Narrative and theme: An exploration of the semantics of narrative

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Study title: Narrative and Theme: An exploration of the semantics of narrative

Student (applicant): Geyer NP (12324663)

Supervisors: Professor I Bekker

Ethics number:

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Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date: 12/10/2021 **Risk Category:** No risk

Expiry date: 11/10/2022

Approval of this no risk literary and textual analysis study (with no additional human participation) is provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

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Language corrections were minimal. The student is enrolled for a Doctoral degree in English, with previous experience in professional language editing himself. Furthermore, the student assured me that both of his supervisors also edited the language, and his primary supervisor has also done professional language editing in the past. In addition, the thesis was also proof-read by two of the student's friends, who are also experienced language editors.

Therefore, I can confirm that the submitted thesis more than meets the standards stipulated in the NWU's *Manual for Higher Degrees Studies*.

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Abstract:

Theme is a long-neglected topic in the study of narrative, partly due to longstanding views concerning the role of theme in narrative, partly due to shortcomings in semantics in the past. However, advances in semantics, particularly in Fauconnier and Turner's work on cognitive blending, have revealed the fundamental role of theme in narrative interpretation. This paper demonstrates the relevance of these insights to solving various shortcomings in existing narratological theories, and in doing so develops a new thematic model of narrative interpretation.

Tulving's research into memory distinguished between two kinds: experiential (episodic) and abstract memory. While Tulving emphasized their discreteness, Schank, Abelson and Langer's research into cognitive scripts instead demonstrates their interdependence. This fundamental distinction is then linked to parallel linguistic concepts, such as instantiation vs. abstraction, transitive vs. ergative, basic-level categories and experiential vs. abstract metaphor, uni-directionality, type vs. token, embodiment and scientific vs. folk-modelling in language. On this broad basis of linguistic evidence, it is proposed that instantiation and abstraction are both fundamental universals of language and cognition.

Based on the linguistic evidence, we propose two primary kinds of memory, abstract memory, which is devoted to interfacing between concepts, and experiential memory, which is devoted to interfacing concepts and the sensory inputs which relate concepts to life experiences. While distinct in their particular functions, they are at the same time closely integrated and mutually dependent.

Furthermore, it is proposed that narrative is intimately related to this coordination between the two kinds of memory, and that likewise, this cognitive model is fundamental to an authentic understanding how narrative works. According to the thematic narrative model, narrative is one of the primary ways in which we interface between these two kinds of memory, namely experiential memory and abstract memory. This makes it unique compared to all other narrative theories, which define narrative only in terms of experiential

cognition, often deliberately exclusive of abstract cognition. For this reason, the thematic narrative theory is not only ground-breaking in terms of the extensive support from linguistics, psychology and cognitive science research, but also in completely overturning most accepted ideas about narrative.

From this theory of the mind, the thematic narrative model mainly builds upon three prior theories, namely Northrop Frye's archetypal theory of narrative, Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative de-automatisation, and Fauconnier and Turner's Blending theory. Following Frye, narrative is defined as a relationship between an exemplar, which corresponds with the literal narrative, and a theme, which is the message it serves to convey. In the thematic narrative model, the exemplar in turn is identified with experiential memory, and the theme with abstract memory.

Building upon Frye's model, Ricoeur defined the primary purpose of narrative as de-automatisation. According to him, the mind takes the confusion of sensory input and gleans from it recurring patterns which then form the building material of concepts. Through conceptual integration, these concepts are refined and organized to form a unified conceptual framework. But in this process of refinement, concepts also lose much of the phenomenological significance of the original experiences. This is because the process of conceptualization is fundamentally one of generalization: identifying similarities at the cost of the unique. Ricoeur's premise is supported by the linguistic evidence for uni-directionality. Narrative then is a process of reintegrating experiences and de-automatising concepts by reminiscing on these original experiences and meditating on their conceptual significance.

This process of narrative de-automatisation is effectively one of conceptual blending, and thus Fauconnier and Turner's Blending model provides a handy means of explaining how this narrative de-automatisation blends experiential and abstract concepts. However, this is only achieved through a significant reconceptualization of the original theory. In Fauconnier and Turner's model, two conceptual inputs (in this case an experiential and an abstract one) are integrated through the creation of a generic space on the basis of their similarities. However, in the thematic narrative model, the generic space is instead equated with Frye's archetypes. According to Frye, narrative exemplar is primarily (but not exclusively) integrated with theme via a pre-existing vocabulary of integration schemas called archetypes. While Frye does make place for the kind of ad-hoc generic spaces Fauconnier and Turner describe (termed imagery by Frye), for him this is the exception

rather than the rule. Instead, Frye defines a kind of internal encyclopedia of integration models he terms archetypes which perform most of this work.

Thematic narrative in this way resolves many of the short-comings of the generally accepted definition of narrative (as *a series of events*). It is deeply entrenched in and integrated with research in the related fields of linguistics, psychology and cognitive science. It not only provides a more descriptive framework for defining narrative, but also provides a clear social function, something which most current narrative theories are rather deficient in. Aside from this it resolves a myriad other narratological problems. The accepted narratological definition, through its exclusive concern with experience as opposed to abstract cognition, isolates it from much of the current research and theory on language and cognition, while thematic narrative theory places narratology at the centre of the debate. This also affects their respective abilities to deal with a host of other narrative concerns such as cognitive perspective, narrative structure, narrative events, fictionality and figurative expression, affect, denotation and connotation and the language of narrative generally, and so on. For all of these criteria, the thematic narrative theory presents a remarkable advance compared to alternative theories.

Key words: narrative; theme; conceptual blending; archetype; Stephen Donaldson; Heart of Darkness

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Lastly, I must also acknowledge the financial and other assistance received from the NWU during the course of my studies that made this thesis possible.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Narrative and theme

1.1 The question of theme

Whenever one is introduced to a story, the first question that comes to mind is *what is it about*?

The reason for this is clear – the *aboutness*, topic or *theme* of the story, is its most distinguishing feature, the one feature which defines all the rest. Although part of this is often mirrored in the concept of plot, more than anything it is a question of theme. Narrative is traditionally defined in terms of main features, such as plot, character, theme, style, point of view, etc. (Fowler 1977:45-6, Beardsley 1956). But among these it is theme which corresponds most closely to the concept of what the story is about, and thus deserves to be our starting point for investigating the defining features of narrative.

Narrative is traditionally defined as '*a series of related events'*, and within this definition, it is the 'relation' element which equates with our concept of 'theme'. If we take two events, for example,

> A fox tries to reach grapes hanging on a vine,
>
> *and,* the fox departs, deciding they are not fit to be eaten.

It is the relation between the events which defines their meaning. The conclusion needn't be universal. However, only an interpretation which manages to reconcile the disparate events into a coherent whole could be termed the meaning (or theme) of the story.

But this proposed relation also redefines each element in the respective events. For instance, if we follow the conventional interpretation, it is a story about the fox, and the theme is reconciling disappointment through *consoling lies*. If, on the other hand, we centre our interpretation on the grapes, we might arrive at a very different interpretation, namely one relating to *deceptive appearances*. Notice however how different our conception of the fox is in each interpretation. In the first, the fox is a fool which lies to itself to conceal its own inadequacies, while in the second, the fox is wiser for the experience, having learned a valuable lesson. Similarly, these

variations spread out to encompass the other elements as well. In the first, the grapes are essentially passive, while in the other, they are personified as actively deceiving the fox. Ultimately, what relationship we select to integrate the elements into a coherent whole comes to define each individual element.

In this way, we understand the centrality of theme. An individual narrative event has no independent meaning other than what is assigned to it by the theme. Language is inherently *plurisignifying*, that is, *polysemic*. The construction of meaning from language requires the incorporation of *connotations* or inferences unspecified by the individual words themselves (or even clauses for that matter) but rather through their collective collocation into a holistic message or text (Langacker 1987: 86-109, Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 191). This is why theme is necessarily the starting point for understanding narrative – because theme is the universal key to unlocking narrative meaning.

Theme, as Abrams defines it, is '*a general concept*…which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader' (1993 [1957]:121). Theme or motif (which are historically interchangeable, alongside other cognates such as leitmotif or simply motif, topos, archetype and prototype (as well as the earlier topic or subject)) refers not to the particular entities or events depicted in stories, but rather the general truths which we derive from them (Seigneuret 1988:xvii). In other words, theme is an abstraction from the concrete entities and events presented in the text (Holman, Thrall & Hibbard 1986).

Beardsley (1956:xxxi-ii) provides a more expanded definition: As he explains, theme is what we get when we observe something striking and ask ourselves, what is its significance, what does it represent or mean? Going further, he distinguishes between the *concrete subject or plot* and the *abstract subject or theme*, and explains that the concrete subject is what we substitute for the abstract subject in cases where the latter is uncertain or indescribable. If we are uncertain as to the theme of *the Fox and the Grapes*, when asked what the story is about, we say simply *a fox and some grapes* – we've substituted the plot for the theme and left the question of the theme up to the audience to decide. Notice that the question of theme is still, there. It's only been temporarily deferred. Furthermore, he differentiates between theme and thesis. *Thesis* comprises a specific statement or message, while theme is less defined – a set of ideas posed for the reader to make up their own mind about.

Theme is the conceptual raw material from which the reader constructs their own thesis. Thus, theses are more the domain of essays and themes than of artistic literature.

Falk (1967) takes a more text-centred, structural approach, defining theme as the most salient structural quality. Motifs[1] emerge from the text through foregrounding, meaning either structural prominence (such as being connected with critical events such as the incitement or denouement) or simple repetition. Theme in turn is the unifying factor across motifs. Theme and motifs can be communicated in a variety of guises – through the discursive or descriptive component (the way the author describes or comments on events), through direct statement (such as the famous opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*[2]), or through representations (character dialogue, character traits, events, places, objects, etc.), Like Beardsley, he also distinguishes between theme and thesis, with the latter commonly being something that the reader subjectively interprets from the former.

Theme, in this sense, is then more than just the sum of all semantic content of the narrative. In the field of thematics, the term theme is often used ambiguously to mean all subject matter connected to narrative (Petterson 2002). In this way, the question of theme is circumvented by equating narrative theme or meaning with the plot in its entirety. ‘To view theme in this way is to anchor it in structure – which I find appealing’ (Rimmon-Kenan 1995:16). But plot is not theme, as stated above. Theme is what the plot signifies or means to the audience. Weinberg emphasises the importance of the distinction between *narrative semantics*, which comprises this broader sense of all meaning content associated with a narrative, and thematics, which should properly focus only on the unique message, or as Falk puts it, the over-arching structural concept, of the individual work (Falk 1967:xi-iv). As Kintsch and van Dijk state, theme is fundamentally reductive since its purpose is to differentiate the global from the local significance (1983:52).

Lastly, the *plurisignifying/polysemic* nature of narrative must be kept in mind (Schleifer 1987:147). This means that stories, by their very linguistic nature, can have manifold possible themes (Frank 2010). Language coherence, as Linde states,

[1] Falk employs the term ‘motif’ in a specific sense, but generally it is cognate with ‘theme’.
[2] 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife'

is both social and idiolectical, comprising a combination of both conventional and individual meanings (1993:12). One of the most common complaints about thematics is that it inhibits the creativity of literature (Sollors 2002). But theme is not singular, static or universal. As Linde (1993:12, 25) states, the reading process requires a unifying concept to guide the reader as they continuously synthesise new information with that which has been given. But this unifying concept needn't be the same for all readers, nor need it even remain the same for the individual reader over time. Themes can differ between readers and change or evolve over time even for a single reader. Thematics thus shouldn't be an obstacle to creativity.

In short, theme is that which everything within the narrative has in common. A narrative comprises a set of represented experiences, and the theme is *the universal subject of a narrative which gives it coherence*. Sometimes such a system is introduced in the narrative, as with Beardley's thetic narrative (narrative with a defined thesis), while at other times, the relation is deliberately vague, compelling the audience to arrive at one of their own.

The primacy of theme is evident to the extent to which other elements, plot, style, character, point of view, etc. are predetermined by theme. This is because their relation to theme is auxiliary in nature – they are defined by their function as the tools by means of which theme is expressed. In other words, *in relation to theme, all else is but its medium*. As Aristotle, father of the form-meaning dichotomy in the arts, stated, to speak of the one is to speak of the other, for form without meaning is meaningless (Friedman 1975:189). In linguistics there is generally a distinction between the intended message (i.e. the theme) which discourse intends to convey, and the encoding of that message. Thus, there is always the need to access auxiliary information which is not part of the message itself, but necessary to make the message coherent to the interlocutor. Part of this auxiliary information includes narrative form. For example, all clauses must necessarily include tense, but almost never is tense itself the intended message of the clause. Rather, tense, like most grammatical information, forms part of the linguistic medium the audience requires to interpret the message. But it is not the intended message itself. We see this intended message function for instance in Sperber and Wilson's principle of relevance (1995 [1986]), or in the very concept of theme itself. 'Themes occur…because they have

communicative value. Successful communication – including the literary system – is largely due to thematic value' (Wolf 2002:341).

Theme is not only the starting point for interpreting story, but also the end goal and guide along every step of the journey. It is the pivot around which everything else in the story revolves. Thus, one's ability to intellectually and emotionally engage with the story is directly proportional to one's engagement with theme. As Falk (1967:1-4) describes it, *understanding theme engages us in the same way in a story that understanding the world around us engages us in everyday life – it produces a sense of contentment through the understanding of our place in the world*.

We observe the centrality of theme for example in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The plot is that of a protagonist sent into the wilderness to locate a missing agent, and from this we might easily be excused in believing this to be some kind of adventure story, travel diary or detective mystery. The plot does not provide a real clue as to the actual themes which inform the story, namely an account of the moral deficiencies of imperialism and the journey into the human psyche which inspires them (Knowles & Moore, 2000). But while there is nothing in the plot which presupposes these themes, the reverse is not so – it is quite easy to see how the choice of theme influences the choice of plot: the journey into the wilderness is a common metaphor for the inner journey of self-discovery, and the journey to the colonies provides a means to expose imperialist atrocities. Plot therefore encompasses more than just the theme – plot is the instantiated theme – theme plus form, intended message plus the informative medium used to communicate it. But it is theme which is more important, because the intended message alone warrants the existence of the medium.

In short, we can say that theme is the message a narrative is intended to convey. It will be argued that narrative does so through *instantiation*, that is, *an illustrative example*, which is the narrative itself. Thus, the narrative is merely the outward form or medium of the intended message, and the often unspoken theme, which the narrative serves to illustrate, is the intended message itself.

Historically, the words *story* and *narrative* have always been tied to the transmission of knowledge. When we trace their etymological roots, we find they derive from words relating to knowledge (*story* from the same root as the word *wisdom*, *narrative*

from the same root as the words *notion* and *to know*). It is important to note that the *knowing* in this case has less to do with the formal definition of disaffected mechanical reason, and more to do with the broader vulgar sense of a comprehensive, embodied understanding encompassing both mind and feeling, senses, body and spirit (Doty 2000: 43-4, 56).

It is strange then that in most narratological works, this essential connection with ideation is typically scarcely mentioned or even wholly absent. Consider for instance such seminal works of narrative theory such as Mieke Bal's *De Theorie van Vertelen en Verhalen* (1980) where theme is not even included in the list of terms, or Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* (1983), where it is only mentioned briefly (and dismissively) in a section comprising the length of two pages, a trend which only continues in their later works. Similarly, a scan of many of the definitive works on the subject (c.f. Booth, 2010; Brooks, 1992; Chatman, 1980; Genette, 1983, etc.) reveals this same trend. *This silence regarding the relevance of theme* has carried over to the present day, as we see in Herman's influential *Basic Elements of Narrative* (2011), which still defines narrative much the same as Bal and Rimmon-Kenan did at the outset of narratology, as 'a structured time-course of particularised events'. At no point is any mention made of thoughts, ideas or meaning. Instead, narrative is entirely externalised to 'categories such as event, time, character, actions, etc. The origins of this bias will be explored below, but what is important to note for the moment is that such a bias exists. Ryan (2007), for instance, in her overview of literature on narrative gives the accepted definition of narrative as about:

> *a world populated by individuated existents, some of which are intelligent and emotional agents, situated in time and undergoing significant transformations, some caused by purposeful actions, and caused by non-habitual physical events, some of which must be asserted as fact, in a unified causal chain leading to closure, communicating something meaningful to the audience* (my own paraphrasis*).*

Firstly, it would seem obvious that the last criterion is by far the most important. Stringing together a series of random events doesn't constitute a narrative. Narrative exists only when those series of events communicate a meaningful relationship, that is, a theme. As Linde states, narrative is created only through the selection of events which can be unified through mutual coherence (1993:12, 25). Yet it is this last

criterion (*communicating something meaningful to the audience*) which is both obviously the most important and also the most neglected in formalist narratology. Most definitions completely exclude the last criterion, and those which do, such as Ryan (2007) and Herman (2011), only do so in the form of a footnote with little further explication. Ryan, tellingly, includes many less consequential specifications, but fails to mention Linde's most fundamental criterion of the thematic selection of events.

Secondly, apart from the last criterion, we notice that all of these criteria describe the narrative in terms of *real-world phenomena*, as though the effect of narrative were to somehow conjure up a simulated reality for the reader to immerse him or herself in. This is only too visible in the various ways narrative is commonly dissected, all of which concern either categories of reality or the perception thereof. Consider for instance Rimmon-Kenan's taxonomy: events, characters and characterisation, time, focalisation, levels and voices, speech representation (1983).

But narrative doesn't create an open world for the reader to explore at their own whim, only a limited set of pre-packaged experiences, all of which are mediated via the central concept which they are designed to convey. There is perhaps some truth to the claim that imagination and inference make up for the obvious limitations of the text (du Plooy 1986:176-7, Frye 1956:115-22), but these inferences still expand from a clearly and thematically defined content. Instead, the commonly accepted understanding of narrative results in a literalist bias, where narrative is viewed as *a transparent window into the story world* beyond rather than a structured arrangement of concepts (this will be further discussed in sections 1.3 and 3.3). Understandably, such a theory negates the role of theme. No longer is narrative viewed as language, that is to say, a communicative medium in which a sender encodes an intended meaning to a receiver, but instead as a window through which a story world is directly experienced.

This will be the topic of this study, namely to arrive at a definition of what we conventionally term narrative. And the answer, *and* the primary shortcoming of most previous definitions, it will be argued, lies in the account of theme and the key role that it plays in narrative.

1.2 The intended message and the audience's interpretations

At this point, it is perhaps necessary to discuss what is meant by the term *intended message*, as well its relation to the audience's interpretation. On the one hand, there is the narrator's intended message, on the other, the audience's interpretation of it. Both of these views have been endorsed above. This is because, while the post-structuralist tradition views them as contradictory, from the linguistic perspective they are not only compatible, but complementary or even mutually interdependent.

Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) initially coined the term *intentional fallacy* in rebellion against the earlier tradition of biographical criticism, and post-structuralism continued in this direction with Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1977). But Wimsatt and Beadsley's objection was less against the concept of communicative intention but rather against a naïve interpretation of it which ignores the limits of the reader's knowledge or his or her creative responses. Post-structuralism went even further, denying, as Abrams puts it (1993:260) 'the validity of the key "function" or "role" hitherto assigned by Western thought to a uniquely individual and purposive subject as the "cogito" or origin of all knowledge; as the initiator, purposive planner, and (by his or her intentions) the determiner of the form and meanings of a text.' As such, in the narratological context, reference to an *intended message* may often recall negative associations with such a pre-structuralist interpretation of meaning.

The post-structural view resembles the standard understanding of meaning in linguistics. The classical communication model affirms the centrality of both sender and receiver roles, and in functional linguistics this interactivity is even more pronounced. The speaker is understood to communicate with the explicit intention of eliciting an independent response. As such, the agency of the sender and that of the receiver within the communicative act presuppose one another. After all, there is no purpose to encoding a message in the absence of a reaction, and the idea of audience reaction only makes sense in relation to a coherent stimulus. In systemic-functional analyses of discourse, meaning (in this context, theme and exemplar) is clearly conceived of as a shared creation of the participants. This is notwithstanding the significant role of of the socially-inscribed encyclopaedic background of language that they utilize as well (c.f. Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 29-30, 106-110).

Thus, the prescriptiveness which the post-structralists attribute to the concept of *intended message* is largely misplaced within its linguistic context. Communicative intent plays an indelible role in language use (Herman 2013:24). Indeed, Tomasello (2009) demonstrates that in the absence of communicative intent, language is reduced to no more than random noises and scribbles. It is only through communicative intention's imbuing of sounds and marks with meaning that they become language. In short, the term *intended message* is merely a recognition of the primacy of the *communicative intention* behind all language, that is the intention to share knowledge and experience (c.f. Rabinowitz 1987).

Linguistics instead affirms the polysemic nature of meaning (that an expression has multiple possible meanings, particularly in the differences between participants) (Bennett 1998). We observe this polysemy for example in the concept of under-specification, which is the 'deliberate omission of information from linguistic descriptions to capture several alternative realisations' (Egg 2010:166). And this, under-specification only increases at higher levels of syntactic organisation, as we observe when we proceed from clause to text. Indeed, it is this polysemy, the differences in interpretation, which form the basis of language interaction (Frisson 2009, Dancygier 2012a: 9-10). Indeed, it is hard to even conceive of a monosemic language, given how fundamental this trait of providing a marketplace for different perspectives is to language.

But of the various participants, it is the sender's original intended message which serves as the starting point of the conversation. As such, it deserves if not priority, then at least an ordinal primacy. After all, it is hardly possible to critically react to any text in the absence of at least some conception of an intended meaning. What exactly constitutes the *intended message* of the receiver is a complicated philosophical question (c.f. Irvin 2006), but one which we will set aside for the moment, suffice it to say that here we will view it as something which is inherently interactive, changing and context dependent.

1.3 Two definitions of narrative

Given the above, it seems obvious that the starting point for any narratology should be the intended message of narrative, that is, the theme. It is this communicative

intent which reasonably should define the selection of all other properties in any given narrative. Yet as we've seen, for the most part narratology studiously avoids the question of theme.

In this way, we can see that there exist two definitions of narrative within narratology, derived from what are two incommensurable interpretations. What needs to be kept in mind is that historically these two interpretations have not generally been viewed as antithetic, and consequently both have managed to coexist under the broad umbrella of narratology. Subsequently, as one would expect, most narrative theories combine claims from both interpretations, and therefore cannot be clearly classed in only one camp or the other, but instead often incorporate certain assumptions from both positions. Yet, even so, due to their incommensurability, one of the two typically takes a central position.

Firstly, there exists a dominant tradition which shall be termed *the formalist tradition*, where narrative is viewed as *a window onto an objectively perceptible narrative world*, and narrative meaning is attributed to the narrative world itself, defined by variations of the same rule-bound nature as our own experiential reality. Thus, narrative is defined in objective terms as a sequence of related events. By the term formalism, we are not alluding to any specific philosophy or methodology, such as the New Formalism (Theile & Tredennick 2013), but rather the entirety of that part of mainstream narratology which espouses this formal definition of narrative.

Secondly, there exists a more peripheral tradition which shall be termed *the thematic tradition*, where narrative is viewed in terms of a linguistic model as *a medium for communicating an intended message* – i.e. the theme – via an embodied experiential exemplar (These terms will all be explained in the figure below). In other words, narrative is seen as a device used for illustrating abstract concepts in a form mimicking real-life experiences.

We see this second tradition represented amongst others in Levi-Strauss' structuralist anthropology, Greimasian semiotics, Bremond's narrative possibilities, Frye's archetypes, Bruner's narrative cognition, Ricoeur's narrative mimesis; and, most importantly, corroborated by the functionalist linguistic tradition (these will each be discussed in full below). Again, none of the above-mentioned theories exclude all reference to formalist narratological ideas. Northrop Frye's *archetypal theory of*

narrative perhaps represents the clearest and most consistent expression of this preferred position, and therefore will provide the primary reference point, but even here we do find occasional reference to formalist concepts. The purpose here is not to painstakingly catalogue every item and nuance, but rather to focus examination exclusively on the primary theoretical principles and conclusions.

The formalist position adopts, I will argue, a *naïve realist view* regarding semantics, where the meaning of a text is equated with an equivalent to the *denotatum* or *referent* of semantic theory. In effect, the word *dog* refers to actual dogs rather than some kind of abstraction (Scholes 1974:111). In this way, narrative creates a pseudo-reality, which the audience experiences in a way similar to actual reality. This is why Barthes (1977: 79) can claim that narrative is 'international, transhistorical, transcultural', that narrative meaning is objectively universal in a way that other discourse is not. Narrative 'substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted'. 'Truly there is no longer a "narrator"…The events seem to tell themselves' (Genette 1976: 11).

We see both of these positions represented in the canonical narratological text, *The Nature of Narrative* (Scholes et al. 2006). Firstly, the authors present the traditional thematic definition, which originates with Aristotle and culminates in Frye's theory. This is however superseded by the more refined modern formalist narratological definition, which improves on the traditional definition in a number of respects:

Firstly, it agrees with one mainstream philosophical view, which equates narrative with a representation of human experience, as opposed to discursive language, which is a representation of abstract thought (Ricoeur 1984). The viewpoint of much narratology expands on this view, equating plot with reality, and narration with the subjective framing of reality as experience, of defining the window, to continue the metaphor. The purpose of narrative then becomes the capture of some essential quality of human experience (Kermode 2000 [1966]).

This then secondly has the virtue of greatly simplifying how narrative works. Plot (histoire/fabula) then constructs an objectively perceivable narrative world, comparable to reality itself, and this is experientially framed by the formal properties of narration (recit/syuzhet) (Culler 2002 [1981]: 171). This explains the fixation in modern narratological theory with the plot-narration binary.

Thirdly, if narrative functions by creating such a simulated reality, this also achieves the liberation of the reader from the censorious prescriptivism of thematics, which is seen as imposing pre-determined interpretations onto the reader, effectively denying the imaginative creative quality of reading and reducing the reader to a passive receptor (Bremond & Pavel 1988, Ryan 1988). If, instead, narrative creates a simulated reality, the reader is free to form their own interpretations as they would in real life.

Scholes et al. (2006) attempt to present this transition as predictable and only fitting, yet the incongruity of the two definitions is patent from the fact that the only way the authors can reconcile the two definitions is by means of a superordinate definition of – narrative is *any narrative told by a narrator* – in other words, the obvious circularity of a narrative *is* as a narrator *does*. By contrast, here it will be demonstrated that not only is the formalist definition not a natural refinement of the thematic one, but instead that they are inherently contradictory, and that the formalist definition is fundamentally the inferior. Regarding the three main points, it will also be argued that the philosophical view on which the formalist theory is based is contradicted by the linguistic evidence, that its simplification of how narrative works is ultimately a distortion, and finally, that the prescriptivism it accuses the thematic definition of is misplaced.

The thematic approach however, follows the contemporary view of *cognitive semantics,* where *meaning is figurative and abstract* rather than realistic. There is no narrative world, and words do not refer to some realistic equivalent, but instead to an abstract and symbolic form defined by conventions. In place of real-existents like character, setting, time and point-of-view, thematic narrative is defined by purely semantic principles like instantiation and abstraction, embodiment and archetype. Narrative is understood not as a representation of pure experience, but rather a synthesis of experience and abstract thought, and its purpose is the integration of unique experiences via abstract relationships. The thematic approach emphasises both denotative and symbolic associations, and views the text as a meaningful unity defined by its own unique communicative intent rather than a simulated reality from which the reader can select meanings. Nevertheless, it still acknowledges the creativity of reading and interpretation by acknowledging the functionalism of linguistic conventions, that these conventions are less a deterministic rule-set and

more a functional tool-set. *Meaning is created rather than determined*, and adapted to the personal semantic frame of reference rather than to an imposed uniformity that formalists associate with thematic approaches.

Here it shall be argued, primarily on the grounds of linguistic evidence, that these two alternative conceptions are ultimately irreconcilable and fundamentally opposed. Furthermore, it will be argued that between them, the thematic definition is the truer representation of narrative, and this all therefore requires a re-examination of the basic assumptions of formalist narrative theory. Indeed, the thematic definition is already implicit in the formalist definition, which defines narrative as *a series of related events*. In this case, *event* correlates with the experiential representation, but what else can the term *related* refer to other than a shared theme universal to all individual experiential *events* comprising the narrative? Yet this implicit thematic concept unfortunately doesn't make it past the definition in formalist theory. Instead, formalist theory posits the existence of a narrative world, and the narrative text as a window through which the audience gains access to this experiential realm. In this way, the question of theme is entirely sidestepped.

The lynchpin of the difference between them lies in the formalist' plot-narration binary. For formalists, plot equates with an objective referent which is simply taken as given. Analysis then pivots on narration, which is the subjective framing of this referent. The thematic definition, on the other hand, rejects this plot-narration binary, replacing it with the theme-exemplar binary. Here, the exemplar is the story as presented, while the theme is the message behind it which it seeks to communicate. The main difference between plot and exemplar is that while plot is equated with the referent, exemplar is equated with the signified. Thus, while the formalist theory plot is simply a given, for the thematic theory, the exemplar is subject to the linguistic code. Contrary to formalist theory, emphasis then falls on interpreting the exemplar and the various linguistic codes employed in doing so.

Thus, the thematic approach rejects the basic plot-narration binary almost entirely (except in the most rudimentary sense). Predictably, it then also rejects their derivatives, such as character, setting, time, action, etc. This is why these seemingly obligatory chapters in any narratological study will be conspicuously absent. Instead, because it rejects the formalist supplanting of the signified with the referent, focus shifts from categories of referent, such as the above (character, time, setting…), to

the linguistic codes used to interpret the signified (abstraction, instantiation, embodiment, exemplification, etc.).

For instance, by eliminating the plot-narration distinction, so too does the significance of time in narrative dissipate. By eliminating the thematic relation between events, formalist narratology often resorts to temporal succession as a substitute for explaining event relations (Bal 1999, Rimmon-Kenan 1983) – time rather than theme becomes the primary unifying principle in narrative. But as Linde points out, narrative time is not real time but a highly abstracted, figurative correlative whose purpose is more to represent conceptual relations between events (such as causality) than the objective experience of actual time (1993:13-26). The same is true for most other formalist categories such as character, setting, etc.

For the same reason that the thematic approach rejects the notion of plot, there can neither be any equivalent to the formalist concept of *natural narrative*[3] (and hence also the *unnatural narrative*) (Fludernik 1996), or the *zero-degree narrative'* (Genette 1980). This is because both of these depend implicitly on the assumption that plot corresponds to some kind of objective reality.

The plot-narration binary is so basic to the formalist theory that rejecting it means rejecting almost all other formalist theoretical distinctions. An example of this fundamental disconnect is in the formalist concept of performativity, which interprets narrative from a dramatic perspective. Performativity makes a distinction between performativity i, which defines the 'narrative reality' or plot which the story describes, and performativity ii, which defines the subjective perception or narration of that objective reality (Genette 1972). But when we replace plot-narration with theme-exemplar, the subject-object dichotomy between performativity i and ii vanishes, since all experience is subjective. From the thematic narrative perspective, there is only performativity ii. Performativity i cannot exist within a narrative framework from a thematic perspective.

And when we look for it, this same plot-narration distinction is omnipresent in formalist narratology. In essence it is the lynchpin on which almost all of the formalist narratological framework rests. It is the basis of formalist concepts such as narrative

[3] Narrative in its unmarked or 'natural' form. However, formalists predictably confuse this with 'realism': 'An unnatural narrative violates physical laws, logical principles, or standard anthropomorphic limitations of knowledge by representing storytelling scenarios, narrators, characters, temporalities, or spaces that could not exist in the actual world' (Alber 2013).

levels (including concepts such as enunciation, focalisation, mediacy and metalepsis, (Genette 1972)), character (Margolin 1990), event, temporal sequence and narrativity (Huhn 2008), fiction, fictional worlds (Ronen 1994), and narrative space (Ronen 1986), to name only some of the most prominent.

These differences can be summarised by using the following experiential model:

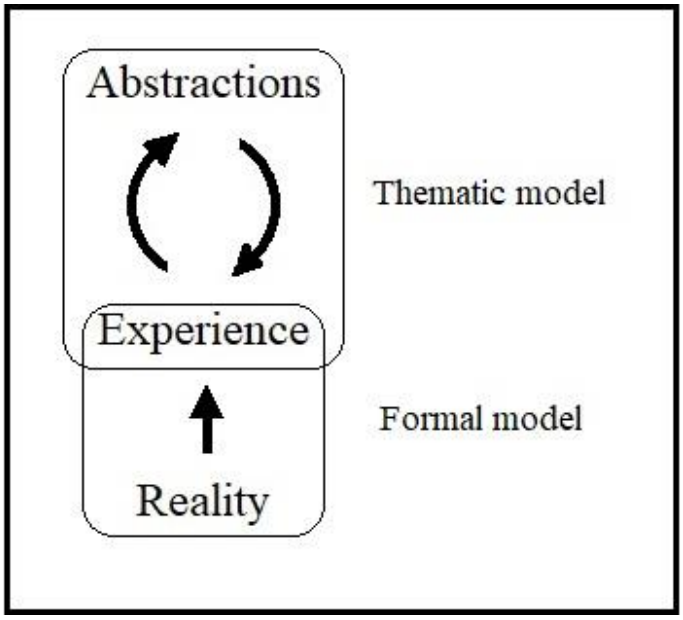

Figure 1.1 The experiential model

This model depicts the standard model of experiential cognition. Reality is perceived through the senses and construed as experience. For example, a real dog is perceived to render the experiential instance of *a dog*. Next, individual experiences are collected into groups. For example, from individual examples of *a dog* we create the collective group of *dogs*. This is a process called abstraction, by which we eliminate the unique characteristics that tells apart different individuals within a group until only the characteristics they have in common are left. This is also more colloquially referred to by the term *generalisation*. Later, we can again add unique peculiarities to the group to imagine an individual. For instance, from the group or category *dogs* we can again imagine an individual example of *a dog*.

The process corresponds with our concept of theme. The theme is the general idea or message which the specific example chosen in the story serves to portray. The particular example chosen for the story constitutes the *exemplar*. This exemplar then corresponds with the general concept of AN EXPERIENCE. And just as we can call both an instant in time or a prolonged period *an experience*, so to can we term a whole

story or a particular character or event *an exemplar*. Ultimately, even the terms *instance* and *event* display this same plasticity, in the sense that we can say *Heart of Darkness* couples the theme of imperialist atrocity to the event of Marlow's journey to find Kurtz.

These concepts are complicated, and will be explained at length in chapter 4, but the important take-away for now is that formalist narratology conceives of narrative as a relationship between reality (or at least a close fictional correlative) (the plot) and the experience of reality (narration). By contrast, thematic narratology defines narrative in terms of a relationship between individual experiences (the exemplar) and the general concepts or abstractions we glean from them (the theme).

Whereas formalist narratology defines narrative as a *referential* relationship between narrative text or experiential representation and narrative world or reality, thematic narratology defines it as a purely *representational* relationship between narrative text/exemplar or experiential representation, and a unifying abstract representation or theme.

Through this can we see just how radically different the formalist and thematic models are. The formalist model equates plot with reality, and therefore considers it a given, to be taken at face-value. The thematic model by contrast, views the exemplar as a mental construct, something which must be carefully constructed in accordance with both a linguistic code of shared conventions and subjective creativity. For formalists, the dog in a story correlates with real-life dogs, whereas for thematic narrative, the narrative dog is purely an ideation, which may or may not have any correspondence with the familiar real-world correlative depending on the linguistic cues given.

But not only do the two models differ radically in how they conceive of the *story-world*, the one as something which is objective and self-apparent, the other as something which is abstract and subjective, but also in terms of its interpretation. For the formalists, interpretation truly enters into the picture only with narration – that is, how reality is perceived. Hence, creativity and subjectivity are less a matter of what is portrayed (outside of the limited choice of subject) than how it is portrayed.

At the same time, the ideational significance (narrative meaning) is entirely eliminated by reducing narrative to a relationship between plot and narration, that is,

between reality and the impression of it. The core message which the narrative is intended to convey and which as we saw defines it entirely (that is, the theme), is wholly divorced to the periphery. While thematic narrative focuses on the relationship between the narrative representation and the intended message it is designed to convey, for formalist narratology, the intended message is entirely removed, and even the representation is reduced to a mere impression.

From this description, it might be believed that the breach between formalist and thematic interpretations is insurmountable. Rather, the essential claim is that the formalist definition is merely an incomplete version of the thematic definition. The thematic definition views narrative as an experiential representation of the theme, the formalist definition only as an experiential representation.

Thus, unfortunately, a thematic revision of formalist narrative doesn't merely amount to adding the missing pieces of the puzzle, but involves a more extensive project of purging these problematic derivatives from mainstream theories of narrative. Such a project of course is beyond the scope of this study, which only aims to provide a clear and detailed explanation of the thematic narrative definition as well as to substantiate this position.

Furthermore, the breach between thematic and formalist approaches doesn't even necessarily apply to most narrative analyses in literary criticism and elsewhere. As has often been noted, there is a rift between narrative theory and narrative analyses because by its very thematic nature, narrative analysis cannot do other than contend with the thematic function of narrative (Ronen 1994:147-9). Theory however exists to scaffold practice, and due to its omission of thematics the result is that, in practice, this is often done in a haphazard manner. In this sense, the thematic definition of narrative proposed here can be seen as an attempt to match narratological theory with what is already standard narratological practice.

The following comprise the primary shortcomings of formalist approaches to narrative: firstly, *the arbitrariness of narrative definitions* in their exclusion of thematic function, secondly, the claim that narrative communicates meaning through the creation of *an observable narrative reality*, and thirdly, *the derivatives* of this claim, which all deal with the function of other elements of narrative such as character, plot, fictionality, point of view, etc.

1.4 The definition of formalism

One other important terminological issue that must be addressed is the distinction between how the term *formalism* is employed here, and how it is commonly used in the context of cognitive narratology.

Formalism conventionally alludes to non-enactive and non-intersubjective theories of narrative (Armstrong 2020). Typical examples of this are structuralist and other representational theories of narrative, which instead view narrative as inherently rule-bound, universal and schematic.

This standard definition of *formalism* is very different from how the term is used here. Here it is used to refer to all mainstream narratological theories which accept the plot-narration binary and subsequently erase theme. In other words, these theories privilege form over content or theme. This is because they associate content/plot with the referent rather than the signified. This means that content is assumed to be a straight-forward representation of reality, so that almost all analytical interest is instead directed to form/narration, that is, how the narrative frames the plot.

Thus, the term, as employed here, denotes all formal theories of narrative, not just those which reject the enactive and intersubjective perspective. Obviously, this leads to the potential confusion of labelling as *formalist* many narratological theories which classify themselves as *anti-formalist* (Armstrong 2020). We retain the term in spite of this in the interests of greater clarity. This is because the crux of the thematic narrative opposition to mainstream narratology is precisely its privileging of form (i.e. the signifier) and subsequent erasure of meaning (i.e. the signified) by substituting it with the referent.

Regarding the representationalist vs. enactivist dispute, we firmly espouse the middle-ground, in accordance with Frye's original position (see Section 2.2 below). As we shall explain in the next chapter, Northrop Frye defines narrative in terms of a set of continuously self-adapting interactive representations termed archetypes. In this way, Frye's theory of narrative is at once both enactivist and representational. Indeed, this middle-ground between the two extremes appears to be the most broadly favoured view, having been adopted by such eminent narratologists as Herman (2010), Fludernik (2014), Caracciolo (2014) or Popova (2015). But while accepting the same position, vis-à-vis the representational vs. enactive dispute, we

simultaneously reject all of these aforementioned approaches for their fundamental formalism.

1.5 Thematic narrative in the sciences

The thematic narrative position is one which is gaining increasing currency, particularly in fields outside of narratology which are nonetheless also deeply invested in the study of narrative. These include, cognitive science (Bruner 1991, 1986), artificial intelligence (Dessalles 2007), educational psychology (Walker et al. 2015), mythography (Doty 2000), folkloristics (Zipes 2012), and perhaps, most importantly, in linguistics. Surely, unless we reject the linguistic basis of narrative, it is impossible to maintain the formalist position in the face of so much evidence to the contrary. The thematic definition of narrative is perhaps more current in these fields because they do not study narrative for its own sake, but in relation to its communicative function. Yet it is precisely the *purposelessness* of the formalist definition that has most inhibited the study of narrative.

Narrative is well-known to be a fundamental feature of human consciousness and experience (Turner 1996). This is reflected by its significance in social sciences research (Creswell 2007 [1997]:53-7). But among all of these fields aside from linguistics (which we will explore in the next chapters), perhaps the most convincing evidence for the central role that theme plays in narrative comes from educational psychology and psycholinguistics (Deane et al 2019). Studies of autism in particular demonstrate the fundamental relationship between narrative and communicative intention or theme. It is widely known that autism impacts the ability to intuit intended meaning in language, to form a 'theory of mind' (Frith 2012). But evidence shows the same disorder affects narrative interpretation. Studies suggest that this is because the two are inextricably linked – that narrative is not about conveying experience itself so much as the underlying abstract ideas they represent (Hale & Tager-Flusberg 2005, Leslie & Happe 1989, Losh 2003). Studies have also determined a neurological link between task-based cognition and narrative cognition, suggesting that narrative is inherently purposive – we don't interpret narrative events neutrally, but rather as tools for achieving a specific end (Fletcher et al. 1995).

These findings correlate with those from studies of narrative comprehension which find that one of the primarily motivations in narrative comprehension is the determination of the communicative intention or thematic message of the narrator (Cain et al. 2001, Graesser et al. 2003). Studies of narrative comprehension development among children demonstrates the purposive nature of narrative. Even among adults, narrative retention is only around 30%, decreasing steadily as age decreases (Ravid & Berman 2006). Yet the narrative events which are retained are not arbitrary but instead always select critical events which relate particularly to the intended message or theme of the narrative. Indeed, tellingly, among the youngest children, the ability to identify and retain these critical events even precedes the ability to correctly sequence them causally (Peterson & McCabe 1983). Furthermore, the development of narrative ability among children and adults is steered by the goal of more accurately and effectively communicating intended meaning (Cain 2003, McKeough 1996, Pinto et al. 2016). Adult narrative is distinguished from children's narrative specifically by the ability to not only thematise narrative, but also by the use of techniques to explicitly identify and analyse theme (Berman & Nir-Sagiv 2007, McKeough & Genereux 2003). Relatedly, the fact that children's ability to identify the theme or moral of a story long precedes their ability to retell it (Stein & Albro 1997) suggests that narrative formation is consequent upon thematic formation. Admittedly, these children's comprehension of theme is typically simplistic and literal rather than abstract (for instance, the theme of *Red Riding Hood* might be stated as *Red Riding Hood shouldn't have talked to the Wolf* rather than the more abstract form an adult might provide, such as *a cautionary tale against trusting strangers*) (Walker & Lombrozo 2017).

"Considerable research has demonstrated that a successfully comprehended text is represented in memory as a coherent structure" (van den Broek et al. 1996:175). Research shows that text and individual sentence comprehension are both correlative to clarity of theme (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 22, 32). Predictably then, thematic segues in narratives correspond with significantly slower reading times than with sentences where the theme remains constant (1983: 58). Experiments also demonstrate that theme also defines retention – in narratives with a clear theme, readers generally recall the same key details, while in its absence, the details retained appear arbitrary (1983: 331).

The same thematic understanding of narrative underlies most of psychology. Much of psychological practice involves the analysis of personal narratives, so-called *life-stories*, for the unconscious themes they express (Linde 1993). We see this most clearly evidenced in the theory of thematic apperception tests, wherein patients are instructed to tell stories on the basis of a set of standardised images, and therapeutic progress is measured through changes in the themes these narratives express (Cramer 1996: 5-7). Implicit in this process is the idea that stories are direct expressions of abstract beliefs. Interestingly, the prevailing belief in psychology about the thematic basis of narrative is not based on any theory of consciousness or communicative intention, but simply on repeated observations by psychological practitioners (Cramer 1996:39, 319).

In short, the ability to interpret and create narrative is generally correlative with communicative ability. This may seem like an obvious conclusion, but it points to a more unobvious link between story and the communication of ideas. Language, indeed, cognition itself is functional. In other words, it is thematic. In the 1970s Schank and Abelson already demonstrated that the knowledge base of the mind is not mere data, but purposive in nature. Our knowledge base is organised around the performance of commonplace tasks and objectives (Schank & Abelson 2014). In the same way, the evidence demonstrates that the events and details of which a narrative is comprised is not neutral experience like first-hand experience of reality, but rather purposive, selective and subordinate to the intended message it is designed to convey. Narrative experience, hence, is fundamentally different from real-life experience. Narrative experience is pre-construed experience, structured in terms of the world-views and life perspective of the narrator, and therefore inevitably serves in communicating those organising structures (Laszlo 2008).

The essential role of narrative in the shaping of belief systems has long been understood. We see this for example in the important role than narrative theme plays in the selection of literature for school curricula (Lickona 2009). We see this also in the immense influence narrative themes can have in shaping society in general, such as the influence of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on attitudes toward slavery or Dickens' novels in shaping class consciousness (Strange 2002, Harrison 2008). Yet many of the present definitions of narrative concern themselves wholly with the ostensible form of narrative, but make no allusion to the all-important and defining function of

narrative as a vehicle for the communication of ideas. *A definition which concerns itself only with arbitrary features and ignores the essential purpose of a thing is not a meaningful one.*

Given its importance, *an improved definition of narrative is needed*, one which accurately reflects its essential role in language, society and individual experience. It should be the outcome of an improved, more accurate understanding of narrative, which will be the goal of this study, namely to arrive at a thematic conception of narrative. This dissertation aims to contribute to the necessary reassessment of this fundamental concept, as well as to propose an alternative model to guide future exploration of this approach. The end goal here is best understood not as replacing the old with the new, but rather as one of adding onto and improving on existing concepts to arrive at a more complete understanding of narrative. The problem with many existing theories of narrative, as this thesis will argue, isn't that they are wrong, only incomplete.

1.6 Role of language

The present study is primarily a linguistic study of narrative, given that much of the recent research which inspired this thesis derives from linguistics. The role of language in literature has been contentious from the beginning (c.f. Dancygier 2012a: 4-30), and many of the issues depend on the particular definition of language, given that different grammars and linguistic theories propose different definitions of language and the role of meaning in it. A more formalist perspective, which defines language only in terms of its particular forms, sees the issues of form and meaning as separate, and hence linguistics and literary studies as equally separable. This would also correspond with the mainstream view in narratology and literary studies (Dancygier 2012a).

The present work, instead takes a different approach, one which subsumes all forms of language, including narrative, into its orbit. If instead, we view language as not restricted only to the particular forms, but more generally to the exchange of meaning in all its various guises, then this traditional separation of language and literature becomes untenable. This is generally the functionalist perspective, or more specifically what we might describe in line with Halliday's (2003) particular definition,

an anthropolinguistic perspective. In this view, language infiltrates every corner of the human experience, as material objects, as products of history, as biological organisms, as social participants and as thinking beings; and hence the study of language cannot limit itself to anything less than the entirety of the human experience, including all disciplines concerned with the subject. As a linguist, you also have to be a bit of a sociologist, psychologist, literary scholar, anthropologist, historian, etc.

This is not to say that all else is necessary subordinate to linguistics. Instead, it merely means that there is a great deal of overlap (and opportunity for fertile exchange) between the various disciplines. The premise that everything relating to the human experience is language, eschews the formalist view of clearly defined disciplines with tidy boundaries. Instead, from this perspective, different disciplines focus on different aspects of the same phenomenon.

Despite the prominent role of cognitive linguistics in this study, this is not a work of cognitive narratology, except in the general sense that a cognitive narratology is also subsumed within the broader circumference of an anthropo-narratology (in the same sense as an anthropolinguistics). It may also be considered a cognitive narratology in the incidental sense that the specific linguistic theories which attend most closely to the question of meaning in language and hence also to the subject of this study happen to be cognitive linguistic theories. But within an anthropo-narratology, the cognitive dimension is only one among many, albeit a significant one. Indeed, the very notion of a cognitive linguistics appears self-contradictory – consciousness appears to be embedded in and thus inseparable from the experience of the physical world, the biological function of the mind and body, or the social fabric of interpersonal interactions, so that a cognitive linguistics is by necessity an anthropolinguistics.

1.7 Postclassical narratology and cognitive poetics

An anthropo-narratology then both corresponds closely with the definition of a postclassical narratology, particularly in terms of its focus on linguistics and cognition, but also ultimately rejects the postclassical narratology framework (Herman & Vervaeck 2005) for, if anything, being too restrictive. Postclassical

narratology transcends traditional formalist narrative theory while still retaining many of its perceived *strengths*. The most notable of these is the fundamental formalist plot-narration binary. Even though it redefines it, the core limiting theoretical assumptions still remain the same.

The argument we have presented here instead is that the core formalist assumption about the nature of narrative is flawed and must be discarded, and no amount of postclassical reinvention can redeem it. This is because it inherently denies the significance of theme, which as we argue is the true primary function of narrative – and no authentic definition of narrative is possible without accounting for the central role of theme.

From its flawed foundational formalist assumptions, other problems again proliferate. For instance, while postclassical narratology acknowledges the importance of theme, it rejects it in all meaningful senses of the word. Nunning's (2003) definition of theme bunches it in with context and ideology, associating narrative theme not with its semantic representation, but with its real-world referent. Thus, Nunning clearly follows the formalist tradition of defining narrative as a relationship between text and reality, not as we argue here, as a relationship between text and concept.

In other words, postclassical narratology still denies the existence of an intended message. Instead, theme is redefined as whatever in the real-world we choose to associate the narrative with. Instead of an expression of a narrator's intended meaning, narrative still creates an open world for the audience to explore at their own whim.

Similarly, it attempts to include both the philosophical possible worlds theory and cognitive linguistic accounts of narrative, even though they are mutually contradictory, as we shall demonstrate in chapter 3. For the same reason, the relationship of this study to narrative research in the field of cognitive stylistics/poetics is similarly complicated by its espousal of the formalist, anti-thematic definition of narrative. Existing applications of cognitive linguistics to narrative theory confusingly blend formalist and thematic narrative approaches (Semino & Culpepper 2002, Dancygier 2012a, Stockwell 2019 [2002], Turner 2006, Herman 2009, Herman 2011). It is only to be expected that when linguists analyse narrative texts that they will attempt to incorporate narrative theory. However, as this

study will argue (see Chapters 2 and 3) the formalist and thematic definitions are mutually excluding. Hence, any attempt to incorporate this research into a thematic narrative theory is made difficult by its extensive inclusion of basic principles of formalist narratology.

1.8 An outline of the study

Having presented an outline of the central thesis, it is necessary to present a chapter outline. Chapter 2 expounds the thematic narrative position as it presently stands through a summary of the main contributions of its major proponents. Chapter 3 outlines the formalist position as well as its primary shortcomings which makes the need for a thematic revision of contemporary narratology so imperative. Chapters 4 and 5 develop a coherent theory of thematic narrative on the basis of the pre-existing ideas presented in Chapter 2, in concert with supporting evidence and theories from linguistics. Chapter 4 first explores the universal narrative principles of language that conventional narrative is rooted in, while Chapter 5 explains how these features are foregrounded to form the specific language register[4] commonly termed narrative.

The remainder of the thesis then proceeds to apply this theory of thematic narrative to a variety of narrative contexts in order to demonstrate its value and versatility in the analysis of narrative. This application starts out with an analysis of exemplary narrative (fables, parables, allegories, anecdotes, etc.) as well as examples from the broader folktale tradition, both because these are examples where narrative theme is more pronounced or even explicitly given, as well as because of the historical influence they have had on the formation of modern narrative. Chapter 6 explores the definitions and structural descriptions of exemplary and folklore narrative in order to demonstrate how these are defined and explained by the thematic function of narrative. Chapter 7 begins with an analysis of a number of short exemplary

[4] It is proposed that narrative be defined as a language *register*, that is a variety of language relating to different circumstances and purposes (Biber et al. 1999: "Register distinctions are defined in non-linguistic terms, with respect to situational characteristics such as mode, interactiveness, domain, communicative purpose, and topic." This is because here the necessity of a functional definition of narrative is specifically argued for, that is, language used to a specific purpose and within a specific circumstance. It is important to keep in mind that registers are not exclusive: for example the register of news reporting can overlap with the conversational register in a news broadcast, versus written in print. And of course both will typically be in a formal language register. The linguistic features which define this register are discussed at length in Section 4.4.2.

narratives, and then proceeds to more modern short narratives, demonstrating the essential role of theme in narrative comprehension.

Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 apply thematic narrative analysis to the opening sections of two novels, namely, Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever*, and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Opening passages often play a key role in setting up the core themes of a narrative. In this way, it allows an in-depth analysis of the role of central themes in longer narratives without having to examine the texts in their entirety, as well as a demonstration in each case of how an understanding of thematic narrative is essential to reading and interpreting longer narratives. Chapter 10 finally concludes the thesis by reviewing thematic narrative theory in relation to narrative's role in the sciences.

1.9 What about the traditional definition of narrative?

Readers will be surprised to find none of the seemingly obligatory chapters, found in virtually every study on the subject of narrative, on topics such as character, time, plot, setting, focalisation, etc. This is because, as was stated earlier (Section 1.3), thematic narrative denies the significance of these things in *defining* narrative. Consequently, these conventional topics are seen not as necessary but merely incidental qualities of narrative, and as such will only be mentioned incidentally.

Thematic narrative instead defines narrative very differently. This alternative perspective will be explained in Section 3.4, but we can summarise the main differences as follows. Firstly, while formalist narratology promotes a *referentialist semantics*, where language is understood to be composed of representations of real-world referents, thematic narrative acknowledges a fully conceptual account of representations. Thus, the conventional referential semantics and theory of fiction adopted by formalist narratology is replaced with a semantics of figuration.

Secondly, formalist accounts of *narrative structure* define it as a blend once again of referentialist semantics (the sequence of events as they actually occur) and artistic intent. But in contrast, while thematic narratology acknowledges the influence of referential semantics on narrative structure, it also sees it as primarily a reflection of conceptual structure.

Finally, the most significant transformation is of the formalist interpretation of *perspective*. Formalist narratology adopts a referentialist semantics, where the semantic representation is viewed as relatively true-to-life representation of the referent. As such, narrative perspective is understood to comprise only superficial variations in such a representation in relation to different framings of an objective referent. However, in line with its cognitive semantics stance, thematic narratology understands semantics to be perspectival *all-the-way-down*. In other words, in semantics everything is perspective.

For those specifically interested in these topics, the comparison between the thematic and conventional definitions of narrative will be broadly discussed in Section 3.4.

Chapter 2

The case for thematic narrative

2.1 Greimas and the Straussian vs. formalist paradigms

Before Claude Levi-Strauss, the social sciences were in a materialist quandary. Durkheim, amongst others, intuited that the social fabric/culture/meaning which was the central concern of all social sciences, was irreducible to positivist proxies such as the human environment, human biology, instinct, the unconscious mind, etc. This is because this social fabric is both independent of the physical world and the individual member of society. But prior to Levi-Strauss, Durkheim could only propose mysticisms such as the collective consciousness as the basis of society (Clarke 1981: 1-5).

Durkheim's student, Levi-Strauss, was able to provide this crucial component through his acquaintance with the works of linguists such as de Saussure and Jakobson. Thanks to their work, Levi-Strauss was able to propose language itself as the basis of culture and society, thereby replacing the earlier mysticisms with something observable and measurable. It was this elementary insight which provided the basis for the revolution in the social sciences called structuralism (Harland 1987: 25).

While Levi-Strauss was quite willing to acknowledge the achievements of formalist linguistics as a basis of his structuralist theory, he was less willing to accept their definition of language (Schleiffer 1987:132). This is quite understandable since his work in anthropology focused most on those aspects of language which the formalist concept of language mostly disregarded. Formalist linguistics originated in the pure art-for-art's-sake aesthetic of the Russian Formalists and the work of the linguist de Saussure; and was developed further under the guidance of luminaries such as Jakobson, Hjelmslev, Bloomfield and eventually Chomsky (Erlich 1980 [1955]:186-91, Toman 1995). Although there are obvious differences between Chomskyan linguistics and earlier formalists, generative linguistics is resolutely formalist in its proposal of an innate grammar, that is, a purely syntactic basis for language (Tomasello 2008). And while Jakobson and Helmsjlev are notable for founding

functionalism, the influence of their formalist roots is apparent. In short, a large part of what lead to the major breakthroughs in the science of language was the useful fiction that while language is composed of a form-content binary, specifically in the form of de Saussure's signifier-signified bipartite sign, *it is only the signifier, the formal aspect of language, which is the proper concern of linguists* (de Saussure 1989 [1916]).

It is likely through this useful fiction of formalism and the consequent avoidance of the muddy waters of semantics (due to its more abstract and indefinite nature), that great strides were made in linguistics during the early twentieth century. But for Levi-Strauss this was unsatisfactory, since his primary interest as an anthropologist lay in those discards. Inspired by elementary work on semantics by Jakobson, Propp and Skaftymov (Erlich 1980 [1955]:204-6), Levi-Strauss' work-around was the proposition of a third leg to the previous form-content binary, namely *structure*, which he proposed as *an intermediary between form and content*. Structure was the content complement to form, essentially content-in-form (Schleiffer 1987:132). Mirroring the later thinking of Ricoeur (1984) and Turner (1996), for Levi-Strauss, language is fundamentally narratological. The purpose of language and narrative is to reconcile the differences that exist in the world we perceive, to restore equilibrium to the chaos of experience, by imposing narrative form onto it. In the form-content binary, structure mediates between form and content by rendering the chaos of individual experience into structures correlative to language forms. Language and narrative are therefore fundamentally plurisignifying, fluid and adaptable – structures by their very nature can be superimposed onto a variety of experiences, so that structures themselves can be interpreted in an endless number of ways (Schleiffer 1987:133-4).

A J Greimas was one of the leading figures in the structuralist movement and one of the founders of narratology, yet likely devoted more energy during his lifetime to the criticism of both. Although Levi-Strauss' concept of structure became the banner for the structuralist movement in the social sciences, structuralists themselves largely followed their formalist predecessors in ignoring structure and content in favour of form. It is this formalist bias which semiotician AJ Greimas laments as the greatest failing of structuralism (Hawkes 1977:87). Greimas is primarily known for his contribution to the area of agency in narrative through his theory of actants (Bal &

van Boheemen 2009 [1980]), but it was his attempt to restore content, that is semantics, to its proper place which was his life's work (du Plooy 1986:173). As Greimas argues, in language form exists solely to articulate content – so that an authentic formal linguistics is ultimately impossible (Schleiffer 1987:22-25).

For this reason, Greimas sought to found the new science of semiotics, much like Levi-Strauss' structuralism, with its subject as the scientific description of the structures which relate form and meaning (Schleiffer 1987:3-14). Following primarily Levi-Strauss, but also the folklore morphologies of Propp and the dramatic functions of Souriau (Culler 1975:213, Elam 2002 [1979]:127) he also differentiated between three levels of semiosis: a deep level of virtual meanings, a surface level of instantiated abstractions, and the realised level of actual discourse (Schleiffer 1987:84-6, Rimmon-Kenan 1983:7, 10-13). Similarly, Greimas' interest is primarily with the surface level, which comprises structured meanings, because at the deep level of meaning, each signifier can signify both several different meanings or multiple meanings at once (du Plooy 1986:174). Because of the plurisignifying nature of meaning, it is the process of interpretation rather than the determination of meaning which becomes the object of study (Schleifer 1987:147, c.f. Rabinowitz 1987).

It is the absence of this intervening layer in the formalist concept of the sign that results in the bias towards the signifier. Like Levi-Strauss, Greimas viewed the deep layer of meaning as inherently chaotic, comprised of the haphazard collection of experiences gathered over the course of a person's life. In order to make sense of the relationship between form and meaning, it is necessary to identify *the intervening structures* which organise this mass of experiences on the basis of similarity and contrast so that meaning can be bound to form (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:10-13, Schleiffer 1987:132, Hawkes 1977:87).

In Greimas' view, the purpose of language is to create a narrative of our experience. It does so by taking the chaos of sensory input and imposing structure onto it to transform it into coherent experiences. All language then is narrative in nature (Schleiffer 1987:12). This concept of narrative is also dualistic – at the deep level narrative is comprised of an unstructured and arbitrary collection of meanings, while at the surface level it takes the form of a unified whole with its own internal coordination like that of the sentence (Schleiffer 1987:131). While narrative is to

some extent structured by the syntagmatic associations at the formal level, for Greimas, the real structure of narrative occurs at the intervening cognitive layer of *content-in-form* (Schleiffer 1987:131, Rimmon-Kenan 1983:7).

The intellectual divide within Structuralist narratology that Greimas laments (i.e. the formalist tradition founded by the Russian Formalists and the content-centred Straussian tradition) is never better illustrated by the contrast between Greimas' own *Maupassant* (1988) and Barthes' *S/Z* (1990 [1970]). Both are similar in that they comprise an extensive analysis of a short story on the basis of Structuralist principles, in the former, Maupassant's 'Two Friends' and Balzac's 'Sarrassine' in the latter. But the stark difference is clear in the outcomes. Barthes' conclusion at the end of his book is that regardless of how interesting, the enterprise is ultimately futile because no interpretation can ever be exhaustive – it is ever only one of a possible infinite plurality of meanings. Greimas, on the other hand, readily acknowledges this condition from the point of inception – for him the aim is always to understand the process of interpretation, not the product (Schleifer 1987:147).

2.2 Frye and the archetypes of narrative

A major shortcoming of Greimas' theory however lies in his underestimation of the complexity of the intervening structure. In his semiotic theory, it is comprised solely of identities and contrasts, which in turn are expressed as antonymies and hyponymies (Schleiffer 1987:6-12). The limits of this view are plainly visible in light of the archetypal theories of Northrop Frye found in the *Anatomy of Criticism*.

Firstly, it is important to note that Frye's is solely a study of narrative art (1957:3-15). Although Jung deserves credit for popularising the term *archetype*, he of course did not invent the concept of the archetype out of thin air, but was inspired in part by the concept of recurring mythic motifs and themes from the mythographic and literary critical fields, which is where Frye's use of the term also originates (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:87-9, Russel 2017:13-20). Frye certainly mirrors Jung in rooting the concept in a psychological rather than a genetic basis (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:91, Russel 2017:116-31). But, at the same time, Frye's use of the term is distinctive as a purely literary convention, and furthermore, Frye has the distinction of being the first to do so (Segal 2004:83, Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:100). But while Frye makes it clear that

he constrains his authority to his own field of study, he doesn't feel constrained from drawing broader conclusions about the nature of language, society and the human consciousness, nor does he consider it wise to attempt to isolate his subject from its broader context.

Frye's significance for narrative theory is in leading a substantial shift in the interpretation of literature, which from the time of the New Critics was seen as an end in itself. Frye marks a return to the notion that the purpose of literary criticism is instead to get at *the universal ideas* behind the individual literary work, that is, the themes. For Frye, narrative is an expression of man's *mythic consciousness* (in the semantic/cultural sense rather than the psychological sense of Jung), which is inspired by the urge to find correspondences between mankind and the world it inhabits, to as it were, find our place in the cosmos. For Frye, the mythic consciousness is an expression of subliminal cultural abstractions of practical everyday wisdoms. Thus, the goal is not to trace modern narratives to ancient myths, but rather to find their common theme of *eternal recurrence*. Similarly, the challenge for narratology is not so much to document the entire historical development of every theme, but rather to discover the everyday relevancies that unite each of them (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:91-101, Russel 2017: 61-72).

Contrary to the main trend of literary criticism, like Greimas, Frye was interested in the science of literature rather than its appreciation (Coupe 1997:150). Yet Frye amends the limitations of Greimas by postulating a theory of semiosis whose complexity reflects that of the subject. Mirroring the structuralist concept of language of Levi-Strauss, Frye similarly postulates a *tri-partite theory of language and narrative* (which he further expands into a five-layered theory by subdividing the intervening third into three layers). Likewise, Frye distinguishes between two facets of the sign, an internal facet which he terms the literal phase, corresponding to the conventional concept of form, and an external facet which he terms the descriptive phase, corresponding to meaning (Frye 1957:73-82). In a similar vein, Frye also uses the Aristotelian terms precept or dianoia (translated as theme) and mythos or exemplar (translated as narrative) (Frye 1957: 83, 103-104, 107), with the latter terms again corresponding to the formal text itself, and the former to the meaning or argument it seeks to convey. It is clear that for Frye, the relationship between

meaning and form is one of *abstraction vs. instantiation*, that is, between a concept and its representation (see section 4.3 for further explanation).

In addition to these two traditional components, and similar to Levi-Strauss and Greimas, he adds the third intervening component, which he further subdivides into three types: The first is the image. *Imagery*, Frye states, is formed out of the void that exists between form and meaning. Convention dictates a binary relationship between form and meaning. It also dictates syntactic relationships between individual forms. The problem is that convention simply isn't broad enough to cover every one of the near infinite potential syntactic combinations. Convention only covers a basic set and reason and imagination has to make up the difference.

For instance, many individual denotations of red or blood occur in *Macbeth*. Even if convention were to supply us with an associated meaning for each individual form, convention also states that the individual instances are also linked. At some point, convention must reach its limit and speculation take its place (Frye 1957:82-94).

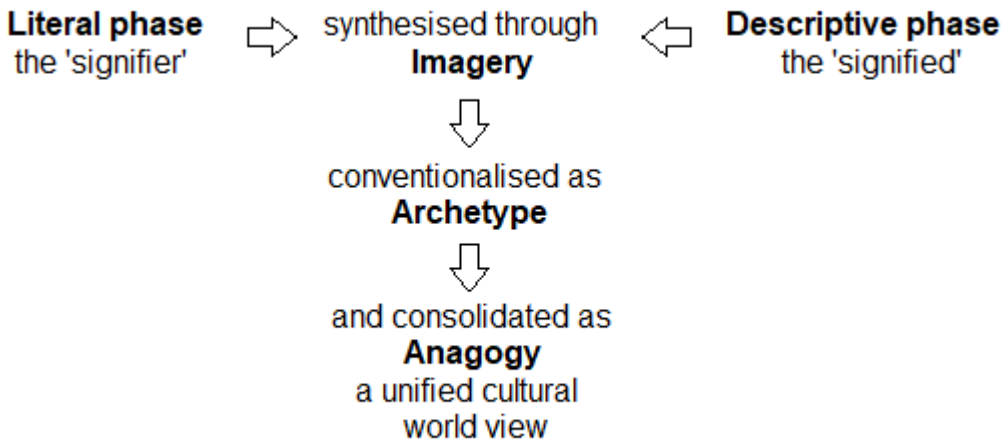

Figure 2.2: The Fryean model of narrative

The second and most significant type for our inquiry, is archetype. *Archetype* in Frye's theory most closely reflects Levi-Strauss' concept of structure or the idea behind Greimas' surface structure, namely intermediary meaning-forms. These all comprise a conventionally prescribed set of associations which exist to integrate form and meaning. On the surface this may seem opposed to the role of imagery, since if conventional structures already exist to bind form and meaning, what then is

the need for imagery? As Frye explains, art takes inspiration from art, and imagery from previous images. *The same image, repeated over time creates a new convention.* This recurrence of imagery over time transforms the arbitrary creations of individual narratives into articulated conventional units. For this reason, archetypes also differ from signs in their degree of complexity, since over time they gather an increasing number of associations. Archetypes of course can never be complete, and would break down should they do so. Rather, *archetype and imagery exist in symbiosis* – each enriching the other. Archetypes enrich imagery with the past associations of artistic predecessors, and imagery continually revitalises archetypes by adding new, unconventional interpretations, thereby preventing them from growing stale (1957:95-104).

Yet even though archetypes are constantly evolving, the central ideas around which they are formed remain eternal just as the world and human nature both also exhibit certain constants. As stated earlier, archetypes represent the eternal truths we derive from practical everyday wisdoms, and imagery the inconstancy of life which requires their continual adaptation (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:102). Thus, narrative is in constant oscillation between the opposed poles of myth and reality, or as they are exemplified in narrative, archetype and imagery. In all narrative, no matter how realistic or abstract, the opposite pole is always there. There is always realism in the most abstract narratives, and myth is present in the most realist of narratives (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:101).

An example of such an archetype is the knightly sword. On the surface it is merely another mundane object, one among many commonplace weapons of war from history. But despite this, your average reader can fill pages with the lore surrounding it. In copious metaphor and idiom, the sword is the embodiment of violence, as well as of everything violence represents – tyranny, cruelty, death and much more. But in its cruciform it is also a symbol of faith, duty and piety. And just like the sidearm of the western's gunslinging law-man it is a symbol of justice. Historically it has often served as a status symbol, and therefore of power, authority, divine favour, and thus also indirectly of everything we might associate with these. In myth it is often imbued with magical properties and ritual significance. It is the standard accompaniment of the hero, and thus becomes a symbol for the hero's journey as well (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1982:959-61). And all of this is only scratching the surface, the most

widespread and obvious examples. Beyond this we can cite countless more specific examples like Excalibur from Arthurian legends, or the gladius as symbol of Roman military supremacy or the slave-soldier, the gladiator. Archetypes may be universal, such as for instance the cycle of birth-youth-maturity-senescence-death or the cycle of the seasons, or otherwise culture specific (Frye 1957:118). But their collective nature, complexity and significance to human consciousness is hard to discount.

Archetypes for Frye comprise the core function and value of art. Archetypes are formed from those images that are so powerful that they recur continuously in art, and in such a way become human obsessions ingrained in culture and social consciousness (1957:79, 96, 108-112). Frye's concept of artistic value then mirrors that of dialogics[5]: narrative isn't an individual creation so much as assemblies from a set of communal cultural codes, and it is from this shared legacy that narrative derives its meaning and value (Frank 2010). Compare this with the formalist view, where art is not about what is expressed, but how it is expressed – in other words, artistic form (Erlich 1980 [1955]:190). It is this view which lies behind narrative formalism – the idea that exploring the themes of art somehow misses the point which is the creative means of expression rather than the particular subject at hand (Sollors 2002). While both points of view have their justifications, one important difference is that Frye's view of art doesn't exclude the formalist view but includes it within its broader definition. But the formalist view in contrast, and in its most radical forms, does explicitly exclude Frye's.

Despite using the same term, it must be emphasised once again that narrative archetypes are not to be confused with Jungian archetypes. Unlike Jung's archetypes, which comprise a limited, constant set, each with its own fixed meaning (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:59-66, Doty 2000:196-210), *narrative archetypes are potentially innumerable, constantly changing, with highly variable meanings*. For example, the knightly sword archetype varies from one culture to the next, from one person to another, and even from one context to the next. In this way, *archetypes function in much the same way as words do.* Indeed, archetypes could be defined as fulfilling the same role in text as words within the sentence or clause. Just like words, archetypes serve less as fixed meaning units and more as adaptable templates or schemata of meaning. To give another example (as Luthi (1986 [1951]) explains, the

[5] Mikhail Bakhtin's social theory of narrative. This is explored in section 9.2.

archetypal idler of folktale tradition has no fixed meaning. The exact same character can just as easily take on the role of villain, where it represents the vices of sloth and imprudence, as the role of the hero, where those same characteristics symbolise virtues like humility, patience and common sense.

Frye describes archetype as not only the meeting point between – but also the encapsulation of – two contrasting drives: the literal or exemplary expresses itself as *recurrence*, and the descriptive or conceptual as desire or wishful-thinking. Through recurrence, narrative becomes *ritual*, a symbolic reflection of everyday life, in which the muddled and mundane of daily activity is made sensible, recast in a clearly-defined and timeless mould. In a similar way, through *desire*, which is the expression of the descriptive or conceptual, narrative is imbued with *dream*, which is an exemplar of purpose. Through dream, narrative streamlines the conflicted yearnings and passions of the human heart into a unified purpose for humanity as a whole. Ritual and dream in this way explain the potency of narrative in human existence, both as a means for making sense of our world and for shaping the shared values which define societies and the individual's role within it (1957:104-107). This mirrors Malinowsky's concept of the two main functions of myth, namely to represent both society as it functions as well as an ideal model that individuals should strive toward (Doty 2000:68).

Lastly there is the *anagogic phase*, which resembles Levi-Strauss' *equilibrium* or Greimas concept of *narrativity*. These comprise the substantifying of narrative, its transformation from a series of linguistic codes on the formal level of the text and their meaning associations on the semantic level, into a unified whole. It is through narrativity that we get the sense of narrative worlds as fully realised and lifelike realities of their own (Schleifer 1987:131-134). But Frye's notion of anagogy also transcends the individual narrative text to encompass the unity of all narratives within one's cultural consciousness. In this sense it also encompasses what Greimas conceives of as the *semantic universum*, which is the semantic equivalent of language – *a shared system of meanings which transcends the individua*l just as language comprises a shared syntax which exists beyond its individual speakers (du Plooy 1986:176-7). Once again, Frye concentrates attention to the application of these ideas within the realm of literature, but at the same time, doesn't limit their

projection outward to culture, society and life in general (Russel 2017:106-115, Hart 1992).

What is important to stress is that archetypes are not merely representations of reality. They are that in truth, but also much more. There is equally the opposite aspect, where narrative is also a reflection of thought, an abstraction divorced somewhat from reality through its adherence to the ideal. It is the synthesis of these contrasting tendencies, the compromise between opposing forces, that lends narrative its distinctive character.

Given the significance of Frye to this endeavour of defining thematic narrative, it is perhaps necessary to dwell for a moment on the various criticisms *Anatomy of Criticism* has garnered over the years. Most of these are the predictable criticisms that the formalist mainstream reserves for perceived anti-formalists. Denham (2009) provides a thorough overview of this criticism (see also Hamilton 1990:2-8).

The most common complaint against Frye is his obsolescence. From the moment that *Anatomy of Criticism* was first published, mainstream scholarship has been asserting that Frye represents a dying and outdated current of thought about narrative. Yet despite mainstream formalism's determination to commit Frye to the garbage heap of theory, by several metrics, Frye's relevance has outlived and outstripped that of all his detractors and is still growing. Even today, *Anatomy of Criticism* is one of the most cited works of literary criticism (Denham 2009).

Another common criticism is anti-historicism, by which formalists actually mean being overly-historical – that is, giving equal priority to the role of history rather than only the unique immediate circumstances of conception. Other common complaints include anti-realism and anti-individualism, which are simply alternate framings of the above complaint, and his general disregard for the established formalist interpretation of literature (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:102). As Doty puts it, Frye represents a recidivistic logocentric atavism that is obsolete in the modern era (2000:245-251). In an era in which meaning conventions are denounced as synoptic and totalising, Frye is an unrepentant heretic.

Lentricchia (1980:3-27) captures the core of anti-Fryean antipathies: Frye opposes the value of individual creativity and freedom in literature in favour of collective and deterministic interpretations of literature. While it is true that Frye emphasises society

and its cultural heredity in making the ultimate decision regarding literary value, this should hardly be a contentious point. Besides this, the complaint utterly ignores the central role Frye grants to the creativity of the individual – his assertion that meanings can only ever enter the realm of collective cultural values through the creativity of individual artists. Lentricchia claims that Frye is a-historical in emphasising the continuities rather than originalities of history, favouring the mainstream over the liminal, the idealistic over the critical and reactive, and idealism over realism. 'Lentricchia's assumption here is that it is self-evident in each case that the latter idea…is to be preferred to the former' (Denham 2009:19).

However, this clearly is a predetermined misreading of Frye which largely ignores the pole of imagery in the imagery-archetype dichotomy. *Anatomy of Criticism* constantly contrasts the symbiotic interplay between the critical, contemporaneous, creative individual and the idealism of the collective. *Archetype exemplifies the consistency necessary for social order while imagery contains the creative iconoclasm required to maintain relevance.* Lentricchia's criticism thus is clearly misplaced. It is not the lack of appreciation of individuality that he criticises, but rather that Frye attempts to balance it with the collective norms of society. Certainly, Frye emphasises the importance of the archetypal medium of expression to the neglect of the individual product (Coupe 1997:103), but this is entirely warranted given the purpose of *Anatomy of Criticism*, which is to restore archetype to its proper place in literary criticism. As Denham (2009) concludes, the common formalist representation of Frye as a musty conservative who only seeks to suppress artistic creativity in the name of tradition is a clear caricature aimed to discredit a popular view which is different from its own.

Thus, we find that the primary criticisms against Frye are ideological. Frye represents a conservative appreciation for and celebration of the Western cultural heritage which his liberal detractors rail against. Both agree on the contemporary cultural and literary malaise, yet disagree starkly on the diagnosis – for Frye this is because of a lack of consciousness of our cultural legacy, while for his detractors it is because of the failure of that legacy to accommodate modernity (Hart 1992, Doty 2000:245-51). Whichever it is, is beyond the scope of this study however.

Another distinct difference is their views on the role of science in the study of narrative. While Frye underscores the importance of a narrative science, for his

detractors, cultural value exists outside of the scope of science, and any attempt at scientific description is a logocentric infringement of creative licence (Doty 2000).

There are however several more pertinent criticisms. One of these is the licence with which he interprets the Aristotelian theory of literature (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:101). But to be fair, Frye never claims to accurately represent Aristotle, but only to employ an approach inspired by him (Frye 1957:15-17). More serious is the speculative basis for Frye's archetype (Doty 2000:245-252, Meletinsky 2014 [1976]). The fact is that the understanding of language was not advanced enough at the time to provide such a foundation – and it is the purpose of this present thesis to do precisely that.

Coupe (1997:150-9) demonstrates why *Anatomy of Criticism* can be divisive: it attempts to intuitively reconstruct the instinctive interpretive methods we all unconsciously deploy without the evidentiary substantiation to clarify exactly what is going on. As far as the science of narrative was concerned, and as we shall see in chapter 5, Frye was ahead of his times. The result of his intuitive approach at times is an obscurity which can make the numerous paradoxes inherent to narrative appear as inconsistencies. Some examples are the paradoxes between the mythic and realistic modes, or between the individual creativity of imagery and the collective ideals of archetype.

But Frye's theory doesn't merely reveal the shortcomings of narrative formalism – it also provides solutions. Firstly, like Levi-Strauss and Greimas, he underscores the pivotal role of theme in narrative. Secondly, through archetype, again like the aforementioned, he explains the medium by which theme is exemplified in story. Thirdly, in contrast with Greimas, Frye's archetypes exhibit the necessary complexity to produce the intricate structures we observe in stories. And finally, Frye's theory provides a process-based modelling of how theme relates to story via imagery, archetypes and anagogy.

2.3 Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*

Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative provides an insightful elaboration of Frye's archetypal theory of narrative. This is because Ricoeur seeks to define the broader concept of narrative, particularly of historical narrative, which Frye only invokes as a

theoretical backdrop to his specifically literary theory of narrative (Polkinghorne 1988:75).

Like Frye, Ricoeur understood that without the imposed unity of an external theme, narrative devolves into a confusion of unrelated experiences. Yet at the same time, this imposition necessarily transforms and thus compromises the authenticity of the original experience (Ricoeur 1979:24). This essential problem of apprehending original experience is what Ricoeur seeks to confront through his analysis of narrative.

Ricoeur's narrative theory is problematic on two grounds however: Firstly, it is grounded in the philosophical tradition with its aforementioned definitions of concepts and paradigmatic principles that often conflict with those of linguistics and literary criticism (Section 1.3). Secondly, Ricoeur's is not a purely thematic theory of narrative in the Fryean sense. While critical of *empty formalism* (Dowling 2011:38), he nevertheless seeks to reconcile it with the thematic tradition rather than rejecting it outright. This attempt to reconcile incompatibilities consequently results in certain confusions which must be addressed. In spite of this, Ricoeur's investigations into the fundamental nature of narrative provides several indispensable insights which make this diversion well worth the while.

Ricoeur's study of narrative begins with *The Rule of Metaphor* (2004). This is because narrative and *metaphor* are viewed as fundamentally alike. Although traditional metaphor theory has been rendered outdated by cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), the central principle stands that like metaphor, narrative is an analogy between a concept and an instance, specifically an event (what Ricoeur terms plot): 'it is this synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor' (Ricoeur 1984:ix). What Ricoeur is speaking of here is instantiation – which achieves a kind of metaphorical analogy through the association of concept with experience.

Crucially, Ricoeur observes that this analogy is not primarily creative, but restorative. Narrative restores proximity to distant associations (Ricoeur 1984:x). Concepts are derived from varied experiences. For instance, the concept DOG is abstracted from experiences of various individual dogs. But in the process of abstraction, the clarity and detail of the experience is lost – conceptualisation is inherently reductive.

Narrative serves the fundamental need of restoring the experiential roots of concepts – a function that will be termed *narrative rehabilitation*.

Narrative seeks to break down the associations that tie together the abstract concept and replace them with the experiential understanding of 'the circumstances, ends and means, initiatives and interactions, the reversals of fortune, and all the unintended consequences issuing from human action'. It seeks to recapture 'the prior understanding resulting from an acquired familiarity with the use of language' to as it were recapture the instantiated conditions from which the concept was originally acquired – *to relearn words anew* (Ricoeur 1984:x). This is a fundamentally different conception of narrative function from that of mainstream narratology. Formalism attempts to associate the narrative experience with a distinct 'narrative world', while Ricoeur instead associates it with a polysemic array of experiences (Polkinghorne 1988:75) (see sections 1.3 and 3.3).

Ricoeur's theory of narrative is mainly presented in the three volume *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985, 1988), which in many ways can be seen as an attempt to situate Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* in the context of philosophy and history – indeed resemblances to the latter permeate the former. It must be stated however that Ricoeur's theory is difficult to interpret, intentionally so in part, in line with the contemporary French philosophical tradition (Dowling 2011:ix-xii), but also in terms of his intention to reconcile Frye's thematic narrative with the formalist and philosophical traditions. For example, Ricoeur defines literary narrative both in terms of the Fryean view as a figurative instantiation of cultural archetypes, and as a self-contained world in formalist terms (1985:5-6). Yet these opposing views contain contradictions which Ricoeur clearly underestimates and consequently fails to resolve.

One of the places where Frye's influence is most apparent is in Ricoeur's tripartite description of narrative, mirroring Frye's three narrative levels of imagery-archetype-anagogy. As we shall see, however, Ricoeur's model more closely follows a similar distinction made by Heidegger (Ricoeur 1980:179). Thus, Ricoeur's narrative foundation is in anagogy – what he terms *prefiguration* – which forms the cultural backdrop of symbols we use to interpret language. Ricoeur however points out that much of what Frye terms cultural symbolism is in fact based on universal embodied human experience. And like Frye's anagogy, this is not a static encyclopaedia of

associations, but an immediate, living experience we participate in, in every moment of our existence (1984: 54-64). What is original in Ricoeur's conception of anagogy is the idea of *concordant discord*: narrative achieves a paradoxical harmony between the divergent goals of abstraction, which seeks to unify through reductivism, and that of instantiation, which seeks variety through proliferation.

This is where archetype – what Ricoeur terms Mimesis2 – enters the picture (1984: 64-70). For Ricoeur, archetype is created when anagogical instances are bound to theme. Through emplotment, individual episodes are translated into a single thought (i.e. theme). In this way, narrative is imbued with a beginning, middle and end. Through theme, the ending is already known at the beginning, and the ending in turn renders significance to the beginning. Theme thus imbues the unique event with repetition, framing it in relation to the memory of past narratives (Polkinghorne 1988:133).

