tools, double articulation of language, incest taboo conducive to the extension of families), and the Soviet linguist Ivanov supposes that artificial languages cannot be acquired prior to the development of natural languages. It is therefore legitimate to postulate a "secondary" relation between sentence and discourse—a homologous relation—to reflect the purely formal character of correspondences.

The general language of narrative is but one of many idioms within

8 It goes without saying, as Jakobson did not fail to notice, that between the sentence and the space beyond it, there are transitions: coordination, for instance, may reach beyond the sentence.

9 See, in particular: Benveniste, *Problèmes*, Ch. 10; Z. S. Harris, "Discourse Analysis," *Language*, 28 (1952), 1-30; N. Ruwet, "Analyse structurale d'un poème francais," *Linguistics*, 3 (1964), 62-83.

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the scope of the linguistics of discourse,[10] and consequently it comes under the homologous hypothesis. Structurally, narrative belongs with the sentence without ever being reducible to the sum of its sentences: a narrative is a large sentence, just as any declarative sentence is, in a certain way, the outline of a little narrative. The main categories of the verb (tenses, aspects, modes, persons) have their equivalent in narrative, except that they are expanded and transformed to match its size, and are equipped with signifiers of their own (often extremely complex ones). Moreover, the "subjects" themselves, in their opposition to verbal predicates, also tend to conform to the sentence model: the *actantial* typology put forward by A. J. Greimas sees the great number of characters to be found in narrative as equivalent to the elementary functions of grammatical analysis.[11] The kind of homology here suggested is interesting not merely for its heuristic value, but also because it implies an identity between language and literature (inasmuch as it is a sort of privileged vehicle for narrative). It is hardly possible any longer to conceive of literature as an art which would stand free of any relation to language, having once used the latter as an instrument to express ideas, passion, or beauty: language never ceases to accompany discourse, holding up to it, as it were, the mirror of its own structure. Doesn't literature, more particularly in our day, turn the very conditions of language use into a language of its own?[12]

2. The levels of meaning

From the very first, linguistics provided the structural analysis of narrative with a decisive concept, because it pointed out the essentials for any system of meaning, namely its organization; linguistics made it possible at once to spell out how narrative differs from a mere series of propositions, and to clarify the enormous mass of elements that go

10 It would be precisely one of the tasks of the linguistics of discourse to lay the foundation of a typology of discourse. On a temporary basis, one can recognize three broad types of discourse: metonymous (narrative), metaphorical (lyrical poetry, sapiential discourse), enthymematic (intellectual discursive).

11 See "Eléments pour une théorie de l'interprétation du récit mythique," III, 1, *Communications*, 8 (1966).

12 Mention must be made here of Mallarmé's insight, at the time he was contemplating a project in linguistics: "Language has appeared to him as the instrument of fiction: he will follow the method of language (to be determined). Language, as it were, mirrored. Finally, fiction seems to him to be the very procedure of the human mind—it is fiction which causes all method to be brought into play, and man is reduced to his will" (*Oeuvres complètes* [ed. Pléiade], p. 851). One will recall that for Mallarmé fiction and poetry are synonymous ("situated at the converging point of other arts, generated by them, and governing them, there is Fiction or Poetry," *ibid.*, p. 335).

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into the making of a narrative. Such a concept was that of the *level of description*.[13]

It is well known that a sentence can be described, in linguistic terms, on several levels (phonetic, phonological, grammatical, contextual); these levels stand in hierarchical relation to each other, for if each has its own units and its own correlations, thus making an independent description mandatory, then none can, of itself, produce any meaning. No unit pertaining to a certain level can be endowed with meaning unless it can be integrated into a superior level: a phoneme, although perfectly describable, means nothing by itself; it partakes in meaning only if integrated into a word; and the word itself must in turn be integrated into the sentence.[14] The theory of levels (as enunciated by Benveniste) provides two types of relations: distributional (if the relations belong on the same level), integrative (if they straddle two levels). It follows that distributional relations alone are unable to account for meaning. Thus, in order to carry out a structural analysis, it is necessary first to distinguish several levels of description [*instance de description*] and to place these levels within a hierarchical (integrative) perspective.

Levels are operations.[15] Thus it is normal that linguistics should tend to multiply them as it progresses. For the time being, analysis of discourse can only operate at rudimentary levels. In its own way, rhetoric had assigned at least two planes of description to discourse: *dispositio* and *elocutio*.[16] Nowadays, in his analysis of the structure of myth, Lévi-Strauss has already specified that constitutive units of mythical discourse (*mythèmes*) become significant only because they appear in clusters which in turn combine among themselves;[17] and Tzvetan Todorov, taking over the distinction of the Russian formalists, suggests working on two large levels, each of which may be broken down further: the *story* (the argument), which consists of a logic of actions and a "syntax" of characters, and *discourse*, comprising tenses, aspects,

13 "Linguistic descriptions are never monovalent. A description is not correct or incorrect, it is better or worse, more useful or less useful" (M. A. K. Halliday, "Linguistique générale et linguistique appliquée," *Études de linguistique appliquée*, I [1962], p. 12).

14 The levels of integration were postulated by the Prague School (see J. Vachek, *A Prague School Reader in Linguistics* [Bloomington, Ind., 1964], p. 468), and have been adopted since by many linguists. We think that Benveniste (*Problèmes*, Ch. 10) gave this theory its clearest formulation.

15 "Loosely defined, a level can be considered as a system of symbols, rules, etc., which must be used to represent expressions" (E. Bach, *Introduction*, pp. 57-58).

16 The third part of rhetorics, *inventio*, did not concern language: it had to do with *res*, not with *verba*.

17 *Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1962), p. 233.

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and modes pertaining to narrative.[18] Whatever the number of levels one proposes to study, and whatever their definition, there is no doubt that narrative is a hierarchy of levels or strata. To understand a narrative is not only to follow the unfolding of the story but also to recognize in it a number of "strata," to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative onto an implicitly vertical axis; to read a narrative (or listen to it) is not only to pass from one word to the next, but also from one level to the next. Let me introduce at this point a kind of apologue: in *The Purloined Letter*, Poe pungently analyzes the failure of the Police Inspector to lay his hands on the letter. His investigations were perfect, "within the scope of his specialty," to quote Poe's words. The inspector did not omit a single location, he completely "saturated" the level of the "search"; but in order to find the letter, protected as it was by its very prominence, one had to switch to another level, in other words, to substitute the relevance of the concealer for the relevance of the police agent. In similar fashion, however complete the "search" might be when it came to bear on a horizontal set of narrative relations, in order to be efficient, it must also be directed "vertically": the meaning does not lie "at the end" of the narrative, but straddles it. Thus, meaning eludes any unilateral investigation, no less than the purloined letter itself.

Many trials and errors are to be expected before the levels of narrative can be identified with certainty. The ones we are offering here constitute a tentative profile whose principal merit is, for the moment, almost exclusively didactic: through them we can situate and classify problems, without incurring disagreement with the few analyses that have taken place.[19] We propose to distinguish three levels in any narrative work: the level of "functions" (in the sense Propp and Bremond gave to this word), the level of "actions" (in the sense used by Greimas when he writes of characters as actants), and the level of "narration" (which is roughly the level of "discourse" as seen by Todorov). Attention is again called to the fact that those levels are bonded together according to a mode of progressive integration: a function has a meaning only insofar as it takes its place in the general line of action of an *actant*; and this action in turn receives its ultimate meaning from the fact that it is being told, that is, entrusted to a discourse which possesses its own code.

18 See Tzvetan Todorov, "Les catégories du récit littéraire," *Communications*, 8 (1966), 125-51.

19 My main concern, in the introduction, has been to interfere as little as possible with current research.

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II. Functions

1. The determination of units

Since any system can be defined as a combination of units pertaining to certain known classes, the first step is to break down the narrative and determine whatever segments of narrative discourse can be distributed into a limited number of classes; in other words, to define the smallest narrative units.

According to the integrative perspective here defined, a purely distributional definition of units will not do: meaning must be, from the very first, the criterion by which units are determined. It is the functional character of certain segments of the story that makes units of them, hence the name of "functions," early attributed to those first units. Since the Russian formalists,[20] the practice has been to regard as a unit any segment of the story which presents itself as the term of a correlation. The "soul" of any function is, as it were, its seedlike quality, which enables the function to inseminate the narrative with an element that will later come to maturity, on the same level, or elsewhere on another level. If, in *Un Coeur simple*, Flaubert informs the reader at a certain point, nonchalantly as it seems, that the *sous-préfet*'s daughters in Pont-l'Evêque owned a parrot, it is because this parrot is to play an important role in Félicité's life: the enunciation of this detail (whichever linguistic form it may assume) constitutes a function, or narrative unit.