It is archetype's binding of theme to instance which achieves concordant discord. Theme expresses the harmony and unity of reason, while instance expresses the heterogeneity of experience. However, the result of this is different from logic-mathematical descriptive discourse. Following a similar distinction made by Bruner (1986) and Halliday and Matthiessen (1999), Ricoeur distinguishes between two essential modes of language, namely the descriptive and the narrative (1984:31-51). While both of these express a concept of unity, the unity of descriptive language is that of universal reason. Narrative unity is only that of the unitary experience. This concordant discord leads to what is perhaps the most distinctive quality of narrative: *the double perspective*. Narrative imposes a simultaneous double perspective – one which is abstract, logical, consistent and objective; and another which is instantiated, irrational, heterogeneous and subjective.

This is something which Ricoeur asserts only narrative can achieve, namely an understanding of the subjective nature of human experience, but only when reconciled with the logic of thematic unity (1984:31-51). Like so many narratologists, Ricoeur observes that there is something uniquely human about narrative. However, he doesn't make the mistake that so many others make in stating that narrative necessarily involves descriptions of humanity – it obviously does not. The theories of evolution or the Big Bang, for instance, are essentially narratives, and are often explained as such in books. Rather, Ricoeur shrewdly observes that narrative can

contain any experience, any subject, but is always uniquely framed out of the eye of the human beholder – it is an inherently subjective, *embodied perspective*. One of Ricoeur's most insightful criticisms of Frye relates to the latter's ignorance of the universal embodied human experience. While for Frye, archetype is essentially a cultural artefact, Ricoeur points out that much of what Frye attributes to culture is in fact universal to all of humanity – most significantly, narrative itself (Polkinghorne 1988:127). In this, Ricoeur prophetically divines the importance of the embodiment principle that has proven so revolutionary in recent linguistics.

Ricoeur also emphasises the essentially *figurative distance* of narrative. Narrative doesn't seek to reproduce original experience so much as to create a convincing yet ultimately still partially abstracted simulacrum. This is marked by narrative's conventional use of past tense and third person. Both of these are linguistic markers of distance, in the first case temporal, and in the second spatial. These linguistic markers of semantic distance are employed to mark the figurative distance between actual and narrative experience – to mark its simulated nature to the audience (Ricoeur 1985). This is even more apparent in literary narrative compared to historical narrative, with the former being grounded in concept (i.e. theme) rather than historical fact (Ricoeur 1988).

It is in this simulated and figurative experiential form that narrative achieves its apotheosis, what Ricoeur terms refiguration (1984:70-87), which is equivalent to Frye's imagery. It is telling that Ricoeur essentially inverts Frye's model. For Frye the purpose of the narrative experience is to convey the ideas behind the story. But for Ricoeur, these ideas are only the means to get at the unique narrative experience. This is where Ricoeur's strong formalist and philosophical loyalties come to the fore. This is because Ricoeur's interest in narrative lies primarily in its role as a possible solution to the old philosophical problem of epistemology. For him, narrative is a solution, or at least a compromise, between the contradictions of subjective human experience and objective knowledge of the world (1984:31-51). Frye's emphasis on the socio-cultural role of narrative is largely ignored. Unlike Frye, for Ricoeur narrative is but a means to an end.

Ricoeur criticises mainstream narratology's rejection of unifying themes. He traces this rejection back to Propp, who tried to objectify the functional analysis of folklore narrative by replacing a unifying theme or function with individual functions (1985

[1949]:33-38). But by doing so, a coherent unifying rationale for the inclusion of different individual functions in the same narrative is lost. All that Proppian analysis can accomplish is the observation of collocations – the method rejects the necessary next step of proposing a purpose for these collocations. Later narratologists sought to amend this deficiency with formal unity, but Ricoeur argues that by elevating one internal feature of narrative (namely form) over others actually reduces the rich meaning potential of narrative, in contrast to the external unification achieved by theme, which instead further enriches it (Polkinghorne 1988:75).

A few early narratologists such as Greimas and Bremond sought to reverse this trend by restoring the role of function, Greimas through his theory of actants and semiotic squares, Bremond through his logic of narrative possibilities (Bremond & Cancalon 1980). While these early attempts restore the embodied character of narrative, they still deflect the question of narrative intent away from the external narrator to characters within the story. As Ricoeur argues, this essentially supplants theme with plot, the intended meaning with its illustration. It describes what it is, but not why it is. Using a Wittgensteinian metaphor, describing the rules of a game is not the same as describing the purpose of the game. For Ricoeur, this is the importance of Frye, because he is the first to truly restore the thematic component to narrative. For Ricoeur, Frye is able to achieve this precisely because he comes from outside the narratological tradition – which is inherently flawed in its basic assumptions (Ricoeur 1985:38-61).

But ultimately, the same criticisms Ricoeur levels at narratological thematics like Greimas and Bremond can be applied to himself. While for Frye, narrative is an end in itself, Ricoeur sees no inherent value in narrative. Instead, for him, the real value lies outside of narrative in experience and the alluring possibility of an objective understanding of the world that narrative suggests. For Ricoeur, narrative is only a flawed approximation of this ideal. He fails to recognise the inherent value of narrative that Frye sees, only as an unavoidable compromise – the closest we can get to the unreachable ideal of authentic objective experience.

Thus, for Ricoeur, the purpose of narrative is still solely to represent experience, like the formal narratologists. For him, the ultimate purpose of narrative is still to produce *anagnorisis* – an appreciation of the embodied human experience (1984: 6, 1985). Ricoeur states that narrative is the figuration of subjective experience by means of

an imposed objective logical order, and in particular that historical narrative is able to blend objective fact with subjective experiential intuition to arrive at an understanding of the minds and motivations behind the great events in history (1984:226-230, 1988). But it is here that Ricoeur turns against Fryean narrative theory. For while he and Frye agree on the synthetic nature of narrative as a blending of objective experience and subjective thought, Ricoeur follows the philosophical tradition in assigning value to the objective experience alone. Unlike Frye, he sees no value in the blend itself except in its approximation of objective experience.

But ultimately, the difference between Ricoeur and Frye is one of perspective. Neither truly contradict one another except in terms of where they place the highest value in narrative. Both describe the same process, but place the objective at different ends. This says something important as well about the difference between thematic and formalist narrative. The problem of formalist narratology is not so much in the claims made about narrative as about what goes unsaid. Thematic narrative theory doesn't discount the value of Ricoeur's and formalist narratology's narrative experience, only its separability from narrative theme.

Even so, as we've seen, Ricoeur's reanalysis of Fryean narrative theory produces several important insights, namely that the primary function of narrative is not creativity or aesthetic appreciation (although it can also achieve these secondary ends), but narrative rehabilitation – that is, the restoration of the experiential grounding of conceptual abstractions. Secondly, the result of this is the double-perspective, a perspective which captures both the objective, rational perspective of abstract thought, as well as the subjective immersive perspective of experience. Thirdly, that narrative is thus ultimately figurative – it is not a recreation of actual experience, but of a distorted demi-monde. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, the definitive embodied character of narrative is emphasized.

Unfortunately, Ricoeur does, in the final analysis, follow the formalist and philosophical tradition of foregrounding the instance, that is, the experiences narrative represents, over the theme that it conveys. Even so, he strongly rejects the conventional *window onto reality* concept of formalist narratology in favour of the intentional theme-instance figuration model of Frye. While he may not agree with the Fryean emphasis on the centrality of theme, Ricoeur still adheres to the thematic

narrative position that narrative comprises an intentional message comprising an inextricable figurative blending of concept and experience.

2.4 The cognitive turn

One obvious flaw in Frye's theory of narrative however, is its dependence on mystifications. To transform Frye's visionary theory of narrative into a working model, requires the same reforms as Levi-Strauss applied to Durkheim.

It is in cognitive linguistics that we find exactly the transformation required. Fauconnier and Turner's (2002, 2006) *Blending Model* and before that, Kintsch and van Dijk's (1983) *Model of Discourse Comprehension* provide just such definite, detailed and efficient working models of how the mind integrates disparate concepts such as theme and story, along with other cognitive models which are complementary to it, such as Lakoff's cognitive schema (Tuggy 2006, Gibbs & Colston 2006) or cognitive metaphor theories (Lakoff 2006), or Langacker's theory of cognitive grammar (1987,1991). An authentic approach to narrative must ultimately acknowledge the cognitive foundations of narrative (Kintsch and van Dijk 1983). Narrative as a description of experience is radically different from similar scientific descriptions because it is a description of the human consciousness of experience rather than directly of experience itself (Polkinghorne 1988: 9-10).

Regarding the relationship between narrative and language in general, we will proceed here on the assumption, as do many of the above-mentioned linguists themselves, that narrative is on face value an ordinary language register (c.f. Turner 1996, Lakoff & Turner 1989, Kintsch & van Dijk 1983). Therefore, any observations that apply to language and language cognition in general logically apply to narrative as well, unless demonstrated otherwise.[6]

2.4.1 Discourse comprehension

The Kintsch and van Dijk model of discourse comprehension (1983) is one of the first to acknowledge the significant challenge cognitive science posed to the traditional formalist understandings of narrative and discourse more broadly.

[6] The inverse however is not necessarily the case, however. As shall be posited (see chapter 4), a basic necessity of a theory of narrative is to provide a definition which can differentiate between narrative and non-narrative language.

However, at the same time, it needs to be understood that Kintsch and van Dijk's model was still firmly rooted in the formalist tradition, as visible in van Dijk's early work (1977). For example, they maintain both thematic and formalist definitions of narrative, overlooking their contradictions (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 56-7, 112, Kimmel 2005: 201-2).

Kintsch-van Dijk's model was significantly influenced by Tulving's (1993) distinction between *episodic and semantic memory*. As such, they proposed that discourse (and narrative) is comprehended on two levels, one of experience (the text-base in their terms, or *exemplar* in ours) and another more abstract understanding (the macrostructure, or *theme* as we have termed it here) (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 12-15. 48, Kimmel 2008: 165). It is by dividing narrative cognition into two separate processes, one formalist, the other thematic, that they sought to resolve the contradictions between them.

Contrary to formalist theories which claim that comprehension is built from the ground-up (by aggregating individual words into larger units), they proposed instead that meaning is multidirectional or compositional, that is, the whole also in turn defines the unit. For instance, in the sentence, *John turned on his friends*, we know from its larger context that the *turn* denoted here is not meant in the literal sense. We witness this also in syntactic parsing (how we distinguish between *turn* in the role of noun vs. verb). In other words, theme is essential to comprehending text – linguistic cognition requires an essential double perspective (1983: 10-2, 31). While Ricoeur coined the term double perspective in the context of narrative, as Kintsch and van Dijk demonstrate, this is essentially the same as the cognitive linguistic concept of compositionality, and hence a general linguistic phenomenon, rather than one specific to narrative. Though it is perhaps more pronounced in narrative, where it is often used for artistic effect (as we shall see in Sections 7.2, 7.4 and 9.1).

For them, following Schank and Abelson (2014) language then is *functional* rather than formal: it is *creative* and hence open-ended and *polysemic*, and *purposive*, meaning it is aimed towards expanding existing knowledge structures in a way that is both practical in terms of real-life situations and efficient in terms of its use of limited cognitive resources (1983: 10-2, 62-9).

As they explain (1983:194-6), theme is made necessary equally by human memory constraints and the consequent structuring of memory. According to psychological theory, it should be impossible for short-term memory to retain the amount of knowledge it does. Theme then not only provides coherence by linking experience to semantic frames of reference, but also plays an essential role in reducing *cognitive burden* and overcoming the problem of retention.

For instance, when you *see* a dog, you in fact aren't actually seeing it, but rather remembering it. The short-term memory only has to recognise enough details to identify the relevant long-term memories, and then these memories fill in most of the details. In this way, we make up for our limited attention spans by drawing from memory. In narrative, theme provides this all-essential context which allows us to make sense of the words on the page.

This is fundamentally different from the formalist definition of narrative, which understands narrative as simply absorbing the narrative world like taking a photograph or recording a film. Thematic narrative makes not the *narrative experience* but rather the *semantic frameworks* we interpret them through foundational to our interpretation.

Theme then serves several essential functions in general cognition, including narrative cognition:

1. It reduces cognitive burden in the process of recognition by identifying the most relevant semantic frame of reference.
2. It reduces cognitive burden in the process of observation by filling in the details from long-term memory, freeing up short-term memory for further inputs.
3. It reduces cognitive burden in the process of comprehension by providing an organised and meaningful framework for the observed details.
4. It adds details from other experiences to further enrich the immediate experience.
5. It links the experience to related concepts, enabling further deductions to be made which are not immediately apparent.
6. It provides a perceptual filter to distinguish significant details from sensory *noise* in the environment.

In this model, Kintsch and van Dijk intuit that what they term superstructures or schematic strategies, which is the equivalent of Frye's archetypes, play an essential role in linking experience to theme (1983: 16, 54, 237-42). Unfortunately, they seem to struggle to fathom what form these take, only repeating the standard introduction-body-conclusion convention in compositional writing. This however is understandable, since, as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, these are defined at high levels of abstraction which semantics at the time still had to discover.

Finally, they espouse a dynamic, on-line perspective of meaning, as with many modern cognitive linguistic theories. However, what exactly this process exactly entails is difficult to pin down due to the polysemic nature of language. While commonalities do occur and hence certain generalisations can be made, no two readers will share the same identical interpretation. Language still includes an irreducible subjective component. This also applies to the dynamic component of interpretation. As Kintsch and van Dijk (1983) observe, no two readers will read in exactly the same way. We interpret either synchronically or diachronically (interpreting utterances either as isolates or in relation to previous utterances), retrospectively, immediately, or prospectively. Some will skim more, others read more thoughtfully, teasing out every single word. Some will regularly page back to reconsider earlier passages, others pause often to contemplate, while for others it is a race to the finish. Generally, we can make generalisations such as that the opening scenes will greatly affect how a reader interprets the remainder, or that the specific ending chosen by the author frames the narrative as a whole, that succession does matter in that preceding passages will influence what follows, but any attempt to parse moment for moment, sentence by sentence, word by word, what the readers' precise chain of reasoning will be seems a fool's errand in the face of polysemy.

2.4.2 Metaphoricity

Fauconnier and Turner's Blending Model is partly an outgrowth of cognitive studies of metaphor (Lakoff & Turner 1989), but expands beyond it to become *a general model of conceptual integration* (Fauconnier 1985). It develops from the insight that the processes which are behind the phenomenon we term metaphor closely resemble basic cognitive processes behind general cognition (Fauconnier 1997:18-25, Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 314). Specifically, it concerns the methods we use to

reconcile disparities which exist between distinctive concepts and integrate them into a seemingly seamless whole (Fauconnier & Turner 1998). To give an example, in the sentence *We walked about a mile down river*, the items *walk* and *river* are not typical cognates. In order to make sense of the sentence requires first concluding that what is meant is something other than the literal walking on water, then imagining the river as a line across space, along with the path walked as a parallel line alongside it. In this image then, *down river* specifies a certain direction along this path. Blending is a process which exploits the necessary details included in schemata to explain how disparate concepts are integrated in constructions. In this way, Fauconnier and Turner demonstrate a fundamental link between metaphor and language in general.

As Lakoff explains, metaphor denotes any non-literal meaning, with convention and experience defining the literal meanings of words and expressions (Lakoff 2007). However, it is also clear from the above example that the boundaries of convention and experience are also murky and imprecise. To give a mundane example, in *Jack walked down to the Rio Café* it is hard to imagine that *Rio Café* is a conventional association of *walk* and that some degree of creative imagining isn't obligatory to construe the sentence. Similarly, when in his renowned *I have a dream* speech, King blends his experiences of contemporary America with his hopes for what the nation can become, does this still fall within the bounds of literal meaning? Since it refers to the future, it transcends experience, and given the impact of the speech, one assumes that it was a somewhat unconventional vision of America. Is this then a kind of metaphor? But what about the contrastive example Lakoff gives of literal meaning: *the balloon went up*. Clearly, this should be the most conventional of examples, but what exactly does *balloon* or *went up* denote? It could as easily describe a deflated balloon travelling in an elevator or a balloon set aflame. These are certainly more extreme examples, but still within the bounds of experience, if not convention, and a little imagination can come up with stranger examples still. Where then do we draw the boundary between convention and non-convention?

This is not to say that Lakoff's distinction is meaningless – the difference is clear when comparing extremes of both – but there is clearly a large overlap between literal and metaphorical. Metaphor is clearly pervasive in everyday language (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), and Fauconnier and Turner have demonstrated the remarkable

similarities between how we construe literal and metaphoric constructions (2006b, 2008). As their blending models of metaphors demonstrate, the creativity of metaphor is highly exaggerated, most often exploiting existing semantic relationships rather than creating new ones. For instance, time and space are very different, yet we comprehend time most clearly through motion across space, such as the time it takes a ball to drop from one's hand to the ground, and vice-versa, space is understood in relation to time, such as the time it takes to walk to the end of the street versus the end of town – hence time and space are already intimately linked despite their apparent dissimilarity. As Fauconnier and Turner's blends demonstrate, metaphor and literal expression are not very different at all.

Metaphor may not be drawn directly from experience, but the analogies it creates are experientially motivated. Grady (1997) and de Mendoza Ibanez and Masegosa (2014:40) differentiate between abstract and experiential metaphor, with the former building upon the latter: For instance, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY abstract metaphor is built on the experiential metaphor(s) of CHANGE IS MOTION, or GOALS ARE DESTINATIONS. Thus, like literal meaning, metaphor too is grounded in experience.

Lakoff (2007) states that the difference between literal and metaphorical meaning is that literal meaning is linguistic while metaphor is analogical[7]. This claim is somewhat diminished by both cognitive grammar (Langacker 2008) and Blending Theory's highly analogical cognitive semantic analyses of grammar. Both of these theories show that literal meaning as much as metaphoric meaning is something to be figured out on the basis of a set of cognitive principles and decoding strategies – the only real difference being that with metaphor we are perhaps more conscious of these procedures due to its greater novelty. But there is perhaps some validity to the claim. de Mendoza Ibanez and Masegosa assert that literal meaning draws more on experience, while metaphor stimulates more conscious analysis (2014:1-3). Metaphor, in short, is the primary method by which we perform abstract reasoning. Its primary function is to make abstraction comprehensible by means of mapping experience onto it.

Even the most unconventional constructions will have some experiential motivation. Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of literal and metaphoric meaning not in

[7] That is to say, literal meaning is semantically codified, while metaphors have to be consciously figured out.

absolute terms but rather in terms of more or less. All metaphors are literal to some extent, and all literal expressions exploit some abstract, metaphorical analogies. *We can thus also postulate that metaphoric and literal expressions also exploit the same cognitive abilities, only to differing extents.* It is this insight that provides the foundation for Blending Theory.

Given its propensity for experientialism (Lakoff 1987), it is therefore unsurprising that Blending Theory, like most cognitive theories, emphasises the narrative quality of cognition (Turner 1996:3-25). As Ricoeur stated in the previous Section (2.3), metaphor and narrative are fundamentally alike in that both comprise the mapping of experience onto abstract thought. Moreover, like narrative, metaphors too can repeat across an entire text or conversation (similar to extended literary metaphor) as demonstrated in Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). This is likely because narrative is fundamental to how we construe everyday experiences (Polkinghorne 1988:66).

In *The Literary Mind* (1996), Turner calls this kind of narrative metaphorical analogy, *narrative imagining*. Narrative imagining allows us to identify patterns within experience, and by means of these patterns to map prior experiences and concepts derived from them onto present experiences. This in turn enables us to recognise phenomena based on similarities, explain how present events occurred, predict future outcomes, evaluate potential responses, plan out responses to achieve desired outcomes, recognise other agents who might enact plans of their own, even evaluate the authenticity of our own narrative imaginings (Turner 1996:8-10). Recalling Ricoeur, we can see narrative rehabilitation at work in the way that abstract concepts are grounded in experience, providing meaningful context to reductivised abstractions.

In short, metaphors like LOVE IS A JOURNEY or CONVERSATION IS WAR can be viewed as mini-narratives, and vice-versa, any story as a kind of extended metaphor. Typically, metaphors are instances where more abstract concepts such as LOVE or CONVERSATION are superimposed onto more direct experiences such as *taking a walk* or *fighting someone* – metaphor is the use of less abstract, more direct experiences as illustrative examples of more abstract concepts which are more removed from direct experience (Gibbs 2005). In this way, *the more concrete experience lends substance and definition to the more obscure concept* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). In

the same way, stories frequently use simple, direct experiences to make complex, abstract ideas more comprehensible: The biography of two rival tennis players could be told in terms of a boxing match metaphor, a war history as a game of chess between two opposing generals, the rising star of a young tech entrepreneur as a skilled artisan constructing a monument. In narrative though, the opposite is more often the case, the story itself is used as an expression of more abstract themes.

In traditional metaphor theory (Richards 1936), metaphor is comprised of a tenor or meaning, and a vehicle or expression. For instance, in the proverb *even a donkey doesn't hit its head twice*, the donkey serves as the vehicle or expression of the tenor or concept of *learning from one's mistakes'* In Blending Theory, *the relationship between theme and story is very much like the relationship between tenor and vehicle* (Turner 1996:3-25). For instance, in *Heart of Darkness*, the story is not about Marlow's journey – Marlow's journey, just like the donkey in the proverb, is merely an expression of the story's real meaning. Marlow's journey and the donkey hitting its head then both serve the role of an illustrative example of a broader principle or concept.

Theme, it will be argued, then stands in relation to story in a way similar of tenor to vehicle in traditional metaphor theory. In the expression, *The criticism is right on target* or *He shot down all your arguments*, which is an example of the CONVERSATION IS WAR conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), the image of warfare serves as a representation of the concept of debate. This is similar to how Marlow's journey serves as a representation of the concepts of imperialism and the psyche.

The reason it can be said that Turner and Fauconnier's model provides us with *the first working model of thematic narrative* lies in the various selective filters which include some and exclude other components of the original semantic domains which are being blended in the narrative or metaphor (Fauconnier & Turner 2006, Fauconnier & Turner 2002). In other words, blending doesn't simply combine two concepts, but *blends* them, transforming each in specific ways. Conrad's exposition of the themes of imperialist atrocity and human motivations in *Heart of Darkness* are neither comprehensive nor meant to be. Both themes and story impose a constraining effect on one another. Colonialist iniquity is not presented impartially and exhaustively but deliberately subjectively, as through the lens of a passing traveller. As Dancygier (2012: 35) explains, thematisation is an on-line process. The

audience doesn't start the narrative already with a clear understanding of the theme, but instead slowly pieces it together from the exemplar as the story progresses. Story thus serves in a selective role in regards to theme, and vice-versa. It is these selective filters which gives narrative its distinctive shape in contrast to other modes of discourse, and which are instrumental to understanding the processes which produce this unique shape. Like earlier thematicists from Levi-Strauss to Frye to Greimas, Fauconnier and Turner's model includes an indispensable *intermediary third* between story and theme which provides a conceptual common-ground between the disparate concepts. This is termed the *generic space*, and it provides the means for the integration of theme and story into what is termed a *blended space*, which is effectively an interpretation of the story. (These concepts will be more thoroughly explained in section 4.7.)

2.4.3 Embodiment

Another important contribution of cognitive linguistics is that of the *embodiment principle.* As Ricoeur stated, the defining characteristic of narrative is its embodiment of abstractions. This is because what makes narrative different from scientific descriptions of experience is its integration of human subjectivity (Polkinghorne 1988: 17). Experientialism has often been misconstrued as an attempt to argue for some kind of empirical basis for semantics. But this entirely ignores the embodied, which is a fundamentally subjective, character of experientialism (Dancygier 2012: 26).

Cognitive linguistics arose as a rejection of Chomsky's proposed innate grammatical faculty (Croft & Cruse 2004, Tomasello 2008). It instead proposes that language is more integrated with the general cognitive function, as best exemplified by the notion of embodiment. While the Chomskyan paradigm is considerably different from preceding formalist linguistics, it still remains formalist in its firm separation of grammar from semantics. Cognitive linguistics rejects this through Langacker's symbolic thesis (1987: 11-12) which not only claims that syntax and semantics are closely related, but furthermore that syntax is an extension of semantics. To give an example, in the literal sense of the verb *promise*, the semantic properties clearly dictate the rules of what can validly occupy grammatical positions like subject and object – in this instance, a conscious subject and an abstract contractual direct object (such as transfer of ownership or performing a service) (de Mendoza Ibanez &

Masegosa 2014). Even in the metaphorical sense, as in *the investments promise substantial returns* or *approaching storm clouds promise rain* this is true by implication of its associated personification of the subject.

Embodiment is the idea that language is defined by human physiology (Gibbs 2005). This can be differentiated into two main corollaries: Firstly, the body influences how we acquire knowledge. We acquire knowledge through experience, which is shaped by the nature of our senses, how our physiology interacts with the environment, through the frame of perception, etc. Secondly, the way we process and store that knowledge is shaped by the structure and function of our bodies, specifically the brain (Turner 1991:30-46, 68-98). Although cognitive science is not neuroscience, it does have a neuroscientific commitment in that it seeks to create models of cognition which cohere with neuroscientific findings (Semino & Culpepper 2002, Stockwell 2019 [2002], Lakoff 1990, Fauconnier 1997). In other words, cognitive linguistic models do not claim to be exact descriptions of neurofunction – they are still just theoretical abstractions, albeit abstractions consistent with our understanding of how the human nervous system operates.

When we look for it, we find that embodiment pervades language. For instance, there is some evidence that modality in language is a projection from bodily experience, and time similarly is general construed through the path metaphor, with the future as an approaching landmark, the past as a receding one, temporal proximity as visibility while temporal remoteness is invisibility (Gibbs 2005: 160-1, 187-90). Semantics and syntax are clearly not cleanly separable and moreover the semantics of the verb clearly plays an important role in defining its syntactic behaviour.

Like the metaphoricity principle, which undermines the commitment to realism of formalist narratology by asserting that all language is fundamentally figurative, embodiment similarly undermines the plot-narration distinction of formalist narratology. This is because embodiment asserts that meaning is inherently subjective, framed in relation to the human perceiver. In this, it undermines any clear subject-object distinction in language, such as found in the plot-narration binary, where plot describes an objectively known story-world and narration the subjective framing of it. While it espouses a philosophical realism, it rejects formalist narratology's over-simplified account of it (Lakoff & Johnson 1999).

Perhaps the best example of the embodiment principle, particularly as it pertains to narrative, is the prototypical or archetypal narrative. But giving this concept the full explanation it deserves will have to wait for succeeding chapters.

2.4.4 Usage-based

Finally, meaning is also learned. The architecture of thought is not wholly automatic but in large part passed on through social exchange. We see this in the different ways that languages embody meaning. Language therefore is an equal product of the natural embodied nature of the mind, but also the social transmission of these embodied schemata. Semantics therefore is also a social and cultural construct, sometimes relatively universal in relation to human universals, while at other times more environmentally and culturally specific (Turner 1991:39-42). Cognitive linguistics is a branch of functional linguistics, which views language as shaped by the holistic human ecology, the physical environment, human biology, social interaction and mental structures (Halliday 1976:7-25, Bybee 2010, Nuyts 2005:70, Heyvaert 2003:9-40). However, despite its recognition of these broader determinants, cognitive linguistics is still often justly criticised for its cognitive bias towards the biological and mental aspects of language, and its neglect of the social and environmental aspects (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999), but it also needs to be mentioned that this prejudice has been remedied somewhat through the work of figures like Croft and Croft (2001), Geeraerts (2006), Goldberg (2003) and Pascual (2014).

2.4.5 Criticisms

A serious criticism that can be levelled against blending theory is the ambiguity of the term *domain*, at least on the surface. If blending is defined as the integration of distinct domains (or mental spaces, in their nomenclature), then the ambiguity of domain boundaries leads to the obvious question of whether blending even occurs, or whether the theory is only describing the existing semantic relationships within already integrated concepts. In other words, it is worth asking whether, if we cannot determine whether domain boundaries exist, any blending even occurs. And if no, then what becomes of a supposed theory of blending.

This question is one which a whole section in chapter 4 is devoted to (Section 4.6). However, to summarise, the question is not as significant as we might suppose.

Firstly, blending theory is not unfamiliar to the notion of intra-domain blending (termed simplex and mirror networks (Section 4,7.2)), so that domain boundaries turn out not to be so important after all. The reality that conceptual integration must occur at some point. If presented with the construct *fruit* + *shake*, whether we blend the concepts online or simply retrieve an already integrated construct from memory, blending must occur at some point. Nevertheless, the issue of domain boundaries is certainly relevant enough that it deserves to be discussed at length. This is because the nature of domain boundaries will define what and how blending occurs. Indeed, the question of domain boundaries are perhaps the most pressing issue in cognitive linguistics, and deserve more attention than this study allows.

Another prominent criticism has been of blending theory methodology. Gibbs (2000) questioned the falsifiability and hence scientific credibility of the claims made by blending theory. However, as Fauconnier points out in his response (2020), the methodology of blending theory is identical to that employed by linguistics in general, namely of testing hypothetical predictions against the linguistic data of actual language expressions. Gibbs' criticism then should be viewed in the light of a psychologist casting doubt on the methodology of a rival discipline with its own competing methodologies to those of his chosen discipline. Fauconnier goes on to point out that while the methodology of linguistics and psychology may be different, the foundational assumptions are the same.

2.5 Where do we go from here?

It might seem that we have reached the end of our journey at this point. The dream of a thematic narrative theory which started with Levi-Strauss and was taken up independently by Northrop Frye, has finally found its apotheosis in Fauconnier and Turner's Blending model. The latter seems to resolve all the shortcomings of the formalist concept of narrative. It is a model which fully realises the way in which theme is expressed in story in its fully figurative quality, even while still retaining the versatility to encompass formalist interpretations of narrative.

The main defining features of thematic narrative can be summarised as follows:

- Narrative, like all language, is defined by communicative intent. But narrative is also a specific linguistic register, where the communicative intent is to

convey an abstract concept termed the theme in its instantiated or experiential form. Thus, at the core of thematic narratology is the tri-partite model of narrative, comprising form, meaning and an intermediating meaning-in-form (As we saw with Levi-Strauss' structures, Greimas' semiotic squares, etc.). In this capacity, the narrative function closely resembles metaphor's tenor-vehicle juxtaposition. Similar to metaphor, theme is also usually implicit rather than explicit, but also comprises the primary communicative intent. For example, in the metaphor *a donkey never hits the same stone twice*, the tenor of *learning from one's mistakes* is not only implicit, rather than explicit, but also comprises the intended message. Considered as a narrative then, the tenor constitutes the theme or meaning, and the vehicle the exemplar or form.

- More accurately however, the intended meaning lies in the blend of meaning-in-form. In the case of the above example, it would more accurately be *the theme of learning from one's mistakes as exemplified by the example of donkeys not hitting the same stone twice*, or what Frye terms imagery or Ricoeur terms mimesis, or in Blending Theory, the blended space.

- The theme is less a definite statement than a loosely defined subject for contemplation. Narrative is thus a characteristically interactive form of communication, where both narrator and audience jointly play the role of story-tellers.

- Through the association between theme and exemplar narrative gains its distinctive embodied character – that is, a distinctly subjectively human experience. This also demonstrates the defining function of the narrative register, namely to achieve narrative rehabilitation, a restoration of experience's sense of being-there to abstract thought, similarly again to experiential metaphor. But narrative is not an attempt to recapture an original experience, but to juxtapose or blend experience and abstraction, that is, the double-perspective of narrative.

- For this reason, narrative is also fundamentally figurative rather than denotative or mimetic, or in the vernacular, *realistic*. For example, the donkey in the above example is not intended to realistically represent a donkey, outside of its functional representation as something that learns, just as the

stone which is struck represents a mistake. Mimesis in the exemplar is only indirect, via its role of instantiating the theme, not for its own sake as a realist may imply.

But as the reader will likely have noticed, all of these qualities are characteristic of all language. They define what will be termed *the narrative consciousness,* i.e. the innate narrativity that all language possesses. What then makes conventional narrative itself unique? For all the progress that has been made in defining thematic narrative, this question still remains unanswered and will be the main objective of this thesis.

The answer we will present is two-fold. Firstly, the definition of narrative is of necessity scalar, not absolute, because the qualities that define narrative are universal to all language. But they also increase in prominence the more a text is identifiably and conventionally *narrative*. This universal aspect of narrative will be explained in Chapter 4.

But at the same time, there is one characteristic which appears to be more unique to conventional narrative, namely Fryean archetypes. This main defining feature of narrative will be the topic of Chapter 5. While Fauconnier and Turner's concept of Blending provides a solid foundation for an archetypal theory of narrative, the concept of Blending is too universal – it only describes standard cognitive blending and does not explain the unique properties of the narrative blending we will term archetype.

As we saw, archetypes, which are conventionalised associations between an experience and an abstract concept, do occasionally occur in an elementary form in non-narrative language, for example in idioms and ordinary language metaphors. But they occur with nothing of frequency and complexity that we observe in conventional narrative. For Frye, conventional narrative differs from ordinary language narrativity in its archetypal aspect. As Frye defines it, conventional narrative is a sublimated form of ordinary language narrativity – narratives retold and reinterpreted countless times, each time increasing in depth of insight, breadth of relevance, and richness of significance such that they have become in a sense super-narratives. This frequency and complexity will be demonstrated in the remainder of the thesis, namely Chapters

6 to 9, where we will analyse a wide range of narratives to demonstrate its significance.

Chapter 3

The case against the formalist definition of narrative

3.1 Narratology and the poverty of meaning

Before we can proceed to explore the question of what defines the thematic approach to narrative, it is necessary to return to the question of narratological formalism. In large part, the inadequacies of this approach are what make the thematic model of narrative so necessary. All of the arguments from the previous chapter, of course, beg the question of why mainstream narratology persists in its bias against theme.

The reasons for the failure of formalist narratology to account for theme as wel as its consequences will be the topic of this chapter. While it was said that thematic narrative theory doesn't seek to replace formalist narratology so much as improve it, the formalist's erasure of the key role of theme in understanding narrative has led it to resort to alternative, flawed hypotheses as substitutes. The apotheosis of a formalist narratology into a thematic one, requires the exposing and elimination of these flawed inferences.

Again, it must be re-emphasised that formalism does claim to engage with semantics by equating narrative form with theme (Petterson 2002, Falk 1967:xi-iv), but this claim is only possible if one rejects the symbolic thesis of cognitive semantics which views form as a surface manifestation of a separate, underlying conceptual layer (Rimmon Kenan 1995). Formalism instead equates theme with the surface forms while ignoring the underlying layer of abstractions which unite them. Hence it is a thematics bereft of everything which defines the thematic function; theme in name only.

The answer to the question of anti-thematic bias is likely historical in nature. The formalist bias of mainstream narratology is quite understandable given the inadequacies of semantic theory at the time of narratology's advent. The reality is that *until recent decades, narrative formalism was entirely justified on practical grounds*, even if the theory fell short. At the time of its inception, linguistics suffered from the same semantic vagueness as does present narratology (Rimmon-Kenan

1995). As we saw with Greimas, even later structuralist understandings of semantics were limited to inadequate notions like simple logical-oppositions. Similarly, Frye's theory of narrative, while more complete, is also highly abstract theoretically, and requires significant elaboration to make it practically applicable – a project which only recent decades of linguistic developments have made possible. Narrative formalism thus was an entirely justified response to the inadequacies of linguistics at the time. Since meaning is so nebulous in nature, it only makes sense for scientific study to concentrate on the most evidential aspect, namely the form. However, it is when necessary biases become ingrained as doctrine that the compromise to pragmatism goes too far. Indeed, even the founding figures of the formalist approach, namely the Russian Formalists, later acknowledged the error of formalism. Jakobson, Tomasjevsky and Tynjanov all state in their later writings that the formal properties of art are meaningless outside of their unified purpose or function (Erlich 1980 [1955]:199). Jakobson later even endorsed the thematic definition of narrative when he stated that the narrative unit is defined by its universal communicative purpose (Polkinghorne 1988:35).

The origins of narrative formalism can perhaps be traced mainly to three roots, namely linguistics, philosophy and literature itself. The twentieth century was largely an era of formalist linguistic dominance. This in turn can be attributed to the profound influence of the two major linguists of the twentieth century, namely Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky, both of whom were formalists. As such, given the influence of linguistics on narratology (Dowling 2011:39, Polkinghorne 1988:80-1), it is only predictable that it too would adopt a formalist perspective. Besides this, it was also perhaps necessary. It is hard to imagine that the great strides in semantics accomplished by functionalist linguistics would have been possible without the bedrock of the meticulous understanding of the surface forms of language supplied by the formalists. After all, as Langacker's symbolic thesis states (1987: 11-12), the surface forms of language are the manifestation of underlying semantic structures – thus it is only through this penetrating understanding of the surface forms that their underlying semantic structures have been revealed.

In Ricoeur's narrative theory we also see the overwhelming formalist bent of mainstream philosophy's attitude toward narrative. Phenomenology in particular is deeply concerned with understanding the relationship between abstract thought and

the pre-conceptual experience of the world from which it derives. In this tradition, the association of narrative with experience is natural due to its clear difference from the abstract discourse of higher reasoning. But as Ricoeur demonstrates, these associations are only a continuation of ideas cemented by Kant, and can be traced back even further to Augustine and Aristotle (Ricoeur 1984). It is this dichotomy between narrative and abstract thought whence derives much of the formalist opposition to narrative thematics.

Finally, twentieth century literature and the profound influence of modernist artistic ideas on it, specifically its deep concern with the exploration of the artistic medium itself – that is, the artistic form – over the subject matter of the art work, has certainly also played its role (Levenson 2011, Bell 2011). If the consciousness of form in modernist literature is not self-evident from the works themselves, there are also the numerous mentions of form in the various artistic manifestoes: tellingly, the first section of Pound's manifesto, *A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste* (1913), is titled *Language*, and defines the stylistic vision of this new art form. The Russian Futurist manifesto, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* (Burluik et al. 1912), largely reiterates Martinetti's *Manifesto of Futurism*, but explicitly expands on the language forms which define it (Lawton 1976). Similarly, Woolf's *Modern Fiction* (1925) emphasises the importance of the modernist style. This formalist artistic concern echoes throughout the rest of the century, and undoubtedly had its influence on the critics and scholars as well.

But this bias toward form and against meaning has stubbornly persisted despite the great strides that have been made in the field of semantics since the birth of structuralism, biases which have been inherited by narratology: Genette (1988:16), for instance, addresses the question of the relationship between thematics and narratology, stating that since narratology is able to define narrative without reference to meaning, the question of meaning has no place in narratology. As Sollors (2002) puts it:

> Thematic approaches to literature are anathema, as Claude Bremond and Thomas Pavel have wittily observed in their call for '*La fin d'un anathème*'. (1988). Expressing an explicit interest in literary themes at this moment may still seem equivalent to admitting a deficiency in theoretical sophistication, or to showing only a feeble concern for literature proper. The argument goes

> somewhat like this: Thematics by necessity misses what makes literature exciting; it is a positivistic misunderstanding of what constitutes literary texts and their specificity and uniqueness; it can never reach the work because the methodological starting point, the theme, is an abstraction; it works as a form of politics and ignores the formal side of literature.

Similarly, he points out that,

> It is an indication of the state of the field that 'theme' and 'motif' have nearly disappeared from the indexes of the Modern Language Association and are not graced by entries in such new handbooks as Lentricchia and McLaughlin's *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (1990).

Thematics may be alive and well, but it certainly doesn't occupy the prominent position it should within narratology (Sollors 1993, Sollors 2002, Petterson 2002, van Peer 2002, Deane et al. 2019). Instead, if anything it is kept well to the side.

But as Aristotle stated, form without meaning is meaningless. So it is not surprising, as Ronen (1994:147-9) points out, that while in their theories narratologists always strictly maintain the position of formal autonomy, in practice this credo is regularly ignored. As Fauconnier & Turner (2002:12) explain, formalist theories have always tacitly included cognitive semantic principles through the unstated founding assumptions of their theories. Even in their definitions, at some point narratologists always have to sneak in some oblique reference to cognition. We see this in the last criterion of Ryan's formalist definition of narrative as *meaningful communication*, as well as in Herman's mention of 'events…that…introduce some sort of disruption or disequilibrium' (2011:1). 'Disruption' and 'disequilibrium' and meaningful communication in this context demands a cognitive semantic definition which formalist semantics fails to provide.

In the absence of a cognitive semantics to explain meaning in language, there is only one real alternative – a return to realism. Or rather a virtual realism. This is the old fallacy which supplants the signified with the referent: the word *table* refers to actual tables, the sentence *the dog runs* points to real dogs running (Scholes 1974:111). While referentiality does comprise an essential part of semantics, the formalist signifier-referent pair deliberately omits the crucial role of the actual signified (the concept).

This *naïve interpretation of language* and narrative is what Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* argues against. But while he argues against its naïveté, he doesn't dispute that this is the artistic intent. For Ricoeur, the purpose of art is not the exemplification of theme through experience, only the representation of experience itself. This is the primary shortcoming of his theory of narrative – it posits narrative as a relationship between reality itself and its formal experiential representations. Narrative then is conceived as an interplay between reality and experience, not between experience and thought (as represented in figure 1.1 in Section 1.3). The role of theme, that is the communicative intent of narrative, is either erased or simply reduced to form, which ultimately amounts to the same thing.

As argued at the start of the first chapter, this is still the present day theoretical conception of narrative: narrative conceived of as conjuring up some form of virtual reality, and interpreted as interpret the world around us – either in terms of the properties of the perceived world, namely time, space, objects, causality, etc. or in terms of our perception of it, namely point of view, focalisation, agency, etc. But from the thematic narrative perspective, these properties are only the containing form of narrative meaning, not the narrative meaning itself.

Without ruling out referentiality entirely, the thematic model in contrast interprets narrative from an *experientialist* perspective (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987). Inspired in part by the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, this is the idea that meaning or even scientific truth is not a natural property of the world, but rather something that is created in the interaction between the human subject and the world. In this way, it is the blend of objectivism and subjectivism. It is the idea that truth is embodied – it only comprises those facts about the world which have significance to us (Polkinghorne 1988:22-30). In this perspective, the presentation of highly detailed experiential content in language and narrative is not so much for the sake of verisimilitude, but rather as rich and imaginative content for creative concept-forming. Experience is not valuable in itself, but rather as the materials from which thought is formed. It is this vital second phase in human consciousness that is missing from formalist narratology. This is particularly pertinent in the case of fictional narrative, which doesn't even refer directly to reality, but rather exists only as a figurative representation of theme.

Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) did much to mitigate against the severe formalism of early narrative theory by introducing narratology to the sender-message-receiver linguistic model, specifically the concept of the author. Similarly, the contemporary reader-oriented theories (Prince 2013) did the same for readers. Yet when it comes to the text, we still see the same allusions to story-worlds being created (Booth 1961:393). These theories pointed out the flaw of conceiving of the author- and reader-in-the-text as referring to actual authors and readers, since it is impossible for the one to truly know the other. Consequently, the necessary distinction arises between the actual authors and readers and implied authors and readers in the text. But logically, the same should apply to the narrative itself. Just as a distinction is made between actual and conceptual authors and readers, so too should there exist a distinction between actual narrative referents and their conceptual or thematic counterparts. Yet this is not the case.

This study will demonstrate that contemporary cognitive semantics is more than sufficient to meet the requirements of narrative inquiry. Why then does the formalist bias persist? When we seek out the rationale for this anti-thematic bias, we find the same justifications mentioned by Barthes above – namely that including thematics is necessarily a return to the moral prescriptivism of early criticism and a denial of the essential creativity of the narrative consciousness. From the mainstream formalist narratological perspective, the only conceivable direction a science of narrative theme could take is a dull and utterly unartistic determinism (Bremond & Pavel 1988, Ryan 1988). Sollors (1993, 2002) explains that this is due to misconceptions about the nature of theme, namely that literature is the study of the creative, while thematics is unimaginative and therefore falls outside the scope of its study. But, as we have shown, this is a clear misrepresentation of the thematic narrative position as envisaged by Levi-Strauss, Greimas and Frye, where the objective is not to define 'appropriate' thematic interpretations but rather to explore the creative structures which produce such interpretations.

In summary then, it is important to re-emphasise that a thematic model is not a substitute, but a complement to formalist narratology, aimed at achieving a more complete understanding of narrative. But in order to achieve this one requires a substantial revision of present narratological theory, particularly in disposing of the naïve realism fallacy. This needs to be replaced by a figurative interpretation of

narrative, where the set of experiences which comprises narrative are mediated via a thematic component. This necessitates firstly restoring theme to its proper role in narrative, and secondly redefining narrative forms in terms of their auxiliary role vis-à-vis theme.

3.2 The taxonomic fallacy

Perhaps the most thoroughgoing critique of mainstream narratology is that of Ronen's *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (1994). Ronen's critique is mainly aimed at theories of narrative fiction, but as we shall see, it also applies to mainstream narratology in general. Ronen begins by terming theories which attempt to define an object in terms of a set of distinctive features, taxonomic theories (1994:76-81). As we have shown in the preceding sections, narratology seeks to do exactly this: it defines narrative either in terms of formal features, or in terms of real-world categories or categories of perception in keeping with the virtual world claim. These include typical taxons like plot, character, narration, focalisation, style, etc. As she points out, most of such lists are far from comprehensive, and to attempt such is nigh impossible – the variety of forms that narrative can manifest alone could be virtually infinite.

Thus we can define the taxonomic fallacy as not determining the defining features of narrative by analysing their *functional, communicative* role, but rather in terms of the notion that narrative can be defined by such features alone – and without any reference to their semantic function. As Jolles explains (summarised in Scholes (1974:50)), narrative is defined by its social and cultural role, and therefore cannot be defined by a set of abstract rules. To illustrate this point, imagine one were to take a corpus of narratives, of whatever size we want, and identify each feature held in common by all or most of these individual items. The obvious insufficiency is that what we would likely arrive at is a description of language in general (by virtue of all narratives also simultaneously being language texts as well).

Such an approach seems patently absurd on the face of it, but how different is this from the approach of formalist narrative theory? Put differently, we can ask, exact terms aside, how different is formalist narrative theory from linguistic theory in general. Of course, there will naturally be a significant overlap since narrative

ultimately is language. Narrative is also a distinct register of language and a definition and theory should make this difference obvious. Yet when we look to any standard narratology textbook for the definition of narrative and various topics associated with it, such a distinction is not very apparent. Herman (2004, 2009, 2017), for instance, defines narrative so broadly it in effect becomes a theory of language, not narrative[8]. We observe the same in Toolan's (1988: 4-8) definition of narrative[9]. Indeed, there doesn't appear to be a significant difference between the mainstream narratological definition of narrative and linguistic definitions of the clause (Croft 2012, 2015).

How different is the defining distinction between plot and narration (Abbott 2002) from similar distinctions in linguistics, such as systemic functional grammar's distinction between experiential and interpersonal or textual metafunctions[10] (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985])? How is narrative person (voice/focalisation/point-of-view) (Abbott 2002) different from grammatical person[11] (Siewierska 2004, Biber et al. 1999, Miller 2002), or time in narrative (Bridgeman 2007) from grammatical tense[12] (Comrie 1985), character (Margolin 2007) or setting (Ryan 2003) from semantic agent or patient roles[13] (Croft 2012)? How different is narrative event (Herman 2005) from grammatical verb[14] (Croft 2012)? So many narratological concepts duplicate existing linguistic concepts, such as narrative mood versus grammatical mood, narrative frequency versus grammatical iterativity, duration in narrative versus grammatical durativity and boundedness, etc. When we take all of this into consideration, one has to ask oneself why narratology is so intent on removing itself from or even erasing its undeniable foundation in language? Is it perhaps to disguise its superfluousness in relation to linguistics? Or is it perhaps to

[8] Herman (2011) for example defines narrative as 'a structured time-course of particularised events'.
[9] Toolan's minimal definition is 'a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events' .
[10] Halliday and Matthiessen defines the experiential metafunction as a representation or 'theory of experience' and the textual metafunction as the organisation of meanings into text (2004: 29-30), Many other linguists define language in similar terms (c.f. Croft's semantic principles (2012)). This essentially mirrors the same narratological distinction between plot as a representation of experience and narration as its organisation in the narrative text.
[11] Grammatical person by necessity encompasses narrative person as their use in narrative necessarily comprises one of the grammatical uses of the same.
[12] As above, 'the semantic concept of time reference…grammaticalized in a language' (1976:6), must necessarily also encompass all narrative time reference since narrative is also language.
[13] Although these correspondences are not as clear-cut as in the previous examples, the essential narratological distinction between character and setting revolves around the characteristic of agency (as denoted by the synonyms '"agent" or "actor/actant"…used for character' (Abbott 2002:188). The grammatical roles similarly revolve around the same essential distinction.
[14] More on this below (see section 4.4.3).

conceal the fact that the formalist definition of narrative is not a definition of narrative, but of language as a whole?

While some narratologists do pay lip service to linguistics, mentioning the linguistic foundations of narratology, rarely does this go further than a superficial acknowledgement. In none of the seminal works cited here or in Sections 1.1 or 1.3 is an attempt made to address the extensive parallel literature and data in linguistics on these topics. Instead, what we more often find are narratological claims made in direct contradiction of overwhelming linguistic evidence (as we shall explore further in the next chapters). Aside from this, many of the foremost narratologists have adopted an unambiguous anti-linguistic stance (c.f. Genette 1988, Rimmon-Kenan 1995, Ryan 2007). However, these arguments are all based on a Chomskyan formalist definition of language (namely that linguistics is solely a science of signifiers, not the signified), ignoring the far more widely-accepted functionalist definition. For more on narratology's anti-linguistic stance, see Ronen (1994).

Certainly, there will be an overlap, but the overlap between narratology and linguistics goes so far that they are virtually identical, at least in their respective taxonomies. *And this is the essential problem of the taxonomic approach, namely its inability to distinguish an object from its environment*[15]. Suffice it to say, the study of narrative will always be plagued by this indeterminacy between narrative and language in general so long as taxonomic definitions persist. From one perspective, the thematic definition of narrative, despite its linguistic foundation, finally enables the liberation of narratology from this linguistic superfluity though its differentiation as a distinct mode of discourse from the rest of language.

To illustrate, consider *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Formally we can distinguish two taxons of characters – human and bear. But what is the significance of this distinction? In all likelihood none. Goldilocks is a human being for the same reason she is a child – to identify her to the target audience, human children. The bears on the other hand are the paragons of social normative behaviour. In keeping with convention in fables, they are presented not as human but as denizens of the natural world in order to associate desired social norms with the natural order of the world we live in (Blackham 1988, Salisbury 1994). But approaching the narrative from a

[15] That is to say, the functional qualities from the circumstantial attributes.

taxonomic perspective rather than one rooted in semantic convention creates a void of reference which compels the reader to reach for arbitrary meanings.

To return to the example of Goldilocks, the protagonist commits the same social infraction three times in threefold succession (three chairs, three bowls of porridge, three beds). This refers (thrice over) to a common convention or trope of the triple infraction, a specific semantic trope with its own unique narrative purpose and meaning. This can be seen for instance in Peter's denial of Jesus, or the variations of the fairy lover tales from Celtic folklore (Zipes 2012:31-2). In the absence of a clear understanding of narrative function, it is only possible to read some other kind of meaning into the iteration itself, likely about repetition and human nature. (For the thematic narrative answer to this question, see Section 6.2.2)

Ronen (1994:79-80, 149-159) lists the problems which result from the taxonomic approach:

1. The list of formal features is essentially endless. As a result, any selection of definitive features will necessarily be arbitrary.

2. Since narrative is linguistic in nature, such a list of features is not so much a description of narrative as a description of language in general.

3. Distinctive features only allow us to identify narrative without telling us anything meaningful about it – a taxonomic definition is inherently a meaningless definition.

This in turn results in the following consequences:

1. An inability to define or understand narrative.

2. An inability to define the concept *event* as part of the formal definition of narrative as *a sequence of events*.

3. An inability to define relationships between events.

4. An inability to make crucial semantic distinctions such as between figurative and non-figurative uses of language.

5. An inability to define how narrative is created or how it is meant to be interpreted.

Of these criticisms, the most devastating is formalist narratology's inability to even establish a definition of narrative that most closely reflects what is commonly understood by the term *story* (c.f. Rudrum 2005). Aside from Ronen's criticism of the

taxonomic approach *sui generis*, the standard definition is itself problematic. As stated earlier, the standard definition is some variation of discourse containing plot – some variation of *an ordered sequence of events* (c.f. Ryan 2007, Rudrum 2005). Although this is characteristic of the vast majority of stories, rarer instances exist to belie this definition, such as the 'Time Passes' chapter in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, where there is hardly any temporal progression, but which is nevertheless distinctively narrative in tone. Similarly, one can cite single event scenes such as the following opening passage from Peake's *Gormenghast*:

> The Hall of the Bright Carvings
>
> Gormenghast, that is, the main massing of the original stone, taken by itself would have displayed a certain ponderous architectural quality were it possible to have ignored the circumfusion of those mean dwellings that swarmed like an epidemic around its outer walls. They sprawled over the sloping earth, each one half over its neighbour until, held back by the castle ramparts, the innermost of these hovels laid hold on the great walls, clamping themselves thereto like limpets to a rock. These dwellings, by ancient law, were granted this chill intimacy with the stronghold that loomed above them. Over their irregular roofs would fall throughout the seasons, the shadows of time-eaten buttresses, of broken and lofty turrets, and most enormous of all, the shadow of the Tower of Flints. This tower, patched unevenly with black ivy, arose like a mutilated finger from among the fists of knuckled masonry and pointed blasphemously at heaven. At night the owls made of it an echoing throat; by day it stood voiceless and cast its long shadow. (p. 7)

Even taken out of context, right from the start, we can clearly sense that we are reading a story, despite the absence of any *succession of events* (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:2). Similarly, we can cite single event limericks, which are often defined by their narrative tone, even though they don't conform to any formal definition of narrative:

> There was an Old Man with a beard,
> Who said, 'It is just as I feared!
> Two Owls and a Hen,
> Four Larks and a Wren,
> Have all built their nests in my beard!'

Formalist narrative defines narrative as a sequence of events, i.e. a plurality. Yet in the 'Time Passes' chapter from Woolf, the central theme is the eventlessness and the distinct absence of the sense of the passage of time which follows from it. In the subsequent example, there is no evidence of temporal succession. If a sequential plurality of distinct events is the single necessary feature of narrative all formalists agree upon, how could these then be considered narrative?

Most telling of all perhaps is that the definition put forward by narratology is identical to the cognitive semantic definition of *verb*. According to Langacker (1987), verbs have the quality of framing qualities or entities in relation to an ordered sequence of time-frames (i.e. events). For example, when I say *look here*, *look* frames a state of conscious and physiological being over a sequence of time periods or moments corresponding to the vague concept of the present. In cognitive grammar, verbs are foremostly defined by a property called sequential scanning, which construes the relationship of processes to temporality as a sequence of consecutive states or events. In this way, each individual verb does not simply profile an event, but rather a sequence of events. Strictly speaking then, in terms of the standard narratological definition, any utterance comprising a verb constitutes a narrative.

These consecutive states are also often highly distinctive. To return to our example: *look* also comprises several distinct and consecutive frames or stages (see Croft & Cruse 2004:116-140), of directing one's gaze, of perceiving a visual stimulus and cognitively processing the sensory input, at the bare minimum – several senses of *look* encompass even more complex processes such as *look for* in the sense of *to search* or *give a look* which encompasses the act of perception within the context of a communicative act. As Langacker explains, these discrete component events encompassed in the verb become clear through verb modification: For instance, *I looked without seeing* profiles the sensory component of *look* versus *I looked without comprehending* which profiles the cognitive component. As this clearly demonstrates, a single verb alone frequently denotes an entire mini-narrative when defined as a sequence of events. This is hardly what anyone (at least outside of narratology) would recognise as *a story*. Yet this definition of verb is hardly unique to Langacker. Croft (2012) for instance similarly defines verbs within the framework of complex event structures. For an alternative approach which nevertheless arrives at the same definition of verbs, consider Halliday and Mathiessen (2004 [1985]:111-7,

335-51). It is in part the temporal grounding of verbs themselves which substantiates the cognitive linguistic claim that thought itself is fundamentally narrative in nature (Turner 1996, Schank & Langer 1994).

In light of this insight, the narratological definition encompasses any and all linguistic utterances which include a verb. Compare this to the thematic model, where narrative is defined as figurative, somewhat akin to metaphor, namely the description of abstract categories by means of an experiential instance. In terms of this model, *What happened on our first date* or *That time I met the Queen*, are typical examples of the concept of *story* because they are abstract categories such as *first dates* or *the Monarchy* presented in the experiential form of *what happened on…* or *that time I encountered…* And at the same time, the thematic model enables us to exclude the false positives of the conventional definition such as *look here* or *the genus Loxodonta comprises two living species*. While perhaps not perfect, the thematic model allows us to construe a more specific notion of what narrative is than the traditional definition which encompasses just about any linguistic utterance.

Ronen's critique reflects a similar criticism by Meir Sternberg regarding cognitive narratology (2003a, 2003b, 2009). While Sternberg's criticism is directed specifically at a particular sub-set within narratology, it develops from a broader critique of narratology as a whole. Cognitive narratology is a branch of narratology which aims to incorporate discoveries from cognitive science, including many of the cognitive linguistic concepts employed in this dissertation. Unfortunately, as we saw above (Section 1.7), this branch of narratology resolutely adheres to the mainstream formalist tradition (Herman 2011, Turner 2006), which, as we shall demonstrate below, is philosophically incompatible with cognitive and functional linguistics. In other words, while incorporating these important concepts, they refuse to grant them their proper status, instead appending them to existing theory in an ill-fitting manner that necessarily distorts their meaning. For instance, Herman often references how qualia, that is, the uniqueness of individual human experiences, are characteristic of narrative, but offers no explanation in the definition for why this is in his definition (2009:144-54). This has resulted in a clearly limited incorporation of these linguistic insights into narrative theory.

The fundamental argument of Sternberg is similar to that of Ronen, and therefore potentially carries over to narratology more generally. Some of these are:

1. An inability to define the unique character of narrative that distinguishes it from other forms of discourse.

2. An inability to define the purpose of narrative.

3. An inability to differentiate the fictional/figurative from the non-fictional/non-figurative.

4. A preference for abstractions and a failure to engage with the actual language of the text.

5. Under-emphasis of narrative plurisignation (signifying many different things), ambiguity (uncertain signification) and affect.

The full catalogue of criticisms by Sternberg are manifold and would take too long to discuss in the detail they deserve, but I include a brief commentary on them if only to demonstrate just how extensive the problems created by the taxonomic fallacy are.

The first four criticisms given above mirror those of Ronen, and hopefully will be satisfactorily resolved by means of a thematic definition of narrative, which is also a functional definition of narrative. Sternberg's last criticisms, namely an impoverished sense of narrative plurisignation, ambiguity and affect, perhaps gives some sense of unintended casualties of an overly formal approach. It is not hard to see how understating the role of theme also impoverishes an appreciation of the scope and variety of themes present in a story. If this is the case, then it also necessarily means an impoverishment of the emotional resonances of these missing themes, as well as the mystery, wonder and imagination arising out of the vague boundaries between them. This is particularly surprising, given cognitive linguistics' particular sensitivity to these issues (Turner 2006, Tsur 1992, Lakoff 1987, Tuggy 2006).

How then, you may ask, does thematic narrative seek to resolve these issues? As stated earlier, the taxonomic fallacy arises when we attempt to define a phenomenon in terms of distinctive features alone instead of in relation to the defining purpose (i.e. function) which is responsible for those defining features. Thematic narrative theory amends this lack by adopting Ricoeur's functional definition, as discussed in Section 2.3, namely that narrative is a language form whose purpose is the deautomatisation of abstractions through rehabilitating their basis in experience. As we shall demonstrate in the following chapters, this transformation significantly resolves many

of the above-mentioned problems which derive from the formalist's taxonomic approach.

3.3 Formalist realism

In Section 1.3, it was argued that one of the most problematic consequences of the formalist anti-thematic bias is the *window on a story-world* metaphor. This is the problem of replacing the semantics of signifieds with a semantics of referents – that is to say, to say that signs refer not to abstract semantic representations, but instead to actual things in the world. The consequence of this is creation of a flawed realist semantics, and this is the issue we will deal with in the following section.

One of the most influential theoretical approaches to analysing narrative meaning is possible worlds theory (PWT) (Pavel 1986, Ryan 1991, Ronen 1994, Ryan 2012). PWT derives from truth-conditional logic and is based on the intuition that for any modality there exist multiple possible states of affairs each relating to each conceivable outcome. A classic example is Schrodinger's cat, where there are two possible outcomes of the experiment, one in which the cat is alive, the other dead. Based on this premise, PWT tries to explain the relationships between actual states of affairs and these possible outcomes (Ronen 1994:21).

This basic premise was revolutionised by Thomas Pavel with the insight that fiction doesn't have to simply create a hypothetical reality, but can create an independent one. In other words, fiction is no longer bound by possibility, but only by internal consistency. Previous theories emphasised the role of fiction as a distorting mirror to reality, where the role of fiction was ultimately determined by the ways in which it deviated from reality. Pavel in contrast emphasised the ability for the internal logic of fictional worlds themselves to communicate meaning independent of their relationship to the real world (Pavel 1986).

To give a simple example, Sherlock Holmes presents a world in which mysteries are solvable through seemingly impossible chains of deductive reasoning. Traditional PWT centres on the question of how, if at all, this might be possible. But this question has little to do with the narrative itself. The Sherlock Holmes stories are not a study of investigative techniques. Pavel's approach side-steps this question by simply accepting this as true for the fictional world, and instead asks how this

alternative state of affairs contrasts with our own reality. Pavel's alternative means that we get closer to the theme of the narrative, because the fictional world in this way becomes its conceptual surrogate.

In this way, PWT is used to evaluate fictional worlds not in terms of possibility but rather referentiality (Ronen 1994:25). This is a subtle but revolutionary difference, since it amounts to much the same goal as that of thematic narrative, namely to focus interpretation on the narrative as a whole rather than only isolated formal features. Before Pavel, PWT focused its interpretation only on the fictional elements themselves, ignoring their interactions with the non-fictional elements also present in the narrative. Thus, we can admit that Pavel's complaint was similar to our own, namely a complaint against the theoretical biases inherent in the formalist taxonomic approach, which only analyses selected formal features and ignores the themes present in the narrative as a whole.

According to Ronen, one of the greatest contributions of PWT is its ability to enable us to view fictional worlds independently of the real world and on their own terms. Ronen (1994:10-12) defines fiction then as a derivation of actuality – an independent world constructed for the purpose of referentiality (c.f. Ryan 1991). Older, simpler definitions of fictionality that bring in the question of truthfulness have fallen away, replaced by questions of referentiality, specifically about how the fictional work refers to reality and how and why it departs from it. In practice, this means two main types of application: theories of fictionality (how the fictional world relates to the known world), and the description of specific fictional worlds (how knowledge of the known world is used to create fictional worlds) (Ryan 2012).

Thus, fictional worlds theory represents a great stride forward by acknowledging the compositional nature of narrative, namely that meaning cannot be attributed to individual formal features outside of the narrative whole (the fictional world in this case). Compositionality (Langacker 2008, Kintsch & van Dijk 1983:10) is the cognitive grammar term which describes the interactive, mutually specifying nature of language. For example, in *bike engine* we know that the *bike* in question is a motorbike rather than a bicycle from *engine* and we know that *engine* refers specifically to the kind belonging to a motorbike. In other words, in language, we know that words do not remain discrete units when they are added together to construct the whole, but rather that the whole defines the parts and the parts the

whole equally, while at the same time, the different parts also define one another. Everything hangs together in language.

But this surface victory is deceptive in that it amounts to little due to its omission of the conceptual nature of narrative. Outside of simple reference, narrative is conceived of as little more than a window onto the narrative reality that lies behind it. What is worse, Ronen (1994:76-7), like many other possible worlds theorists, and narrative formalists, even tacitly admits that narrative meaning is conceptual – that fictional meaning is subject to various conventions specific to culture and context – while still omitting any overt reference to cognitive semantic convention in her theory. Once again, PWT resorts to the same intellectual legerdemain of formalist narratology by substituting the signified with the referent. In PWT, a fictional dog is not interpreted in relation to the concept DOG, but rather in relation to dogs in the real world. Without recourse to conceptual definitions corresponding to the narrative forms, meaning can only be relegated to real-world entities and states. This is ultimately self-serving because under such theoretical conditions, PWT is the most useful approach to interpreting narrative content.

The problem becomes clear the moment we ask what are these possible- or story-worlds? If they refer to real existents, what kind of existence are we speaking of? Or if they are accepted as imaginary, then why term these *worlds*?[16] Aren't *conceptual structures* more appropriate? The term possible- or story-world is a self-contradiction, *possible* or *story* implying a prognostic or mental state, while *world* implies these are somehow real at the same time. This is the necessary result of substituting the signified for the referent – a confusion between reality and semantics.

In the parable *the Fox and the Grapes* this is the difference between interpreting the eponymous fox as a species of talking canid, versus interpreting it as a symbol of human greed. Obviously, this is not to say that narratologists routinely interpret such

[16] The PWT answer is obviously that the implications of any proposition extend beyond the proposition itself. For instance, the proposition "If Ronald Reagan became president in 1969" conveys are vast array of implications beyond simply the identity of the US president. These consequent implications then extend outward to generate its own a possible world conception (c.f. Ryan 1991). But as we shall explain, the problem with PWT (and essentially any story-world semantics) is that there is no limit to how far these implications extend, and therefore must be understood to extend *ad infinitum*, which also simultaneously means *ad absurdum*, since an infinite implicature must inevitably result in self-contradiction at some point. Cognitive semantics, by contrast, is circumscribed by convention, and thus limited in its implications, avoiding this problem.

symbolism in the literal sense, only that the theories themselves do not account for these kinds of figurative interpretation. Given narrative's propensity for symbolism, one would expect most definitions of narrative to mention it, or for figuration to comprise a large portion of any formalist narratological handbook. But it doesn't, because this would wholly undermine the formalist definition of narrative in terms of real-world categories. After all, how useful are such definitions if the real-world referents are entirely figurative, and therefore ultimately arbitrary? Furthermore, if it were conceded that narrative worlds are entirely figurative in nature, this would necessarily also mean conceding that narrative must be defined semantically rather than formally.

As Ronen noted previously, narratological theory and practice regularly don't coincide. A fundamental problem with PWT is its inability to explain the role of convention in meaning. Cognitive semantics states that concepts are structured in relation to their own system of rules or conventions which relate not directly to any properties of the real-world correlatives themselves, but rather to how these correlatives interact with us, that is, the embodied human mind. An example of this is prototypicality semantics (Geeraerts 2006).

However, the fundamental premise of PWT, that narrative refers to an objectively knowable narrative world rather than cognitive structures, is not unique to it, but rather represents the mainstream consensus in formalist narratology. It is exactly this naïve realism which was Greimas main criticism of narratology and which Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* was written in response to (Polkinghorne 1988:93). As Mieke Bal states, narrative consists of an objectively observable series of events defined by definite agents, chronology and spatial locations (Culler 2002 [1981]: 171). In the same way, Kermode (2000 [1966]) describes narrative not as an instantiation of ideas, but as an imposition of the order of the subjective human experience of time onto the chaos of reality. Consequently, the goal then becomes to pierce through the narrative text to the narrative reality behind it, in Culler's terms, to filter functions from discourse. The narratological project then is envisioned in the guise of a scientist seeking out causatives from the passive natural environment (Culler 2002 [1981]:171), rather than appreciating the artistic unity of the whole.

An example of a more recent iteration of the *story-world* problem is Text World Theory (Werth 1999, Gavins 2007). Like most cognitive narratologies, Text World

Theory presents itself as a cognitive theory of narrative while at the same time completely ignoring all cognitive dimensions other than the sensory-experiential one. Instead, when abstract semantic representations are refered to, it is only by equating them with their real-world referents. The vital question of if and how abstract representations may depart from their real-world referents is largely ignored, even though the various ways in which language and consciousness transforms experience is probably the most important one linguists and narratologists need to ask.

Certainly, experience constitutes an important part of cognition, but in the context of narrative even experience is only presented second-hand, as it were, through the frame of conceptualisation. In other words, narrative does not present experience first-hand, recreating the original experience for the audience to perceive afresh, but instead only retrieves the memory (i.e. conceptualisation) of an experience. But like most cognitive narratologies, Text World Theory does not truly address the issue of conceptualisation and conceptual structures, and therefore even its representation of cognitive experience constitutes a serious distortion of the subject.

As previously explained, early studies of narrative, and language in general, were based on the metaphor of narrative or language as a window onto an objectively observable world through which the audience views the depicted events much as they would in real-life (Section 1.3). Of course, they did so for lack of a better alternative given the limitations of psychology and cognitive science at the time. But, although the human consciousness still very much remains a mystery to us, we do know enough to now accept that this metaphor is highly inaccurate. Instead, it is rather the case that language rather points to knowledge and experience structures as they exist in the mind. Yet for all this, much of academia remains stubborn in its insistence on the window metaphor, despite the wealth of evidence to the contrary and the comparative lack of evidence in support. Yet these misconceptions persist, both in the form of popular beliefs and up to highest levels of academia.

In spite of Ronen's claims to the contrary, PWT ultimately remains another kind of taxonomic theory of narrative. Like formalist narratology, PWT ascribes meaning to a virtual narrative world, and the meaning of this virtual world, in turn, derives from its supposed reference to real-world denotata. This then supplants the role of communicative intention as the source of meaning. But the problem is that unlike

language, the observable world has no inherent meaning. Instead, meaning is superimposed by the subjective viewer. Similarly, from the formalist perspective, narrative has no inherent function other than that which the audience imposes on it. Narrative then, becomes an arbitrary collection of features with no unifying purpose, and hence victim to the taxonomic fallacy. PWT thus inevitably falls victim to many of the same flaws. To her credit, Ronen at least admits this shortcoming of PWT, though without fully abandoning the PWT position. Other possible worlds theorists differ (Ryan 2012).

Again, the fundamental problem with this position is that *it doesn't stand up to linguistic scrutiny*. Unless the intention is to propose that narrative is a phenomenon separate from language, theory needs to hold up to contemporary linguistic definitions of meaning. Certainly, formalist narratology was originally inspired by formalist linguistics, but just as functional linguistics has (at least partially) superseded it, so too do we need a functional narratology which takes into account the contemporary communicative or thematic function of narrative.

As Croft (2012: 13) explains, linguistic meaning is independent of objective truth. Instead it is subjective, inextricably linked to the cognitive biases of narrator and audience. Furthermore, basing meaning on reference to real entities and events, rather than semantic abstractions, results in a distortion of how fictivity in language really appears to work (Langacker 2005, Pascual 2014).

In short, the exact same shortcomings of the taxonomic approach listed before also characterise attempts to apply PWT to narrative. Just like the formalists' endless and arbitrary list of features, the number and variety of possible worlds which can be extrapolated from a narrative text is potentially infinite and equally meaningless. As one would only expect, the consequent understanding of narrative is equally distorted. The absence of any conceptual or even linguistic component in PWT results even in the fundamental failure to comprehend the essential purpose of narrative as a mode of communication – even traditional formalist narrative theory manages at least this much.

As can be expected, the similar flawed assumptions lead to many of the same lamentable consequences. PWT's aim of interpreting narrative as a virtual world is inherently antithetical to an appreciation of narrative's figurative nature. This is

particularly important since most narratives are figurative in the sense that they are thematic – the realism of the narrative is not significant to the story, only that of the theme it seeks to convey. Does it matter whether Marlow's journey down the river actually took place, or that the events he describes are an accurate representation of the situation in the Congo at the time? Or is it rather more correct to ask how they serve to communicate the author's intended message or themes? Cognitive semantics is selectively referential: it can refer to reality in relation to one dimension of a concept, and entirely ignore it with respect to another (Croft 2012:14).

Furthermore, it is unclear how a comparison of contrasting realities can grapple with the conventional nature of meaning. Interpreting narrative in terms of its contrast with reality results in the same kind of distortions of meaning that characterise taxonomic models. For instance, comparing the stories of *Goldilocks* or *Red Riding Hood* against reality naturally highlights the distinction between human and anthropomorphic characters, even though, as we saw earlier, this difference is rather incidental and meaningless in and of itself. Croft (2012:11-13) raises a similar point regarding conceptual frames: even if two words denote or refer to exactly the same thing, their relationships to other objects within the semantic network can be very different. *Land* and *ground* can refer to the same object, but *land* is in contrast to *sea*, while *ground* is in contrast to *air*. In this way, *land bird* and *ground bird* denote very different things (Fillmore 1982: 121). But formalism's substitution of the signified for the referent erases these differences. This comprises what Croft states to be the most important distinction between cognitive and formalist semantics – the versatility of construal/conceptualisation. In this way, the fundamental inadequacy of the PWT and the broader formalist approach is demonstrated. They fail not so much in terms of what the terms respectively denote, but rather in what they do not point to or evoke.

This inability to understand the nature of the sign and figuration is visible, for instance, in Searle's theory of metaphor (1979:76-116), which employs the same truth-conditional logic on which PWT is based. He states that when confronted with a metaphor, we isolate the truth-conditions referred to, to the two words linked by the metaphor. Then we isolate meaning on the basis of any identity between the truth-conditions of each word via several principles such as defining or contingent features, similar conditions, and so forth. As we saw above with Ronen, and earlier

with Herman and Ryan's formalist definitions of narrative, there is a veiled reference to conceptualisation through a vague reference to culturally or individually perceived features or conditions. This is, however, not taken further.

The problem with all of This is that the features associated with the referents of each term are potentially innumerable, because of the vast number of qualities attributable to any entity, and the similarly immense number of possible identities between two or more entities. For instance, in the case of *Lucy is a diamond*, *Lucy is precious (like a diamond)* is a prototypical interpretation. But in Searle's theory, so too should be *Lucy as an organism is carbon-based (like a diamond)*, *Lucy is heavier than air (like a diamond)*, *Lucy's eyes are translucent (like a diamond)*, *Lucy's bones are harder than clay (like a diamond)*, etc. The same is true of any metaphor, and truth-conditional semantics provides no selective criteria on the basis of which one would select the appropriate meanings, nor can it due to its taxonomic nature.

These criteria can only be provided by means of a conceptual-basis which inherently defies truth-conditional logic, being formed of subjective human experience rather than objective reality. In the case of *Lucy is a diamond*, it is only through the conventional (conceptual) associations of the emotional value of human beings and the fiscal value of diamonds that the metaphor makes sense (in that we regularly attach emotional value to the security which objects of fiscal value provide us) (Lakoff & Turner 1989:160-213). Cognitive semantic convention thus determines which meanings of each word in the metaphor are pertinent and also determines how they relate. Where then does truth-conditional logic or PWT enter into this process? The simple answer is it doesn't. The entire semantic process of meaning construal occurs independently of truth-conditional analysis. Fauconnier and Turner (2006b) explain that cognitive semantics is fundamentally irrational, or at least of limited rationality. Semantics typically requires violations of logic, such as, for example, the concept of cyclical time (such as the 24-hour cycle, or the 7-day week) which directly contradicts its actual linearity. Again, in this example, we see that logical derivatives which are not relevant to the theme of cyclical time (which is the recurrence of patterns of events), namely temporal linearity, are simply ignored. Rather PWT's role is restricted to relating concepts to external context. It may play a crucial role in evaluating meanings relative to a specified real-world context, but the process of meaning construal occurs independently of these processes.

Does fictionality even matter then? If the meaning of fictional narrative is accepted to be primarily conceptual and figurative rather than referential, is the question of fictionality even all that significant? The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is itself quite murky: fiction and fact are constantly interwoven in narrative and literature in general, and often it is not even possible to know which is which. Furthermore, things like figurative language, rhetorical devices and conceptual abstractions also occupy this hazy in-between area. As such, identifying any features whatsoever which are unique to fiction alone may not be possible (Ronen 1994:76-7, c.f. Nielsen et al. 2015). Through the course of history, many works which have been considered fictional have on re-evaluation been found to be rooted in facts, and vice-versa (Bruner 1991). Fictionality is an omni-present feature of all language (Pratt 1977:87-88, Fauconnier 1985, Pascual 2014).

Furthermore, if narrative meaning is accepted as inherently figurative, then we must accept that all narrative (if not all language) is fictional to some degree. In this case, the facticity of the events described in a narrative is often largely immaterial because their primary role is only as an expression of a concept, namely the theme, and it is the veracity of the theme itself rather than the individual events used to exemplify it that is of consequence. For instance, were I to ask an ex-con about life in prison and he told me a story about how once the prison he was in was almost hit by a plane, even if his story were true, it would not be considered very relevant regarding life in prison – after all, how typical is it for prisoners to die by falling planes? Even in eye-witness testimony, narrative displays this fundamental figuration. In character witness testimony, the facticity of details is entirely irrelevant except in terms of how it relates to the theme of the person's character. Referentiality is only indirect, mediated through theme. For instance, when testifying to an act of self-sacrifice, does the person no longer qualify as a good Samaritan if one mistakenly gets a certain detail like the name of the beneficiary wrong? But if this is the case, does fictionality truly affect the meaning that readers attach to it? Is fictionality meaningful? Undoubtedly there is some significance to referentiality, though I think not to the extent that possible worlds theorists make out. The question of fiction may itself have been inflated precisely because of the formalist narrative bias against conceptual meaning and its search for substitutes.

Fauconnier's mental spaces (1985) and conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2006) theories provide an alternative to the historically dominant truth-conditional approach of semantics, and as one might expect, the authors provide a detailed analysis of the failings of this view. As they explain, the distinct difference between truth-conditional semantics and cognitive semantics is that the latter views meaning as conceptual, while the former seeks to derive meaning from a state of existence outside of the mind. Thus, for PWT and truth-conditional semantics meaning is viewed as realistic rather than conceptual, and consequently this realism leads to numerous unsolvable and absurd metaphysical entanglements, since for every alternate you present you have to create an entire alternate reality (Fauconnier 1985:xxxvi).

In contrast, mental spaces have the advantage of being localised and discrete (1985:xi-xiv). *Localised* means that cognitive semantics avoids the metaphysical complications of PWT, since any alteration only affects the concept itself and its immediate semantic environment. *Discrete*, on the other hand means that multiple contradicting spaces can coexist. For instance, we can imagine both *toy dogs* and *ordinary dogs* coexisting in the same universe.

For example, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the supernatural properties of this single painting and its effect on the eponymous character has no impact on the wider world. In other words, meaning is *localised*. Unlike in PWT and truth-conditional semantics, we do not need to assume that this individual instance constitutes a law of nature in this universe that need be applied to the larger fictional reality. Are all self-portraits in the fictional world like this? Does this same phenomenon replicate with other paintings? How exactly does this work? These questions are fundamental to PWT and truth-conditional semantics because it is based on a universal rule-bound conception of reality. Cognitive semantics however regularly ignores these inconsistencies because semantics is understood to be ideational rather than realistic.

Similarly, it is *discrete* in that Dorian Gray is at the same time both like and unlike the picture. This is because we recognise fiction as figurative rather than metaphysical, and as such can have multiple simultaneous interpretations in relation to the different meanings of words (Fauconnier 1985:xxxviii). Cognitive semantics has a high degree of tolerance for inconsistency that truth-conditional semantics lacks, particularly in

relation to referentiality – since PWT uses known reality as a basis for constructing possible worlds, it is limited in the extent to which it can diverge from reality without losing coherence (1985:xxxvi). The result of this for cognitive semantics is a more fluid or adaptable semantics, and one which is far more efficient (1985:xiv). Whereas in cognitive semantics, every alternate space reduces complications by eliminating contradictions simply by excluding them from one another, in PWT, every alternate reality only multiplies the complications due to metaphysical entailments (1985:xxxvi).

Another flaw of PWT is its own internal inconsistency. For instance, PWT presents itself as a solution to the abstractions of conceptual states by basing itself in real-world understandings. But an inescapable part of reality is the subjective human consciousness, and PWT therefore validates cognitive semantics by incorporating it into its logic even while claiming to reject it (1985:153-5). In other words, it cannot wholly avoid cognition unless it restricts itself to narratives without conscious human characters. To represent human beings is to represent their meaning-making capacity.

Similarly, as cognitive syntactic theories like Langacker's cognitive grammar demonstrate, cognitive semantics are fundamental to even the most simple linguistic constructions, such as the basic propositions which truth-conditional logic employs (1985:xxxix). In other words, truth-conditional logic cannot even explain how we interpret the meaning of the narrative propositions which it seeks to evaluate. One cannot simply reach behind language in order to access the reality it denotes. Analysing propositional linguistic constructions requires grappling with language and its associated cognitive semantics. The same is true for pragmatic ambiguity in language. Language necessarily requires a degree of ambiguity, which is, in turn, compatible with the under-specification of cognitive semantics and cannot exist in the over-specified metaphysics of PWT where meaning is associated with concrete and unambiguous real-world denotata (1985:xlii). Ultimately, even though it presents itself as a superior alternative (Rimmon-Kenan 1995, Ryan 2007), PWT cannot exist without cognitive semantics.

In short, the fundamental flaw in the *story-worlds* theory of narrative is their supplanting of the signified with the referent and ensuing violence it necessitates be done to the signified. Certainly, some understanding is required of the referent the

signified is intended to represent, but as we have shown, narrative meaning is inextricably bound to its signified and simply cannot be quarantined from it without entirely distorting its nature. The signified differs from the referent in two important ways. Firstly, the signified is defined by its elimination of many of the unique characteristics of the referent. This is termed the process of abstraction, and it is a necessary step in the generalisation necessary to create categories. Secondly, the signified replaces these vacancies with associations other categories to create the semantic network. (Both of these processes will be discussed at length in the next chapter.)

Thus, result of supplanting the signified with the referent is a distortion on two-fronts: simultaneously imposing irrelevant constraints on a concept while at the same time divorcing it from its semantic context within the network of associations with other concepts. As you can see, the resulting description is entirely alien from the actual phenomenon.

In summary, in place of narrative realism and fictionality, thematic narrative substitutes the concept of *narrative figuration*. Simply put, this is the notion that narrative, and language in general, is not a representation of reality, but rather of semantic structure. It is not a representation of reality itself, but rather of reality as the subjective human mind conceives it. For this reason, although there will obviously be certain similarities sometimes, the differences can often be immense, and thus the difference between a conceptual- and realism-based theory is that between meaningful description and failure.

Thematic narrative theory presents a different understanding of fictionality. From this viewpoint, narrative is understood to be essentially figurative, specifically in relation to the interaction between story and theme. Fictionality from this perspective presents no real challenge – it is only a different kind of expression of abstract narrative figuration more generally. Like with the metaphoric war in the CONVERSATION IS WAR metaphor, which is conceptual, not real, and defined by its own semantic conventions, fictional entities or even worlds can be treated in a similar way. From this perspective, fiction doesn't require its own separate definition but is instead viewed as a natural component of narrative.

Is a thematic narratology then entirely divorced from reality? The answer is no. In comparison to formalist narratology, thematic narrative, even though it prioritises abstract conceptualisation, it has no difficulty in incorporating referential experience as well. Indeed, the thematic definition of narrative, as thematic instantiation (i.e. experientialisation), requires it. At minimum, thematic narrative defines narrative as a blend of two domains, one abstract theme, and one of which is experiential. This will be more extensively explained in the next chapter.

3.4 The departure of the thematic from formalist approaches to narrative

As has been repeatedly stated, the primary difference between the thematic and formal narrative perspectives is the incompleteness of latter, specifically, its exclusion of the essentially cognitive semantic or figurative nature of narrative.

But unfortunately, amending this lack is not merely a matter of "seasoning" existing formalist narratology with the missing ingredient. In the absence of this essential component, formalist narratology has often arrived at flawed alternative explanations which need to be revised right down to their root assumptions. This is because of the symbolic thesis of cognitive semantics, which states that all narrative form is a manifestation of underlying semantics (Langacker 1987: 11-12). This differs starkly from the traditional formalist interpretation of narrative presented in the previous Sections of this chapter, which views the relationship between form and meaning in almost the opposite way, with form at the centre, and meaning as its derivative (c.f. Genette 1988, Rimmon-Kenan 1995).

Unfortunately, as stated previously, a complete revision of formalist narratology deserves a far more extensive study than the present one, which limits itself merely to defining, briefly elaborating and exemplifying the opposing thematic narrative position. Nevertheless, something needs to be said on these topics, if only for the sake of clarity, in order to fully comprehend the implications of a thematic revision of formalist narratology, and I shall endeavour to present a synopsis here.

One of the core concepts, as we saw above, which also cuts to the core of the distinction between formalist and thematic approaches to narrative, is the theory of fictionality, which defines the relationship between narrative worlds and real worlds (c.f. Nielsen et al. 2015). But if we accept the conceptual nature of narrative, there is

no longer a narrative world, and thus the founding premise of many formalist theories of fiction largely disappears.

To understand the figurative nature of narrative, we need to return to Ricoeur. For him, narrative is not merely a different mode of expression, but in fact a distinct kind of consciousness. Ricoeur distinguishes this from a rational, logical consciousness whose purpose is to derive universals by tracking commonalities between individual experiences. For Ricoeur, narrative is different in only seeking instantial or local significances. Thus, we can say that while abstract thought concerns itself with the rule, narrative is instead concerned with the exception. It is less concerned with determining the truth and more with problematizing it, with contemplating the truth than defining it (Ricoeur 1984).

To be clear, Ricoeur certainly overstates these differences. As has been explained, narrative doesn't only instantiate, but rather blends abstraction and instantiation. There is much to criticize in philosophy's penchant for simplifying the confusion of reality with (on-the-surface) clear binary oppositions, and although Ricoeur does challenge earlier philosophical ideas on narrative, ultimately his bias shows in his own predisposition for such dichotomies.

But there does appear to be something to his idea of a narrative consciousness. For Ricoeur, history teaches us something fundamental about narrative, namely that it isn't merely a form of communication, but a way of thinking. When we see a historical *trace* of the past, a piece of historical evidence, we do not simply see it in isolation; we embody it. We superimpose the entirety of embodied perception onto it, the concepts of durativity, telicity, dynamism, control and experience. In other words, we place ourselves within the same moment imaginatively and recreate an embodied narrative around it. We blend the objective historical traces with our subjective human experience. Furthermore, as Ricoeur points out, we are not only imposing our own personal experience, but also our shared cultural consciousness. In other words, we use cultural stories to create new personal stories in our daily existence. We employ our cultural history, which is the distillation of a culture's generations of experience – the fact that culture comprises everything about a human collective that is enduring – to create new histories for the phenomena we encounter (Ricoeur 1984, 1988).

There is an awareness that story is not actuality but interpretation. It is a hypothetical, a proposition, neither true nor false, based on the facticity of experience but also of narrative speculation. Part of the figuration of narrative is the embodiment of facts, placing them within a subjective human framework. But an equally important part of it is thematicity. As Polkinghorne states, 'Narrative displays the significance that events have for one another' (1988:13). Or as Beardsley explained narrative theme is about asking what do these events mean to us as human beings. The function of theme is to transform a chronicle of events into a conceptual whole by highlighting their role in that whole, without which each event appears as discontinuous and self-contained (Beardsley in Polkinghorne 1988:18). In doing so, narrative theme imposes order onto the chaos of sensory impressions. Thus, narrative erases the dichotomy between truth and fabrication, placing narrative somewhere in-between these opposing poles (Ricoeur 1984). This is why fictional narrative – with its unique degree of flexibility – is able to exemplify these ideas or themes to a degree that life stories or history or any other narrative with a greater commitment to facts cannot (Polkinghorne 1988:69).

For Ricoeur, this is because people don't live in stories where there is a clear beginning and defined end. Lived experience is characterized by a bewildering randomness of events – it is only after the fact that we impose the narrative order onto this randomness. As stated before, Ricoeur argues that fictional narrative employs clear signals, such as distancing itself from experience through, for example, the use of past tense and the third person. It thus signifies its figurative nature, placing itself clearly in the realm of thought rather than experience. These various markers serve to accentuate the embodied nature of experience and the thematicity of narrative for two connected reasons: the first is to package it in a form familiar to the narrator's audience, thereby facilitating clear communication, and the second is to accentuate its figurative nature – to signal that it is a hypothesis, not a fact, that is being communicated (Ricoeur 1984).

While any theory of fiction implies a comparison between real and invented narrative, the concept of figuration views all narrative as a blending of experiences and abstractions. Thus, thematic narrative must ultimately reject the concept of fiction because it is based on the same naïve concept of language as creating objectively knowable narrative worlds, as discussed above. But as we shall see, this problem

extends far beyond only the theory of fiction to virtually all concepts of narrative meaning.

Linguistics often describes language in terms of three primary dimensions, for example Halliday's metafunctions or Croft's semantic principles. These are a conceptual dimension (how meaning is structured), an experiential or denotative dimension (how these structures relate to real world experiences), and an interpersonal or communicative dimension (how meanings relate to communicative roles of speaker and audience). Given that narrative is a form of language, we can similarly break down the theory of narrative into three main components, namely narrative structure, narrative referentiality (narrative denotation), and narrative perspective (narrative roles). The component of narrative referentiality defines the relationship between any particular narrative and the world of experience, and is predominantly the domain of theories of fiction such as PWT and several speech-act theories (c.f. Pratt 1977, Ohmann 1971, Searle 1979). This topic has been discussed above. Suffice it to say, these theories can largely be supplanted by the semantics of figuration in the thematic approach to narrative. In its capacity for contrasting proposition with fact, theories of narrative referentiality then only remain of limited applicability. Specifically, such theories might still have relevance to the evaluation of narrative theme, since, as stated above, it is only the narrative theme, that is, the intended meaning of the narrative, that makes any real claim to truth.

Another component mentioned above is *narrative structure*, which defines how narrative meaning is partitioned into component parts, and how these parts relate to one another. Certainly, the perceived properties of the experiences which comprise the narrative play a significant role in how it is structured, but a separate abstract system of relations is also determinable. As the fabula-sjuzhet distinction between plot and narration clearly demonstrates, narrative structure regularly departs from the natural order of experience. Why is this?

As might be expected, narrative structure has been a primary concern of formalist narratology (c.f. Culler 1975, Eco 1979, Bal & Van Boheemen 2009, Rimmon-Kenan 1983, Chatman 1980, etc.). As stated before, structural description has also had a predominantly experiential focus, related to the idea of a narrative world and the typology of its entities and events. As one might expect, there is no generally

accepted explanation of structural organisation other than allusions to individual artistic intent (Herman 2011).

Again, when we approach narrative from a cognitive semantic perspective, the concept of narrative figuration comes to the fore. If we accept that narrative is a representation not of a story-world but of semantic structures, and proceed on the basis of the symbolisation thesis (that the surface structures of narrative are manifestations of these underlying structures), then it makes sense that much, if not all, of narrative structure can be explained in terms of semantic structures (Turner 1996:146-54).

Several of these organising principles of semantic structure are worth touching on at this point. Perhaps the most obvious is the linguistic principle of nested units (word, phrase, clause) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]). This recalls Shklovsky's concept of stairwell structuring (Erlich 1980 [1955]:243-6). According to this concept, like language and experience, narrative takes the form of a linear stream. According to Shklovsky, repetition is exploited to shape this linear stream into patterns, and those patterns in turn become units within larger patterns. Through this repetition, a line becomes a circle, and narrative units come to be superimposed onto one another to bring similarities and contrasts to attention. A path becomes a stairwell, simultaneously forming both a line and a circle – both a single continuous stream and a repeating pattern of units.

Another is the concept of schematicity (Tuggy 2006, Gibbs & Colston 2006) or prototypicality (Geeraerts 2007). Schemas are scalar in organisation. In other words, certain components are more central to the concept while others are more peripheral. Within the schema FRUIT, APPLE is typical, POMEGRANATE less so. Dancygier (2012a) argues that while plot is organised experientially, in other words, in accordance with the natural temporal sequence, narration is organised thematically. That is, we narrate events in order of their conceptual centrality. Events which are subjectively construed as more central to the theme are recounted first or last (based on the principle of initial- and final-position emphasis), while more thematically peripheral events are placed in the middle. Similarly, familiar events are presented closer to the beginning, while unfamiliar or unexpected events are presented at the end.

In summary, while it is true that narrative structure is ultimately defined by communicative intent, as we can see from only these two above-mentioned examples, the thematic approach to narrative provides an explanatory framework which can guide us through the process from theme to narrative instantiation, something which is sorely missing from formalist theories of narrative structure.

The third and final component is that of *narrative perspective*, and this is perhaps where the contrast between formalist narratology and the figuration-based interpretation of thematic narrative is starkest. As explained above, formalist narratology attributes narrative meaning to an objectively knowable narrative world. In this conception, perspective can be clearly differentiated as the different stances held by various human agencies, be they characters in the story, or the communicative roles of narrator or audience, in the way that these frame the narrative world differently. Perhaps the most authoritative book on this topic is Booth's famous *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), though most narratological works attend to this subject.

The thematic approach to narrative however doesn't allow for such a straight-forward distinction between subject and object. Instead, from the cognitive point of view, meaning is perspectival all the way down. While the experientialist philosophy of cognitive semantics acknowledges philosophical realism, that is that our senses describe an objectively existing reality rather than simply appearing from the ether, the categories we construct to construe experience are inherently subjective in nature. All meaning therefore is perspectival.

To give an example, the difference between *dog* and *cat* is less one of objective fact and more one of subjective interpretation. Imagine for instance a language with only the word *animal* or *pet* or *carnivore* and no more specific taxon. In this case, a dog and a cat would be perceived as the same thing in the same sense that we identify two distinct dogs as essentially the same kind of thing. This is not to deny the existence of empirical reality, but rather it is only an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the way that language categorizes it. This is why we can say that language is perspectival all the way down. Again, this is not to deny the existence of objective reality, only to assert that how we categorise it semantically is subjective. All language is perspective.

From this viewpoint, there are no universal conventional meanings associated with words within a language. Shared meaning is instead based on sufficient similarity. Two people do not have to agree perfectly about the meaning of words, so long as there are sufficient similarities for effective communication to occur. (Indeed, one can argue that language depends on the existence of such disparities, without which there would be nothing to share.) (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983).

Fauconnier and Turner (2002:25-6) provide an illustrative example. Consider the meaning of the word *safety* in the constructions *child safety*, *road safety*, *financial safety,* or *gun safety*. Although the word is the same, the meaning differs radically in relation to perspective: in the first case it refers to the patient of danger, in the second case, the location of danger, in the third, the protector from danger, and lastly to the source of danger. As Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 178) point out, the generative linguistic claim that language is infinite in meaning due to its infinite possible syntactic combinations is somewhat of an understatement, since individual words themselves are already almost infinite in meaning. They give the mundane example of *brown cow*, and asks the reader to attempt to imagine all the different kinds of *brown* and *cow*, either real or imagined, which the words can be used to denote. As this demonstrates, linguistic constructions, including words, have no objective meaning, but rather exhibit an almost infinite variation relevant to context.

Certainly, constraints do exist, such as the principle of relevance. That is, while semantics demonstrates a wide latitude for individual variation, especially through the use of metaphor, some trace to a conventional core of meaning is necessary to ensure mutual coherence. Another entailment of the principle of relevance is the above-mentioned commitment to philosophical realism – that is, the semantic meaning must also cohere in some way to the shared experience that the word denotes. Similarly, the embodiment principle also lends itself to the uniformity of subjective human experience. But outside of these constraints, variation still seems almost endless. Take the word *dog* for instance. We can as easily conceive of it as a noun, a verb, an adjective, and so on. We can personify it as a human characterisation, or objectify it as a tool or a kind of food. While in all of these there remains some trace back to an original meaning, the number and range of possible variations seems almost limitless.

Cognitive semantics does allude to the more traditional concept of perspective, as for instance in the cognitive linguistic concept of viewpoint or vantage (Langacker 2008: 73-85, Turner 1996:118-9), but views this as inseparable from the broader concept of salience or bounding (Langacker 2008:55-89). This comprises the selection or profiling of specific meanings to be attributed to a word from the encyclopaedic background knowledge associated with it. In this understanding then, perspective is meaning. In fact, there appear to be many curious correspondences between the processes of perception and cognition, as though seeing is a kind of thinking, and thinking is a kind of mental seeing (Carroll 1994).

Many grammatical features also instantiate differences in perspective: for instance, different tenses can be interpreted as merely different temporal perspectives: *By tomorrow he will have eaten* combines the past participle with the future tense by projecting temporal perspective into the future, from whence the participle appears as the past. The same is true for other grammatical phenomena such as subject vs. object or even word classes. For instance, the difference between the verb *to run* and the noun *a run* can simply be viewed as different perspectives on the same phenomenon (Verhagen 2007). In fact, it will be argued below that salience, the process behind cognitive perspective, could comprise the basic organising framework for all meaning. In other words, it could be that at the moment of construal, the encyclopaedic background of knowledge is static like a painting, and cognition is merely a matter of shifting frames of attention like the way that one's gaze moves across the surface of a painting.

To summarise, and repeat, the thematic definition of narrative doesn't necessarily invalidate existing formalist narratological theory entirely, but certainly appears to require substantial revisions down to a foundational level. However, revising the entirety of narratological theory is certainly too significant an undertaking for the moment. For now, the goal is simply to take the first steps in realising an authentic thematic theory of narrative.

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the primary thesis is not that formalist narrative theory is wrong, but rather that in order to circumvent the role of theme (which in many ways was justified

at first) required the incorporation of several bad ideas in its place. We can summarise these as the following three main problems:

1. An inability to define narrative in useful terms, and consequently, an inability to provide a defining purpose for narrative.
2. Inconsistency in its claims regarding the relationship between narrative form and narrative semantics.
3. Inconsistencies in its claims regarding fictionality, and more broadly how this relates to figurative and general meaning. This relates once again to problems regarding narrative referentiality and semantics.

It is in the comparison of the formalist approach to narrative with that of Frye that the poverty of the former comes into focus. Whatever significance narratology attributes to the role that narrative plays in daily life and the world in general fails to be reflected in the list of features it uses to define narrative. The opposite is true of Frye's thematic description of narrative – it is more than just a definition of an object; it is a description of a richly meaningful phenomenon and the vital function it serves in human existence. Formalist approaches to narrative have their place within the context of the thematic understanding of narrative, but not vice-versa.

Chapter 4

The narrative consciousness

In Chapter 1, the case was made that there exist two conflicting narratological traditions, broadly speaking. The dominant one is formalist narratology, which attributes meaning to the relationship between the text and the objective experiences it represents. The peripheral tradition, termed thematic narratology, interprets narrative as a figurative association between the explicit narrative text (the exemplar) and an implicit theme. For thematic narratology, narrative is interpreted, in terms of a linguistic framework, as the communication of an intended meaning, identified as the theme, in its instantiated form which constitutes the narrative text. Chapter 2 proceeded to outline the thematic narrative concept in relation to its main proponents. Chapter 3 presented the case against the formalist narratological tradition, outlining its primary shortcomings and hence the need for its revision, as well as how thematic narrative responds to them.

The following two chapters will elaborate the thematic narrative theory, primarily through an examination of linguistic evidence. Chapter 4 will begin by first outlining the concept of the narrative consciousness that underlies all language. This is because conventional narrative, which will be the focus of Chapter 5, develops out of and foregrounds certain features which are universal to all language. In other words, it will be shown that all language has a narrative basis, and what is commonly termed narrative is a specific language register in which these features are the most pronounced. Narrative therefore is defined by scale or degree rather than kind.

4.1 Theoretical outline

The aim of this study is to arrive at a theory of narrative across two dimensions: a basic definition of general narrative cognition as it occurs both in conventional narrative but also to a lesser extent in natural language, and a more specific definition of conventional narrative proper, which necessarily develops out of the former.

For the sake of clarity, I will firstly lay out the key propositions before providing the substantiating arguments and evidence in following sections:

4.1.1 What is narrative?

Narrative is defined as the expression of an idea or abstraction, termed the theme, in the form of an illustrative example or instance, or in narratological terms, an event. Following the traditional definition of narrative as a series of related events, the linguistic term *instance* equates to the narratological concept of event, and the theme equates with the *related* in a series of related events. The events from which the narrative is composed then serve an illustrative function, specifically to illustrate the relationship or universality that exists between them.

Concepts occur on a scale between the opposing poles of instantiation and abstraction. Instantiation corresponds most closely to what can be termed direct experience. Instantiation increases with individuation, with a unique individual entity, property or event comprising the most extreme end of the instantiation pole. Its opposite, abstraction, is the process of emptying those experiences of distinctive details in order to reduce them to their commonalities with others, thereby creating associations. In other words, eliminating their unique qualities for the sake of generalisation. At the most extreme end of the scale we find the ultimate generalisations of virtually empty categories like THING, OBJECT, EVENT, ENTITY, PHENOMENON, etc.

For instance, a specific dog is an example of an instantiation or instance. By removing the unique features of numerous individual dogs and retaining only those features they have in common, we get the abstraction of the category DOG. But we can further abstract DOG in relation to other similar creatures to arrive at the even more abstract ANIMAL and once again we can apply the process to arrive at the even more abstract LIFE-FORM and once again, to arrive at THING, and so on. In this way, we see that all concepts occur on a scale from most instantiated (in this case, a specific instance of dog) to most abstracted (in this case, a thing), with various points in-between (in this case, the categories dog, animal or life-form).

Narrative is one kind of means of linking such *emptier* abstractions with *fuller* instances in order to restore their meaningfulness. As one would expect from this, narrative is distinct in its linking of the more extreme ends of the abstraction-

instantiation scale. Narrative prefers to pair extremes of instantiation with extremes of abstraction. Thus, more than other forms of language, narrative displays a predilection for unique individual entities and events rather than categories of these. For example, *The Fox and the Grapes* describes a particular fox, a particular grape vine and a specific event involving both, instead of comprising a description of vulpine diet and behaviour in general. Similarly, narrative also displays a predilection for highly abstract themes, such as hope, love, free will, morality, human nature, death, etc. over less abstract, more specific themes such as English table etiquette, the geography of the West Indies, or statistical methods in psychology. This is because, as we saw with the example of dog vs. thing, abstraction is a graded process. This means that highly abstract concepts like hope, love or free will are conceptually the most remote from the highly instantiated experiences of our day-to-day existence. But at the same time, these abstract themes exist solely to help us navigate our way through the everyday problems we face daily. Narrative then serves as a mental shortcut by creating conceptual frameworks for grounding these nebulous abstractions in the instantiations which characterise our day-to-day experiences.

But narrative can also work the other way as well. It can also be used to relate apparently unrelated experiences, to find new and useful categories which we may not have been aware of before. This is more the function of everyday narratives, sharing personal experiences and day to day life stories with our fellows as a way to communally analyse and integrate them within our broader conceptual frameworks. Generally, any individual narrative will regularly perform both of these functions simultaneously, both enriching abstract categories with new instances and instances with new categories.

In this sense, narrative is a set of omnipresent cognitive processes we use constantly. These are what Fauconnier and Turner gather under the broader term narrative imagining (Turner 1996, Lakoff & Turner 1989). Yet this isn't what we typically mean when we refer to the terms narrative or story. Rather, narrative proper is a more formalised, deliberate, ritualised performance of this process for its own sake. It is in this more dedicated use that it takes on the more complex properties that we usually associate with the term. Narrative is thus both a common feature of all language registers and a distinctive linguistic register.

4.1.2 What is an instance/event?

The definition of the illustrative instance or event is necessarily vague, partly due to the adaptability of its parameters. The difference between instance and abstraction is scalar rather than absolute. An instance therefore is defined as any concept or representation comparatively nearer to the direct experience end of the scale. However, this still means that narrative instances can vary considerably in their degree of instantiation, i.e. how close to the extreme end of the instance pole they are. Furthermore, instances (as well as themes) comprise multiple features, and these features themselves can occupy different positions on the instance-abstraction scale. It appears better rather to speak of a prototypical instance, with actual narrative instances or events conforming to or deviating from this norm by various degrees.

At minimum, a linguistic event, that is the minimally coherent linguistic construction, consists of a spatially and a temporally bounded unit, that is a thing + an event, where the thing provides a spatial bounding, and the event a temporal one. However, most narrative events comprise more than this. Often, this is in order to make it more informative. But often, they are complicated without increasing the informative content. For example, if we compare the answers to the question, *How did you get here? By car* versus *I drove*, both communicate the same information, but the latter specifically profiles the agentive role in the event. According to embodiment theory, the latter is generally more effective, because it explicitly grounds the answer in the familiar experiential domain of driving and therefore it is easier to integrate into long-term memory.

Such complications are performed in order to make the event more closely resemble the prototypical event. The prototypical event comprises a single conscious actor performing an observable action on a concurrent physical object to produce an intentional and lasting change (Lakoff 1987:54-55). Prototypicality is a process of organising disparate concepts around a central or typical instance in relation to their correspondences with it, for the purpose of increasing cognitive integration. This is because the more integrated a concept is, the more meaningful it is to us. Thus, we often personify things or metaphorically imagine non-discrete phenomena as discrete in order to make them more closely resemble the prototypical event. Since the primary purpose of narrative is cognitive integration, it is only predictable that

narrative events will typically resemble the prototypical event, favouring stories involving human beings over inanimate objects or abstract concepts, physical actions over abstract relations, and so on. Of course, how closely it resembles the prototypical event depends on a variety of other factors as well, such as other semantic principles such as human-scaling, or the specific concepts which are being integrated, and so on.

4.1.3 What is a theme?

Following the traditional definition of narrative as a series of related events, the theme or themes equates with the relationship which links together the various events which comprise the narrative. In linguistic terms, the theme equates with the term abstraction, just as event equates with instance. As stated, narrative is a way of illustrating a theme or abstraction by means of a set of events or instances.

Just as the process of instantiation produces instances or instantiations, the process of abstraction produces abstract concepts or abstractions. Abstraction is achieved by means of reducing the differences between instances to their commonalities. Instantiation is achieved by the opposite process, namely populating abstract concepts with the unique features that identify their referents.

Hence, we perform abstraction in order to more fully integrate disparate concepts and hence, make them more meaningful to us. Typically, the transformation from instance to abstraction and back again is seamless and easy to achieve, because most instances and abstractions lie relatively close to one another on the instantiation-abstraction scale. But the more we abstract, the more remote the abstraction becomes from its original instance. This is because the process of abstraction often removes critical components from the instance, and in order to maintain its coherence, the abstraction needs to be reintegrated by adding new components which conflict with the original instance. In Blending Theory, these additions are termed emergent structure. Thus, the more abstract a concept is, the more remote it becomes from its original instances. This creates disparities between the abstraction and the instance, resulting in what is termed uni-directionality in linguistics, where an abstraction no longer resembles its original instances, and in order to instantiate it, a new instance has to be created instead, one which resembles its changed form.

This is where narrative comes in. Narrative is effectively the creation of new instances to instantiate an abstraction which has lost its connection with the instances from which it was originally derived. Hence, narrative is the creation of events or instances which serve to illustrate a theme or abstraction. This is why narrative demonstrates a bias toward highly instantiated events and highly abstracted themes. Because it is exactly these concepts which are most remote from one another and which hence require narrative integration. This is the process termed narrative rehabilitation: narrative effectively rehabilitates abstract concepts, by rediscovering their relevance to day-to-day life experience.

Narrative achieves this integration through the process of blending. However, blending is not merely a process of identifying correspondences between abstractions and instances, but also of transforming the original concepts to increase their integration. Hence, the theme of the narrative is no longer identical to the original abstraction. The theme of love in *Wuthering Heights* is comparable to our own concept of love, but not identical. The same for the theme of human nature in *Heart of Darkness*. In this way, narrative not only rehabilitates our abstract beliefs, but also allows us the chance to revaluate these beliefs and world views in relation to real-life experience. Narrative is not only about narrative rehabilitation, but also thematic revaluation.

This is also why the post-structuralist judgement of thematics is invalid. By its very nature, narrative theme is open-ended. Due to its nature as an ambiguous fusion of disparate ideas, narrative is self-critical and embracing of creativity and heterogeneity. This is necessarily so, if a narrative theme is to appeal to the diverse variety of beliefs and interpretations of its audience.

4.1.4 What is conventional narrative?

Narrative, as described above, is characteristic of all language to some degree. But there is also narrative proper or conventionalised narrative, which corresponds more closely to the common understanding of the term. These are instances where the dominant function/communicative intention is the narrative function of thematic instantiation.

According to Frye (1954), it is archetype that comprises the primary distinguishing feature of conventional narrative. Thus, conventional narrative is archetypal

narrative. Narrative integrates theme and exemplar (the collection of individual events which comprise the narrative) by means of narrative blends[17] which associate features of the abstraction with those of corresponding instances. It is in the incorporation of Fryean archetype that the narrative blending model introduced here differs most significantly from pre-existing blending models. In this way, narrative provides the means of integrating our abstract beliefs with the instances of day-to-day life experiences. However, narrative serves not only to integrate belief and experience, but also to revaluate these beliefs through novel experiences. This is because life changes, and gives rise to a need for new stories to integrate the new experiences or beliefs we encounter.

These new stories will often reuse or adapt narrative blends of theme and exemplar (the totality of events in a narrative) from existing stories. Narrative blends have value in their ability to unify theme and exemplar into a coherent whole. This inherent utility lends blends to recurrence. That is to say, particularly effective blends will be used over and over again. Through this recurrence, novel narrative blends become conventionalised, that is archetypes. Archetypes then can be defined as recurrent narrative blends of theme and exemplar.

In this way, archetypes, as conventionalised semantic units, serve much the same role in narrative as words in a sentence. Archetypes are intertextual blends, blends which are no longer bound to a specific narrative, but independent conventional semantic units. Unlike Jung's archetypes, with which they are not to be confused, archetypes more closely resemble words. Thus, Fryean archetypes are potentially limitless, much like words. And like words, archetypes are also adaptable and evolving. Frye's term archetype then essentially identifies any narrative convention which mediates theme and exemplar, including narrative tropes, literary devices, even narrative forms. Examples of archetypes include THE HERO'S JOURNEY, THE FRAME NARRATIVE, STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS STYLE, THE FEMME FATALE TROPE, THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL, THE FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE, THE HORROR STORY, THE ANDROID TROPE, POST-MODERN LITERARY NARRATIVE, ANAGNORISIS, DRAGONS, RED-HERRINGS,

[17] Although Fauconnier and Turner apply blending theory to narrative, Dancygier (2012) was the first to develop a specifically narrative version of the standard model. However, the narrative blending model developed here is significantly different from Dancygier's, particularly in the incorporation of Fryean archetypes.

ALLEGORY, THE NOBLE SAVAGE, DRAMATIC STRUCTURE, THE CASANOVA, THE FLASHBACK, SLAP-STICK COMEDY, ad infinitum.

We know that each of these comprises an archetype by virtue of it comprising a conventionalised narrative blend which serves to integrate a specific kind of theme with its corresponding exemplar. For example, we know that first-person narrative is an archetype because it works with certain kinds of stories, that is, certain themes and exemplars, better than others. It comprises its own unique semantic structure and includes specific components like the embodied perspective, unreliable narration, internal dialogue, etc. which lends itself to integration with only a limited set of other narrative structures. The same applies to all the above listed examples.

According to Frye (1954), these archetypes are the signature of literary narrative and the development of these vital mental resources for integrating our core beliefs with day-to-day life experiences is literature's defining purpose. For Frye, literary value doesn't reside in any specific individual narrative, but instead in the shared ideas they manifest. In the Fryean view, individual narratives are like different voices in conversation, and it is the conversation itself that matters, not any particular statement. Archetypes are not limited to any one narrative, but instead recur over and over and evolve through history. This is because it is these ideas themselves that have value in their ability to express enduring beliefs and adapt to remain relevant to our own individual life experiences and how we live those lives.

With a basic understanding of the end goal, let us now begin with the first step of exploring the Blending Theory concept of general narrative cognition, or narrative imagining, as Fauconnier and Turner (2002) term it. Understanding narrative requires us first to look at the underlying human narrative propensity termed narrative imagining. This is because narrative is both a distinctive linguistic register and a universal quality of language or even consciousness. Narrative is always present in language as one among many linguistic functions – in certain circumstances however, these qualities predominate – they become the defining function of the particular construction. This is what is properly termed conventional narrative.

4.2 Narrative imagining

According to Barthes (1966), narrative is all-pervading. Narrative lies at the background of all human experience as an integral part of consciousness (Polkinghorne 1988: 13). As stated previously, Fauconnier & Turner (Turner 1996, Lakoff & Turner 1989), similar to Frye, view narrative as innate to human experience, a phenomenon termed narrative imagining (see Section 2.4). We perceive the world in terms of stories – as events involving ourselves, other people and/or objects we perceive in the world around us. We see examples of this in Michotte's famous experiments on the perception of causality and animacy[18], which demonstrate the human ability to take series of pictures and construct meaningful narrative out of them by means of the perception of a common theme (Scholl & Tremoulet 2000). The same principle is demonstrated by Murray's thematic apperception test[19] (Cramer 1996, Polkinghorne 1988). Narrative appears to have special significance to human consciousness.

The pervasiveness of narrative in everyday language, through literary and mythological allusions, idiom, fixed expressions, lexical semantics and conventional metaphor, leaves no doubt as to the importance of narrative to basic cognition (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:103). The importance of stories in childhood development is similarly indicative of how important narrative is to basic cognition. Modern culture unfortunately suppresses this narrative consciousness in adults so that we no longer perceive the narrativity and fictionality of everyday life. But much evidence demonstrates that we still exploit narrative as an interpretive framework in everyday life – except that we perhaps do so less consciously today due to the anomie, the rootlessness, of modern existence that has resulted from increased secularism and rapid social change (Doty 2000:45-52, 80).

4.2.1 Narrative consciousness

The term narrative imagining describes an innately narrative quality of consciousness. All language demonstrates a story-like quality (Turner 1996:155).

[18] Michotte's test uses extremely simplified visual sequences to identify the basic parameters by which we assign causality and animacy to objects. The images represent simple shapes moving around on a blank surface. What Michotte demonstrated is that certain configurations convey the impression of causality or animacy.

[19] Murray's test uses evocative imagery as a therapeutic instrument. Patients are shown the pictures and then told to create a narrative around them. The narrative choices are then used to divine inferences about the patient's psyche.

Two examples of this have already been given in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, namely *look* and *safety*. As these examples demonstrate, words, and verbs in particular, effectively comprise mini-narratives in that they can be decomposed into a series of individual event profiles, comprising participant roles, actions and discernible qualities. *Look* comprises a variety of actions, from fixing one's attention on an object, absorbing the visual stimulus, interpreting the information, and so forth. In the same way, the various senses of the noun *safety* can only be interpreted in terms of a mini-narrative of a danger threatening a patient with an intervening protector, all of which takes place in real space and time (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:25-27).

We witness these same qualities even in syntax. Goldberg (2010) notes how the basic syntactic unit, the sentence or clause, is grounded in the semantic experiential unit of the *event*. This in turn defines syntactic units like noun or verb in relation to experiential roles like spatial and temporal event grounding. In other words, just as the minimal definition of a narrative event is a phenomenon located at a specific point in space and time – stories involve specific spatial objects, typically characters, participating in events occurring within a definite time frame – all sentences are characterised by a basic requirement of spatial and temporal bounding (Langacker 2009). Thus, while events in narrative typically feature more specific spatio-temporal bounding than most sentences, this quality is still fundamental to all language.

The formalist definition of narrative then is at least somewhat accurate in the sense that it describes the universal narrative qualities of language, even if its description of these qualities flawed in its omission of the signified. Where it fails is in the definition of the specific narrative register colloquially termed story which develops out of the narrative consciousness.

Another example of narrative imagining at work is in the cognitive grammar theory of how linguistic constructions are formed (Langacker 2005). Abstraction is the default mode of language, as all words on their own constitute abstractions. It is only through constructions and the experiential grounding they create that instantiation occurs. For instance, the category DOG is an abstraction, while the instance of *dog* in *walking my dog* points to a particular dog in a specific context. In this way, the same process of instantiating an abstraction that defines narrative also defines all linguistic constructions. The only difference is that, while in the case of the linguistic construction this only occurs on the level of individual words, in narrative the process

occurs on the level of entire texts. We witness the same principle in the theme-rheme function[20] (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]:64-105). (In this context however, the grammatical theme function is not to be confused with narrative theme.) In this way, even the least story-like language exhibits a hidden narrative substrate.

Finally, socio-cognitive linguistics also emphasises the important and pervasive role of narrative in everyday communication (Pascual 2014). It argues that meaning is not idiolectal but shared, and narrative is what forms the socio-cognitive basis of language. According to Pascual, narrative creates a sense of being-there, in part to cognitively immerse the audience more fully in the narrative. Narrative achieves this by means of semantic redundancy, by in effect, communicating more than is strictly necessary. More than any other language register, narrative is known for its surfeit of detailed description. For instance, a narrative will not stop at only telling the audience that a character has new shoes, but will often proceed to describe them in precise detail.

According to Pascual, the remarkable consistency in semantic schemas across linguistic communities is in large part due to narrative's ability to simulate real experiences[21]. By communicating not only the intended message itself, but also a large portion of all the semantic content associated with it, narrative not only communicates the intended meaning, but also ensures that the semantic framework within which it is integrated is also identical to that of the narrator's. By doing so, narrative produces a broader consistency within the entire semantic frameworks of linguistic communities than other more pragmatic and economic registers which focus only on the intended meaning. Pascual thus proposes that narrative is responsible for much of the mutual coherence necessary for language to function effectively.

[20] The relationship of theme to rheme is essentially one of instantiation. For example, in the sentence, *the dog scratched his ear*, the rheme *scratched his ear* serves to identify a specific individual out of the category *dog*. In this way, instantiation is shown to be an essential function of all language.
[21] By simulation is meant the imagining of an embodied experience. This ties in with the theory of embodied cognition (Section 2.4.3), and though not explicitly referenced by Pascual, is complementary to mental simulation (Barsalou 2008).

4.2.2 Experiential metaphor

But it is not only when communicating experiences that language in general exhibits many features of the narrative event, but also when communicating abstract concepts. This is the phenomenon of experiential metaphor (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999).

One of the foundational premises of cognitive linguistics is that abstract thought itself is deeply rooted in experience (Turner 1996, Kolodner 1994), and as we have seen, narrative is one of the primary means the mind employs to comprehend experience. Thus, abstract thought, like experience, is rooted in the narrative consciousness.

This experiential basis is expressed in the philosophy of experientialism (Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Consider, for instance, how much of human experience can be accommodated by the schema set of what Talmy (1988) terms *force dynamics*, which comprises simple variations on the *x do y to z* narrative model, or *x be y at z*. In fact, so natural does this kind of thinking appear to be that we regularly use it to model experiences or concepts, even when they do not naturally conform to it. For example, abstractions like LIFE, DEATH or TIME are conventionally bound to such experiential metaphoric schemas like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS A DEVOURER or TIME IS A THIEF (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989). Note how in each of these, of all the schemas they could employ, they all employ the schema of human agency (*x do y to z*). Then consider how many other metaphoric schemas do the same. This seems to suggest that there is some cognitive significance to experience beyond its representative value. It suggests that even though we can and do conceive of abstractions in a correspondingly abstract way, there is also some invisible need to conceive of them in a tangible way that is contrary to their intangible nature.

Another example of the omnipresence of narrative instantiation in ordinary language is the prominence of *basic-level categories* in semantics, the categories which we interact with most frequently in everyday experience (Rosch et al. 1976). For a city-dweller, this will simply be TREE, since the difference between various kinds of trees is not significant enough in their environment to warrant further distinction. For rural communities however, these differences become important, so that the basic-level of categorisation becomes OAK, ELM, BIRCH, etc. Then there are specialists for whom

even this level of categorisation is too general, preferring instead more discrete categories such as SILVER OAK or BOX ALDER (Lakoff 1987).

As basic-level categories demonstrate, language naturally gravitates towards the highest practical level of resolution. We prefer specific terms like *tree* or *grass* or *bush*, even when more general terms like *plant* or even *life-form* would suffice. Indeed, using such general terms in ordinary language even seems awkward, even when they would be more efficient for their increased simplicity. The reason for this is that there appears to be a certain *cognitive ease* associated with experiential cognition that abstract cognition lacks (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

The function of experiential metaphor appears to closely reflect that of narrative. This should not be surprising given the similarity. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002:154-60), metaphors are essentially mini-narratives. Metaphors typically involve using vivid domains of experience to provide clarity and definition to abstract and indefinite concepts. For instance, if we consider metaphors such as *the cat is out of the bag* or *flogging a dead horse*, although the precise meaning may not be directly apparent from the metaphor alone, the narrative which the metaphor helps to visualise, assists us in the interpretation. *Stream* or *fired* in the metaphors *stream of abuse* or *fired abuse* comprise mini-narratives. We know this because they are not interchangeable – that is, not just a lexical stand-in for a verb like *to express*. Rather, the one or the other is chosen on the basis of the different stories they tell, one of which best resembles the intended meaning. In the same way *running* doesn't mean the same in *running with sweat* and *running sore* – they refer to the same mini-narrative of *to run* (in the sense of flowing), but select different parts of it for comparison. *Running with sweat* profiles an ongoing activity as in *a running tap*, while *running sore* profiles a state of being as in *the water in the house is running again*. This is how we know the word *running* refers to a story – it has different parts, or we might say, episodes (Blackham 1988:xi-xiii). Hereby, once again, we are shown the remarkable power and hold narrative has over the human consciousness.

Thus, all semantics demonstrates a narrative basis, either naturally as in the case of experiential representation, or metaphorically, in the case of representations of abstract concepts. What has also been demonstrated is that narrative is also not an absolute term, but rather a graded one. All language exhibits a narrative quality to some degree or another. What is commonly referred to as *a story* or *narrative* is only

language in which the narrative function is most pronounced. This prevalence of narrative throughout language is because of the essential role that narrative plays in human consciousness and how we share it with one another through language. All of the evidence in linguistics from recent decades only seems to confirm Frye's visionary insight into the importance of narrative to human existence.

Narrative, it has been argued, is defined as the illustration of a theme by means of an exemplar, but as we shall see in the rest of this chapter, this is achieved by a variety of means.

4.3 Narrative instantiation

Thus far, it has been repeatedly stated that the purpose of narrative is instantiation of a theme, or atomisation, as it was termed by the Russian Formalists (Erlich 1980 [1955]:243). It is perhaps necessary at this stage to explain exactly what this means.

4.3.1 The abstraction-instantiation scale

According to the Russian Formalists, narrative is characterised by a device called *retardation*, where meaning is explicated in minute detail, atomistically, so that in a way we are forced to perceive and conceive a phenomenon afresh (Erlich 1980 [1955]:245). This corresponds to the philosophical concept of qualia, which is the indescribable uniqueness of experiences, which is a defining quality of narrative (Herman 2009: 144-53). It also relates to the cognitive semantic concepts of low-level cognitive processes or experiential grounding (Dancygier 2012:15-29). This is often especially visible in the most dramatic scenes of novels where the narrator slows the pace down so that we perceive actions occurring moment by moment. However, this phenomenon is a complicated one. *Atomisation* is not an absolute term, but one of degree, and can be construed at varying levels of *discreteness*, as in:

Commerce:

a trade of commodities

→ The exchange of goods for money

→ Persons buying and selling things to and from each other

→ When people give money to a merchant, and he gives them his merchandise in exchange for it.

→ I give Manny the basket of fruit and vegetables we want to buy and he tells me how much it costs. Then I give him the money and he packages the fruit and vegetables to take home.

Each of these profiles the same concept at increasing levels of *delicacy* or *resolution*. As this clearly demonstrates, atomisation is not absolute, but scalar. Atomisation can also occur at the same level with differing content:

Commerce:

➔ The exchange of commodities via a shared medium of currency

or

➔ The distribution of goods by means of value symbols and rituals of exchange.

As this demonstrates, the individual scales or levels of atomisation aren't absolute either, but variable. This is because instantiation is a process of inference, and hence *idiosyncratic*. This is because schemata comprise a multitude of details, and which are selected will always be unique to each individual to some degree (Polkinghorne 1988:19). This is also for practical reasons – we employ abstraction and instantiation to discover commonalities between instances. Hence every abstraction must be able to relate to multiple and often very different instances.

One can generally define narrative as atomisation at a high level of resolution, but as these examples show, what counts as high-resolution is relative. In other words, generally speaking, the greater the resolution of a description, the closer it conforms to the prototypical form of narrative. As this also demonstrates, the same features which define narrative semantics, namely atomisation, are commonplace throughout language. This means that narrative is also not a clearly circumscribable phenomenon, but one of blurred boundaries.

The argument we have presented thus far is that exemplars (i.e. narratives) serve to atomise, or to use the linguistic term, *instantiate* themes. And themes in turn are *abstractions* from experiential instances. A central organising principle of semantics is the *instance to abstraction cline* (Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1987, 2008, Halliday &

Matthiessen 1999, Fauconnier & Turner 2002, Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 12, 52-3). Abstraction is central to child language development (Tomasello 2008, Halliday & Matthiessen 1999), and language in general. For instance, grammar is the product of the abstraction of grammatical classes like noun or past tense from recurring features of experience (Langacker 2008). Similarly, we construct linguistic expressions through the instantiation of these grammatical classes (Goldberg 2010). Both instantiation and abstraction are also essential functions of narrative (Bruner 1991), and the multi-functionality that this produces in turn defines narrative (Frank 2010). Thus it is necessary to invest some time in this topic.

From the cognitive perspective, meaning is *schematic*. Schematisation means that meaning is captured in abstract formal/figurative representations of experience (Langacker 2008:32, Lakoff 1987:68-76). To be clear, this abstract, figurative quality applies to all cognition, both instantiations and abstractions. The difference between instances and abstractions is in their level of resolution.

Schemata thus vary in their degree of resolution, that is to say, the level of detail any schema captures of the original experience. Abstraction reduces this level of resolution, while instantiation increases it. Abstraction does this in order to integrate schemata which are different from one another. This is because the more detail a schema contains, the more potential there is for conflict when attempting to integrate it with another one. By doing so, abstraction makes a schema more versatile to integrations with other schemata. But this versatility comes at the expense of informativity.

It is also important to note that abstraction is not generic or random but specific and varied. PET, CANINE and CARNIVORE are all abstractions of DOG, but it is important to note that each abstraction reduces the resolution of dog in specific ways. Similarly, *bulldog* and *spaniel* are both instances of DOG but each instance also increases the resolution of DOG in specific ways.

4.3.2 Valency patterns and the abstraction-instantiation scale

These changes in resolution accomplished by abstraction and instantiation are demonstrated by *valency patterns*. Valency patterns refer to the different kinds of constructions possible with a specific form of a word. These are significant because they help to explain the functional roles of abstraction and instantiation respectively

in terms of the different kinds of linguistic constructions each facilitates, and hence by implication the different kinds of conceptualisation that underlie each.

Cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008, Verhagen 2007) explains these valency patterns through the different types of profiling associated with a lexical or syntactic form. *Profiling* defines the selection of features from the schema associated with a particular word. If we, for instance, compare *cross* in *cross-border raids* vs. *raiders crossing the border*, *cross* in the latter (the verb) profiles the process in much greater detail than the former (the prefix). These differences in profiling are visible when we consider the valency patterns of each. The former (the prefix), through abstraction, is able to be used in many combinations where the latter cannot (at least without great difficulty), such as *cross-beam*, *cross-examination* or *cross-wise*. The latter (the verb), on the other hand, can be elaborated on in a wide number of ways, for instance, through modifiers – *raiders* recrossing *the border*, or through adverbs – *raiders* cautiously *crossing the border*, or even a whole circumstance – *raiders* crossing in utmost silence *the border* (Langacker 1987:277-327). This is because as a verb, crossing comprises a more elaborate profile, that is, it features greater instantiation, and as such, is more informative. By virtue of its more detailed profiling, the latter verb form comprises more information which can be elaborated, while the former, by virtue of its simplified form, demonstrates more associative versatility due to its relative informative poverty. By eliminating the temporal profile of *cross* and instead only profiling the completed result, the former is reduced to a simple prepositional relation of transversity or opposition. As this demonstrates, the difference in resolution between instantiation and abstraction is quite complicated in how it changes word meanings and how they can be used.

Aside from the type and degree of schematic profiling, abstraction and instantiation are also determined by semantic *word associations*. According to Lakoff (1987:68) semantics consists of two essential kinds of meaning, namely schematic meaning, which comprises an abstract representation of experience, closely tied to mental imagery, and associative meaning (including domain, metaphoric and metonymic associations), which comprises a set of associations to other concepts. Although all words include both kinds of meanings, they differ in terms of which of the two are more prominent. This is demonstrated by the type vs. token distinction (Langacker 1991:31-35, 55-58). Tokens profile the unique individual features of phenomena (i.e.

the schematic). Types, in contrast, only profile the universal features of a set of phenomena (i.e. the associative). As a generalisation, the type necessarily disposes of the individual characteristics of its individual members in favour of the shared characteristics. We witness this difference in the difference between type DOG and instance *the dog*.

The same abstraction-instantiation distinction is also visible via the state vs. event distinction in verbs. States are imperfective processes and thus temporally unbounded, while events are perfective and therefore temporally bounded (Langacker 1987:244-267). In other words, states are often generated from events though the abstraction of their temporal boundaries. Similarly, we can observe that the further concepts are on the abstraction end of the cline more they tend to be stative, and vice versa for active on the instantiation end. In this way, abstractions emphasise stative semantics, while instances emphasise active semantics. For this reason, the prototypical grammatical structure in narrative is the material clause (*x do y*), while for discursive texts it is the relational clause (*x be y*) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]:168-259).

4.3.3 Transitive vs. ergative and the abstraction-instantiation scale

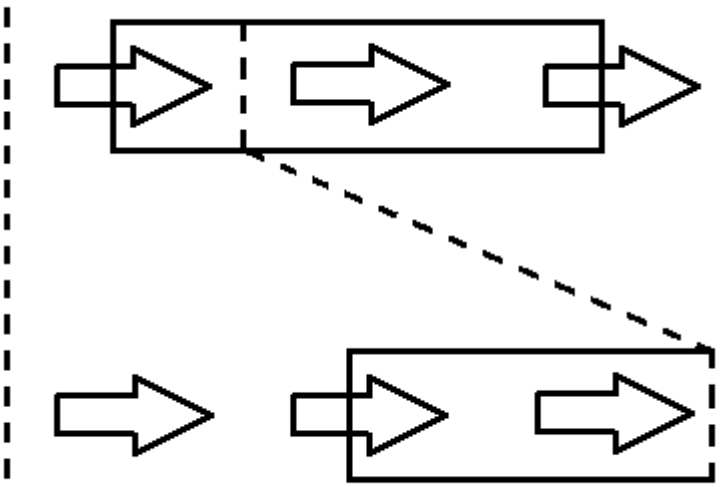

Figure 3.1 Transitive elaboration of the path schema.

Abstraction and instantiation also play an important role in grammar. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004 [1985]:168-302) describe two main kinds of experiential

organization, namely the transitive and ergative models. The transitive model construes experience in terms of dissimilarity, specifically differences in grammatical function, and in this way construes meaning in the form of an instance. The other is the ergative model, where relations of similarity predominate. The clause in the ergative perspective is an elaboration of an event through the objects related to its occurrence. The transitive model construes experience as *a doing*, that is, as separate entities acting on one another, while the ergative model construes experience as *a happening*, a unified phenomenon of which individual items are construed as facets.

In this way, the two models provide a good example of the different kinds of profiling associated with abstraction and instantiation respectively. Let us look at the example of the PATH schema (c.f. Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989). This is characterised by an elongated space with an object moving lengthwise across it, with a point of origin where the object crosses onto the path, a point of transit where the object is fully on the path, and a point of destination where the object leaves the path space. These distinct transitive units (origin, transit and destination) are compressed via the ergative unit (the path space onto which the transitive units are mapped) to form the PATH schema. However, we can split the compression into component parts and schematise each of these separately. For instance, we can instantiate separate DEPARTURE, TRANSIT, and ARRIVAL schemata. By doing so, each of these individual schemata become fully realised, independent schemata with their own differentiated parts. For instance, we can then further instantiate the DEPARTURE schema into PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE, POINT OF DEPARTURE, and SETTING OUT schemata. And this process can be continued almost indefinitely. This illustrates the process by which a thematic abstraction becomes instantiated as exemplary structure.

The transitive and ergative models are not alternative representations of experience, but rather two different facets present in all linguistic constructions. This is because all constructions are both simultaneously instances of experience and conceptual abstraction. Transitivity differentiates the whole into its separate parts, comprised of individual experiences, while ergativity emphasises the unity between the parts by profiling their correspondences. But they remain different models because every unit in the representation at once instantiates two different classes of relation, one of similarity and one of disparity. For instance, *Mary sailed the boat*, from a transitive

perspective, models *Mary* in the role of actor and *the boat* in the role of goal. From an ergative perspective, *Mary* is the agent and *the boat* the medium. However, if we change the construction to *the boat sailed*, in the transitivity model, *the boat* changes to the actor, while in the ergative model, *the boat* remains the medium.

This is because the verbs, *to sail* are not identical in both cases. In the first, it is the transitive form, in the second, it is in the intransitive – in the first, Mary sails the boat, in the second, the boat sails itself. The first describes an action Mary performs on the boat, the second a passive state the boat is in. But because the ergative interprets the event from the perspective of the verb itself, all other participants are viewed only as features of the event. This is because in terms of ergativity, the phenomenon is still the same unified experience, but in terms of transitivity, a modelling of differences, a change in the constituents of a composition, necessarily means a change in the kinds of contrasts that hold between them.

4.3.4 The cognitive role of abstraction and instantiation

Abstraction is a major factor in comprehension given its ability to reduce the resolution of schemata in order to identify correspondences with others. By these means, we are able to transfer knowledge from one schema to another. For instance, reducing the resolution of my experience of *my dog* to create the category DOG enables me to, say, predict possible behaviour in other members of the species based on experiences of my own dog.

The power of abstraction thus is the power of *generalisation*. Generalisation enables us to recognise unknown phenomena based on their similarities to known phenomena, it enables us to predict potential qualities based on this similarity, and through this we are also able to plan, evaluate or explain experiences (Turner 1996: 9, Polkinghorne 1988: 21). Abstraction in this way constitutes a paradox. Abstractions increase in association as they decrease in resolution, or in other words schematisation. This means that, in effect, the less they mean, the more they mean. A prime example of this is the word *thing*, which is one of the most comprehensive abstractions that exist, able to associate with almost anything imaginable. Yet at the same time, it profiles almost nothing – it is essentially an empty semantic category, comprising only what is added to it through composition (that is, grammatical association with other words).

Less conspicuous is the opposite or reverse process, namely instantiation. Through instantiation, we increase resolution so as to imagine specific experiences or instances. The value of this is more subtle but also very important, since it grants us the ability to differentiate. *Differentiation*, though subordinate to generalisation in that differentiation is necessarily subsequent to first identifying a similarity, adds greater refinement to generalisation and the various mental abilities derived from it. For instance, through differentiation, I can notice the differences between *my dog* and DOG and on this basis predict potential unique features of my dog's behaviour.

4.3.5 Uni-directionality and narrative rehabilitation

The theory of cognitive models draws a distinction between primary, low-level and high-level cognitive models (de Mendoza Ibanez & Masegosa 2014: 63). Primary cognitive models comprise the experiential or sensorimotor grounding upon which the rest of language is built, for instance IN, OUT, HOT, COLD, HIGH, LOW, etc. Low-level cognitive models assemble these elementary impressions into models of direct experience (Gibbs 2005), and it this level which corresponds most directly to the concept of an instance. High-level cognitive models in turn are abstractions of low-level cognitive models. Once again, these are general rather than precise distinctions. But what this emphasises is the uni-directionality of this process.

Uni-directionality (Verhagen 2007) emphasises the bias toward the conventionalisation of abstraction over instantiation. Of the two, conventionalised abstraction occurs with far greater frequency than instantiation. While direct instantiation is not wholly absent, this seems to indicate that it is far easier to create new instantiations for abstractions than it is to restore the original instances from which the abstraction was first formed.

We observe this for example in the construction *it is across the table from me* (Verhagen 2007). Semantic analysis seems to suggest that we first conceive of the meaning of *across* in relation to subjective orientation, so that the meaning of *across* initially implies by default *across (from me)*. Then we learn to transpose this orientation through abstraction from oneself to other objects, such as *the chair is across the table from the wall*. When we do so, we are essentially imagining ourselves in the place of the subject viewing the object across an intervening space. Reasonably then, to return to personal orientation, we need only say *across*, without

the additional *from me*. The fact that one does so, suggests that in the process of abstraction, the original default personal orientation has been lost.

We witness this all over the place in language – the fact that we so often need to explicitly add new experiential grounding after abstraction has taken place, rather than simply reverting to the original instance from which the abstraction was derived. What this suggests is that a degree of semantic decay is associated with abstraction. Specifically, it suggests that there is a proportional relation between the degree of conventionalisation in language and the degree to which a new abstraction loses its connection to its experiential grounding. This perhaps explains the importance of narrative as a behavioural compensation mechanism for an innate cognitive drawback of abstraction. Narrative is thus a rehabilitation of the experiential foundation which is lost in the process of abstraction.

We also observe this same feature in mnemonic exercises. It is well-known that memorisation of abstract information is made easier by placing it within a narrative context – that is to say, through instantiation. While it seems counter-intuitive that increasing the amount of and complicating the information makes it easier to memorise, we see over and over in language that our minds seem better geared toward processing complicated experiential narratives than simplified abstractions. Why this is isn't fully understood yet, but we can speculate that the ease of creating a new memory has to do with the extent of integration with existing memory. Abstractions, by virtue of their reduced resolution also result in reduced memory integration. By linking the abstraction to a story, that is to say, instantiation, restores this lost resolution and therefore also increases the extent of memory integration.

Experiments demonstrate that abstractions are both harder to construe and memorise, but also easier to recall than instances (Barsalou & Wiemer-Hastings 2005, Yuille & Paivio 1969). While the latter is what one would expect, considering that abstractions are informationally simpler than instances, the former is surprising for the same reason. The possible explanations for why this is so are too lengthy to get into here, but the main point to take away is that this seems to substantiate the above observation drawn from mnemonic exercises – namely that abstractions are harder to construe on their own than when they are instantiated, as occurs in narrative.

The cognitive salience of experience over abstraction is also visible in studies of embodiment (Gibbs 2005: 99-104). For instance, there is a well-known example of how memory is improved by imaginatively reliving an experience associated with a memory, such as picturing where you were when you lost your keys (Gibbs 2005: 142-4). Similarly, in one experiment it was demonstrated how participants were immediately able to recognise both duck and rabbit in the familiar duck-rabbit illusion after being instructed to draw it themselves where previously they could only recognise one (Chambers & Reisberg 1992). The point being, that the detailed experience of drawing the illusion enabled the participants to mentally engage with and manipulate the image far more than merely through a superficial glance – once again, rich experiences engage mental faculties more fully than simpler ones.

Thematisation or abstraction is fundamentally reductive – its purpose is to reduce meaning to its most essential, significant elements. It is not only reductive, but also constructive. Abstraction requires not only the deletion of unshared elements, but also the reconstitution of what remains into a unified and coherent whole (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 52, 190). It is not only the removal of elements familiar to the experience, but also the reconstitution of these remnants into a coherent whole which distances the abstraction from the original experiences and thus demands narrative rehabilitation.

Uni-directionality also has support from cognitive science. Cognitive science distinguishes between two primary forms of memory, namely *experiential or episodic memory*, and *abstract or semantic memory* (Tulving 1993). However, experiential memory is subordinate to abstract memory in the sense that abstract memory is autonomous but experiential memory is dependent on abstract memory. We observe this in how we are able to recall how to do things without being able to recall the experience of having learnt them, but not vice-versa. Similarly, in child development we observe the same – children are able to learn things years before they develop the ability to memorise and recall experiences. In other words, knowing something is not the same as remembering something, and we often know things even when the specific memories associated with it have been lost. But those memories too have meaning value apart from the mere ‘knowing’ and narrative appears to serve an important role of creating new memories to replace what has been lost.

While instantiation is the most visible function of narrative, since the narrative is itself an instantiation of the theme, abstraction is equally crucial, since the process of narrative interpretation is one of abstracting the themes which gives the narrative meaning. ‘Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite’ (Polkinghorne 1988: 13).

But it is the linguistic features of instantiation rather than abstraction which occur with both the highest frequency and prominence in narrative (more on this below). We argue that this is for the same reason that experiential metaphors pair an abstract tenor with a vehicle instance – to donate high-resolution input from an instance to a low-resolution abstract. In doing so, the differentiation of instantiation contributes to the related goals of recognition, prediction, planning, evaluation and explanation.

To look at an example of this same idea manifested in metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:77-86) analyse the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor, to determine what purpose there is for such analogies – what is gained through metaphor? They list the following benefits:

- increased differentiation of participants in an event,
- increased differentiation of component parts of an event,
- increased specificity of stages within an event,
- increased specificity in the linear or causal sequencing of events,
- increased specificity of the role of agency in events.

This is just one example. Given the wide range of information that can be added to an abstraction through instantiation, the full range of potential benefits gained through instantiation is conceivably immense. To illustrate, when reading fables as a child I remember being told that the purpose of the story was to teach us the moral at the bottom of the story. Often, I would wonder if their point was to teach us the proverb at the end of the story, why not just present it alone and leave out the story? What was the unspoken relation between such fables, parables, proverbs, allegories, and other kinds of exemplary narrative and their themes? When Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant, was the story to be interpreted in terms of its moral, or the moral in terms of the story? It was only later that I realised that there is

something about the exemplar that means more than the moral on its own could convey. Like the blurb on the back of a dust jacket, much of the meat of the story is lost in the act of concision – such is the relationship between theme and exemplar, between the story and its moral. Although the exemplar is subordinate to the theme as the carrier of the core message of the text, the theme alone is incomplete without the fullness of meaning provided by the exemplar.

In this way, the motive behind instantiation becomes clear. Instantiation provides the means to greatly increase the utility of concepts by increasing the resolution of their constituent parts. The result of this is Turner's list of narrative abilities: the ability to recognise, comprehend, evaluate, predict, etc. In theory at least, due to compression or ergativity, this doesn't necessary imply an accompanying cost to the abstractive utility of the concept, which shouldn't either be underestimated. Compression and ergativity suggest that we can at once hold a theme in our mind both in its abstracted form and its instantiated form. However, in practice, one must express some doubts as to this overly rosy picture. As stated before, uni-directionality suggests some degree of semantic decay is associated with abstraction that in turn provides narrative value in terms of its role in thematic rehabilitation. What exactly this entails we will look at next.

4.4 Narrative mimesis

Given the importance of instantiation in narrative (in that narrative is the *instantiation* of a theme), let us first look at what form instantiation takes in narrative. Specifically, we will look at how narrative *mimics* experience. The emphasis on mimicry is important here, since recalling Ricoeur (Section 2.3), contrary to the formalists, narrative doesn't create experiences but instead recalls them. As we shall later see, this fact is of vital mportance. Narrative simulates experiences by instantiating abstractions. In other words, the narrative 'experience' is constructed from an abstraction and still bears traces of its origin in abstractions. It is through these traces that we are able to identify the abstract theme which the narrative seeks to illustrate and which renders it as a coherent message.

A distinction was drawn above between two main kinds of semantic modelling, namely the ergative and transitive. Although there is a clear overlap between them,

the former aligns more closely with high-level abstraction, and the latter with low-level instantiation. This is because the ergative emphasises continuity, and models experience as a state, while the transitive emphasises change, and models experience as an event. Each of these in turn relates to a corresponding grammatical model. For the ergative it is the relational clause, which models experience as processes of being and having (i.e. *x be y at z* type clauses). For the transitive, this corresponds with the material clause, which models experience as processes of doing and happening.

4.4.1 Folk-modelling

This is significant for narrative, because each in turn also corresponds with two main classes of register. Language features many different registers, but these can broadly be grouped into two main types. 'One (type) leads to a search for universal truth conditions, the other for likely particular connections between two events' (Bruner 1986:12). The second type Bruner refers to is *folk-modelling*, where the focus is on the representation of real-world experience. This is a form of semantic modelling characteristic of less technologically developed cultures with a greater material dependence on the natural world, and is perhaps best represented by oral narrative, conversation and written narrative registers. The other is *scientific, academic or technical modelling*, which aims at the communication of abstract concepts. Academic and procedural (for instance law or policy) writing is perhaps the most typical example of this register and is characteristic of highly developed and structurally complex societies. As stated above, just as with all registers are certainly not completely discrete classes, but at the same time clear differences between them are observable in general (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999, Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985], Halliday & Martin 1993). Academic or procedural legal literature may include some narrative sections, and vice-versa, in the same way that other registers occasionally intersperse with one another. But registers are still generally identifiable – the exception doesn't disprove the rule.

This corresponds with a similar distinction made by Bruner and Ricoeur between narrative reasoning, which focuses on the unique subjective significance of experience, and descriptive, expositional or logico-mathematical reasoning, which is defined by an external, objective focus (Polkinghorne 1988:17, 21, 35, Bruner 1986). It also corresponds with Tulving's (1993) distinction between experiential episodic

memory, which is defined by its temporally ordered, highly embodied and experientially vivid qualities, and abstract semantic memory. However, it is important to note that two are closely related and not always easily distinguishable, as is perhaps best demonstrated by narrative (Devitt et al. 2017). Narrative typically comprises the abstraction of speculative scenarios and then imaginatively creating new experiences which visualise them.

	Instantiation	**Abstraction**
Cognitive base	Experiential	Conceptual
Syntactic prototype	*x do y to z*	*x be y at z*
Prototypical clause	Material clause	Relational clause
Transitivity	Transitive model	Ergative model
Representation	Event/Token	State/Type
Semantic model	Folk-modelling	Scientific-modelling

Table 3.1 Instantiation and abstraction and their related linguistic features

Narrative, on the face of it, appears as a far cruder and inefficient method of communication than say academic language. For instance, it lacks scientific language's propensity for specialised jargon, complex lexicalisations and grammatical constructions, as well as objectification, all of which serve to increase semantic specification and compression and reduce extraneous associations (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999:539-47, 565-601, 615-8). By comparison, the language of narrative is frequently ambiguous, often features a great deal of seemingly unnecessary detail, adding to a sense of being-there but without necessarily communicating any directly relevant information, and is deeply mired in the subjective perspective (Turner 1996:3-25). But if we consider the mind to be specially geared towards construing the chaotic sensory input that we call experience, then what on the surface appears to be a very ineffective format, is instead less surprising.

Folklorists have noticed many of these same attributes, and attribute them to the bias towards oral over written communication (Propp 1984 [1949], Thompson 1977

[1946]). Spoken language is highly sensitive to auditory interference, where individual words may easily be misheard or not heard at all. Narrative thus employs a variety of techniques to compensate, such as repetition, increased contextual embedding and compositionality, which spreads the semantic burden across multiple words linked syntactically. This means that when an individual word might be missed, meaning can still be inferred.

The narrative vs. technical language distinction brings to the fore what is perhaps the most salient feature of narrative – namely its *mimesis*. Narrative mimesis refers specifically to the narrative representation of experience, which is distinguished from realism by its fundamental subjectivity. Mimesis then refers to a natural, naïve representation of experience as we *live* it, namely subjectively and embodied, without the artifice of objectivity. Mimesis and instantiation go hand in hand and are characterised by reduced abstraction and more experiential representations. Narrative is characterized by particularized description (Herman 2007:9-10, Bruner 1991) and the representation of human experience (Ryan 2007:24), or at least the impression of it. Narrative attempts to at least simulate if not recreate direct experience.

Technical registers comprise a more direct form of communication and explicit messaging, limiting extraneous information with a narrower focus on the most pertinent detail (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999). By comparison, narrative employs a more indirect approach, presenting a wealth of information, and then leaving it to the audience to connect the dots on their own. From one perspective, narrative is a form of communication characterised by a great deal of redundancy both in content and in form. But from another perspective, narrative is a richer, more informative and engaging form of communication.

But what is this mimesis comprised of? What are its characteristics? How does narrative achieve this illusion of being-there? Again, a comparison with academic language demonstrates these qualities most clearly. Halliday and Mathiessen describe the differences in the modelling of experience found between registers in terms of a cline from folk to scientific modelling (1999:539-47, 565-601, 615-8, see also Halliday & Martin 1993). As they explain, this also defines the historical progression of language change in relation to technological advancement. As societies' technological proficiency develops over time, so too do their linguistic

resources. Technological development goes hand-in-hand with conceptual specialisation, which in turn requires linguistic changes to complement them. In other words, less technologically advanced societies typically have more experience-based languages, while advanced societies also develop more concept-rich registers. This cline corresponds with the instance-to-abstraction cline, with folk modelling leaning towards a more instantiated, experiential form, while scientific modelling leans to a more abstract, conceptual form. And of all the various registers, natural narrative or story (Labov & Waletzky 2003) perhaps corresponds most closely to the concept of folk modelling.

To give an example of the difference, compare the vernacular:

Jack fancies Jill. He sends her a posy to make his intentions known,

to the technical,

Sexual attraction accompanies the exchange of gifts.

Here we witness the main features of the shift from folk to scientific modelling: specialised jargon, nominalisation and grammatical condensing. However, these apparently few main changes belie a host of smaller yet very significant specific differences.

4.4.2 Linguistic features of folk-modelling

We can list Halliday and Matthiessen's (1999:539-47, 565-601, 615-8, see also Halliday & Martin 1993) primary features of folk modelling as follows:

- Polysemy: words tend to convey a wider range of potential meanings. This has the effect of both making them more adaptable, but at a cost to precision. For example, the word *dog* can refer to a kind of animal, a type of behaviour, a kind of tool, a type of person, etc. while the word *canine* refers only to the animal. It means that narrative can make greater use of a smaller vocabulary. Polysemy defers to context for specification, and thus focuses attention on the unique experiential context.
- Schematic simplicity: at the same time word meanings tend to be schematically more simplified and generalised than technical modelling. This may appear to contradict the basic concept of instantiation, which is increase of resolution. However, narrative appears to delegate this heightened

resolution to context and compositionality rather than individual words. Compare the simplicity of *dog* to the scientific term *canine* which lends to the former its adaptability. This simplicity and the generalisation it allows is at the root of its polysemic adaptability. While individual words often appear to have low resolution in order to increase valency patterns, it is instead through these valency patterns that narrative manifests its propensity for high-resolution.

- Categorical simplicity: Folk taxonomies/categorisations are less elaborate. Technical categories tend to be complicated and detailed (living organism → animal → chordate → mammal → afrotherian → proboscid → elephantform → elephant → loxodont → African bush elephant), while folk taxonomies tend to be flatter and less comprehensive (tree → oak → silver-oak) (c.f. Lakoff 1987). This once again derives from schematic simplicity.

- Semantic fixity: word meanings are less malleable and receptive to modification, not only in terms of word affixes and component morphemes, but also with relational words. This derives from lexical simplification, where instead of modifying the words themselves to increase specificity, the burden of specification is instead shifted to the syntactic and situational context. Compare for example the words *change* vs. *modification*, which is a composition of latin *modus* + *facio* + *tio*.

- Instantiation: word meanings tend more towards being context-bound and context-specific. Folk modelling replaces lexical specification with syntactic specification by drawing additional information from the syntactic context. In other words, it is combinations of words rather than the individual words themselves that provide specificity. For instance, an instance of the word *dog* will typically be accompanied by further specifications, such as the kind of dog, what it looks like, what it is doing, how it relates to other referents, etc. The term *canine* in contrast is already highly specific, often not requiring this additional detail.

- Compositionality: there tends to be more semantic interplay between words, making clause structures more interconnective (c.f. Langacker 2008). The lack of specificity and complexity in individual words is also amended by increased syntactic mutual specification. Scientific-modelling for instance

greatly favours relational clauses of simple passive attribution (*x be y at z*) vs. folk-modelling's preference for material and mental clauses (*x do y to z*) of intricate and dynamic events with multiple interactive components.

- Verbal frequency: verbs are used with greater frequency as connectors between nouns. Due to the shift from lexical to syntactic specification, verbs, in their role of syntactic connectors become more prevalent. They also emphasise the dynamicity of experience, and thus the individuation of entities and events. Consider the *Jack and Jill* example above.

- Verbal complexity: meaning is more evenly distributed between verbs and nouns, compared to technical registers which are noun-weighted semantically and focus on schematically simpler verbs as simple connectors. Again, consider the *Jack and Jill* example given above.

- Experiential grammaticality: a tendency towards more concrete than abstract grammaticalisations (nouns are more often used to denote physical objects than abstract categories, verbs to denote observable changes rather than abstract relations, etc.) (c.f. Langacker 2008, 1987). Since more meaning is derived from context instead of lexis, it makes sense for semantics to be structured to more closely resemble experience.

- Grammatical discreteness: there is a greater tendency in folk-modelling towards the representation of discrete events, rather than related phenomena. In contrast, there is a greater frequency of complex clauses and conjunctions in academic language. Once again, grammatical discreteness reduces abstraction and increases concretisation of language.

- Temporal complexity: there is a greater frequency of temporal specification. Just as verbs are more common, so too are time words. This is a predictable consequence of concretisation, due to the importance of temporal ordering in coherently communicating complex direct experiences.

- Participant complexity: there is also a more frequent specification of persons. This includes verbal person (e.g. third person singular form), but also pronouns and characters. Once again, this relates to increased concretisation.

- Semantic redundancy: there is also a high degree of semantic repetition. This relates to previous characteristics such as temporal and participant over-specification, as well as compositionality, but also in general. This increases the effectiveness of syntactic specification.

- Metaphoricity: finally, there is a greater frequency of experiential metaphor (Section 4.2.2), specifically instantiating an abstract concept as a physical experience, such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY or TIME IS MONEY. This differs from conceptual metaphor, which abstracts experiences as concepts, such as AN EVENT IS A STATE or AN EVENT IS A QUALITY type metaphors. This again lends itself to increased concretisation of meaning.

Unfortunately, there are few corpus analyses comparing narratives and non-narratives, since the majority of corpus studies of narrative only compare fictional narratives to one another, not to non-narrative registers (Mahlberg 2019, Biber 2011). Biber et al. (1999) provide one such example, however, comparing fiction and academic registers, among others, and corroborate many of the above features, specifically,

- a higher frequency of verbs, pronouns and adverbs and a corresponding lower frequency of nouns and adjectives.

- a greater frequency of simpler clause and phrase structures, with simple additive *and* being the most common connector between clauses.

- semantic generalisation (*some*, *couple of*, *around*, *sort of*, *kind of*, etc.) preferred to specification. (Again, this is because narrative exploits contextual over lexical specification, and because narrative deals with countable (tangible) rather than abstract phenomena.)

- greater frequencies of animate and concrete subjects, and more frequent *to*-clauses (typically indicating intent).

- fewer noun modifiers (simpler nouns)

- greater variety of verbs, higher frequency of material and mental verbs, and preferred use of the active voice over the passive.

- greater frequencies of descriptive adjectives and circumstance (place, process, time, purpose, causation) adverbials,
- highest frequency of idioms and fixed expressions.
- Other predicable features (more informal language, frequent use of past tense).

Firstly, it needs to be cautioned that these results are only preliminary, primarily derived from only two sources, neither of which is intended as a study of narrative linguistics specifically, but rather of general differences between registers, including narrative. More focused research is necessary to corroborate these results and to further explore the unique language of narrative.

The formalist position is that narrative is an omni-present feature in language and therefore something linguistics can only comment on but not differentiate, in the same way it can comment on literary language in general (Toolan 2012). It is indeed this view that leads to the taxonomic fallacy (Section 3.2) and results in a description of narrative that is fundamentally the same as that of language. While there certainly exists a large body of literature on narrative stylistics, none of these appear to attempt to differentiate a particular narrative register as we do here. If anything, they emphasise its indistinctness.

On the contrary, it is proposed here that what we typically refer to as narrative is a specific kind of language that can be linguistically defined by distinct linguistic markers. Indeed, the fact that we can generally identify a ‘story’ at a brief glance, as demonstrated in Section 3.2, suggests the existence of clear linguistic markers of narrative, i.e. a language of narrative. While at present the evidence is admittedly limited, it is certainly sufficient to warrant further investigation.

From these features, we can gain a more specific idea of what narrative is:

- *Experiential*: Narrative displays a preference for concrete and animate subjects.

- *Metaphor*: Narrative displays a preference for metaphor, specifically experiential metaphor, which associates abstractions with experience.

- *Event-based semantics*: It has been said that narrative exploits high resolution, highly schematic language. But with respect to the actual linguistic

features of narrative, such as categorical simplicity, semantic fixity, polysemy and schematic simplicity, we find exactly the opposite, namely a predilection for more simplified, abstract lexis. Doesn't this contradict what we've been saying all along? Well, if we consider it from a practical point of view, this all makes perfect sense. Words denote groups, not individuals (excepting for proper nouns), for the simple reason that creating a different word for every individual item in existence would be impossible. Therefore, it is only through syntactic word combinations that individuals can be identified. But we also know that the kinds of individual words that display the most versatility in forming such combinations are more low-resolution, simplified, abstract (in the sense of generalised rather than immaterial) words.

Consider for example the words *dog* and *run*. Individually, they are non-specific, low-resolution lexical items (compared to *husky* or *sprint*). But combine them as *dogs running* and we achieve a far more specific high-resolution image that is more than just the sum of its parts. Blending Theory explains this through the concept of *emergent structure*. According to this theory, most words have a broad backdrop of encyclopaedic background information. But it is only through the combination of words and the mutual specification this creates that this background is activated (this theory shall be extensively explained in the final section of this chapter). Hence, we have the seeming paradox that narrative creates high-resolution imagery by exploiting low resolution individual words.

- *Dynamic instantiation*: Given its emphasis on syntactic combinations, narrative's predilection for verbs, whose primary function is as syntactic combiners, shouldn't be surprising. Verbs are inherently compositional, as compared to nouns. We see this from the fact that nouns will often occur alone, for instance in titles, signs, etc. but verbs less so (and almost only in the imperative then, where the subject is implicit). This only accentuates the compositional foundations of narrative meaning – that the most basic unit of narrative semantics is the sentence, not the word. Thus, linguistic facts seem to support the event- rather than word-based analytical approach to narrative that formalist narratology often adopts.

But verbs not only serve to associate, but also to differentiate things. This is particularly the case for the kinds of complex verbs which narrative prefers. As discussed previously (Section 3.3), transitivity is primarily a relationship of contrastive roles. But not only do verbs differentiate in terms of roles, but also through temporal coordination. For instance, *kick* in *John kicks the ball* denotes a temporal succession of first *John kicks* and then *the ball is kicked*. In this way, we see that verbs play a central role in the concretisation and individuation of words. Thus, it also shouldn't be surprising that narrative also prefers material clauses to mental or relational clauses, just as it prefers common to abstract (here, in the sense of immaterial, not general) nouns. Differentiation or individuation however is not separation. Notice that verbs differentiate though relationships of interdependency. The relationship is of an experiential whole decomposed into parts rather than a subdivision into independent entities.

Consider for example, the role of *kick* in *John kicks the ball*. The verb defines the participants through contrastive relationships of subject vs. object, agent vs. patient, cause vs. effect, theme vs. rheme, etc. Alone, the participants appear almost indistinct – each differs from the other in innumerable ways, yet none of these differences are exactly pertinent either. The verb however associates them in particular ways, as a conscious subject acting on an unconscious instrument, an origin of force and the subject of that force, a psychological landmark of an experiential event and a trajector, an informational unit and a related circumstance, etc. The verb thus provides a framework of multiple dimensions for differential relationships.

The emphasis on the dynamic as opposed to the constant achieves individuation through the creation of spatial and temporal boundaries between participants. This creates both a sense of the semantic uniqueness of the individual elements within the events, as well as a sense of unity through these differential, mutually defining relationships. Dynamicity thus plays a central role in achieving the individuation and concretisation of experience which characterises narrative.

- *Plurisignification and ambiguity*: As we have seen, narrative individuates and concretises language through exploiting multiple dimensions of

association. These multiple distinct dimensions of experience render the narrative in high-resolution. But this penchant for complicated, multi-dimensional imagery also means that narrative is essentially ambiguous and plurisignifying. Dynamicity creates multiple lines or layers of meaning, and this complexity in turn creates ambiguity. Compositionality further complicates plurisignification, since by attributing multiple meanings to the whole, we are also motivated to discern multiple meanings in the parts as well. For example, in the fable of the fox and the grapes we read the fox's failure as a lesson about dealing with disappointment. But we also know from fable convention that foxes generally represent human ingenuity, and this might lead us to perhaps interpret human ingenuity itself as a form of self-deception in the face of disappointment.

Given narrative's focus on syntactic compositions of disparate concepts, its penchant for metaphoric associations between highly divergent concepts is also hardly surprising. As we have seen, the narrative event traces commonalities between disparate concepts, much like metaphor, which is the juxtaposition of a concrete image with an abstract concept. By its very nature then narrative problematises meaning, demanding a high degree of cognitive engagement.

- *Thematicity*: As we have seen, the focus in narrative falls on the syntagmatic relations between phenomena, over the individual phenomena themselves. This syntagmatic focus is also a thematic focus – it is the abstract relationships, that is, themes, between individual experiential units that creates coherence in narrative. Thus, there is a close correspondence between the linguistic concept of compositionality, which depends on the associative schemata which unite individual phenomena into an experiential unity, and the narratological concept of theme. Here we also see the significance of metaphor, which is simply another of these syntagmatic compositions or themes uniting disparate experiences.

- *Semantic redundancy*: The thematic instantiation of experience, the subjectification of experience and multiple lines of meaning, all contribute to the semantic redundancy which simulates the profusion of stimuli of direct experience. Unlike more direct registers, the semantic redundancy of

narrative also problematises meaning, forcing the audience to decode and select input in much the same manner as direct experience.

While admittedly, comparative research on the distinctive traits of the narrative register is limited, the evidence suggests that narrative has a clear linguistic basis, and furthermore, that this linguistic basis defines much of what is unique about narrative. While, as we have seen, many scholars such as Northrop Frye and Paul Ricoeur arrived at the functional definition of thematic narrative through close analysis of narrative texts and their social context, as the above demonstrates, any non-linguistic definition can only be so accurate. It is only through the study of the linguistics of narrative that we can truly appreciate the precise mechanisms by which narrative language achieves the instantiation of narrative themes. As we have seen, when analysed on the lexical level of individual words, it is easy to overlook the instantiating function of narrative because instantiation only truly manifests as a result of the syntactic combination of words. Similarly, we have seen how influential verbal organisation is in terms of syntactic roles and temporal bounding, or how semantic profiling contributes to narrative ambiguity and plurisignification. An abstract definition of narrative function is clearly shown to be deficient without a linguistic explanation of how this function is manifested.

4.4.3 Linguistic and narrative event

Given what we have observed about the language of narrative, we find that much of what defines narrative is rooted in what is termed *the event*. Not only is the concept of experience or instantiation concretised in the event, as we have just observed, so too are the observable linguistic properties of narrative. We have observed that instantiation is syntactically- rather than lexically-based, focused on dynamic interactions between multiple phenomena, defining phenomena through the multiple semantic relationships between them.

But before we can move ahead, we first have to ask, what is *an event*? In formalist narratology, a distinction is made between an *ordinary event*, which describes any observable change of state, and a *narrative event*, which describes a tellable, ‘eventful’ or story-worthy change of state (Bruner 1986, 1991). It shall be argued that this second qualifier is unrelated to the narrative event because tellability is a factor of narrative theme, not the event itself, and that formalist narratology only associates

it with the event because it rejects theme (see Section 5.2.1). In addition, the problem with these definitions is that both are described in highly abstract terms, a representation of any kind of change, without any guidance as to how they would actually be applied in practice. Nor do they demonstrate any essential narrative quality to distinguish them from a linguistic event. Once again, we witness formalist narratology's failure to engage with its own subject. Instead, it is grounded in the notional narrative world (Ryan 1991), but more than enough has already been said about this. There have also been attempts to ground the narrative event in linguistics (c.f. Herman 2002), though with limited success (Huhn 2008).

Here we shall attempt to revive this linguistic definition of an event, equating it with the sentence. This is because, without a firm grounding in the actual language of the text, any conception of narrative event can only be an arbitrary abstraction, and the closest linguistic equivalent to the narrative event is the sentence. A concept of narrative event must be grounded in the *grammatical event* (the clause or sentence), since in practice this is ultimately the origin of all conceptions of narrative events. However, this assumption also has some support from cognitive science, which grounds the sentence in memory constraints – short-term memory constraints are a primary determinant of syntactic unit size (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 27-8). (If the concept of *an event* is defined by physiology rather than convention, then it suggests that the grammatical event is universal to all registers including narrative – it is also the basis of the narrative event.)

Equating the narrative event to the grammatical event necessarily means getting mired in the complexities of the multitude of opposing theories on the subject of grammatical events (c.f. Croft 2012). For the sake of simplicity, we shall resort to the traditional narratological approach of defining a minimal event (Bruner 1986, Prince 1973), which comprises the basic necessary characteristics which any coherent representation of a narrative event must adhere to, as well as the basis from which all narrative events elaborate. Furthermore, we shall also define a prototypical narrative event, which is the ideal form which all narrative events tend towards. In this way, most of the potential variation implied under the term *narrative event* can be explained as existing somewhere between the opposing poles of minimally necessary and ideal forms.

Both of these are well defined in cognitive linguistics, and thus cognitive linguistics will provide the primary theoretical foundation for these theories. The first and most basic necessary requirement for an event, indeed any linguistic construction, is that of instantiation, or to employ the cognitive linguistic term, profiling. All constructions comprise a profiling (i.e. selection) of specific details from a category or domain (Goldberg 2010, Langacker 2008), for instance, the selection of an instance *a dog* from the myriad of individual objects within the category DOG. But profiling is typical of all linguistic constructions, even non-narrative event-type constructions.

Rather, what appears to be closer to the minimal definition of a complete and coherent sentence is a specific kind of profiling, namely spatial and temporal bounding. For any sentence to be complete requires a minimum of a main verb, providing a temporally bounded semantic space, and a main noun or subject (potentially implicit, as in the case of imperatives) to provide a spatially bounded semantic space. It is only through the creation of such a spatio-temporal reference point that anything meaningful can be communicated, and thus, the minimal event conforms to the most basic unit of meaning. In this sense, the concept of narrative event can be equated with the grammatical unit of the sentence or clause (Langacker 2008: Croft 2012, Croft 2015, Goldberg 2010, MacWhinney 2005).

Croft (2012, 2015) however points out that this creation of a reference point, what he terms aspectual structure, alone however is not sufficient to define an event. An event also requires a causal structure which differentiates the various components of a construction, such as the aforementioned noun and verb. And the way in which we make these distinctions is on the basis of causal models, which in turn are based on the foundational experience of causality. This derives from Talmy's theory of force-dynamics (1988), which states that we use a set of conventionalised models of causal relationships between phenomena to construe experience. An example of this is the three main types of experiential modelling, namely the material clause (*x do y to z*), the relational clause (*x be y at z*) or the mental clause (*x sense y(material/relational clause)*) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]:168-306).