Is everything functional in a narrative? Is everything, down to the most minute detail, meaningful? Can narrative be integrally broken down into functional units? As will soon become apparent, there are no doubt several kinds of functions, for there are several kinds of correlations. The fact remains, however, that a narrative is made up solely of functions: everything, in one way or another, is significant. It is not so much a matter of art (on the part of the narrator) as it is a matter of structure. Even though a detail might appear unequivocally trivial, impervious to any function, it would nonetheless end up point-

20 See, in particular, B. Tomachevski, "Thématique" (1925), *Théorie de la littérature* (Paris: Seuil, 1965). A little later, Propp defined a function as "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), tr. Laurence Scott (1958; Austin and London, 1968), p. 21. Todorov's definition, "The meaning (or function) of an element in the work is its ability to enter into correlations with other elements in this work, and with the work as a whole," is to be found in *Communications*, 8, which also includes precisions contributed by A. J. Greimas, who comes to define a unit by its paradigmatic correlation, but also by its position within the syntagmatic unit to which it belongs.

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ing to its own absurdity or uselessness: everything has a meaning, or nothing has. To put it in a different way, Art does not acknowledge the existence of noise (in the informational sense of the word).[21] It is a pure system: there are no wasted units,[22] and there can never be any, however long, loose, or tenuous the threads which link them to one of the levels of the story.[23]

From a linguistic point of view, the function is obviously a content unit: it is "what an utterance means," not the way it is made, which constitutes it as a functional unit.[24] This essential signified core may have a variety of signifiers, some of them quite devious. If we are informed (in *Goldfinger*) that "James Bond saw a man in his fifties," such information inherently contains two simultaneous functions, reflecting an unequal degree of urgency: on the one hand, the age of the character fits into a certain portrait (whose relevance to the remaining part of the story is not negligible, but diffuse, or delayed), and on the other hand, the immediate signification of the utterance is that Bond does not know his future adversary. The unit thus implies a very strong correlation (the opening of a threat coupled with an obligation to identify). In order to determine the initial narrative units, it is therefore necessary never to lose sight of the functional character of the segment under consideration, and to be prepared in advance to recognize that those segments will not necessarily coincide with the forms traditionally attributed to the various parts of narrative discourse (actions, scenes, paragraphs, dialogues, inner monologues, etc.), and still less with "psychological" classes (behaviors, feelings, intentions, motivations, rationalizations of characters).

Similarly, since the *langue* of narrative is not the *langue* of articulated language—though it often uses the latter as its vehicle—the nar-

21 This is precisely what distinguishes it from "life," which offers only a "blurred" communication. The "blurred" effect (that which limits the view) may exist in art, but then only as a coded element (Watteau, for instance); and the "blurred" effect, for that matter, does not exist in the written code, which inevitably calls for clear delineation.

22 At least in literature, where the freedom of notation (due to the abstract nature of articulated language) implies a much stronger commitment than in the "analogical" arts, such as movie making.

23 The functionality of the narrative unit is more or less immediate (hence noticeable), depending on the level where it operates: whenever the units are positioned on the same level (in the case of suspense, for instance), the functionality is quite noticeable; much less, however, when the function becomes saturated at the narrational level: a modern text, with a lower degree of significance on the anecdotic level, achieves its full impact only at the level of *écriture*.

24 "The syntactic units (beyond the sentence) are in fact content units" (A. J. Greimas, *Cours de sémantique structurale*, cours ronéotypé, VI, 5). The exploration of the functional level is therefore a part of general semantics.

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rative units are independent of linguistic units with regard to substance. They may indeed coincide, but only occasionally rather than systematically; functions will be represented at times by units larger than the sentence (groups of sentences of varying length, up to the work as a whole), at times by lesser units (the syntagm, the word, and even in the word, only certain literary elements[25]). When we are told that Bond, upon hearing the telephone ring while on duty in his Secret Service office, "picked up one of the four receivers," the moneme *four* constitutes in itself a functional unit, for it refers to a concept which is necessary to the story as a whole (one of a highly technical bureaucracy). In fact, in this case, the narrative unit is not the linguistic unit (the word), but only its connotative value (linguistically, the word *four* never means "four"). This explains why, on occasions, certain functional units can be smaller than the sentence while still belonging to discourse; such units reach out beyond the level of denotation which, like the sentence, belongs to linguistics proper, even though the units may be materially confined by the sentence of which they are a part.

2. Classes of units

These functional units must be distributed into a small number of formal classes. If one is to determine these without relying on their content (psychological substance, for instance), one must again consider the various levels of meaning: some units correlate with units on the same level, while others cannot be fulfilled without switching to another level. Hence the necessity to provide, at the outset, two broad classes of functions, distributional on the one hand, integrative on the other. The former correspond to Propp's functions, revived by Bremond among others, but which we intend to consider here in much greater detail than they did. To these alone we shall assign the name of "functions" (although the other units are no less functional). The model has become a classical one after Tomachevski's analysis: the purchase of a gun has, for its correlate, the moment when it is put to use (and if it is not used, the function is inverted to designate vacillation, etc.); picking up the phone has for its correlate the moment when it is laid down; the intrusion of the parrot into Félicité's home correlates with the stuffing episode, its worship, and so on. The second broad class of units, integrative units, comprises all the "indices" or

25 "One must not consider the word, as a primary, indivisible element of literary art, like a brick used in the construction of a building. It can be broken down into more tenuous 'verbal elements' " (J. Tynianov, quoted by Todorov, *Langages*, 6[1971], 18).

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"indicators" (in the broader sense of the word).[26] In that case, the unit, instead of referring to a complementary and consequential act, refers to a more or less diffuse concept which is nonetheless necessary to the story: personality traits concerning characters, information with regard to their identity, notations of "atmosphere," and so on. The relation between the unit and its correlate is no longer distributional (often several indices point to the same signified and the order of occurrence in discourse is not necessarily relevant) but integrative; in order to understand what purpose an index [*indice*] or indicator serves, one must pass on to a higher level (actions of the character or narration), for only there can the "index" be clarified. The administrative power that lies behind Bond, suggested by the number of lines on his phone, does not have any bearing on the sequence of actions triggered by the act of answering the phone; it only takes on value on the level of a general typology of character (Bond is on the side of Order). Indices, because their relations are, as it were, vertically oriented, are truly semantic units, for unlike properly defined "functions" that refer to "operations," indices refer to a signified, not to an "operation." The sanction of indices is "higher-up," sometimes it is even virtual, outside the explicit syntagm (the personality traits of a character may never be verbalized and yet repeatedly indexed), it is a paradigmatic sanction. By contrast, the sanction of "functions" is always "further on," it is a syntagmatic sanction.[27] Indeed, the distinction between *functions* and *indices* bears out another classical distinction: functions imply metonymic relata, indices metaphoric relata; the former are functional in terms of action, the latter in terms of being.[28]

These two main classes of units, functions and indices, account for a certain classification of narratives. Some narratives are predominantly functional (such as popular tales), while some others are predominantly indicial (such as "psychological" novels). Between these two opposites, we have a whole spectrum of intermediary forms, deriving their characteristics from history, society, or genre. But that isn't all: within each of those two broad classes, two subclasses of narrative units can readily be determined. Referring back to the class of functions, its units are not equally "important": some constitute actual hinges

26 These designations, and the ones subsequently introduced, may all be temporary ones.

27 This does not preclude the possibility that, *ultimately*, the syntagmatic dispersion of functions may come to express a paradigmatic relation between separate functions, as has been generally acknowledged since Lévi-Strauss and Greimas.

28 One cannot reduce functions to actions (verbs) nor indices to modifiers (adjectives), for there are actions with indicial value, "signaling" a personality, an atmosphere, etc.