This may appear to confirm the narratological definition of the narrative event as a representation of changes to a set of entities within a narrative world. But once again, this definition falls short in its failure to define these as figurative models rather than representations of real phenomena. This figurative nature of experiential

modelling is perhaps most obvious in the common occurrence of *hysteron proteron*, the device of causal inversion. This includes abstract or subjective or mental causality such as perceptual, moral or intentional causation, which can invert objective causality. We can observe this in the following examples: *the boy was sad because he was crying* (rather than *the boy was crying because he was sad*), or *John destroyed my painting (by leaving it out in the rain*) (rather than *the rain destroyed my painting*), or *Hitler killed six million Jews* (rather than *Hitler ordered six million Jews to be killed*). Otherwise, it can be done for artistic effect, *blooming flowers beckon spring*. Or if causality is not self-evident, as in *the sun is coming out from behind the clouds* where it isn't always discernible which object is moving when at a great distance. Causality in narrative, and language in general, is as Bruner (1991) terms it, based on human time, coordinated relative to humanly significant events.

Of course, in keeping with the experientialist assumptions of cognitive linguistics, this is not to say that the narrative event is a purely subjective creation – the significance of an objective reference point (the aforementioned obligatory spatio-temporal bounding) suggests the opposite – but only that the narrative event is a synthesis of objective sensory stimuli and subjective human experience.

4.4.4 The prototypical event

Taking all of this into consideration, why then do narrative events so rarely occur in this minimal event form? Part of it has to do with practical necessities, such as the informative intention (Sperber & Wilson 1995 [1986]), or else experiential mimetic accuracy. But even when such practical considerations are not present, narrative events often still take more elaborate forms than that of the minimal event. Why is this? The answer becomes apparent when we consider the *prototypical event* form (Lakoff 1987:54-55, see also Langacker 2008:355-357). This involves:

- a single discrete agent and patient
- a simultaneously occurring agent and patient
- an agent which is human
- an action performed by an agent
- an action which is consciously willed and controlled throughout

- an effect which the patient undergoes
- a discrete change in the patient before and after the effect
- a direct transference of energy from agent to patient arising from the action and resulting in the effect
- the energy is transferred through physical contact between agent and patient, either directly through the body or indirectly through an instrument
- the entire process is perceptible by the agent.

We can see a clear correspondence between this list of features, and the earlier list of features of experiential metaphor. Similarly, when we look at the defining qualities of the grammatical event/main verb, we again see these same attributes recurring. De Mendoza Ibanez and Masegosa (2014: 75) list them as follows: duration (a temporally distinct beginning and end), telicity (a discernible cause and effect), dynamism (a demonstrable change), control (a discernible human agency) and experience (perceptibility) (c.f. Croft 2012, Dik 1997). Repeatedly, we find the emphasis of key qualities in the ideal representation of experience: temporal, causal and participant discreteness and discrete causal, agentive and perceptual roles.

But why is this? Why do we often even compromise mimesis or the informative intention to make a representation fit the prototype? This obviously relates to the earlier question of why experiential memory is so much more effective than abstract memory. As you will recall, it has been found that new information is harder to memorise in its minimal abstract form, as opposed to in a more elaborate and complex narrativized form. You will also recall that it has been postulated that this is because the more complex instantiated form includes more connections to existing memories than the minimal abstract form, and hence results in greater integration within any existing semantic framework.

When we consider the above list of attributes, it seems clear that the prototypical event form follows the same trend. The clear difference between minimal and prototypical event forms is the *personification* or *embodiment* of experience. Experience in narrative is not objectivised but instead pointedly subjectivised. The personification or embodiment of experience aims to present experience within the framework of the familiar embodied human frame of reference. By virtue of us being

human beings, and most of our experience coming about as a result of our own subjective experience of our own actions, experiential representations which conform to this subjective human agentive perspective will have more corresponding points for associative integration into our own experiential frame of reference. Indeed, Bruner (1991), like Mendoza and others, goes so far as to define it as a necessary feature of narrative, though I would hesitate, given the frequency of de-personification or disembodiment of experience as a theme in modern literary narrative (as illustrated by common themes such as inaction and the impossibility of agency, or the existential alienation of experience) (Bradbury & Mcfarlane 1991).

Similarly, the nature of our senses dictates that spatially and temporally discrete phenomena are more perceptible than those which are not. Hence, serial rather than simultaneous causality, tangible rather than intangible and durative rather than ephemeral phenomena are more easily construed and thus will similarly have more correspondences with existing frames of reference. Thus, it only makes sense that we try as far as possible to make events resemble this default format for the sake of maximal cognitive integration, even if it requires a degree of figurative distortion of reality, such as the way we pretend that experientially formless objects like mass nouns (i.e. water or sand) have form[22] (c.f. Langacker 2008:128-39). By maximising informativeness, narrative also potentially creates a sense of immersion and thus increases our cognitive engagement, by figuratively placing the audience in the situation and allowing them to process it for themselves. This differs distinctly from technical registers which aim to provide pre-packaged, informationally condensed semantic content.

In summary, just as narrative is not an absolute but a variable quality, so too does the narrative event conform to some point on the scale between the minimal event profile universal to all constructions, and the ideal of the prototypical narrative event. Importantly, this also reveals the limitations of the formalist narratological definition of narrative events, which is based on a taxonomy of real-world phenomena with little real evidence to support it. Instead, the evidence demonstrates that the narrative instance or event is defined primarily by cognitive semantic principles such as the embodied human perspective and semantic models of experience.

[22] The spatial bounding necessary for linguistic coherence demands that we imagine boundaries to exist were in reality they do not.

4.5 Narrative compression

Having explored narrative instantiation at length, in this section, we will turn our attention to the other end of the scale, namely the abstraction pole. Just as instantiation is linked to the narrative exemplar, abstraction is tied to its associated theme. In particular, we will explore how Langacker's concept of abstraction is elaborated in blending theory through the analogous concept of compression, which is of particular importance in how it explains the interdependences which exist between abstractions and their associated instances.

4.5.1 The thematic function of narrative

In the previous sections of this chapter we explored how the narrative exemplar, that is, the narrative text itself, is defined by its extensive and varied use of different methods of instantiation. So, the natural question to ask at this point is why? Specifically, we need to ask, what is being instantiated? Clearly, the over-simplistic formalist answer of just experience is insufficient (see Section 1.3). It is not all or just any old experiences being represented in a given narrative, but rather specific ones. What is this nebulous thing behind the narrative exemplar that at once selects and unites the instances in the given narrative?

The obvious answer is that narrative's purpose is to communicate the relation or *theme* that exists between the individual events themselves, the idea that they all share. Specifically, this means communicating the theme in its exemplified or experiential form. In other words, theme is what all the represented experiences have in common. It provides the all-important selection criterion which determines which experiences get represented and which are left out.

To do so is, in addition, to reveal the fundamental cognitive nature of narrative – that narrative is not about representing reality itself as the window metaphor claims, but rather about representing our ideas about reality. This thematicity of narrative seems self-evident, particularly when we observe actual narratives. When we read Keat's *Ode to a Grecian Urn* or Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, it is impossible to believe that the author's actual intent is to tell us about antique crockery or some nonsensical imaginings. All narratives comprise selected experiences. Even though the theme is most often is not directly pointed to, we have to believe that there is a reason for the

narrator's selection of those specific experiences – we have to assume that it is an exemplification of *some other idea at the back of it*.

Thus, theme can be defined as the *message* that the text is seen to convey. What is less evident is the reason why narrative seeks to express themes in such a convoluted manner. Northrop Frye, we saw in Section 2.2, was the first to postulate such a reason, namely to ground key abstract cultural values in everyday experience. Ricoeur went further, explicating why this process is necessary through explaining how abstract concepts come to be disassociated from the experiences they were birthed from and how narrative serves to restore these broken links. Finally, cognitive linguistics has presented direct evidence of this dissociation through the concept of the unidirectionality of abstraction.

With all of these pieces of the puzzle in place, we can finally define the function of narrative as '*the exemplification of a theme'*. In more explicit terms, we can say that narrative serves to explain or explore a theme by means of presenting the audience with the experiences which exemplify it, that is, by presenting examples of the experiences from which the abstract concept (theme) is drawn. The relationship between theme and narrative is that of abstraction vs. instance or concept vs. example. In Polkinghorne's terms, 'narrative displays the significance that events have for one another' (1988:13), and this significance is constructed through the Piercean concept of abduction, which is the process of testing a hypothesis by fitting it to observable facts (1988:19). This is because it is only the fittingness of our abstract cultural values to the concrete experiences of day-to-day existence that renders them valid.

We also have to acknowledge that there is something fundamentally creative about this form of communication, that it is not a simple as transmitting ideas from one person to another. Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory (1995 [1986]) most effectively isolates this aspect of language i.e. that language is less about transmitting meaning and more about the shared exploration of it. This is because simply transmitting meanings doesn't make sense. As self-interested human beings, we also want something in return. Nor does it make sense in such simple terms, since people are different, and we require some kind of feedback to know how best to communicate those meanings. These differences create ambiguity and contradiction, which in turn inspires creativity and thus a variety of responses

(Bartlett 1995), as well as the particularly heightened ambiguities of narrative, such as the often unspoken, implicit nature of theme, and more importantly, how that theme relates to the exemplar or represented experiences.

As we have seen, theme is often communicated at various degrees of implicitness or explicitness. Communicating the theme, whether more directly or indirectly is essential to crafting a coherent message (Haviland & Clark 1974). Falk stated that this is communicated either through simple repetition, which is the most common method (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 43-6), or structurally, or some combination of the two. Examples of structural prominence are grammatical prominence, such as identifying theme with the subject of a sentence, structural prominence, such as stating the theme in the title, introduction/exposition, or conclusion/denouement (prominence of the initial or final position), or else through exemplary prominence, such as tying theme to prominent qualities in the setting, main events or protagonist (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 201-6, 221, Labov & Waletsky 2003).

4.5.2 Thematic compression

Narrative theme is easily ignored by formalist narratology for the same reason that it is hard to identify and explain. This is because, like many cognitive linguistic features like blending, abstraction and instantiation, or emergent structure, it is an abstraction rather than something which is directly perceptible (Turner 1996:14-5). Things like character, setting, point of view, etc. at least have direct correlatives one can point to in the text, in the form of pronouns, nouns, etc. But for most narratives, theme exists only in the abstract relationships between lexical and grammatical units. The exceptions to this are exemplary narratives such as fables and parables, or else natural narrative, which often includes some kind of thematic statement termed the abstract (Labov 1997, Labov & Waletzky 2003), as well as some literary narratives (Pratt 1977).

While we have argued that the theme comprises the intended message of narrative, this is only half the story. It is more accurate to say that narrative aims to communicate an exemplified theme, that is, an abstraction in the form of the instantiations it originates from. To understand how this is achieved, it is important to understand the concept of *compression* (Fauconnier 2002:113-38). Compression is not only a linguistic device, but an essential cognitive organisational principle. All

language is fundamentally relational – words appear largely to derive their meaning by referring to other words, and those words in turn by referring to other words, ad-infinitum. At the same time, words also connect to experience – all words essentially comprise categories of experiences on the basis of likeness (Croft & Cruse 2004:74-106, Taylor 2003). Words link together on the basis of recurring patterns in experience, using these similarities to reconcile distinct experiences into continuous narrative (Turner 1996:16-9).

These thematic relationships of compression are created through instantiation and abstraction. By abstracting a specific feature of an instance, we can find commonalities with other instances, in the same way that by isolating features such as feathered, beaked, egg-laying, warm-blooded vertebrate from pigeon, we are able to identify it as a member of the class of *birds*. But the category BIRD wouldn't be of much use if it were truly isolated from its individual members, pigeon, stork, crow, etc. as its purpose is as a linking device between them. In this way the category BIRD serves as a compression, or index if you will, uniting a vast number of individual instances. This may seem to contradict the concept of uni-directionality, the dissociation which accompanies abstraction, and which provides narrative with its *raison d'etre*, But it needs to be kept in mind that uni-directionality is a gradual process, and only occurs when these linkages decay through disuse.

Why would uni-directionality happen, you may wonder, if the sole purpose of abstractions is to serve as linkages between instances? Well, this is for the very reason of compression. Abstractions create linkages between instances by condensing the content of the instances. Often these condensed forms may prove more convenient than their original instances, to the extent that we may even forget these connections to the original instances entirely. This is the process termed automatization by the Russian formalists (Erlich 1980 [1955]), whereby as a result of the simple habit-forming nature of human-beings, we fall into routinised ways of thought. Narrative then helps us to periodically refresh these broader frames of reference so that we do not get trapped by habituality; and ensures that we have these extended mental resources available for when we need them.

Consequently, the idea of theme as intended message should not be misconstrued. This should not be understood as implying that narrative comprises an unnecessarily convoluted or roundabout mode of communication. The distinction between theme

and exemplar (i.e. narrative) is not between the meaningful and the purely instrumental, but rather between the individual constituent parts of the text and its organising principle. Discovering a theme is not like peeling a fruit or shelling a nut – the exemplar is not just disposable packaging; it is an essential part of the text. Rather the theme is like an instruction manual or toolset for interpreting the exemplar. In other words, it is inaccurate to identify the theme alone with the intended message. Rather the intended message is the exemplified theme, both exemplar and theme. To be precise, the function of narrative is to communicate the complex relationships between theme and exemplar.

The relationship between theme and exemplar is complicated. In the most basic form, what we have termed the narrative rehabilitation function, the exemplar serves to explain or describe the theme in the familiar terms of everyday experience. But narrative can just as easily serve a creative function, as a way of synthesising new experiences into existing conceptual frameworks, in effect, challenging the audience's preconceptions. Or alternatively, narrative can serve as a means to create entirely new conceptual frameworks. These can be termed thematic creation, where narrative confronts the audience with new experiences and challenges them to discover their theme, that is, their significance. This is a more exploratory form of narrative, and quite typical of less formal narratives like *Honey, how was work?* or *Guess what happened to me today*, or certain more experimental forms of formal narrative. In these cases, compression itself is the end goal – not to communicate a theme so much as to discover one (c.f. Pratt 1977: 136-148, Labov & Waletsky 2003, Tannen 2007, Herman 1999).

Linde (1993:67-85), on this basis, distinguishes three *different classes of narrative*, namely the conventional narrative, whose function is the standard narrative rehabilitation, the exemplary narrative, whose function is to explain an unfamiliar theme or concept by means of familiar illustrative examples, and the chronicle/expository narrative, which simply provides a collection of experiences and leaves it up to the audience to discover a common thread, if any, that runs between them. In this we get a sense of just the variety of uses narrative may have. Exemplary narrative, we see, forms the basis for many kinds of instructional guides, such as recipes, how-to manuals, text books on practical subjects, etc. Chronicles in

turn comprise much of psychological therapy, personal introductions, eye-witness testimony, historical literature, diaries, travel guides, etc.[23]

It needs to be made clear that the theme is not typically simply a synopsis of the plot, as is often stated, as in the Kintsch & van Dijk model (1983). This can often be the case, typically in chronicles/expository narrative, such as news articles, conversational narrative, etc. But conventional narrative mainly serves as a medium for figuration, that is the exemplification of an abstract concept (Sections 2.3 and 2.4). Yet even here, theme plays a role in narrative coherence. For instance, in the *what we did on holiday* story the likely selection of instances will be *holiday-activity* type events from experience. The theme will not simply randomly select any old happenings over the time period. "We slept, we ate, we drove the car, etc." even if true, is not a meaningful holiday narrative. Rather the specifically *holiday-themed* elements are requisite: *where* we slept, *where* we ate, *where* we drove, etc.

The expository vs. exemplary narrative distinction is not clear-cut. In historical narrative for instance, we are not so much interested in the events themselves as what they signify to us in the present day. This appears to place history in the exemplary narrative category. But then again history's scientific ideal of objectivity demands its presentation in expository form, presenting events as neutral facts so that the reader can form their own independent opinion. Yet, following Ricoeur, we cannot ignore the fact that history is still an exemplary narrative pretending to be expository narrative[24].

Consequently, theme can vary considerably in *specificity* and *complexity*. For expository narratives, the theme is a simple, general shared feature, while for exemplary narratives, the theme is a mirror image of the exemplar, only in the abstract. Thus it will be every bit as complex and specific. The events comprising a story can be bound together by as specific and complex a thematic compression as *imperialist atrocity and the inner motivations that inspired it* or just as vague and loosely connected a concept as *my day's events*. Story needs a theme just as all human behaviour requires a *raison d'etre*. Just because a theme is vague and

[23] This doesn't necessarily contradict the claim that there exists a narrative register in the same way that the written language register may include instances of the spoken language register in the form of direct speech, and vice-versa, quotations from written text in the spoken register.
[24] In other words, his argument is that history aims to argue a specific point while pretending to be an unbiased chronicle of events.

indefinite, doesn't make it unnecessary – *sharing my day's events* to intimates over dinner might typically constitute a relatively uninteresting theme, but it is essential to keeping in touch with our separate and varied lives, to maintaining the social fabric on which so much of our lives is dependent.

Theme also plays an important role in the *dynamicity* of narrative, to the extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish theme from plot. Earlier on we discussed an example of this in the verb *look*, which itself comprises a mini-narrative comprising various individual stages of receiving visual stimuli, selecting a focus of attention, interpreting the information, etc. In the same way, any theme comprises a collection of instances, often with an implicit temporal succession between them. The nature of abstraction is fundamentally connective. Abstractions exist to create connections between disparate instances. Hence, a degree of dynamism, heterogeneity and hence narrative is inherent to abstraction. Categorisation or abstraction does not exist, as commonly asserted, to impose uniformity/homogeneity but rather to reconcile heterogeneities through identifying the homogeneities within their midst. This is the basic idea of Schank and Langer's scripts (1994).

Finally, it must also be kept in mind that the relationship between theme and exemplar is not simply a one-on-one correspondence but *mutually transformative*. Instance and abstraction are very different in nature, and the purpose of narrative isn't simply to insert a referential link between them, but to blend or integrate them. Existential authenticity or the deceptiveness of appearances may be common narrative themes, but no two stories will expound either in exactly the same terms. The instance transforms the abstraction and vice-versa, by necessitating a reconciliation of their differences. Certain differences will be filtered out, while others will be incorporated. This is a process termed imagery by Frye and blending by Fauconnier and Turner.

4.6 Narrative meaning

So far, we have explained that narrative comprises a particular relationship between at least two concepts, namely the theme and the exemplar. But crucial to this definition is the notion of the boundaries that distinguish these concepts from one another, as well as how narrative overcomes these boundaries. After all, it could

easily be argued that theme and exemplar are not separate schemata but simply different aspects of the same one. This will be the subject of the final two Sections of this chapter, namely, the semantic boundaries that differentiate schemata/concepts, and the way in which blending works to overcome these boundaries.

Firstly, it is important to understand the cognitive semantic view of meaning adopted here. Generally, there are several principles which define it (Evans, Bergen & Zinken 2007). Firstly, there is no clear distinction between semantics (conventionalised meaning) and pragmatics (the co-ordination of meaning with context and experiential background). That is to say, the embodiment principle finds that much of what is otherwise defined as pragmatics is semantically embedded. Secondly, meaning is organised, that is to say, meanings are not isolates but integrated units whose meaning derives from their position within the greater semantic framework as a whole. Thirdly, meaning emerges from context, including linguistic context. And finally, meaning is dynamic, meaning conventional associations are adaptable in relation to context.

4.6.1 The problem of domains

As was stated in Section 4.5, compression is the purpose of narrative, while blending is the means by which this is achieved. Blending is defined as the combination of concepts, and concepts in turn are differentiated in terms of their associated *domains* (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:37). One weakness of blending theory which was mentioned previously (Section 2.4.5) was the ambiguity of the term domain. Traditional cognitive theory views the mind as though it were a filing system, where concepts are filed on the basis of their features into folders termed domains and meaning is created simply by locating the appropriate folder (Langacker 2008, Taylor 2003, Croft & Cruse 2004). But at the same time, neurological evidence indicates that all cognition appears to be spread out across the brain, activating widely distributed sectors regardless of the topic (Thompson & Kim 1996). This makes sense considering how individual concepts can simultaneously coexist in very different domains. A car can be both a physical object, a core technological utility of modern civilisation, an icon of social status, a sex symbol, a personal attachment often of deeply felt sentiment, among others. This implies that if the concept of domains is in any way an accurate representation of the actual meaning structures in the mind, then there is a great deal of redundancy. Fauconnier and Turner stress

how semantic analyses continually understate the number and variety of associations between domains (2008), and this is borne out by Blending Theory analyses, which are characterised by their complexity and level of detail. But perhaps they are completely wrong – perhaps the associations are in fact small in number but instead more complicated and varied in content than they are given credit for. After all, who is to say whether the above connotations of CAR are associations from outside the domain, or instead integral parts of the domain itself (see Section 2.4.5 for the criticisms of blending theory). This is the fundamental *problem of boundaries* in cognitive semantics. If cognitive semantics is a study of associations between domains, then the question of where those boundaries lie would appear to determine what does or doesn't comprise inter-domain associations.

Unsurprisingly then, there is a great deal of evidence to discount the notion of domains. Schneider and Hartner (2012:9-10) in fact identify this idea of domains and categorisation as perhaps the single greatest weakness of Blending Theory, if not cognitive linguistics. At the same time, they explain that this idea of domains can and should be viewed as a necessary theoretical metaphor, a simplification for something we do not yet fully comprehend.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence against domains is metonymy, which is a type of intra-domain blending (Croft 2006, de Mendoza Ibanez & Masegosa 2014:39-45, Ioannou 2019). Metonymy, as a part-to-whole association, is inherently a blending of part of a domain with itself. This would appear to indicate then that blending really doesn't have anything to do with relationships between separate domains. Langacker solves this problem by theorising the existence of nested and overlapping domains, so that domains may only seem to have redundancies, but rather the shared content is not a case of multiple replications of content but of shared content due to overlapping domains (Langacker 2008).

The concept of domains and the boundaries which distinguish them is more indeterminate than typically acknowledged. Explanations typically demonstrate domain boundaries by comparing closely related to seemingly unrelated concepts, such as DIVORCE vs. MARRIAGE vs. SPORTS, for instance. But once we try to circumscribe exactly what the limits of a domain are, this proves a far harder task. DIVORCE for instance profiles against the domain of MARRIAGE, but also RELATIONSHIPS, LAW, EMOTION (as visible for instance in *amicable/acrimonious*

divorce), PROPERTY, INCOME/EMPLOYMENT, GENDER, CHILDREN, FAMILY, HOME, SEX, EMPLOYMENT, SOCIETY, CULTURE, etc. to varying degrees. This is something which was witnessed recently in the breadth of the discussion over the legalisation of same-sex marriage. However, that such domain boundaries do exist is highlighted by the example of near synonyms such as LAND BIRD vs. GROUND BIRD given previously (Section 2.3). The fact that BIRD in each case has a different meaning suggests that LAND and GROUND comprise distinct domains. But then again, it is also possible to explain these differences in a way that is still consistent with cognitive semantic theory through reference to concepts like mental imagery, without recourse to semantic domains. In this explanation, it is possible to explain the differences between LAND and GROUND as different configurations of the same domain content rather than as different domains.

The concept of the domain (or any of the other terms used to refer to selections of conceptual content, such as mental space, schema, frame, script, idealised cognitive model, category, etc.) (Goldberg 2010, Croft & Cruse 2004) indicates the information that is brought to attention by invoking a word or other semantic unit. The fact that words invoke certain conceptual content and not other seems to suggest that such boundaries exist. Similarly, the simple fact of learning – the idea that one can increase domain boundaries by increasing their conceptual content or even create new domains – suggest the existence of such boundaries.

Or does it? The concept of domains is based purely on conventionalised associations. For instance, it seems strange to say *an arm has five fingers*, rather than *a hand has five fingers*. Theoretically, this is because *fingers* are more closely associated with the domain of HAND rather than ARM. But even so, we can conceive of a circumstance where such a statement may seem perfectly natural, such as *We have recovered the entire arm with all five of its fingers*. Metaphor and figurative language are examples where associative norms are pushed to their limits, and when we consider such instances, the notion of associative boundaries seems to vanish. Indeed, it was Derrida who first pointed out the illusory nature of associative boundaries with his concept of *différance*, or the endless deferral of meaning (Norris 1982, Culler 2007 [1982]). This is the idea mentioned in the previous section that words derive their meaning through their associations with other words, and those words with other words, and so on. When we seek the meaning or definition of a

word, we are only given more words, which are in turn defined by more words, and those by more words in turn, apparently *ad infinitum*.

William Empson (1984 [1930]: 27) provides an example of this from a poem by Nash on the theme of DEATH. He quotes the following image:

> Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
>
> (Nash, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*)

where the image is formed of Helen's mortal remains, with empty eye sockets filled with the dust of her own decomposition. Yet how is it possible for this image to form, given the paltry evidence we're provided with – literally just three significant words *dust close* and *eye*?

Let us examine the underlying processes at work here: The image employs an extension from the DEATH IS SLEEP metaphor, so that closed eyes are metaphors for dying. At the same time, it connects the image of dust in the eyes, forcing one to close them, to that of death causing the body to decompose into dust, of the gathering of dust indicating the passage of time, of collecting dust as an indication of abandonment, of abandonment indicating the absence of life, of dust filling empty containers, and lastly of the eye socket of a dead person's skull constituting such an empty container. These are all connected by the simultaneous and completely spontaneous and unique metaphoric and metonymic analogies of EYELIDS ARE DUST and FILLING UP FOR CLOSING, and chained metonymies and metaphors of EYELIDS FOR FLESH and FLESH IS DUST. Aside from this, the image contains numerous contradictions which should oppose the creation of the image, specifically that of the opposition between Helen's living and dead states. Additionally, there is the rich associated imagery, connotations and emotions which makes it so poignant and its use so effective. For instance, of dust in the eyes causing tearing up, tears representing grief and mourning, tears causing blindness, sight as a gateway to the wealth of opportunity and wonder of experience, and the fear of losing it through blindness. These are just a small number of the rich associations the image may produce.

All of these implications and associations are drawn from the combination of only three words (*dust, closed* and *eye*) within the thematic context of DEATH. When inspected closely, the image's creation seems almost miraculous. Yet in spite of this,

most readers should be able to automatically construe the image with little conscious effort. The same is visible in another image we will explore later, this time comprised of the association of just two concepts, namely HUMAN SKELETON and SCYTHE, namely the GRIM REAPER. When one is trained in semantics and able to introspect all the complicated and diverse analogies necessary to create the most pedestrian linguistic imagery, it is difficult to accept the narrow view of denotated meaning commonly espoused, and not to share Derrida's opinion of the nearly limitless potential of signification.

In terms of this understanding, it is difficult to give credence to any claim for the existence of any hard semantic boundaries. Indeed, we can test this by selecting any two random words and examining them to see if any associative links exist between them. When we do so, the power of blending, particularly within the context of artistic language, seems to belie the existence of any hard boundaries. If a body can have fingers, then isn't it possible to associate any one concept with any other? The association between FINGER and HAND comes easier than the association between FINGER and ARM or BODY, likely because the association is more conventional in the former case than the latter case. But by comparison, the association between FINGER and BODY comes easier than say FINGER and KITCHEN SINK, or any other random word. Thus, we notice a receding scale of association rather than a fixed limit. Perhaps as Derrida seems to suggest, all concepts are linked to all other concepts, at least to some minor degree, though it would be difficult to determine this as a fact.

Langacker elsewhere seconds this denial of fixed boundaries: 'There is no fixed limit on how far something can depart from the prototype and still be assimilated to the class, if the categorizer is perceptive or clever enough to find some point of resemblance to typical instances' (1991b:266). This agrees with Smith and Samuelson's (1997) concept of *ad hoc* categorisation, where categories are not fixed constructs but are dynamic formations constantly re-created through the blending of past associations and present context. This is supported by Barsalou (1987) and Labov's (1972) observation that categories appear to be highly subject to contextual influences, and Barsalou's (1983) studies of non-conventional categories such as *things at hand to pound in a nail*. This demonstrates the uncertainty in semantics regarding the indexing of conceptual content.

Croft and Cruse (2004) similarly propose a dynamic theory of categorisation. In their view, categorisation is essentially the product of contextual interpretation. Contextual input is blended with purport, which is the *body of conceptual content…contributed by a word* (2004:100). This is then shaped by constraints and construal (i.e. cognition). However, Croft and Cruse to an extent sidestep the issue of whether semantic boundaries exist, since they do not necessarily deny the existence of conventionalised boundaries, only that these are fluid to contextual influences.

In part, this indeterminacy of semantic boundaries is due to the nature of blending itself. Blending is not limited to the content of the blended domains, but can and regularly does introduce any outside information necessary to reconcile any differences that exist by means of what Fauconnier and Turner term *emergent structure*: 'Emergent structures arise in a blend that is not copied there directly from any input (blended domain)' (2002:48). The same principle is evident in linguistic constructions. It is difficult to imagine any two words which cannot be associated within the framework of a linguistic construction like a sentence (Croft 2012:13). For instance, were we to choose two random words with no apparent conventional association between them, say LOBSTER and PIANO, we can either expand our scope of attention outwards until such a connection appears, say, *a piano and lobster restaurant*, that is, *a classy restaurant with live piano music and lobster on the menu*, or perhaps create such a link from scratch, say, *Uncle Nathan who has an abiding love for playing piano and trapping lobster along the coast in his old weather-beaten dory*.

The concept of domain and the conventionality on which it is based are then contradictory, since the concept of domain implies fixed boundaries, while convention is *scalar* – associations are neither purely conventional or unconventional, but more or less conventional to a degree (Lakoff 1987, Croft & Cruse 2004:77-92). This indeterminacy is even more problematic when it comes to the question of theme. It means that virtually any arbitrary proposition could serve as the theme, which is a contradiction in terms. An intended message or theme requires the existence of semantic boundaries to confine it to a specific meaning.

4.6.2 Semantic organisation

The answer to the problem highlighted in the previous section perhaps lies in a different concept in cognitive linguistics, namely that of the receding scope of attention. Cognitive linguistics includes two selective principles, namely the concept of domains with their relatively hard boundaries and the concept of *salience*, with its comparatively soft boundaries. The concept of salience (including all its associated terms such as profiling, scope, viewpoint, trajectory-landmark, figure-ground, etc.) (Langacker 1987, 2008, Croft 2012), describes selection in terms of *receding prominence* rather than a strict boundary of inclusion/exclusion. For instance, FINGER directly associates with HAND, and less directly with ARM, BODY, HUMAN BEING, and remotely with KITCHEN SINK, and so forth, seemingly *ad infinitum*. The concept of salience then allows us to explain how figurative language can create increasingly unconventional associations – because from this point of view, no concepts are entirely unconnected. The only difference is the degree of salience or conventionality. Indeed, as was argued earlier, much of what comprises differences in meaning can be interpreted as mere changes in perspective (Verhagen 2007). The traditional concept of domain then only corresponds with the most immediately prominent associations connected to any word.

Some kind of selective principle is obviously necessary. If every word prompted every conceptual association equally, the mind would be useless. It is only the ability of the mind to parse the *relevant* from the *meaningless* that allows meaning to exist. Salience, or gradual rather than absolute selection, provides the necessary adaptability, versatility and efficiency for the creation of meaning. What this means is that words do not actually mean anything in absolute terms – or rather, they mean everything – but in relative terms they do mean some things *more than* other things.

Salience clearly plays a central role in semantics. Indeed, most cognitive semantic theories have to include both concepts of domain and salience in order to fully explain semantic phenomena. Salience appears to be the process behind abstraction and instantiation through its ability to foreground identities and push inconsistencies to the background (Langacker 1987). Similarly, it appears to form the basis of perspective via the same process of differential prominence (Verhagen 2007). In the same way, morphosyntax can be viewed as a mechanism for foregrounding specific semantic properties, such as spatial bounding in nouns or the

temporal profile of events in verbs (Langacker 2008). In this way, semantics can simply be boiled down to different types of salience operations.

In the case of *piano and lobster restaurant*, we can either deduce that the domain of RESTAURANT provides an association between PIANO and LOBSTER that isn't present in either of these domains, or that RESTAURANT only brings to attention an association that was already there. The question of which of these two alternatives is correct is the crux of the issue. As we argue here, there is clear evidence that the most salient associations of a concept aren't all there is. Particularly when we take connotation into account, the limits of signification are clearly broad and mutable. There doesn't appear to be a great deal of evidence to support the existence of domain boundaries. At present, there doesn't appear to be any definitive proof to decide the question either way, but I believe the weight of the evidence is on the side of salience rather than domain boundaries.

4.6.3 Semantic selection

But even if the concept of salience provides us with such soft selective bounding, the question of what determines the scope of what is selected remains. Fauconnier and Turner state that the primary determinant of these boundaries is what they refer to as *human scaling* (2002:312). They claim that conceptual boundaries are defined by the practical limitations of our human embodiment, such as the limitations of perceptual awareness, interactivity or cognitive resources. TREE or BUILDING is more basic than FOREST or CITY BLOCK because we can actually perceive the former immediately and holistically in a way that we can't for the latter. The larger objects are only knowable by means of imaginative compressions of individual experiences of the former. In the same way, KNIFE, FORK and SPOON are more basic than CUTLERY, because even though we can perceive the latter at once, we use the former for very different tasks and therefore we experience them as very different. The understanding that meaning is intimately related to human experience is not new (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 47), and has been greatly expanded through the various theories of embodiment (Gibbs 2005).

No matter how miraculous human cognitive potential may appear to be in its ability to create associations between even the most remote objects, it still has obvious limitations. However, regardless of the limitations imposed by human scaling,

compression enables us to surpass these limitations by breaking down immensely complex conceptual structures and processing them piecemeal without actually having to separate the part from the larger whole. The power of compression thus means that at least theoretically, if not practically, human beings are virtually limitless in their cognitive potential – we can hold any concept, no matter how vast or complex in our minds – just not all at once. The concept of human scaling vs. compression should be familiar, since in principle it is the same as the way that salience organises the semantic anagogical sphere (the totality of a person's cultural learning). Human scaling means that at any single moment our focus is restricted, even though compression links simultaneously maintain connectivity to a far wider semantic backdrop.

But perhaps the most tangible evidence for the existence of conceptual boundaries is inconsistency. Although a word may have a vast, perhaps even infinite, array of associations, concepts are not universally integrated with all other concepts at the same time. Although *dog* and *cat* may have a wide range of mutual associations, obviously there are also numerous inconsistencies which could prove problematic were they to be fully integrated together. Contradiction has long been the traditional mainstay of semantic differentiation as we witness in semantic exercises going back to Jakobson and de Saussure (Erlich 1980 [1955], Toman 1995). However, as Fauconnier demonstrated, this factor shouldn't be overstated due to the mind's exceptional capacity for resolving contradictions. For instance, FINGER and PALM are contradictory across many dimensions, yet they are seamlessly integrated into the compression of HAND through simple spatial differentiation (Fauconnier 1985). The same with CAT and DOG in the context of PET. Through the simple mechanism of spatial differentiation, the mind is able to reconcile a myriad of inconsistencies simply by assigning them to different spatial coordinates. This simple solution of creating multiple, separate semantic spaces or realities to allow one to simultaneously hold contradictory ideas apart was previously discussed in Section 2.3.

And it is the resolution of such inconsistencies which is perhaps the defining feature of blending. Cognitive linguistics differs from formalist linguistics in that it views semantics as consisting of more than just similarities and contradictions. Semantics is instead viewed as figurative, that is, as having actual conceptual content. As stated before (Section 2.3), Fauconnier views meaning as abstract and conceptual

rather than realistic or referential. Meaning is compositional and analogous, meaning it is limited in scope rather than exhaustively exact. It is also contrastive, implying that semantics provides us with the necessary tools to create meaning relative to changing circumstances rather than simply providing complete and pre-packaged meanings.

A major component of this is what Langacker terms *imagery* (2008:34-6, 1987:110-3). This is closely associated to the concept of *schema,* which is an abstract representation that organises and interprets information, often in a figurative or imagistic framework. Two instances of the latter have already been discussed, namely in relation to the words *see* and *safety* (Sections 2.3 and 2.4). The idea that semantics comprises some form of actual imagery in its content at least seems implicit from such key concepts such as prototypicality, which defines conceptual associations such as category membership in terms of centrality and peripherality, or image schemas, which often include complex semantic images. Aside from this, spatial imagery is pervasive in language, such as how we interpret sound (high, low, full, big), time (near, distant, approaching, receding), emotion or thought, and so forth (c.f. Lakoff & Turner 1989:89-100). But most convincing is the pervasiveness in semantics of certain basic images which structure concepts that seem impossible or at least ineffective to conceptualise any other way. Langacker gives the following examples: simple images such as lines and shapes, light and colour, or motion, configurations (such as most prepositions) and those which comprise spatial relationships between multiple objects, such as contrast, boundary, change, inclusion, distance, or plurality, and finally ubiquitous image schemas[25] such as PHYSICAL OBJECT, HUMAN BODY, FACE, PART VS. WHOLE, CONTAINMENT, PERSPECTIVE, POSSESSION, ACTION, CREATION, COMMUNICATION, etc. Certainly, Langacker's imagery corresponds closely to what we perceive as the mimetic qualities of narrative. Blending, which is integral to the creation and transformation of these mimetic images, has a similarly close relationship to narrative from this perspective.

At the same time, it needs to be kept in mind that these limitations on the scope of selection are not absolute. In Section 3.3, it was argued that the malleable nature of cognition belies the formalist conception of a referential semantics. This semantic malleability similarly holds true in relation to the limitations imposed by mental

[25] A recurring structure in cognition which establishes patterns of thought and knowledge.

imagery. The mind has a surprising ability to ignore inconsistencies in the aim of developing meaningful associations, so that while the associative restrictions deriving from mental imagery are certainly pertinent, they are not insurmountable. The creativity of narrative itself makes a non-figurative semantics difficult to imagine. It is important to note that blends only direct us to what is to be blended, not how (Turner 1996:147). The fact that different people can and will inevitably execute blends in different ways reinforces the idea that language is analogical rather than analytical, intuitive rather than rational. While formalist linguistics has attempted to curtail this aspect of language purely to the domain of aesthetics, modern linguistics is more and more often coming to appreciate how great the overlap between the traditional figurative and non-figurative categories is – that the difference between artistic and ordinary language is one of scale and degree of complexity rather one of kind (Turner 1996:156-9, Tannen 2007).

The essential creative nature of blending needs to be stressed. Earlier it was mentioned that narrative meaning is inherently plurisignifying/polysemic, and if blending plays as fundamental a role in the creation of narrative meaning as Fauconnier and Turner suggest, then this is likely its primary source. As Fauconnier and Turner's *brown cow* example (Section 3.4) demonstrates, it is this plurisignifying feature of narrative, the power to describe virtually any circumstance or as they term it, equipotentiality (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:179), that explains its explanatory power of narrative in the human experience.

4.7 Narrative Blending

Having presented a theory of what comprises concepts/schemata, let us now look at how they are blended in narrative. As previously stated, *Blending Theory* (Fauconner & Turner 2002, 2006, Turner 1996, Coulson & Oakley 2000, Schneider & Hartner 2012) provides a linguistic model of meaning construction which almost perfectly mirrors Frye's theory of narrative. However, as a linguistic model, it provides the means to engage with the language of the text at a much higher level of detail.

4.7.1 The blending process

As with Frye's theory, blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 2006) explains the method by which multiple distinct concepts are reconciled (*blended*) into a single

coherent narrative. These concepts are termed *input spaces*, each defined by their own distinctive imagery and other abstract associations.

These inputs are blended through a combination of the processes of abstraction (reducing content) and instantiation (adding content). Blending Theory breaks this process down into a number of steps. *Cross-space mapping* is the first step, and comprises an initial identification of identities between the inputs. In the second step, these are isolated through the process of *selective projection* to create a *generic space*. Together, these two processes comprise a description of the process of abstraction. The generic space however only comprises the groundwork for the blend. This is because the generic space comprises little more than an incomplete and miscellaneous collection of meaning content.

The final step uses the generic space as the foundation for forming a *blended space* by means of *emergent structure*. Emergent structure projects additional, unique content from either inputs or elsewhere. Emergent structure itself is comprised of three separate stages. In the first stage, called *composition*, the generic space guides further projection from input spaces in order to create an integrated whole. Secondly, *completion* uses this basis to draw further inferences needed to complete the blend. This is the step during which emergent structure is drawn from elsewhere besides the inputs. Finally, *elaboration* occurs when the blended space is applied to relevant contexts in order to determine the utility of the concept. This construction of a new blended space from the abstracted content of the generic space essentially describes a process of instantiation. As this indicates, abstraction and instantiation are inextricably intertwined. Even when abstraction is employed to create concepts at a higher level of abstract thought, a certain amount of subsequent instantiation is necessary to ensure the conceptual integrity and coherence of the selected content.

To give an example, in the phrase *My karma ran over my dogma* (Coulson & Oakley 2000), which describes the familiar conflict scenario of the failure of ideals (*dogma*) in the face of everyday reality (*karma*), composition comprises the blending of CAR ACCIDENT and concepts from RELIGION. Completion involves making the necessary inferences, such as that when cars run over dogs, the dog often dies. This means that the image implies karma (divine providence) trumps dogma (religious doctrine). Finally, elaboration consists of mapping the concept portrayed in the blend onto

personal experience to determine the concept's usefulness (in terms of how accurate it is, how informative it is, the range of applicability, etc.).

De Mendoza Ibanez and Masegosa (2014) make several important contributions to Blending Theory. Firstly, they state that selective projection is not the only tool used to resolve inconsistencies, but that these can also be *hidden* by means of salience, i.e. *selective attention*. By focusing attention on consistencies and overshadowing inconsistencies, the illusion of consistency can be created. In this way, consistency can be maintained without selective projection's obligatory loss of detail and complexity. Salience thus possibly becomes even more important than selective projection. This corresponds as well with Fauconnier and Turner's description of compression (Section 4.5), which comprises the isolation of consistent content without wholly removing all association with the inconsistent. Such selective attention is most visible in narrative mimesis, where if one analyses fictional realism at any more than a superficial level, it quickly falls apart. This has been discussed extensively before (Section 3.3).

Furthermore, the authors point out that selective projection is used to not only eliminate inconsistencies and repetitions, but also the obvious or *redundant*. Consider for instance the ancient Greek Sphinx's riddle: *what has four legs in the morning, two at noon and three in the afternoon?* The syncopation (contraction) in the Sphinx's riddle has only three stages for the same reason most processes can be reduced to three stages: beginning, middle and end. In the same way, we can summarise a journey into three images, departure, travelling and arrival. The middle represents the general features of the process, and the beginning and end frame it temporally. Inference is sufficient to fill in the rest.

They also discuss the importance of cross-mapping not only by similarity, but also by *contrast*. This is particularly significant in contrastive blends, such as in the case of sarcasm or irony, or else analytical blends such as riddles (see the Buddhist monk example (Fauconnier & Turner 2002), see also Morgan (2017)). These kinds of blends are often analytical and as we shall see in the narrative analysis chapters (6, 7 & 8), particularly common, even instrumental, in conventional narrative.

More importantly however, they also point out that blending doesn't only explain the processes behind abstraction, but also those behind instantiation, and how the

distinction relates to the *scale* of selective projection that occurs. For instance, abstracting MAMMAL from DOG signifies a reduction of resolution through selective projection at a reduced scale. On the other hand, instantiating *John's dog*, signifies an increased resolution through selective projection at an increased scale, drawing content not only from the categories DOG and JOHN, but also from associated experiences relating to the relationship between owners and their pets.

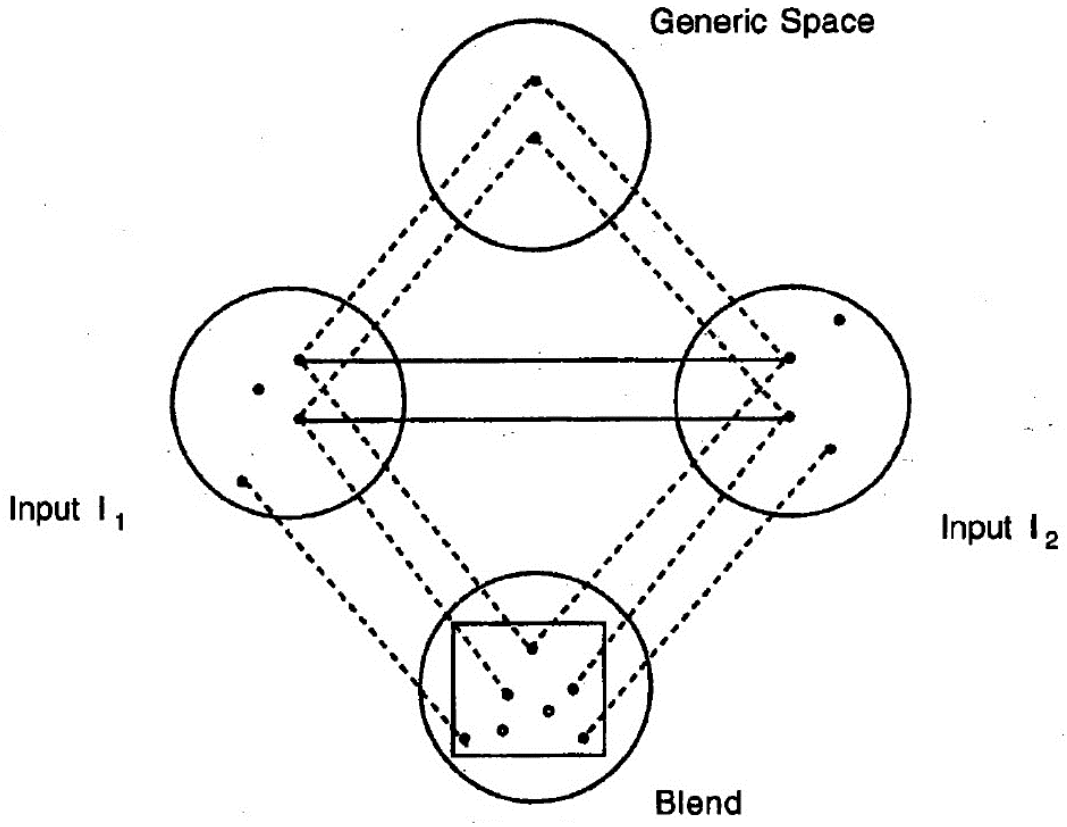

Figure 2.2 The blending model (Fauconner & Turner 2002)

The figure above provides a visual representation of the blending model. The circles represent the various concepts or spaces. The dots represent content of each, with solid lines representing cross-mappings and broken lines projections across various spaces. Lastly the square represents the emergent structure of the blended space. As we can see, cross-space mapping identifies identities within the generic space, some of which are blended in the blended space, while others are left unblended. The remaining content from the input spaces are either independently included or wholly excluded. The square represents emergent structure, by which a unity is wrought from the component parts. The isolated dots inside it represent elements of

this emergent structure, which incorporates new content from outside of the blend (Fauconner & Turner 2002).

To explain how the thematic definition of narrative fits within the Blending Theory framework, we propose that theme serves in a similar role to narrative as the generic space. Following this theory, individual events in a narrative are cross-mapped in order to discover a shared theme or themes. In this way, theme determines narrative coherence. By blending the various exemplars, comprising the various individual events of the narrative, via the thematic generic space, we arrive at the blend which is the narrative interpretation or meaning, that is to say, the *exemplified theme*. As this demonstrates, *the narrative as we take it to mean is neither the same as the text itself, comprised as it is of a set of individual events or statements, nor the theme as it is conceived independently of the narrative, but rather the holistic meaning of the narrative as united through the exemplified theme*.

At the same time, the cross-space mapping process itself which identifies the shared theme or generic space could itself be interpreted as a kind of preliminary or precursory blending. Unfortunately, since Fauconnier and Turner describe the process of cross-space mapping in terms similar to blending itself, the differences between them are not very clear. Nonetheless Blending Theory provides a detailed model of how themes are derived from narrative. As stated earlier, even in cases of exemplary narrative, where an intended theme is provided, blending remains necessary in order to determine how the narrative relates to the theme, what inferences can be drawn from the narrative regarding theme, and finally the meaningfulness of the theme to the audience.

Blending is seen to go hand-in-hand with compression. Compression has been discussed before, but it is necessary at this point to give a detailed definition and to explain how it relates to blending. Blending achieves compression by cross-mapping sets of similarities across a number of spaces, and then selectively projecting these similarities onto a blended space. By doing so, it simplifies the spaces through filtering out a great deal of extraneous detail, whilst simultaneously strengthening the prominence of the selected similarities within the input spaces (Fauconner & Turner 2002:113-35).

To give a commonplace example of compression in blending, consider the blend of MAMMAL within the collective input spaces of various animals. The blended space of MAMMAL serves to organise the relationships between both those inputs included within it as well as those excluded, but also anomalies which don't easily synthesize into the set of commonalities. At once this provides us both with a sense of the shared features that all mammals have in common, but also the range of variation within the category MAMMAL that allows for the distinction of individual members of the category. This includes anomalies which share some of the traits but not others, such as the egg laying echidna, the heterothermic arctic ground squirrel, or the scaly armadillo, as well as their relationship to non-members such as reptiles, birds, amphibians, etc. This relationship between the category and its members/instances is termed decompression and is a necessary accompaniment of compression, since compressions lose value if the simplification they produce also results in a loss of content. Compressions serve to create links between inputs rather than simply replacing them (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:114).

Compression in turn uses selective projection to strengthen *vital relations*. Vital relations refer to those elements in the blend which are of most significance, those elements which define the identity that exists between the input spaces, in other words, the theme (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 89-112). Fauconnier and Turner relate these organising principles grouped under the term vital relations to many of the basic cognitive abilities that define mental construal and form the foundation of semantic structures (c.f. Langacker 1987:99-146, 2008:55-89). These are cognitive abilities such as the perception of space and time, force-dynamic constructs such as cause and effect, motion and change, cognitive relations such as contrast, part-to-whole, type-to-instance, etc. While these certainly do comprise important features of most semantic structures, they alone do not explain the selective principles which we observe in compression – only a broader concept of theme achieves this.

While Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 89-112) proceed to list the types of vital relations, this I believe leads once more to the taxonomic fallacy. Certainly, there are often several conventionally salient features of all inputs, such as EDIBLE for FOOD or FABRICATE for TOOL, and it is true that we can often group these into a wide-ranging system of vital relations. But at the same time, it is in the nature of semantics that everything within it is significant – that which is not significant is forgotten, since the

mind is a tool and useless tools are swiftly discarded. Just so, for a chemist or toolsmith, CHEMICAL COMPOSITION can become a vital relation for FOOD or TOOL. As such, any feature or meaning can potentially serve as a vital relation. The notion which they advance that certain features are inherently vital doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

Dancygier (2012b) provides a more extensive discussion of the application of Blending Theory to narrative. She also introduces the concept of narrative blending, based on the premise that Blending Theory is fundamentally a grammatical and not a textual theory of interpretation. Yet this conclusion seems largely unwarranted given the diversity of Blending Theory applications, sometimes to single sentences, sometimes to whole texts. This clearly demonstrates that Blending Theory, as is, applies to language at all levels of linguistic analysis (c.f. Fauconnier & Turner 2002). Rather, Dancygier's theory instead seems intended to achieve a rapprochement between blending and narratology's very different perspectives on narrative meaning (as Turner himself has previously attempted (2006)). Given that we have planted our banner here squarely on the side of Blending Theory and against that of formalist narratology, for the numerous reasons laid out in Chapter 3, we shall instead dispense with such diplomatic gestures.

4.7.2 Defining features of blends

Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 309-346) distinguish between a range of *different kinds of blends*. Simplex networks are limited blends, where there is only truly one input space. An example of this is *My name is John*, where *name* and *John* are both elements of a same category NAMES, *John* only being a particular instance of the category. Mirror networks function similarly in spite of the existence of multiple inputs, because the different inputs are themselves only instances of the same input. For instance, in *Zuma and Mbeki are both presidents*, the two input spaces are really only multiples of the same input SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENTS. Single-scope networks employ two fully developed and richly detailed input spaces, but exhibit significant *asymmetry* in the blending, so that the blend incorporates virtually the entirety of one input, but only minor elements from the other. An example of this is metaphor, which typically exhibits this asymmetry in such a way that we can differentiate between tenor and vehicle inputs, as has previously been discussed. We saw this for instance in LUCY IS A DIAMOND where the input Lucy is incorporated in its entirety, but only the

sense of *a diamond as an object of value* is selectively projected from the other input, but virtually all else is excluded. All of these are variations of asymmetric blends, where one input provides the frame, while only minor elements from other inputs are inserted. The other main kind of blend is symmetric, comprising multi-scope blends, which can also be seen as the only true blends. An example of this is the GRIM REAPER symbol, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 5,6. One last kind of blend is mentioned by de Mendoza Ibanez and Masegosa (2014). These are *chain blends*, where one or several concepts are used as intermediaries between two concepts. They give the example of the STRINGS FOR STRING ORCHESTRA metonymy, which comprises several chained metonymies, namely, PART FOR WHOLE (strings for string instrument), OBJECT FOR PERSON (instrument for musician), and MEMBER FOR GROUP metonymies (musician for orchestra).

Finally, blends are subject to a number of restrictions, termed *governing principles* (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:309-52). Blending Theory suggests a potential for limitless imagination and creativity. However, there are obvious practical limitations that differentiate viable and non-viable blends. The primary governing principle, the one to which all other principles are subordinate, is *human scaling*. As said before, human scale is hard to define, but the more experientially perceivable and interactive (i.e. the smaller the spatial and temporal distance), the fewer the participants, and the more direct the causality, the more 'human-friendly' the concept is. It is important to stress that this is not a perfect yardstick. The principle lying behind human-scaling is cognitive efficiency – but blends have competing pressures and so the yardstick will apply less or more stringently from one blend to the next. As explained above, neither is it even desirable to increase compression beyond a certain point due to the loss of meaning inherent in the process. For the reader's sake, in several cases, I've renamed the governing principles below using more self-explanatory terms (though Fauconnier and Turner's original terms are given in brackets at the end). The eight governing principles are as follows:

- *Congruence principle*: It is useful that compressions within the blend not be transformed to the extent that they no longer resemble the inputs they compress. Obviously, if this congruence between the compression and the inputs they compress is lost, the compression no longer functions. For instance, at its core, the FATHERHOOD concept profiles a parental relationship

between father and child. If the compression simplifies the relationship out of existence by removing one of the two participants, the compression no longer works (Topology).

- *Integrity principle*: For the same reasons, as far as possible, compressions in the blend should not be transformed to the extent that they obscure or complicate internal relationships within the inputs. For instance, in the above example, it was stated that neither FATHER nor CHILD can be compressed to the extent that that which makes the relationship distinct is lost. Similarly, the concepts CHILD or FATHER individually should not be compressed to the extent that they lose their core identity (Web).

- *Economy principle*: As far as possible, instead of introducing new components into a blend, utilise already existing components if they can work as well. For example, using two different protagonists in a story where one would suffice conflicts with this principle (Pattern completion).

- *Internal consistency principle*: Blends should be as internally consistent and integrated as possible. For example, including conflicting themes in the same story contradicts this principle (Integration).

- *Thematic maximisation principle*: Maximise thematic links within the blend and between blend and inputs as far as possible, or intensify them in terms of prominence or simplicity. This is a difficult principle to define because theme can either be maximised through simplification (making it clearer), or through complication (making it more informative). What constitutes thematic maximisation will thus vary from case to case, in accordance with the story-teller's intent, the audience, the theme itself, etc. (Maximization of vital relations)

- *Interest principle*: The blend should prompt the audience to interpret its meaning. This principle goes beyond Blending Theory itself, since it relates to a context outside of the structure of the blend which defines what an audience finds interesting (Unpacking).

- *Relevance principle*: In addition to evoking the audience's interest, the blend should communicate something meaningful to the audience. This again relates to properties beyond the blending model itself (Relevance).

- *Recursion principle*: Finally, by virtue of their utility as a means for the compression of large semantic networks into simple meaningful structures, blends acquire a functionality beyond their immediate circumstances of creation. Indeed, this is common where blends occur in art or academic discourse and is one of the main intentions behind their creation. According to Frye, it is through this recursion that imagery transforms into archetype and ordinary narrative into literary narrative (Recursion).

Finally, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) list some of the primary strategies for meeting these criteria:

- Firstly, there are the basic principles of blending mentioned above: *cross-space mapping, creating generic and blended spaces, selective projection and the different types of emergent structures*.

- *Borrowed compressions*: Sometimes one of the inputs into a blend will already have a highly compressed structure which can then be mapped onto other inputs. We will explore an instance of this with the Friedrich painting (Sectiion 4.1), which already contains a highly compressed ROMANTIC ART structure which can then be used as a template for interpreting other Romantic art works. All archetypes are by definition borrowed compressions.

- *Down-scaling, syncopation*: Complicated structures or sequences can be simplified by reducing the number of constituent parts to only the most essential. A familiar example of this is the sphinx's riddle where the entire human life span is reduced to only three stages.

- *References*: Instead of blending an input entirely, inputs can instead only be referened in the blend. This helps prevent inconsistencies or the blend from becoming over-complicated. This technique is strongly associated with symbolism where a single feature refers to a complex concept, and lies at the heart of what makes compression unique. A familiar example of this is the well-known definition of mammals as warm-blooded, even though most

people can't actually explain the physiological characteristics entailed by homeothermy. This is because the blend of MAMMAL references rather than incorporates these features.

- *Blending themes*: Merging multiple themes into a single theme enables one to similarly merge their multiple exemplars into a single one. For example, *The Heart of Darkness* does so by blending the historical theme of imperialist atrocity and the psychological theme of the universal hidden human motives that caused it.

- *Compression through creating new structures*: As with emergent structure, creating new structures where none previously existed can make multiple existing structures obsolete and thus disposable. An example of this can be seen in nearly every denouement of every story, especially so in the 'twist-ending', where an epiphany or climactic event resolves or makes irrelevant previous apparent obstacles to closure.

To simplify, blending is governed by two primary but competing principles, namely the *maximisation of informativity* (specifically of both experiential and conceptual inputs, both in terms of relevance and pure interest) and the *maximisation of simplicity* (by means of eliminating redundancies, integration, repetition and referencing). These two opposing drives are reconciled on the basis of a third primary principle, that of *maximisation of consistency* (both within the blend itself and vis-à-vis its inputs) which itself is achieved through the maximisation of a common shared theme. Add or subtract too many details, either way, and you risk your blend losing consistency or coherence.

In this way, the complex laws that govern the blending process can be reduced to three simple principles, namely maximise informativity, simplicity and consistency.

Chapter 5

Conventional Narrative

Having defined the underlying cognitive processes which give rise to narrative, it is now time to turn our attention to the last and perhaps most important subject, namely formal or conventional narrative – that is, what is conventionally understood as *a story*. The argument will be made that this is intimately bound to the Fryean concept of archetype.

The central question we will address in this chapter is two-fold: Firstly, what differentiates story from language, or in technical terms, conventional narrative from the universal narrativity of language? And secondly, how does a story teach its lesson? Again, in technical terms, we can paraphrase, how does conventional narrative serve as a communicative medium for an intended message? Both questions are addressed simultaneously because the answer to both is the same, namely *narrative archetype*, The proposition then is that what is most distinctive about conventional narrative is its particular mode of communication.

5.1 An example of narrative archetype

Before we head into the analysis, let us first look at an example of narrative archetype in order to have a basic template at hand to guide our thoughts as we proceed. The example I wish to look at is rather atypical in being a painting rather than a written text, namely Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (see Figure 3.1). This is especially so in terms of the traditional formalist definition of narrative, since most paintings present a single rather than a sequence of multiple events. Regardless, it fits well within the definitions of thematic narrative which have been provided here, namely, an instance of a concept presented in an experiential format. This is itself part of the reason for choosing this example – it presents both a challenge as well as an opportunity to demonstrate the versatility of the thematic narrative model.

5.1.1 The Wanderer

Figure 3.1 *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* by Caspar David Friedrich, 1817.

Let us first describe the most observable features of the painting: The subject is a wanderer within a natural landscape. The foreground and centre are occupied by the

figure of the traveller and the ground on which he stands, and his prominence is further emphasised by the dimensions of the painting. The rocky outcropping is striking in its ruggedness and the light emphasises the sharp lines and contours of the wanderer's elegant attire. But at the same time, the figure has his back turned toward us and the detail is blackened out by the luminous scene ahead. As such, the foreground presents a contradiction. It is both detailed and indistinct, prominent and inconspicuous. Thus, while our eyes are drawn by the figure's prominence within the landscape, the figure's opacity itself leads our eyes outward to the landscape beyond.

Our eyes are thus strongly drawn to the landscape by the contrast between the luminosity of the mist against the stark black of the figure, even as large parts of it are veiled by the fog. The visible landscape mirrors the ruggedness and detail of the figure and foreground, even as the washed colours and the darkness of the landscape blots out much of the definition. In this way, the contradictions in the background mirror those of the foreground. The striations in the fog suggest movement, lending animacy to the scene. We can imagine a wind blowing across the landscape, perhaps even ruffling the figure's hair and beating at his coat.

But what does this signify? The effect of this painting is the creation of a contradiction whereby we are made at once to centre our attention on both the figure occupying the foreground and the landscape around him. Even the figure itself gains definition the more our eyes move outward – as a silhouette, the most detail is naturally concentrated around the periphery.

This contradiction is resolved by the way the painting encourages us to insert ourselves into the picture, in the position of the wanderer. He stands with his back to the viewer, much as the viewers themselves would were they standing there in real life. His features are hidden from view, reducing him to a faceless template, and the dark blot of his silhouette creates a hole in the middle of the painting enticing us to fill it. In this way, it becomes easy to identify as an observer with the figure through the similarities in posture with the observer of the painting, the way in which the audience's gaze is made to follow his by the composition of the painting, as well as by the simple fact of the familiarity of his human form versus the otherworldliness of his environment. The painting immerses us within it by these means. It invites us to entertain the illusion that it is we who are standing there on the prominence

beholding the ethereal landscape beyond, and to imagine what it would feel like, the scent of the mountain breeze, the chill winds buffeting us. The wanderer holds a relaxed posture, and the sense of beauty aroused by the landscape is projected onto our proxy. This sympathetic attitude is only enhanced by his sense of isolation. In this way, the painting foregrounds the act of viewing, the direct experience of nature's grandeur.

But at the same time, the number and prominence of the oppositions between the cultivated gentleman and the undomesticated wilderness emphasise the semantic distance between humanity and the inhumanity of nature. The ruggedness of the landscape as opposed to the wanderer's refinement conveys a sense of the essential alienation of undomesticated wilderness. The figure is finely dressed – almost too much so for such a wild setting. His refinement contrasts starkly with the raw elemental power of the wilderness and the tortuous stone at his feet. The landscape dominates the picture in its luminosity and grandeur, making the figure appear small and indistinct by comparison, despite his statuesque pose. The wide-open expanse emphasises the figure's solitude and isolation. Yet the figure occupies the foreground; and even the shape of the canvas, that of a portrait in place of a landscape, draws him into focus. Similarly, nature's mutability contrasts with humanity's consistency and stasis. While the wanderer is stationary, the world around him seems chaotic and alive.

Yet, against these contrasts there are the also numerous equivalencies, such as the stark blend of light and definition and darkness and obscurity. As stated above, the composition also encourages us to view these contrasts as complementary rather than antagonistic. While they are starkly different, the simultaneous affinities between them signifies that in nature we humans find our polar yet complementary opposite, the yin to our yang, so to speak: we discover that which we need to complete us but also that which doesn't exist within us; we discover that which we must reach outside of ourselves to attain, and thereby to grow as human beings.

This renders a sense of oneness in the midst of alienation. It emphasises both the closeness as well as the distance between the wanderer and his world. It is perhaps not meaningless that the centre of the natural landscape is occupied by a human figure, so as to convey the centrality of man to nature. The way the painting frames the viewing figure makes us highly conscious of the role of the spectator in the

landscape's acquisition of meaning. It is as if nature cannot attain the same value in the absence of a beholding eye, as if it were meaningless on its own without the necessary human catalyst to reflect it. Each renders the other meaningful.

The pervasive lacunae coax the imagination to fill in the blank spaces. Similarly, the way that the landscape seems to rise up from the fog, associates the act of creation with nature. Nature becomes the font of creativity for the human imagination. In this way, the painting also highlights the role of imagination in human experience. It both emphasises the role of the human senses, which encourage us to fill in the experiences that the picture fails to convey, while at the same time pointing out their insufficiency to render complete experiences without the assistance of the imagination. The eyes are insufficient on their own. Rather it is only by immersion through all our faculties, mental, emotional and spiritual, that we can begin to truly comprehend our world and our place in it.

More than anything, the painting draws our attention to nature. Nature is presented as something grand yet ethereal, something which has intrinsic meditative value. Through the observing figure, it emphasises more than just disinterested contemplation, but rather it emphasises the immersive multi-sensory experience of being-there. The wanderer's serene reflection is almost reverent, and the experience almost religious. This impression is enhanced by the dazzling luminosity and invisible horizon, which suggests the immanence of the transcendental in nature and the blurring of the line between the terrestrial and celestial.

In conclusion, the painting thematises the transcendental experience that humanity finds in nature. The solitary human being, bereft of the familiar society of his fellows, is forced to seek a new kind of belonging in nature, as well as to discover new and unfamiliar aspects within himself which correspond to this new environment. Nature thus is embryonic, providing mankind with a necessary recreation and rebirth.

5.1.2 The Romantic archetype

From the perspective of Blending Theory, we are presented with a variety of inputs, for example NATURE on the one hand, HUMANITY on the other, as well as the COMPOSITION of the painting (the last is important to mention, because it easy to forget that there is no real *nature* or *humanity* in the painting itself – these are all associations, albeit motivated by the composition). According to Frye (1951:131), the

nature of painting makes the distinction between the paradigmatic axis (the meanings we associate with it) of representations, and the syntagmatic axis of composition (the set of signs the painting is actually composed of) particularly distinct. These inputs are united via a generic space, which we can term HUMANITY IN NATURE which selects certain meanings from both input spaces while also creating new meanings during the blending of spaces, to arrive at a blended space which is *the meaning of the Wanderer*.

Yet the painting and its themes do not stand in isolation. These associations recur over and over again in Friedrich's art (Koerner 1990). And as one's exposure to this broader body of work expands, so too is it only predictable that many of these same tools we only just developed will be reused and adapted to decipher the meanings of his other works. Nor is Friedrich an isolate, but part of a broader artistic movement termed Romanticism. Friedrich's *Wanderer* is an epitome of Romantic art and may often be the first taste for the uninitiated into this artistic philosophy. I chose this painting in part for its renown, but also in part because it exemplifies so many of the core ideas or themes of Romanticism. Like the painting, Romanticism idealises the relationship between humanity and nature. Romanticism calls for an escape to nature, and not just the nature outside of ourselves and beyond the cultivated environment, but also to the nature within us, the primal and irrational sentiments that drive the human heart. Like the painting it also emphasises the opposition between the human and the natural world, between primal human nature and the soulless artificiality of social convention. It opposes the reflective solitude found in nature to the conformity and loss of identity demanded by society. Like the painting, Romanticism emphasises nature's role in unlocking our creative potential, as opposed to social learning which is largely mechanical and derivative. Nature is the immanence of the transcendental, the transformative and the ineffable. Nature is immediacy, vivacity, uniqueness and authenticity (Wordsworth 1798, Abrams 1993 [1957]:127-9, Fleming 1995 [1955]:537-542, Lamont 1987).

Romanticism is an idea which originated in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. But it is also simply a reappraisal of another far older idea, the town-mouse country-mouse type of fable which juxtaposes human and natural orders. This idea can be traced back to the first cities and the invention of writing in ancient Egypt and Sumer (see the Gilgamesh example below). It reappears in classical literature as the

pastoral of Theocritus and as popularised by Virgil. This was revived in the medieval and early modern eras, to finally transform into Romanticism. Since then, it has remained a lasting undercurrent in literature and media, in Yeats, Hardy and Faulkner, in the modernist obsession with the Freudian primitive unconscious and 'primitive' art, in the gothic idealisations of modern fantasy literature, or the ecological themes in popular media, as illustrated by numerous disaster flicks.

And we can trace this back even further still to some of the earliest cave paintings tens of thousands of years ago, depicting hunting initiatory rites (Aubert et al. 2019) comparable to those documented among contemporary hunter-gatherer cultures. Underpinning such initiations is the concept of separate worlds, particularly those of the human and natural, and the necessary ritual transformations required to gain passage between them. In this way, we can see Friedrich's wanderer as a modern successor to the cave-wall figures from more than 40 millennia ago, representing a narrative archetype which could, in all likelihood, be older still. Both are essentially initiates in a rite of passage into the wilderness in search of spiritual rebirth.

In this way, we see that while Romanticism could be considered a theme, that is, a specific set of ideas or beliefs about the relationship between man and nature, it also communicates these ideas by means of a set of far older man vs. nature symbols. Archetype is the term we use for these symbols which serve as a communicative medium, a narrative grammar, if you will, between a set of experiential representations of natural and human objects and the themes of Romanticism. A theme is a specific set of ideas communicated by a particular narrative. Archetypes, by contrast, are the recurrent language or code of conventionalised symbols employed by numerous narratives to communicate different themes. Themes comprise a specific set of abstract ideas or beliefs. Archetypes are the ideologically neutral narrative conventions used to express these different, even opposing ideas or beliefs. Theme then encapsulates the meaning for the narrative, while archetype refers to the symbolic medium used to communicate that meaning.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the boundary between theme and archetype is not definite. There is a certain degree of overlap. For one, theme needn't be a specific statement, but simply a set of interesting semantic relationships presented to the audience for them to as it were figure out for themselves. Archetypes, by the simple expedience of proposing symbolic relationships between

exemplar and theme has much the same outcome. This overlap has a linguistic parallel in the lexico-grammatical cline where we often find grammatical units, idioms, figures of speech, fixed expressions, and the like, behaving much like lexical units. In spite of this, it is still possible and useful to maintain a distinction between lexis vs. grammar. The same holds true for archetype. Archetype is the medium rather than the message, and as such can be employed to express a variety of different meanings. A specific theme can be exemplified by a variety of instances, and similarly, individual instances can be used to express a variety of themes. But archetypes do, on the other hand, often enter into specific, conventionalized theme-instance pairings. Archetypes are malleable and evolving, but they can only be adapted to new themes or exemplars by modifying the archetype as a whole.

Archetypes can also vary considerably in their level of specificity. Romanticism exploits the MAN VS. NATURE archetype, but by adapting it to its own specific themes and exemplars, it also produces its own ROMANTCISM archetype. We can even say that Friedrich's works contain their own set of archetypes. Different paintings by the artist express different themes, and so the same recurring conventions employed to express these different themes could then also be considered archetypes, that is, as a symbolic medium of sorts. In this way, major archetypes branch out into more specific subtypes, the MAN VS. NATURE archetype becoming the ROMANTICISM archetype, which in turn morphs into Friedrich's own archetypes. As this illustrates, archetypes can vary considerably in their dimensions.

The power of any archetype is evident in its longevity and its creativity. Aside from the numerous permutations of the MAN VS. NATURE archetype itself, there are also the myriad derivative archetypes to testify to its bountiful significance. This archetype has abstracted the JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS from the MAN VS. NATURE archetype and transformed it into the symbolic JOURNEY INTO THE PERILOUS REALM, a central feature of the archetypal HERO'S JOURNEY which arguably serves as a template for almost all narrative (Campbell 2008 [1949]). The MAN VS. NATURE duality corresponds with numerous other such archetypal dualities, such as the ancient PASTORAL VS. AGRARIAN opposition we see repeated in myths such as Cain and Abel or Gilgamesh and Enkidu. The fertility and rebirth motifs of the rite of passage into nature (which we saw in *the wanderer* example above) similarly correspond to similar motifs in COSMIC CYCLE myths of death and rebirth (El-Aswad 2005, Eliade 1974 [1949]) such

as Persephone or Jesus Christ. At the core of all of this variation is the notion of the reconciliation of divisions and a restoration of an ideal cosmological order.

Archetypes also demonstrate complex relationships with one another, as one would expect when newer archetypes evolve out of older one. The same MAN VS. NATURE archetype is also closely tied to many other archetypes, as a source of input material. One of these is the ORIGINS OF INEQUALITY archetype (Ashliman 2005). This employs the above-mentioned town-mouse-country-mouse man-in-society vs. man-in-nature distinction as the basis for other traditional social class distinctions such as between farmers, herders, warriors or rulers, etc. to explain social differences. Due to the close synergy between these two archetypes, it is thus not surprising that ROMANTICISM also evolved a distinctly political aspect.

Regardless of one's estimation of its artistic merit, Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* serves as a patent example of many of the central concepts behind the Romantic movement. As such it is not surprising how prevalent its use is for exactly that purpose. While on the one hand the painting is a work on its own, it is also an instance of a broader category of ROMANTIC ART. Yet how do we recognise the category except through its instances? The ROMANTICISM archetype comes into being only through discovering the recurrence of theme-exemplar pairings in many other works of art. As we discover other similar art works more and more, we dust off this old concept and refresh it to meet new challenges. Through recurrence, figures such as this develop into archetypes – generalisations of recurrent associations across numerous art works. In this way, the meaning of the *Wanderer* also forms an important part of a larger archetype of the Romantic ideal in art. We can recognise the archetype because of its interpretive rather than denotative or representative role. This idea of Romantic art has no substantive existence of its own outside of the various individual expressions it serves to help interpret. As with other archetypes like the dying god in mythology or the symbol of the sword in folklore and literature, it is an ephemeral concept, constantly evolving with every new instantiation we encounter, and every new theme it is employed to represent. In this way, through the continually evolving blend of theme and exemplar, archetype demonstrates its essential role in the creation of narrative.

5.2 Theme in conventional narrative

We have previously introduced the subject of themeand how it relates to compression. Compression, in this context was presented as a means of moulding disparate concepts into a single unified blend on the basis of commonalities.

Theme functions in essentially the same way in conventional narrative, only in a more complex form, due to the increased complexity of conventional narrative. As has been stated, conventional narrative differs from ordinary language narrativity in terms of *the foregrounding or prominence of the narrative function*.

Previously, it was stated that narrative theme displays a bias towards high-level abstractions such as LOVE, HOPE, UNCERTAINTY, TRUTH, GOOD, EVIL, IDENTITY, because these are the most in needs of rehabilitation with everyday experience. Additionally, if we accept the proposition that narrative is the creative medium for cultural norms (Frye 1957, Bruner 1986, Doty 2000), then it makes sense that narrative seeks to identify universal truths that matter to society as a whole, not just certain individuals (Doty 2000:42). Furthermore, selecting themes with a broad popular appeal also helps fulfil the communicative requirements of the principle of relevance.

5.2.1 Narratives as display texts

So far, we have discussed several of the defining features of narrative, such as the primary characteristic of thematic exemplification, which in turn provides its defining function of narrative rehabilitation. We have also demonstrated how this results in the distinctive linguistic features termed *folk-modelling* (Section 4.4.2). We have also demonstrated that just as narrative tends towards a high-degree of instantiation in its exemplar, it also tends to an equally high-degree of abstraction in its themes.

But one of the most distinguishing features of conventional narrative we have so far left out is its *tellability* (Linde 1993:21). This occurs when a narrative becomes disconnected or independent of context. It acquires meaning in itself rather than a context-dependent meaning. This self-contained out-of-context meaning means that the narrative acquires recurrent utility – it can be retold over and over again without becoming redundant. Instead of its meaning being bound to the immediate discourse context, its context instead attaches itself to universal thematic abstractions. In the same way that a recipe or instruction manual has a high-level of accessibility

because it is generalised to appeal to a broad audience, so too does most conventional narrative display this same kind of contextual independence.

Of course, much like a recipe or instruction manual, it is not wholly independent of context. Stories often tend to be age-specific, as well as interest-specific. As Linde points out, they also demand different levels of specialised or culture-specific knowledge in terms of the topics they discuss (1993:21, 163-5). But it also needs to be acknowledged that conventional narrative tends to be a lot less context-bound and hence repeatable than most other conversations such as business-meetings, office-small talk, therapy sessions, dinner plans, etc.

According to Labov and Waletsky (2003) one of the distinguishing features of narrative is its *tellability. Tellability* is a feature common to all language, equivalent to Sperber and Wilson's Principle of Relevance, or Searle's representatives (1985 [1979]). While all narratives must be embedded in the known, so as to be comprehensible to the audience, they must also aim to communicate something new (Bruner 1991). These are utterances which are aimed at communicating noteworthy information to the audience and which are aimed at creating knowledge rather than bringing about a demonstrable real-world effect such as behaviour. Such an utterance cannot only communicate something intelligible, but also needs to communicate something noteworthy. Noteworthiness comprises two primary features, namely, it has to be something unknown to the audience, and that unknown has to be something the audience is interested in hearing – it must be useful information. Although it must also be said that often this is indirect, particularly in the case of literary narrative, communicating no new information in itself, but instead only presenting the known in a way which undermines its authenticity (c.f. formalist concept of estrangement (Erlich 1980 [1955])).

But Labov specifies that the criterion of *tellability* is not sufficient for defining conventional narrative, because narrative requires a *permanent agenda*, that is, it needs to be *tellable* not only in the particular context, but in a wide range of contexts. This includes a wide variety of audiences or audience members. This is what Pratt terms *display text* (1977:136-48). These are utterances that convey information which is worthy of *display*, or in other words, meaningful or noteworthy in its own right, rather than within a particular set of circumstances. Display texts are common conversational devices used to initiate and control conversation topically. They can

vary from the most elementary *small talk* items, such as sports news, jokes or general interest topics such as the weather, to more exceptional items such as interesting concepts, extraordinary life experiences, or literary or archetypal narrative.

These are characterised by two additional features: firstly, they are context-free, or rather *they contain their own context*. This means that they can be inserted into most conversations with relative ease. This also often characterises what is termed 'news'. In these texts, the theme is not subservient to the exemplar as a mere organisational or contextualising feature, as for instance witness statements. Rather it is *the exemplar which is subservient to the theme* – the intent of the message is to convey a theme by means of an exemplar. It must be stressed that just as not all narratives are display texts, not all display texts are narratives. But all archetypal narratives (that is. narratives employing archetype, which is to say, conventional narratives) exhibit this quality.

This is not to say that archetypal narratives aren't grounded. As Searle correctly states (1985 [1979]:73), whereas ordinary language is rooted in immediate or situational truths, i.e. context, fiction communicates through its conjunction to general truths. Thus, again, they inherit their grounding through the grounding of the precept or theme. But precepts, being compositions which feature a high degree of abstraction, are only loosely grounded in immediate fact, and narrative exemplars, which stand at one further degree of remove by inheriting their grounding from the precept rather than being grounded in experience directly, are representations of experience which needn't represent actual experience very accurately – hence the remove from reality that fiction entails.

Display texts also present a similar penchant for bending or for completely ignoring the normal communicative criterion of truthfulness, and it is this phenomenon which explains much of what is termed fictionality. Display texts often feature exaggeration, strategic omissions or outright fiction (Pratt 1977:148). It is this remove from reality which also enables the more figurative nature of narrative. Narrative can easily blend truth and fiction because the truth of the instance is of only limited concern.

Despite their modern connotations, myth and folklore, for example, are often not consciously appreciated as fictions/untruths in their native cultures (Doty 2000:40).

Similarly, fiction has the often-remarked quality of stimulating its readers imaginatively and emotionally as though it were real. This is because they are real to the audience, though just not in the same way as direct experience – instead, they are categorically real. That is, while we are conscious that the particular events themselves may not be true, the conceptual constructs which they exemplify are. They may not be literally true, but they are still true in the sense that really matters.

Fiction comprises instantiations whose authenticity is grounded not in real-world experience but rather in abstractions. Abstraction is a process of constrained referentiality. Abstraction creates identities between experiences by removing much of the distortion of disparity. The concept DOG is less real than the instance of 'dog' because the concept only references the qualities which are universal to all dogs. A fictional dog therefore can diverge from the real qualities of dogs in any way the imagination desires, so long as it only remains true to the defining qualities of the category. The truthfulness of the representation is secondary to the truthfulness of the theme, and the former can even be a hindrance when the representation interferes or distracts from the theme.

Secondly, display texts are susceptible to *elaboration*, or in other words, they are engaging. This second criterion is demonstrated by their affinity for provoking us to 'contemplate, explore, interpret, and evaluate, seeking pleasure and interpretive consensus' (Pratt 1977:140). These are 'varieties of human experience a community holds to be wonderful, amusing, terrifying, unusual, and problematic, that is, in need of interpretation and evaluation' (1977:141). Like *news*, they are also conversation starters, proposing a new topic for discussion, or even serving as a basis for creating a conversation. This can be seen in how these narrative starters are often conventionalised as greetings, such as *How are you doing? What have you been up to?* or *What's new?* (1977:144).

Importantly, Pratt also notes that such display texts also seem to contradict the normal rules of communication (1977:148). Display texts do not in themselves have to represent new information. As we see in narrative, these kinds of utterances demonstrate a great penchant for repetition: it might be a familiar story or characters recast in a new mould, as the popularity of the serial or reboot film in current media attests, or it might be the reappearance of an all-too familiar archetype. This is because of the aforementioned thematic focus. Narrative instances do not have to

communicate any new information in the exemplar, so long as they convey new thematic content. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the literary critical field, where we find a continual reinterpretation of classic literary works through novel thematic framings.

Through its internalisation, narrative context is also more open to interpretation than ordinary speech. It is this feature than makes narrative so important to mutual understanding. Its density of experiential representation and tolerance for contradiction both creates the basis for mutual understanding and a tolerance for misunderstanding. For this reason, Bruner proposes narrative as the foundational building block for culture and society. The recent importance of narrative understanding in anthropology and social science broadly is thus not surprising (Bruner 1991).

5.2.2 Thematic communication

Theme may be at the centre of narrative, if not of the general communicative function. Nevertheless, the process by which we select and construct themes is still fraught with unknowns. Previously, we equated theme with the Blending Theory concept of compression. Compression can occur on the basis of a myriad of features. What determines which features we choose as the basis of association? We associated this with the concept of blends, which are exactly that – the integration of different concepts on the basis of similarity. This does provide much clarity, since a multiplicity of potential compressions also means multiple possible blends, since blends create compressions. For instance, CAT and DOG can be compressed by PET, DOMESTICATED ANIMAL, CARNIVORAN, MAMMAL, to name but a few. This is the central question of this chapter.

We have discussed some of the strategies employed to communicate theme in Section 1.1. According to Beardsley, themes can be either *thetic*, in the form of a clearly formulated proposition, or *thematic*, as a loose collection of related ideas, or somewhere in between. According to Falk, theme can be communicated via direct statement from the narrator, or via representation in the narrative events or participants, or both. Additionally, this representation manifests either through a single prominent event, such as the inciting or climactic event, or through recurrence throughout the story. Linde (1993:130-62) adds a number of strategies, such as

selectivity, drawing attention to those features in the narrative which relate most closely to the theme while downplaying those which do not, or through *synthesis*, emphasising the correspondences between most or all features of the narrative and the theme. Another important strategy is *equalisation*, whereby beliefs which narrator and audience share are invoked, and then the theme is equated to this shared belief as a way of convincing the audience of its significance. Linde also points out how theme and exemplar select for audience: whether or not an audience will find a story to be significant or tellable to them depends a lot on their frame of reference. If a narrator wishes to include a broader audience, the narrator will often provide the necessary background information, while narrators can likewise exclude the necessary background in order to exclude certain audience members (1993:163-5). Aside from these, there are also clear linguistic cues such as grammatical conventions like grammatical theme, or schematic prominence. But despite this, there is admittedly much we still do not understand about the interpretive process.