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of the narrative (of a fragment thereof); others do no more than "fill in" the narrative space separating the hinge-type functions. Let us call the former *cardinal functions* (or *nuclei*), and the latter, in view of their complementary nature, *catalyses*. In order to classify a function as cardinal, all we need verify is that the action to which it refers opens (or maintains or closes) an alternative directly affecting the continuation of the story, in other words, that it either initiates or resolves an uncertainty. If in a fragment of narrative the telephone rings, it is equally possible to answer or not to answer the call, procedures that are bound to carry the story along different paths. On the other hand, between two cardinal functions, it is always possible to bring in subsidiary notations, which cluster around one nucleus or another, without modifying its alternative nature: the space separating "the telephone rang" from "Bond picked up the receiver" can be saturated with countless minor incidents or descriptions, such as "Bond made his way to the desk, picked up the phone, put down his cigarette." These catalyses are still functional, insofar as they enter into correlations with a nucleus, but their functionality is toned down, unilateral, parasitic. The functionality involved is purely chronological (what is described is what separates two moments of a story), whereas the link between two cardinal functions possesses a double functionality, at once chronological and logical: catalyses are no more than consecutive units, while cardinal functions are both consecutive and consequential. Indeed, there is a strong presumption that the mainspring of the narrative activity is to be traced to that very confusion between consecutiveness and consequence, what-comes-*after* being read in a narrative as what-is-*caused-by*. Narrative would then be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by scholasticism under the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, which may well be the motto of Destiny whose "language," after all, finds its expression in narrative; and this "telescoping" of logic and temporality is mainly achieved by the framework of cardinal functions. These functions may at first glance appear quite trivial. What makes them crucial is not their spectacular quality (the importance, the volume, the unusual nature, or the impact of the enunciated action), but rather the risk involved: the cardinal functions are the risk-laden moments of narrative. Between the disjunctive points, or "dispatchers," the catalyses open up areas of security, rest, or luxury; such "luxuries," however, are not useless. It should be stressed again that, from the point of view of the story, catalysis remains functional, even if only marginally. Were it purely redundant (in relation to its nucleus), it would nevertheless

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partake in the economy of the message. But it is not redundant. Though a particular notation may seen expendable, it retains a discursive function: it precipitates, delays, or quickens the pace of discourse, sums up, anticipates, and sometimes even confuses the reader.[29] Since what is noted always tends to be seen as what is "worth noting," catalysis constantly reactivates the semantic tension of discourse, forever saying: there has been, there is going to be, meaning. The enduring function of catalysis is, then, in the final analysis, a phatic function (to use Jakobson's term): it maintains contact between the narrator and the reader. To sum up, one cannot delete a nucleus without altering the story, but then again one cannot delete a catalysis without altering the discourse.

With regard to the second broad class of narrative units (indices), the units they contain have this in common: they can be saturated (completed) only on the level of characters, or on the level of narration. They are part of a *parametrical* relation,[30] whose second term, on account of its implicit nature, remains continuously active, affecting a whole episode, a character, or the work as a whole; however, a distinction can be made between indices proper, referring to a personality trait, a feeling, or an atmosphere (e.g., suspicion), a philosophy, and, on the other hand, *bits of information* used to identify or pinpoint certain elements of time and space. To say that Bond is on duty in his office while, through his open window, heavy billowing clouds can be seen obscuring the moon, is to index a stormy summer night, a deduction which can in turn be translated into an atmospherical index pointing to the heavy, anguish-laden climate of an action as yet unknown to the reader. It follows that an index always signifies implicitly, while informants do not, at least on the level of the story: they provide pure, locally relevant data. Indices imply a deciphering activeness and consequence, what-comes-*after* being read in a narrative with a character or an atmosphere; informants bring with them a ready-made knowledge. Like catalyses, they are marginally functional yet still functional: whatever the "flatness" in relation to the rest of the story, the informant (e.g., the precise age of a character) is there to authenticate the reality of the referent, to root fiction in the real world. Whatever serves as informant is a realistic operator, and to that

29 Valéry spoke of "dilatory signs." The detective makes extensive use of these "deceptive" units.

30 According to Ruwet, a parametrical element is an element which remains constant throughout the duration of a musical piece (for instance, the tempo in a Bach allegro, or the monodic character of a solo).

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extent, it possesses of an undeniable functionality, if not on the level of the story, at least on the level of discourse.[31]

Nuclei and catalyses, indices and informants (again, the names are immaterial) are, it seems, the initial classes into which the units of the functional level can be distributed. Two remarks should be appended to this classification.

First of all, a unit can at the same time belong to two different classes: to drink a whiskey (in the hall of an airport) is an action that can pass off as a catalysis to the (cardinal) notation of *waiting*, but it is also, and at the same time, an index to a certain atmosphere (modernity, relaxation, reminiscence, etc.): in other words, certain units can be mixed units. This opens up a whole range of possibilities in the economy of narrative; in the novel *Goldfinger*, Bond, having to conduct a search in his opponent's room, receives a pass from his associate: the notation is a clear-cut function (cardinal). In the film version, this detail is changed. Bond laughingly snatches a set of keys from an uncomplaining chamber maid; the notation is no longer merely functional, but also indicial, pointing to Bond's personality type (his devil-may-care ways and his success with women). In the second place—more on the subject later—it should be noticed that the four classes just mentioned are subject to another distribution—closer to the linguistic model, incidentally. Catalyses, indices, and informants indeed have one character in common: they are *expansions* in their relation to the nuclei. Nuclei (as will be shown shortly) form together finite sets combining very few terms; they are logically controlled, at once necessary and sufficient. Once this framework has been constituted, the other units fill it in according to a mode of proliferation which has no theoretical limits. As everyone knows, that is what happens to the sentence, which is made up of simple propositions, yet keeps sprouting any number of duplications, paddings, convolutions, and so forth. Like the sentence, narrative can give forth any number of catalyses. Mallarmé bestowed so much importance on this type of structure that he made it the organic principle of *Jamais un coup de dés*, which may well be considered, complete with its "nodes," its "antinodes," its "nodal words," and "lace-words," as the very blazon of all narrative form—of all language.

31 In *Communications*, 8 (1966), 152-63, G. Genette establishes two types of description: the ornamental and the meaningful. The latter relates of course to the level of the story and the ornamental to the level of discourse, which explains why, for a long time, it made up a perfectly coded "piece" of rhetorics: *descriptio* or *ekphrasis*, a highly regarded exercise in neo-rhetorics.

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3. Functional syntax

How, according to what "grammar," are the different units linked together in the narrative syntagm? What are the rules of the functional "combinative" or obligatory scheme? Informants and indices can combine freely among themselves: such is the case in the portrait, which presents, side by side, without restrictions, personal biographical records and personality traits. A simple implicative relation binds together nuclei and personality traits: a catalysis necessarily implies the existence of a cardinal function on to which it can depend, but the implication is not reversible. As for cardinal functions, they are bound together in a solidarity relation: a function of this type combines selectively with one of its own kind, and vice versa. This solidarity relation must engage our attention further: first, because it helps define the very framework of the narrative (expansions are optional, nuclei are not), second, because they are the principal concern of researchers who seek to give a structure to narrative.

It has already been pointed out that narrative, on account of its very structure, tends to establish a confusion between consecutiveness and consequence, between time sequence and logic. In that ambiguity lies the central problem of narrative syntax. Is it possible to uncover, behind the temporal sequence of the narrative, an atemporal logic? This point has been a divisive issue among researchers until quite recently. Propp, who has been credited with opening the way to present studies, adamantly defended the principle that the chronological order is irreducible: to him time is the very stuff of reality and for this reason, he insisted on rooting the tale in temporality. Yet Aristotle, even as he contrasted tragedy (defined by its unity of action) to the narrated story (defined by a plurality of actions within one temporal scheme), was already stressing the primacy of logic over chronology.[32] And so have modern researchers (Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, Bremond, Todorov), all of whom (while possibly diverging on other points) would probably subscribe to this proposition by Lévi-Strauss: "The chronological order of succession is reabsorbed by an atemporal matrix."[33] Contemporary analysis tends to "dechronologize" the narrative continuum and to "relogicize" it, subjecting it to what Mallarmé used to call, referring to the French language, "the primitive thunderbolts of logic."[34] To be more precise, the goal is to give a structural description to the chronological illusion; it is up to narrative logic to account for narrative

32 *Poetics*, 1459a.

33 Quoted by Bremond, "Le Message narratif," *Communications*, 4 (1964).

34 *Quant au livre* (*Oeuvres complètes* [ed. Pléiade], p. 386).

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time. To put it another way, temporality is no more than a structural class of narrative (understood as discourse), just as in ordinary language, time exists only in the form of a system. From the point of view of narrative, what we call time does not exist, or at least it only exists functionally, as an element of a semiotic system: time does not belong to discourse proper, but to the referent. Both narrative and language can only refer to semiological time; "true" time is only a referential illusion, "realistic," as Propp's commentary shows. It is in this respect only that structural description can presume to come to terms with it.[35]

What then is the logic that regulates the principal functions of narrative? Establishing such a logic has been an actively pursued and most widely debated goal in current research. Reference is here made to contributions by A. J. Greimas, Claude Bremond, and Tzvetan Todorov, published in *Communications*, 8, all of which deal with the logic of functions. Three main trends of research are emerging, set forth by Todorov in his article. The first, initiated by Bremond, is more properly logical in its approach: the goal is to reconstruct the syntax of human behavior as exemplified in narrative, to trace the succession of "choices" which this or that character inevitably has to face[36] at various points in the story, and thus to bring to light what could be called an energetic logic,[37] since characters are caught at the moment when they choose to act. The second model is linguistic (Lévi-Strauss, Greimas): the essential preoccupation of this research is to identify paradigmatic oppositions in the functions, and then to "project" such oppositions onto the syntagmatic axis of narrative, according to the Jakobsonian definition of the "poetic" principle (evidence will be found in *Communications*, 8 of new developments in Greimas' thinking which tend to correct or complete his paradigmatic approach to functions). The third direction of research, sketched out by Todorov, is somewhat different, for it sets up the analytical process on the level of "actions" (that is to say, of characters), and tries to figure out the rules which

35 In his own way, keenly perceptive as always though not driven to its conclusions, Valéry has correctly formulated the status of narrative time: "The belief in time as an agent and a guiding thread is based on the *mechanism of memory* and that of combinative discourse" (*Tel Quel*; emphasis ours): the illusion is indeed a product of discourse itself.