Above we introduced the idea that theme corresponds to the traditional linguistic concept of the intended message in the sender-message-medium-receiver model (Sectiion 1.1). This may seem to attribute a certain authoritative role to the narrator, but this is not necessarily the case in modern linguistics, and particularly not so for narrative. Instead, in modern linguistics, there is a growing sense of meaning or intended message as something which is communally created by both sender and receiver, or narrator and audience (Section 1.2). The problem with the traditional communication model is that it ignores the fact that in language there is usually a continuous exchange of roles of sender and receiver, that language is fundamentally interactive.

This may seem to be less the case with narrative, particularly literary narrative, given the remoteness of author and readers. But this ignores both the emphasis placed on audience engagement by narrative, as well as the ambiguous nature of most narrative themes. Narrative themes most often take the form of a collection of related ideas rather than a clear thesis. And even in thetic narratives, as we shall see in the next chapter, there is still a great deal of subjective interpretation involved.

As Bruner (1991) importantly notes, theme, or compression in Fauconnier and Turner's terms, is neither exclusively a quality of either narrative creation or narrative interpretation, but rather of both. The narrator composes a narrative with the

intention of communicating a theme, and the audience interprets it with the same intention. The result of this is never a complete identity, but neither is it typically a complete non-identity. The act of speaking is one of meaning creation (Pratt 1977), as is the act of interpreting discourse (Rabinowitz 1998), yet despite their differences, some degree of consistency between them has to occur to ensure meaningful communication (Sperber & Wilson 1995 [1986]). Unfortunately, views tend to one or the other extreme, viewing meaning either as wholly subjective or wholly objective, as with the distinction between objective, closed texts and subjective open texts. 'In a word, then, it is not textual or referential ambiguity that compels interpretive activity in narrative comprehension, but narrative itself (Bruner 1991:9).

But this variability shouldn't be surprising, given that theme is inherently ambiguous, abstract and plurisignifying and can therefore vary from one person to the next, or even for a single person over time. Part of this ambiguity has to do with the invisibility of theme – the fact that even when explicitly stated, the individual compressions between any two exemplary instances must be inferred. Partly, this is also due to the natural ambiguity of language, requiring some degree of subjective input on the part of the audience. For this reason, contrary to Formalist view of theme, it is the methods which we use to interpret narrative theme rather than the themes themselves which becomes the foremost concern of narratology.

But even though we cannot often say for certain what the theme is, the evidence for the importance of theme in narrative interpretation cannot be denied (more on this below). Still, even though we can identify the centrality of theme in narrative, the question of how we determine theme remains.

5.3 Narrative exemplification

Were one to present a random collection of objects to an audience and instruct them to make sense of it, one would likely receive as many different answers as there are audience members. The human talent for making sense of the arbitrary experiences life presents, and the variety of ways in which this natural talent presents, demonstrate the awesome creative potential of blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:279-298). But likewise, this creativity also poses a problem when we try to

understand how meaningful communication takes place. *How is it that this creativity doesn't interfere with the clear transmission of messages or ideas from one person to another?*

Blending Theory emphasises the importance of the creative aspect of cognition, which is admittedly a vital component. But it does so at the expense of the deterministic component. After all, to serve as a communicative medium, language needs to also include determinate, intended meaning as well. Fauconnier and Turner's model unfortunately leaves us unclear about exactly how this takes place – an oversight which we will attempt to remedy in this chapter, at least for narrative blending.

So far we have presented a model in which the narrative exemplar (the set of events that comprises the narrative) serves as the input. The reader is presented with a multitude of different events, and through blending discovers the common thread or theme between them. The reader's own background knowledge on that theme is also activated and input into the blend, so that the theme is simultaneously both a product and a further input. It needs to kept in mind that the Fauconnier and Turner blending model is a highly simplified representation of the reality.

From this we derive the theme by means of blending. In this way, the theme is a compression of the exemplar. But this is not entirely accurate. As we have argued, exemplars are part of a message, just like any other form of language. They are not arbitrary raw first-hand experience, which is open to interpretation by the audience according to their own means and motives. While this is true to an extent – there is *always* an inescapable creativity associated with blending – it is also true that the exemplar already constitutes a compression or a blend.

The exemplar thus comprises both inputs and blends. The exemplar is a representation of experience which has been primed to convey the narrator's message, and it will be argued that it is this priming which enables blending to convey a pre-determined, intended meaning. In this chapter, it will be argued that this priming for an intended message is achieve through linguistic markers which associate the exemplar with a specific archetype/exemplification.

Archetypes are the term we use here for a proposed set of interpretive models included in the natural language speaker's lexicon. Exemplifications are what we call

such interpretive models when they are constructed *ad hoc*, often on the basis of pre-existing archetypes. It is the purpose of these interpretive models to serve as a semantic instructional guide or semantic network chart, identifying relevant semantic domains, most significantly in the case of narrative, the intended theme. This then allows the audience to derive an invisible theme from the visible exemplar. Furthermore, it will be argued that the mechanism which explains how all of this works is the semantic principle of prototypicality. All inputs already comprise blends in some form or other. This is because the basic unit of meaning is the sign, which is already a conventionalised association, i.e. a blend, between form and meaning (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:275-7). In other words, it will be argued that *the inputs into the blending model are themselves already blends* which comprise a set of blending instructions to guide the audience toward the intended interpretation.

Thus, the exemplar both presents the audience with unformed input like raw experience, but also contains pre-formed meanings that convey an intended message. Not only is the theme a blend, but the exemplar is as well. This is contained in Blending Theory in the concept of *borrowed compressions*, which is nothing more than archetype by a different name. But a major shortcoming of the theory is its underestimation of the prevalence of these borrowed compressions or making no mention of their instrumental role in conveying intended meaning. Hence there is no explanation of how blends are employed as a communicative medium. This is the last defining feature of our thematic theory of narrative, namely a feature termed *exemplification*. This is essentially identical to Frye's concept of *imagery* (Section 2.2), but I have chosen to use a different term to avoid confusion with the term imagery as used in the cognitive linguistics literature (Section 4.6.3).

Part of this priming of inputs for an intended blend is simply their selection. Clearly a narrator can nudge an audience toward certain interpretations by controlling what semantic content they have at their disposal for interpretation. This is aided by governing principles (Section 4.7.2) which limit the range of possible interpretations, as well resulting in interpretive routines which allow the narrator to somewhat predict blending outcomes and adjust the message accordingly. But as we saw, despite this, inputs still inherently have multiple potential compressions due to the plurisignifying nature of semantics. In addition, the factor of emergent structure makes this control

limited, since in theory at least, this enables the audience to add additional inputs unspecified by the narrator which can transform the blend in unpredictable ways.

The final theoretical argument made in this dissertation is that this *priming* of the theme is achieved by means of a process of exemplification. While we have used this term before generally as the linking of theme and exemplar, it is time to precisely define what it means. Put otherwise, *inputs are also themselves blends*, *instances are thus at the same time abstractions – and therefore also have the seeds of themes planted within them*. Narrative, and archetypal or literary narrative in particular, is distinct in its prevalence of such already-blended inputs. These are defined as highly schematic instances or in other words instances which are also highly abstracted. These are phenomena which are both unique instances of a category and representative of that category.

Thus, we can define exemplification, of which archetype is a specific kind, as follows: *Exemplifications comprise those conventional units which associate an instance (or in the case of narrative, an exemplar), and an abstraction (or in the case of narrative, a theme)*.

This is comparable with (but not identical to) the conventionalisation of the association between signified and signifier. It also corresponds with Frye's concept of *imagery*, Greimas' *surface level of meaning*, or Strauss' *structure*. It is what intermediates and organises between the actual word-meanings we use in discourse, and the abstract meaning frameworks behind them which give them a unified context.

We already find a sense of exemplification, as mentioned above, in the Blending Theory concept of borrowed compressions, as well as in Dancygier's (2012: 42:51) concept of narrative anchors, which are specific prominent narrative events which cue the reader to the intended theme. As Dancygier explains, certain exemplars are naturally rich in symbolic associations and in this way cue a wide range of thematic associations throughout the text. The narrative itself can then further enrich this nexus by building additional associations over the course of the narrative. In this way, certain key exemplars serve as intermediaries between narrative theme and the narrative exemplar as a whole.

Whereas we saw that blending undermines the communicative intent by incorporating creative factors which disrupts conventionalised interpretation, exemplification restores this coherence by imposing predictability. This might suggest exactly the opposite to what was claimed in the first chapter, namely that thematic narrative is not a species of prescriptivism which contradicts the creative subjectivity inherent in the artistic medium. However, it must be kept in mind that exemplification firstly, doesn't so much restrict narrative meaning as expand it by drawing upon additional semantic content, and secondly, although it is a primary determiner of meaning, it is not the only one and exists in constant tension with other more *liberating* features.

According to Schank and Abelson (2014), Tulving's distinction between episodic and abstract memory (Section 3.4.1) is deceptive because it suggests a separation which is not apparent in practice. Instead, they point out that the two are inextricably linked, because narrative is necessarily communicative, and that means *mapping your stories to mine* (1995: 17). On this basis they instead propose what is essentially the instantiation-abstraction cline, that episodic and abstract memory are essentially, different faces of the same coin. Experience requires a conceptual frame of reference to be comprehensible, and concepts require grounding in experience to be applicable to everyday life.

What this ultimately suggests is that every *instance has its correlative abstraction and vice-versa*, which is essentially the cognitive semantic view as well. Accordingly, all narrative exemplars then automatically evoke their associated themes, even if they are never explicitly mentioned. When we communicate our experiences, and even when we experience them ourselves, we are already fitting them to a shared schematic framework. Our experiences may feel unique and inimitable to us, yet the evidence shows that we are constantly automatically and unconsciously fitting them to a set of predetermined, linguistically defined templates. Of course, templates are not exemplars, and as such are inherently malleable. After all, no two stories are ever exactly the same, even if they aim to be. But no story is every truly unique either, nor can it ever be. Instead, all stories are cobbled together from odds and ends of previous stories in a process of imperfect imitation.

This point is essential, because it lies at the basis of the defining theme-exemplar function of narrative. All narrative is a matching of instance and abstraction,

experience and concept, and positing either of these poles on their own, as formalist narratology does, only results in an incomplete picture.

With regards to narrative exemplification, it is precisely the unspoken yet inseparable themes accompanying every exemplar which provides the interpretive template which makes narrative comprehensible and enables effective narrative communication. It is through these associated themes that we are able to identify the intended message of the narrative. Theme is the unified meaning without which the exemplar is no more than random noise.

Yet the concept of exemplification is more than this. It has to be, because the narrative theme is not only the abstract correlative of an instance. Often narratives serve to question accepted conceptions as much as communicate them. As such, the theme itself is often a novel blend. What template then guides our blending of the theme? We propose that there is another kind of template, one which mediates between theme and exemplar, namely the narrative exemplification or archetype. (The difference between these two terms will be addressed below, suffice it to say for now that archetype is a kind of exemplification).

It is perhaps helpful to explain what is meant by this by means of an example: consider the exemplification of the noble knight (Gheerbant et al. 1996). The archetypal knight is an abstraction from various knightly instances, whether imagined, such as the Knights of the Round Table, Sirs Gawain or Galahad, for instance, or real, such as El Cid or Le Chevalier de Bayard. But at the same time, it is also an instantiation of various themes such as nobility, knightly virtue, chivalry, etc. *Exemplifications typically have this peculiar quality of standing somewhere between the exemplar and the theme*, and by virtue of this serve as a bridge between the two by providing a template to blending on how to proceed from the one to the other.

Exemplifications are associations between instance and abstraction, similar to how words are symbolic associations between signs and meanings, only at a far higher level of complexity. For where words associate individual signs with lexical meanings, and grammar associates word groups with grammatical meanings (Langacker 2008), exemplifications are conventional associations between extended text and complex concept. The correspondence between exemplification and

grammar has been noted repeatedly in the past. Andres Jolles in his *Simple Forms* draws a comparison between his narrative forms and grammatical forms (Scholes 1974:43). Similarly, Barthes equates narrative with the superlative form of the sentence, just as the sentence constitutes a mini-narrative (Polkinghorne 1988:81). Burkert (1979) terms these motifemes, which are the narrative equivalents to lexico-grammar, derivative from Dawkin's concept of memes (Zipes 2012:17).

5.3.1 How exemplification functions

Exemplification and archetype are most evident through those distortions of familiar experience we find so often in narrative, the arresting larger-than-life characters and events, the all-too-familiar formulaicisms of well-trodden plots. For the same reason, the conventionality of narrative tropes, such as the farm boy or girl who turns out to be or marry a prince/princess, often presaged by some kind of riddle or prophecy, are often much lamented. Farmers are stock characters because readers want relatable everyman or -woman heroes, and for most of human history, from the dawn of the agricultural revolution up until the industrial revolution, almost everyone was a farmer[26]. While most of us have moved on from this baseline in the modern world, it is to such a bewildering array of professions and lifestyles that this original anachronism perhaps still provides our most common societal touchstone. After all, what today could be considered the most typical, average profession? Is there even such a thing anymore? It is hard to say, but what we do know for certain is that not so long ago there was such a thing. Only about a century ago, most people on earth were farmers, and before the industrial revolution, this profession encapsulated almost the entirety of the world's population. Just as abstraction derives from the simplification of past experience, we can say that for the same reason, narrative harkens to an ideal past of an experientially simpler existence, one where the farmer *was* the ordinary man (c.f. Propp 1984 [1949]).

In this way, the farmer becomes schematic of all of humanity by containing features that (at least used to) define most of us, a conventionalised narrative instantiation of the prototypical grammatical event – a person engaging with the observable world with the intent to produce a meaningful outcome. Just as when we want to invoke the

[26] While it is impossible to determine an exact figure, generally it is estimated that 95% of preindustrial populations were rural-dwelling (Bairoch 1988: 26). This corresponds with estimates that only about 5% of preindustrial populations were employed outside of the primary sector (Volti 2008: 10).

theme of nobility, our story calls upon the knight, when we want to invoke the theme of humanity in its default or general sense, we draw upon the peasant boy or girl. In each case, the particular instance is the most representative of its category as a whole. For the same reason, farmers so often become princes or princesses because what could be more exemplary of the personified agency essential to narrative than rising to the pinnacle of the social hierarchy? When studied through the lens of thematic narrative, common tropes which often seem like a form of maladroit contrivance to the uninitiated are revealed as masterful symbolism.

Similar to the themes they convey, exemplifications are visible through their distortion of experience. As simultaneously instances and abstractions, exemplifications have an almost super-real quality. As abstractions, their purpose is to homogenize diverse experiences on the basis of familiar frames of reference through distorting them to the point of conformity. However, as simultaneous instantiations, they also seek to maintain the discreteness of experience. As such *exemplification selects an instance which is highly representative of the abstraction, arriving at a result which is essentially a blend of the two, synthesising characteristics of both the instance and the abstraction into a strange blend of the two*. The farm boy or -girl archetype seeks to represent the abstraction of HUMAN BEING in the form of a real world instance of humanity. This exemplification comprises an instance, but also one which is highly representative of the category.

These distortions of experience demonstrate the compositionality of exemplification – blend inputs have a transformative effect on one another, not just additive. It is crucial to understand that exemplification is not analogy, it is a synthesis. When certain elements fall away or new ones are added to an exemplification, they transform the meaning of all other elements of that exemplification – thus not just the exemplification itself, but all narrative exemplars and themes associated with it as well (Doty 2000:33). We see this for example in the relationship between the archetypes DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS REST, DEATH IS A RELEASE and DEATH IS AN OBLIGATION (Lakoff & Turner 1989). These all interweave the various experiences of sleep as a form of being dead to the world, of death as an end to responsibility and thus the transference of those burdens onto others.

Exemplifications concentrate around those features of experience which mean the most to us. Unlike the exemplar, which purposely pursues redundancy, that is to say,

detailed description, and even more so than the theme even, exemplifications instead incline towards *simplicity*. While, as shown in previous examples, archetypes can be amazingly complex in the number and variety of exemplars and themes they can associate with, they themselves tend to simplicity. Again, this makes sense given how valency patterns (Section 3.3.2) often correspond with schematic simplicity – in other words, the simpler a schema, the more adaptable it is.

Exemplification in this sense is also cognitively important, providing an organisational system for concepts and experiences, by serving as a nexus point between numerous different themes and instances (Doty 2000:317), although it should be noted that not all exemplifications are equally fecund in their valency patterns. This is the difference between exemplifications and archetypes. Archetypes are those exemplifications which recur due to their abundance in valency patterns, that is to say, their high-degree of reusability. Exemplifications do so by identifying those few features which are most essential to us. By reducing phenomena to their most essential qualities, exemplifications are able to synthesise vast realms of thought and experience into a meaningful order.

Myths are well known for their interpretive abundance (Doty 2000:33). This is because of their plentiful use of exemplification. Exemplifications are highly *polysemic*. Not only are they simultaneously abstractions of a wide variety of exemplars, but also instantiations of a wide variety of themes. This explains their efficacy – why such a relatively small number of templates can be used over and over again without exhausting their novelty. Their power derives from this synthetic ability – to synthesize such vast ranges of experience and thought down to just a few elementary commonalities.

It is due to this simplicity that it is possible to create dictionaries of archetypes (c.f. Seigneuret 1988), something less easy to do with themes and impossible with instances. This is because the theme and its exemplar need to be at least somewhat unique to meet the relevance criterion – that is, to communicate something new and interesting to the audience. Exemplifications on the other hand are *instrumental*, and just like grammaticalisations, they are highly *reusable*. It also means that as symbolic relations exemplifications do not mean anything by themselves. Rather, meaning is only granted to them by virtue of the themes and exemplars selected by the individual narrative (Doty 2000:332-3). Thus the exemplification of the protagonist

means something entirely different for a story on the virtue of right action such as *The Pilgrim's Progress* as opposed to a story on the themes of the impossibility of meaningful action like *Waiting for Godot*.

Exemplifications thus are inherently *embryonic*, requiring association to be fully realised. They provoke emotional responses by associating with the things we value most, yet remain elusive in their incompleteness, enticing us to constantly engage with them intellectually. They inspire the playful creativity which exemplifications require to remain relevant. This creative association also fosters awareness of internal consistency, imposing the clarity and simplicity of abstraction onto the confusing complexity of experience (Doty 2000:50).

5.3.2 Prototypicality in exemplification

A central claim of this thesis is that the narrative exemplar is an instantiation of a theme, and that thematic instantiation occurs by means of exemplification. Exemplifications are essentially blends of theme and exemplar indicated by the narrative text itself (the exemplar) which guide the audience to the invisible intended theme. Hence they are instrumental in transforming Blending Theory from a model of cognition to one of communication.

The concept of exemplification is essential because no prior existing theory explains exactly how theme is embedded in the narrative text. Blending Theory only explains how we can construct a theme from the exemplar, but not how we arrive at the intended theme. Frye, in turn, explains this process of discovering the intended theme, but only in general terms. The problem then is to reconcile these two theories, that is, *to explain the Fryean concept of exemplification (or to use his term, imagery) in terms of Blending Theory*.

In simple terms, the argument made here is that this priming of not just any theme but specifically of an intended theme is fundamentally connected to the concept of *prototypicality*. Prototypicality is the idea that categorisation is not a simple, neutral list of membership, but rather that categories show a complex and nuanced structure (Geeraerts 2006).

Prototypicality theory was developed by Eleanor Rosch (Mervis & Rosch 1981, Taylor 2003) to explain salience effects in categorisation, specifically why category membership is not uniform. For example, the category FRUIT has more central

members, such as APPLE and more peripheral members such as PINEAPPLE. This centrality is expressed in terms of ease of recall, memorisation and recognition. In other words, prototypes are those instances which are usually the first to be recalled, the first to be memorised and the first to be recognised. Prototypicality thus shares many of the traits common to the earlier mentioned concept of basic-level categories (Lakoff 1987:48, 56-7).

Prototypicality states that while a category is representative of a collection of instances, not all instances are equal. Instead, prototypicality demonstrates that some instances are more closely associated with a category than others. Since narrative is the illustration of an abstraction by an instance, it makes sense that the audience can be directed to an intended abstraction or category by means of the selection of an instance which is more prototypical of it. Instances do not belong to a single category, but rather a multitude. This is why we are able to arrive at multiple thematic interpretations of a narrative. But because of prototypicality, we also know that specific instances are more illustrative of certain themes than others, and hence we can reason that the selection of a specific instance is motivated by the intention to communicate that most prototypical theme associated with it. This is the concept of exemplification in a nutshell.

Exemplifications are not just instances of a category, but instances which are representative of the category as a whole, to the extent that they serve almost as *abstractions* or *compressions* of the entire category. But how can this be? Aren't abstracts and instances at polar ends of a spectrum? This is possible because of the inherent connection between instance and abstraction, between member and category, between token and type. It is difficult to think of a single instantiation without associating it with a more general abstract category. Whether a particular reference is to an abstraction or an instance, its abstract or concrete correlative is always close at hand in the background. It is hard to think of a specific instance of a dog without at the same time recalling the abstract category DOG, for instance, and vice-versa.

A good example of how exemplification employs prototypicality to select theme is the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor, which explains how we so easily interpret metaphors in spite of their apparent lack of any discernible logic. When we compare a person to Odysseus, a pig, a flower, a lantern or a diamond, how do we know what

quality in the metaphor is being invoked? All of these have several qualities in common, and each individually exhibit a wide range of attributes. According to the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor, we categorise phenomena comparatively, and identify individuals by their most prototypical features.

In all metaphors, the class of the source domain/vehicle defines what we are trying to communicate:

- When comparing to a *human* life, they suggest *conscious* qualities: *He is a Ulysses*.

- When comparing to *animal* life, they suggest *instinctive* qualities: *He is a mule.*

- When comparing to *vegetable* life, they suggest *biological* qualities: *He is an oak*.

- When comparing to *synthetic* objects, they suggest *purposive* qualities: He is a beacon.

- When comparing to *natural* objects, they suggest *physical* qualities: He is a rock.

This simple diagram serves as an map for interpreting countless metaphors, and in each case, it is the prototypicality effects which suggest the intended meanings out of the wide array of associated features (Lakoff & Turner 1989:160-213).

But the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING also demonstrates the basic principle behind exemplification. We know an Odysseus character or other likeness represents prudence or cunning because these are the characteristics which comparatively stand out. By the same token, we know a pig exemplifies the theme of greed, a flower, beauty, a lantern, illumination, and a diamond, hardness or something precious. They do so because they are comparatively the most representative of that special quality. As was stated earlier, exemplification proves such an effective unifying system precisely because of its tendency to reduce things down to their most essential features.

The concept of prototypicality demonstrates this close relationship between abstraction and instance. More importantly, it shows that some instances serve as better compressions than others, or in other words, that they are more representative of their abstraction. When one considers it, it seems reasonable that when grouping objects in terms of similarity, some members of the group will have more of those similarities, and others less. These more typical members may then serve as

representatives for the group as a whole. Prototype theory (Rosch 1978, Lakoff 1987, Geeraerts 2006, Croft & Cruse 2004:77-92, Lakoff 2007) argues that this is because prototypes usually are the 'most typical' members of categories. That is, they often correspond most closely with the defining features of the category.

Prototypicality relates to narrative indirectly due to its relationship to exemplification. But prototypicality also shares another affinity with narrative. Geeraerts (2007) argues, similarly to what is done here, that prototypicality is functional. Specifically, he argues that prototypical instances are incorporated into the abstraction in order to enrich the abstraction with some of the experiential richness of the instances that is lost during the process of abstraction. Thus, prototypicality serves a similar function to narrative rehabilitation (Section 4.3.5).

Prototypicality also demonstrates many of the same features as Blending Theory. In keeping with the governing principle of economy, and the borrowed compressions strategy (Section 4.7.2), it appears that categorisation borrows the structure of the most prototypical member for the construction of the relevant category. This also resembles asymmetrical blending, as mentioned before (Section 4.7.1), where the blend or compression adopts the structure of one input space with little change and only incorporates features of the other input spaces into this pre-existing structure. It is this same process that narrative exploits to select for exemplars which already suggest themes.

Lakoff (2007) urges caution regarding the notion of the representativeness of prototypes to categories, since this can easily lead to the much-bemoaned referential fallacy which attempts to treat the prototypical instance as the category itself. This is definitely not the case. The prototype is only the instance most closely associated with the category. Sometimes this can be because of actual correspondences, while at other times it is purely through socially imposed convention, as in the case of emblems. Abstractions are structured identities, and as such there are going to be some members which identify more closely with the abstract structure than others.

Prototype is also closely linked to metonymy (Lakoff 1987:77-90), which also comprises a kind of member-to-category representation. The more prototypical the member, that is, the better it represents the whole category, the better it serves as a metonymic substitute. Of course, metonymy and prototypicality do not always

overlap. This is because the definition of metonymy is often interpreted very broadly as any kind of relationship where one thing is taken to stand for another thing, where the two are typically closely associated (Croft & Cruse 2004:216-7, Croft 2006). Many of these relationships are not member-to-category relationships. For this reason, it is difficult to make generalisations about metonymy simply because of how wide a concept it is, but generally, metonymy is also based on familiar cognitive principles such as human scaling, experiential salience or embodiment. Generally, we use metonymy to substitute a concept with a representation which is more effective in some way – i.e. it is more familiar, more informative, less complicated, etc. And we also witness some essence of human scaling in the way prototypes are sometimes used as borrowed compressions of categories, in the way Geeraerts (2006) describes.

Prototypes however can vary considerably. Some of the more typical examples of prototypicality, where instance and abstraction closely resemble one another, are what Lakoff refers to as generators and cluster models. Due to the human scaling of experience, the abstract often closely resembles the instance. Indeed, the concepts of prototypicality and human-scaling appear to be closely related. This was mentioned earlier in the case of FOREST or CITY-BLOCK which are defined by multiplication of their individual constituent members TREE or BUILDING. Lakoff terms these kinds of prototypes generators (1987:88-89). Another example is the cluster model or radial structure (Lakoff 1987:74-6, 83-4). Here there is one central member or instance, and all the others are defined in terms of their derivation from it. As example of this is 'mothers', where MOTHER is construed as the prototype, and other types of mothers, STEP-MOTHER, SURROGATE MOTHER, BIOLOGICAL MOTHER, etc. are defined in terms of the way they depart from the norm. Another example is paragons, where the prototype can be a real person, place or other actual instance, such Ghandi for philanthropy or Bill Gates for wealth (Lakoff 1987:87-8, Lakoff 2007).

Prototypical instances however are not always similar to the abstraction or category they are prototypical of (as in the instance of APPLE as prototype of FRUIT) – sometimes the association is primarily conventional, as with emblems which bear little to no resemblance to what they denote, such as the hammer and sickle for communism or the stick figures on bathroom doors. Ideal prototypes similarly are often very different from their members (such as the Ghandi or Bill Gates examples

above – very few instances can meet such high standards) (Lakoff 1987:87). In the same way, a prototype can resemble not the most average member of a group, but instead only the most commonly encountered or most well-known member of a class. For instance, the individual members of categories such as FRUIT or CUTLERY vary quite considerably, so that it is not surprising that the more common members, KNIFE AND FORK or APPLE, serve as prototypes. Similarly, with concepts which are highly emotionally or ideologically charged, such as DENTIST or POLITICIAN, it is only to be expected that there would be a disparity between the concept of the 'typical' instance and what is actually typical for the category. These are termed stereotypical prototypes. Prototypes can also vary in relation to context (Croft & Cruse 2004:74-106). For instance, in the context of 'yoghurt' or 'milkshake' a less typical instance of the FRUIT category, namely STRAWBERRY, suddenly becomes prototypical.

This same prototypical variety reflects a similar variety we observe in exemplification. We have looked at the farm boy/girl archetype previously, which resembles the stereotypical prototype of DENTIST or LAWYER. Below we will examine Frye's example of the symbolism of Christ, which resembles the generator or cluster model of prototypicality, as well as the example of Lassie, which is an instance of the ideal or paragon prototype. As this demonstrates, the same variation we observe in general prototypicality is present in the prototypicality effects we observe in exemplification.

Prototypicality is most commonly associated with things, but in fact applies to all concepts, including qualities and events. In language, we witness the same prototypicality in grammar and linguistics in general (Lakoff 1987:59-67, Langacker 1987:49-55, Halliday & Matthiessen 1999, 2004). Certain grammatical forms demonstrate clear prototypicality, such as active over passive voice, SVO constructions over alternatives, declaratives over imperatives or interrogatives, etc.

One important example mentioned earlier (Section 4.4.4) is the prototypical event (Lakoff 1987:54-55), which comprises a single conscious actor performing an observable action on a concurrent physical object to produce an intentional and lasting change. Clearly there is an ideal cognitive model or template of the most effective form of instantiation which informs both grammatical prototypicality and experiential metaphor. Similarly, there is a clear similarity between this template and the characteristics of folk-modelling, such as the greater balance between events and entities (one agent and patient per action), emphasis on discrete events/actions

and the interactions between them, and so on. Again, we see that there is a clear ideal template towards which narrative event instantiations aim.

When we consider why this is so, we once again return to the question of human-scaling. Firstly, the general characteristics of simplicity alongside a high degree of articulation conform to the general parameters of human-scaling. Furthermore, we witness a strong element of personification. Indeed, the concepts human-scaling, personification and embodiment are largely interchangeable. Even when we are dealing with non-human themes such as predetermination or fate, themes which have no requirement of human involvement, we still find these stories typically involving human characters, or the themes being personified themselves. This is because even though they are non-human, as humans it is only natural that we understand these phenomena from a human perspective. Similarly, part of the cognitive dimension of human-scaling is perceptual discreteness. We prefer scenarios where patient and agent, cause and effect, prior and posterior states are clearly distinct.

In narrative, the effect of this is visible in, for example, the exemplification of death. Death, and specifically killing are unusually common in narrative in comparison to real life. This is obvious if we for instance were to compare the mortality rate of characters in Shakespeare's tragedies to their contemporary medievals. Aside from the principle of interest, death being an inherently attention-grabbing event, killing also perfectly demonstrates the prototypical qualities mentioned above which makes it ripe for exemplification – it is typically agentive, highly distinct in its consequences and thus in agent and patient differentiation, etc. As such, death and killing become symbols for human agency or even change in all its aspects. Hamlet's quest for revenge or justice is exemplified through his multiple murders. Macbeth's pride is exemplified through the murders of those who injure it. Romeo and Juliet's star-crossed love is exemplified through their deaths. None of these tales require death to convey their meaning, but the schema of death both makes their tales more striking and provide a highly distinctive template for the instantiation of vague abstractions.

This is not to say that prototypes and exemplifications are the same thing. Rather, they are cognates, in the same way as we explained before that metaphor is a cognate of narrative. That is to say, they are manifestations of the same function in different contexts. According to Lakoff (1987), prototypicality is the product of the

underlying semantic structures which are used to organise meaning in a coherent and efficient way. Exemplifications are specifically chosen instances of a category which are highly representative of other instances.

As Lakoff (2007) is at pains to point out, prototypicality isn't a real thing. To be precise, there is no single definable phenomenon we can call prototypicality, or any single cause for it. Rather, prototypicality comprises a range of different cognitive phenomena bearing a superficial similarity, each produced by at least one of a range of different underlying causes. As noted above, two of these phenomena are borrowed compression and human-scaling. But what all of these do seem to demonstrate once again is the importance of salience in semantic selection, just as with metaphor, metonymy, basic-level categories, etc. Once again, we find salience as one of the primary organisational principles of meaning.

5.3.3 How exemplification functions

Now that we've defined what exemplification is and how it exploits prototypicality, let us consider how it works. The relationship of theme to exemplar is defined by relevance, that is, the theme allows one to distinguish the significant (the identities between exemplars) from the instrumental (the non-identities). This concept of narrative relevance – that in terms of the communication model there is certain information in the exemplar which corresponds to the message, and other information which corresponds to the medium – is familiar to both narratology and linguistics (see Section 1.2). In other words, certain information represents the intended meaning, and other information serves in an instrumental role in representing that meaning. The function of exemplification is to assist the reader in distinguishing between these two. It achieves this through the selection of exemplars. Different exemplars associate with different themes, and thus by selecting the appropriate exemplar primes the reader to the intended theme.

For example, the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor (Lakoff & Turner 1989:160-213) serves as a selective matrix to define exactly what in the vehicle is being compared to the tenor based on the class of entity, be it material, artefact, plant, animal or human. If it is material, it is the material qualities which are relevant. But if it is an artifact, then the intended purpose becomes relevant, while the material properties become merely instrumental. Similarly, for the people, the conscious properties

become relevant, while the others, physical, biological and instinctive, become merely instrumental. These other properties still have to be represented in order for the person to serve as an exemplar, that is, a recognisable experience of a human being. But they no longer have thematic relevance.

To illustrate with another example, consider Lassie (Knight 1940). Lassie is simultaneously both a unique instance of a dog and a paragon (i.e. an ideal prototype) of all dogs (i.e. the category DOG). When we think of an instance of DOG, Lassie is often the first name that comes to mind. Certainly, Lassie is a rough Collie, a rather more uncommon breed, but then such paragons often have remarkable traits to make them memorable and interesting. But outside of these superficial features, the significant features which come to mind are all those we idealise in dogs: loyalty, bravery, resoluteness, compassion, etc. Lassie behaves as we think or rather wish all dogs would. Admittedly, these traits are exaggerated, but this again is something which is typical of narrative. In this way, the exemplification of Lassie serves to both represent a complete and fully realised exemplar in all its facets, but also to single out those features which are significant to its role of exemplifying the themes of loyalty, compassion, etc. from those canine traits which are only instrumentally necessary to identifying the exemplar.

Furthermore, because the role of the last-mentioned traits is purely instrumental, they can even be exaggerated in order to make the exemplar even more experientially striking. Therefore, Lassie is a rough-collie, a highly unusual breed of dog, and displays extraordinary animal intelligence, almost seeming to be able to understand human speech. By making Lassie unusual in these ways, by means of the device of estrangement (Erlich 1980 [1955]), we are curiously made even more conscious of the fact that Lassie is a dog. Significantly however, those characteristics which relate to the theme are represented within their ordinary dimensions – Lassie's loyalty is that of a dog, not a human. This is because it is in these features where the *core* meaning of Lassie resides, and in order to communicate the theme most clearly, it is best to represent thematic characteristics in their most familiar form. In this way, *the hallmark of the thematic in exemplification is often ordinariness, while the purely incidental is often made to stand out in terms of either extreme typicality or atypicality*. Exemplifications are not always accurate in

degree, since it is often through exaggeration that intended themes are communicated, though they are usually true in kind.

Lassie is essentially a fable, and like all fables, its narrative function is to attribute social values to the natural order of the world by illustrating their presence among animals (Blackham 1988). This device of presenting thematic features in their most ordinary and familiar aspect, while representing instrumental features in highly extraordinary, experientially striking ways is, as we shall see in chapter 6, common in the folktale tradition, but also more broadly as well. And this illustrates the selective mechanics of exemplification at its clearest.

As blends of theme and exemplar, exemplifications are also characterised by their blending of the attributes of each. *Exemplifications thus neither exclusively mean (as a theme) nor exclusively represent (as an exemplar) but are instead something in between*. The purpose of the theme is to convey an intended message to the audience, and that of the exemplar is to illustrate that message in a mimicry of first-hand experience. But as a blend of theme and exemplar, the exemplification also blends both of these purposes. For instance, the fictional villain archetype (recall that archetypes are a kind of exemplification) is not only an illustration of an obstacle the hero must overcome, but is also a personification of the theme of adversity. In this sense, in its attempt to capture both the singular experience and the universality of theme, the archetypal villain almost becomes a self-contradiction, as must all exemplifications.

In a sense, the concept of exemplification even supplants theme and exemplar, or, rather, incorporates them into itself. Recall for instance the introductory illustration of the ROMANTICISM archetype at the start of this chapter. As we saw, because theme and exemplar are inherent to exemplification, when an exemplification is transferred from one narrative to another, it also conveys with it some of its associated themes and exemplars. In this sense, theme and exemplar are often inextricable from the exemplification, so to say that Romanticism is defined by its shared themes is also to say that it similarly shares exemplifications and exemplars. This is not necessarily so – we can think of examples of the same theme being exemplified by very different exemplars, or vice-versa, but it frequently is the case that when a narrative selects a specific theme, it also employs its associated exemplifications and exemplars as well. This is at the root of narrative genre (as well as intertextuality).

Exemplifications and archetypes can often lack the high resolution of pure instantiations, and this is the most common complaint against them – that they can become caricaturish, hackneyed and destitute. This is a valid complaint, at least potentially. Exemplifications need to carefully straddle this uncertain space between the two poles of their nature as blended theme and exemplar or lose their efficacy.

5.4 Exemplification and archetype

As stated before, an exemplification is a kind of blend embedded in the exemplar to indicate an intended theme. Archetype in essentially the same thing but which has been employed more than once, and thus has thereby been transformed into a shared convention. The term exemplification then strictly refers to original unique blends of this kind found in individual stories.

An argument has been made for the equivalence between the concept of blending, specifically of borrowed compressions (that is, inputs which are already themselves blends), as it pertains to narrative, and archetype. This means that the term archetype essentially describes any and all narrative conventions which mediate theme and exemplar. Archetype should therefore not be understood in the limited sense of a handful of deep-seated psychological templates in the Jungian sense. Rather, it should be understood in the more pedestrian sense posited by Frye i.e. as simply a more descriptive term for *any literary or narrative convention that mediates between theme and exemplar*, which includes virtually all narrative conventions since thematic exemplification is the defining function of narrative.

Even though exemplification and archetype are generally employed in a narrative context, it is by no means a phenomenon unique to this context. Rather it is simply a narrative manifestation of the instantiation-abstraction process previously discussed (Section 3.3). We observe a different example of the same process in the relationship of instance *a dog* to the category DOG. Most linguistic constructions exhibit something of this same process, and it is one of the fundamental principles of language. The relationship of a narrative to its themes is simply another manifestation of this same principle. All concepts, therefore, which demonstrate this type-token aspect potentially contain the basic building-blocks for exemplifications, and exemplifications are simply those concepts which have been applied to a

narrative theme-exemplar association. As Jolles put it, narrative forms have a universal appeal because they are rooted in a universal psychological function (Scholes 1974:43).

This process is also visible in experiential metaphor, which relates a concrete concept to an abstract one, and the relationship between exemplification and archetype resembles that between ordinary metaphor and conventionalised metaphor. There are certain metaphors which become so conventionalised that we no longer even recognise them as metaphors unless they are pointed out to us (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). In the same way, exemplifications can become so automatic that they become archetypes. For example, the painting by Friedrich discussed above is quite unique in the extent to which it illustrates the concepts behind the idea of Romanticism. Most Romantic art does not – most examples merely reference rather than explain; they assume the basic concept to be familiar to the audience already, and instead focus their attention on a more specific theme.

Exemplifications and archetypes require the further qualification of blending theme and exemplar, and thus any literaryconvention which displays these mediating qualities falls within their *ambit*. We know this is the case for any such convention which displays a bias towards the blending of the thematic and exemplary. Examples have been previously given (Section 4.1.4): THE HERO'S JOURNEY, THE FRAME NARRATIVE, STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS STYLE, THE FEMME FATALE TROPE, THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL, THE FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE, THE HORROR STORY, THE ANDROID TROPE, POST-MODERN LITERARY NARRATIVE, ANAGNORISIS, DRAGONS, RED-HERRINGS, ALLEGORY, THE NOBLE SAVAGE, DRAMATIC STRUCTURE, THE CASANOVA, THE FLASHBACK, SLAP-STICK COMEDY, etc. Each of these particular literary conventions works better in some stories than in others – that is to say, better with certain themes and exemplars than with others. It is by this means that we can identify them all as being archetypes.

Archetypes can be comprised of nearly any repeated image or convention in narrative. Even something as simple as a slapstick image of a chair breaking and spilling its bearer onto the floor. Indeed, this could even be said to be the signature image of slapstick physical comedy. It is highly symbolic, signifying themes such as the blind trust in the familiar, human vulnerability in the face of the unexpected, intruding into the most domestic of spaces. In many ways, it is an ideal example of

an archetype, involving the most intimate of exemplars, the mundane action of sitting on a chair, coupled with one of the most universal of themes, namely the unpredictability of life. Its conventionalisation is thus to be expected.

As we can see, a great many literary conventions constitute archetypes. A counter-example might be something general such as narrative point of view, which is universal to all narrative, as compared to a specific kind of point of view, such as first-person narrative or third person omniscient narrative, each of which suggest certain themes and their accompanying exemplars more than others.

Exemplification then is the source of archetypes. If exemplification is the process by which theme is embedded into instance, then *all exemplifications are intended to become archetypes*. Highly effective exemplifications are naturally prone to becoming archetypes, and archetypes in turn are regularly recruited in narrative to serve as thematic exemplifications. In this way, the relationship between exemplification and archetype mirrors that discussed before between imagery and archetype, as exemplification is only another word for Fryean imagery (Section 2.2). Exemplification instantiates the great ideas which guide humanity, and archetype provides a shared semantic index to the great ideas which we draw from to render comprehensible our bewildering life experiences. New exemplifications in turn relate these ideas to our changing world, and when these innovations are reintegrated with archetypes, it allows the latter to evolve so as to ensure that they remain fresh and relevant. This synergetic relationship grants archetypes a seeming immortality, with the same core archetypal ideas persisting from the dawn of humanity up until today, yet constantly adapting themselves through adjustment to our changing world. We can then presume that archetypalisation is the goal of all narrative, and exemplification is the process through which this is achieved.

Perhaps the important difference between exemplification and archetype then could be stated as, exemplifications are novel blends constructed from existing conventions, while archetypes are formed from these when the novel blends themselves become conventionalised as units. In plainer words, exemplifications are blends of separate pre-existing conventions, while archetypes are conventional blend-units. But, as this demonstrates, the boundary between exemplification and archetype once again isn't absolute but graded. All archetypes have elements of exemplification in that no archetype is ever, in practice, used in an identical fashion.

And at the same time, all exemplifications use existing archetypes as building material. Thus, all archetypes will have features of exemplification and vice-versa.

Thematic narrative is not simply a one-to-one association between text and concept. A narrative is typically a composite of several different ideas, in terms of both the theme and the exemplar, and in the exemplifications which link them. Some of these ideas are old and well-established, creating a familiar grounding in the audience's past experience, and others new and interesting. These exemplifications are often generated on an *ad hoc*, *ad necessitatem* basis, but equally often they are drawn from a historical repertoire of previous archetypes. When the need for blends arises, rather than creating them *ex nihilo*, we can instead recycle similar previous blends and simply adapt them to the new circumstance. In doing so, we have created an archetype.

Some of these archetypes may simply fall into disuse, but others will by virtue of their utility recur over and over again, and through language will pass from one person to the next to become staples of the cultural consciousness. This resembles the same process by which novel metaphors may catch on in popular use and so over time become conventional metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). And just as each recurrence requires adaptation to suit the changed context, each recurrence entails elaboration. Archetypes, much like themes, are not to be understood as static mechanisms for conceptual blending, but rather subjectively variable and constantly evolving conceptual tools. And as archetypes grow in complexity and versatility, so too do they increase in utility, thereby also increasing their cultural entrenchment. In this way, for Frye, archetypes comprise one of the sources, if not the pre-eminent source, of artistic value.

Fryean archetypes, by virtue of being based in shared conventions rather than peculiar to an individual narrative, are thus inherently intertextual in the sense of Kristeva (Abrams 1993 [1957]:285), or in plainer terms, linguistic units. In this way every narrative exists at the centre of a constellation of other narratives. Exemplifications are crafted from previous archetypes, and archetypes are formed piecemeal through the numerous narratives in which they occur. We use this constellation of related narratives to interpret the story, and the archetypes provide the connective fabric that links all the stories together.

Frye (1957: 124-41) links the concept of archetype to the literary concept of the *concrete universal*, or *the one that stands for its class* (Wimsatt 1947). In many ways, Wimsatt's thesis is the intellectual progenitor for Frye archetypal theory, though both trace the origin of their ideas back to Aristotle. It states that literature's value is embedded in its figurative nature, specifically in its use of concrete instances to express universal truths, and the creative pleasure elicited from solving this mysterious connection between the two. As an example, Frye uses this to explain the symbolic power of Christ. In Christ we find unified the symbols of the *One Temple* or *Rock*, *the One Tree* or *Vine*, *the One Lamb* or *Dove*, *the One Man* and *the One God*. Each of these relate respectively to one of the various divine orders that govern creation, namely the mineral, vegetable, animal, human and divine. Just as he is God of all creation, so too is there a symbol specific to each order. Each of these in turn are symbols of their respective Christian spheres, the Church of Christ, the City of God and the Rock of Faith, the Garden which sustains His creations, the Shepherd's Flock, the Christian fellowship of mankind, and the promise of Heaven.

In this way, the Christ archetype branches out into every facet of creation. Christ becomes the uniting divine order which synthesises all of existence, both in authority and in sympathy. All is part of Christ and Christ is in everything. For instance, in the mineral sphere, Christ's presence is in the Rock on which creation stands confident in his unfailing commitment, as well as in the One Temple which symbolises the reciprocal commitment of the mineral world to divine authority. This is then personified in the Holy City of the faith, not the Jerusalem of the world, but the spiritual city which represents the sympathy of the divine laws which govern the mineral world to provision our needs. Through these various personifications, the City which shelters, the Garden and Flock which nourish, etc. it is shown both how creation is subordinate and superordinate to mankind. Mankind is a part of creation and must adhere to its laws, but in return, creation serves mankind by furnishing all its wants. And Christ is the crowning symbol for all of this, both mortal and divine, both servant and master.

Frye's example couldn't present the synthetic function of archetype in any clearer fashion – at each level of symbolism, we find an increased degree of abstraction. The world of experience is subsumed into five categories, which in turn are subsumed into one. Each of these in turn have their exemplification (the instance

that stands for its class), as well as their associated personification (through the link to Christ, the ideal of mankind). Firstly, the categorical structure demonstrates the essential abstractive function of archetype, linking the image to an important message. Secondly, the instantiated forms in turn familiarises these abstractions by grounding them in our own life experiences. And lastly, the personification function demonstrates the pragmatic goal of archetype, namely to embody experience in a meaningful way for human narrators and audiences.

5.4.1 How archetype defines narrative

But archetype is not simply to be understood as a useful syncretism of content. Rather, it is a defining function of narrative itself. In other words, archetypes don't merely comprise the content, but form an essential part of the medium.

This is the real criticism of formalist narratology by thematic (i.e. archetypal) narrative theory – formalism is made largely redundant by archetype because archetype defines narrative form.

This is best illustrated by what could be called stylistic or formal archetypes. To give an example of this, consider the common fantasy trope of the OMEN or PROPHECY. Frye explains: 'The introduction of an omen or portent, or the device of making a whole story the fulfilment of a prophecy given at the beginning…suggests, in its existential projection, a conception of ineluctable fate or hidden omnipotent will. Actually, it is a piece of pure literary design, giving the beginning some symmetrical relationship with the end, and the only ineluctable will is that of the author' (1957:139). In other words, the PROPHECY trope is nothing other than a disguised instance of Labov's abstract (Labov & Waletsky 2006). The PROPHECY trope then provides the author with the means to present the abstract without having to break the fourth wall.

But aside from a convenient narrative conceit, the PROPHECY archetype also conveys certain powerful ideas, not least of which is the idea that life itself is a story comprised of seemingly random experiences but which are in fact made sensible and consequential through a hidden cosmic design. And this is true, at least in the subjective sense: we experience life as a narrative, and just as human consciousness naturally assigns to narrative meaning-making themes, so in the same way, we cannot help but make our lives meaningful in some or other sense.

Related to this is also the idea of a sympathetic universe, which is closely tied to the concept of narrative fantasy. Fantasy is not simply the idea of a reality invested with the supernatural (Wolfe 1986:38-40), but the idea of a sympathetic reality, one which adopts the rules of the human imagination, or in other words, the inner human reality. After all, fantasy is not merely the randomly occurring supernatural, but rather the thematically derived supernatural – concept or imagination given substance, the order of our inner worlds imposed on external reality.

In this sense, we can see a clear genealogical connection between the PROPHECY archetype and the PROTOTYPICAL NARRATIVE schema (i.e. a narrative employing the prototypical narrative event). As mentioned above (Section 4.4.4), a key attribute of the prototypical narrative schema is the personification of experience. Our experiences of the world are metaphorically interpreted in human terms, imbued with intention, agency, consciousness, morality, sentiment and theme or meaning. Although we've been indoctrinated by modern-day realist sensibilities to perceive the trope of PROPHECY as a sign of authorial heavy-handedness or a formulaicism signifying a lack of creativity, in truth it is one of the most natural narrative expressions. It prompts us to do what all narrative is meant to do – to see events not as arbitrary but as signs of and clues to a greater design and ourselves as playing the instrumental role of realising that meaning.

And the PROPHECY archetype maintains its pervasiveness in narrative through its latest incarnation, namely the FRAMING STORY (Abrams 1993 [1957]:195). This archetype maintains many of the conveniences of its antecedent, namely subtly inserting the abstract, presenting a sympathetic story world and a sense of internal order, while also humouring the modern reader's superstitions regarding fantasy and figuration. It achieves this by reframing the PROPHECY schema in a way that is more palatable to modern inhibitions – cosmic order is projected from heaven onto the frame narrator, who exhibits the same god-like authority over his or her creations as supernatural entities over the natural world, but does so without challenging the reader's world-views.

Traditionally, archetypes are associated with narrative content, separate from formal narrative features. This follows the traditional dichotomy between theme or subject matter and technique (Beardsley 1956). But as the FRAME STORY example demonstrates, this distinction is false. FRAME STORY may traditionally be considered a

formal or stylistic device, but its inextricably bound content and close semantic ties with the PROPHECY archetype cannot be easily ignored. As Bruner (1991) argues, the same is true for other formal features of narrative. Narrative content is assigned meaning through convention, the same as narrative form – both originate in the conventional association between form and content. Nor is it easy to distinguish between what is traditionally viewed as narrative form or content, as both essentially comprise the same identical conventionalised form-content association. 'We celebrate innovations in genre as changing not only the content of imagination but its modus operandi' (Bruner 1991:15). What are termed stylistic or formal innovations versus thematic innovations can never be isolated to either pole. Changes in form are always mirrored by complementary changes in content and vice-versa.

Earlier, we presented as a counter-example to archetypal narrative forms such as the first-person or third-person omniscient point of view, narrative point of view itself (Section 5.4.1). But it is also true that narrative point of view is also simply a category or class of archetypes, and is in turn defined by those archetypes. In this way, it could be said that narratology should primarily be the study of archetype, as Frye originally predicted.

This impossibility of isolating form from content is the root of the problem of the form-content dichotomy. Changes in form are only significant because of the corresponding changes in content. Differences between literal and figurative or ironic interpretations of content are often indicated by formal markers. Narrative techniques traditionally defined as formal, such as the STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS style illustrated in Prufrock's internal monologues, or the LINGUISTIC FOREGROUNDING typical of e e cummings cannot for this reason be defined as anything other than archetypes in their own right. This is in keeping with the cognitive semantics-centred approach which a thematic approach to narrative is couched in.

But archetype not only encompasses narrative form alone. It must also include the epistemological conventions of narrative. As an example, Bruner (1991) gives us the writings of Mary McCarthy who later revealed her fictional narratives to in fact be AUTOBIOGRAPHY. Hence, this completely changed how the audience interpreted much of the content of the novels i.e. not as fictional inventions but rather real-world references. Similarly, we can point to the changes in meaning produced by postmodern writers employing the technique of the EPISTEMIC TURN, such as Italo

Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller* (1979), or Barthes' metamorphising reinterpretations of Balzac's *Sarrasine* in *S/Z* (1990 [1970]). Changing the epistemic conventions of a narrative necessarily also changes how we interpret it. Thus, even the epistemology of narrative cannot be entirely divorced from archetype.

In this way, by defining the medium between theme and exemplar, archetype defines the narrative medium itself. If narrative is about exemplifying a theme, then it makes sense that exemplification defines narrative itself. Narrative is exemplification and archetype. Archetype exposes the flaw in formalist narratology's separation of form and content, as manifest in the narration vs. plot distinction. Instead of division, the founding premise of archetype is the integration of theme and exemplar and of form and content.

Furthermore, the conventionality of archetype makes it the narrative equivalent of language – a shared code we exploit to communicate meaning. We understand the meaning of the archetypal villain largely through convention – because the villain recurs so consistently across stories that we learn to recognise the trope even in the absence of obvious cues. Archetypal villains like Sauron (Tolkien 1991 [1955]), the Wicked Witch (Baum 1900), or the Emperor in Star Wars (*Star Wars: A New Hope* 1977) are almost caricaturish in their simplicity, but nevertheless serve an important role in the semantics of the narrative. We know through tradition that they serve as the personifications of adversity, a central axis around which pivot and emanate the various distinct episodic challenges our heroes face. In the same way it is often difficult to decrypt the significance of such highly conventional figures in foreign or lost narrative traditions because their significance was taken for granted as something understood and was therefore never fully and explicitly explained.

Predictably then, Frye (1957:101-2, 134-40) sees the use of archetype as unavoidable. In this way, Frye exposes the futility of the iconoclast, who seeks to destroy the conventions they view as inhibiting creativity. Those who foolishly rebel against convention, cannot escape archetype completely – they just learn to better disguise it. Walt Whitman for instance was one such artist, known for professing to reject the artificial for the natural in expression. Yet, as Frye goes on to point out, regardless of his intentions, his poetry is replete with veiled archetypes just as language itself is. Rather than rejecting all artificiality, he was simply rejecting the academic archetype for the folk archetype. Furthermore, even if he were able to

evade the natural archetypes which pervade all language, the audience would still impose them on the interpretation because of how strongly entrenched they are in human consciousness. For instance, how difficult is it to think of life without visualising it as a journey, or of time not as a precious resource to be invested wisely, even though none of these things have anything to do with the literal reality of life or time (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Kermode (2000 [1966]), provides another example of the anti-novel, whose intention is to purposely sabotage its own exemplification and archetypicality in order to allow the audience to grasp a true experiential reality swept clear of the illusions of conventionalised preconceptions. But at the same time, he acknowledges that this is a vain ideal – that even were one able to remove old conventions, human beings by their very nature would simply impose new conventions in their stead.

This explains how the archetype itself becomes the focus of what is essentially narrative discourse. In this way, archetype may possibly supplant formalist description of narrative entirely.

5.4.2 Prevalence of archetype

The importance of exemplification is evident from its pervasiveness in narrative and beyond. Just as the characteristics of narrative consciousness are pervasive in language, so too are elements of archetype. What, after all, are Lakoff's conventional metaphors other than archetypes? As such, it is hard to find instances from everyday language where archetype is completely absent. But it is still in conventional narrative that archetype has its greatest influence.

To use Heart of Darkness (1996 [1899]) as an example once more, we can see just how important archetype is from their number and prominence. The most notable is the HERO'S QUEST or JOURNEY INTO THE PERILOUS REALM archetype which is an exemplification of all journeys, both real and metaphorical, such as the JOURNEY OF LIFE (this will be further discussed in Section 6.2.3). This is linked to the related exemplifications of the SEA VOYAGE, where water exemplifies abstract (spiritual, intellectual, metaphysical, etc.) space as opposed to physical space (Birkalan & Garry 2005), and the JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS (Dimic 1988), where physical movement is used to exemplify the process of intellectual discovery (see Section 4.7). Another is THE TEMPTATION (Little 1988, Underberg 2005, Spivak 1988b)

exemplification. In terms of this schema, Kurtz represents the archetypal tempter, who uses grandiloquence to hide dark deeds, and offers the material gifts of wealth, status and power at the price of spiritual compromise, and Marlow the archetypal unwary adventurer and naïve idealist who is his victim. The story is also deeply immersed in the DARK CONTINENT and WHITE MAN'S BURDEN archetypes which inspired European imperialism and colonialism, walking the boundary between earlier and later forms of the myth and thereby questioning both. The earlier myths are those of imperialism as the noble and obligatory duty of the enlightened West to the perceived 'savage' throughout the rest of the world. The later myth is that of Imperialism as the ultimate and indisputable evil and the victim nations as helpless innocents.

Aside from these central examples of exemplification, other examples permeate every page and almost every line of the narrative. To name but a few in no specific order, there is the trope of the NAMELESS STOCK or STEREOTYPE CHARACTER (the Lawyer, Company Director, etc.) (Abrams 1993 [1957]: 200-1), the DEATHBED CONFESSION, the CHARACTER FOIL (Kurtz serves as a foil for Marlow's journey of self-discovery) (Auger 2010:130), the DESCENT INTO MADNESS, the NOBLE SAVAGE (Labat 1988:918-28), the CONSTANT LOVER, LIGHT AND DARK COMPANIONS (Kurtz' intended vs. his consort), the THREE FATES (Kratz 1988), the DARK TWIN (constant comparisons between Britain and Africa) (Peternel 2005), the UNSPEAKABLE/ INEFFABLE, the FRAMING NARRATIVE, the FALSE MENTOR/GENIUS BY REPUTATION ONLY, the FINAL BETRAYAL (the lie to Kurtz' Intended), the CAPRICIOUS WHEEL OF FATE (the comparisons between pre-Roman Britain, present day Britain and Africa) (Kratz 1988), the RESCUE OF THE MENTOR (Barta 1988), TRUTH VS. SEEMING or WHO YOU ARE WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING, to name but a few (c.f. Seigneuret 1988, Ferber 1999, Gheerbrant et al. 1996, De Rose 2005, Joseph 1988).

Bruner in his discussion of the conventions which define narrative, points out that while innovation receives continual praise, the generic receives less than it deserves (1991). The study of archetypes perhaps even suggests that while innovation has some value in contemporising archetype, it is in its conventional wisdoms that most of literary value lies. Indeed, as we witnessed, certain truths prove so eternal that they likely trace back to the dawn of humanity. Moreover, as we have also seen,

even innovation only occurs through the medium of archetype. This is what Frye means when he states that the study of literary value is the study of archetype.

5.5 The cultural role of archetypal narrative

To recap, exemplification produces archetypes by means of divorcing experience from immediate context and discovering the latent universal themes contained within. In so doing, narrative takes on the qualities of a display text, a text distanced from immediate context and imbued with an inherent, self-contained context in its place. Archetypes play a crucial role in narrative communication by providing a shared code on how to discover intended theme within an exemplar. They do so through the creation of theme-exemplar hybrids, abstracted exemplars or thematic instances. In this way, by providing a framework in which theme and exemplar are already linked, we are given the basic building blocks for the blend which we then only have to fill out with the unique particulars of the exemplar and themes of the narrative at hand.

With a theory in hand of how archetype functions linguistically, it is time to address its broader social function. Doty (2000) describes the human storytelling predilection as a manifestation of the *ritual* aspect of the mythical consciousness. Archetype derives eternal patterns from the welter of experience and then mythologises these as a divine cosmic order, that is, as symbolisation of a universal and eternal set of cultural values. Social values are essentially strategic, designed to achieve specific human-oriented goals by the most effective means. Schemas in turn are the strategies which are intermediate between these abstract values and the real-life challenges of enacting them (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 67), and in narrative, these take the form of archetypes. But as has been repeatedly stated, abstractions are prone to stagnation without continuous revision. This is achieved through ritual re-enactment, one form of which is narrative. Although exposition plays an important role in narrative as a form of teaching, passing cultural knowledge from one generation to the next, ritual is primarily about living out these meanings.

The social need which ritual conventions express explains the unique circumstances from which conventional narrative arises. As the earlier discussion of the MAN VS. NATURE archetype demonstrated, the study of archetype reveals that although there

is a consistent core idea, archetypes are in constant flux, and under continuous revision in the face of a changing world (c.f. Seigneuret 1988). Ritual re-enactment is the means by which we revitalise archetypes, and it takes many forms, such as drama, ceremony, ritual and narrative. Through re-enactment, we rehabilitate abstractions by reconnecting them not only to the world of experience, but also to our embodied experience – that is, how they relate to ourselves. Ritual re-enactment is both physical and experiential, both normative and creative. Through ritual we meditate on archetypes in order to reappraise their place within our human frame of reference. Those whose value is reaffirmed are simultaneously refreshed in memory through the process, and those found lacking are renovated through synthesis with new experience (Doty 2000).

In this way, narrative ritual is shown to be essentially metaphoric. By incorporating experience, narrative encourages the associative variety and imaginative experimentation and play that keep archetypes vital and relevant, and also feed the growth which ensures their all-inclusivity. But their metaphoric character also focuses attention on the integrity and consistency of the archetype by forcing us to constantly evaluate their associations. We see these features at play in myth, in the sense of a convergence between the sacred and the mundane, between the divine cosmological order and the chaos of everyday experience (Doty 2000:49-51, Eliade 1959).

Archetypal efficacy rests on the ability of archetypes to cut through to the most essential aspects of the various phenomena they represent. Archetypes are streamlined to their most elementary cores through generational transmission – with succeeding generations, the redundant is forgotten and only what is most important is passed on. In this way, archetypal narrative communicates the essential elements for effective action (Burkert 1979) and thus archetype becomes fundamental to defining our identity, our place in society and the world we live in, and the various phenomena we experience in it (Doty 2000: 58, Frank 2010).

It is not only the instantiation of archetypes, but also their *embodiment* which is the goal of ritual. Corresponding to the theme-instance relationship of narrative is the local-universal relationship of archetype, which encapsulates the oppositions of internal-external, self-other, human-nature, individual-social, etc. What all of these have in common is embodiment. It is not enough that we are able to understand the

experiential grounding of concepts in order to exploit or evaluate their utility. For them to be effective, we need just as much to understand how they *matter pragmatically* to humanity, collectively and individually. This is self-evident from a brief look at the core mythic archetypes: LIFE VS. DEATH, MASCULINE VS. FEMININE, INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIETY, MAN VS. NATURE, ORDER VS. CHAOS, INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL, BODY VS. MIND, KNOWN VS. UNKNOWN, etc. Each of these intimately involves subjective human experience. Thus, it has been stressed in the literature that the kind of knowing realised through narrative is not the disembodied, disinterested knowing idealised in the modern world, but rather a more holistic, embodied knowing (Doty 2000:54-6).

The intimate side of human experience is used as a source domain for the interpretation of all external reality. Two of the most important of these conceptual mappings from the domain of the body are boundedness and interconnectedness – it is from this sense of the body that we draw conceptual organisation and unity, and the sense of the external world as unified by a divine cosmological order (Doty 2000:56, 311-5). Geertz (1973) states that conceptual embodiment is a necessary evolutionary product as the human body has been shaped in direct sympathy with its environment, both natural and social. Ritual, including the ritual of narrative, is the personal enactment of the external as a means of synthesizing the external world with the internal (Doty 2000:311-3).

Modern secular society has become more and more partitioned and disconnected from this embodiment due to its materialistic rejection of the embodied and figurative consciousness that enables myth and ritual's totalisation of varied human experience. Even modern mysticism provides no reprieve as a result of its association with social isolation and experiential withdrawal. This is entirely opposite to the mythological mystical experience, which was explicitly socially and experientially immersive, even intoxicatingly and ecstatically so (Doty 2000:57)

Ritual therefore becomes the medium between the worlds of thought and experience. Ritual in this way mirrors the role of archetype – it is the pragmatic, functional correlative of the cognitive, representational function of archetype. Similarly, the symbiotic relationship between archetype and imagery is mirrored by that between archetype and ritual. Ritual is a continuous renewal of archetype (Doty 2000:311-3).

This then hearkens back to Frye's conception of narrative and its role in society. Imagery becomes conventionalised into archetype through ritual. Archetype in turn forms the shared cultural legacy which comprises *anagogy*, the collective linguistic and semantic conventions which comprise the cultural traditions of humanity.

Archetype thus defines the interplay between individual and society through Frye's concepts of (1) archetypal ritual, which synthesizes individual experiences into shared truths (2) archetypal dream, which harmonises individual aspiration with societal goals, and (3) their combination to form anagogy (or narrative accrual as Bruner terms it), which is the cultural unity on which society is built. Archetypes thus define society. If archetypes are narrativizations of cultural value systems, and societies are defined as groups with shared cultural value systems, then it follows that archetypes define societies.

Bruner (1991) echoes Frye when he states that narrative is fundamental to human culture and society. Bruner argues that narrative, in its particular facility for representing and thus sharing human experience, abstracting important truths from shared experience and in its talent for reconciling opposing perspectives through figurative and fictional distance, provides the indispensable tools necessary for the creation of a shared cultural frame of reference and the synergy necessary for societies to form. But Cassirer takes this even further, postulating that if archetype is able to unify experience and thought into a seamless whole, this anagogic unity comprises our reality for all intents and purposes (Doty 2000:238).

Archetype thus comprises the social fabric of society through the shared values which unite groups of individuals in interdependencies of common purpose (Doty 2000:64). But narrative is not only the basis for cultural norms, but also for contesting them. Conflicting narratives thus becomes the locus for power and social development. This is because narrative is not only the medium for sharing experience, but also for restricting experience (Zipes 2012:6-7).

Desalles (2007) links Sperber & Wilson's (1995 [1986]) criterion of relevance to the foundation of communication and the human societies that are built on it, and Zipes claims that narrative is the medium through which this occurs (2012: 5). *Relevance* in narrative provides the material justifications for cultural beliefs and individual roles within society, through its symbolic association of concept and experience. Narrative

in turn abstracts these beliefs into models of human agency. Burkert (1979) emphasises the role of narrative archetype in not only modelling experience, but, through the embodiment of that experience, transforming these into models of human behaviour. In this way, narrative seeks to provide *a comprehensive map of reality*.

Through this appreciation of the ultimate significance of narrative through its role in the creation of archetypes, the thematic theory of narrative provides us with a real yardstick of literary value, rather than somewhat vague philosophical ideals like beauty or truth. Consequently, a proper understanding of narrative and archetype, Frye and Doty propose, deserves to be one of the key scholarly pursuits of our times.

Finally, these defining characteristics of archetypal narrative in turn define archetypal function: As such, archetypes impart both (1) cultural values and (2) general frames of reference, specifically relating to the interactions between (3) individual and society, (4) human and divine, and (5) human and nature, and enacted either through (6) normative social ritual or (7) creative works of imagination (Doty 2000: Chapter 3).

In summary, we can now outline the defining characteristics of conventional narrative as follows.

1. Thematic: The purpose of narrative is to rehabilitate the detached and impersonal abstractions which makes our world comprehensible through the rich and immersive experiential grounding needed to make them familiar and tangible. As a consequence, the epistemic grounding of narrative is primarily that of the abstractions (or themes) themselves, which are by themselves (i.e. outside of narrative) removed from immediate experience.

2. Figuration: Because narrative employs experiences primarily as a means to ground our abstract beliefs, these experiences become integrated with these abstractions and thus partially abstracted themselves. Thus they are less accurate representations of experience, and more abstract models of experience. While this comes at the cost of authenticity, it has the benefit of increasing their associative versatility.

3. Exemplification: Conventional narrative achieves its purpose of grounding abstractions in instances through the use of exemplifications. These are simplified embryonic blends comprising elementary features of both theme and exemplar. These then provide blueprints for their actualisation as fully realised theme-exemplar blends.

4. Archetype: Those exemplifications which demonstrate lasting value are reused over and over again until they become conventionalised units. Through their recurrence, they also gain increased versatility with regards to the range and complexity of themes and instances they can combine with.

5. Compositionality: In order to be effective, archetypes need to be simple enough to accommodate the incorporation of a broad range of blends. As such, they exhibit a high degree of compositionality with regards to both exemplars and themes, as well as with other archetypes.

6. Systematising: Archetypes convey not only the meaning content of narrative, but shape the medium of narrative itself. In other words, the conventions which define narrative are themselves archetypal in nature.

7. Embodiment: Archetypes are also anthropomorphic, personified or embodied. They do not represent experience objectively, but instead from within an explicitly subjective human framework – not with neutral disinterest but self-interestedly.

8. Essentialising: Since archetypes reduce the variety and complexity of thought and experience to only that which is their most essential defining features, archetype becomes a simplified universal cognitive reference system for both thought and experience.

9. Creative: Due to their simplification, the interpretation of archetype demands creative and active engagement, both intellectually and emotionally. Through this creative process, new archetypes are also formed.

10. Cultural values: Through its symbolisation of thought and human experience, archetype becomes the cultural frame of reference through which we interpret reality. Archetype thus defines identity, be it individual, social or even reality itself.

11. Ritual: Conventional narrative rehabilitates cultural values through the representation of embodied experience. In this way, narrative becomes a continual ritual re-enactment of our most deeply held beliefs regarding our world and through the frame of our everyday lived experiences. Through narrative ritual, these beliefs are continuously adapted to ensure their enduring relevance in the face of a changing world.

12. Mimesis: Through ritual's pairing of beliefs with those personal experiences which are most relevant to them, narrative becomes an important medium for both the refinement of experience and the sharing of those significant experiences.

13. Map of reality: By providing links between our abstract ideas and our experiences of material reality and the models of human agency that provide the means to realise the former, narrative seeks to provide the essential meaning-making tools for human existence.

5.6 The Grim Reaper

Now let's finally look at an example of narrative blending again to witness these processes in practice. We will jump straight into the deep end, exploring one of the more complex examples given by Fauconnier and Turner, namely the Grim Reaper archetype. (This example is repeatedly discussed across a number of publications: Fauconnier & Turner 2002:292-5, 334-5, 348, Fauconnier & Turner 2006, Lakoff & Turner 1989:1-79, Turner 1996:76-82, c.f. Garry & Langlois 2005, Thompson 1977 [1946]). This example's complexity will afford us the opportunity to witness the full extent of variety and intricacy possible in blends.

The GRIM REAPER archetype seems to trace its origins back to the dawn of humanity and the related invention of the sickle. Mesolithic hunter-gatherers crafted the first sickles to harvest wild-grains long before their domestication into the staple crops of today (Bar-Yosef 1998). What must have seemed a mystical coincidence between sites of autumn harvesting and the spring shoots from cast-off seeds likely cemented the death-rebirth cyclic association with sickles in the early mind of humankind, as would its visual similitude to the crescent shape the moon takes just before its cyclical demise and after its subsequent rebirth.

Thus, the sickle and later the scythe have always been symbols of death. The personification traces back to the various gods of death. Cronus is the first sickle- or scythe-wielding god of death on record, though given the association between sickles and death, he is unlikely the first. The further association of the skeleton with death is similarly ancient, for obvious reasons (Gheerbant et al. 1996).

The Grim Reaper is a striking image, in part because of its inconsistencies, apparently in contradiction with the governing principle of internal consistency. Specifically, this relates to its tautological nature and its grisly imagery. It represents both the means and the end, cause and effect, killer and victim in one. But it is perhaps this inconsistency which lends it the mystery and conspicuousness that appeals to the governing principle of interest. As was said before, narrative and archetype like to combine the sensible with the incongruous in order to increase the image's cognitive salience. This challenges the audience to attend more closely by forcing them to figure it out for themselves.

The power of the archetype can also be attributed to its mimetic qualities. The GRIM REAPER invokes a fear we can all relate to. This fear is heightened by the mimetic aspect that death incarnates, specifically violent death. Another of these mimetic qualities is the personification contained in the image. Personification is one of the most powerful methods of narrative instantiation. PERSONIFICATION is an extension of the prototypical or ARCHETYPAL NARRATIVE, which comprises a person engaging with the observable world with the intent to produce a meaningful outcome. Personification not only imbues abstractions with physicality, entrenching nebulous concepts in perceptual experience, but also with embodiment. DEATH made human enables us to imagine it with the vividness of first-hand experience. It enables us to project ourselves into the body of DEATH, to live ourselves into the physical experience as we do with our own bodies, and beyond that to project ourselves into its mind, to understand the relevant thoughts, emotions and motives through self-knowledge.

The GRIM REAPER blend is primarily a blend between the input spaces of the PERSONIFICATION OF DEATH schema (Lakoff & Turner 1989) and the schema of HARVESTER. This personification schema is already in itself a complicated archetype, complementary to numerous other such personifications such as TIME IS A THIEF or LOVE IS A CONQUEROR (c.f. Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Personification enables us to

employ self-knowledge to comprehend what are often alien and incomprehensible abstractions. Through this personification, we are able to make death sensible and familiar and thereby to dispossess it of much of its confusion and terror.

Furthermore, at closer inspection, the concept is not all that tautological. Death can be both a force of nature and a personal loss, and it is not tautological to say that death in the one sense causes death in the other. In the same way, realistically speaking, if life is imagined as a path, it is you who are approaching death (instantiated here as the skeletal remains which we all are eventually made into), but in the GRIM REAPER image, this is inverted – it is your own corpse which is approaching you. But this inversion again doesn't demand significant distortion of the facts – it is only a minor conceit in the greater scheme of things. And as stated before, causal inversions are a common trick in blending to simplify or add meaning to blends (Section 4.3.3).

In terms of the blending model, we start off with two initial inputs into the PERSONIFICATION OF DEATH archetype, namely the TIME schema (specifically a HUMAN LIFETIME) and the PATH schema. The PATH schema with the various points along it, is cross-mapped onto the HUMAN LIFETIME schema with its various signature life moments. This results in the LIFE IS A JOURNEY blend (c.f. Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989). In this blend, various major life landmarks become points on the journey of life. The GRIM REAPER blend however selects only one of these signature life moments, namely death. In addition, death is personified as Death, in the manner described above. In this version of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY blend, the landmark of death becomes the person of Death who awaits the traveller at some unknown point along the path.

This TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH blend (derived from the LIFE IS A JOURNEY schema, which in turn was blended from the TIME and PATH schemas) then provides the one input in the GRIM REAPER blend, the other being the HARVESTER schema. Once again, this blend exhibits a high degree of asymmetry. This is because the theme of the blend is death, not harvesting. Harvesting as such, is only the vehicle for the tenor of death. In this blend, DEATH is cross-mapped with HARVESTER and the corn that he reaps is cross-mapped with the traveller from the TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH schema. While this may seem strange at first sight, the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS (CORN) metaphor is actually quite well grounded in mythology, folklore and idiom (c.f. Lakoff & Turner

1989, Gheerbrant et al. 1996). However, in the HARVESTER image, it is the corn that is stationary and the HARVESTER that approaches – opposed to the TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH where DEATH is stationary and the traveller approaches. In this way, the action schema is inverted, so that it becomes the death/harvester that approaches the traveller/corn.

In the same way, reaping is cross-mapped with dying, but while the death meeting the traveller is unintentional, the harvester reaping the corn is an act of intent. This creates the opportunity for the emergent structure that radically transforms the more inoffensive image of Death as a patient bystander awaiting a foreordained encounter into a malevolent killer actively hunting his victim. So powerful is the influence of this emergent structure that Fauconnier and Turner (2002:292-5) treat it not as emergent structure but instead as a separate KILLER input. This indicates the blurred lines between inputs and emergent structure. I tend to disagree with this interpretation, since, as I have shown, the inputs of TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH and HARVESTER already contain all the necessary structures to compose the GRIM REAPER blend without recourse to additional inputs. But admittedly, this is a matter of differing interpretations.

But this raises the question of what differentiates an input space from emergent structure, and at what point does emergent structure become an input space? In later analyses, Fauconnier and Turner (2008) seem to prefer viewing emergent structure instead as initial inputs, and there is perhaps a greater consistency to this approach, though it may obscure the thematic significance of the primary inputs. This is because the GRIM REAPER expresses the themes of life and the inevitability of death, while the HARVESTER merely plays an instrumental role as a way to explain the theme in a striking way. This distinction between input and emergent structure also resembles the difference between input symmetry and asymmetry (see Section 4.7,1) in terms of the different extents to which each input is included in the blend. Perhaps the theme determines the difference in the inclusion of inputs in the final blend. HARVESTER is more than just emergent structure because it also expresses the theme of death, through the harvester 'killing' the corn, only in an a-typical way. This is a recurrent observation regarding blend inputs, as we will see in the various textual analyses that will follow this chapter – that the prominence and scale of

projection (the selection of content) from input spaces corresponds with the extent of their thematic resonance.

Other components from the HARVESTER input are also projected into the blend. One other notable inclusion is the 'harvester's' scythe, which is transformed into the instrument of death. This transforms the serene image of reaping corn into a bloody image of a killer hacking to pieces multitudes of victims. Other projections from the HARVESTER input include the helplessness of the corn onto the TRAVELLER, the fields of corn onto the multitude of travellers comprising all of mankind, the agrarian cycle onto the cycle of life, and so forth.

The main input however remains the TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH input, since the Grim Reaper itself is a contemplation on the theme of Death rather than on the theme of farming. Fauconnier and Turner for instance describe the Grim Reaper itself as a syncope of death (the various successive stages). The scythe represents the instrument of death, the cerements or funerary robe he is bound in represent the burial of the corpse, and the skeleton represents the inevitable corruption of the remains (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:334-5). In art, harvesters are traditional denizens of the pastoral – an arcadian world of carefree earthy rusticity. But the Grim Reaper is anything but. He is inhumanly implacable and moreover bereft of anything resembling human sentiment. Similarly, he is singular – *The* rather than *a*. As we can see, of all the features that define this figure, it is only the scythe itself that derives from the HARVESTER input. Even the significance of the scythe, now as an instrument of death rather than an agricultural implement, along with everything else comes from the TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH input. This serves to demonstrate the important role that theme plays in the selection of projected input and the composition of the blend, and the resulting input asymmetries.

As stated before, we identify theme primarily through its repetition in the exemplar. This repetition then comprises the cross-space mappings or generic space which serves as the basis for the blend. Through all the various images which are combined into the GRIM REAPER blend, the one main commonality is that of death. However, although this is the main similarity, it is not the only one. For instance, other similarities which run through all the images are time, space, perspective, interpersonal relationships, identity, etc. However, as we stated at the beginning of this thesis (Section 1.1), these are discounted as themes on the basis of the

relevance principle – these are not new ideas, but basic features of all narratives. They constitute the medium, not the message. What the relevance principle comes down to, therefore, is that blending is not merely something that occurs between events or concepts in the narrative, but also between story and audience. This means that the concepts conveyed in the narrative have to be both familiar *and* interesting to the audience.

Despite the radical transformations occurring in the course of blending the concept DEATH into the blends of a TRAVELLER MEETS DEATH and the GRIM REAPER, congruence and integrity principles are preserved, and in some ways, even strengthened. Both blends symbolise very different notions of death, one as a certainty we must all reconcile ourselves to, the other as an unknowable and terrifying enemy we are helpless to resist, yet both are genuine and easily understandable symbols in their own right. Through it all, the images manage to maintain a remarkable economy and internal-coherence despite first appearances. The symbols are richly suggestive yet spare all the same. They contain two figures, yet virtually all the significance is borne by only one figure, Death, while the other, his victim, fades almost to imperceptibility and often exists only by implication – in the sense that a killer also implies a victim. And as discussed in the previous paragraph, both images also achieve a remarkable thematic maximisation and integrity. We also mentioned how the seeming contradictions serve to evoke one's curiosity, in line with the principle of interest, without actually undermining the internal-consistency principle. Given the theme, these archetypes have an inherently high potential for relevance, and consequently also a high potential for recursion. The prevalence and popularity of this archetype even unto the present is thus by no means surprising.

When we review the genealogy of this archetype, we observe that the GRIM REAPER is a much-reduced symbol in comparison to its antecedents. The death gods from which it evolved had a much stronger association with the cosmic death-rebirth cycle, as well as chthonic and psychopomp/katabasis symbolism, amongst others (Coupe 1997:16-23). The GRIM REAPER is almost purely a death symbol. Rarely does it feature the psychopompic attributes of being horse-mounted or winged, associated with the role of bearing the spirits of the departed to the afterlife, and symbols like scales to represent the role of arbiter and custodians of the dead are virtually absent (Gheerhant et al. 1996). The related DEATH IS A GATEWAY or JOURNEY psychopomp

archetype that we see as so prominent in older religions has been reduced to the DEATH IS DEPARTURE archetype, profiling the first phase of the journey and erasing the rest. Death is the departure from life, but whereto is generally left unsaid. Similarly, the scythe appears to have lost its association with fertility symbolism, as a tool which simultaneously both kills but also feeds through the life-giving grain it reaps and resurrects through the seedstock that will be planted during the next season. Given the ubiquity of the BENEVOLENT DEATH archetype across the world, particularly in the form of ancestral guardians and ancestor worship, the rarity of this trope in modern western culture is rather striking. Even so, the GRIM REAPER imagery retains enough potent symbolism to sustain its persistence in the canon of established archetypes.

But while its symbolism has been greatly reduced through the loss of divinity, other associations have been strengthened. One association from the BENEVOLENT DEATH archetype that has been retained is the DEATH IS AN OBLIGATION schema, as perhaps best represented by Hamlet's ghost. (Recall that blends also include links or references – schemas which are associated with the blend without being incorporated into it. See Section 4.7.2.) In this archetype, life is a gift, which is also accompanied by an obligation to predecessors, living and dead, and most of all to a divine primogenitor. This is understandable given that – while the aspect of mortal obligation to the divine has fallen away in a secular age – the obligation of the living to the deceased, specifically ancestral obligations, remains a familiar life experience. Other prominent related archetypes include: DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS A THIEF, DEATH IS DARKNESS, DEATH IS AN INEVITABILITY, DEATH IS DESPAIR, DEATH IS TERROR, DEATH IS RELEASE, DEATH AS A LEVELLER, etc. (Lakoff & Turner 1989, Gheerbant et al. 1996, Ferber 1999). Certainly, the frequency of DEATH archetypes makes it more likely to resonate with some themes than with others, and contributes ultimately to the fecund associations of the GRIM REAPER archetype – for instance, the scythe represents the equalising role of death, reducing both the tallest and shortest shoots down to their stalks. This in turn links it to the WHEEL OF FATE/CHANGE and DEATH IS DARKNESS and LIGHT IS TRUTH archetypes which reveal our common mould. In the same way, linking it with the DEATH IS A THIEF archetype makes stories on the theme of dealing with loss more effective, or likewise the DEATH IS FEAR metaphor in relation to themes of finding

courage in the face of death. All these examples give just a glimpse of the wealth of associations the GRIM REAPER archetype still retains in spite of its reduced form.

But of these newer associations, one stands out for its prominence and thematic fertility. The GRIM REAPER was popularised during the time of the Black Death, but despite its passing, life remains as precious as ever. While the GRIM REAPER's original conditions are absent, the imagery retains its poignancy. Life is something we inherently value, and thus its ending is a universal concern. The same can be said of the subliminal violence of the image. Thus, the validity of the iconising of death as the ADVERSARY, which in turn is the personification of ADVERSITY, schema retains its pertinence. This closer association with the archetypal ADVERSARY has perhaps increased the GRIM REAPER's value as a symbol. This is because ADVERSITY is archetypal of almost all narrative – at the heart of most stories is some kind of conflict (Bruner 1986). The archetypal narrative, specifically, the personified event, features a human agent overcoming a meaningful challenge, that is, adversity. Further personifying that adversity as the ADVERSARY only increases that cognitive salience through the embodiment of an abstraction. Correspondingly, it is surprising that the GRIM REAPER is not ubiquitous in narrative. But at least as a popular allusion, if not incorporated entirely (see the blending strategy of reference in Section 4.7.2) – the robed and hooded villain, the skeletal or corpselike visage, death as a preternatural inevitable force, etc. – it is.