36 This conception bears a certain resemblance to one of Aristotle's views: the *proaïresis*, a rational choice of potential actions, is the foundation of *praxis*, a practical science which, unlike *poiesis*, does not produce any work distinct from its agent. In these terms, one may say that the analyst tries to reconstruct the praxis which operates within narrative.

37 This logic based on choice (*to do this* or to *do that*) has the advantage of accounting for the dramatization process which is usually embodied in narrative.

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attend the combinations, variations, and transformations, in narrative, of a certain number of fundamental predicates.

No attempt is here made to choose among those working hypotheses; they are not rival but parallel theories, still in the process of elaboration. The only point on which we could venture a few complementary observations concerns the dimensions of the analytical effort. Even if we set aside the indices, informants, and catalyses, there still remains in a narrative (especially if it is a novel and not a tale) a considerable number of cardinal functions; many cannot be controlled by the abovementioned analyses, which have been dealing thus far with the larger articulations of narrative. Provision must be made, however, for a sufficiently detailed description, accounting for *all* narrative units, including the smallest segments. Cardinal functions, as one will recall, cannot be determined by their "importance," but only by the interlocking nature of their implicative relations: a "telephone call," however futile it may appear, on the one hand comprises a few cardinal functions (ringing, picking up the phone, speaking, putting down the phone), but on the other hand, the same telephone call, considered as a whole, must be linked, at least through a chain of implications, to the larger articulations of the anecdote. The wide span of functional arrangement in narrative imposes an organization based on relays, whose basic units can be no other than a small group of functions, which will be referred to as a *sequence* (in conformity with Bremond's terminology).

A sequence is a logical string of nuclei, linked together by a solidarity relation: [38] the sequence opens when one of its terms is lacking an antecedent of the same kin, and it closes when another of its terms no longer entails any consequent function. To take a deliberately trivial example, consecutive functions like ordering a drink, receiving it, consuming it, and paying for it, constitute an obviously closed sequence, for it is not possible to mention anything prior to the ordering or posterior to the paying, without moving away from the homogeneous set designated as *consommation*. Indeed, a sequence is always nameable. When determining the larger functions of the tale, Propp, then Bremond, found it convenient to name them (Fraud, Treason, Struggle, Contract, Seduction, etc.); the naming process is also inevitable for trivial sequences, those "micro-sequences," as they might be called, of which the fine grain of the narrative texture is made. Does the operation of naming sequences belong exclusively to the analyst? In other

38 In the Hjelmslevian sense of double implication, whereby two terms presuppose each other.

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words, is it purely metalinguistic? Surely it is, since it deals with the narrative code, yet one could argue that it is part of a metalanguage elaborated by the reader (or listener) himself, as he apprehends any logical sequence of actions as a nominal whole: to read is to name; to listen is not only to perceive a language, but also to construct that language. The sequence titles are fairly similar to the cover-words of translation machines which cover, quite adequately, a great variety of meanings and nuances. The conventional narrative language internalized by the reader comes readily equipped with such essential head-words. The self-contained logic which structures a sequence is inextricably tied to its name: any function which initiates a *seduction* imposes, from the moment it appears, by virtue of what is conjured up by the name, the whole process of seduction, as we have learned through all the narrative acts that have fashioned in us the "language" of narrative.

However minimal its importance, the sequence, made up as it is of a small number of nuclei (which means, in fact, "dispatchers"), always involves moments of risk which make it worthy of analysis: it might sound futile to set up as a sequence the logical succession of trivial acts which go into the offering of a cigarette (offering, accepting, lighting up, smoking). Yet precisely at each of those points, a choice, hence a "freedom" of meaning, becomes possible: du Pont, Bond's special agent, offers to light his cigarette with his own lighter, but Bond refuses; the meaning of this deviation from the norm is that Bond instinctively shrinks from a booby-trapped gadget.[39] One may say, then, that a sequence is a *potentially incomplete logical unit.* As such, it is justified within the local context, but it is also rooted in the larger context. Because it is self-contained with regard to its functions, and bracketed under a name, the sequence can be apprehended as a unit, ready to function as a simple term in another, broader sequence. Take the following micro-sequence: *extending one's hand*, *shaking hands*, *releasing the handshake.* This *Greeting* becomes a simple function: looked at in a certain light, it assumes the role of an index (du Pont's flabbiness and Bond's shrinking from it). Considered as a whole, however, it constitutes one term along a broader sequence, subsumed under the name of *Encounter*, whose other terms (*drawing near*, *stopping*, *hailing*, *greeting*, *settling down together*) can be micro-sequences on

39 It is quite possible to identify, even at the infinitesimal level, an opposition of a paradigmatic type, if not between two terms, at least between two poles of a sequence: the sequence *offering of a cigarette*, spreads out—even as it suspends it—the paradigm *Danger/Safety* (brought to light by Cheglov in his analysis of the Sherlock Holmes cycle), or *Suspicion/Protection*, *Aggressiveness/Friendliness.*

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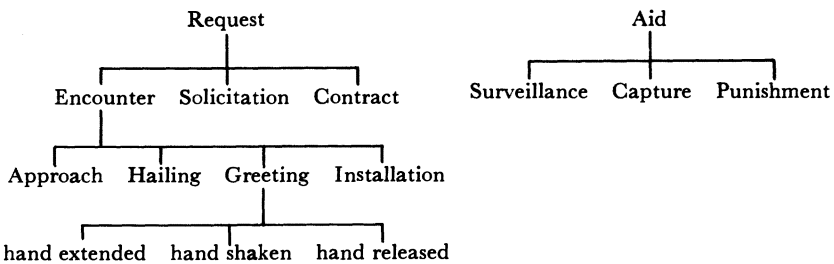
their own. A whole network of subrogations thus binds together the narrative, from the smaller matrices up to larger functions. We are dealing here, of course, with a hierarchy that still fits within the functional level. It is only when the narrative has reached a greater expansion, one connection leading to another—from the cigarette offered by du Pont to Bond's fight with Goldfinger—that the analysis of functions can be considered complete. The pyramid of functions then yields to the next level (the level of Actions). There is indeed, at the same time, a syntax within the sequence, and a (subrogating) syntax regulating functions among themselves. The first episode of *Goldfinger* thus presents itself like a "stemma":



This representation is obviously analytical. The reader, by contrast, perceives a linear succession of terms. But what calls for special attention is that some terms belonging to several sequences can easily dovetail into each other. Before a sequence is completed, the initial term of a fresh sequence can be introduced: sequences proceed according to a contrapuntal pattern.[40] Functionally the structure of narrative is that of the fugue: narrative "pulls in" new material even as it "holds on" to previous material. It is conceivable that, within the same work, this dovetailing of sequences may suddenly be interrupted, somewhere along the line, at a clean break-off point, yet this can only happen if the few independent blocks (or "stemma") that now make up the work are recovered, as it were, on the upper level of Actions (of characters). *Goldfinger* is made up of three functionally independent episodes, since the stemmas cease to interlock on two occasions. No sequential relation exists between the episode in the swimming pool and that of Fort Knox; but there remains an actantial relation, for the characters (hence the structure of their relationship) are the same. Here we recognize the epic pattern ("a whole with multiple fables"):

40 This counterpoint has been anticipated by the Russian formalists, who have roughed out its typology; it is not unlike the principal "gnarled" structures of a sentence (see below, V. 1).

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the epic narrative is broken on the functional level but remains one on the actantial level (this can be verified in the *Odyssey* or Brecht's theater). It is necessary then to top the level of functions (which supplies the major part of the narrative syntagm) with a higher level from which, one after the other, the units of the first level derive their meaning, and that is the level of Actions.

III. Actions

1. Towards a structural status of characters

In Aristotelian poetics, the notion of character is secondary, entirely subordinated to the notion of plot. There can be fables without characters, according to Aristotle, but there cannot be characters without fables. This view has been upheld by classical theoreticians (Vossius). Later, the character, which until then had been nothing but a name, the agent of an action,[41] took on psychological consistency, became an individual, a "person," a fully constituted "being," even though he might remain idle, and of course, even before he acted.[42] Character was no longer subordinated to action; it became the instant embodiment of a psychological essence; such essences could lend themselves to inventories which have found their purest expression in the list of traditional "roles" of the bourgeois theater (the coquette, the noble father, etc.). From the very first, structural analysis showed the utmost reluctance to treat the character as an essence, even for classification purposes; as T. Todorov reminds us in his article, Tomachevski went so far as to deny character any narrative significance whatsoever, a point of view which he toned down subsequently. Without going so far as to ignore characters in his analysis, Propp reduced them to a simple typology, based not on psychology but on the homogeneous nature of the actions assigned to them by the narrative (giver of the magic object, Assistant, Villain, etc.).

Since Propp, the character has kept challenging structural analysis with the same problem: on the one hand the characters (whatever the names given to them: *dramatis personae* or *actants*) constitute a necessary plane of the description, outside of which the commonplace

41 It will be kept in mind that classical tragedy does not as yet use "character," but only "actors."

42 The "person-character" dominates the bourgeois novel; in *War and Peace*, Nicolas Rostov is, from the outset, a nice, loyal, courageous young man; Prince Andrew is high-born, disillusioned, and so forth: what happens to them illustrates them, but does not make them into what they are.

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"actions" that are reported cease to be intelligible, so that it may safely be assumed that there is not a single narrative in the world without "characters,"[43] or at least without "agents." Yet on the other hand, these numerous "agents" cannot be either described or classified in terms of "persons," whether one considers a "person" as a purely historic form restricted to certain genres (no doubt the best known to us), thus putting one under obligation to consider separately the case, quite considerable indeed, of all the narratives (popular tales, contemporary texts) using agents, but not persons; or whether one takes the view that the "person" is but a convenient rationalization superimposed by our epoch on otherwise pure narrative agents. Structural analysts, scrupulously avoiding to define the character in terms of psychological essences, have done their best until now, experimenting with various hypotheses to define the character not as a "being" but as a "participant." To Claude Bremond, each character can be the agent of action sequences that are properly his own (Fraud, Seduction); when a single sequence involves two characters—it is the normal case—the sequence implies two perspectives, or, if one prefers, two names: what is Fraud to one is Dupery to the other. What it comes to is that each character, even a secondary one, is the hero of his own sequence. Tzvetan Todorov, analyzing a "psychological" novel (*Les Liaisons dangereuses*), starts not from characters but from the three broad relationships in which they are apt to become involved and which he calls basic predicates (love, communication, assistance). These relationships are examined by two sorts of rules: the *derivation* rules, when other relationships have to be taken into account, and *action* rules, when it comes to describing the transformation of the original relationships in the course of the story. There are many characters in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, but "what is said of them" (their predicates) is classifiable. Finally, A. J. Greimas has proposed to describe and sort out characters in narrative not on the basis of what they are but on the basis of what they do (hence the name of *actants*), inasmuch as they partake in three main semantic axes, which incidentally have their replica in the sentence (subject/object, attributive clause, circumstantial clause), namely communication, desire

43 If a portion of contemporary literature radically interferes with the "character," it is not in order to destroy it (which is not possible), but to depersonalize it (which is quite different). A novel devoid of any characters, such as *Drame*, by Philippe Sollers, turns entirely away from the person, to the benefit of language, but retains nevertheless a fundamental interplay of actants bearing on the speech acts themselves. This type of literature does not do away with the "subject," but the "subject" is, from now on, the linguistic subject.

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(or the quest), and ordeal.[44] Since this participation falls into pairs of opposites, the infinite world of characters also comes under the control of a paradigmatic structure (subject/object, giver/recipient, adjutant/opposer), projected on the syntagmatic axis of the narrative; and since an actant serves to define a class, its role can be filled by different actors, mobilized according to rules of multiplication, substitution, or by-passing.

These three conceptions have many points in common. The main point, which should be stressed once more, is that they define a character by his participation in a sphere of actions, such spheres being limited in number, typical, and subject to classification. That is the reason why the second level of description, though concerned with the characters, was called the level of Actions: the word *action* then is not to be understood here in the same sense as those minor acts which formed the texture of the first level, but rather as designating the larger articulations of *praxis* (to desire, to communicate, to struggle).

2. The problem of the subject

The problems raised by a classification of characters in narrative are still partially unresolved. There is surely a large measure of agreement on the fact that the innumerable characters in narrative can be subjected to rules of substitution and that, even within one work, one single figure can absorb different characters.[45] On the other hand, the actantial model proposed by Greimas (and further developed by Todorov in a different perspective) seems to have withstood the test of accommodating a great number of narratives: like any structural model, its medit does not lie so much in its canonic form (a six-actant matrix) as it does in the regulated transformations (by-passes, confusions, duplications, substitutions) to which this model lends itself, thus raising the hope of establishing an actantial typology of narratives.[46] However, when the matrix has good classifying potential (which is the case with Greimas' actants), it has more difficulty accounting for the multiplicity of participatory acts as soon as one starts analyzing

44 *Sémantique structurale* (Paris: Larousse, 1966), pp. 129ff.

45 Psychoanalysis has widely accredited these operations of condensation. Mallarmé had already written, in his time, referring to Hamlet: "Secondary figures, those characters [*comparses*] must inevitably be! for, in the ideal mode of picturing peculiar to the stage, everything moves according to a symbolic reciprocity between types or relative to a central isolated figure" (*Crayonné au théâtre, Oeuvres* [ed. Pléiade], p. 301).

46 For instance: narratives where object and subject are merged into one character, as in narratives centered on the quest of oneself, of one's identity (*L'Ane d'or*); narratives where the subject pursues successive objects (*Madame Bovary*), and so forth.

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them in terms of perspectives; and when these perspectives are respected (as in Bremond's description), the system of characters ends up being too fragmented. The reduction proposed by Todorov avoids both pitfalls, but it has thus far been applied only to one narrative. It seems that most of these difficulties can be smoothed over fairly rapidly. The real difficulty one runs into when classifying characters is the location (hence the existence) of the *subject* in any actantial matrix, whatever its formulation. Just who is the *subject* (the hero) of a narrative? Is there or is there not a privileged class of actors? The French novel seems to have built up in us a tendency to emphasize, one way or another, sometimes in a devious (negative) way, one particular character among others. But this privileged status only has a limited applicability when one considers the whole of narrative literature. Thus, for example, a great many narratives set up two opponents at odds with each other over the possession of a stake, and this opposition has the effect of "equalizing" their actions. The subject then is actually a double subject, and it cannot be further reduced by substitution. This may even be a widely used archaic form, as if narrative, emulating the practice of certain ancient languages, recognized as in Greek, a "dual" in persons. This "dual" is all the more interesting because it points out the affinity between narrative and the structure of certain (quite modern) games in which two equal opponents set out to conquer an object placed in circulation by a referee. This scheme recalls the actantial matrix proposed by Greimas, an analogy that is not surprising if one pauses to realize that play, considered as a language, possesses the same symbolic structure as that found in language and narrative. The procedure of playing can be analyzed in the same manner as a sentence.[47] If we must retain a privileged class of actors (the subject of the quest, of desire, of action), one should at least make it more responsive by subjecting such an actant to the specific categories of the grammatical person, not the psychological. Once more it will be necessary to draw closer to the linguistic model in order to describe the personal stance (I/you) as distinct from the *apersonal* stance (he) of the action, each of these two categories being further describable as singular, dual, plural. It is quite possible that the grammatical categories of the person (accessible through our pronouns) will eventually hold the key to the actional level. But since these categories can only be defined in relation to discourse, not in relation to reality,[48]

47 The analysis of the James Bond cycle (*Communications*, 8 [1966], 77-93) concerns itself more with play than with language.

48 See the analyses of the person by Benveniste (*Problèmes*).

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the characters, considered as units on the actantial level, can only find their meaning (their intelligibility) if they are integrated into the third level of the description, which we shall call, for the purpose of this study, the level of Narration (as distinct from Functions and Actions).