In this way, the various archetypes of DEATH are harnessed as an instrument to unlocking the mysteries of life:

> Whether in the form of mythical narrative, theological dogma or philosophical reflection, death beliefs help explain life itself. They point to life's goals and possibilities while acknowledging its difficulties and pitfalls. One philosophical means of interpreting human capability lies in the idea of self-transcendence. This begins in the powerful human sense of discontent, the awareness that things are not as they should be: human existence is flawed (Davies 2005:8-9).

Narrative seeks to instantiate the abstract and ephemeral in terms of the observable and permanent, and nothing is more patently conspicuous and permanent as the boundary between life and death. More than anything, death is a physical

transformation – it is something we can see and feel, and as social beings, the absence brought about by death is particularly heart-felt. It also embodies this change in the human form, as few incidents can be as intimate to a human life as the certainty of its demise (Morgan 2002). This applies not only to conventional narrative, but more importantly to the narrativity of consciousness and the story of our own lives. Our own mortality then becomes the yardstick by which we measure every moment we breathe and every action we take. Death becomes the measure of our lives.

DEATH can represent itself, but it can also serve as a symbol of something else (Ferber 2007, Frye 1957: 147-50). It was said that most narratives centre around a conflict, and all conflicts revolve around the same crux – the success or failure of intention. The failure of intention itself can be understood as a minor death, the demise of opportunity. All aspirations can be equated with the pursuit of life, and all adversity to the ultimate failure of death (Kermode 2000 [1966], Polkinghorne 1988: 133). Aside from the DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY archetype, this also links with DEATH IS THE END or DEATH IS A DEVOURER metaphors – failure becomes a devourer of or an end to intention, meaning and value. Thus, we can construe grief or despair as the death of happiness, loneliness as the death of love or friendship, ignorance or confusion as the death of knowledge or discovery, ennui or inaction as the death of motivation or volition, compulsion or powerlessness as the death of freedom, etc. In this way, almost all themes can be re-interpreted as conflict with the ADVERSARY. This association makes the GRIM REAPER a suitable archetypal ADVERSARY of nearly any story.

This results in the archetypes of AGENCY IS LIFE or MEANING IS LIFE and in terms of which failure or meaninglessness is conceived as the death of agency (Gergen & Gergen 1986). Even when the protagonist isn't engaged in a life-and-death struggle, the conflict is usually of existential dimensions. Cinderella's oppression at the hands of her in-laws seems as inescapable as death. The Miller's son in *Puss in Boots* is so hopeless that his destitution has a fatal inevitability without the salvation of his miraculous cat (Perrault 2009). While these examples are from folktale, they exhibit in miniature the same rule common to most narrative.

For Kermode (2000 [1966]), narrative intimately concerns the theme of human mortality through its constant juxtaposition of the eternal, in the form of the theme,

and the momentary, in the form of the exemplar. This is particularly visible in narrative's predilection for crises, particularly ones involving death. Indeed, for Kermode, the primary intention of the modern novel is to create awareness of the momentary, of the mortality of human existence. In this way, narrative finds its supreme expression in the life-and-death struggle. Central to all myth-criticism is the fertility cosmic-cycle archetype imbuing the transient, mundane and secular with the eternity and universality of the cosmos through the sacred power of rebirth (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:91).

Understandably, the only consistency in the depictions of death in literature and art is its variety (Davies 2005:90-1). Through association with general adversity, the GRIM REAPER becomes a symbol of archetypal ADVERSITY in any form, not just death. As the archetypal ADVERSARY, it becomes the natural antithesis of the archetypal HERO, and the hero's victory or defeat of the adversary signifies the supremacy or failure of the COSMIC CYCLE which the hero represents. Indeed, the HERO'S JOURNEY is archetypally presented as a COSMIC DEATH-REBIRTH CYCLE. The hero journeys to the PERILOUS REALM, which is a topicalization of DEATH, and either fails and is damned to remain in the land of the dead, or more typically overcomes the ADVERSARY to return in a symbolic rebirth (Campbell 2008 [1949], Thompson 1977 [1946], Underberg 2005b, Garry 2005a. Garry 2005b, Brennan et al. 2005. Barta 1988, Spivak 1988a, De Rose & Garry 2005, El-Aswad 2005, Eliade 1974 [1949]).

In this way, every challenge we face in life is a symbolic confrontation with death, and when we succeed the old in us dies and we are reborn a changed person, wiser and better off for the experience. In this way, the older fertility symbolism of THE COSMIC DEATH-REBIRTH CYCLE and BENEVOLENT DEATH has been restored in a more abstract form. Just as the ancients did, we too find the inspiration, in the face of the grim countenance of inevitability, to transform the ultimate source of despair into one of faith and hope (Davies 2005:10-13).

As Morgan (2002) explains, narrative seems particularly preoccupied with the embodied imagery of birth and death, because these are the most tangible manifestations of the nebulous thing we call human existence. But between life and death, death makes for a more powerful image. This is not only because of its emotional and semantic impact, but more importantly, because of its tangibility. Paradoxically, even though we think of death as abstract and life as real and

tangible, semantically it is the opposite. Life is bewilderingly varied; as Star Trek eloquently puts it, life is '*infinite diversity in infinite combinations*'[27]. Death by contrast is grimly finite and certain. We see this in the difference between the folktale protagonist who symbolises life and the antagonist who represents death. Here, the protagonist's nebulous character typically contrasts with the clearly defined outline of the antagonist (see Section 6.2.2).

In this way, death literally becomes the measure of life. The antagonist provides the clarity the protagonist lacks, and the things we value in life are defined by the adversities which threaten them. The love story is defined by the loneliness it overcomes; the detective story is defined by the mystery at its core; the adventure tale is defined by the Great Unknown; and the action story by ever-present imminent danger. Life then is only drawn in the negative, silhouetted by its opposite.

In narrative, life then is affirmed by the double negative, by the death of death. In the folktale, the hero most often affirms life by literally killing the representative of death, namely the antagonist. But in most narratives, this is more abstract. For example, the detective unravels the mystery, which is the enemy of knowledge, with knowledge, the lover wins over the reluctance of the object of affection. But in each case, the life value is only conceived through the reflection of its opposite, and affirmed through the opposite's elimination.

In this way, as Davies (2005) states, we symbolically salvage hope from the bleak certainty of our own demise. Confronted with that desperate truth, we are driven to make the most of what we have – to leave behind something meaningful or lasting, something that survives our own demise and grants us supremacy over death. This is what Mircea Eliade dubs the terror of history and the myth of the eternal return (1974, Coupe 1997:50-6) and is the significance of Frazer's fertility ur-myth from *the Golden Bough* (1990 [1890]). It leads us to the archetypal hero's journey and its narrative symbolisation of the cosmic death-rebirth cycle. In this archetype, the hero, the personified cause of the archetypal event, kills death to ensure his or her rebirth.

[27] From the Star Trek (1968) episode "Is There in Truth No Beauty?

5.7 Conclusion

To conclude, by accepting the thematic definition of narrative as a collection of exemplars or representations of experience which serve to illustrate a shared theme or narrative message, we see that the Fryean concepts of archetype and exemplification (or imagery as he termed it) are essential in terms of defining and communicating the theme-exemplar relationship, to the extent that archetype and exemplification define narrative itself. Understanding archetype is then essential to understanding the function that narrative serves in society as well as its function in human consciousness i.e. in terms of the cognition of experience, the communication of that experience, and the creation of the shared socio-cultural values which guide our interpretation and engagement of the world through experience.

In this way, the thematic-archetypal theory of narrative not only presents a more informative explanation of narrative texts themselves, but also of the essential function they serve in shaping human consciousness, language, society and our interaction with the world. Although these extrapolations are based on substantial evidence from a variety of fields, it is admittedly a complex and broad-ranging proposition that has implications for a great many fields of study. Hence, this theory requires a great deal of further investigation to be fully accepted, yet for all these reasons is deserving of our honest appraisal and dedicated inquiry.

Chapter 6

Exemplary narrative

Having laid out a theory of thematic narrative, it is suitable to now provide some illustrations of how the theory applies to real narrative texts. This will be the subject of the final chapters of this thesis. For this purpose, a primary topic of this chapter is the form of narrative that shall be termed the exemplary narrative.

Cluysenaar (1976) states that even though linguistics provides us with evidence-based, objectively verifiable information about texts, *stylistic analysis is nevertheless inherently subjective*. This is because although linguistics may provide us with the structuring laws of linguistic formations, it provides no clear-cut comprehensive rule-system to guide our selection of which linguistic information is relevant to the interpretation of the text, nor how to integrate the different details provided into a holistic interpretation of a text's meaning. In other words, it provides us with the toolset, but not a comprehensive instruction guide. Linguistics provides us with formal conventions of meaning associations, but it is up to our subjective judgement to determine when and how they are appropriate to understanding discourse. Thus, linguistic analysis always has *an inseparable subjective component* (c.f. Abrams 1993 [1957]:247).

This corresponds to the Greimasean understanding that interpretations are ultimately subjective and arbitrary. This is even more applicable at the super-clausal level for the reason of *under-specification*, as discussed previously (see Section 1.1). From this perspective, it is therefore an understanding of the ways in which we interpret rather than the interpretations themselves which is the objective of narrative study.

At the same time, it also needs to be kept in mind that linguistics has long tended to be biased towards conventionalised interpretations, as well as for certain unfounded assumptions regarding ordinary linguistic conventions, often to the neglect of significant variations in meaning or interpretation within the linguistic community For instance, constructions which have been considered awkward or ambiguous by linguists have later been shown to be quite commonplace in actual language use (Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 336-7). This requires that we always keep in mind that any linguistic interpretation is only one among many.

For these reasons, the first analyses will focus mainly on exemplary narrative, which are narratives in which the theme is either explicitly given or strongly implied. In part, this is simply for the sake of brevity, allowing us to focus on a single theme rather than several possible themes (even though this itself is not as simple as it may first appear, as we shall see below). But a closer look at exemplary narrative is also instructive since it is here that the role of theme in narrative is most evident. Exemplary narrative is often made to seem like some kind of outlier or exception when it comes to narrative (Blackham 1988). This likely stems from the anti-thematic formalist prejudice discussed previously. However, as will be demonstrated below, exemplary narrative is much more like ordinary narrative than is often considered. There is no clear-cut distinction to be made between exemplary narrative and other kinds of narrative (Section 4.5.2). Rather these occur on a continuum, or rather multiple continua existing between narrative and non-narrative discourse.

A study of exemplary narrative therefore allows us to observe more clearly how stories select for themes, which is at the crux of a thematic definition of narrative. As was argued in the previous chapter, exemplification does select an intended meaning, or a range of potential meanings. If it didn't it would deprive it of all possibility of communicative value. But to state that a text has a variety of possible interpretations is not the same as to say that any and all possible interpretations apply.

Lastly, this will also be a study of the exemplary narrative form for its own sake, as such a study provides insight into how different narrative forms communicate theme in their own particular way. This is because of the reasons given above, but also because of the key role exemplary narratives have played in the history and development of both folk narrative and literary narrative.

6.1 The definition of exemplary narrative

As is often the case, the definition of this literary term is not so clear cut. There are many different terms used to signify a story which exemplifies a clear message or theme, and definitions of individual terms themselves can vary considerably. Instances of this include the allegory, fable, parable, exemplum, anecdote, apologue, etc. All of these differ with regards to some detail in the manner of exemplification.

This is why a neologism has been chosen: *the exemplary narrative*, which signifies all narratives where the theme is given or otherwise made explicit rather than implicit. Abrams (1993 [1957]) groups all of these terms under the title of *allegory*. Dupriez (1991), does the same, under the term *apologue*.

The exemplary narrative is any narrative with a clear conventionally-agreed upon theme. This can either be explicit or only strongly implied, but generally, the theme is not merely an organising principle used to guide our interpretation of the narrative, but its main purpose. This refers to the earlier distinction between exemplar- and theme-dominant narratives (see Section 4.5.2). In the expository narrative, *what happened to me today*, emphasis falls on the informative value of the various *happenings*, and the theme serves only to contextualise them, while in the explanatory narrative, *how to get from a to b*, the instances are entirely subservient to the informational value of the holistic theme – in the first instance, the instances have value in themselves, while in the latter, the instances only have value in relation to the whole. In other words, the exemplary narrative is a form of narrative whose primary function is to illustrate the theme.

Goodman (1976) explains it this way: denotation is the relationship between a sign and the group of objects which it refers to. Exemplification, on the other hand, is *the use of a single member or instance of a group, a single denotatum, as an illustration of that group as a whole*. Typically, this instance comprises a highly representative one, that is, one that demonstrates many prototypical features. Thus, exemplification is similar to narrative in general, but exemplary narrative in particular – it is the use of an instance from a category to illustrate the category as a whole. Like metaphor, its purpose is experiential enrichment of an abstraction, and this is achieved in a variety of ways.

6.1.1 Types of exemplary narrative

Of the various terms associated with exemplary narrative, exemplum and apologue are perhaps the most comprehensive. *Exemplum* defines *any story told to illustrate a moral* (Cuddon 2012 [1977]: 294). Exempla are distinct in that they are typically used in an explanatory context rather than an illustrative one: their purpose is to explain a difficult concept. This is different from how theme usually functions in that, as explained before, typically the theme informs our understanding of the story as much

as the story informs our understanding of the theme. In addition, exempla are typically, though not exclusively, tied to the context of religious sermons (Abrams 1993 [1957]:6). As such it is closely related to the parable.

The *apologue* is a relatively comprehensive term, meaning *any story 'Illustrating some 'truth''* (Dupriez 1991:55), and encompassing all the above terms. However, there doesn't appear to be much consistency regarding its definition. For some, an apologue is merely another word for fable (Abrams 1993 [1957]:5). For others, an apologue is like an allegory (a comparison of stories) but differs from it in that individual actors and events from the stories being compared do not have to correspond, only the outcome of the story as a whole. For others, an apologue is necessarily fanciful and unrealistic (Dupriez 1991:56). For others again, the definition is entirely different and far broader, not even requiring a story, just a single word or reference to a thing, an illustration, such as *He is a Hercules* or *Peter is the rock on which the church is built* (Cuddon 2012 [1977]:35, Blackham 1988:xi).

Cuddon defines *allegory* as *a story with multiple meanings*, one of which is literal, and one or more which is implicit or metaphorical. This is achieved by means of analogy, and the purpose is generally explanatory, specifically either moral or explanatory (that is, to illustrate an idea), satirical (in which case the analogy need not be entirely convincing, only humorous), or salutary (employing a complementary comparison – as in *he is a Hercules*) (2012 [1977]:20). Blackham provides a more precise definition, namely that while fable is a likeness between an idea and an instance, allegory is a likeness between two instances. Fable thus has, as a feature, thematic integration or compression (to use the Blending Theory terminology) that allegory avoids (1988:xv). Abrams further distinguishes between realistic allegory and 'the allegory of ideas' (1993 [1957]:4), where the allegory comprises either an analogy between two realistic or at least plausible occurrences, such as the frequent comparisons with David and Goliath, or where the illustration is explicitly fantastical or abstract, such as *Gulliver's Travels* or *The Divine Comedy*. Allegory is also often differentiated from its near synonyms by its length, as fable, exemplum, parable and anecdote are typically defined as short stories. The latter also differ from allegory in their tendency to make some broad statement about human nature (Abrams 1993 [1957]:5), while allegory can serve to illustrate any proposition.

Allegory foregrounds the role of blending in narrative rather than exemplification. When we compare a seemingly unequal contest in sports to the story of David and Goliath, or a long and eventful journey to the Odyssey or the Biblical Exodus, we are primarily juxtaposing two instances, not an instance and a theme. Allegory's frequent correlation with exemplary narratives is thus deceptive. Allegory departs from most exemplary narrative by not strongly proposing a relationship between theme and exemplar, but instead between two exemplars (Blackham 1988:xv). In this sense, allegory is much more alike to conventional narrative, where theme is more implicit and ambiguous. Allegory thus serves as a patent example of narrative blending. This is the same process of attempting to find a relationship between two distinct events. The difference is that in allegory, the instances are far more distinct from one another by virtue of comprising separate narratives, and therefore the relationship between them is made more prominent.

The *fable*, on the other hand, is perhaps the most recognisable and well-known example of exemplary narrative. Yet when we look at what has historically been included in collections of fables, we find examples of almost every kind – fairy tales, myths, legends, anecdotes, debate, historical accounts, jokes, and in modern renditions, travelogues, ethnographies, fantasies and even science fictions. In this sense, the kind and matter of the story doesn't appear to matter – only how it is composed (Blackham 1988:xvii, Whitesell 1947).

Some define fables as specifically animal allegories, though this is often not the case, and many fable collections comprise tales both with and without animals (Whitesell 1947). Others specify further that these are fantastical tales of animals (Propp 1984 [1949], Thompson 1977 [1946]:10), though while animal characters are common, even Aesop combines both fantastical and realistic stories of both animals and other subjects in his *Fables*. Indeed, Salisbury (1994:105-34) states that the association of fable with animals is a recent development. Originally, animals were simply used for their convenience as commonplace familiar exemplars. In the early Greece, fables were a narrative tradition particular to the peasant class, and were taught as part of rhetoric specifically as a device to appeal to the *dêmos*, a people who would be highly familiar with animal behaviour (Clayton 2008).

Often, the term fable is taken as synonymous with the beast fable (Abrams 1993 [1957]). While this is the most common type of fable, it is certainly not the only kind.

There are two types of beast fable, namely the rarer beast anecdote, which is a description of the natural behaviour of animals followed by the moral that this can teach to the human observer, and the beast fairy tale, which is the more common of the two. The latter falls more properly in the fairy tale tradition, comprising anthropomorphic beasts usually serving as paragons of some human trait in a morality tale (Whitesell 1947). The imagery of the fable is usually highly archetypal – animal imagery such as the FOX, LION or ASS are well-established archetypes, but also includes non-character archetypes such as events, props or settings. The bestial cast typically serves as a representation of various human virtues and vices (Blackham 1988:1, Lakoff & Turner 1989), and the fable thus as an inculcation of desired cultural values, serving as an instrument of socialisation.

Nature clearly featured more prominently in past cultures than it does in the highly urbanised world of today, and animal behaviour would have been far more familiar to these people than they are to us. As such, animals provided an experientially rich domain from which to draw on in thinking about the world and in particular, human behaviour (Clayton 2008). We witness this, for instance, in the prominence of animals in proverbs (Lakoff & Turner 1989). Thus, we can speculate that fables were originally essentially narrative proverbs. It is only in the Middle Ages that we find animals transformed into a fictional space for the projection of human societal features, as for instance in the *Reynard the Fox* fables, where we find animals engaging in entirely human occupations. This innovation made human fables redundant as any moral theme could thus be transformed into animal narratives. In this tradition, fable characters no longer represent animals but rather serve merely as empty placeholders for character archetypes (Salisbury 1994:134).

In classical times, the fable was closer to our present definition of *any fiction representing a moral*. However, even then the association with animals was salient. Aesop, for example, was mythologised into a half-man, half-beast (Salisbury 1994:105-7). Blackham explains that this is because the association with animals also serves as a validation of the moral truths they convey by associating them with natural law (1988). Animal fables ground human truths in natural law and our animal natures through the ancient wisdom that Darwin only recently rediscovered – that we are all victims of nature (Zipes 2012:13).

With the Greeks, the fable also gained political prominence as a medium for social commentary. Despite their ostensible moral function, fables also regularly employ humour as well, and they were often told simply for entertainment. As such, they were often intentionally ambiguous (Salisbury 1994:107-9). Fables were thus contemplative rather than prescriptive – they not only teach a lesson but also employ ambiguity to encourage contemplation – and have been used as often to question cultural norms as to instil them. Fables thus become an ideologically neutral marketplace for political thought (Zipes 1988, 2012:13).

Thus, historically, the only common feature of fable is a story that illustrates a moral. However, even this is a problematic definition, since the moral can be implied rather than stated, so that simply placing a story among other fables can transform it into one, or vice-versa, dissociating it from its context can change its meaning. In fact, we see this happening occasionally in the past, with the same story sometimes occurring in fable collections, other times in short story collections (Whitesell 1947). This is interesting since it implies that even though the fable has identifiable structural characteristics, much of what defines a fable is the attitude of the audience and the interpretive strategies they select.

Also, the importance of the moral of the story can vary. We see in Ambrose Bierce's *Fantastic Fables* (1995) instances whose sole purpose is amusement, and whose 'morals' serve more in the role of punchlines to the joke:

> **The Ineffective Rooter**
>
> A Drunken Man was lying in the road with a bleeding nose, upon which he had fallen, when a Pig passed that way.
>
> "You wallow fairly well," said the Pig, "but, my fine fellow, you have much to learn about rooting."
>
> **The Moral Principle and the Material Interest . . .**
>
> A Moral Principle met a Material Interest on a bridge wide enough for but one.
>
> "Down, you base thing!" thundered the Moral Principle, "and let me pass over you!"
>
> The Material Interest merely looked in the other's eyes without saying anything.

> “Ah,” said the Moral Principle, hesitatingly, “let us draw lots to see which shall retire till the other has crossed.”
>
> The Material Interest maintained an unbroken silence and an unwavering stare.
>
> “In order to avoid a conflict,” the Moral Principle resumed, somewhat uneasily, “I shall myself lie down and let you walk over me.”
>
> Then the Material Interest found a tongue, and by a strange coincidence it was its own tongue. “I don’t think you are very good walking,” it said. “I am a little particular about what I have underfoot. Suppose you get off into the water.”
>
> It occurred that way.

These stories hinge on wit, not so much truth, and the morals they convey are often patently false, if nonetheless humorous and entertaining. Throughout their history, fables have therefore varied between instructional and entertaining (Salisbury 1994:109). While their genesis was in etiological myths (origin stories, such as *Where the leopard got its spots*), along with their secularization came an increasing focus on amusement, and thus the fable has swung between these poles in accordance with context (Whitesell 1947).

But even if on-the-surface humorous fables may appear very different from the moral kind, perhaps they are not. The moral and the humorous fable both have one thing in common: they both depend on a comparatively narrow interpretation, simply because either the moral at the end of the story, or the punchline, or both, only works in relation to certain interpretations. Without these we are free to interpret the story however we like, while in their presence, we are disposed to a more predictable range of possible meanings. This relates to the thematic function of narrative in constraining the intended message.

The term *parable* corresponds with the fable as a story on themes of human nature, but typically also has an element of religious instruction (Dupriez 1991:56). Whereas the fable aims at exploring the moral by providing an instance for the audience to contemplate, the parable aims instead *to explain the moral by means of an illustration*. In other words, fable has a critical aspect which is more subdued in parable (Beavis 1990), which is only predicable given the latter’s religious context.

The parable is also attached to its moral in a way that the fable is not, since it is not to be contemplated in a general sense, but specifically in its relation to spiritual or religious domains. But these distinctions are relative, and there is always something of the fable in the parable and vice-versa (Blackham 1988:xiv).

Finally, there are borderline cases such as *anecdotes* and *fairy tales*. In both of these instances, it is common, though by no means obligatory, for the story *to have some clearly stated moral behind it* (Dupriez 1991:56). However, with these tales, the purpose of conveying a moral is overshadowed by the primary *purpose to delight and entertain* (Whitesell 1947:1047). In this sense then, we see that most narratives clearly emphasise their plurisignifying and ambiguous liberty in interpretation, with a comparatively weaker thematic determinism. It is through the contrast with exemplary narrative that we can best observe the creativity of the rest of narrative.

6.1.2 Universal qualities of exemplary narrative

It is the affinity between fable and parable which betrays the *mythic origins* of exemplary narratives. It is theorised that religion was once primarily etiological in nature, as it still is among many primitive cultures around the world. As such, its primary purpose was to explain everyday phenomena through tracing them back to their divine origins. Divinity thus became a conceptual space for realising the abstract truths which reason deduces from everyday experience. As primitive religion evolved into modern religion, it changed both in substance and in purpose, foregoing its etiological concerns (such as where does rain and lightning come from?) for more abstract, philosophical and theological meditations (such as the nature of free will and its relation to divine law) (Frazer 1990). This created a void which in turn was filled by fable. Myth provided the template for these new stories. Myths are moral tales deprived of their religious authority, parables which have lapsed into fable. But while myths often retain a popularity despite their loss of credibility, for early Christians, using pagan gods to sanction moral instruction was no longer feasible. Nor was it feasible to incorporate new ideas, meanings and interpretations into the biblical canon. For this reason, the exemplum, fable, parable and allegory were created: etiological tales in the form of the old religious tales, but appealing to reason and common sense rather than divine authority (Whitesell 1947, Propp 1984 [1949]:78-9, Dupriez 1991:57). Parable thus occurs on this boundary between divine

etiology and exemplum. Like the religious edict it partly subsists on ‘so sayeth the Lord’, but like the exemplum, it also partly appeals to reason.

Most historiographers of exemplary narratives trace them back to the earliest written examples from ancient Sumer (Zipes 2012:10, Salisbury 1994, Holzberg 2002). But this ignores the etiological tale, which traces back to our most distant hunter-gatherer roots. After all, what is an exemplary narrative, if not all narrative to some extent, other than an experiential etiological myth – they attempt to relate a socially prescribed truth to an experiential rather than a divine etiology: this is true because this kind of experience validates it as such.

Thus, the exemplary narrative can be viewed as subsuming a type of etiology. The importance of etiological myths derives from the explanatory power of origination. Origins in themselves are often important for understanding phenomena. Understanding the cause of an effect often enables one to control that effect through the manipulation of the cause (Doty 2000:5). This is of particular importance when it comes to human causation and the cultural artefacts it produces. Thus, an understanding of origins not only imparts partial control of the natural world, but even greater control of the cultural environment. But aside from this, the embodied metaphor of the original/etiological/creation/founding archetype is also an instrumental cognitive model which increases cognitive control of phenomena irrespective of the actual physical control it imparts. As stated before, personifying non-human causalities through the model of human agency allows our minds to better make sense of them (Section 3.4.4). We see an example of this in Golden Age myths. Through these myths we imagine the time of origin as a golden age of perfection. This derives from the understanding that the original intention and the product are not always the same. Thus, the mythic Golden Age provides a cultural yardstick by which all endeavours can be evaluated. Furthermore, the myth manifests the cultural ideals of a society as a shared material vision of what reality should be; in this way providing a guide to coordinating individual endeavours into unified social constructs (Doty 2000:58-60). The exemplary narrative, as a form of etiology, demonstrates many of these same characteristics.

Clearly, the exemplary narrative can assume a wide variety of forms. But what all exemplary narratives, allegory, fable, parable, exemplum, etc. have in common is the literary device of *concretisation*. Concretisation is the use of a concrete example as a

substitute for a concept (Dupriez 1991:114). This is, in essence, the same thing as our previously defined concept of instantiation, namely the substitution of an instance for an abstraction or category, the difference being that with exemplary narrative, this function is more pronounced than usual, given the explicit nature of the theme. This contrast between the exemplary narrative and other folktales corresponds with Beardsley's distinction between thesis and theme. Theme comprises the raw materials of a thesis, but leaves it up to the audience's judgement to determine their precise thetic arrangement. The thesis in contrast is a definite and unequivocal proposition. On this basis one can differentiate two kinds of narratives, a thematic story, where a topic is presented to the audience to deliberate upon, and the thetic story, which presents an argument which the story seeks to convince the audience of. Exemplary narratives emphasise the process of exemplification described in the last chapter, which is the priming of a specific theme in the narrative. It does so to the point that theme is not just suggested but explicitly stated in the form of a *thesis*.

This thematic/thetic narrative distinction relates to a broader thematic vs. thetic discourse distinction. As Frye (1957:52-3) argues, the distinction between thetic and thematic exposition, or in his terms, *mythos* and *dianoia*, is the difference between narrative and discursive exposition. It is the former's emphasis on experiential expositions and the ambiguity that this fosters that lends narrative its distinctive character, and similarly the latter's focus on abstraction and clarity which makes it appropriate to discursive writing.

In other words, the abstraction-instance relationship is in essence universal to all language – the difference between narrative and discourse being that discourse sustains clear evidenciary arguments linking thesis (abstraction) and evidence (instance), while narrative only provides an illustrative example (instance), suggests a possible conclusion in the theme (abstraction), and then leaves it up to the audience to make up their mind. This also relates to the previous distinction between folk- and technical-modelling in language (Section 3.4.1).

Clearly, this distinction is not black and white but graded, with many kinds of variation occupying the space between. In this sense, exemplary narrative, with its more thetic aspect, constitutes an intermediary form between these two main modes of discourse, and blends aspects of both. This explains why thetic narrative is often

classed alongside thetic discourse in general rather than narrative, as we find in the case of the exemplum (Fludernik 2011).

Linde's narrative taxonomy links this to an even broader framework (Section 4.5.2). You will recall that she distinguished between three classes of narrative, namely chronicles/expository narratives, conventional narratives, and exemplary narratives. The expository narrative emphasises the exemplar, so that the theme is effectively minimal. Examples of this type of narrative have been previously discussed (eye-witness testimonies, 'how was your day' type narratives, etc.). Next we have conventional narrative, where there is a balance between theme and instance. Lastly, there is exemplary narrative, where the exemplar is wholly subordinate to the theme (1993:67-85).

However, even this is relative. It is in the exemplary narrative that we most clearly recognise the blurred boundaries between non-narrative discourse, exemplary or instructive narrative, and meditative *display-text* types of narrative. Narrative, by its very nature imports ambiguity and creativity into the message. Abstractions by their nature are derivative from instances in the same way that we understand the category through its members. Themes and theses, as abstractions of the exemplar, share the same characteristic. In the exemplary narrative, the exemplar provides the evidence which substantiates the thesis, and in this way, the narrator leads the audience to reproduce the same chain of logic that leads to the thesis and in this way to internalise it (Blackham 1988). But by doing so, the narrator also opens up the possibility that the audience may interpret the evidence differently and arrive at another conclusion. As stated above, even thetic narratives differ in how strongly they argue their point. Parables are more authoritative, fables more open to interpretation. Yet even the parable is not absolute: Beavis (1990) demonstrates how the same parable has been attached to different and even conflicting morals at different times and places. Even the exemplary narrative, as with all narrative, has a primarily meditative rather than argumentative function.

To give an example, the *Emperor's New Clothes* is generally taken as an allusion to being caught out at self-deception (Hirsch et al. 2002) – a version of the *liars eventually get caught* theme. Yet it has equally often been interpreted more generally as relating to the theme of scepticism, specifically, trusting one's own judgment over purported fact (Zipes 2005). But others again point out that the

epilogue to the tale, specifically that the emperor and his courtiers continue as though nothing had happened, point to a darker, more cautionary interpretation: the immunity of falsehood to evidence and of power as the sole legitimator of truth (Wood 2007). Clearly, even in the case where the thesis is generally agreed upon, interpretations of its meaning can still depart starkly from one another.

As Blackham (1988:xi-xviii) explains, the exemplary narrative is more than just an illustration of a moral, because it says more than the minimum this purpose requires. Rather, the exemplar itself is the intended message, and the moral only an embedded part within the larger story. The exemplary narrative expresses the moral in a way that not only explains it, but inspires us to contemplate it, to question it, to think critically about it. It is for this reason that the fable is also typically *short* – so as to be memorable and capable of being held in the mind all at once. The entertaining or humorous effect of exemplary narrative also highlights this creative and meditative aspect – exemplary narrative is not merely instructive.

Exemplary narratives are usually perspicuously fictive, even if inspired by real events. This shows us that they are not meant to be taken merely as an instance, but instead as an exemplification of the moral, not just any example of the theme, but the best example. Fiction enables the creation of an even more perfect exemplar than any realistic version, and thus an even clearer communication of the theme. But it is also an invitation to contemplation: the exemplar breaks down the abstraction into its component parts so that we can examine their relations and explore alternate constructions (Section 3.4.4) – in other words, the exemplar enables us to manipulate the concept. The fictionality of the exemplar in essence serves to heighten awareness of this componential nature of the theme (Blackham 1988:xiii-xvii). In this way, the exemplar or narrative becomes a ‘display text’ (Section 5.2.1), something which, while conveying a message, also becomes a subject of meditation in itself. The exemplary narrative may be told because it teaches a lesson particularly relevant to the situation, or simply because the lesson is generally worth knowing irrespective of immediate relevance – the exemplary narrative can and often does do both of these at the same time.

The exemplary narrative is not only fictive in general terms, but fictive in a specific sense – namely it is metaphorical, in the sense that all narratives are metaphorical, as was discussed in Sections 2.4.2, 4.2.2.and 4.4.2 Its nature is to express an idea,

typically in an active, instantiated form, so as to evoke thought about it. Exemplary narrative then simply extends this narrative feature into the dominant by stating the metaphoric relationship between theme and instance explicitly, much in the way that simile is an explicit form of metaphoric likeness (Blackham 1988:xi-xiii).

6.2 Exemplary narrative in the folktale tradition

Exemplary narrative traditionally forms part of the larger folktale tradition, particularly in the case of the fable (Thompson 1977 [1946]). Like exemplary narrative, folktales are often perceived as *conveying a general moral or message*, whether it be to caution against bad manners in the case of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, trespassing in the case of *Hansel and Gretel*, or trusting strangers in *Little Red Riding Hood*. As Zipes states, essential to understanding the folktale is to understand the specific use it is intended for, and how that use defines its shape (Zipes 1988:13). However, these morals are often cloaked in rich imagery which obscures them and leaves them more open to interpretation than the typical exemplary narrative (Zipes 1988:12). But even when they do not convey such a specific theme, they are still rooted in archetype which attaches to certain general themes (Doty 2000), such as the archetype of THE MAGICAL FLIGHT with themes of liberation or discovery. Thus, to properly understand the exemplary narrative requires a firm grasp of the broader folktale tradition in which it is placed.

Archetype, which is the narrative exemplification of theme in its most essential form, features more prominently in the folktale than anywhere else. It is not insignificant either that the folktale is also historically the root form and source of all narrative. Thus, the folktale provides the clearest picture of why the theme-exemplar relationship is so essential to the form and function of narrative and why consequently the thematic definition of narrative is so significant to understanding the latter.

6.2.1 Defining the folktale

The term *folktale* designates an integral part of the larger tradition termed ‘folklore’. Folklore varies widely between social groups, but even so it can be defined in general terms. Firstly, folklore is an abstraction, comprising the ideas behind the individual cultural products by which we know it, rather than the products

themselves. Secondly, the term only designates the communal ideas, not those of individual members of the society. This is why it is necessarily an abstraction, since it comprises those qualities which individual products have in common rather than the individual items themselves. Thirdly, folklore is often ritualised or conventionalised by distinctive cultural forms which distinguish them from individual creations by the weight of social sanction. Historically, folklore has also often been characterised by its longevity, often in this way coming to constitute a tradition, and by oral transmission, though these last two criteria have come to be viewed as outdated in the modern age (Ben-Amos 1971). From this definition, it becomes clear how some commentators like Frye and Doty can view narrative theme as synonymous with culture. Narrative is an extension of the folktale tradition, which in turn is an integral part of the folklore tradition, which clearly is simply another word for culture in an individuated form (Ben-Amos 1971).

The term folktale encompasses a wide range of different story types. Thompson's taxonomy is perhaps the most widely accepted: the most prominent of these are the fairy tale, the legend and the myth (Thompson 1977 [1946]). The *fairy tale* typically features fictive characters involved in marvellous adventures in imagined settings (Zipes 1988). As Jolles explains, its focus is on the theme or cultural value which it seeks to instil, and its fantastical nature reflects this idealised form (Scholes 1974:47). *Legends* typically comprise shorter narratives involving real persons in known locales, though often involved in extraordinary occurrences. According to Jolles, the legend proposes ideals of human conduct. These ideals are thus both abstract yet also human and approachable – it is the concretisation of the ideal. The tragedy is thus an inverted form of the legend – a negative ideal (Scholes 1974:44). *Myths* occupy the intervening space between these two extremes: they typically involve fantastic beings, places and events which are nevertheless intended to be believable on the basis of religious authority. Unlike the fairy tale, the purpose of the myth is to be more instructive than entertaining, either conveying important lessons or else metaphysical information such as the cultural beliefs concerning cosmogony or the afterlife (Thompson 1977 [1946], Propp 1984 [1949], Scholes 1974:45).

Aside from the three main types, important sub-types are: the *etiological tale*, which usually falls under the category of myth, but is occasionally secular. *Riddles* mirror this mythic function, but only in interrogative form, as do *proverbs*, but in the form of

a concise, striking statement. Then there is the *fable*, which has been mentioned above. The *saga* is a form of legend which merges the social normative functions of the legend with cultural history. Also related to legend is the *memoir*, which is a chronicle of real events and emphasises observable details. This has been the predominant form in novels (namely, realism) (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 113). The *novelle* is a kind of fairy tale which takes place in the known world, such as occurs in the *Arabian Nights*. This then constitutes a blended or intermediate form between the legend and the fairy tale. And finally, there is the *jest* or *anecdote*, which is a short story told for humorous effect, and often corresponds with the category of fairy tales. Like the novelle it also merges the legend and fairy tale functions, typically by juxtaposing the ideal truth of the fairy tale with the reality of the legend, as a means of scrutinising or criticising social norms or values (Thompson 197 [1946]7:7-10, Propp 1984 [1949]:39-47, Scholes 1974:44-8).

Zipes (2012) explains that each narrative serves a distinct function, and that it is the differences in narrative function that define the various narrative types. Moreover, these differences are complementary, as the different narrative types serve to meet the different needs of a society. In this vein, Luthi distinguishes between two important needs that narrative serves to meet. These are the communication of experience, and of ideas. Accordingly, Luthi distinguishes the primary role of legend as the former, of fairy tale as the latter, and of myth as serving the intermediary function of grounding everyday experience in important cultural ideas. In this way, myth both substantiates cultural beliefs with evidence from daily experience and provides a cosmological interpretive framework for those experiences. Consequently, myth serves the vital function of providing a kind of bridge between legend and fairy tale, between experience and thought (1986 [1951]: 82-3). It is thus not coincidental that myth also serves a cosmological function. Importantly, these types are not strictly delineated: there exists a minority of borderline cases which merge elements of these different genres (1986 [1951]:102-3).

In this way, Luthi grounds generic folktale differences in a visionary functional definition based on the same abstraction-instantiation cline presented previously. Indeed, the thematic definition proposed in this thesis is hardly new within the field of folkloristics and mythography, as is true of most academic fields concerned with the study of narrative, and instead seems to constitute the mainstream definition of

narrative outside of narratology (c.f. Swann Jones 2002, Zipes 2012). Within this framework, the fairy tale lies on the most abstract end of the spectrum, while the legend, and even more so, the modern conventional narrative, on the instantiated end, with myth serving as an intermediary form. However, the differences are more complicated than this. Fairy tales express this heightened abstraction through an almost purely archetypal form of narrative, while in conventional narrative, archetype is wholly subordinate to the function of instantiation. Thus, the generic differences are measured in terms of archetypal prominence (Luthi 1986 [1951]). For this reason, it is useful to explore the fairy-tale at some length in our study of archetype.

In order to explain why these differences exist, it is necessary to look for a moment at the origins of the folktale. When it comes to the origins of fairy tales, there are two main schools of thought. The first view concentrates on the archetypes and narrative functions which folktales exemplify and the continuities between these and the earlier mythologies they evolved out of (da Silva & Tehrani 2016, c.f. Luthi 1986 [1951]). These are readily apparent when we observe these stories out of the perspective of the Aarne-Thompson-Uther motif index[28] (Uther 2004). In this view, the changes that occurred between the earlier mythological forms and the more recent fairy tale forms are largely superficial, and therefore this school of thought traces the origins of these stories back thousands or even tens of thousands of years.

The more accepted view, on the other hand, originally formulated by the Brothers Grimm and maintained by eminent scholars like Zipes (1988) and Luthi (1986 [1951]), points to their disconnection from religion and mythology as an indicator that their present form could only have come about after the widespread popular conversion to Christianity and consequent extinction of pagan religion. In this view, the inherent hostility of Christian theology and its abstractions to the embodied, instantiated view of the sacred inherent in earlier religions, forced the folktale traditions to evolve into the fairy tale form.

Both views have their respective strengths and weaknesses: the latter school in its overemphasis on formal characteristics and consequent neglect of the essential social narrative functions they were created to express, and in the former case, a

[28] This is perhaps the most influential work in folkloristics, creating a catalogue of folktales from across the world in terms of their shared motifs.

neglect of the significant impacts of the unique historical and local variations of these stories. More importantly though, these two schools of thought are not mutually contradictory, but even complementary. We can at the same time acknowledge the antiquity of the root narrative functions of these stories, while also acknowledging the significant changes that accompany their natural evolution across time and space. This is essentially what the Fryean archetypal framework does.

Luthi presents a theory of folktale evolution which reconciles these views within the framework of Frazer's theory of cultural evolution (1990 [1890]:11-140). According to this theory, myth was the original form of narrative, fulfilling all narrative functions through its ideal harmonising of theme and exemplar. However, as Frazer argues, cultural cosmological myths demonstrate increasing abstraction as societies develop technologically. While animistic cultural world-views are very much based in the here-and-now, with every stage of societal advancement, cosmological myths move increasingly away from the physical toward the metaphysical. According to Luthi, as these myths evolve, the narrative bonds between thought and experience stretch thinner and thinner until they break, resulting in the desacralisation of myths. When this occurs, two things happen. Either, in the case of legend and conventional narrative, they focus on their instantiation function of representing experience, or in the case of fairy tale, they focus on their thematic function, becoming narratives of almost purely archetypal form (1986 [1951]:98, 115). Hence, in the present secular age, it isn't surprising that legend and its modern derivative (the novel) has become the almost exclusive form of narrative in circulation. The fairy tale has unfortunately not shared the same fate, largely due to a concurrent reverence of novelty and consequent scepticism toward the explanatory power of archetype beyond their admitted pragmatic value as a tool for instructing children.

The fairy tale and legend then both evolved out of desacralised myths. But why then the distinction between archetypal and instantiated narrative? Luthi (1986 [1951]) explains this in terms of their conflicting functions. Abstraction and instantiation are different in nature, and therefore they often conflict. The fairy tale aspires to the ideal representation of archetype in its purest form, while the legend employs theme in its loosest sense so as encompass the broadest range of events (Luthi 1986 [1951], Olrik 1992 [1921]:42, Rosenberg 1978). In other words, legends represent archetypes in their broadest and most adaptable form, while fairy tales represent

them in their most precise and restrictive sense. Thus, the fairy tale is the most ideal form of archetypal narrative. The folktale, then, is less a kind of narrative, and more a *quality of* all narrative. This quality is more pronounced in myth, most in fairy tales, but less so in the other genres more closely related to legend. Also, by virtue of their desacralisation, folktales are no longer so strictly bound to the mythic function of uniting belief and experience. Thus they have been able to diversify and specialise, some becoming more thetic (as in the case of fable), others more thematic (for example, fairy tale).

This is all further complicated by the characteristics of oral narrative. As stated previously, oral narrative has its own unique characteristics. One of these is a preference for repetition as a compensation for the noise interference natural to spoken communication. Others are contextual embedding (through references to the immediate or familiar), and compositionality (through a wealth of associations between items – again, we saw how high-degree associative integration is an important mnemonic tool – the more interrelated concepts are, the easier they are to remember). These features, we will see, are all highly characteristic of the folktale.

As Olrik (1992 [1921]:62-75) proposes, memorisation is one of the primary defining factors of oral narrative form, and in particular the folktale. Human memory has its limits, and therefore oral narrative is under extreme pressure to achieve its most effective form. Through generational transmission, only the most memorable features in terms of cognitive ease and meaningfulness are retained. In this way, folktales are streamlined (Burkert 1979) or essentialised (Luthi 1986 [1951]) into their purest form. It is also for this reason that the fairy tale vs. legend distinction arose, as the limits of memory make it more practical to devote a particular narrative to either thematic or exemplary function, not both.

These features are so prominent in the folktale, because like the fable, it is truncated, so as to all be held in the mind at once. Like the fable, it is intended to be conceived as a single unified image, not as a series of independent but related episodes or images as with the modern novel. At the same time, like the fable, it represents a theme componentially, in all its constituent parts. For example, the sword the hero is given to defeat the first monster is completely forgotten when he faces the next one so that he is forced to seek a new solution. This is because each monster represents a different problem, and therefore requires a different solution –

the folktale is not so much concerned with the representation of a seamless realistic experience as it is with the ideas behind it. Thus, it readily sacrifices realism for thematic exemplification. It is these discontinuities which demonstrate the archetype's division into it component parts (Luthi 1986 [1951]:36-54). It is this goal of concentrated significance that results in two of the most distinctive features of the folktale, namely the simultaneous simplicity of the narrative as well as the use of striking or distinctive images.

All of these attributes emanate from what is perhaps the most important of Olrik's laws, which is the law of narrative logic. This law states that *the mimetic always surrenders to the thematic* in determining the constituent elements of the narrative (1992 [1921], 1965 [1908]). This is simply a restatement of the central premise of the thematic definition of narrative, namely that as the organising unity of the narrative, the theme defines both the form and content of the exemplar – in short, theme defines narrative. Another related law is Olrik's law of patterning (1992 [1921]). This states that *mimesis is as simplified as possible*, so as not to distract from the thematic dominant. Consequently, elements are reduced to the bare minimum: only one new element is typically introduced at a time, and as far as possible everything is as featureless and indistinct as possible. Recalling Fauconnier and Turner's blending laws, simplification corresponds with the degree of integration in thematic blending, resulting in highly engaging and effective narrative blends.

The folktale's thematic focus is also expressed through its emphasis on archetype. While the world is that of everyday reality, the folktale plot is always inherently unrealistic, to the extent that one can only conclude that it is deliberately so (Propp 1984 [1949]:18). It is not just the frequency of farm boys wedding princesses and becoming kings – even the mundane events seem deliberately framed so as to appear impossible. For instance, trickster characters are hardly extraordinary on their own, but the way in which they are never caught out or consistently trusted with a frankly impossible gullibility foregrounds the narrative's fictive quality. In the same way, the supernatural of the folktale also exhibits this apparently deliberate unreality. While the literary supernatural is often clothed in a semblance of plausibility, the supernatural of folklore is typically pronouncedly nonsensical and often presented in a humorous way so as to underscore its impossibility (Propp 1984 [1949]:19-20).

This deliberate foregrounding of the fictive is only starker still in contrast to the deliberate mundanity of the narrative world.

As stated, the appearance of the fantastical in the folktale exhibits little remark (Luthi 1986 [1951]:6-7). When the hero meets a talking animal, he or she either treats it as unremarkable, or is repeatedly astounded each time it occurs as though each time were the first (42). The entrance of the fantastic is not allowed to interfere with the audience's sense of immersion in the familiar. The hero is regularly aided by miracles which also miraculously appear as needed (58). Time doesn't pass: there are no seasons, and characters are seemingly immortal (19). Time only exists when explicitly evoked, often supernaturally so – the character who has slept for a hundred years awakens unaffected until told, at which he promptly withers to dust (19). And time is marked out perfectly in terms of an idealised pattern, and passes only in specific intervals – it takes an exact amount of time to complete an action, and these intervals often repeat, so that the journey to the monster's lair and the time it takes to kill the monster is often exactly the same (32). For the same reason, providence always favours the hero – he is always where he needs to be at the exact moment (31). The reality of the folktale is not the one we live in, but the one that exists in our minds – it is a thematic rather than a mimetic reality. Miracles appear as easily as the mind makes associations, and the natural laws of this universe obey the architecture of our thoughts.

The magical trinket often only appears when needed and is then immediately forgotten once its usefulness has passed. When the hero is given a magical box, it is forgotten until the time it is needed. It evokes no curiosity until then. 'Everything in the folktale belongs to the same dimension' (Luthi 1986 [1951]:6-7). The gifts the hero receives typically have a single faculty which corresponds perfectly with the challenges he is confronted with (30). For the same reason, changes that occur are purely ornamental (12), and when characters' inner states are represented, they are purely instrumental in terms of causing the following chains of events. The heroine only faints so that the hero can chance upon her. The hero only wails in despair so that the helper can come to his rescue (14). Just as the fabric of reality in the folktale is schematic, so too are the individual constituent objects and events.

As stated before, the folktale is designed to be conceived as a single unified concept. Every element in the narrative has to correspond with a component of that

concept, and when that component has been completely depicted, it vanishes from existence just as abruptly as it appeared. Consequently, functionless elements are rare (60-1). At the same time, these instantiations are meaningless in and of themselves – the instantiations of the folktale are mere tokens (79). They don't so much mean in themselves as suggest where meaning can be inserted (66).

The folktale thus sacrifices the experiential and mimetic in favour of the abstract and archetypal (Luthi 1986 [1951]:55). This artificiality imparts a clarity of form to the narrative which would be impossible in a more realistic narrative (52). What is presented as miraculous chance instead portrays the precise architecture of the abstraction (54). As stated before, this same abstraction is also strongly characteristic of myth. As in the myth, the fictionality of folktales in general is not always consciously appreciated. This is because the audience knows that while the events they portray may not be literally true, they are true in kind. This is because, as abstractions, they are more concerned with the universal truths significant to society as a whole rather than individual truths (Doty 2000:40-2, 61). In other words, folktales focus on thematic truth rather than being true to life. This corresponds with the general narrative semantic principle of compositional rather than denotative or referential meaning. Narrative elements do not refer to real world equivalents, but rather to significant relationships within the central organising theme. Folktales especially, but all narratives to a large extent, take place not in the world of experience but in a thematic reality (Sections 2.3 & 2.4).

The patterns the folktale represents are abstractions from ordinary narrative – the rescue of the maiden, the journey to the underworld, etc. (Luthi 1986 [1951]:68) It concerns itself with representing reality in its most essential form, which is also the elementary function of archetype. In this way, the folktale also represents the form from which all other narratives are elaborations. All other narratives present archetypal features – the folktale is simply its purest representation (92). By capturing the essence of experience rather than the particulars, even while omitting much of the denotative richness of exemplars, archetypes are relevant to more varied and subjective experiences (Zipes 1988:12-3).

At the same time, just as instantiation still plays an integral part in archetype, so too for the folktale. Just as the root of the word *story* comes from the word *to know*, the root of the word *to tell* comes from the word *to count* or *to enumerate*. In this sense,

we can etymologically paraphrase *telling a story* as *the particularization of a concept*. In this we see the two main functions of narrative, which are abstraction or knowing, and instantiation or denotation, which lies at the root of enumeration (affixing mental categories to experiential designates). And although the abstractive function dominates in the folktale, as in all narrative the instantiation function still serves an important function.

Paradoxically, while its primary purpose is thematisation, perhaps even more than modern literature, the folktale also emphasises narrative instantiation. This extreme instantiation is perhaps a compensation for its simultaneous extreme abstraction. The reality of the folktale is, or rather was, the mundane reality of the common man: farmers, shoe-makers, wood-cutters, etc. While folktale exemplars tend to reflect history, it is the history of the common man – the objects, people and places are those of the everyday: lamps, carpets, combs, etc. The modern sensibility emphasises the fact that there is often some extraordinary element at the centre of the tale, but everything that surrounds it is the extremely familiar and mundane, even more so than most narratives. And even when the extraordinary is represented, castles, princesses and the unearthly, these are represented from the perspective of the ordinary, with very little detail (Propp 1984 [1949]:17). For the same reason, folktales favour physical action over psychological conflict (Propp 1984 [1949]:22), and when they do represent the latter, they are typically physically instantiated. This corresponds with a sub-law of Olrik's law of narrative logic, namely the law of demonstrable attributes, which states that the inner life of the characters is only ever externally projected as actions or things. This mirrors the way in which folk metaphor instantiates abstract concepts through physical actions – LOVE IS A JOURNEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, etc. This is because physical action is more cognitively discrete or definite than abstract concepts. All of these emphasise the purpose of grounding the narrative in the familiar and experiential.

As stated above, oral narrative favours simplicity and contextual embedding. Thus, it shouldn't be surprising that the folktale in general, and the folktale in particular, favours the familiar and every-day, even in its representation of the miraculous: the carpet, the mirror, the godmother, the mouse, etc. these are often the bearers of miraculous properties (Luthi 1986 [1951]:11-12). By this means, the folktale continually juxtaposes the domestic and the miraculous, and in this way suggests its

ability to synthesise all of human consciousness, from the most concrete to the most abstract, within its ambit (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 79).

The purpose of the archetype is to ground the abstract in experience, and in pursuit of this ideal, we find that in the folktale, no abstract property is represented except in its instantiated form, and no instantiated property appears unless it has an abstract correlative. Therefore, phenomena in the folktale have no other distinguishing features other than those that conform to the essential geometry of the archetype, and they only appear when they are needed, and only for as long as they are needed, vanishing without explanation immediately after (Luthi 1986 [1951]:11-2). The defining qualities of characters are only ever represented materially or behaviourally, as actions the character performs or as physical features (13). The hero rarely overcomes challenges by his or her own talents but rather through the miraculous appearance of gifts or magical helpers, which serve as concrete symbolisations of abstract qualities (56). In the same way, the archetypal structure is often manifested in physical space in the form of a journey (29). Similarly, relationships are almost never depicted through expressions of emotions, but instead through the performance of obligations through action such as the exchange of gifts. And intellectual discovery is conventionally represented through material gain or physical changes. Folktales so often end with weddings because regardless of what the heroine has learned or accomplished, it is meaningless in the logic of fairy-tales until physically manifested through the material symbol of the wedding feast or the inheritance of a kingdom (18, 39).

However, the action is itself symbolic. Action symbolises agency and change, much as it does in the archetypal personified event. In every folktale, the hero is confronted with a task, which is a symbolisation of human need (56). But the action plot also symbolises the intellectual discovery process in the audience rather than the protagonist. Three brothers set out on a quest. The first two fail, but the third succeeds, not through learning from the failure of the others, but through simple fortune. The first two brothers' failures are represented because it is intended that the audience who from their mistakes, not the hero (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 39). Some readers often commit the same error in analysing Greek tragedy, stating that they cannot be truly tragic, i.e cautionary, because the tragic hero commits the infraction unwittingly and therefore never has the chance of escaping his/her fate. But this

ignores the obvious point that the story is told for the benefit of the audience, not the fictional characters therein, and as long as the audience is aware of the infraction the tale has served its cautionary function. Making the hero unwitting in turn serves the purposes of narrative simplification, avoiding the complicated entanglements of motivation and cutting straight to the heart of the story – the infraction and the lesson it illustrates. The death of Oedipus doesn't matter – we all understand him to be an imaginary figment – only that we the audience learn from his example.

In this sense, the linear structure of the narrative reflects the linear process of comprehension – the theme is introduced in the introduction, then the various features are delineated through the plot, and finally, the relevance is grounded in the conclusion – in this way, the structure of the narrative represents the cognitive structure of the concept, as discussed previously (Section 3.4). In this way, the folktale also achieves its function of embodiment[29] (Hodge 2006).

At the same time, the folktale is not interested in the significance of things, but of doings. Goals are typically clear (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 29), and the stories are not about gain but about accomplishment (86). Accomplishment is admittedly often denoted through material gain, but often these gains are meaningless outside of their symbolic value. Thus, folktales concern themselves more with ethics than morality, more with how to do things than whether they should be done, less with what could be and more with what is (89-91). Thus, the folktale expresses the raw, indisputable, universal truth that actions have consequences (93).

For this reason, the folktale is also psychologically barren. It ignores the psychological concerns that other narrative forms express, in order to more clearly represent the experiential essences which inspire them (92). This is because the metaphysics of existence develops out of the physical. Thought and emotions are responses, not independent objects, and their existence is entirely derivative from concrete existence. Thus, by representing experience in its essential form it also indirectly represents all its derivatives (94). In this way, the folktale creates an empty psychological space for the imagination to fill in (80). Its open-endedness, almost to the point of absurdity, lends itself to humour and playfulness (96). It is also for this

[29] Hodge argues that myth present embodied truth as opposed to objective truths. Mythic truths, such as that sun revolves around the earth or that the moon dies and is reborn each night, only have the requirement of serving a pragmatic function in our lives.

reason that they so readily capture the interest of children and are so significant to their development – through their archetypal nature they provide the basic building blocks of more complex ideas (98). Yet for the same reasons, they also have a universal appeal (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 99, Swann Jones 2002: 20). Thus, the folktale is both distant and intimate. The result is the diametric opposite of the modern novel. Through its focus on the psychological, the conventional narrative creates an intimacy with the external world through its emotional connections, while at the same time creating distance through the individuality of these inner experiences – the fact that we will never respond exactly as the protagonist in the novel does creates an emotional barrier that is absent in the fairy tale (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 113).

Despite their various permutations, there are certain features held in common by all types of folktale which warrant the shared label. Propp argues that the folktale differs from literature in that the latter is the art of the ruling elite, while the former is the art of the people (Propp 1984 [1949]: 5). Folk-tales, and to an extent its modern correlative, popular fiction, do not exalt the individual, but rather the society, not the intended meaning or vision of the prophet-author figure, but rather communally shared values. It is for this reason that they encourage repetition more than creativity, not the ability to convince the audience of novel concepts, but rather the ability to convey staid homely wisdoms in a manner that delights and entertains (Propp 1984 [1949]:19-20).

It is because of its communal nature that the folktale has no discernible origin (Doty 2000:35). Instead, it arises organically and communally. It has no correlative of intellectual property or canonical form. That multiple equally authoritative versions of the same tale can coexist is well known and is itself even a celebrated trope (Propp 1984 [1949]:7-8). Narrative meaning is thus solely defined by the shared code of the cultural community to whom the folktale belongs. There is no author or exegete to consult, no original source to discover.

Such tales are far from being devoid of creativity however – Doty shows the considerable changes that folktales undergo over time and space (2000:35) and Azadovsky demonstrates the vast variation the same tale can exhibit from one raconteur to the next (Thompson 1977 [1946]:451-5). The idea of folklore as an unchanging tradition has long been rejected. Oral traditions have always been a combination of recollection and creativity (Finnegan 2018:52-8). In fact, the same

formulas which define stasis in the folklore tradition equally provide a template for creativity (Finnegan 2018:69-72). Indeed, the process of recording folktales is necessarily complicated due to the challenges of eliminating such individual creative flourishes and capturing only the universally shared narrative (Olrik 1992 [1921]). The folktale does permit and even encourages a great deal of creativity and innovation, but only within certain parameters. Take for example, the traditional closing formula of the Russian fairy tale, which takes the form of:

> …And I was there and ate (x) and drank (y). It ran down my moustache but did not go into my mouth.

Like many such opening and closing formulas, it serves to create an epistemic link to the present, thus authenticating the experiences related. The traditional Russian fairy tale typically ends with a feast, and the epistemic link is created by the narrator placing themselves at the event. In addition, it adds the subtle wink of *it did not go into my mouth*, hinting at the ephemerality of the narrative world. However, many creative variations to this formula are evident:

> …I was at that feast too, I drank mead and wine there; it ran down my moustache but did not go into my mouth, yet my soul was drunk and sated.

Or:

> …I dined and drank mead with them, and their cabbage was toothsome. Even now I could eat some!

Or, the most elaborate of all:

> …they celebrated their wedding, and are still alive to this very day and chewing bread. I was at their wedding and drank mead; it ran down my moustache but did not go into my mouth. I asked for a cap, and received a slap; I was given a robe, and on my way home a titmouse flew over me cackling, “Flowing robe!” I thought she was saying, “Throw away the robe,” and I threw it away. This is not the tale, but a flourish, for fun. The tale itself is not begun! (Afanas’ev 1945 [1855])

Notice that in all of these instances, variation is allowed provided it doesn’t violate or omit the essential epistemic function of the closing formula. The folktale tradition allows a lot of room for creative variation, but at the same time creativity is strictly

prohibited from interfering with certain invariable constants. This is because of the precise composition of the archetype it represents, which certain changes would disrupt (Luthi 1986 [1951]:49-51).

And how could such stories come to be in the first place in the absence of invention? Instead, the creativity of the folktale doesn't express itself in a single act of *creatio ex nihilo* but more likely in modest improvements accrued over generations. But regardless of the teller, the basic structure of the story is always the same (Propp 1984 [1949]:5). This makes sense after all – narrative, by virtue of its inherent ambiguity, doesn't seem best suited to the purposes of persuasive argument, but its features rather make it perfectly suited for the explication and contemplation of accepted truths. If we follow this argument to its conclusion, it is the folktale, and its modern correlative, the popular novel, which is perhaps the higher form of art, and the literary novel, with its celebration of the avant-garde, the innovator, and the opposition to accepted truth, which is the inferior.

6.2.2 Thematic narrative and the laws of folktale structure.

No clearer example of the importance of the thematic definition of narrative, and the central role of archetype is visible than in Olrik (1992 [1921], 1965 [1908]) and Luthi's (1986 [1951]) defining laws of folktale structure. At the start of the twentieth century, Olrik produced a set of laws which defined the traditional folktale, and Luthi later employed several of them to create a comprehensive theory of the European fairy tale form. While the universality of Olrik laws and Luthi's structure have been questioned in the years since (Shuman & Hasan-Rokem 2012, Swann Jones 2002), for the purposes of this analysis, this is immaterial. What matters is not that these laws are universal, but only recurring – conventionality doesn't have to be absolute, only more widespread than could be explained as arbitrary. This is important because it means that their origins can be traced directly to the thematic nature of narrative. Nor are these features unique to the folktale, but just as archetypal features and thematic structures are to be found in all forms of narrative, so are these.

Swann Jones (2002) defines the fairy tale as (1) an extraordinary series of events, (2) centred on a single protagonist, (3) structured around the resolution of a central problem, (4) exemplifying a theme. These correspond to Olrik's and Luthi's most

important structural laws of the folktale. The significance of the extraordinary and that of thematic exemplification in the folktale has just been discussed. Regarding the centrality of the protagonist and the narrative conflict he or she encounters to the organisation of the narrative, these are not surprising given the role of the archetypal event as a basic template for all narrative structures.

Olrik's *law of concentration on the protagonist*, and the *law of unity of plot* state respectively that the folktale is typically organised around a single character (at a time), and that the plot is defined by building towards a single event and only that which is necessary to it is included in the narrative. The law of concentration on the protagonist states that the entire narrative world is oriented around the protagonist and nothing appears in it which isn't of relevance to him or her. The law of unity of plot states that narrative organisation increases in accordance with how closely the narrative follows the archetypal formula, and all complications serve only as elaborations of the single central event. This second element is encoded as a sub-law and is termed *the law of epic unity*, which states that the introduction of each narrative element predicts a consequent event later on. The law of unity of plot is only violated by the laws of concentration on the protagonist or the law of narrative logic (for the reader's sake, see below for a summary of all the laws), when multiple distinct narratives are strung together by virtue of sharing the same protagonist or theme, for example by theme in the case of the *Völsunga saga* (Morris 1997) or both theme and protagonist in *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor* (Lane 2010).

These laws reflect similar statements by narratologists on the centrality of the protagonist (Bruner 1986, 1991, Ryan 2007) and narrative conflict (Todorov 1977 [1971], Bremond & Cancalon 1980, Ryan 1991, Booth 2010, Bruner 1986, 1991) to the defining form of the narrative. The discourse on the defining role of conflict in narrative is extensive; that on character, less so. Many authors, such as James, Melville, Joyce, have emphatically argued for the inextricability of character from plot (James 1884, Bruner 1986:14). Tomashevsky states that this is because narrative sequence can only occur through agency, and agency through character, so that narrative necessitates character (du Plooy 112). This is the logical inspiration behind Greimas' actants (du Plooy 177-9), and though he doesn't explicitly state it, it is necessarily implied in Todorov's defining transformations of narrative which

subjectivise experience (Todorov 1977 [1971]:118-142). It is also this subjectification of reality that explains PWT's particular concern with character (Ryan 1991).

As this shows, concern with the protagonist and a central conflict are not peculiar to the folktale, but common to most narratives. Similarly, the fact that the most common criticisms of stories are either their un-relatable protagonists or irrelevant plots, provides evidence for this as well. Unfortunately, despite lengthy discussions on these subjects, narratologists have little of substance to add as to why these are so important to the narrative. No real explanation is given for the centrality of the protagonist other than conventionality and logical requirements: narrative is defined as a sequence of events, i.e. change, agency drives this change, and agency in turn implies character and conflict.

But for the thematic theory of narrative, these features go beyond simple convention and logic, and are deeply rooted in the semantic principles of *embodiment* and *relevance*. Narrative represents embodied experience, and this binds it intimately to human experience in general. Similarly, the principle of relevance demands the communication of meaningful experience, which is intimately tied to the conflict between the known and the new. Both of these principles are visible in the folktale, which conventionally includes a representation of experience defined by embodiment (human agency, perceivable change) and relevance (meaningful or intentional change). At the same time, it is important to mention that contrary to Luthi and Bruner (1991), while these are the norms for the obvious reasons stated above, exceptions do exist. Although they are extremely useful, narratives do not need protagonists, nor a central conflict, as we see in several of Borges' tales which instead simply describe imaginary places or concepts.

As Luthi (1986 [1951]: 64) states, in the narrative, the protagonist and the central conflict are both symbolisations of the narrative theme, and their coordinating roles within the narrative structure are manifestations of the organising role of the theme. Each of these represents a different facet of theme, namely the associative, in the case of the protagonist, and the relevant, in the case of the conflict. The protagonist is apparent in every episode of the narrative in the same way that each motif requires an obvious connection to the theme. In this way, how the protagonist associates with each individual motif in the story comes to resemble radial structures (Section 5.3.2) in prototype theory (Lakoff 2007a). Moreover, by personifying these

semantic associations they are framed in an embodied context, while at the same time providing an epistemic link to their experiential exemplars in the narrative world. The facelessness of the hero makes him a template for every person. Similarly, miracles are not performed by the hero, but rather appear as needed, so as not to distance the hero from the audience. Thus, the highly archetypal nature of the protagonist makes him or her a portal into the imaginary world, and the folktale an imaginative space for the audience to dream in. The protagonist thus provides not only an embodiment of the theme, but also through his or her connection to every episode an embodiment of the entire thematic network.

The conflict, on the other hand, Is only implicitly present in every scene, only fully manifesting itself in the concluding episode for the same reason that an argument first needs to fully detail all its appurtenances before presenting its conclusion. As stated previously, the structure of the narrative is designed to reflect the structure of concepts. As prototypicality demonstrates, concepts are not indeterminate sets of features, but schematisations with their own internal structures. Different elements serve different functions, and some elements are more central and others more peripheral. Thus the slow, deliberate anticipation of the conflict through the plot mirrors the careful development of theme. This is the same reason for the essential given-new principle in language (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]:87-95) – the given provides the context, and the new explains the significance.

Finally, as another sign of their narrative significance, we witness in the laws of protagonist and central conflict the presence of virtually all the principles of narrative blending. As thematic symbolisations, they achieve both high degrees of conceptual integration and through the associated exemplars, experiential integration as well. Both are thematic symbols and so their omnipresence contributes to thematic maximisation. Their recurrence and the minimalism of the exemplars contribute to the principles of simplicity, reuse and referencing. Finally, the defining role of embodiment results in the maximisation of consistency. It is perhaps only the principle of interest that is sacrificed in the name of simplification.

So far, we have discussed six of Olrik's folktale laws:

1. *Law of narrative logic*: the mimetic always surrenders to the thematic in determining the narrative exemplar.

2. *Law of patterning*: mimesis is as simplified as possible, so as not to distract from the thematic dominant.

3. *Law of demonstrable attributes*: the inner life of the characters is only ever externally projected as actions or things.

4. *Law of concentration on the protagonist*: the folktale is typically organised around a single character (at a time).

5. *Law of unity of plot*: the plot is defined by building towards a single event and only that which is necessary to it is included in the narrative.

6. *Law of epic unity*: the introduction of each narrative element predicts a consequent event later on.

The rest of the laws are:

7. *Law of opening*: Folktales almost never begin or end with the extra-ordinary. Narrative proceeds from the ordinary to the extra-ordinary. The story starts with one and proceeds to many, with the ordinary and proceeds to the extraordinary, from the known to the unknown, and from stasis to action. The conclusion again reverses the above.

8. *Law of closing*: A denouement always follows the climax. The story ends in stasis, with the effects of the main character on others, the fate of subordinate characters, and visible memories of the climactic event.

9. *Law of repetition*: Significance is primarily communicated through repetition. Typically, this is accompanied by a progressive ascent which builds tension. Repetition also adds a sense of variety while maintaining simplicity.

10. *Law of contrasts*: Narrative is portrayed in contrasts. This applies to things and events. Often, the antagonist or companion will be clearly described to contrast with the indistinctiveness of the protagonist.

11. *Law of three*: When multiple objects are individuated, it is usually in threes. Higher numbers are only used for grouped objects who act in unison.

12. *Law of two to a scene*: There are only two active characters at a time. If there are others, they are inactive.

13. *Law of doubles*: Two characters in the same role are represented identically. Two characters working together are weaker than one character working alone. If an event distinguishes them, they become opponents.

14. *Law of two protagonists*: When there are two protagonists, one is the clear inferior.

15. *Law of the initial position*: If a variety of protagonists are presented, the narrative focus will be presented first, and the narrative interest last. Often the first will be the plot or narrative focus, but the last will be the thematic focus. Often the first is male and the last is female.

16. *Law of the final position*: If multiple elements are presented, the last is always the most important.

17. *Law of single-stranded narrative*: Narrative time is presented mimetically. Simultaneous events are rarely presented and time only moves forward. The past is represented through dialogue. Changing of the protagonist typically only occurs after a formal closure scene, so that each perspective forms a complete sub-narrative.

18. *Law of tableaux scenes*: Central elements intersect in symbolic rather than mimetic scenes. Narrative events are unambiguous and inner motivations are represented as external behaviour.

19. *Law of ideal epic unity*: When the plot groups several similar elements together, it is to best illuminate important features.

20. *Law of schematic storytelling*: Dialogue is presented verbatim as far as possible.

What the laws of opening and closing indicate is that the core message of folktales is concentrated around the middle of the narrative. This corresponds to the above-mentioned given-new principle of relevance, where the familiar is first invoked to provide a context for the unfamiliar, and is predictably found in almost all narratives, not just the folktale. As was stated in Section 2.4, narrative structure is modelled on schema structure, where more prototypical elements of a schema are presented first as a conceptual foundation for introducing peripheral or non-prototypical elements, and then reintegrated in the conclusion. This in turn explains the cognitive basis of the three-act structure (exposition-complication-resolution). This mirrors the same

observation in other archetypal theories such as Campbell and Frye (Swann Jones 2002:15, Campbell 2008 [1949], Frye 1957).

In folktale, the extraordinary is frequently framed by the journey archetype, so that it is framed not only structurally but also exemplified in experience (Luthi 1968 [1951]: 9-10). Similarly, the story starts with the simple before proceeding to the complex, from one to many, from stasis to action. These laws serve to provide epistemic grounding for the narrative, by first invoking the domestic or familiar as a context for the introduction of the extraordinary, fantastic and often also abstract. Significantly, they also frequently begin and with a temporal reference point, as best demonstrated by the formulas *Once upon a time…* and *…happily ever after*. The whole purpose here is to provide the audience with a clear frame of reference for the narrative.

What these also have in common is the bounded vs. unbounded distinction – the singular, simple and static are unbounded because of their uniformity, while the internal differences that characterise the complex, multiple and active demand bounding. In this way, the folktale starts off grounded in the general, before proceeding to the specific, only to return to the general in the end. This is because the given or familiar is presented as unbounded because they are already schematically integrated, while the new or unfamiliar are presented as bounded to emphasise their distinctive details. This clearly establishes a link between schematic simplicity and unbounded time as necessary epistemic bases for schematic complexity and bounded time.

Finally, the same opening procedures return in the closing. While the given provides a point of reference for the introduction of the new, the new must be reintegrated with the given for blending to be completed. This is achieved by the resolution. Semantically this makes sense, since the climax introduced new meaning into the theme, so that the epistemic grounding established in the opening is no longer relevant, and a new grounding needs to be established which incorporates the new.

Thus, we once again see how narrative structure is defined by semantic structure and the processes of conceptual blending. Although the full articulation of these laws is most often found in the folktale, the underlying semantic principles are universal and are thus present in all narrative in some form or another. We can see a clear identity between these principles and Labov's natural narrative functions of the

orientation and the coda, both of which function to create an epistemic link between the narrative and the speaking situation. The same correspondence can be drawn to Freytag's pyramid (1900 [1894]), the three-act structure (Field 1982) and archetypal narrative structure (Frye 2006 [1981]). A clear alternative to this norm is the delayed exposition or *in media res* beginning (Rosenberg 1978), though through delay this is only a variation, not a true deviation.

Next, we have the various laws of repetition. According to Luthi (1968 [1951]: 47-51), and echoing Falk, repetitions create the thematic core around which differences orbit. In this way, identities are created in terms of sameness and variation. Repetition, as stated before, is an established feature of oral narrative (Finnegan 2018:58-69), as well as in narratology (Hasan-Rokem 2000, Rimmon-Kenan 1980, 1983, 1987). In *Narrative Fiction*, Rimmon-Kenan states that repetition is the basis of temporality in narrative – it is the repetition of the basic time unit that creates the timeline in which events occur (1983:56-7). Furthermore, repetition and variation form the basis of narrative structure itself (Rimmon-Kenan 1980, Finnegan 2018). This is predictable, since collocation is the basic principle of language, and collocation itself is based on the same principle of repetition and variation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]:38-9).

Repetition's role in oral narrative is linked of course to its mnemonic qualities (Baddeley 1999:82-5). But more generally, repetition is closely related to general cognition in terms of salience and recognition through the role repetition and non-repetition plays in recognising similarity and difference (Langacker 1987:101-9). Although not always the case, often the more we encounter the same experience, the more significance we attribute to it. In narrative, this results in progressive ascent, which not only builds tension, engaging the audience's interest and emotional involvement, but also communicates a thematic significance (Falk 1967). Furthermore, identifying similarities and differences across various experiences enables both a significant compression of experience and at the same time creates a framework of associations (Fauconnier & Turner 2002:113-38). As these examples clearly demonstrate, repetition is one of the fundamental defining principles of cognition, and therefore by extension of narrative as well. Thus, one would only expect that repetition also plays a fundamental role in all the governing principles of narrative blending.

As stated above, repetition and non-repetition plays a key role in identifying differences, and thus Olrik's laws of repetition and contrast are inextricably intertwined. Contrast is particularly prominent in the folktale because of the high degree of simplification that flows from the law of patterning, which requires striking contrasts to allow for a clear distinction between characters. For instance, since the protagonist is typically schematically simplified to make him or her easier to identify with, the antagonist by contrast is usually the most distinctive character. By over-emphasising both similarity to the point of homogeneity and contrast to the point of heterogeneity, characters transcend ordinary reality and are transformed into paragons of their conceptual polarities. In essence, they become archetypes for the story's theme.

Narrative structure is painted in contrasts, not only of objects, but also of events. This contrastive principle is also expressed in the plot, which typically involves starkly contrasting role inversions, where ugly ducklings transform into swans or peasants become kings (Frye 1956). This is nowhere more visible than in the central contrast of the narrative conflict. Contrast also relates to human-scaling and embodiment through the contrasts of body vs, mind, internal vs, external, experience vs. thought, etc. (Section 4.5) Thus contrast is also essential to the archetype and by extension, any phenomenon which involves archetypes (see Chapter 5).

Although repetition plays an important role, folktale prefers juxtapositions to intersections, contrast to similarity (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 29). In the archetypal reality, phenomena are distinct from one another but without depth (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 24). Underlying similarity is always the basis of contrast, but folktale obscures this in favour of emphasising striking oppositions. Paradoxically then, when identities do occur, they are also the more striking for their scarcity. This is most visible in characterisation: characters are exemplified by extreme features (old/young, beautiful/ugly, rich/poor, etc.), and their fates are typically also equally extreme (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 30-4). In Blending Theory, we observe this same tension between contrast and repetition in the competing principles of informativity (make it familiar, interesting and relevant) and simplicity (simplify, integrate, reuse, reference). Hence, its prominence in narrative doesn't come as a surprise.

The law of repetition is most noticeable in the law of three. Three appears more often in folktale than any other number (except perhaps for the singular). Its

preponderance is only logical since it represents the minimal concept of *many* (take, for example, children's first attempts to count "one, two, many") (Hasan-Rokem 2000). Rosenberg (1978) and Doty (2000:316) relate this to the Hegelian dialectic or Levi-Strauss's mediating third – two establishes a pattern, three violates it. Two thus is contrastive, while three is generative in its exponential increase of the number of possible contrastives from two. The number three includes both an intermediation and an extension of the archetypal binary – the potential to find a bridge between the impasse of the binary opposition and thereby to create new elements through the various possible syntheses. Olrik's explanation is simpler: three is the multiple which can most practically be individuated. Higher numbers are only used for grouped phenomena which behave indistinguishably (c.f Langacker's distinction between mass and count nouns (2008:128-46)). Luthi states that repeating numbers serve as convenient mnemonic devices, and three is as good a number as any (1986 [1951]: 33). Olrik and Luthi's hypothesis of convenience is supported by the exception of India, which instead has a rule of four due to the favourable religious associations of that number – four is still a number which can be practically individuated, if not as easily as three.

The number three is not only propitious in narrative, but in culture in general: we see the number three recurring endlessly in concepts – heaven-world-underworld, father-mother-child, past-present-future, birth-life-death, dawn-noon-dusk, divine trinities (Christ-God the Father-Holy Spirit, Zeus-Poseidon-Hades, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva, etc.), the threefold division of society (priests, warriors, farmers), three wise men, three fates, the geometric significance of the triangle, three judges of underworld, three archangels. Their occurence is endless, and usually significantly related to the concepts of fate, destiny and divine order. Through its creative properties, the number three symbolises multiplicity and infinity and thereby also wholeness and perfection (Gheerbant et al. 1996). While the law of threes may not be as prominent in other narratives as it is in the folktale, the underlying semantic principles which it results from, such as the balance between multiplicity and individuation, or establishing patterns of similarity and contrast, are still prevalent.

The remaining laws of repetition are closely related, namely the laws of two to a scene, doubles, two protagonists, and the initial and final position. The law of two to a scene exemplifies the law of contrasts – folktales usually only feature two

characters at a time, who in turn are usually contrastive, and in conflict more often than not (Thompson 1977 [1946]). If striking juxtapositions are possible, the folktale exploits them. The law of doubles confirms this – if juxtapositions are not practical, then differences are assimilated until the two are indistinguishable. Similarly, the weakness shown by folktale characters when acting in concert, versus the effectiveness when acting alone relates to the prior-mentioned principle of thematic realism, where thematic significance or insignificance is metaphorically instantiated as real power or weakness. Indeed, there is no clearer example of this principle. The law of two protagonists is simply a particular instance of the law of contrasts. When there are two protagonists, characterising both as *strong* makes them indistinguishable. Other characteristics could be used to distinguish them, but this would complicate description, which contradicts the minimalist goals of the folktale. One needs to be strong to be victorious in the conflict, so that logically then the other one has to be weak. All of these principles are observable to some extent in narratives of all types.

The last of the laws of repetition and contrast are the laws of initial and final position. Once again, we see a thematically defined narrative structure (i.e. a formal element). As stated earlier, the protagonist is the explicit thematic core that runs through the length of the story (Rosenberg 1978). Furthermore, the beginning of the narrative provides the epistemic grounding (focus), and the ending the thematic grounding (interest). If however, there are multiple protagonists, logically then the one should correspond with the focus and the other with the interest, in keeping with the law of contrast. Furthermore, since first and last are the most salient positions, one should correspond with the first and the other with the last. The law of the final position on the other hand manifests the principles of final salience and progressive ascent. Again, this narrative focus on the protagonist(s) is a feature common to most narratives, and the prominence of the first and last are basic semantic principles.

The law of single-stranded narrative structures the narrative along mimetic and embodied principles. The entire narrative is presented as a single chronology as if the audience were unseen bystanders. The story never moves backwards in time, nor are there ever simultaneous, separately occurring events. If two separate events occur, they are always presented consecutively, and past events are instead framed through dialogue (Propp 1984 [1949]:22). Most of the time, action also focuses on

only one protagonist or viewpoint at a time, and such transitions in viewpoint are usually formalised to reduce disruptions. Although folktale emphasises the thematic over the mimetic, engagement with the mimetic is maximised through the highly embodied form of the narrative. Referencing blends (blends which simply include a reference to another concept as opposed to fully integrating it) (Section 3.7.2) are employed to include but at the same time disincorporate scenes which are temporally or spatially remote so that they do not disrupt the narrative's established epistemic grounding. In this way, experiential continuity harmonises with the strong thematic continuities in the folktale. This in turn contributes to the efficacy of the illusion of thematic realism, where conceptual structure is substituted for experiential reality. This in turn relates to the law of patterning – a familiar temporally continuous narrative simplifies the symbolic relationship between theme and exemplar. While the folktale follows this law most strictly, it is still the default mode for narratives in general.

The last significant law is the law of tableaux scenes. This law states that the more thematically important an incident is, the more thematic realism substitutes for experiential reality. Folktale pursues a careful equilibrium between the domestic and familiar vs. the miraculous and abstract, and the closer the narrative approaches the thematic core of the narrative, the more the everyday gives way to the extraordinary. Recall that the distinction between given and new corresponds archetypally with the ordinary-extraordinary distinction. Hence, we observe that narrative presents new information more symbolically, that is, in a conceptual form rather than an experiential one. The result of this is a far simpler, more direct and obvious symbolic blending of theme and exemplar, maximising blend integrity and thus thematic engagement, interest, relevance and familiarity. Although the use of this device is accentuated in the folktale, the use of unusual, striking, strongly symbolic images as pivotal narrative scenes is hardly peculiar to folktales.

These scenes typically tend to be more extraordinary, mentally arresting, symbolic and often fantastic. Significant denizens of the folktale are distinguished by their outstanding qualities: simpletons, one-eyed strangers, hermits, beggars, childless couples or those with dozens of children, widows and orphans, giants and dwarves, monsters, heinous crimes, extreme prohibitions, etc. The miraculous is not necessary, but still commonplace: miraculous births, resurrections, blindness and

restoration, dismemberment and reconstruction, metamorphoses, etc. (Luthi 1986 [1951]: 35). An example of the particularly prolific use of this device is Arthurian legend, where climactic events are outstandingly unusual, such as magical swords trapped in stone, invisibility spells, eternally sleeping heroes, holy grails, magical hunts, supernatural opponents and magical settings.

The last two (minor) laws need only be briefly mentioned: The law of ideal epic unity is derivative of the laws of repetitions and contrasts, stating that when similar elements are grouped together, the comparison serves to highlight their similarities or differences. As stated before, this corresponds with an essential linguistic feature. And the law of schematic storytelling relates to the mimetic principle of the law of single-stranded narrative structures by representing dialogue as directly as possible rather than indirect or reported speech. Again, this is a conventional feature in most narrative.