IV. Narration

1. Narrative communication

Just as there is, within the narrative, a large exchange function (enacted by giver and recipient), similarly, in homological fashion, the narrative, viewed as object, is the basis of a communication: there is a giver of narrative and a recipient of narrative. In linguistic communication, *I* and *you* are presupposed by each other; similarly, a narrative cannot take place without a narrator and a listener (or reader). This is a banal statement, yet one that has been so far insufficiently used. No doubt the part of the addresser has been abundantly paraphrased (commentators have studied the "author" of a novel without being too concerned incidentally whether he is really the "narrator"), but when it comes to the reader, literary theory shows more pronounced modesty. In fact, the real problem is not how to probe the narrator's motives or measure the effects the narration may have on the reader, but rather to describe the code through which the narrator's and the reader's presence can be detected within the narrative itself. The signs of the narrator seem, at first glance, more visible and more numerous than the signs of the reader (a narrator says *I* more often than he says *you*); in actual fact, the latter are simply harder to detect than the former. Thus each time the narrator stops "representing" and recounts facts which he knows perfectly well, though they are unknown to the reader, there occurs, through a suspension of the meaningful dimension, a sign of the reading act, for there would not be much sense in the narrator's giving himself information. "Leo was the boss of this joint,"[49] we read in a first-person novel: this is a sign of the reader's presence, a close approximation of what Jakobson calls the conative function of communication. In the absence of any known inventory of such signs, we shall for the moment set aside the signs of

49 *Double Bang in Bangkok.* The sentence functions as "a wink to the wise," as if the reader himself were being addressed. By contrast, an utterance like "So then, Leo had just left a few minutes ago" is a sign of the narrator, for it is part of a line of reasoning followed by a "person."

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the reception (important as they are) to say a word of the signs of narration.[50]

Who is the giver of the narrative? Three conceptions seem to have been formulated so far. The first takes the view that the narrative emanates from a person (in the fully psychological sense of the term): the person has a name, it is the author, who is the locus of a perpetual exchange taking place between the "personality" and the "art" of a perfectly identified individual who periodically takes up the pen to write a story. The narrative (especially the novel) is then no more than the expression of an *I* who exists independently of it. The second conception sees the narrator as a sort of omniscient, apparently impersonal, consciousness that tells the story from an all-encompassing point of view, that of God:[51] the narrator stands at the same time inside his characters (since he knows all that happens in them) and outside them (since he never identifies with one more than the other). The third conception, the most recent (Henry James, Sartre), declares that a narrator must limit his story to what the characters can observe or know: the assumption is that each of the characters is, in turn, the transmitter of narrative. All three conceptions are inadequate in that they seem to consider the narrator and the characters as real, "living" persons (the unfailing potency of this literary myth is well known), assuming further that narrative is originally constituted at the referential level (these again are "realist" conceptions). Now, at least from our viewpoint, both narrator and characters are essentially "paper beings." The living author of a narrative can in no way be mistaken for the narrator of that narrative;[52] the signs of the narrator are embedded in the narrative, hence perfectly detectable by a semiological analysis. But in order to argue that the author himself (whether he is obtrusive, unobstrusive, or surreptitious) has signs at his disposal which he can scatter through his work, one must posit between this "person" and his language a strict complementary relation which makes the author an essential subject, and narrative the instrumental expression of that subject. This assumption structural analysis is loath to make. The one *who speaks* (in the narrative) is not the one *who writes* (in real life) and the one *who writes* is not the one *who is*.[53]

50 In "Les catégories," Todorov deals with the narrator's and the reader's images.

51 "When will someone write from the point of view of a *joke*, that is to say the way God sees events from above?" (Flaubert, *Préface à la vie d'écrivain* [Paris: Seuil, 1965], p. 91).

52 A distinction all the more necessary, given the wide scope of this analysis, because, historically, a considerable mass of narratives is without authors (oral narrative, folk tales, epic poems entrusted to bards, to recitors, etc.).

53 J. Lacan: "Is the subject to which I refer when I speak the same as the one who speaks?"

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In fact, like language, narration proper (or the narrator's code) admits of only two systems: personal and *apersonal* (impersonal). These two systems do not necessarily benefit from the linguistic marks attached to the person (*I*) and to the nonperson (*he*). For example, some narratives, or at least some episodes, can very well be written in the third person, although their real stance is nevertheless the first person. How are we to decide? All one has to do is to rewrite the narrative (or the passage) from the *he* to the *I*: as long as this operation does not entail any alteration of the discourse other than the change of grammatical pronouns, we can be certain that we are still in a person system. The beginning of *Goldfinger*, although written in the third person, is in fact "spoken" by Bond. When testing whether the stance has changed, the decisive factor is that the rewriting then becomes impossible; thus the sentence "he saw a man in his fifties, still young looking . . ." is perfectly personal, in spite of the *he* ("I, James Bond, saw . . ."), but the narrative utterance "the tinkling of the ice cubes against the glass seemed to awaken in Bond a sudden inspiration" cannot be considered personal, on account of the verb "to seem," which becomes a sign of *apersonality* (not on account of the *he*). There is no doubt that the *apersonal* mode is the traditional mode of narrative, language having worked out a whole tense system peculiar to the narrative (articulated on the aorist[54]), designed to eliminate the present of the person who is speaking. "In narrative," writes Benveniste, "nobody speaks." Yet the personal stance (under various guises) has gradually found its way into narrative, narration being brought to bear upon the *hic et nunc* of the locutionary act (indeed this is exactly the definition of the personal system). As a result, narratives, even some of the most common types, will be found to intermingle the personal with the *apersonal* mode at a very fast tempo, often within the limits of one sentence. For example, the following sentence from *Goldfinger*:

His blue-gray	*apersonal*
eyes	personal
were looking intently into duPont's eyes making him lose his countenance	personal
for this steady gaze evoked a mixture of ingenuousness, irony and self-depreciation.	*apersonal*

54 Benveniste, *Problèmes.*

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This intermingling of the two systems is obviously felt as a facile device. Such a practice can become faking. A detective story by Agatha Christie (*Five twenty five*) manages to keep the riddle alive only by cheating on the person of the narration: a character is described from within, even though he is already the murderer.[55] Everything happens as if a witnessing consciousness, belonging to discourse, could be made to coincide within a single person, with a murderer's consciousness inherent in the referent. Only through this tricky juggling with the two systems can the riddle be kept alive. It is thus understandable that, at the other pole of literature, writers of fiction should have made the commitment to a rigorous and consistent system of narration one of the necessary conditions of a work, without always having been able, however, to meet the challenge.

This rigor—sought after by certain contemporary writers—is not necessarily an aesthetic imperative; what is generally called a psychological novel is usually characterized by a mixture of the two systems, mobilizing in turn the signs of the nonperson and the signs of the person. Indeed, "psychology"—there lies the paradox—cannot long survive on a pure person system, for if the whole narrative is reduced to the narrational stance, or if one prefers, to the illocutionary act, then the very content of the person is threatened: indeed, the psychological person (belonging to the referential order) has nothing to do with the linguistic person, which is never defined by natural dispositions, intentions, or personality traits, but only by its (coded) point of insertion in the discourse. It is this formal person which today's writers are trying to express. We are faced here with an important subversion (confirmed incidentally by the reading public, who has the impression that no one writes novels any more), for it is aimed at converting the narrative from the order of pure observation (which it occupied until now) to the performative order, whereby the meaning of a speech act becomes the very act by which it is uttered.[56] Today, writing is not "telling"; rather it signifies that one is telling, thereby making the whole referent ("what is being said") contingent upon this illocutionary act. This is why part of contemporary literature is no longer descriptive but transitive, striving to achieve so pure a present

55 Personal mode: "It even seemed to Barnaby that nothing looked changed, etc." The device is even more blatant in *The Murder of Roger Akroyd*, since the murderer is simply made to say *I*.

56 On the performative mode, see Todorov, "Les catégories." The classical example of a performative is "I declare war," a speech act which "records" or "describes" nothing, but derives its entire meaning from the fact that it is being uttered (by contrast: "The king declared war," actually records or describes something).

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in speech that the whole of discourse becomes identified with the act that delivers it, the whole *logos* being reduced—or extended—to a lexis.[57]

2. The narrative situation

It can then be said that the narrational level is occupied by the signs of narration, which reintegrate functions and actions into the narrative communication, the latter being articulated by its giver and its recipient. Some of the these signs have already been studied. In oral literatures, certain codes of recitation have been figured out (metric formulae, conventional protocols with regard to presentation), and it is known that the "author" is not the one who invents the most beautiful stories, but the one who achieves the greatest mastery over the code he shares with his audience. In these oral literatures, the narrational level is so clear-cut, its rules so binding, that it is difficult to conceive a "tale" without the coded narrative signs ("Once upon a time," etc.). In our written literatures, the "forms of speech" (which are in fact narrational signs) have been identified early: among them the classification of modes of authorial interventions, outlined by Plato, continued by Diomedes,[58] the coding of beginnings and endings of narrative, the definition of various styles of representation (the *oratio directa*, the *oratio indirecta*, with its *inquit*, the *oratio tecta*),[59] the study of "points of view," and so forth. All these elements are part of the narrational level. To these, of course, must be added the writing process as a whole, for its role is not to "transmit" the narrative, but to make it conspicuous.