To conclude, the aim of the folktale is not to convince but to exemplify – to inform. And just as information can be interpreted in different ways, so too can the narrative theme accommodate a variety of interpretations. Surprisingly, even exemplary narrative demonstrates this quality. While the exemplary narrative may appear to be definable in terms of its intention to argue convincingly and in clear, unambiguous terms, it's not uncommon to find the same essential fable attached to very different and even conflicting morals (Beavis 1990, Whitesell 1947). With its pronounced thetic (exemplary) form, the folktale arrives at a similar result. The purpose of the folktale thus is not so much to carry a point, but rather to contemplate it. If, for instance, we consider the fable of *Thales and the Well*[30] (Townsend 2008), we can as easily attach to it the conflicting morals of *unhealthy obsessions can overshadow important concerns* or *the pursuit of loftier aims may come at a price*. For the purposes of the fable, it is not the way in which we frame our conclusion that matters so much as that we contemplate the contrast between the stars and the well and what each represents.

What this lengthy discussion has shown is how extensive the influence of the defining principles of thematic narrative are on narrative structure even at the smallest level of detail.

[30] In this fable, the astronomer Thales falls into a well while gazing at the stars.

6.2.3 Archetypal narrative structure

This has already been a lengthy preamble to the promised analysis of exemplary narrative. However, I hope it has been a worthwhile digression in demonstrating how the semantic principles of narrative define narrative form. Before we come to the meat of the matter, there still remains one final bone to pick, specifically the skeletal frame of the narrative, and how this is defined by archetype. In Section 3.4, this topic was introduced with the statement that it is too extensive to treat in this thesis, and instead deserves its own study. However, certain points of this argument are too immediately relevant to set aside, and so I shall briefly lay them out here.

Narrative structure has historically been one of the foremost concerns of narratology. Unfortunately, despite volumes of discussion on the topic, much still remains to be explained. Indeed, aside from Frye's writings, too little advance has been made on the subject in the one and a half centuries since Freytag's seminal theory of dramatic structure (1900 [1894]). This can largely be attributed to formalist narratology's firm anti-semantic stance and its commitment to the window on reality metaphor (Section 2.3). In the fourth century AD, Donatus developed the idea of the three-part structure to explain how narrative exemplifies the Aristotelian definition of a single whole action representing an idea. Freytag expanded this into a five-part theory of dramatic structure, mirroring many ideas later expressed in Labov's theory of natural narrative. In this way, Freytag advanced the semantic definition of narrative structure i.e. that it is conceptual in form and aimed at the effective instantiation of a theme or idea.

Narratologists, on the other hand, cast these advancements aside as baseless conventional truisms, instead pursuing the definition of narrative as a reflection of reality, and hence a description of narrative in terms of either essential features of reality or the representation thereof (Chatman 1980). We can see this for example in Genette's theory of plot (1980), which describes events in terms of the temporal order, duration and frequency of events in the narrative, and then specifies five possible relations between narrative time and narration time, namely summary (telescoping of narration time), ellipsis (occlusion of narration time), scene (equivalent times), stretch (telescoping narrative time), and pause (occlusion of

narrative time). The problem is that all of this falls apart the moment the reader realises that there is no such thing as narrative time (Linde 1993:26). This is because there is no such thing as narrative reality. The narrative exists solely in the mind of the audience, and therefore any supposed narrative reality is purely the product of the audience's imagination. Any discussion of narrative time outside of the semantic context of the subjective human consciousness is thus entirely arbitrary.

This is only one illustrative example, but most narratological theory on structure follows this mould (Section 3.4). What then is this essential semantic form of the narrative? We introduced the concept of the minimal event in Section 4.4, which comprises the minimal necessary elements all narrative needs to conform to, as well as the archetypal event, which is the embodied form the minimal event usually (but not necessarily) takes in order to make the event more hospitable to the human consciousness. In Chapter 5 we expanded on the archetypal character of the archetypal event, and in this chapter so far, we have explored how this manifests in various individual narrative forms and devices. At this point in time, it is useful to complete the picture by analysing Frye's archetypal narrative theory through a cognitive linguistic lens.

To recap, narrative structure begins with the *minimal event*, which comprises the two properties of causality and aspect. In other words, there is a thing, defined by bounding in abstract space, and a doing, defined by bounding in time relative to the speaking event. Thus, when an abstraction is instantiated through a spatially bounded entity involved in a temporally bounded happening, the minimal requirements of narrative are satisfied.

But most narratives comprise more than this. The thematics of narrative is scalar, graded from least to most prototypical, depending on the requirements of the specific theme being explored and how the narrator chooses to represent it, in other words, theme and style. Ideally, narrative comprises an archetypal event, which is the minimal narrative event in its embodied form. The archetypal or personified event comprises *a conscious actor performing an observable action on a concurrent physical object to produce an intentional and lasting change*.

The *prototypical event* reveals the imprint of nature, of the embodied principle of consciousness. Although not necessary, most narratives transform the minimal

space into a *human protagonist*, because most of our own knowledge and experience is acquired from a human perspective as opposed to a dissociated "scientific" one. By constructing narrative experience in this format makes it more useful as models for organising our own life experiences. The same is true of each of the other prototypical narrative features: the intentional observable action, the concurrent physical object, or the intentional observable lasting change. Each of these are defined either by the physical laws of reality, our own physical form and the nature of our senses, or the physiology of the mind. These are conventions, to be clear. But they are not arbitrary conventions, but rooted in the nature of reality and humanity.

With this in mind, the relationship between the prototypical or archetypal event and the prototypical or *archetypal narrative* is obvious. This archetypal narrative is better known as the monomyth or the hero's journey (Section 4.6), and in it, the hero instantiates the protagonist of the archetypal event, the journey the intentional observable action, the adversary the concurrent physical object, and the confrontation with the adversary and the journey's end the intentional observable lasting change.

This elaboration of the archetypal event into the archetypal narrative parallels the simultaneous elaboration of the simple abstract-instance relationship of the event into the more complex theme-exemplar one of narrative. In this way, a single event is elaborated into the multiple episodes of the narrative, each episode representing a different facet of the shared theme that unites them into a single narrative. And as one would expect, each episode in turn explores a complementary facet of each component: the protagonist, adversary, journey and confrontation. In this way, the archetypal narrative fulfils the function of all narrative, namely narrative rehabilitation through narrative instantiation into increasingly localised and individuated experiences.

Several components of this elaboration of archetypal event into archetypal narrative merit further explanation. Firstly, there is the elaboration of object of the event into the *adversary*. The reasons for this are the same as those for the personification of the conscious actor – the human form is more familiar to the mind than the material object. This is the same reason why the change of the event is also often personified, for example as the damsel in distress.

Furthermore, the intentional observable action and lasting change are instantiated as a confrontation with the adversary. Once again, this is because of the embodied principle – not only is interaction with other human beings a familiar everyday experience, but it is also a highly embodied one. When we interact with other human beings, as opposed to material objects, we can project our minds and bodily experiences into theirs and thereby gain far greater insight into the situation. Finally, this is often (but not always) instantiated as a physical confrontation once again because physical actions are more experientially real than abstract confrontations. This is the same justification as behind the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor – transforming an abstract into a concrete conflict makes it more cognitiviely tangible (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

But why the journey? *Journeys*, specifically the path schema, are extremely common in semantics because of their extreme usefulness. The path schema represents the simplest way of coordinating the spatial and temporal dimensions of change, specifically those changes profiled by the most common verbs and prepositions occurring in language (Langacker 1987, Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987, Brugman 1988). As an object moves along a path from a to b, the abstract dimension of time is concretised into the physical dimension of space, while the physical dimension in turn is measured through time. In this way, the two experiences reinforce each other's perceptibility.

But to profile any change on the path schema requires the differentiation of at least two spaces or points, the origin and the destination. Consequently, the hero's journey archetype also conventionally comprises *two opposed spaces*, namely the apocalyptic, and the demonic, to employ Frye's terms (Russel 2016:94-105, Frye 1956:141-51 Gergen & Gergen 1986). The hero's journey to confront the adversary can only result in two outcomes, namely success or failure, of finding meaning or meaninglessness. The apocalyptic and demonic respectively represent each of these. Hence, we get two essential types of narrative, the comedic happy-ending story, and the tale with the tragic ending.

But a journey also requires an origin, not just a destination, and hence, these two types are further differentiated into two additional sub-types. In this way, we get Frye's four mythoi, namely the comedic journey from demonic to apocalyptic, the tragic journey from apocalyptic to demonic, as well as the two subtypes, the epic

journey from apocalyptic to apocalyptic (via demonic), and the satiric journey from demonic to demonic (via apocalyptic).

A last point to add is what each of these spaces signify. Narrative communicates a theme, and as explained before (Section 3.6), the most abstract, universal truths, those same truths which form the foundations of our social beliefs, are also those most in need of narrative rehabilitation. Hence, these are the themes narratives are most concerned with. Moreover, narrative is a communal exercise, and it is in these eternal ideals that our individual existences intersect with one another. These in turn can be differentiated into positive values, our cultural ideals, as well as negative values, our cultural prohibitions. Consequently, we employ the apocalyptic journey to instantiate these ideals, and the demonic journey to instantiate our taboos.

Then, employing the twin metaphors of SUCCESS IS LIFE and FAILURE IS DEATH, we arrive at the symbolic realms of the apocalyptic and the demonic (Frye 1956: 141-51). This derives from the simple knowledge that the continuity of life is dependent on success, while failure disrupts that continuity. Success in turn requires the knowledge of how to succeed, and, as a result, the requisite knowledge is elevated to the status of immortal ideals. Hence, the success assured by steadfast virtue is symbolised as the continuation of life through the ascent into the divine and immortal realms of the gods, and the failure which vice condemns one to is symbolised by the inexorable decay through descent into the mortal abode of demons (see also Section 4.7).

As we see here, there is a clear parallelism with the theme-exemplar distinction. The apocalyptic signifies the elevation of the fallen experiential world into the transcendental world of ideas, while the demonic signifies its opposite – the descent of the transcendental ideal into the fallen material realm. These transformations mirror the constant oscillations in narrative between the opposing poles of myth and realism. Myth links to the eternal and communal, realism to the moment and the individual (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:101). This corresponds closely to Eliade's (1959) distinction between the sacred and the profane, and both essentially serve as exemplification of the abstraction vs. instantiation, theme vs. exemplar, thought vs. experience distinction we've been exploring.

This sacred vs. profane relationship is important because it reveals the essential connection between these symbols and the narrative function of thematic exemplification. Both apocalyptic and demonic need to be present in the narrative in order for the narrative to both instantiate the concept and thematise the experience – thereby demonstrating the meaningfulness of our social values in our everyday lives. By representing these as physical realms, it conveys the understanding that our beliefs and the experiences they relate to are not mere abstractions, but serve a meaningful, tangible and enduring role in our lives. In this way, the hero's quest intimately follows the audience's narrative experience.

Campbell (2008 [1949]) first emphasised the significance of the journey motif in the hero's quest (Swann Jones 2002:15). Campbell links the journey metaphor to the transition between conscious and unconscious states (Swann Jones 2002:16), but for Frye this was a journey from the sensory confusion of reality into the ideational world of truth. Frye noticed a parallel between the dominance of *mythic* qualities and the level of abstraction in the narrative (1954:33-5). Thus, the archetypal narrative is a narrative journey between the *world of experience* and the *world of ideas* (Coupe 1997:151). This cyclicality again mirror's Eliade's (1959) concept of cyclical rituals in religion and myth and the important narrative function of cyclicality, or as we termed it earlier, narrative repetition. For it is this repetition which is the fundamental principle of association, which in turn is the basis for abstraction. This is because abstraction creates unity through the identification of recurrent patterns. For it is only through repeatability that isolated experiences can be elevated to eternal truths. Once again, the hero's journey serves as an intimate reflection of the narrative audience's intellectual experience of transforming the linearity of everyday experience into the cyclicality of higher truths.

Thus, Frye arrives at his *four mythoi*, namely the comedic archetype of spring, the epic archetype of summer, the tragic archetype of autumn, and the satiric archetype of winter. These are each distinguished in terms of the four different phases of the hero's journey, and correspondingly, two different types of hero, namely the mortal and immortal heroes.

- In the comedic archetype, the mortal hero conquers death to gain immortality. The journey is from the demonic to the apocalyptic. At its essence, its theme is about discerning the meaningful from the trivial.

- In the epic archetype, the immortal hero conquers death to prove his worthiness of immortality. Journey is from the apocalyptic back to the apocalyptic. The central theme here is the trial of the worthiness of our held truths in the face of doubt.
- In the tragic archetype, the hero loses immortality in the confrontation with death, often signified by the hero's own demise. The journey is from the apocalyptic to the demonic. Thematically, these are cautionary tales about placing faith in falsehoods.
- And finally, in the satiric archetype, the mortal hero endures the certainty of death by accepting his or her mortality. The journey is from the demonic back to the demonic. The theme here is the acceptance of existential uncertainty.

Immortality and mortality in this context, like the demonic or apocalyptic realms, or the journey or contest with death itself, are not necessarily literal, but *symbolic*. Immortality may be literally instantiated, particularly in myths, however it more commonly signifies a figurative sense, as in *immortalised by one's achievements*. It alludes to a human being achieving a significance beyond their mortal limitations, and is often instantiated in folklore in the form of social status (peasants becoming princes or princesses) or familial bonds (the traditional wedding at the end of the hero's quest).

As this demonstrates, all narratives relate to the mythic archetype – only, by telescoping selected parts of the whole archetypal hero's journey, the resemblance is often obscured. It is through the inclusion of telescoping that Frye's archetypal model succeeds where previous ones, like those of Campbell (2008 [1949]) or Raglan before him, failed. With this small change, Frye solved the most significant limitation to the application of the hero's journey archetype – its inability to describe the vast majority of narratives. Instead, these predecessors tried to shoehorn the entire archetype into every narrative, even when it obviously wouldn't fit. Frye's insight was that every narrative selectively attends to only a small section of the larger archetypal narrative. This was achieved by changing his focus from the individual narrative to the literary tradition as a whole. By making not the individual narrative but the entire literary tradition the basic unit of study, Frye was able to

discern how individual stories work together to compose the archetypal narrative behind our beliefs.

This is the same principle of selective instantiation in action discussed previously in the section on the ergativity-transitivity relationship (Section 4.3.3). For Frye, all narrative demonstrates the same mythic consciousness which is inspired by the urge to find correspondences between humanity and the world we live in, to as it were discover our place in the cosmos (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:100). Historically, we can observe the narrative lineage from myth down to the modern novel, but narrative profiles only the most thematically relevant segment of the whole archetype, so that only by observing all the various generic forms of narrative in concert do we detect its genesis from myth.

In the various permutations of these four myths, we find the primary thematic function behind the various kinds of narrative. In the true horror tale, the hero succumbs to the horror of the unknown, while the reader experiences the catharsis of appreciating that same experience through the *cordon sanitaire* of narrative. The mystery novel is adaptable to any of the mythoi, as one of the most direct exemplifications of the audience's journey of discovery through storytelling. Traditionally however, the mystery novel usually takes either the epic form where the immortal Holmesian detective uses preternatural intellect to prove his mastery over uncertainty, or the satiric form where the mortal, hardboiled gumshoe presides over death by acceptance of the uncertainty of existence. It is through our understanding of the archetypal foundations of all narrative that their thematic functions are most clearly revealed, as well as how these various genres function in tandem to satisfy the complete holistic thematic function of narrative in all its various permutations.

We can see this, for example, in the mythos of tragedy. Through the lens of Fryean mythic archetype, we see that the tragedy of tragedy (or horror) derives from its linearity. While other genres emphasise the cyclicality of time, which is the idea that nothing is ever terminal, tragedy emphasises the linearity and terminal nature of time for humanity. It does so by eliminating the fertility archetypes from narrative and instead focuses on the agentive and moral personifications of narrative. The tragic hero has the redemption of the consequentiality of his agency, even though this consequence ultimately destroys him or her (Meletinsky 2014 [1976]:90).

Of the various mythoi, traditionally the comedic has been dominant historically, since the discovery of meaning in life from the chaos of experience is perhaps the most important prerogative for humanity. However, since the start of the modern period, in literary fiction at least, the satiric mythos has risen to the apex. Examples of this abound, *Ulysses*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Catch-22*, to name only a few. While the folktale typically chronicles the rise of the ordinary man to hero, in the modern and post-modern novel, the ordinary man remains hopelessly ordinary throughout. These narratives express the intransigence of fate toward redemptive myths, expressing a modern secular ideological aversion by the intellectual elite toward the mythos of comedy (Kermode 2000 [1966]).

Frye's archetypal narrative is revolutionary among its kind in that it shows us not only the mythical foundations from which all narratives evolve, but also how they are differentiated from each other through focusing on specific elements and expanding their articulation and granularity. In this way, we perceive the true genius of Frye's visionary anticipation of the semantic discoveries that would come decades later. At its root, all of Frye's revelations stem from an understanding of the semantic nature and linguistic basis of narrative – the understanding of narrative as fundamentally thematic.

6.3 Conclusion

Hopefully, this chapter has successfully argued the fundamental role that theme and archetype plays in the ancestral narrative to all contemporary narrative, if not in all narrative.

We began with a look at exemplary narrative, demonstrating how the theme-exemplar relationship is central to its understanding, while at the same time demonstrating its sympathies with conventional narrative. Thus, exemplary narrative, rather than a unique kind of narrative, is merely a form in which the theme-exemplar relationship, which is fundamental to all narrative, is more visible.

Next, we proceeded to an extensive survey of the folktale form, demonstrating how all of the numerous defining characteristics are perfectly predictable from the perspective of cognitive semantic principles which inform the thematic narrative

theory. We demonstrated how all these different features derive from a small set of defining narrative functions. In addition, as an ancestor of the modern narrative, while these features are most definite in the folktale, they are visible as well in all modern narrative to varying degrees, so that thematic narrative becomes equally indispensable to its description. This is compared to formalist narratology, which is wholly incapable of explaining these same features due to its referential semantic assumptions.

Finally, we briefly looked at Frye's archetypal narrative model, demonstrating how it provides a foundational archetype which encompasses all narrative forms in its descriptive framework – something which once again formalist narratology is fundamentally incapable of due to its founding assumptions.

Chapter 7

Narrative analysis

The proceeding chapters discuss several narratives in order to demonstrate the application of thematic narrative theory to individual narrative texts. The following chapter will specifically focus on a reasonably intensive analysis of a variety of short narratives. The texts selected are Aesop's *The Fox and the Grapes* (Phaedrus 1902), Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* (2000), a selection of parables, the Vizier's fable from *One Thousand and One Nights* (Dawood 1973), the well-known children's story *Red Riding Hood* (Perrault 2009), *What the Moon Brings* by Lovecraft, and The Doors' *Riders on the Storm* (1971). All of these were selected on the basis of:

i. their brevity (with the exception of *The Pardoner's Tale*), to allow a more comprehensive linguistic analysis within a limited page count;

ii. a general critical consensus on theme, in order to facilitate thematic analysis;

iii. their exemplification of specific aspects of thematic narrative theory; and

iv. in addition, there was the consideration of a varied and reasonably representative range of narrative texts, so that the versatility of the thematic theory of narrative could be demonstrated.

There is admittedly a distinct bias in favour of exemplary narratives, with the majority of texts selected from this type of narrative. But this was done with the intent of focusing on the role of theme in narrative: precisely the purpose of this thesis. Nevertheless, the last three texts could by no means be considered exemplary narratives, and therefore demonstrate the applicability of the theory to non-exemplary narrative analysis as well.

7.1 Introducing thematic narrative analysis: The Fox and the grapes

The fable of the Fox and the Grapes needs little introduction. It is a staple of that most well-known collection of fables from Aesop, and is itself one of the most familiar in the collection, as can be seen from its colloquialisation in the idiom *sour grapes*.

The oldest extant version is that of Phaedrus, written in Latin. It is brief, the narrative composed of only two sentences in four lines, with an additional two lines for the moral. The analysis will focus almost exclusively on the narrative section, namely the first two sentences/four lines. I provide an English translation, as close to the original Latin as I could manage, and for the reader's sake the analysis shall be of this translation.

Its brevity makes it well-suited as a first example, where we shall attempt to analyse the text as exhaustively as possible in order to demonstrate the thematic model in its fullest scope. This is not always feasible, and subsequent analyses will focus only on the most pertinent features. Following Cluysenaar (1976) in the introduction to chapter 6, it is acknowledged that all such close readings are inherently arbitrary and thus no single interpretation can ever be truly exhaustive. Yet perhaps through its breadth, one can hope that this interpretation will incorporate at least something of the majority of readings.

> *Fame coacta vulpes alta in vinea*
> *Uvam appetebat summis saliens viribus;*
> *Quam tangere ut non potuit, discedens ait:*
> *"Nondum matura est; nolo acerbam sumere".*
>
> *Qui facere quae non possunt verbis elevant,*
> *Ascribere hoc debebunt exemplum sibi.*
>
> Driven by hunger, a fox strove after grapes on a tall vine, leaping with utmost might. Since it was unable to reach them, departing it said: "They are not ripened yet; I don't wish to taste bitterness."
>
> Those who make light of that which they cannot accomplish with their words, they ought to apply this lesson to themselves.

Starting with the features of folk-modelling (Section 4.4.2), the words are highly polysemic – that is, semantically under-specified and hence highly versatile. *Fox* for example, denotes a species of canid, a cunning person, or an act of cunning, etc. *Strive* similarly can take on a multitude of meanings. The words demonstrate this adaptability by virtue of their schematic simplicity, which enables them to be easily modified to a variety of contexts. This applies in particular to the verbs, such as *drive*, *strive*, *leap*, *reach*, etc. *Drive* for instance, schematically profiles simply the

exertion of an unspecified force on an object. *Strive* similarly profiles the exertion of force by an object toward a goal. This in turn makes them semantically context-dependent, as it is the words they are grammatically bound to which fill out the necessary details that their schematic simplicity deprives them of. In this way, sentences which exhibit folk-modelling are more semantically interdependent and unitary. This is particularly evident in the complexity of the sentences in terms of their modification via complex phrase structures and subordinate clauses. The results of these features are varied. Firstly, their inherent lexical ambiguity facilitates a broader range of interpretations. For instance, psychological meanings can easily be attached to the physical behaviours being described. This in turn also facilitates a higher degree of cognitive engagement, due to the compositionality of meaning, meaning that denotations have to be compiled from multiple lexical items. Thirdly, this compositionality also facilitates increased thematic unity, creating a strong sense of unity and clarity in the message. Finally, this also contributes to a greater sense of unity in the instantiation of the theme as a single experiential image. As stated before, these features are typical of the fable form, namely, both a distinct thematic thesis along with a vivid and equally distinct exemplary image.

The sentences of this narrative semantically emphasise verbs, both through their number – eight verbs in two sentences, and through the complex and detailed actions they describe. As stated above, while the verbs themselves are schematically simple, they are greatly elaborated by their grammatical compositional context. Compare for instance, *leap*, which alone only schematises a vague upward movement, with *fox leap*, which suddenly profiles a complex, detailed and highly specific image. Then compare *fox leaping after grapes,* where the image grows even more distinct and detailed, and *fox leaping after grapes with utmost might*, and so on. Through this compositionality, a high-degree of concretisation is rendered. This is also reflected in the kinds of clause: six of the clauses are material (x do y) and only two mental (x thinks/says y) – and one of these is a verbal clause, which is the most concrete form of mental action (compared to feeling, thinking or perceiving). Tellingly, none of these are relational (x be y), which is the most abstract clause type (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]:168-248). Folk-modelling is also characterised by more complex and distinct temporality, as we would expect from a high degree of concretisation and verb frequency. Here, the timeline is simple and mimetic (there is

no temporal inversion), but then again, we can only expect so much from a two-sentence narrative. The events are at least temporally distinct, one with the fox leaping, the other departing. Verbs emphasise the clear segmentation of imagery into distinctive units even while uniting them in chains of causation. As stated, this dendrogramic (branching) semantic structure is highly characteristic of narrative – a single image composed of various distinct yet highly integrated parts.

The result of this high degree of concretisation is increased semantic resolution. An image which could easily have been communicated in a single clause is instead broken up into a number of distinct sub-units, allowing us to contemplate each separately. This not only increases experiential clarity, but also results in increased metaphoric density, through the metaphoric interpretation imposed by the concluding moral statement. This in effect forces the reader to not only provide a metaphoric interpretation to the image as a whole, but to each subordinate unit as well. This in turn forces us to create an equivalent schematic delicacy *vis-à-vis* the theme. Abstract themes of the type presented in the moral of the story naturally tend to categorical simplicity in order to synthesise the greatest number of members within that category. The imposition of schematic delicacy onto naturally indelicate themes renders them more informative and hence more meaningful.

Other word classes (within the compositionally specified context) reflect the bias toward the concrete, with very few abstract, intangible meanings (*hunger* and *bitterness* are two examples), and even these are still sensually quite distinct (as compared to abstractions such as *like* or *curious*). Participant specification is also frequent. As is typical with these types of stories, the number of participants is reduced (here to only three – the fox, the grapes and the vine). In keeping with the number of verbs, references to the participants' involvement in the actions or events they depict also multiply. This is particularly so in the original Latin (though that language does have the feature of greater noun-verb agreement as a general rule, so whether this is above average is unclear), and has the result of increasing the impression of concretisation though the greater involvement of the characters in the events portrayed – this is for the simple reason that we cannot perceive actions directly, only indirectly through the actors that perform them. Once again, the result is an experientially immersive experience which at the same time retains a coherent thematic unity.

In this we can see how important the theme-exemplar relationship is to narrative coherence. Outside of the thematic context, the events are merely meaningless random isolates. Certainly, there are objective relationships between the events, as there always are between events. But what organises these specific events into a narrative unit is how the relationships between them all have a shared thematic subject in common. It is only through the medium of subjectification to theme that experience gains coherence. That being said, the relevant theme can hardly be said to be unitary, but instead encompasses a variety of interpretations, as we will discuss below.

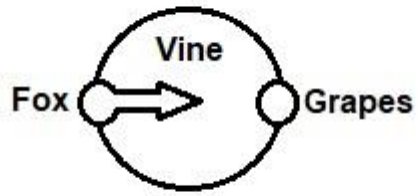

Fig. 7.1 A schematic representation of ‘The Fox and the Grapes’.

Lastly, as we would expect from a fable in particular, the language is highly metaphoric or symbolic, as is needed in order to convey the thematic message of the narrative. But to fully explore this aspect, let us turn from the topic of the narrative exemplar to narrative exemplification (in other words, from the illustrative example itself to what links it to the theme). Schematically, the image is simple, despite the rich detail associated with it. The vine delineates a space, with the fox as one pole and the grapes as the other. The fox is the trajector, which is the active centre of cognitive attention, and the grapes the landmark, which is the goal that orients our point of view regarding the action. The action is a simple motion of trajector to landmark, and the vine defines the space between them. But that distance is also the barrier which prevents the trajector from reaching its landmark (c.f. Langacker 2008:70-3).

The second scene modifies the first scene in several ways. Firstly, the fox is described at departing, defeated by the vine. However, it also includes a verbal projection, where the vine is replaced by quality of bitterness attributed to the grapes.

It is important to note that this third alternative scene exists only as a projection. In terms of “objectification" (Langacker 1987: 128-32), we perceive the projection as existing at a greater “cognitive distance” (Langacker 1987: 177-182), as it is distanced by it subjectification as a verbal projection. Moreover, the verbal projection includes a further level of subjectification in that the quality of “aversion to bitterness” is also subjective to the Fox.

Figure 7,2 Schematic representations of the second scene. The left is the actual scene, the right is the verbal projection of the fox.

Cognitve grammar distinguishes between objective and subjective spaces. Objective spaces are presented as epistemically neutral, while in subjective spaces, the dependence of the space’s existence on a specific epistemic viewpoint is foregrounded. This is the difference between *you took the cookie* versus *I saw you take the cookie*. By framing fox’s reason for departing at two levels of subjectification, the narrator leads us automatically to question its veracity. This subjective space is then directly addressed in the moral of the fable through the phrase “make light of…with their words”.

The story comprises two scenes, one with the fox striving its utmost to reach the grapes, the other with the fox departing upon deciding for himself that they’re sour. The first scene is a standard image of desire for the unattainable. The second contradicts it by stating that the unattainable is also undesirable. This identifies the central problem of the narrative: why is what was desirable at one time undesirable at another? Blending provides the means to make sense of these two very different scenes by explaining the implied causal relationship between the two events. By doing so the blend simultaneously also proposes the theme that connects them into

a single unified meaning that conveys the significance of the story to the audience – its moral.

The obvious cross-space mappings between the scenes are the participants, namely the fox, the grapes and the vine that separates them. The fox is the same in the one as in the other, equally hungry, equally incapable of crossing the distance of the vine. However, the grapes in the one are diametrically different from the grapes in the other. In the first they are sweet and enticing, in the second sour and unfit for vulpine consumption. For the same reason, the vine which separates the two is inconsequential in the second scene, since the fox no longer wants the grapes. The narrative challenges the audience to create a blend which explains these contradictions.

The narrative provides us with the clues we need to resolve this disparity: we can deduce that the grapes are sweet in the first scene from the fox's actions. In the second scene we are only told that the grapes are bitter, and the obvious difference is that the fox is unable to reach the grapes. Thus, lacking any evidence for the fox's change of mind, we can conclude that the fox says that the grapes are bitter only because they are out of reach. In other words, the bitter grapes only exist in the mind of the fox, an interpretation which is motivated by its presentation as a mental clause. Thus, the scene already pre-empts the moral postscript.

The schema of self-deception is the emergent structure which best integrates the evidence presented, even in the absence of the concluding sentence. The fox lies to himself about the grapes to allay the frustration of failure. Other possibilities include ignorance or discovery, but both of these entail more complex blends than the self-deception blend. The ignorance blend conflicts significantly with the first scene, and thus requires a great deal of additional emergent structure. The discovery blend requires further inputs in the second scene which are not given.

But this blend cannot itself explain the moral of the story, namely *disparaging that which cannot be attained*. To do so, we need to explore the narrative exemplification. The purpose of exemplification, as stated in chapter 5, is to employ symbolism to broaden the signification of the narrative beyond its simplest denotative values. Through exemplification, a fox leaping after grapes becomes a general symbol of human striving for something beyond attainment.

As stated above, verbs, particularly action verbs, are often inherently symbolic and exemplifying. This mirrors the versatility of archetypes. They are schematically simple in order to maximise their usefulness as a means of categorising experience. It is in this way that we can use the word *run*, for example, to describe any kind of fast and continuous or cyclic motion, such as the movement of legs, of fluid, or of a machine. But this adaptability doesn't only mean that it can signify any one of a range of phenomena, but it can also symbolise all of them. Thus, the image of a fox striving after grapes symbolises something striving after anything.

As Lakoff and Turner (1989:166-181) explain in *More than Cool Reason*, THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor uses animals as symbols of human instinctual nature. We do so because of the embodiment of experience – that is, we naturally superimpose external experiences onto internal experiences in order to maximise our insight into the world around us. For instance, we understand someone or something else's behaviour as hunger because it resembles the experience of our own behaviour when hungry.

In this capacity, the fox forms part of larger group of animal symbols for cunning, which includes the African jackal, American coyote, Australian dingo, among others (Uther 2006, Hofmeyer 2020). For this reason, fox proverbs or idioms are usually on the theme of cunning. When they are presented in a positive light, it is usually in comparison to strength, while negative portrayals, like in the fable above, are typically related to being too clever for one's own good. We likely view these creatures this way because they are among the smaller carnivores in the ecology who often scavenge on the prey of larger predators, often using deception to accomplish this. The only unusual thing is that here it is self-deception (Uther 2006).

Due to this symbolic association with the intellect, it is also not surprising that of all animals the fox is most closely associated with humanity. This is likely because we see a lot of ourselves in the fox's predilection for cunning, as one of humanity's most distinctive traits. Often this translates to foxes shape-changing into human form. It is thus unsurprising how common a stock-character the fox is in fable literature. Foxes are equally often symbols of the malevolent or even demonic, as we find in many Asiatic folktales, such as the well-known nine-tailed fox. As scavengers and omnivores, literal everything-devourers, they become symbols of rapacity, and by

extension, sexual desire, and coupled with deception their demoniac associations become unsurprising (Uther 2006, Gheerbrant et al. 1996).

The vine and the grape are naturally paired or interchangeable symbols. As Lakoff and Turner (1989:166-181) explain, while animals symbolise human instincts, plants symbolise our biological traits. Plants represent human life in general. Old plants like the oak or olive tree are associated with senescence and longevity, beautiful plants like flowers with beauty and youth, etc. However, within this overall capacity their symbolism is quite varied. The most salient symbolism for us is biblical symbolism, where plants represent human lives (as mentioned in the Grim Reaper example (Section 4.6)) and the vine, as the most treasured of plants for its bounty, similarly represents the best of humanity – either the chosen peoples specifically (the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, the Holy Church in the New), or generally those persons who most closely approach the ideal of what God intended us to be. Thus, it is unsurprising that Jesus is also the Vine (Frye 1956:141-2).

Grapes are exemplars of nourishment, not just of food, but of delight – the delight of satiety. Grapes are among the sweetest of fruit, and the source of wine, which is the richest of drinks, the headiest of the unfortified liquors of ancient times. Wine is the sacred drink, the favoured Olympian beverage, and grapes correspondingly the sacred food. Wine is traditionally symbolised as the blood of the grape, so that just as the vine and the grape symbolise life, wine is the essence of life. Wine and the vine are a symbol of life, youth and health, as can be seen in the various names for liquor equivalent to *water of life* from across the world (Gheerbrant et al. 1996).

From this central association with not just human life, but with the paragon or ideal life, broader associations branch out. Grapes are associated with sexuality, which is the source of life, and specifically with the sexual organs themselves, and the eating of grapes with sexual gratification and procreation. Through their association with wine and drunkenness they may even represent excess and gluttony. The pressing of grapes, on the other hand, is associated with ritual trials, the suffering that winnows out the best. In Greek symbolism, the vine is associated with Dionysus, the god of the irrational and unconscious. In spite of being one of the oldest and most Greek of gods, in Greek mythology he is always the foreign newcomer, a saviour come to redeem the faithful from suffering and tyranny. Wine and grapes assume the same symbolism (Gheerbrant et al. 1996).

Either way, the symbolism is obvious: a fox striving for grapes represents humans desiring the things in life that are of value. The fox leaping after grapes beyond his reach symbolises the human desire for the unattainable. In this case, the vine's role as that which separates the fox and the grapes seems largely circumstantial rather than symbolic. The second episode, that of the fox claiming the grapes to be sour, harnesses the fox's association with cunning – only here it is self-deception. This is an interpretation which is supported by the subjectifications of the verbal projection and the mental quality of aversion. There are also suggestions of the grape-pressing symbolism as a ritual ordeal of purification – the grapes which are left untouched could represent a failed test of purity or moral fibre. In the grape's Dionysiac associations with liberty (Gheerbrant et al. 1996), the failure to attain the grape is also the failure of liberation from biological determinism (represented by hunger). This leads to an interpretation of *people desiring what they can't have, lie about the worth of those things (perhaps because they are themselves unworthy)*. This is the moral of the fable, and as we see, the moral is already embedded in the fable itself – the postscript is merely a repetition for emphasis.

This may seem like a rather considerable bush to beat around to arrive at such a simple message – but then this may be the whole point. The formalists stated that the primary purpose of artistic language is defamiliarization – namely the deliberate obfuscation of meaning to elicit reflection (Erlich 1980 [1955]). Likewise, fables cloak meaning in a veil of symbolism precisely to provoke contemplation and critical thinking. Not that the author could be viewed as deliberately casting doubt on the truism. Rather, the effect is that of strengthening agreement. The message is already made more striking because the audience is required to actively seek it out rather than passively receive it. Secondly, because the moral is unlikely to be highly contentious, the effect is likely to be even more strengthened, because the chain of logic is not given, but must be reasoned out, so that in a way the conclusions are being drawn by the audience themselves. In this way, the narrator Babrius effectively tricks the audience into making his argument for him.

Of course, this is not the only possible interpretation, but I believe it is a highly salient one. Alternative interpretations can stick to the same theme, but interpret it more narrowly or more broadly. John Elster's (2016) interpretation is an example of the latter. It takes the moral to an even greater level of abstraction, making it a fable on

the theme of cognitive dissonance, which the moral is presented as an instance of. Conversely, history furnishes numerous examples of *sour grapes* which the fable can serve as an allegory of, such as the disparagement of Caesar's victories by his political rivals.

Deviating from the moral of the story however is problematic, given that it is explicitly stated. For instance, another recurring interpretation is that of a warning against paedophilia (Thornbury 1982 [1668]). But although this interpretation agrees strongly with some of the symbolism of the fable, in particular the latent sexual associations of fox and grapes, it conflicts strongly with others. The fox has long been a metaphor for both male and female sexual appeal and appetite, and grapes for the sexual attributes of the human body and sex itself. The blend which resolves the contradictions between the two scenes in this instance is different. Here it is the appearance of the grapes which is the lie, and the fox's declaration that the grapes are unripe and therefore unfit to eat which is the truth. The blend therefore resolves the contradiction again by a differentiation between a real space and a false mental space – but the false space is not the verbal space of the sour grapes, but the perceptual space of the sweet grapes.

But the problem with this interpretation is that, although it fits the fable itself perfectly, it contradicts the moral which specifically stipulates that it is the verbal space that is false and the perceptual space which is real. The reason why this interpretation can match the story perfectly but conflict with the moral demonstrates the distinction between theme and thesis. Theme is the organisational structure of the narrative, which, as stated above, is the central contradiction between the sweet grapes in the first episode, and the sour grapes in the second. Any interpretation which employs any subset of the symbolic values of the narrative to resolve this contradiction is thematically valid. Ideally, the more comprehensive the symbolism it incorporates is, the better, but so long as it meets these criteria, it is valid. The thesis however predisposes one to only one of the above-mentioned interpretations.

Finally, turning to exemplary narrative and archetypal narrative features (Chapter 6), the fable exhibits many of these features. In the fable tradition, through the almost etiological association of the moral with animal instinct, the fable seeks to elevate the proverb to natural law (Section 6.1.2). At the same time, the blending of morality and humour lends it a less serious note. Similarly, it has the truncated form and simplified

essentialism dedicated to clear thematic exemplification (the Law of Patterning) (Section 6.2.1). It also displays the related qualities of thematic realism and perspicuous fictionality in its curious use of grapes as the fox's prize and the protagonist's human attributions. Additionally, no abstract property is represented except in its instantiated form, and no instantiated property appears unless it has an abstract correlative. And the structure of the narrative accordingly also reflects the process of comprehension. Typically, it is also psychologically minimalistic, and drawn in strong juxtapositions between the active fox and passive grapes, the stark optimism in the first scene and pessimism in the second, realism and symbolism, etc. Lastly, it has the simplified domesticity of familiar experience, drawn in the clearest and most detailed but still minimalist lines.

Despite its simplicity, it still manages to obey most of the laws of the archetypal narrative (Section 6.2.2). Protagonist and conflict are singular and central, thus also de facto obeying the laws of opening and closing and initial and final position (unsurprising given that there are only two scenes). The repetitions of central characters, namely fox and grapes, represent the law of repetition, and the numerous contrasts have already been mentioned. If we conceive of the grapes as an antagonist, it clearly obeys the laws of two to a scene and contrasting characters. If obeys the traditional single-stranded form and representative dialogue. Lastly, the popularity of the fox and grapes image in ornamentation demonstrates that it partially adheres to the law of tableaux scenes.

Although it departs from the archetypal narrative (Section 6.2.3), this is hardly surprising – due to its brevity, there simply isn't the space to represent the archetypal hero's journey more than superficially. Yet there are still clear resonances. It is a clear instance of the archetypal event. Although there is no life-and-death struggle (excluding some spectacular mental gymnastics), it still represents an eternal universal theme in concrete form. There is no journey between worlds, yet still a trace of this in the clear spatial segmentation between fox and grapes, the hero and his prize. The truest representation is of the tragic archetypal form, with a clear progression from the apocalyptic and optimistic in the first scene, to the demonic and pessimistic in the second scene.

To conclude, we have analysed the narrative quite exhaustively, from the smallest level of the individual words to the highest level of the comprehensive thematic

imagery. In the process, we have seen identified several dozen individual markers of how the thematic narrative function defines the form of the narrative. And this is despite the fable being a highly distinctive narrative form, departing from the archetypal narrative in several distinct ways. Yet even so, it retains a conformity to the underlying principles. For example, even though it clearly departs from the hero's journey archetype, a trace of this template remains. The fox's troubles are clearly universalised, with strong symbolic associations with the universal struggle to transcend our corporeal instincts – in a sense to defy mortality – a clear reflection of the same ideas behind the hero's journey archetype. Similarly, although there is no division of worlds, there is a strongly figurative juxtaposition between the hopeful and disappointed images that produces a similar result. All of this shows that the narrative form contains copious interpretive cues that render it a distinctive linguistic artefact with its own very unique linguistic function, and it is essential to understand these unconscious codes to accurately understand this vital form of human communication.

7.2 The double perspective in *The Pardoner's Tale*

From one of the simplest and most familiar examples of the fable, let us turn to one of the greatest specimens (Reiss 1964). Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales* collection demonstrates many of the typical features of the form, as well as many which are strikingly different. The frame narrative states that the moral of the tale is *Radix malorum est cupiditas*, greed is the root of all evil, and here we will analyse how the structure of this exemplary narrative exemplifies this theme. The focus of this analysis will therefore be on the exemplary narrative itself rather than the frame narrative. This redresses the historical imbalance that most analyses have focused on the Pardoner himself rather than his story (Reiss 1964). At the same time, in keeping with our linguistic approach, we will follow the critical tradition of focusing primarily on the text itself rather than its historical context – the aim is less to discover what it may have meant to Chaucer and his audience and more to discover its present-day significance to us (Halverston 1970).

Linguistic analysis will necessarily be sparse due to the length of the text. The kind of in-depth linguistic analysis such a long and complex text deserves would require a

complete dissertation on its own. As we will note, the narrative thematics of *The Pardoner's Tale,* is expressed at all levels of language, lexis, grammar, semantics and all dimensions, material, mental, relational, literal, figurative, instance, abstract, etc. Instead, our focus will be on demonstrating the narrative conventions discussed in Chapter 6 which in turn are expressions of underlying linguistics principles. Thus, linguistics will only be addressed indirectly (but nevertheless it is still addressed). In particular, we will address Ricoeur's narrative concept of *the double perspective* (Section 2.3), which is of particular importance to the interpretation of this text. This is because the story strongly foregrounds the conventions of narrative, to the extent that it is even questionable whether a true understanding is possible without this context. At the same time there is a clear lack of research into these features in this literature on this text. In this way, we not only hope to offer a demonstration of how these narrative conventions contribute to the thematic interpretation of texts, but also to demonstrate the value of thematic narrative theory in contributing to scholarship.

The narrative opens with the Pardoner taking his turn at storytelling. He prefaces his tale with a sermon on the topic of avarice, but mainly boasts of his skill at defrauding gullible victims of their wealth. The story proper opens with a scene introducing our three rioters. After this false start, the main body of the sermon on greed and its many faces follows. Returning to his tale, the protagonists learn of the demise of a comrade at the hands of a character named Death. At the news they determine to avenge their fallen companion. They abuse a passing traveller who informs them of the whereabouts of Death. They find a treasure instead and abandon their quest. One goes to town for provisions but decides to poison the others' drinks. The others treacherously slay their companion when he returns and then drink the poison and die themselves. The Pardoner then concludes his sermon and carried away by his performance, ends with a failed attempt to defraud his hosts.

The fable corresponds with the Aarne-Thompson Type 763, *The Treasure Finders who Murder one Another* (1961). It was an old tale already when Chaucer told it and can be found in various forms throughout the world (Hamel & Merrill 1991). While many of these instances predate *The Pardoner's Tale* (Canby 1905), it is uncertain whether some of the other tales draw from the original archetype or whether they are popular retellings of Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* itself (McKenna 1977)

Starting as we did before with the text itself, Higuchi (1987) provides a linguistic analysis of *The Pardoner's Tale*, employing the framework of Halliday and Hasan (2014 [1976]) to interpret the use of lexical constellations to communicate theme. His approach is admittedly limited in that he exclusively analyses lexis and leaves out syntax. He thus focuses primarily on lexical frequency at the expense of position – though as stated before, recurrence is one of the primary signals of theme (Section 4.5.1). Yet in spite of its limitations, the analysis still clearly demonstrates how the text exemplifies the theme of avarice in terms of two constellations – physical death through murder, pestilence, the infirmity of old age and sterility, and spiritual death through the sins of drunkenness, blasphemy, gambling and most importantly, the fraudulent ministry of the Pardoner. In this way, the polysemy of death serves as an ideal exemplar for the theme of avarice not only due to its highly distinctive mimeticism, but also in its intimate and universal relevance. Once again, we see narrative employ experiential domains to compensate for the level of abstraction of the theme. Higuchi's analysis clearly mirrors Canby (1905) and Bronson's (1960:86) theories of the origin and composition of *The Pardoner's Tale*. According to this theory, the story originates in the original blending of an Italian version of the fable which is unique in its inclusion of an old man who warns the protagonists to mend their ways, and a sermon by Pope Innocent III[31]. The fable exemplifies the themes of avarice and death, while the sermon exemplifies the themes of avarice and spiritual death.

We are plainly told, at several points, that avarice is the theme of the narrative, but what about death? Higuchi demonstrates the frequency of references to death, a theme which is also marked out by structural prominence. According to Frye, narrative structure is defined by the '*principle of conversion'* (1957:165, 2006, Sheehan 1983) or transformation that renders narrative structure. All narratives comprise an essential transformation, or as it was termed earlier, a journey, either manifested in the protagonist or their world. These transformations furthermore take two forms, the instructive tale, in which a positive transformation occurs, and the cautionary tale involving decline. Several transformations occur through the course of *The Pardoner's Tale* – indeed we differentiate episodes precisely through the changes that occur between them. Of all these transformations, the most significant

[31] Lotario dei Conti de Segni, 1160/1-1216, papacy 1198-1216.

by far is the last, specifically the death of the protagonists. This is furthermore foreshadowed by the vow to kill death in the exposition. Thus, death is the inciting event, the primary adversary and concluding event. In this way, both structural foregrounding and repetition lead us to the same theme, namely Death.

As stated before, most analyses of the story focus on the character of the Pardoner. In Higuchi's (1987) analysis, the Pardoner serves as a symbol of both sin and death. The Pardoner's sin is expounded upon at great length, though his symbolism of death is more subtly indicated, through his associated sterility, preoccupation with dead things (relics), and the spiritual death attributed to sin. The character of the Pardoner has fascinated critics continuously due to its prominent contradictions. Reiss (1964) summarises the main views: for some the Pardoner is simply evil, manifesting in the form of greed and vanity, and his contradictions simply an expression of the contradictions inherent to his sins. For others, part of his debauched nature is drunkenness, and it is the irrationality of intoxication which explains his contradictions. For others again his presiding sin is unrepentance, so that he cannot help both trying to defraud his fellows while simultaneously defeating himself through his own boastfulness.

But what all of these interpretations miss is that the Pardoner is first of all a narrative function, specifically within the conventions of the dramatic monologue (Reiss 1964, Harrington 1968). It is this same narrative function that results in the oft-parodied trope of the soliloquising villain, along with the equally parodied trope of the hero using this foible to foil the villain. This trope exists because, in order for a narrative to effectively communicate its message, it is necessary for the criminal to confess his crime. His purpose in the story is to instantiate the theme, and it is this which serves as the primary motivation for his actions. What most critics miss is that his motivations are driven not by realism but by narrative requirements. This is a convention particularly prominent in Shakespearean drama – in the characters of Iago, Shylock or Macbeth, for example.

This preference for narrative or thematic realism, that is, figuration – a reality shaped by the conceptual structure of the theme rather than the laws of reality – over ordinary realism is ubiquitous. According to Lavinsky (2015), the function of the Pardoner is to serve as an epitome of the sins that all the travelling companions, and consequently the whole of humanity whom they collectively symbolise, share. *The*

Canterbury Tales is a redemption narrative, and *The Pardoner's Tale* serves as the necessary cathartic confessional which must necessarily precede an authentic Christian redemption.

Consequently, *The Pardoner's Tale* follows the conventions of the exemplary narrative and the broader archetypal narrative tradition closely. One example is the false start, which critics have gone to extravagant lengths to explain. *The Pardoner's Tale* starts out with a framing sermon, then presents the opening scene of the narrative, but strangely, resumes the sermon again before concluding the narrative. However, what many critics do not appreciate is that this fits perfectly within the exemplary narrative tradition of explicating the theme within the frame of the narrative itself: avarice is the encompassing theme, which in turn is instantiated through the manifestations of drunkenness, swearing and gambling. By explicitly stating the theme at the start of the narrative, we are more attuned to its presence and the functional role it plays in the story: drunkenness both inspires the protaganists' foolish quest and brings them to their end in the poisoned drink. It is the taking of oaths in vain which leads them on the foolish quest in the first place, and their forsaking of the same oath out of greed that leads to their destruction. Lastly, it is the addiction to risk-taking which inspires their reckless endeavour, and the same addiction which leads to them taking the gamble of betraying one another for a greater share of the profits (Bishop1967). The result of this is the palindromic symmetry typical of the archetypal narrative (Treanor 2012). In short, when we keep in mind the archetypal structure of narrative, this narrative interruption hardly appears strange at all.

In keeping with this tradition, the narrative also displays a remarkable economy. Characters, events and setting are minimally portrayed (Bishop 1967, Harrington 1968). Only those features which are absolutely necessary to predict future eventualities or establish motives are presented (Bishop 1967, Harrington 1968). All the explication and elaboration of narrative themes occurs outside of the main story, in the Pardoner's sermons or in narrative-internal dialogues (Lavinsky 2015). Similarly, the narrator only interrupts twice in the course of the entire story to offer direct commentary. Everything else we discover is done through the mimetically realistic convention of the single-stranded narrative (Halverston 1970). Following Olrik's laws almost precisely, undifferentiated characters always act collectively, and

when they are individuated at the end of the story, they become adversaries. Similarly, they fail collectively to succeed in their quest of finding death, only succeeding once they are individuated – in keeping with Olrik's law that the one is always stronger than the many. Likewise, the antagonist, Death, particularly in the instantiation of the old man, is the only character who is rendered in detail. Pointedly, Death is the only named character (Bishop 1967). Another scene which is presented in uncommon detail is that of the apothecary, whose meticulous description of the poison's effects informs the audience's predictions, so that the ending of the story is a mere formality, cursorily confirming what we already know is going to happen (Lavinsky 2015). Narrative economy and thematic realism/figuration go hand in hand. Thematic realism discloses the thematic structure of the narrative, so that excessive detail is needless. In the same way, the minimalist narrative keeps the story on point, maintaining thematic clarity. As stated before, narrative economy truncates the tale, so that it can all be held in the mind at once. The result complements the disturbing tone and theme of the tale – the sense of predestination and thus of everything perfectly aligning to bring about the protagonists' doom (Bishop 1967). It is this same thematic realism that allows theme to manifest in physical form, Death, the old man, the tree, the treasure (LaBere 2019).

After the Pardoner, it is the old man who has captured the interest of critics most. Like the Pardoner, he is a character rife with contradictions and, in spite of superficial differences, their symbolism is similar (Rhodes 1983). Due to the mentioned contradictions, interpretations vary: for many, the old man is simply the character of Death in disguise, leading the heroes to their fated appointment with him (Kittredge 1959). Others associate him with the literary figures of the Wandering Jew (Bushnell 1931), or the personification of Old Age, one of the traditional companions of Death (Hamilton 1939). As with Death, the appearance in literature of these figures is traditionally disguised, as we see in *The Pardoner's Tale* (David 1965). Then again, as with all the fantastic elements in the story, the character can be perfectly explained in realistic terms, so that some claim him to be no more than an ordinary passer-by (Owen 1967). However, as David (1965) points out, none of these explanations need be exclusive – the old man can at once be both an ordinary man and Death incarnate. For Miller (1955), the Pardoner's old man corresponds with the scriptural old man who is reborn through Christ. In this context, old age, death and

youth are used in a spiritual sense, so that the senescence he cannot escape is the sin of an unrepentant soul, and the death he cannot attain is the release of confession – the peace of the afterlife spurns him. Thus, the old man is both an ordinary person like us, yet also symbolises the spiritual struggle we all face. He is symbolic of the certainty of death as well as the possibility of a spiritual victory over it through repentance (Rhodes 1983). Thus, unlike the Pardoner, he can serve as the hero's guide because he acknowledges his failure and seeks to surpass it (Steadman 1973).

As Erikson (1983) points out, the fable also follows the archetypal hero's journey with extraordinary clarity and precision. There is no symbolism here. It is literally a band of heroes setting forth to kill Death. Following the archetype, the inciting event is the injury of the heroes' kin, which leads to their commitment to the hero's journey, explicitly stated as an oath. According to the formula, they then encounter a helper, pass his test and are rewarded with the guidance they require to attain their goal. Finally, there is a confrontation with an antagonist, the acquisition of the hero's reward, and the restoration of peace and order. At the same time, even while following the formula with exactitude, it is executed with conspicuous irony. The heroes are clearly unequal to the challenge they commit themselves to. They pass the helper's test by failing it, proving them deserving of their predestined doom. The assistance they gain from the helper is the means of their self-destruction. The antagonists they must face are one another, the goal attained is their own demise, and it is through this self-annihilation that harmony between worlds is restored.

These ironies, namely following the archetypal hero's journey precisely whilst simultaneously subverting it, the contradictions of the old man, those of the Pardoner's motivations, those between spiritual and physical death: all of these relate to the double perspective which Chaucer carefully constructs in *The Pardoner's Tale* (Bishop 1967, Halverston 1970). All narratives serve to exemplify a theme, which is typically unspoken or only vaguely alluded to, and as was previously stated, achieve this through blending. In other words, the theme is the blended conceptual space which integrates all the disparate events or instances in the narrative into a coherent whole. Exemplary narratives are exceptional in that the theme is usually highly explicit, and often directly stated. Because theme is often unspoken, narratives will typically emphasise highly integrated blends. In the case of

exemplary narratives, as we saw, this is usually even truer, since here the focus is more on the instructional than meditative functions. The conventional narrative typically simply proposes a problem for the audience to solve on their own. In contrast, the exemplary narrative also presents a solution, and the problem-statement which the narrative represents instead serves as a substantiating argument for this solution. But in *The Pardoner's Tale*, Chaucer subverts the exemplary narrative convention, transforming the instructional into the meditative. He achieves this by creating contradictions between the exemplar and its moral or theme. In this way he highlights the problem of existential uncertainty – namely the inherent dissonance between the ideas we form about our life and the actual experience of living it.

The Pardoner's Tale exploits a longstanding ministerial tradition of blending sermon and fable, as a way of exploiting the illustrative function of narrative in order to render the abstractions of Christian doctrine more comprehensible to the laity. However, at the time Chaucer wrote *the Canterbury Tales*, this convention was coming under increasing dispute (Lavinsky 2015, Halverston 1970). As stated before, narrative instantiates theme, and the process of thematic instantiation is mutually distorting. The blend that comprises an instantiated theme is inherently different from both the lone-standing theme and instance. It provides the theme with a concreteness that abstractions often lack, and the instance with a scope of significance it doesn't possess on its own. Wycliffe however, argued that this inherent distortion regularly entails a perversion of Christian doctrine (Lavinsky 2015). In the light of the thematic understanding of narrative, we can see his point – at the very least, the blending of a theme with a specific instance necessarily imposes a restriction of the scope that original concept possesses. Indeed, this is its primary strength, but one which is also interpretable as a weakness. Wycliffe thus points out an inherent flaw in narrative – when theme and instance are blended, they enrich one another, but they also compromise the independent functions of each at the same time.

Just like his use of the archetypal hero's journey, Chaucer's use of both sermon and fable are both simultaneously highly typical and a-typical. While certain aspects of the sermon, such as the structure, are quite traditional, others, such as the subject matter, specifically boasting about cheating gullible believers, are definitely not.

These inconsistencies are highlighted by the parodies of Christian doctrine within the exemplary narrative: by the mockery of the Christian pact through their vain oath-taking and of the mass by their murderous feast (Condren 1973). Owen (1967) explains this as the blending of sermon and fabliau traditions, the most reverent and irreverent narrative forms. Chaucer does so in order to invoke the central irony of religion, namely that man's immortal salvation rests in the hands of sinful mortals – that Christians are originally guilty of the very sinfulness they preach against. This is mirrored by the same contradictions between doctrinal clarity and impracticality, and between representations of thought and experience in narrative. The exemplification that Wycliffe rails against is necessary precisely because of the abstraction of doctrine from the complexities of everyday life (Lavinsky 2015). Similarly, narrative seeks to overcome the problem of abstraction through narrative rehabilitation. But these compromises are not without their deficiencies, and Chaucer exploits these inconsistencies to problematise these relationships between Christian doctrine and practice, between human nature and social ideals, between the human aspiration to meaningful existence and the futility imposed by death. All of these concerns are integrated around the thematic axis of greed and its exemplification of death in its manifold manifestations.

This double perspective is perhaps nowhere more distinct than in the character of the old man. Throughout the narrative, there is a clear duality between the literal and the symbolic. This duality comes to a head in the extraordinary character of the old man who is both an ordinary human being, yet also unbelievably old. And his similarities to the Pardoner also serve to highlight his contradictions. Both are almost caricatures of the villain archetype, yet they at the same time demonstrate instances of piety and an honest search for redemption. In this way, the duality of the narrative reflects the duality of the characters of the Pardoner and the old man. Symbolically they are pure embodiments of the theme of avarice. Realistically, they are sympathetically human in their misery and desire for salvation (David 1965).

Another manifestation of this double perspective is visible in the interplay between fantasy and realism. Although nothing in *The Pardoner's Tale* is ever explicitly fantastic, its exploitation of the extraordinary pushes the limits of credibility to breaking point. This is visible in both the frame and exemplary narratives. The quest to kill Death sounds fantastic, but could also be explained through the folly of the

protagonists. The old man could be Death incarnate, or just an ordinary man. Similarly in the frame narrative, the incredible behaviour of the Pardoner is both implausible but at the same time still within the realm of the possible (Murphy 2000). These ironies are brought into focus by the conclusions of both tales, by the 'intertwining irony' of the rioters finding death, and of the Pardoner exemplifying the precise behaviour his exemplary narrative denounces (Bishop 1967).

The result of this is a simultaneous two-fold interpretation of the narrative, firstly as a recounting of ordinary events and secondly as a symbolic representation of themes. Traditionally, narrative seeks to harmonise these two layers of meaning into a functional unity, but Chaucer deliberately sabotages this process, resulting in the contrastive blend (Section 3.7.1) – one which deliberately resists integration and instead constructs unity out of irreconcilable oppositions. In this way, Chaucer highlights the constant tension in narrative between the thematic and the mimetic. The Pardoner's tale comprises elements both distinctly mimetic, such as the representations of dialogue, and thematic, such as its many symbols (Chaucer 2000). Even within the thematic layer, this tension is visible between the exemplifications of physical and spiritual death. Physical and spiritual death are explicitly equated, but also spatially and experientially distinct (Higuchi 1987). In particular, it is telling that the Pardoner, while preaching that sin leads to death, at the same time chooses a life of sin in the face of the inevitability of death.

Thus, *The Pardoner's Tale* exhibits the exemplary narrative in its most conventional form in one sense, while in another it is highly a-typical. As stated before, the exemplary narrative stands on the boundary between expository or discursive literature, whose purpose is to argue a distinct proposition, and poetic literature, which presents a problem or set of undefined ideas for the reader to contemplate, by doing both of these at once. While the narrative observes the particular forms of the exemplary narrative with exactitude, at the same time it also methodically subverts these conventions at every turn, sowing doubt and confusion in the reader. In this way it both presents a clear and detailed argument and makes it impossible for the reader to put any faith in that argument, so that they must revaluate the issue in its entirety in the archetypal manner of the poetic tradition.

These inversions of the archetypal form are complemented by the exaggerated fictionality of *The Pardoner's Tale* as a whole. We see this in the fundamental

absurdity of the plot – three hooligans who set out to kill Death, and, as so often commented upon, the frame narrative is so strewn with inconsistencies as to be virtually nonsensical. Yet while it makes no sense as a snapshot of reality, it makes perfect sense as a conceptual exposition (Harrington 1968). The sequence of events, while realistically possible, stretch the limits of plausibility so far as to force us to conceive the narrative in its thematic form. The Pardoner displays all the characteristics he should – only what is unrealistic is the way in which they are presented. It is believable that the Pardoner should try to cheat his audience. It is equally believable that he should boast of it. But that he should first boast of his skill as a fraud and then try and ply those same skills on his canny audience creates an obstacle between theme and exemplar that brings the subconscious structure of narrative itself into focus.

It is thus not surprising that *The Pardoner's Tale* excites such extraordinary interest and delight. It is an almost perfect exhibition of the narrative formula in terms of economy and effect, yet it does so in all the wrong ways, and in so doing it exhibits both utmost clarity and engagement, but also provokes us to consider the thematic content and execution at a profound level.

7.3 Thetic narrative: The parable

In parable, the relationship between thesis and theme, between exemplary and conventional narrative, between convincing and contemplating is different from the fable. The fable uses the narrative more as a way of convincing the audience that the thesis is true. The parable assumes that the audience already accepts the truth of the thesis – it instead uses the narrative as a way to explain this truth to the audience. Although there is a great deal of similarity, it also may imply certain subtle differences. For this reason we will approach the analysis from the opposite end, starting with the moral as theme and then observing how it is instantiated in the form of an exemplar.

Because the theme is more evident in parable, and because it foregrounds the explanatory nature of narrative, the parable provides an opportunity to explore more closely how narrative achieves thematic instantiation. In the first proverb, we will look at how precisely the exemplar mirrors the stated theme, almost word for word. In the

second, we will compare a parable and the fable from which it likely derives, observing how the differences in function result in differences in the exemplar, as well as the similarities.

The Hebrew word for parable is the same as the word for proverb (Warren 1997:39), or more literally, a comparison (Bruun 2007:145). According to Shillington (2000 [1997]) and Warren (1997:40), parables have three primary functions: firstly, there is an illustrative function by means of the literal exemplar. Secondly, there is an interpretive function, enticing the audience to extrapolate the meaning. And thirdly, there is a provocative function, inspiring the audience to enact the meaning in their own lives. In part, this is a result of their themes, which are predominantly redemptive rather than cautionary, hopeful rather than pessimistic, unlike most fables (Warren 1997:43).

According to Ricoeur, the second function of eliciting extrapolation is tied to the parable's peripatetic nature. Most parables start out with a commonplace event, then juxtapose that with an extraordinary reversal. This mirrors, and is likely inspired by Frye's aforementioned *principle of conversion*, the dramatic transformation that characterises all narrative. Thus, Ricoeur emphasises not only the blend between theme and exemplar, but also the blending that occurs within the exemplar between events. The result of this is an estrangement from the familiar, which breathes life into the exemplar, eliciting a contemplative meaning-creative response from the audience (1975). This in turn ties into the first illustrative function. Parables employ familiar, everyday events (Dodd 1956), strongly visual imagery (Bruun 2007:145), and human protagonists (Warren 1997:40) for this reason. Aristotle defines parable by precisely this distinction between hypothetical as opposed to fictional (1926 [4th century BC]). The parable presents events that can occur as opposed to imaginary events. This sense of immersion is only heightened by the revitalising estrangement, and together these two elements foster further engagement by the audience. In this way, the various functions become integrated, assisting one another in achieving their purpose.

At the same time, parables also foreground their fictional and figurative nature, through the above-mentioned extraordinary reversal, and by their inherent metaphoric nature (Warren 1997:40). Colon attributes this to the old Hebraic taboos against the naming of God, using figurative descriptors instead, which then

encouraged a tradition of metaphoric religious teaching (2012:4). This inherent tension in the parable between the literal and the figurative has thus inspired a wide variety of different kinds of parable (Bruun 2007:145), and an equally broad range of interpretive approaches (Warren 1997:42, Colon 2012:7-10).

The Parable of the Lost Coin

> Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:8-10, King James Bible)

The Parable of the Lost Coin ends with the moral 'there is *joy* in the presence of *the angels of God* over *one sinner* that *repenteth'*. This moral can be decomposed into several core concepts which the parable serves to instantiate, namely *joy, the angels of God, a sinner,* and *repenteth*:

- *Joy* in the theme is instantiated in the exemplar by *Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.*
- *The angels of God* are instantiated by the *woman* and *her friends and her neighbours*.
- *A sinner* is instantiated by *the lost coin*,
- *Repenteth* is instantiated by *light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently 'til she find it*.

The primary purpose of the exemplar is to explain the abstract concepts found in the thesis through experiential instances. It is difficult for the average person to imagine the workings of the heavenly realm, and the parable resolves this unfamiliarity by superimposing a familiar domestic image to concretise the abstract. The main instantiations have been given above, but at closer scrutiny, it doesn't end there, since many of these themselves disassemble into more discrete component parts. For instance, the lost coin instantiates the concept of a sinner, but itself comprises two separate concepts – lost, which equates to the act of sinning, and coin, which equates to the value of the sinner in spite of their sin. Similarly, the woman's

ownership of the coins may represent the angels' caring custodianship of humanity. Thus, we see that the parable not only renders abstract concepts into direct instantiated parallels, but particularly into instances which themselves decompose into relevant component parts or attributes. Thus, the parable not only illustrates but also analyses the concepts.

The moral of the parable exhibits some of the problems of abstractions. Firstly, the sentence is a relational clause (with the verb, *is*) rather than a material one. This allows it the versatility to bind several complex ideas into one (*Joy, the angels of God, a sinner* and *repenteth*) but at the cost of the resolution that most material clauses have. But binding it to a narrative exemplar where material action dominates (*lose, light, sweep, seek, etc.*) makes up for the lack. The relational clause, we observe, is as well suited to the expression of themes as the material clause is to exemplars.

We similarly observe many of the other qualities of the narrative register discussed in the analysis of *the fox and the grapes*: a high frequency of verbs, a preference for polysemic lexis (*light, sweep, seek, find*) all of which have prominent metaphoric connotations, individuation, repetition, etc.

The instances serve to ground abstract ideas in concrete experiences, but the various experiences evoked are not naturally integrated. Instead, they are inherently incomplete and even conflicting – it is through the narrative blend that these individual experiences are united into a coherent story. This is achieved both through the processes of selective projection, which is the selection of commonalities between experiences, and emergent structure, which is the incorporation of independent content to fill in the gaps. Furthermore, in this case the theme itself is presented in the form of a narrative event: Angels rejoicing over the one sinner that repents. This means that in addition to the resources mentioned above, we can also cross-map both of the narratives for additional input for both.

For instance, there are obvious parallels between the schemas of *repent* and *find* – both profile a process of regaining something that was lost. *Sinner* and *lost coin* respectively provide the trajectors (i.e. agents/subjects) for those processes, and *angelic host* and *woman and her friends* respectively provide the landmarks (i.e. goal/object). But in the midst of the parallels, there are many differences as well. Yet

even the heterogeneity adds to the integrity of the narrative rather than incongruity – for instance, unlike repent, *find* is itself decomposed into a detailed mini-narrative of *light a candle*, *sweep the house*, and *seek diligently*. However, through their association, we naturally map these details back from the exemplar onto *repent* to elaborate the thematic narrative. In this way, *repenting* becomes a complex action comprised of introspection (metaphorically *lighting a candle*), honest self-evaluation (*diligent seeking*) and atonement (*sweeping the house*). Blending in this way not only accomplishes the integration of concepts, but also their elaboration. The same can be said of the nominals *sinner* and *lost coin*, which nominalise the verbs *to sin* and *to lose*, which themselves elaborate into mini-narratives as well.

As one might expect from the type of exemplary narrative we have here (i.e. a parable), the image of a woman scouring her house in search of a coin, while experientially vivid in that it is something we can probably all relate to in some way, is not very archetypal – in that it is not an image which recurs a great deal in the narrative consciousness. Yet, even so the image is full of symbolism. The most symbolic element is the coin, which like the sinner in the parable is symbolically two-sided. On the one side, the coin symbolises faith in chance, materialism and greed, all of which we associate with sin. But the sinner is also a soul worthy of redemption, and the coin can also symbolise just rewards, the willingness to devote honest labour in the earning of those rewards, and faith in divine providence. The angelic host is represented by the good wife, who is characterised as keeping her home clean and her possessions in order, and not squandering those things which are of value. Life and the world are in turn equated with the good wife's well looked-after home – an image wherein even the errant sinner is cherished and meticulously cared for.

As we see in this instance, thesis and exemplar are very closely bound in the parable. Yet as we saw in the above instance, even in the parable, the exemplar has elements of the 'display text' (Section 5.2.1) in that the exemplar instantiates the thesis far more than is absolutely necessary. The following example from Beavis (1990) demonstrates this well:

The Barren Fig Tree

> A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, "Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?" And he answered him, "Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." (Luke 13:6-9, King James Bible)

A remarkably similar parable can be found in Babrius, the 2nd century Greek fabulist:

> A farmer had a tree on his land that did not bear fruit but was only a roost for singing birds and cicadas. The farmer was on the point of cutting the tree down because it was unproductive. In fact, he had taken his axe in hand and given it the first stroke, when the cicadas and the birds begged him not to cut down their refuge but let it stand, "for," they said, "we will sit in it and sing for your pleasure." The farmer paid no attention to them, but gave the tree a second and a third stroke. When he had cut into the hollow of the tree he found a swarm of bees and honey. Then when he had tasted the honey he dropped his axe, respected the tree as something sacred, and tended it carefully. (Perry, 1965:480-1)

In broad outline, the two stories are very similar: A tree is barren and the farmer decides to cut it down. In both stories the farmer is advised not to and the tree is saved by becoming fruitful. Only in the first case it is through fertilising the soil, in the second case it is by the discovery of a bee hive.

As mentioned before, plants are symbolic of people, and the fig tree in particular is symbolic of the chosen people (Beavis 1990). The owner represents God, the missing fruit stands for righteousness, and the vinedresser for Jesus. According to Frye (1954:141-2), the fruit-bearing tree also represents the Christian God. In this sense, the transformation from sterility to fertility is a trajectory out of sinfulness and towards Godliness. The meaning is clear: God, who represents justice, commands that the unrighteous be punished; Jesus, who represents mercy, advises patience and that nurturing will lead the sinful back onto the path of righteousness.

There are however interesting connotations. Trees typically are not barren by volition but by circumstance. Trying circumstances have led the chosen people astray and Jesus' guidance will return them to the path of righteousness. Furthermore, Beavis

(1990) states that God's judgement is not to be interpreted literally – God is not without mercy, but rather his command is only intended as a warning should the *tree* spurn the *vinedresser's gift*. Beavis also recalls the tradition of prophetic symbolism associated with trees. Trees budding with new leaf as a presage of summer, symbolise God's promise of the eternal life to come. In terms of this symbolism, the *tree's* unrighteousness is in its refusal to heed the warning of mortality, a rejection of God's divine plan and even natural order and hence a squandering of the promise. The symbolism thus is both ominous and uplifting at once.

Babrius conveys an Aesopic fable, yet the powerful religious imagery also forces us to recognise it as a kind of pagan parable, if perhaps only in origin. As stated before, despite their subtle differences, there is more in common between the fable and the parable, which is why fables have regularly been employed as religious parables in sermons. In the Aesopic fable, the symbolism and its meaning are similar to the biblical parable. One difference however is that the farmer's chopping down of the tree is not righteous judgement but a sinful act. The tree is a symbol of the gods' providence for their chosen people, and the act of chopping it down (rather than the failure to bear fruit) is the unrighteous squandering of the gift (Beavis 1990). In the Greek tradition, the tree is inherently sacred, regardless of its bearing fruit or not. Yet in spite of prudent advice, the farmer continues to chop the tree down. Once again we see the archetypal threefold repetition (three strokes of an axe). As stated before, this symbolises a transformation in the narrative – that of the impious farmer learning piety. Rather than punishing the farmer, the gods show mercy instead, and bestow on him further bounty, as well as a clearer message – honey is the mythic food of the gods, both providing a reason to treasure the tree and reminding the farmer once more of its sacredness.

Both stories reveal as much through their similarity as through their differences. Unexpectedly, even though parable is the more thetic form of narrative, it is in this case the fable that is the more literal of the two. The fable is not metaphoric but metonymic – unlike the parable, the story is not a symbolic example but a real instance of the story's moral. The tree is an instance of a broader category of sacred things which should be revered. The stories also reveal the differences in world view between the respective faiths – the biblical parable is metaphorical because divinity is transcendent (the tree is only a symbol of God's promise), while the pagan fable is

metonymic because divinity in this case is immanent (the tree is itself divine) (Beavis 1990).

Yet in spite of the differences, there are also strong similarities. Although both stories foreground the physical action of cutting down the tree, it is rather the mental epiphany of humility, piety and forbearance which is the core message of each. But most important of all, both convey once again the presence of the meditative qualities of narrative. We started off explaining how parable differs from fable in its emphasis on the illustrative rather than meditative qualities of narrative. Yet both here and with the previous parable of the lost coin we noticed the important role of the *display text* (Section 5.2.1) qualities of the narrative. Regardless of its primary function, these qualities appear to be inseparable from what we term narrative.

7.4 Narrative blending in *The Vizier's Fable*

In the following Section, we will reassess a prior analysis of a fable by Mark Turner himself, the co-creator of blending theory, from *The Literary Mind* (1996). Not only does this provide us with another example of thematic narrative theory at work, but also to compare how the thematic narrative version of the blending model offers additional insights not offered by the original theory. Here, a detailed linguistic analysis of the blend is already provided by Turner, so that we will proceed to analysis of the associated narrative conventions directly.

Turner (1996) presents an analysis of blending in the frame narrative from the *One Thousand and One Nights*, more commonly known as *The Arabian Nights*. Most blending analyses focus on individual images or metaphors, such as the Grim Reaper example previously discussed, rather than complete narratives. This then provides an interesting opportunity to compare Fauconnier and Turner's original Blending Theory with the extended thematic narrative Blending Theory developed in this thesis.

> There was once a wealthy farmer who owned many herds of cattle. He knew the languages of beasts and birds. In one of his stalls he kept an ox and a donkey. At the end of each day, the ox came to where the donkey was tied and found it well swept and watered; the manger filled with sifted straw and

> well-winnowed barley; and the donkey lying at ease, for the master seldom rode him.
>
> It chanced that one day the farmer heard the ox say to the donkey: “How fortunate you are! I am worn out with toil while you rest here in comfort. You eat sifted barley and lack nothing. It is only occasionally that the master rides you. As for me, my life is perpetual drudgery at the plough and the millstone.”
>
> The donkey answered: “When you go out into the field and the yoke is placed upon your neck, pretend to be ill and drop down on your belly. Do not rise even if they beat you; or if you do rise, lie down again. When they take you back and place the fodder before you, do not eat it. Abstain for a day or two; and thus shall you find rest from toil.”
>
> Remember that the farmer was there and heard what passed between them.
>
> And so when the ploughman came to the ox with his fodder, he ate scarcely any of it. And when the ploughman came the following morning to take him out into the field, the ox appeared to be far from well. Then the farmer said to the ploughman: “Take the donkey and use him at the plough all day” (Dawood 1973:20)

It must be recalled that the fable is only half of the story. Indeed, in this context, it serves more as an allegory than fable. The allegory is of Shahrazad’s intention to marry the king and trick him into desisting his evil practice of executing his bride after their wedding night. This is achieved by telling him stories but interrupting the tale before completion, so that his curiosity forces him to delay the beheading.

Turner begins with stating the central inference:

> The central inference is that the donkey has outsmarted himself; he should have foreseen that, on a farm, the inevitable background of ploughing and milling requires work animals, so that if one work animal is excused, another becomes liable for the job. The donkey's failure to foresee the obvious likelihood that he will suffer justifies our judgment that he is too smart for his own good. His conceit makes him blind to the obvious. We blame him for being blind.

The problem however is that it is not enough for the Vizier to simply state the moral to his daughter, since she has her own entrenched opposing view. Instead, the Vizier cleverly incorporates her views into the parable (as the donkey) and then presents his as a counter-argument. “This central inference requires an agent who outsmarts himself *by failing to take account of inevitable and unavoidable background”* (1996: 58). Turner explains:

> Shahrazad's plan to change Shahriyar's mind depends on bringing him to invoke traditional deeply held normative expectations—his own—against his recent abnormal behavior. In the source space, labor by work animals is inevitable background: standard, expected, and unavoidable. But in the target space, suffering by wives has the opposite status: abnormal, surprising, and possibly avoidable. According to the logic of this target space, therefore, Shahrazad cannot be judged as blind for overlooking the inevitability of the background practice, because the inevitability does not exist; it is explicitly denied. Her denial is reinforced by the narrator of *The Thousand and One Nights,* who, before the vizier tells the tale of the ox and the donkey, classifies Shahriyar's behavior as quirky and unstable. (1996: 59)

Similarly, other conflicts between fable and moral exist. Shahrazad doesn’t see herself as acting in pride, but rather compassion, and unlike the donkey, she believes that she makes her choice in full knowledge of the risks. But the Vizier’s view is that her compassion is itself veiled pride in that she believes her influence over Shahriyar will be enough to mend his ways, and her confidence belies her ignorance because it is impossible for her to foresee all the potential pitfalls to her plan.

How then are these inconsistencies to be resolved? The answer lies in the blended space:

> Where are the central inferences constructed? They are constructed in the blended space of animals with human characteristics. The blend includes abstract information that is taken as applying to both source and target, such as schematic event shape and force-dynamic structure. Additionally, specific information from both source and target is projected into the blended space. The scenario of ploughing and milling as inevitable background, the relation of

> work animals to this background, and the classification of the ox and the donkey as work animals come from the source space. From this information, we can deduce that when the ox is excused, the donkey is the likely replacement. We can deduce this only because the donkey is a donkey and a donkey can pull a plough, which is information from the source space. But to obtain the central inferences also requires that the donkey be intelligent, cunning, and able to articulate his complicated plan to the ox so that it can be acted upon. This information comes from the target space. The blended space incorporates intentionality, scheming, talking, foreseeing, and surprise from the target space. The result is an impossible blend with animals that are simultaneously beasts of burden and intentional agents with sophisticated mental capacities. (1996: 59)

In addition, the human space incorporates a modal structure in that humans, through their intellect and free-will, are able to transform their conditions in ways animals cannot. This represents Shahrazad's belief in her own ability to transform Shahrazad using her cunning and beauty. But this contrasts with the causal structure of the animal space, where farm labour is an inevitability if the animals are to survive. Through the blending, the Vizier superimposes the causal structure from the animal space over the modal structure of the human space, implying that Shahrazad's belief in her own abilities is a self-deception trumped by harsher realities.

As we see, it is precisely through the blending device of personification that allows the Vizier to communicate his lesson to his daughter effectively. The human space is attributed to Shahrazad, the animal space to reality. But in the story, it is the animal space which is the source, the actual referent, and the human space, merely the target, an abstraction included only figuratively as a means to draw inferences from the source. This allows the Vizier to identify his interpretation with truth, and his daughter's with a self-delusion, albeit a well intentioned one.

Turner concludes:

> Consider the tale of the ox and the donkey. The vizier creates a blend of Shahrazad and the donkey in which Shahrazad's human conviction and the donkey's unreflecting instinctive stubbornness are the same thing, so as to suggest that Shahrazad is behaving like an ass. She should think about her

plan, reconsider it, listen to his wisdom. Human beings can do these things, and she should act like a human being, not like a donkey. Shahrazad's immediate reaction to his story is so absolute and lacking in reflection as to seem to confirm his blending of the donkey's instinctive "stubbornness" and Shahrazad's intentional stubbornness:

> When she heard her father's story, Shahrazad said: "Nothing will shake my faith in the mission I am destined to fulfil."

The blend works because we have previously conceived of all donkeys by blending them with human beings. We say they are "stubborn," but they aren't. Only human beings can be stubborn. The instinctual behavior of a donkey is not at all the same thing as human stubbornness: For example, all donkeys have this behavior, not just some, and it is not subject to rational persuasion. We have conceived of this particular instinctual behavior by blending it with human stubbornness, and even given it the name "stubbornness." The conceptual ground has already prepared for blending the donkey with stubborn Shahrazad.' (1996:137-8)

As illuminating as Turner's analysis is, by now the reader should already be able to see for themselves how much of the intricacies of thematic narrative it leaves out. This is not surprising, because he is approaching the story from the perspective od a linguist, not a narratologist. He is attempting to present a demonstration of general language blending, not narrative blending. In this way, Turner's analysis provides an excellent demonstration of the differences between Fauconnier and Turner's general blending model and the thematic narrative model presented in this thesis.

The moral or theme of the fable is simple, and the same as in innumerable other fables: it is a warning against unintended consequences. The obvious question we should be asking then is: why this fable if so many others would do?

Turner's analysis can be summarised as this: in Shahrazad's imaginary life story narrative, she imagines herself escaping the fate of the previous brides by wit and with divine justice on her side. The Vizier choses an old fable formula, but adapts it to bear a striking resemblance to that of his daughter's situation. Thus we arrive at the particular fable.

As Ricoeur (1975) asserted, narrative exemplars are themselves blends of various individual events. The most prominent of these, particularly in the exemplary narrative, is the juxtaposition of an ordinary event with an extraordinary one. The donkey's advice to the ox is an ordinary one (aside from the conceit of talking animals, that is). The farmer's cunning response is the unexpected one. The farmer is wealthy and likely has many other oxen. Donkeys on the other hand are not normally used to pull ploughs.

The fable has many features which are designed specifically to apply to Shahrazad's life story. The donkey is an archetype for the vices of human stubbornness and folly. But it is a dualistic symbol as well. In its stubborn quality, and in part from its foolishness, it is also often a symbol of the virtues of perseverance and innocence (Gheerhant et al. 1996, Ferber 1999). All of these qualities can be applied in some way to Shahrazad. We can imagine her identifying herself with the donkey in its more virtuous associations. She is also like the donkey in enjoying sifted hay while others suffer subjection (symbolised by the plough and millstone) seemingly unjustly. The plough and millstone are particularly appropriate in their sexual and destructive connotations as well. The ox is also an archetype, of docile suffering, of victimhood (Gheerbant et al. 1996), symbolising the doomed brides. Finally, in line with Shahrazad's intention, the donkey employs its wits to rescue the ox from its helpless lot.

But in this there is already an omen of the looming peripeteia. Donkeys are not archetypes of wit, but of folly. There is also the hint from the start of the farmer listening in to the conversation, as well as the connotations of rebellion against the divinely imposed natural order of master and beast. Most of all, there is the theme of *unintended consequences* itself, standardised into an archetype by repetition (as seen in the many *be careful what you wish for* type fables, such as *The Old Man and Death*, *The Frog and the Ox, The Tortoise and the Eagle*, etc.) to anticipate the twist at the end.

In this way, the Vizier reshapes her life story to warn her that *pride comes before the fall*. In her story, she is the archetypal fox, but in his, she is only a foolish ass pretending at being the fox, and trying to overthrow the natural order of things. The implication is as clear as it is grim: she will be ploughed to death, and the ox shall

resume its suffering as if nothing had changed. Her rebellion against fate, as all rebellions against fate, is futile and meaningless.

This fable, as all fables do, exploits the architecture of the mind to achieve its ends. Both the mimesis of the ordinary, and the shock of the unexpected are yoked to the Vizier's purpose. The mimetic elements, the familiarity of the first scene, lulls the audience into immersion. Then the shock disrupts the serenity, forcing the audience to adapt a narrative they have already bought into, into the desired pattern. This is the power of narrative.