Indeed, it is in that self-emphasis of narrative that the units at the lowest level take on their full significance. This ultimate, self-designating, form of narrative [i.e., the narrational level] transcends both its contents and its properly narrative forms (functions and actions). This explains why the narrational code should be the last level to be reached by our analysis; going any further would be overstepping the limit of narrative-as-object or transgressing the immanence rule which underlies this analysis. Narration can indeed receive its meaning only from the world which makes use of it: beyond the narrational level begins

57 On the opposition between *logos* and *lexis*, see Genette's "Frontières" (*Communications*, 8).

58 *Genus activum vel imitativum* (no interference with discourse on the part of the narrator: the theater, for instance); *genus ennarrativum* (the poet alone is entitled to speak: aphorisms, didactic poems); *genus commune* (a mixture of the two: the epic poem).

59 H. Sorensen, *Mélanges Jansen*, p. 150.

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the external world, that is to say other systems (social, economic, ideological) which no longer include narratives only, but elements of another substance (historical facts, determinations, behaviors, etc.). Just as linguistics stops at the sentence, the analysis of narrative stops at the analysis of discourse: from that point on, it is necessary to resort to another semiotics. Linguistics is aware of this kind of limit which it has already postulated—if not really explored—under the name of *situations*. Halliday defines the "situation" (in relation to the sentence) as the body of nonassociated linguistic facts;[60] Prieto, as the body of facts known by the receiver at the moment of the semic act and independently of this act.[61] In the same way, one can say that any narrative is contingent upon a "narrative situation," or body of protocols according to which the narrative is "consumed." In the so-called "archaic societies," the narrative situation is coded to a very high degree;[62] nowadays, only "avant-garde" literature still dreams of providing protocols, spectacular protocols in the case of Mallarmé, who wanted the book to be recited in public according to a precise combinatorial scheme. So, too, Butor provides typographical protocols, punctuating his books with his own signs. But, as a rule, our society tends to de-emphasize the coding of the narrative situation as much as possible: there are innumerable narrational devices which try to naturalize the ongoing narrative, artfully presenting it as the product of natural circumstances, and divesting it, as it were, of its decorum. Epistolary novels, so-called rediscovered manuscripts, authors who happen to have met the narrator, films which run the beginning of their story before identification of the cast, all are devices for naturalizing the narrative. This reluctance to dramatize its codes is peculiar to bourgeois society and the mass culture to which it has given rise: both insist on having signs that do not look like signs. Yet this is only a structural epiphenomenon, as one might say: however commonplace, however casual the gesture the reader or writer makes upon opening a novel or a newspaper or turning on a television set, nothing can prevent this modest act from implanting in him, all of a sudden and in its entirety, the narrative code that he is going to need. In this way the narrational level plays an ambiguous role: contiguous with the narrative situation (and even sometimes including it), the narrational level opens out into the world where the narrative is con-

60 M. A. K. Halliday, "Linguistique générale," p. 6.

61 L. J. Prieto, *Principes de Noologie* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), p. 36.

62 A tale, as Lucien Sebag points out, can be told in any place at any time, but not a mythical narrative.

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sumed. Yet, at the same time, acting as a keystone to the preceding levels, this level closes the narrative, constitutes it once and for all, like the speech act of a language which anticipates and even carries its own metalanguage.

V. The System of Narrative

Language proper can be defined by the concurrence of two fundamental processes: the process of articulation, or segmentation, which produces units (this corresponds to *form*, according to Benveniste), and the process of integration, which collects these units into units of a higher rank (this constitutes the *meaning*). This double process has its counterpart in the language of narrative, which also recognizes an articulation and an integration, a form and a meaning.

1. Distortion and expansion

Form in narrative is marked essentially by two governing forces: the dispersion of signs throughout the story and the insertion of unpredictable expansions among them. These expansions appear as opportunities for freedom; nevertheless, it is in the nature of narrative to absorb such "discrepancies" as a part of its language.[63]

Sign distortions exist in language, and Bally analyzed them in his comparative study of French and German;[64] *dystaxie* [dystaxy] occurs as soon as the signs (of a linguistic message) are no longer juxtaposed, as soon as the linear (logical) order is disturbed (for instance the predicate preceding the subject). One typical form of dystaxy occurs when the different parts of one sign are separated by other signs along the chain of the message (for instance the negative *ne jamais* and the verb *a pardonné* in: *elle ne nous a jamais pardonné*): the sign being fractured, its signified is distributed among several signifiers, separated from each other, none of which can be understood by itself. As we have seen when dealing with the functional level, that is exactly what happens in the narrative: the units of a sequence may form a whole at the level of this particular sequence, and yet be separated from each other by the insertion of units from other sequences. As noted previously,

63 In Valéry's terms, "From a formal standpoint, the novel is similar to the dream: both can be defined as embodying this curious property: *all their discrepancies are organic to them.*"

64 Charles Bally, *Linguistique générale et linguistique française*, 4th ed. (Berne, 1965).

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the structure of the functional level is that of a fugue.[65] According to the terminology of Bally, who contrasts synthetic languages, where dystaxy predominates (as in German), with analytical languages that are more respectful of the logical linear order and monosemy, narrative would be a highly synthetical language, based essentially on a whole-within-the-whole and overlapping syntax. Each point in the narrative radiates in several directions at a time: when James Bond orders a whiskey while waiting for the plane, this whiskey considered as an index takes on a polysemic value; it is a sort of symbolic node which attracts and combines several signifieds (modernity, wealth, leisure). But considered as a functional unit, the ordering of a whiskey must work its way through several relays (consumption, waiting, departure) before it reaches its final meaning: the unit is "claimed" by the whole of narrative, yet on the other hand, the narrative "hangs together" only through the distortion and irradiation of its units.

Generalized distortion gives the language of narrative its unmistakable character: because it is based on a relation, often a distant one, and because it mobilizes a sort of implicit trust in one's intellective memory, distortion is a purely logical phenomenon, and as such, it constantly substitutes meaning for the pure and simple facsimile of narrated events. In "life," when two people meet, it is very unlikely that one person's request to "have a seat" would not immediately be followed by the other person's taking that seat; in narrative, these two units, proximate from a mimetic point of view, may well be separated by a long sequel of insertions pertaining to quite different functional spheres. Thus a sort of *logical time* comes to prevail, bearing little resemblance to real time, the apparent fracturing of units being still closely subordinated to the logic which binds together the nuclei of the sequence. Suspense is evidently but a privileged, or, if one prefers, an exasperating form of distortion: on the one hand, by keeping a sequence open (through emphatic devices such as delays and reactivations), it secures the contact with the reader, thus managing an obviously communicative function; on the other hand, it holds over him the threat of an uncompleted sequence, of an open paradigm (if, as we believe, all sequences have two poles), that is to say, a logical disorder. It is this disorder which is consumed with that particular anguish tinged with delight (the more to be savored, since it is always straightened out in the end). Suspense is, therefore, a way of gambling with struc-

65 Cf. Lévi-Strauss (*Structural Anthropology*, p. 234): "Relations originating in the same cluster may appear at wide intervals, when viewed from a diachronic perspective." A. J. Greimas, for his part, insisted on the dispersed nature of functions (*Sémantique structurale*).

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ture, with the ultimate goal being, as it were, to risk and to glorify the structure. Suspense is the intelligible made problematic; by representing order (not the serial type of order) in its fragility, it achieves the very idea of language. What is ostensibly the most pathetic is also the most intellectual: the appeal of suspense is to the "mind," not to the "bowels."[66]

Dispersed along the narrative, the functional nuclei leave interstitial gaps between them, which may be filled almost indefinitely; interstices can accommodate a great number of catalyses. However, at this point a new typology may be introduced, for the catalystic freedom can be regulated, first according to the content of the functions (some functions are more apt to develop catalyses than others, for instance, *waiting*[67]); second, according to the substance of narrative (writing, as a medium, has a potential for dieresis—hence catalystic possibilities—far superior to that of a film: it is easier to "freeze" an enunciated gesture than its visualized counterpart[68]). The catalystic potential of narrative finds a corollary in its elliptical potential. On the one hand, a function ("he had a substantial meal") can economically replace all the virtual catalyses it contains implicitly (the details of the meal);[69] on the other hand, it is possible to reduce a sequence to its nuclei, and again a whole hierarchy of sequences to its principal terms, without altering the meaning of the story. A narrative can be identified even if one reduces its total syntagm to its actants and major functions.[70] In other words, narrative lends itself to *summary* (what used to be called the *argument*). At first glance, this seems to be the case with any kind of discourse; but each type of discourse has its own type of summary. A lyrical poem, for instance, is a vast metaphor possessing

66 J. P. Faye writes, referring to *Baphomet* by Klossovski: "Rarely has fiction (or narrative) so clearly revealed what it always is, by necessity: an experiment of 'thought' on 'life' " (*Tel Quel*, 22 [1955], 88).

67 Logically *waiting* comprises only two nuclei: (1) the setting up of the terms of waiting; (2) the fulfillment or frustration of the waiting process; but the first nucleus is subject to extensive catalysis, sometimes a self-perpetuating catalysis (*Waiting for Godot*): a further instance of gambling with structure, this time carried to the extreme.

68 In Valéry's terms, "Proust separates—and gives one the feeling of being able to separate indefinitely—what other writers are accustomed to leap over."

69 Here again, specifications according to substance must be anticipated: literature has an unmatched potential for ellipsis—which the movie lacks.

70 Such a reduction does not necessarily correspond to the division of the book into chapters; on the contrary, chapters seem to assume more and more a disjunctive role, setting up break-off points, that is, built-in suspense devices (a favorite with serial publications).

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a single signified;[71] to sum it up means to reveal the signified, an operation so drastic that it causes the identity of the poem to evaporate (when summarized, lyrical poems are reduced to the signifieds *Love* and *Death*), hence the widespread belief that paraphrase or summary of a poem is impossible. By contrast, the summary or paraphrase of a narrative (if carried out according to structural criteria) preserves the individuality of the message. In other words, narrative is *reducible* without fundamental damage. What remains untranslatable is determined only at the last level, the narrational level. The signifiers of narration [*narrativité*], for instance, cannot easily be transferred from novel to film, for the latter hardly ever[72] makes use of the personal treatment. As for the last layer of the narrational level, namely the idiosyncratic mode of writing [*écriture*], it cannot be translated from one language to another (or, if it can, the results are poor at best). The translatability of narrative is inherent in the structure of its language; it would then be possible, if one proceeded in reverse, to find one's way back to this structure, by isolating the (unequally) reducible elements from the irreducible in narrative. The existence today of different and concurrent semiotics (literature, movies, comics, radio broadcasting) would greatly facilitate this analytical procedure.

2. Mimesis and meaning

In the "language" or narrative, the second important process is integration: what has been disjoined at a certain level (a sequence, for instance) is joined together again at a higher level (whether it be a sequence elevated in the hierarchy, a signified subsuming widely scattered indices, or an action affecting a whole class of characters). The complexity of a narrative can be compared to that of an organigram [*organigramme*],[73] capable of integrating backtracking and forward leaps; or, more correctly, integration makes it possible to compensate for

71 According to Ruwet ("Analyse structurale," p. 82): "A poem can be understood as the result of a series of transformations applied to the proposition 'I love you.'" As it happens, Ruwet is here referring to the analysis of the paranoiac fantasy made by Freud in relation to President Schreber (*Five psychoanalyses*).

72 Once more, there is no relation between the grammatical "person" of the narrator and the "personality" (or subjectivity) which a film producer may incorporate into the presentation of a story: the *I-camera* (continuously identifying with the eye of a character) is an exceptional case in the history of movie-making.

73 [Organigram: a stemma (or diagram) that enables one to grasp visually the various kinds of relationships that bind together members of a complex, hierarchically structured organization. Whereas a diagram represents some structure which exists in the physical sense (part of a machine, or plant, or organ), an organigram sets forth an abstract set of relations, such as the hierarchy of command in the armed forces, or in a large corporation, or in the judiciary system. Tr.]

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the seemingly uncontrollable complexity of units situated on one level. Integration helps direct the comprehension of fragmented elements, at once contiguous and heterogeneous (as they occur in the syntagm which responds only to one dimension: succession). If, with Greimas, we call isotopy the signifying unit (for instance, one which pervades a sign and its context), we shall then say that integration is an isotopic factor: each (integrated) level imparts its isotopy to the units of the lower level, and prevents the meaning from "hanging loose"—a consequence that would surely take place if one did not perceive the overlapping of the levels. Yet narrative integration does not offer the appearance of smooth regularity, like that of a fine architectural design which would lead, from the infinite variety of simple elements through a symmetrical network of detours, up to a few complex masses; a unit often appears as a single unit, yet it may have two correlates, one at a certain level (a function within a sequence), the other at a different level (an index pointing to an actant). Narrative thus appears as a succession of tightly interlocking mediate and immediate elements; dystaxy initiates a "horizontal" reading, while integration superimposes on it a "vertical" reading. There is a sort of structural "limping," a constant interplay of potentials, whose "falls" impart "tone" or energy to the narrative. Each unit is perceived as a surface texture, while an in-depth dimension is maintained, and in this way narrative "moves along." Through the concurrent use of these two dimensions, structure branches out, proliferates, becomes exposed—then folds upon itself: what is new never ceases to be what is expected. There is, of course, a sort of freedom of narrative (similar to the freedom experienced by any speaker with regard to language), but this freedom is *limited* in a literal sense: by the stringent code of language at one end, by the stringent code of narrative at the other, with a sort of slack in between: the sentence. If one tries to encompass the whole range of written narrative, one finds at first the most systematic coding procedure (the phonematic, or even meristematic level), next a progressive relaxation till one reaches the sentence (which represents the highest degree of combinatorial freedom), then tension is progressively resumed, with smaller groups of sentences (micro-sequences) still enjoying a measure of freedom, and culminates with broader actions which form among themselves a stringent and restricted code: the creativity of narrative (at least under its mythical, "life-stimulating" appearance) would then be situated *between two codes*, the linguistic code and the translinguistic code. That is why it can be said, paradoxically, that *art* (in the Romantic sense of the term) is a matter of enunciating details, whereas *imagination* involves a mastery of the code: "In brief," said

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Poe, "it will be seen that the ingenious man is always full of imaginative potential and that the truly imaginative man is never anything but an analyst. . . ."[74]

Thus the claim that "realism" is the prime motivation of narrative must be largely discounted. As Bond, on duty in his office, picks up a telephone call, he "said to himself," so we are told by the author: "Calls from Hong-Kong are just as bad as ever and just as bad to get." Now, the real information does not lie either in the "he said to himself" or in the bad quality of the telephone service; perhaps this contingency will make things look more "alive," but the true information, the information that will spring up from its seed later, is the tracing of the call back to its origin, namely *Hong Kong*. So in any narrative, imitation remains contingent.[75] The function of narrative is not to "represent"; it is to put together a scene which still retains a certain enigmatic character for the reader, but does not belong to the mimetic order in any way. The "reality" of a sequence does not lie in the "natural" order of actions that make it up, but in the logic that is unfolded, exposed, and finally confirmed, in the midst of the sequence. To put it another way, the origin of a sequence is not the observation of reality, but the necessity to vary and to outgrow the first *form* that man ever came by, namely repetition: a sequence is essentially a whole within which nothing is repeated. Logic here takes on an emancipating value—and so does all the narrative, which rests on it. Men may keep reinjecting into narrative what they have known, what they have lived; but if they do, it is through a form which has conquered repetition and instituted a model for a "becoming." Narrative does not make people see, it does not imitate; the passion that may consume us upon reading a novel is not that of a "vision" (in fact, strictly speaking, we "see" nothing). It is the passion to discover meaning, it is a striving towards a higher order of relation, which also carries its emotions, its hopes, its threats, its triumphs. What goes on in a narrative is, from the referential (real) point of view, strictly *nothing*.[76] What does "happen" is language per se, the adventure of language, whose advent never ceases to be celebrated. Although we know little more about the origins of narrative than we know about the origins of language, it can reasonably be argued that narrative is contempo-

74 *Le double Assassinat de la rue morgue*, tr. Charles Baudelaire.

75 Genette rightly reduces *mimesis* to bits of inserted dialogues; and even at that, there is always a semantic, rather than mimetic, function lying hidden in dialogue.

76 "A dramatic work displays the succession of the outer effects of human acts, so that no moment in that succession can ever retain its reality and, all things being considered, nothing happens" (Mallarmé, *Crayonné*, p. 296).

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raneous with monologue, whose emergence seems to be posterior to that of dialogue. In any case, even without stretching the phylogenetic theory, it may be significant that man's offspring should have "invented," at the same time (around the age of three), both the sentence and Oedipus' narrative.

ÉCOLE PRATIQUE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES,
PARIS

(Translated by Lionel Duisit)

* * *

Note from the translator: The translator of modern critical theory is often caught between his desire to respect the integrity of an author's original text, particularly his terminology, and the necessity to be understood without imposing on the reader the use of a specialized glossary. In the present case, whenever faced with terms that have no English equivalent, I have tried to avoid using approximate substitutes chosen from already existing English terms. It is hoped that a carefully controlled context, with an occasional substitute given in brackets at the time of first occurrence, has aided the understanding of such terms as *actants, indices, informant, atemporal scheme, organigrams*, etc., which have, since 1966, gained currency among the proponents of structural analysis.

Although this essay was originally published in *Communications*, 8 (1966), it has remained one of the key documents in the study of narrative. The present authorized translation is the first to be published in English.

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