The narrative demonstrates strong mimetic qualities. The image is one of farming, of plough oxen, milling and stables, one which would have been highly familiar to most as little as a century ago. Typical of the ideal exemplar, the scene is highly individuated, the wealth of detail painting a vivid picture for the audience's mind. The main features of folk-modelling are well represented: an emphasis on concrete actions and the persons performing them, simplified imagery simultaneous with rich and interwoven detail, as well as being highly suggestive in the narrative's symbolism. These factors together with their anthropomorphism, produce the embodied experience. The purpose of narrative rehabilitation is tied to this particularisation, which, as Turner explains, renders abstract themes in meaningful and transformative detail (1996:9-11), while embodiment provides for an easing of cognitive burden through reframing the wealth of detail from a highly germane perspective.

Through exemplification, exemplar is interwoven with theme, providing a pre-existing interpretive framework to guide the audience's interpretations. These interpretations serve to integrate the diverse array of instances presented in the story through a small selection of common associations, i.e. themes, they all share, to arrive at a unified and holistic blended space. The presence of folktale conventions, as discussed in chapter 6, is palpable. Examples include the rule of two to a scene, the action focusing on the interaction between ox and donkey, the farmer remaining mostly invisible throughout, the rule of opening, introducing the familiar first as an epistemic grounding for the later introduction of the unfamiliar, or the rule of contrasts, assisting discrimination between protagonists and episodes through the use of striking contradictions. Like exemplifications, these serve to achieve cognitive

easing for the audience through the integration of familiar, ready-to-use interpretive models.

Unintended consequences are the primary theme applicable here, with the associated schemas of pride and folly (natural associations since pride often stems from folly and folly leads to unintended consequences) tied into it to render a more elaborate significance. Another minor associated theme is fate. Thus we arrive at a more extended and specific theme of *the unintended consequences of the foolish pride of defying fate*. The theme is a very familiar one, as stated before. The peripeteia is a standard narrative device, and the theme most closely associated with the archetypal *peripeteia* is *the unexpected*, that is, *unintended consequences*. Through this archetype, the fable calls to mind a myriad other narratives, archetypes and symbols, and in this way weaves it into a much larger tapestry of cultural wisdoms, placing them ready at hand to assist the audience in interpretation.

Narrative figuration also assists in this objective, since the combination of the highly figurative with the highly mimetic produces a double perspective, both immersing us sensually and emotionally in the moment captured by the rich description, as well as taking us out of it to observe events in a detached, abstract and contemplative aloofness. These provide both the familiarity to help us immerse ourselves in the scenes and interpret them with ease, along with the estrangement which inspires us to creatively explore potential alternative meanings.

But it is also by exploiting this same double perspective between theme and exemplar and the consciousness of the story-form and the function that it provokes, that Shahrazad is able to reinterpret the theme to restore her determination and conviction in her own life story. She transforms the narrative from a thetic narrative to a conventional *display text* narrative. By doing so she liberates herself from the intended function in order to reshape it to suit her own needs. Just as we saw in the example of *The Emperor's Clothes* or *The Philosopher and the Well*, or *The Pardoner's Tale,* fables often have contradictory meanings. Shahrazad uses this awareness to escape the narrative snare her father laid for her. She refuses to be the donkey, but rather knows she is a fox.

The way she does this is by pointing out that the premise of her father's fable, that narrative has the power to reinterpret reality, change minds and thereby to alter fate

itself, rather than undermining her intentions, instead endorses them. To do so, she has essentially reinterpreted the theme of the narrative, embraced the power of narrative not only to communicate intended meaning, but also to create new meanings. She has embraced the essentially creative, plurisignifying nature of narrative to extend existing meaning into new territory. The tale of Shahrazad and the Vizier's storytelling is essentially the story of language, not only as a medium for communication, for the transmission of static ideas, but as a vehicle of the creative human consciousness.

Shahrazad's interpretation is not just about understanding stories in general, but also about their power. Shahrazad not only uses her interpretation of her father's story to render insight into her world, but also to create her own world. With the power of story she transforms her inevitable doom into the life she dreams of. Through the power of story, Shahriyar is transformed from a monster into her prince charming. Her life is transformed from that of a powerless victim to the queen of a great empire, her world is transformed from ruin to hope and prosperity.

The fable also demonstrates the complexity of narrative. Through it, we the audience are presented with two equally plausible narrative predictions. Which will prove true, we cannot yet know. In this way, the allegory helps us invest in the frame narrative as well and lures us into this story due to our curiosity about which interpretation will come true, Shahrazad's or the Vizier's. The tale is not only that of Shahrazad and the Vizier, but also our own personal stories of reading.

As this analysis shows, the thematic narrative model builds upon the strong foundation provided by Fauconnier and Turner's blending theory by detailing the specific adaptations that are unique to its narrative application. While certainly illuminating, blending theory's generalisations means that, applied alone without the thematic narrative framework presented in this text, it can also only be so informative regarding the unique features that define narrative. We have supplemented a blending theory analysis with an exploration of several of these features, such as narrative embodiment, the theme-exemplar relationship and narrative instantiation more generally, which is only nominally present in blending theory's input vs. blended space modelling. Aside from this, there are many features which blending theory doesn't address at all, such as narrative peripeteia, archetype, the unique folk-modelling qualities of narrative mimesis, the narrative rehabilitation function,

narrative exemplification and the related archetypal narrative forms or laws, narrative figuration, *display text* qualities and the double perspective, and the thetic vs. thematic narrative dynamics and the creative interpretation that it engenders. The analysis of these additional features, as part of the thematic theory of narrative, thus provide far more detailed insight into the hidden gears and mechanisms of the narrative mind than the generic form of Blending Theory.

7.5 Embodiment and body horror in *Red Riding Hood*

In the following Section, we will turn our attention to a well-known fairy-tale. The previous examples have all been of exemplary narratives, where the exemplar functions specifically to to exemplify a particular theme. While the fairy-tale is similarly characterised by a strong thematic character (Sections 6.1.1 & 6.2.1), it is also characterised by a high degree of openness to interpretation. This is perhaps nowhere more evident that in the next example, *Red Riding Hood*, which has perhaps inspired more interpretations and variations over the centuries than any other folktale.

It is this openness to interpretation which will be the specific focus of attention. This then serves to complement the preceding analyses, where it was exactly the opposite, namely the specificity of the theme-exemplar relationship, which was attended to. The opening Section first looks at the most popular interpretations in academic literature, pointing out the limitations of each. Then in the closing Section we will explain why it is that the tale defies simple interpretation through allusion to the powerful archetype of body-horror it invokes. We will argue that the reason why *Red Riding Hood* is so evocative and has spawned so many different interpretations is because it invokes the powerful archetype of body-horror without specifying any of the particular themes associated with it. As such, it instead ends up invoking all the themes associated with the archetype.

This is a vital point to make, because it is to an extent characteristic of all narratives, if not always to the extreme degree we observe with *Red Riding Hood*. Even with exemplary narratives, as observed in the previous Sections, there is some degree of openness to interpretation. In order to provide the versatility required of language's need for expressive adaptability, archetypes, like most words, are inherently

polysemic. By exploiting archetypes to link exemplars to themes, narrative is also necessarily imbued with the same polysemy to differing degrees. This is not necessarily a detriment, however. While it is important for language to provide definite meaning in order for it to serve as a medium to convey intended meaning, this function must at the same time be compromised by the need for shared expression. Language must not only be specific enough to convey intended meaning, but also adaptable enough to elicit a response from the intended audience.

7.5.1 *Red Riding Hood* as archetype

Red Riding Hood (RRH) provides a key instructive instance in that it stands almost opposed to the examples we have looked at so far in its versatility and variety of interpretations. When we talk about *RRH*, it is important to note that we are not talking about a single narrative, but rather about a family of related narratives, some closely, some more distantly.

In this we stand opposed to the dominant perspective on the narrative, presented by such worthies as Bettelheim (1989), Darnton (1984) and Zipes (1993), who all uphold the conviction that all the variations are corruptions of a true version that expresses the true meaning of the story, rather than what seems more apparent, that the variety of forms reflects a variety of meanings. For evidence, these critics invoke the etymological fallacy, which is the likelihood that all of these stories have an undocumented original source (a point which their arguments do seem to sustain (c.f. Vaz da Silva 2016)) but also come to the dubious conclusion that the meaning of all subsequent variations are somehow contingent on the original. This second inference is a classic example of the etymological or genetic fallacy, which is the belief that a past or source meaning of a linguistic expression is somehow truer than its present meaning (Sihler 2000: 131-4).

For Bettelheim, it is a Freudian conflict between emotional and sexual maturity in young girls (1989). For Darnton, it is a warning to children of the general dangers of the seventeenth-century French countryside (1984). For Zipes, it is a feminist outcry against male violence (1993). Putting aside these questionable conclusions, we can appreciate it for what it truly is – not a single narrative, but rather a collection, with a corresponding variety of meanings. And while earlier interpretations seem predominantly preoccupied with colonising the text by imposing the most

authoritative interpretation onto it, fortunately, more recent interpretations instead emphasise the story's universality *and* creative freedom (Orenstein 2002, Beckett 2002, 2008, 2014).

Beckett claims that virtually any theme can be found within it (2008:5. 2002:xx), and proceeds to discuss just some of the main themes present in the retellings to demonstrate their variety: the cautionary tale, the coming-of-age story, a study of the symbolism of the archetypal wolf, the inner journey of discovery, and lastly the taming of the wolf. Two of the more well-known retellings, *Jin Roh: The Wolf Brigade* (1999) and Type O Negative[32]'s *Wolf Moon* (1996) give a sense of just how much these can vary. *Wolf Moon* is a typical instance of the saturnine inversions iconic of the band. Their songs often take familiar ideas and twist their meaning into something both outrageous and amusing at the same time. For example, the song *My Girlfriend's Girlfriend* transforms the misogynistic and homophobic trope of 'lesbians just don't know what they're missing' into a crisis of masculinity. In *Wolf Moon*, the lyricist similarly subverts the traditional fairy-tale by portraying himself as the wolf lusting after a coy menstruating mistress (Digioia 2016). In contrast, the Japanese animated film *Jin-Roh* uses the fairy tale as a political metaphor: political ideologies like communism and fascism are portrayed as wolves which feed off their individual adherents, and in this version, as in Perrault[33]'s first documented version, there is no salvation for the innocent. In this it plays up the antagonistic relationship between RRH and the wolf. There is no victim and villain here, only opposing predators (Greenhill & Kohm 2013).

In the midst of all this variation, what is it then that makes this the same tale? Certainly, there is a clear shared etymology, but why? If the original tale inspired the retellings, it seems reasonable to assume that their meanings should also reflect one another, yet there is little similarity between the two examples above other than the references to wolves, women, the colour red and blood.

In order to understand how all these different stories are related, it is perhaps necessary to study the genealogy. Verdier (1997) presents perhaps the most

[32] Type O Negative is perhaps the best known and most successful band in the gothic metal genre. Lyrics typically feature their signature juxtaposition of heartfelt emotional confessions on themes of romatic love, bereavement and despair yet undercut by self-deprecating humour.
[33] Charles Perrault is the author of the first recorded version of 'Le Petit Chaperon Rouge' or *Little Red Riding Hood*, printed in his 1697 *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*.

compelling analysis of the original RRH folktale tradition in terms of evidential support from the rural cultural traditions where the folktales originated, as well as its consistency with symbolism and folkloristics in general. For her, it is a clear symbolic feminine coming-of-age story. As she points out, the popular fiction icon of a small child is inconsistent with the folktale tradition, which instead indicates a far older girl on the cusp of womanhood. This also makes the story more relatable, more mimetic and less figurative than the popular version, as it naturally stretches believability to imagine such a small child being sent alone through the woods to visit grandma.

The story starts with the girl being sent to her grandmother, a leaving-the-nest symbol, followed by the journey through the woods, which is the traditional transformative space of the heroine. She is presented with the illusion of choice between the paths of pins or of needles, which is likened to the children's riddle where the victim is promised a prize for getting it right, but also a punishment for getting it wrong – except there is no right answer. Verdier invokes the common rural French idiom of pins and needles for womanhood (sewing traditionally being an important feminine occupation) and deflowering (following the imagery of pinpricks drawing blood and threading needles) to interpret it as a symbol of the inevitability of growing up.

The murder and cannibalism of the grandmother Verdier associates with the theme of generational succession. As the girl transforms into a woman, she also supplants the woman who simultaneously transforms into old age and finally death. Generational succession then represents a distinctly cannibalistic motif which is captured in this metaphor: the girl transforms by consuming that which she replaces, following the conventional metaphor of YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT (Goldberg 2005). This interpretation is further anticipated by the girl cooking a meal for the wolf. In doing so she is usurping the role of house-wife from its previous holder, stepping as it were into her shoes. While this scene may seem a minor motif in comparison to other scenes in the story, the fact that it is universal to every recorded version of the folktale suggests its centrality (Delarue 1989:19).

Finally, for Verdier, the grandmother's house represents a symbolic womb from which the girl is reborn when she escapes. Significantly, she is still attached to it by an (umbilical) cord, which she breaks or cuts herself free of – in the folktale she excuses herself from impending doom in the Wolf's bed with the excuse of having to

relieve herself. The wolf however ties a cord to her as a precaution. Like the cannibalism scene, this is also present in every folktale version (Delarue 1989:19).

In many folktale versions, this is followed by a scene in which she encounters laundresses, who carry her across the water on a sheet, while dropping it when the wolf tries to do the same so that he drowns. In this we are reminded of the liminal symbolism of rivers representing the transition between worlds – the girl transitions from the world of infancy into womanhood, while the wolf passes from the world of the living into that of the dead. The cloth also has a dual symbolism: for the girl it is the swaddling of a new birth (or rather re-birth), for the wolf, a death shroud. The old dies and the new is born to take its place, the essential coming-of-age symbolism.

The only interpretation which seems unconvincing is that of the wolf's impersonation of RRH. Verdier interprets this conventionally as a sexual metaphor, but then argues that the sexual metaphor itself is a further metaphor for generational succession. Thus, for her, the confrontation with and victory over the wolf represents the conflict between youth and old age and the eventual victory of the former over the latter. This replaces the more standard interpretation, where the wolf's impersonation of the grandmother represents the coming-of-age replacement of the parental figure with the sexual maturity of adulthood, which the wolf represents. The undressing motif in turn represents the transformation from girl into woman, as she symbolically climbs out of her children's clothes and into her woman's body. And finally, the voyeuristic discovery of the wolf's identity and subsequent out-foxing of the wolf represents the self-discovery and mastery of her own sexuality. By comparison, Verdier's interpretation is overly convoluted and supported by scant evidence. She instead argues that the wolf's strange features represent the deformities of old age, and the wolf's hunger the vengeful feelings parents have for the children who will supplant them.

But aside from this one criticism, Verdier's interpretation seems to be by far the most convincing and well-evidenced. So, is this then the true meaning of RRH that makes it so compelling that it has become perhaps the most popular and well-known of all fairy-tales? The problem is that the folktale version is known to few (Beckett 2002: xvii), and the popular version is so different that little trace of the original symbolism is visible. As Jones puts it, while the historical-ethnographic approach is useful in

revealing the origins of the narrative and tracing its subsequent evolution, its relevance to the question of subsequent variations is dubious (1987:99).

One common theme in the critical literature is a disturbing obsession with the story's supposed sexual subtext (Orenstein 2002, Zipes 1993, Harrison 1984, Brownmiller 1976). This is concerning for the same reason that it is logically questionable – these are primarily children's stories. While this in itself doesn't necessarily refute this assertion, the fact that it is directed at an audience who likely have little understanding of such a mature theme certainly does make the assertion problematic. And what evidence is there for this gendered interpretation? Although the story features a female protagonist in most versions, in some of the folktale versions at least the protagonist is a boy (Vaz da Silva 2016). Furthermore, as previously discussed (Section 6.2.2), a character's gender often does not necessarily mean anything. Folktales have a predilection for binary protagonists, and often give them opposite genders simply for the sake of distinctiveness. Furthermore, there is Verdier's analysis to consider, which shows that the two characters originally at least seem to have represented two opposing aspects of the coming-of-age archetype. As much as Zipes tries to impose a gendered interpretation onto the rape-subtext he reads into the narrative, his own evidence demonstrates that this is hardly an exclusively feminine apprehension (Zipes 1993). Furthermore, as we shall see, the evidence for Zipes' rape subtext may itself have an alternative explanation, so that it is less an inherent meaning than a committed reading of the text.

A perhaps more plausible claim would be that the story is an example of a more general type of cautionary tale on the abstract theme of danger, one of which may be sexual in nature. In other words, the narrative neither endorses nor precludes such a meaning. This was the moral originally appended to Perrault's original story, specifically regarding disobeying parents. Sugiyama (2004) in fact points out that there is good reason to interpret it more literally as a warning against the danger of human predation by wild animals. Women, children and the elderly, exactly the kinds of people represented in the story, are the most frequent victims of human predation, and human predation still would have been a significant concern at the time when Perrault first recorded the folktale. This elaborates on Darnton's analysis, which points to the general dangers to children in the early modern European setting of Perrault's source folktale (Darnton 1984). But this was long before the more recent

worldwide popularity and proliferation of the story, and hence its relevance to explaining this phenomenon is questionable.

But many versions again leave out the part where the wolf tries to eat her. Others, like Verdier, emphasise the feminine hero's journey or the related coming-of-age aspects of the story instead. Indeed, some of the original folktale versions appear on the surface to be little more than ribalds, a sexual metaphoric tale of seduction between the sexes, humorously veiled (Douglas 1995, Jones 1987), a version of the story which also has many modern representatives (Orenstein 2002:109-29, Digioia 2016).

Another interpretation is that the tale is one of the better examples of the feminine versions of the hero's journey, or heroine's journey, to be more accurate (Orenstein 2002:81-2). A study of myth and folklore reveals two types of hero tales, a masculine, which dominates in myth and legend, and a feminine with dominates in fairy-tale. This is easily visible when one compares the most famous figures from each: Odysseus, Gilgamesh, Aeneas, Arthur, Sigurd, versus RRH, Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Goldilocks. The two traditions follow the same outlines, but while the masculine usually confronts the adversary directly, the feminine encounters the adversary by chance. While the masculine usually focuses on overcoming the adversary, the feminine focuses on resisting the adversary. And where the masculine emphasises physical means, the feminine emphasises intellectual means such as cunning, wisdom or moral virtue (Luthi 1986 [1951]).

But in preferring any of these interpretations is to return to the same fallacy that this is a single narrative rather than a collection of narratives. Rather, what we need is not to single out any particular interpretation, but rather to discover the thread that runs between all the variations. As Jones explains, 'these international narratives have a special significance for the study of human nature because they depict situations and concerns that appeal to a large cross-section of individuals and not just the limited members of certain esoteric groups' (1987:100). Furthermore, what comprises these 'concerns that appeal to a large cross section' necessitates a search for a 'core meaning' (1987:99) that explains the tales' mass appeal.

According to Vaz da Silva (2016), while variation signifies popularity, continuity suggests significance. Following this logic, the most recurrent elements also

constitute the most meaningful ones. Taking all variations of the narrative into account, we find virtually no universal elements, but there are some with a clearly greater currency than others. Probably the most iconic of all is RRH herself (Beckett, Vaz da Silva 2016), the girl with the red cape. Although Delarue (1989:18) claims that the red hood has no connection with the original meaning of the story, the numerous retellings and iconic status of the garment proves the contrary. There is a clearly associated symbolism: the child is a symbol of innocence, coupled with red, which is a colour most commonly associated with sexuality and violence (Gheerbant et al. 1996). Already here we have a striking image of a binary contrast.

The wolf is another common feature, and even occasionally features as a protagonist (Orenstein 2002, Beckett 2008). The wolf is an ancient symbol of adversity, as well as of devouring and bloodshed (Ferber 1999, Gheerbant et al. 1996, Seigneuret 1988, Dziemianowicz 2007). As such, it the ideal exemplar for the archetypal antagonist Death, which is also the Adversary, the great devourer and the destroyer of men. As we would expect, the frequent occurrence of wolf antagonists and wolf allusions in folklore narratives attests to this. Aside from this, there is also the wolf's anthropomorphism (sometimes even described as a werewolf), which places these symbols within a human context, as the human capacity for conflict, avarice and violence, as well as his disguise, which signifies guile and deception. The coupling of these two symbols, of the human capacity for destruction, along with the capacity for deceit, the image of destruction incarnate in an innocuous form, evokes our deepest fears and once again makes the wolf a potent narrative image as well.

Each of these symbols would by themselves constitute powerful enough imagery to explain the widespread appeal, but placed together they only magnify one another's intensity. The wolf's symbolism of destruction and deceit are a perfect match for RRH's innocent vulnerability and gullibility. This is only further enhanced by the connotations of the colour red, as a grim omen of looming violence and symbol of sexual desire, the enemy of reason and social mores.

Aside from these symbolic elements, there are also the two most common episodes, which are present in virtually all versions of the story, namely the first encounter with the wolf in the woods, and the second encounter in grandma's cottage. This should not be surprising in light of how their interaction amplifies the symbolism of each. But

each encounter also contributes its own significant associations aside from the basic combination of the symbols of girl and wolf. In the first scene, the girl appears gayly clad in her red hood, off to visit her grandmother, picking flowers for her along the way. These circumstances only accentuate her symbolism: the innocent joys of pretty clothes, picking flowers and the promise of family reunion are in jarring contrast with the red slaughter and intimate tragedy that awaits her at her grandmother's cottage. The same is true for the woods, which symbolise the otherworld to the familiar domestic environment, the realm of the Unknown as opposed to the Known, the deviant as opposed to the ordinary. As the home territory of the wolf, the complementarity of the symbolism of wolf and woods serves to reinforce one another.

Then there is the unwitting betrayal by the girl and the first deception of the wolf who proceeds ahead of the girl to lay his trap, setting up the suspense of the next encounter. Vaz da Silva (2016) also points out several other latent associations. The Red Hood could be interpreted as a symbol of her pubescence, which anticipates the bloodshed at the grandmother's cottage. Vaz da Silva speculates that this is a trace of the folktale symbolism of cannibalistic generational succession, and in this way reinforces the theme of unwitting betrayal. In addition, the sexual connotations of picking flowers (symbolising her sexual flowering) and in some versions, picking strawberries (symbolising her sexual fruitfulness), anticipates the sexual connotations of the second encounter.

The next scene opens with the unsuspecting girl arriving at the cottage. As before, the circumstances build upon the theme of innocence. Within, the wolf is awaiting the girl, disguised as the grandmother, after having eaten her. The wolf beckons the girl closer, sometimes even to join her in the bed, at which point the infamous dialogue ensues. The dialogue could be interpreted in a variety of ways. In one way, it is merely an instance of progressive ascent, an affective device to build tension. But it could also be interpreted as sexually suggestive, which may also contribute to the leitmotif of treachery in the sense of *sleeping with the enemy*. (Previously, she also betrayed the grandmother's whereabouts to the wolf).

In this way, it may seem that we've arrived at Jones' *core meaning*. But what does this core meaning comprise? While it is commonly accepted that Perrault completely transformed the meaning of the narrative, transforming a coming-of-age story into a

cautionary tale, Vaz da Silva argues the contrary. And the above examination seems to bear this out. While Perrault certainly changes the focus of attention in his tale, traces still remain of the original symbolism. While the story has taken more of the form of the traditional cautionary tale, we also still see traces of Verdier's coming-of-age narrative in Perrault. But Verdier's interpretation could also be interpreted in other ways, such as an instance of the archetypal heroine's journey into the perilous realm to receive divine wisdom, or even of the cosmological cycle archetype in its representation of the birth-life-death cycle (Douglas 1995). It could also be interpreted as a morality play on the salvation of virtue or the temptation of sin (Vaz da Silva 2016). Alternatively it could be interpreted simply as a humorous ribald of veiled sexual innuendos, or complexly as a parable on the existentialist concept of bad faith, that innocence itself is a form of betrayal of universal responsibility. Even Perrault's apparently simple moral can have multiple interpretations, either as a warning about the danger of talking to strangers, or of disobedience, or even of inappropriate sexual urges.

But it is often forgotten that the intended audience of fairy tales is not only the children listening, but also the parents reading the story, and while it was argued that for the former, the latent sexual metaphors are probably meaningless, it is mostly not so for the latter. This suggests a certain inherent polysemy, i.e. that these kinds of tales comprise an interlacing of multiple meanings directed at multiple audiences – in essence multiple stories merged together. In this regard, it is significant which parts of the story recur and which do not. The significance of the lack of consistency in the story's ending suggests a certain openness to interpretation, that the interpretation of story as either comedy or tragedy are both equally valid. All of this leads to the strange conclusion that the central message which *RRH* conveys and which has proven so enduring and evocative is precisely the absence of any such core message. This seems to be confirmed when we observe the seemingly endless variation in the vast number of retellings of this story catalogued by the likes of Beckett (2002, 2008, 2014) and Orenstein (2002). As Vaz da Silva (2016) puts it, popularity necessarily results in variety in the retellings, but this variety in turn also increases the story's scope of relevance, which in turn feeds its popularity – according to this logic, the loop is apparently infinite. But this poses its own questions: how is it possible for recognisable consistency and infinite variety to

coexist? In other words, how much variation is possible until the variations become mutually unrecognisable as the same essential story? Secondly, if the story lacks inherent meaning, why would so many storytellers be compelled to utilise it as raw material for their own creations?

The answer to both questions is the same. A finite system capable of infinite variation, the code which is at once meaningless and replete with meaning – this is precisely how Chomsky, and Fauconnier and Turner describe language (see Section 3.3). Specifically, this suggests *RRH* as an example of a particular kind of linguistic unit, namely the one introduced in Chapter 5, the archetype. In other words, the story doesn't suggest any particular theme, but rather simply expresses the archetype and leaves the particular associated theme up for interpretation. In this way, it is comparable to Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008 [1949]). It presents an evocative form that inspires a search for a meaning behind it without actually dictating that meaning. It is a container more than content, a vehicle rather than tenor (Vaz da Silva 2016).

Eventually, what we find is, in contrast to the exemplary narrative with its strong associations between theme and exemplar, a constellation of different narratives centred around a shared symbolic core. It is not only the impact and adaptability of this core symbolism which explains this phenomenon, but also the power of the associated narratives to themselves act as cores for the formation of further constellations. This is what we see most clearly in the analyses of Beckett and Orenstein: the original narrative symbolism fragmented into individuated symbols, the coming-of-age story, the cautionary tale, the sexual metaphor, the exploration of gendered identity, the inner journey of self-discovery, the mastery of the inner human propensity for destruction, to name but a few. And each of these in turn becomes the symbolic core of a new constellation of narratives, and even resumes the same process as the original, fragmenting into new individuated symbols, and so on. What this describes is exactly Frye's archetypal theory of narrative.

What this demonstrates too is the essential creativity of even the most formulaic of narrative forms. This exposes the lie of the learned distinction between the writerly and the readerly (Barthes 1990 [1970]), the open and the closed text (Eco 1979), the literary and non-literary narrative (Scholes 1974). As we have seen, even the most prescriptive kinds of narrative, such as the parable, not only encourage, but require

active engagement through subjective input. But more importantly the two are inextricable. There can be no true *jouissance* without an accompanying *Plaisir* (Barthes 1975), and vice-versa. In a sense, the open text idea represents the ideal which all narratives strive for. Narrative, from the thematic perspective, is a medium for communication, and the variety of interpretations the narrative engenders is a real measure of how meaningful it is – that is the variety is a reflection of the imaginative fertility and semantic efficacy of its constituent symbols.

To summarize, what we have found is that the power of *RRH* is less in its communication of any specific idea, and more its provision of a set of powerful archetypes as templates for meaning-creation. We can see this in the similarities between *RRH* and other powerful archetypes such as the hero or heroine's journey or the cosmological cycle myth. The strength of *RRH* then lies less in the strength of its message but rather in the strength of its imagery. This comprises two related dimensions: firstly, the images themselves, the wolf and girl and all their accompanying images, the red hood, the cottage in the woods, the disguise, etc. are visually striking, both on their own and more so in conjunction with one another. Secondly, they are symbolically open to diverse interpretation, in the many ways catalogued above. These two dimensions are essentially related because it is in part their abundant suggestiveness that makes them so striking.

7.5.2 Body horror

The final argument that will be made here, as implied by the section title, is that the impact of the imagery and hence their archetypal fecundity, is intimately related to these images' embodied characteristics. Specifically, this relates not only to their use of embodiment, but to their specific use of the embodiment of body horror.

We have only recently truly become aware of how vital a role the human body plays in language and culture. We witness this for instance in Foucault's concept of biopower which asserts that modernity has seen the transposition of social power relationships from the domain of the human as abstraction (the free willed, rational, individual citizen) to the domain of human as biological organism (Buchanan 2018 [1991], Lazzaratto 2006). But contrary to Foucault, his kind of embodied interaction in both social and physical environments has always been with us. The scientific reification of the human body may have transformed the language of the human

body, but in truth, the human body has always been the metaphorical locus of meaning, as is visible in the abundant body symbols throughout human history, dating back to the earliest writings of ancient Sumer and visible in the folklore of hunter-gatherer societies, such as their abundant mythological human-animal hybrids or the anthropomorphosis of natural forces as divine human beings.

Body horror is conventionally defined as ‘violation of the human body’ (Cruz 2012:161), though this definition is acknowledged to be problematic (Reyes 2014). A reason for this is that this genre definition, like so many others, suffers from its taxonomic formalism, and gives no sense of its aesthetic function. A better definition is presented by Reyes, who defines it as the ‘indeterminacy and estrangement from one’s own body’ (2014:54).

This feeling is one which all human beings are likely to be familiar with at some point or another. Rapoport (2020) describes body horror as a natural experience for women as they grow-up, encountering for the first-time experiences such as sexual desire, menstruation, lactation, puberty, pregnancy, and so forth. But Shaviro (2011) demonstrates that this experience is hardly exclusive to women, as the feminist Rapoport also implies, exploring as she does the masculine experiences of body-horror.

Body-horror has also evolved with the times, and in the modern age, body-horror increasingly includes the intrusion of the foreign into the human body, in the form of technological dependency, cybernetics, or artificial human simulacra (Ivanchenko 2020). But at the same time, this is only an extension of its traditional sense of a confrontation with the Unknown (Ivanchenko 2020). This is born from the uncertain boundary between the known and the unknown, and hence the fear of discovering the unfamiliar intruding into what was believed familiar, with the familiar symbolised by the human body.

But as others have pointed out, body horror is less a quirky sub-genre, as it was originally understood, but rather a dominant feature of horror and pervasive in tragedy and narrative in general (Badley 1995, 1996, Morgan 2002). Unfortunately, the function of body horror and horror generally in narrative is still poorly understood, as most attempted definitions display the same dismaying taxonomic obsession with isolating a class from the rest of narrative rather than understanding its function.

Horror is less a genre and more a basic narrative function. All stories at their roots are horror stories. This is visible, for instance, even in bucolics like *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and *Where the Red Fern Grows*, stories which one would expect to be the farthest removed from tragedy and horror. In *Anne of Green Gables*, the protagonist's story both starts and ends in family tragedy. *The Wind in the Willows* climaxes with the horror of imprisonment and pursuit for Toad, where the fable's fantasy abruptly disintegrates as Toad is hunted and caged by humans for the animal he truly is. And in *Where the Red Fern Grows*, the haunting spectre of the beloved hounds' deaths looms over the entire narrative.

As argued previously, this is because narrative is about communicating meaning, and there seems to be something about certain abstract themes, which are the standard subject of conventional narrative, which requires negative description, the negative specifically referring to the abstract concept of death, loss or absence. Horror then becomes an integral part of all conventional narrative, a basic necessity for the exemplification of abstract themes, linked to the aforementioned narrative juxtapositions on which plot centres.

As one might expect then, just as horror is universal to narrative, horror in its embodied form, that is, body horror, far from being a fringe occurrence, is instead pervasive. As Morgan (2002) explains, horror's preoccupation with death necessarily incorporates a preoccupation with biology, since ultimately death is a biological condition. In this, it demonstrates a curious affinity with humour, which demonstrates a similar biological fixation (Reyes 2014:55). According to Morgan, this is because there is both a certain horror and comfort in the material certainty of biology. The body is the ever-present omen of the end, as well as a confirmation of vitality and renewal. The reason for this is the tangibility of death and procreation which contrasts so distinctly with the intangible side of our existence. In this, we see the same blend of opposites in embodiment and body horror that makes the imagery of *RRH* so striking. And as *RRH* also demonstrates so clearly in its shocking blend of horror and humour, it is therefore not surprising either that horror and comedy also so often collocate.

We can thus define body horror as the violation of the embodiment function in narrative, which is to contextualise experience in the familiar mimetic framework of the human body. Body horror achieves this violation through a palpable

estrangement of this familiar framework, achieving the arresting alienation of the familiar. In short it is the achievement of a simultaneous identity and alienation in the same object.

Body horror is at its most explicit in the original folktale version of *RRH*, present at some level in almost every scene. It appears in the pins and needles motif at the start of the story, in the implied image of a myriad foreign, metallic intrusions into the unblemished body of a child, then comes shockingly to the fore in the scenes of murder and cannibalism. Verdier states that the grandmother's murder is explicitly described in the familiar rural idiom of pig-slaughtering rituals (1997:109). If murder itself weren't horrific enough, this superimposition of the image of a slaughtered pig onto the grandmother's body utterly dehumanises it. Following this image, we are shown both the girl and wolf preparing the flesh in the manner of an everyday cooking routine. First from human to animal, the grandmother's body is then further transformed from animal to lifeless matter.

We experience a different kind of dehumanisation as the inhuman intrudes into the familiar human form when the wolf disguises itself as the grandmother. This intrusion continues into the dialogue, which brilliantly and simultaneously individuates the image of the human body while juxtaposing the familiar with the unfamiliar for each body part individually. With each question, our attention is drawn to a different feature of the wolf, which in turn is directly juxtaposed with the corresponding human feature in the answer. This intrusion is amplified by the girl's undressing and climbing into bed with the wolf. Not only does this further enhance the juxtaposition, contrasting the youthful ideal of the human body with the monstrous beside it, but also achieves a synaesthetic blending of visual and tactile images. In addition, the sexual innuendos add an additional sense of intrusion to the mix.

The final episode contributes a different sense of body horror. The images of individuated body parts, including veiled allusions to privates (Vaz da Silva 2016:175), and bodily dismemberment, also serves to introduce the next set of body horror images, namely the grotesqueness of the body itself. *RRH* escapes from the wolf's clutches with the excuse of relieving herself. Her repeated pleas imprint the image of bodily emissions, so that the added procreative symbolism of her leaving the cottage attached to a string is hard to miss. This imagery is once again emphasised by the wolf's repeated queries about what she is doing outside. Bodily

emissions and procreation introduce a different kind of body horror, namely that of the familiar and natural yet disgusting. It reminds us that the human body is already alienating in its natural state, irrespective of physical harm or the intrusion of the unfamiliar. In a sense, it brings body horror home – it demonstrates the alien in the inalienable.

An obvious criticism at this point is that most of these instances of body horror only relate to the relatively unknown folktale version. But as Vaz da Silva points out, Perrault doesn't so much erase these associations from the popular version as transform them into more subtle, unconscious forms. The images of bodily harm are the most muted element of Perrault's version and other popular versions, but while less descriptive, they are perhaps even more blatant, since they are even bloodier. In either version, the grandmother meets a grisly end, and while the folktale version ends with both girl and wolf essentially unharmed, in the popular versions someone always suffers a violent end. This is perhaps clearest in Perrault's introduction of the red hood, which is an implicit rather than explicit association, but ultimately still a vivid image of the blood-steeped tale.

Thus the imagery of bodily intrusion mostly remains, if only in a more subdued form. In Perrault's version, the girl's nakedness is only implied, not stated, and hence the sexual innuendos further disguised, if still present. Of all three types of imagery (the transformation of the human body into something inhuman, the transformation of the inhuman into a human semblence, and the natural grotesqueness of the human body itself), it is only the last which is largely missing from the popular version of the narrative, yet only largely. Adult readers at least would still make the connection between the red hood and the association with menstrual blood, and there is also still the close attention drawn to individual body parts, which does achieve a kind of objectification and even semantic dismemberment of the human body. Furthermore, there is the more explicit violence of the tale, which draws attention to a different kind of repulsive bodily emission, namely blood. Thus, Vaz da Silva's argument (2016) seems to hold true that while the popular version may appear very different from the original folktale, the essential symbolism remains the same.

So what do these images of body horror mean? Again, that they can be linked to a wide variety of themes demonstrates their primary exemplifying rather than thematic function. Like the core symbolism of *RRH*, the prominent body horror images do not

mean anything by themselves but rather constitute an effective medium for communicating a wide range of possible themes. This makes sense given our understanding of the narrative role of embodiment, which is primarily as a vehicle for communicating theme rather than constituting thematic content in itself. It is this highly effective synergy between the striking contrasts of the body horror form of embodiment and the equally powerful contrasts within the archetypal imagery that perhaps explains much of the fairy tale's popularity. In this we once again find evidence of the significance of the double perspective which appears to be so essential to the effectiveness of narrative, albeit this time not between theme and exemplar, but within the exemplar itself.

The significant role of body horror also perhaps explains the common misinterpretations of the story as fundamentally about themes such as sexuality, gender and rape. Once we understand the significant role that body horror plays, it is easy to see how this could be misconstrued as thematic content rather than imagery. Indeed, most of what Zipes cites as evidence for his rape theme are in fact typical examples of body horror. For Zipes' argument to be sustained, we would then have to conclude that all body horror thematically concerns rape, an argument too grand to be credited. But ultimately the point is moot: whether or not this was an original intended theme or not, it has become so through forced interpretations of committed critics such as Zipes and Orenstein. They have made it such.

6.6 Disembodied narrative in Lovecraft

The second last of the shorter narrative analysis will be of one of H.P Lovecraft's less well-known stories. However, as will be explained, there is good reason for this choice in that it presents the influential cosmic horror narrative created by Lovecraft in its most stereotypical form. Here we will present an in-depth analysis of an example of modern narrative to compare with the historical examples presented previously. Mirroring the first analysis of *the fox and the grapes* the chapter will begin with a detailed linguistic analysis of the text itself, proceeding to a broader discussion of the associated themes. The purpose of this analysis is to once again demonstrate the thematic narrative model in action, but equally importantly, to also demonstrate its relevance to modern narrative forms.

What the Moon Brings

By H. P. Lovecraft

I hate the moon – I am afraid of it – for when it shines on certain scenes familiar and loved it sometimes makes them unfamiliar and hideous.

It was in the spectral summer when the moon shone down on the old garden where I wandered; the spectral summer of narcotic flowers and humid seas of foliage that bring wild and many-coloured dreams. And as I walked by the shallow crystal stream I saw unwonted ripples tipped with yellow light, as if those placid waters were drawn on in resistless currents to strange oceans that are not in the world. Silent and sparkling, bright and baleful, those moon-cursed waters hurried I knew not whither; whilst from the embowered banks white lotos blossoms fluttered one by one in the opiate night-wind and dropped despairingly into the stream, swirling away horribly under the arched, carven bridge, and staring back with the sinister resignation of calm, dead faces.

And as I ran along the shore, crushing sleeping flowers with heedless feet and maddened ever by the fear of unknown things and the lure of the dead faces, I saw that the garden had no end under that moon; for where by day the walls were, there stretched now only new vistas of trees and paths, flowers and shrubs, stone idols and pagodas, and bendings of the yellow-litten stream past grassy banks and under grotesque bridges of marble. And the lips of the dead lotos-faces whispered sadly, and bade me follow, nor did I cease my steps till the stream became a river, and joined amidst marshes of swaying reeds and beaches of gleaming sand the shore of a vast and nameless sea.

Upon that sea the hateful moon shone, and over its unvocal waves weird perfumes brooded. And as I saw therein the lotos-faces vanish, I longed for nets that I might capture them and learn from them the secrets which the moon had brought upon the night. But when the moon went over to the west and the still tide ebbed from the sullen shore, I saw in that light old spires that the waves almost uncovered, and white columns gay with festoons of green seaweed. And knowing that to this sunken place all the dead had come, I trembled and did not wish again to speak with the lotos-faces.

> Yet when I saw afar out in the sea a black condor descend from the sky to seek rest on a vast reef, I would fain have questioned him, and asked him of those whom I had known when they were alive. This I would have asked him had he not been so far away, but he was very far, and could not be seen at all when he drew nigh that gigantic reef.
>
> So I watched the tide go out under that sinking moon, and saw gleaming the spires, the towers, and the roofs of that dead, dripping city. And as I watched, my nostrils tried to close against the perfume-conquering stench of the world's dead; for truly, in this unplaced and forgotten spot had all the flesh of the churchyards gathered for puffy sea-worms to gnaw and glut upon.
>
> Over those horrors the evil moon now hung very low, but the puffy worms of the sea need no moon to feed by. And as I watched the ripples that told of the writhing of worms beneath, I felt a new chill from afar out whither the condor had flown, as if my flesh had caught a horror before my eyes had seen it.
>
> Nor had my flesh trembled without cause, for when I raised my eyes I saw that the waters had ebbed very low, shewing much of the vast reef whose rim I had seen before. And when I saw that this reef was but the black basalt crown of a shocking eikon whose monstrous forehead now shone in the dim moonlight and whose vile hooves must paw the hellish ooze miles below, I shrieked and shrieked lest the hidden face rise above the waters, and lest the hidden eyes look at me after the slinking away of that leering and treacherous yellow moon.
>
> And to escape this relentless thing I plunged gladly and unhesitatingly into the stinking shallows where amidst weedy walls and sunken streets fat sea-worms feast upon the world's dead.
>
> (Lovecraft 2009)

These days H.P. Lovecraft makes frequent appearances in short story collections, or through references to his work in contemporary media. Lovecraft's influence need hardly be mentioned. Indirectly, his influence is felt through the generations of authors whom he inspired, and most recently directly through the copious Lovecraftian references in highly popular productions such as *Game of Thrones*, or critically acclaimed ones, such as *True Detective*. But in my youth, it was always his

fantasy short stories, the so called ‘Dream-cycle’ that appealed to me, rather than his horror fiction. It is only when I came across the above story than I first came to grasp the underlying themes of his cosmic horror that has cemented his contemporary renown and influence in literature.

It is strange then for me that ‘What the moon brings’ is so little esteemed within the Lovecraftian canon. The master of Lovecraftian scholarship, S.T. Joshi, writes it off as vague and hysterical, ‘flamboyant and unmotivated’ (Joshi & Schultz 2001), and his estimation seems to represent the general consensus. Yet personally, it seems almost perfect in its clear and concise statement of the core vision of Lovecraftian cosmic horror, to the extent that it could be termed a Lovecraftian artistic manifesto.

Horror fiction is a curious genre. As Weinstock puts it, ‘The appeal of the gothic as an artistic mode that depicts or relates violent or macabre scenes or events is a curious thing—after all, when you think about it, why would anyone care to linger over (much less savor) horrific images or accounts of murder, mutilation, monsters, and mayhem?’ (2016: 62) Weinstock’s is a familiar sentiment in critical studies of the horror genre (Lovecraft 1973 [1927], King 1981, Bloom 2012), yet one which, as we have seen, is fundamentally misguided.

This is because horror is the essence of narrative. As discussed previously, the pivot of archetypal narrative is the symbolic confrontation with death. What is a piece of romance fiction without the horror of loss and solitude? What comedy doesn’t toy with the dread of self-loathing and social ostracism? All stories are horror stories at their core, which perhaps explains Lovecraft’s immense appeal and influence. Weinstock’s thesis therefore is clearly misguided, informed by a misunderstanding of the fundamental nature of narrative. Yet there is clearly something to the impulse behind it. There is something very strange about horror fiction.

We may find in horror fiction a distillation of that element which is germane to all narrative. Hence, horror is to be defined by degree rather than by type. But there is more to the unique character of horror than just this.

True horror fiction does stand out from other types of narrative, not in its intention to horrify, but in the seeming absence of the archetypal narrative framework. To be clear, by true horror we mean specifically those tales which do not fit into any of the conventional archetypal patterns: there is no comedic happy-ending, no epic

validation of social mores or satiric reconciliation with fate, nor a tragic fall. This then excludes those classic horrors like Stoker's *Dracula* or King's *It*. For all its horror elements, *It* remains a conventional comedy in its essential coming-of-age narrative mould, and *Dracula* is a typical epic validation of steadfast Victorian social mores against the mystery and temptation of foreign influences. Of all the Fryean mythoi, true horror most closely resembles the tragic mode: a hero journeys from the apocalyptic into the demonic; the hero loses his immortality in the confrontation with death. Yet in the conventional tragedy, the hero's fall is presaged by a social infraction, and the audience's catharsis comes from the affirmation of morality and society. Macbeth and Oedipus's stories, like most tragedies, teach us that there are divine laws to the universe and that we are safe so long as we obey them. Oedipus' disobedience, like many other tragic heroes, was admittedly unintentional, but the point is moot as far as confirming the validity of society's mores is concerned.

But true horror is different. Lovecraftian horror, and other instances of true horror are not tragic in the ordinary sense. It is tragedy without the tragic revelation. Or else it is the revelation that there was no tragic fall – rather it is the tragedy of realising that our fall is only an illusion, that we were fallen from the start (Burleson 2014:158). The heroes often seem almost predestined to meet their doom, and there typically is no moral infraction to speak of. The true horror protagonist is usually the everyman rather than a tragically flawed hero. And the plot is usually not brought about through their actions, but approaches inexorably, helplessly, unavoidably. This is because horrors, like *What the moon brings*, are not about teaching us what we should do, but instead, what will happen. They are not about telling us about what to do, but rather reconciling us to that which nothing can be done about. They centre almost exclusively on the failed contest with death and confrontation with our own mortality, something we all will face sooner or later.

The archetypal narrative framework of the hero's journey then *is* present in the horror narrative, only not in the way it usually manifests, not in the text itself. Rather, the symbolic hero's journey manifests within the audience themselves. The hero's journey then is in the inner psychic trajectory of the audience. It is we ourselves who play the role of the hero confronting death, and it is we ourselves who succeed or fail in meeting that inevitability undaunted and accepting of our fate.

In this way, the horror narrative has much in common with the modern literary narrative's absence of resolutions, particularly in the case of the absurdist narrative. Horror's absence of a resolution closely mirrors the quality that Kermode (2000 [1966]) finds most appealing in the modern literary narrative. In narratives like *Waiting for Godot* or *A Clockwork Orange* it is not the text, but we the audience who instantiate the hero's journey through the text's unresolved representation of the contest with death. In this way, the horror narrative mirrors modern absurdist literature, only there the journey is primarily intellectual, as opposed to horror's more immersive and holistic intellectual, emotional and even visceral experience.

Turning to the text itself, the first image we are introduced to is of a moonlit garden in summer. The image is outwardly enchanting but laced with dark insinuations. Summer is *spectral*, alluding to the *many-coloured* verdure of the garden, but more darkly to its ephemerality and transparency. These repeated dark undertones are complimented by the '*seas'* and *wild dreams* attributions to the garden. These inhospitable *seas* are also contrasted with the seeming benign *shallow stream*. Yet even this impression is treacherous, as the *unwonted ripples* imprecate *strange oceans that are not in the world*.

The image of *blossoms fluttered into the stream*, is a conventional archetype for human mortality expanding from the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor, reinforced by their *calm, dead faces*. The image is of the inevitability of death, symbolised archetypally by their inevitable descent into the watery realm. The flowers are as helpless against the *opiate wind* as the stream is against the *resistless currents* and significantly, the carven bridge becomes the portal through which the blossoms are ferried into the sinister Beyond. Readers familiar with Lovecraft will immediately recognise the recurring horror motifs of sea and stonework. Vegetable life, which represents human life, is associated with dreaming and by extension, hallucination, through the associations of *narcotic, opiate, lotos, 'sleeping flowers'* invoking the LIFE IS A DREAM archetype.

The next scene is of the protagonist's journey into the perilous realm, the Beyond. Like the stream and the blossoms, the protagonist is drawn seemingly helplessly along by *the lips of the dead lotos-faces* whispering sadly. The vatic role of the moon is most clearly stated in the following lines: under the light of the moon, the walls of perception disappear. Paradoxically, it is the pale light of the moon which reveals,

and luminous day which conceals. As so often, journey correlates with revelation, matched in this role by the *whispers*. The revelations however are clearly foreboding, *crushing sleeping flowers* and *maddened ever by the fear of unknown things*. Similarly, the bridges are now plainly *grotesque*.

The journey disembarks at the shore of a vast and nameless sea. *Upon that sea the hateful moon shone.* The protagonist and readers have entered the Pythic adytum, the infernal gates. Significantly, the *perfumes* have returned, yet now are recognisably weird. Yet the seas are *unvocal* like the '*silent'* stream. But it is not that they wish to withhold their secrets, only that they lie outside the province of language and meaning. The protagonist longs to hear the lotos-face speak the secrets of the realm into which they have entered, or question the *black condor*, the archetypal carrion-bird psychopomp, until the gates bare themselves and we are granted a despairing glimpse into the Beyond itself.

Once again, the theme of grim stonework returns, this time in the form of sunken ruins. The fragrant perfumed winds of the garden, what was taken for the scent of life, is now revealed as the rotting *stench of the world's dead*. The seas, to which all eventually flows, drawn by the inexorability of gravity, are revealed as *churchyards* where *puffy sea-worms gnaw and glut*. Indeed, the rippling of the seas itself is the writhing of worms – the sea itself becomes the embodiment of death. And its call transcends the senses – *my flesh had caught a horror before my eyes had seen it* – it is graven in our very being.

Over those horrors the evil moon now hung very low, but the puffy worms of the sea need no moon to feed by. The image demonstrates the moon's *leering and treacherous* subservience, as well as that of the condor, through proximity. But subservience to what? This sudden personification of the moon accompanies another. As the tide slowly ebbs away, the ruins themselves are revealed as the crown of an inconceivably vast sunken idol, horrifically alive.

Enigmatically, the only escape the protagonist can conceive is to join the *world's dead*, to lose themselves to the anonymity of that infinite multitude.

The narrative is rife with archetypes cleverly interwoven and transformed by novel imagery. Perhaps the most obvious example of the narrative's exuberant use of archetype is the constellation of death metaphors. To name only the most prominent:

DEATH IS A DEVOURER, DEATH IS DARKNESS, DEATH IS NIGHT, DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY, DEATH IS RELEASE, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, DEATH IS THE FINAL DESTINATION, DEATH IS DROWNING, DEATH IS FALLING, etc. (most of these can be found in Lakoff & Turner (1989)). Another of these archetypal constellations is the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS vegetable type metaphor of the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor, which instantiates humanity in its corporeal form, along with the common archetypal extensions to the CYCLE OF SEASONS metaphors (LIFE IS SUMMER, DEATH IS WINTER, etc.), the associated PEOPLE ARE FLOWERS and TREE OF LIFE metaphors, THE GARDEN versus THE WILDERNESS, and so on.

These two archetypal constellations are skilfully interwoven through the associated metaphors of LIFE IS A RIVER, and DEATH IS WATER. LIFE IS A RIVER is a common archetype which needs little introduction. DEATH IS WATER is equally prevalent historically, although less well-known contemporarily (Birkalan & Garry 2005). Historically, water has always represented a liminal space for humanity (Lund 2010). This is only natural given that large bodies of water signified the definite limits of known reality for most of human history. Even smaller bodies of water such as rivers and streams were often used to delineate the boundaries between political entities, between the self and the other. Hence they were also the centres of strife and death, not to mention the obvious association with drowning. Thus water is a universal cognate of the otherworld in mythology and folklore, where the living cannot go, psychopomps, death gods and lands of the dead frequently being associated with water, for instance, the rivers of the Greek underworld, the Norse *nastrond* (literally *the hereafter shore*), Celtic lakes as faerie realms and Nuada's river-crossings, the Finnish watery underworlds of *Manala* and *Tuonela*, to name only the most familiar examples.

By blending these two metaphors, the river of life becomes the ocean of death. In this way, Lovecraft elegantly binds together the opposed imagery of the moonlit garden and the infernal ocean with the river journey motif. All this imagery also creates the basis for more complicated archetypes. One of these is the sunken city archetype, which transfers the mythic underworld into the experiential domain in the form of an underwater city. This archetype dates to ancient times, but was popularised in medieval romances, such as the legends of Ys and Lyonesse, recurring more recently in Tennyson and Dunsany, and is made a horror mainstay by

Lovecraft. Another of these is the oracular temple, where a supplicant journeys to a sacred place to receive divine wisdom from a higher power, which is a motif in real world religion as much as narrative fiction. Other such complex archetypes, like the portal into the underworld, carrion-bird as psychopomp, stone idol, therianthropic figure and sea as graveyard also make their appearance.

Equally important is the use of primary or low-level metaphors. These are foundational metaphors which provide the experiential grounding for all cognitive models, and their use enhances the embodied feeling of the narrative by plugging the narrative experiences directly into our sensory awareness. One of these is the binary SMALL IS PERCEPTIBLE vs. VAST IS IMPERCEPTIBLE, which is linked with the SEEING IS KNOWING metaphor. These pervade the narrative as it proceeds to increasingly larger spaces, and link directly with the river of life and hero's journey archetypes, so that the physical journey becomes a mental one, and the expansion of space develops into the expansion of the mind. Another of these is the SOUND IS SPEECH metaphor, where sounds made by objects are personified as their voices (or lack of them), with this personification of objects climaxing in the horrific final incarnation of the drowned city.

By invoking this vast array of symbols, *What the Moon Brings* creates a rich tapestry of associations. But Lovecraft does so largely to subvert their conventional associations, particularly through intertwining them with novel imagery. This provides a clear example of the imagery-archetype relationship, since Lovecraft's inventive imagery uses traditional archetypes as raw material to create entirely new associations, many of which have become conventionalised into archetypes in their own right through their reuse by the many artists he has influenced. For instance, the conventional sunken city archetype refers to cultural extinction, where an entire people depart from the world. But in Lovecraft this is inverted, with the otherworldly city returning from the depths with its horribly transformed inhabitants. Similarly, the temple oracle symbol of divine intercession is sinisterly transformed into an image of an infernal incursion.

An example of an even more original metaphor is that of scent. The scent of flowers becomes narcotic fumes which lull one to sleep. Through the DEATH IS SLEEP metaphor (Lakoff & Turner 1989), this is extended to the foreboding stench of death. In this way, a dreamlike quality is attached to the journey and river of life archetypes,

complementing the mental journey of discovery. More importantly this image links to another more subtle, but also pivotal image around which the theme centres: dreams and soporifics dull the mind and senses, so that if seeing is knowing, then dreams and delirium are forgetting.

Given the pervasiveness of allusions to death, many mistake the theme of the narrative as being about death itself. Allusions to death permeate Lovecraft, as in his most famous quotation, *That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange aeons even death may die*[34] (*The Nameless City*). But Lovecraft is not known for considerable thought on this topic. This is because for him death itself is only a symbol. Opening lines often state the intended theme, and this case is no different. Both title and the opening line invoke the moon and its transformation of the *familiar and loved* into the *unfamiliar and hideous*. The theme presents two conjunctions – the known which is also comforting and the unknown which invokes terror – which are diametrically opposed. Yet contradictorily, the moon reveals, makes known, and therefore should logically be transforming the *hideous* into the *loved*, not the other way round.

This thematic puzzle quickly complicates. The known vs. unknown archetype itself is a conventional one, but the narrative confounds our expectations and natural associations by inverting it. Day is naturally associated with clarity, certitude and familiarity and night with their opposites. But the narrative informs us that moonlight conveys its own revelations. It invades the familiar world of the known with dark hints of even greater truths concealed. As the walls of false certainty fall away, the comfort of certitude in our own firm knowledge similarly evaporates. Our supposed certainty is revealed as a mere illusion we craft to conceal from ourselves greater truths too hard to bear.

In this way, it is revealed that death is merely the symbol for the Great Unknown, there where certainty and its comforting lies die. Throughout, there are allusions to the moon's luminosity, and this points to the central paradox of the narrative, that the boundary between the known and the unknown is not fixed but shifting. The unknown can become the known, but when it does, it is not the *familiar and loved*

[34] This is fundamentally an expression of the concept of cosmic indifferentism: In the face of the eternity of the cosmos, mortality, that defining feature of the human condition, is effectively made meaningless.

which expands over the unknown, but rather the sense of the *unfamiliar and hideous* which invades the familiar.

In this way, the theme of the narrative is the concept of cosmic horror. Its subject is the very alienness and inhumanity of reality, the untraversable distance between subjectivity and objectivity.

Many critics only celebrate Lovecraft's aesthetic or stylistic, that is to say, his formal qualities. It is only recently that critics such as Harman, Kneale or Burleson (see below) have turned their attention to the more profound philosophical or thematic content. This is unsurprising, given narratology's formalist biases. Yet it is hard to appreciate the significance of his style, such as Lovecraft's very distinctive style of weird writing, or his masterful invocation of the fear of the unknown, *the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind* (Lovecraft 1973 [1927]), without a clear understanding of the themes which that style serves to exemplify.

Lovecraft was almost a caricature of the artist-ahead-of-their-time, impoverished and unnoticed in his time. The harshest criticism was for his gothic style of writing (Smith 2011), but Lovecraft's distinctive *weird fiction* style was not the product of fawning imitation or want of skill as his contemporary critics assumed, but is instead deliberate. Lovecraft's *weird fiction* style, adopts the faux-antiquity, formality and verbosity of the gothic style to pretend at glibness, authority, at precision. The obscurity of Lovecraft's style, so starkly different from the norm in horror fiction which seeks to capture the impression of terror in minute detail, is not a flaw but the source of its enduring sense of horror (Burleson 2014:160). In doing so, Lovecraft accentuates the limits of language, and more importantly, the human consciousness which produces it. 'In Lovecraft as in Poe, the horror of things comes not from some transcendent force lying outside the bounds of human finitude, but in a twisting or torsion of that finitude itself' (Harman 2008:30).

Thus 'Lovecraft's style, so often seen as his weakness, becomes central to the study of his fictions' (Kneale 2016:57). Lovecraft's effectiveness can be attributed to this style as much as to the content, which suffuses reality itself with its weirdness, to the extent that 'in Lovecraft the medium is the message' (Harman 2012:23). And the message which Lovecraft seeks to convey is of the insurmountable distance between human consciousness and the world it perceives. Lovecraft's

‘circumlocution is deliberate, and creates a gap between object and profile that is concealed in everyday experience’ (Harman 2008:29). In Lovecraft’s style, ‘we find hesitant and flowery wording that …effectively stunts the relation between things and their traits’ (30).

Lovecraft’s fiction demonstrates a fascination with sensory illusions (Waugh 2013). As a staunch adherent of scientism (the belief that science alone can provide truths about the world and reality), Lovecraft was keenly interested in the fallibility of empiricism, and the product of this quest was cosmic horror. Cosmic horror comprises two essential components, firstly, a realist counterpart to existential alienation, which builds upon epistemic incompetence to arrive at the conclusion of the irreconcilability of subjectivity and objectivity – the awareness that we exist in a cosmos which is fundamentally alien to us. And secondly, by extension, there is the concept of cosmic indifferentism – that we exist in a universe in which we do not matter (c.f. Stableford 2007:66-7). Thus, human existence is contingent only on our inability to fully comprehend these horrific truths, or as the opening lines of *The Call of Cthulhu* puts it, ‘The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents’ (Lovecraft 2018 [1928]).

According to Harman, Lovecraft’s weird fiction is a confrontation of the Kantian realisation of our inability to ever truly fathom *the real*, the insuperable distance between the noumenal and phenomenal (2012:31), along with a Husserlian confusion – an inability to reconcile our various senses (2008). Part of Lovecraft’s critical misappreciation likely stems from his hostility to the reigning aesthetic of fiction theory, whose foundational claim of representational truth he refutes by demonstrating ‘the impossibility of mimesis’ (Kneale 2006:106). The very point of the ‘weird fiction’ approach to description is that it fails, ‘hinting only obliquely at some unspeakable substratum of reality’ (Harman 2008:9). Implicit in Kantian transcendental idealism is the weirdness of the noumenal. We can only distinguish the noumenal (that is, reality) from the phenomenal (i.e. human understanding) by virtue of some intractable quality in it which refuses human understanding. ‘Reality is made up of nothing but substances — and they are *weird* substances with a taste of the uncanny about them, rather than stiff blocks of simplistic physical matter’ (Harman 2008:17). Moreover, as Husserl points out, this strangeness further invades the phenomenal, infecting it with its incomprehensible quality (Harman 2008). In this

way, the weird is no longer remote, out there, but invades us. We become alien to ourselves.

In this way, Lovecraft pre-empts Ricoeur's theory of narrative (Section 2.3). For both, narrative is neither a true representation of reality, or even of the human experience of reality, but only an inaccurate facsimile of the latter. The main difference however, is that while for Ricoeur, narrative is an admirable compromise between the divergent natures of *objective truth* and *subjective consciousness* rendering at least a partially satisfying reconciliation of the opposing needs of certainty and agency, for Lovecraft, narrative is merely a comforting lie humanity fabricates for itself to conceal its impotence in the face of a hostile cosmos. For him, consciousness of the weird is omnipresent, only masked in conventionality: even superstitious people "hold their weird views in a very non-weird fashion" (Lovecraft 1971:215). The role of Lovecraftian narrative then is inherently deconstructive, unravelling our preconceptions of meaning (Burleson 2014:157).

Like Ricoeur's theory of narrative, Lovecraftian narrative is deeply concerned with the Augustinian weight of time, that is, the burden of memory. Indeed, Ricoeur states as his primary intent a reconciliation of the Aristotelian *objectivist* and the Augustinian *subjectivist* accounts of narrative. Because we are human beings endowed with consciousness, that subjectivity colours and thus indivisibly suffuses every instant of objective observation. The result of this is the bounding of experience, which relates to both the tragic consciousness of our own limited existence, and its intransigent alienness.

The same theme of the essential contrast between the seeming infinitude of time and the finitude of human experience, pervades Lovecraft's fiction, as best exemplified by that most famous line *That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange aeons even death may die* (Lovecraft 2014 [1921]). Even death, the human conception of infinitude, fails in the face of the universe's overwhelming alienness. Death in this context can be substituted for any analogous concept: infinity, time, matter, the unknown, etc. 'Conflict with time seems to me the most potent and fruitful theme in all human expression' (Lovecraft 1995:113).

Fathomless time and space are consistent motifs in Lovecraft, and are instantiated by the equally regular motifs of sea and stone. Lovecraft himself was thalassophobic

(Tyson 2010:127), and this comes out in his work. But the horror that the sea represents is not reflexive but symbolic. It is seen in the qualities of its hostility to terrestrial humanity, and hence its mystery, the patent strangeness of sea-life, its formless fluidity, so like the waters itself, its tentacular and membranous features, that the seas are at once so vast and yet also so barren. All of these qualities and more can only evoke a profound humility in the philosophical elevation of the mind. When form and uniformity (i.e. similarity) are the basic building blocks of human consciousness, it cannot but feel a deep disquiet in the face of such formless strangeness.

The same is true at the opposite end of the spectrum. Stone is equally inhuman in its timelessness and inanimacy. Stonework and architecture in particular, evoke Lovecraftian horror. 'The very longevity of homes and material culture may create a sense that agency lies in these things rather than in the relatively transient persons who occupy or own them' (Miller 2001). While stone in itself is imbued with inherent horror, this impression is only heightened for worked stone. Stone ruins bear the trace of their extinct inhabitants, and in this way serve as an embodiment of human transience and insignificance. There is even something treacherous in objects created to shelter humanity outlasting their wards.

Lovecraft regularly qualifies references to sea and stone with horror. Critics and readers often attribute this to the adjectival over-compensation typical of weak writing, but those who intuit his artistic intent can perceive the method behind this apparent incompetence. Through rote association Lovecraft is conditioning his readers into an instinctive, automatic association of these concepts, pounding separate schemata into a single undifferentiated amalgam through force of repetition. This is similar to Conrad’s technique of *the inscrutable*. What it lacks in subtlety it makes up for in effect. By the end of the narrative, the audience cannot but instinctively shudder at the sight of either sea or stone.

Extremes of softness and hardness are continuously coupled in Lovecraft’s fiction as symbols of the inherently alien. Formlessness and pure form are both equally inhuman in their extremity to the human form. They represent our Darwinian genesis and terminus, the origin of life and its necessary culmination, the twinned horrors of our vermicular origins and archeologic doom. In this way, they symbolise another of Lovecraft’s binaries, that of antiquity and the future. ‘Lovecraft evokes the epitome of

modern artistic expression, futurism, in the same breath that he constructs an image replete with archaic horror' (Carlin & Allen 2013:75).

Lovecraft also delights in using communication media as a medium for obfuscation. In a tradition begun by Poe, paintings, books, letters, or in Lovecraft, phone calls, radio transmissions, photos or phonographs, what Ricoeur terms *traces*, distance the audience from the direct experience of horror, thereby making the horror even more terrifying by imbuing it with innate uncertainty (Kneale 2016:53-4). The same device is visible in the eikon and architecture in *What the Moon Brings*. Lovecraft transforms his traditional monster-at-the-end-of-the-book into a sunken idol for the same reason, both to obfuscate the direct experience of horror, and in so doing make it even more horrific, but also to imbue it with the horror of sea and stone. This correlates with his weird-fiction style, which uses antiquated language and formalities to essentially ossify or fossilise language itself, to turn it into some kind of dead, inhuman thing.

Burleson describes cosmic horror as analogous to the deconstructive theme of *denied primacy* both ontologically and epistemologically – the realisation of the disembodied perspective of the universe and eternity, through which embodiment, human significance and hence, meaning itself, unravels (2014:156). 'Deep time functions as a multidimensional repository of that which renders human values meaningless, exceeds all comprehension and measurement, and produces intense existential dread' (Carlin & Allen 2013:74). Through this decentring of humanity, antiquity usurps both the familiar sense of human time, as well as the clarity and tangibility of history. For the scientific atheist Lovecraft, there is something horrifically inhuman and even anti-scientific in the incomprehensible vastness of time. Familiar time, experiential time, and the scientific time of recorded history all become illusionary time, opposed to real time, which is infinite and formless. If the former constitutes human time, the latter is inhuman, even anti-human. It is the antithesis, the nemesis of humanity, in the light of which humanity becomes a meaningless quantity. 'Time "in its humanly accepted sense" has become a thin film through which human annihilation or degeneration could erupt at any moment' (Carlin & Allen 2013:75).

To conclude, it is hard not to agree with Joshi's verdict that *What the Moon Brings* is merely a regurgitation of previous material, that it presents nothing new to the Lovecraft reader that cannot be found elsewhere. Yet to say this is much like saying

that a microscope is also just a different way of looking at the same thing. As we've seen, *What the Moon Brings* explores the foundational concepts of his Cthulhu mythos and Lovecraftian horror, but does so through microscoping on them with an uncommon level of concentration and clarity. In this capacity, it serves as a perfect introduction, and hence also as a kind of Lovecraftian manifesto, for the new Lovecraft reader. Through its simplicity and brevity, Lovecraftian profundities are laid bare to readers in their absolute cosmic horror.

Hopefully, this has somewhat clarified Lovecraft's immense influence not only on horror fiction, but more broadly on art and culture in general. More significant for the present purposes, I hope it demonstrates how significant a thematic narrative understanding and the embodiment principle of narrative is for a full appreciation of Lovecraft's unique genius.

7.7 The importance of narrative: The parable of Jim Morrison

In this final Section, we will explore a more eccentric example of the narrative form, namely one of the Doors most famous songs. Once again, the purpose here is to demonstrate the versatility of the thematic narrative model. The narrativity of the song is not immediately striking. There is little of the conventional narrative structure – exposition, protagonist, peripeteia, etc. But there are definite examples of instances, and the lyrics demonstrate a clear thematic unity. Lastly, we will demonstrate that there is an underlying narrative structure, only veiled.

Once again, primary purposes are to demonstrate the thematic model at work, as well as its adaptability to a variety of analytical challenges.

Riders on the Storm

Riders on the storm
Riders on the storm
Into this house we're born
Into this world we're thrown
Like a dog without a bone

An actor out on loan
Riders on the storm

There's a killer on the road
His brain is squirmin' like a toad
Take a long holiday
Let your children play
If ya give this man a ride
Sweet family will die
Killer on the road, yeah

Girl, ya gotta love your man
Girl, ya gotta love your man
Take him by the hand
Make him understand
The world on you depends
Our life will never end
Gotta love your man, yeah

Riders on the storm
Riders on the storm
Into this house we're born
Into this world we're thrown
Like a dog without a bone
An actor out on loan
Riders on the storm

(The Doors 1971)

The song *Riders on the Storm* might not strike one as one of the more remarkable songs ever written. It can be said that it rose to fame primarily on the back of lead singer Jim Morrison's death. It is infamous for being the last song The Doors recorded before his untimely death from alcoholism only a few weeks later (Hopkins 1995:151); and the autobiographical aspect of the song (Hopkins & Sugerman 1991:324) has transformed it into a kind of last confession of the famed musician. But while its claim to fame may be ascribed to circumstance rather than merit, its persistence, rising to become perhaps the band's most famous song, cannot.

This conflicted reception of the song is echoed by its genesis, in The Doors' brimming internal conflict, Morrison's suicidal descent into alcoholism and producer Paul Rothchild walking out of production, dismissing the song as 'cocktail lounge music' (Hopkins 1995:151). Rothchild recounts that he sensed the band's looming demise in their lazy and defeatist attitude to the prospect of recording a new album (Riordan & Prochnicky 1991:423). The original idea for the song was a reinterpretation of Vaughn Monroe's[35] 'Ghost Riders in the Sky', a song about cursed cowboys, damned to spend eternity riding through the sky, a popular radio hit from the musicians' childhood (Davis 2004:423). Krieger's guitar track is a tribute to this original inspiration, and the theme clearly inspired Morrison's lyrics as well. Manzarek transforms this country sound with a jazz-inspired piano and bass track, while sound engineer Botnick added the atmospheric whispered background vocals and rain and thunder sound effects (Uncut 2014).

While the brooding tension of Manzarek's bass melody, complemented by Morrison's almost conversational delivery and Botnick's atmospheric sound effects, lends the song a distinctive and striking tone, the piano and guitar accompaniment bear out Rothchild's 'cocktail lounge music' estimation. Krieger's guitar melody is more of a parody than a tribute to the original country inspiration, and when situated within the broad corpus of rain-inspired compositions like Sigur Ros' *Hoppipola*, Led Zepplin's *Fool in the Rain* or Missy Elliot's *The Rain*, Manzarek's piano melody with its almost formulaic jazz flourishes hardly strikes one as the most original.

In short, the song's impact can be ascribed in large part to the suspense-filled lyrics. Morrison disliked explaining the meaning of his lyrics (Ashcroft 2000), though he did state in an interview that it was partly inspired by hitch-hiking, and in particular the hitch-hiker serial-killer Billy Cook[36] (Village Voice 1970). The second verse is widely accepted to be addressed to his long-time partner Pamela (Hopkins & Sugerman 1991:324), though several women recall Morrison claiming it to be addressed to them (Ashcroft 2000).

The autobiographical attribution of the song is substantiated by Morrison's own lifelong fixations with hitch-hiking, which Morrison viewed as a modern-day

[35] Vaughn Monroe was a popular musician in the 1940s and 50s.
[36] A famous serial killer who in 1950 went on a 22-day cross country killing spree, hitch-hiking, robbing and murdering his way across the country.

expression of the American frontier culture (Polyphonic 2019), existentialist philosophy (Densmore 1990, Davis 2004:423), and themes of death and murder (Riordan & Prochnicky 1991:495). The title itself is believed to be self-referential, with Morrison viewing his life as a storm and himself as the out-of-control rider (Polyphonic 2019). The themes of hitch-hiking and death in particular come together in the image of Morrison's long-time alter-ego, 'the demonic hitcher, the killer on the road' (Davis 2004:423). Morrison had for a long time been playing with this idea in the notebooks of poetry he always had on him, as well as the idea of love as 'the answer to all things' (Uncut 2014). Finally, existentialist references appear in the chorus, specifically to Heidegger's concept of *thrownness* and Sartrean *bad faith* as acting out the roles society hands us.

As Davis puts it, '"Riders on the Storm" was Jim Morrison's ultimate existential statement…Acknowledging humanity's fragility and essential solitude, amid a soundscape of thunder and rain, the song was also an explicit warning not to pick up Jim's psychotic alter ego: the demonic hitcher, the killer on the road – or "sweet family will die". "Riders" was also an explicit, extremely poignant plea for tender, womanly love' (2004:423).

The narrative structure is both disjointed and eloquent, defined by its stark clash between seemingly disconnected images, but at the same time structurally sound in its progression and circularity. It is this combination of echoing parallels and stubborn incongruity that makes it such an interesting study of blending. The first image is of victimhood, the second of victimisation, the third of the need for salvation, and the last again repeats the theme of victimhood. But despite the seeming incongruence of the images, the foregrounding of form through the repetitions of first and last lines implies an invisible unity to the images and motivates the audience to seek it out through blending. Despite its dark tone, the narrative is ultimately comedic and uplifting. The song sets out to describe the desperate nature of the human condition, then presents the self-destructive response to this existential futility, but answers with the hopeful promise of salvation through love, before finally reinforcing the narrative's original conditions which make the plea for salvation so pressing.

The title alone already invokes powerful contrasts, featuring the polysemy we observed to be typical of narrative, and sets up the semantic foundation skillfully. Firstly, *rider* has two strikingly contrastive meanings: one recalls the horseman,

almost the epitome of control and domination, the other a helpless passenger, a victim to the whims of his driver. *Storm* is more unified, but the literal meaning is also echoed by metaphorical extensions of physical states of disarray or emotional landscapes of inner turmoil. The title then presents a central space of chaos, incorporating into two disparate images, one of a leaf helplessly buffeted along on turbulent winds, another of the powerful image of seizing the reins of an embodiment of chaos, The mental space is of the opposing poles of control, of taking versus surrendering.

The first verse starts with the phrase *Into this house we're born*. This line, though its collocation of *house* and *born*, significantly sets up another important semantic space, namely that of familial domesticity. However, the following phrase *Into this world we're thrown* contrasts with its opposing connotations of abandonment and exile. Alongside the previous line, it carries echoes of the end of childhood. The structural symmetry between the two lines also suggests a semantic likesness – that birth is somehow related to exile. Furthermore, the verbs *born* and *thrown* alongside *into* both profile a process of translocation which in turn recalls a similar profile of motion captured in the process *ride.* This then implies a further association of *house* and *world* with *storm.*

The *like* at the start of the next two lines foregrounds their figurative association. *Dog without a bone* conveys an image of helplessness and inconsolability, and *actor out on loan* connotes similar ideas of inauthenticity, alienation and conformity. Both lines then extend the connotations of *Into this world we're thrown*, thereby also increasing their affinity to *the storm*, which takes on a particular character, the chaos that comes from isolation and an absence of certainty. *Bone* perhaps also recalls the biological associations of *born*, connoting an opposition between the chaotic desolation and the familial domesticity spaces, which will be expanded in the next verses.

Thusfar, the imagery is rich in allusion, but communicates little of substance. For this we have to wait for the second verse. The first line *killer on the road* is another example of structural symmetry, this time with the title. *Killer* maps directly onto *rider* and *road* onto *storm*. This imposes even darker implications onto the control and chaos spaces invoked by the title, where taking control is associated with victimisation and surrendering control with victimhood. Killing invokes the body-horror of bodily destruction, and the second line, extends it to the full triptych of

body-horror: bodily grotesqueness through reference to *brain…squirming* and bodily intrusion through the comparison to *a toad*.

The most striking contrast in the song occurs in the following lines of *take a long holiday* and *let the children play*. From absolute horror, our attention is shifted to bucolic images of familial domesticity. The lines also convey a sense of idiomaticity and conventionality. Both are also imperatives, echoing the theme of control once again. However, this stark opposition is reconciled with the closing conditional clause, stating that association with the killer will result in the destruction of the family space.

It is in the second verse that the narrative structure of the song truly begins to take shape. Here we suddenly are given the basic narrative building blocks: a protagonist and antagonist, a dramatic conflict and a climax and moral of the story rolled into one. The outline is basic: There are dangers in this world and if you aren't careful, they will destroy everything you hold dear.

Over the course of the song, the tone slowly changes. From the start, the song addresses itself to an audience, as is most evident in the pronouns. But in the first verse, the speaker is remote, and the *we* appears to be the abstract, non-specific usage of general statements (akin to the use of the pronoun *one*). However, the second verse amplifies the sense of directed speech through the paired imperatives, *take* and *let.* With imperatives, the addressee is paradoxically made even more prominent by his or her absence as a subject. This is because the subject is absent from the imperative because of his or her assumed immediacy (Langacker 1991: 503-5). Then there is the second person pronoun and conditional in the final warning (a form of offering in which the addressee is again strongly implied (c.f. Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 106-11), which both further manifest the addressee in the discourse. And the warning itself suggests sympathy in place of the previous verse's emotional distance.

In the third verse, the imperative becomes the grammatical dominant. But rather than domineering, the tone comes across more as a plea, as many have commented (Davis 2004:423, Uncut 2014, Hopkins & Sugerman 1991:324). Thus, in the third verse, the tone shifts to the intimate, and the semantics mirrors the grammatical intimacy. The mental space of familial domesticity is extended by the domains of

love, commitment (*take him by the hand* – an allusion to wedlock), and compassion (*make him understand*). These clearly contrast with the associations of desolation in the first verse. The next two lines *The world on you depends/Our life will never end* is another kind of conditional, this time promising redemption rather than threatening destruction. This opposition is enhanced by the final repetition of the first verse. The blend focuses on three primary spaces, the opposed spaces of chaotic desolation on the one hand, and familial domesticity on the other. The intermediating space, the generic space, is the domain of control which itself consists of the diametrically opposed poles of “taking control” versus “surrendering or losing control”. But even then the blending is not simple: The killer loses control in the attempt to take control by the most forceful means, namely destruction of the other. The lovers by contrast, paradoxically sieze control through submission.

Tuning the the philosophical allusions, *into this house we’re born* references the concept of historical or genetic determinism, and the philosophical concept of the *weight of time* or *burden of memory*. It alludes to the concept of the inextricable subjective historicity of human existence, that we find ourselves at every moment of our existence in circumstances not of our choosing and hence outside of our control. This is what the Heideggerean concept of *thrownness*, referenced in the next line, refers to. The *actor* image similarly references this concept, along with the conventional Sartrean bad faith response to it of by pretending our way through life as a way of denying the loneliness and despair that awareness of our fate brings.

The next verse introduces a very different image of the hitch-hiking killer preying off innocent families on holiday. The image is complex, expressing a deep resentment to life itself in its enmity to the family, which symbolises the origination of the human condition through procreation. The image then is ultimately self-consuming, an ouroboros, the hitch-hiker representing the fateful conclusion of the existentialist predicament, lonely, disoriented, distraught, while his violent intentions to the procreative symbol of the family expresses a subconscious intent at self-erasure.

In addition to body-horror, the line *his brain is squirming like a toad* also incorporates elements of Lovecraftian horror. *Squirming like a toad* references the horrific fluidic formlessness that is so antithetic to the formalistic human consciousness. The idiomaticity of *take a long holiday* and *let your children play* could be interpreted as a

reference to the bad faith denial of the existential condition through an automatised existence by means of the illusion of social convention.

The impression of the loneliness, disorientation and despair of the killer in the second verse provides a subtle hint of hidden unity with the same themes from the first verse. Similarly, Morrison's plea for a woman's love in verse three subtly references the creational family image from the first verse. As in the second verse, there is also the sense of impending contact, first between killer and victim, now between lovers. This repetition once again emphasises the contrastive unity between the two and forms a binary opposition, a fork in the road that the existentialist wanderer can choose between, love or self-annihilation.

The last lines *make him understand/the world on you depends/our life will never end* casts love in the archetypal form of the transcendent wisdom with which the hero returns to the mortal world to impart mastery over death. Once again, we see how narratives seem almost gravitationally bound to return to the hero's journey archetype. The message is clear: love provides the transcendental consciousness which allows us to engage meaningfully with the world and thereby to cast off the spectre of death through immortal deeds.

This then is the interpretation most will in all likelihood arrive at. But we can find another story as well, a parable about the meaning of narrative, told on the canvas of lead singer Jim Morrison's life.

Morrison's plea for love seems to evoke a greater *something* to ease the solipsism of the existential condition, yet it seems significant that it is a plea rather than a statement, as if he were reaching for an answer he still could not fully comprehend. And perhaps we can speculate that the killer on the road found him before he could find his salvation.

The concept of *thrownness* is central to Heidegger's philosophy in that it marks the difference between the essentialist *I* as a disconnected centre of consciousness, and the existential *Dasein* which is thrown into the world and thus inseparable from it. Furthermore, *Dasein* is unique from other existents in its self-consciousness and thus possesses free-will. Yet this free-will seems meaningless in the circumstance of our *thrownness*, that is, existing in conditions over which we have no control.

Furthermore, it brings with it an awareness of our mortal limitations, our finitude in both dimensions of time and space (Dowling 28-9, Polkinghorne 1988:127-9).

According to Heidegger, we typically confront this desperate situation with *gerede*, that is idle talk, or in Sartre's terms, *bad faith*, losing ourselves in the illusion of a definite order outside ourselves. Heidegger thus draws a fundamental link between inauthenticity and abstraction. Abstractions reduce the subjectivity of experience in order to grasp a universal-eternal awareness that transcends the prison of our isolated existential condition. But for Heidegger, this transcendence is illusory, because by eliminating subjectivity, it also eliminates what makes us who we are. It is essentially a self-erasure – we escape the spectre of death by playing as if we're already dead (Dowling 29). This mirrors the same dehumanised eternal-universal that Lovecraft defines as the ultimate source of horror.

Heidegger proposes as an alternative to this inauthentic existence, the concept of *Sorge* or commitment to our own finite subjectivity. It is the very awareness of the finitude of our existence which transforms our actions into meaningful commitments. Commitment is thus defined by conscious engagement with our world as opposed to an automatised or routinised unthinking existence. And there is a kind of transcendence to be found in *Sorge*, since commitment to the present is inextricable from a simultaneous consciousness of future expectations and past commitments. In this way, by committing to our present we simultaneously are able to surpass it (Dowling 30).

Heidegger's concept of *Sorge* overlaps with what Ricoeur finds so essential to human existence in narrative. For Ricoeur, *Sorge* is narrative – that is, telling ourselves our own stories. But Ricoeur's Christian faith cannot accept that abstraction is nothing more than an in-built flaw or damnation by an evil creator, nor that there is nothing greater beyond our finite subjectivity to aspire to. Instead, Ricoeur draws upon Frye's concept of narrative anagogy and Levinas' *trace* to reconceive the function of abstraction. While he accepts Heidegger's characterisation of abstraction, through Frye and Levinas he discovers a narrative function to abstractions which Heidegger overlooks. For Levinas' trace is nothing other than the trace of the finite subjectivity of the Other, and Fryean narrative anagogy, the bridge between them (Ricoeur 1983, 1989, Polkinghorne 1988:129).

In this way, mirroring our description of narrative, abstraction doesn't simply reduce subjectivity to no end, as Heidegger conceives, but rather has the purpose of synthesising heterogenous experiences. In doing so, narrative is able to merge multiple isolated experiences into a unified whole. And in the same way, the individual experiences of lone existents are merged into a shared cultural consciousness. Thus, through this shared cultural consciousness, our shared narratives allow us to transcend our finite existential isolation and participate in something which is universal and eternal.

Heidegger's concept of Dasein is essentially the same idea that the song expresses: the opening chorus is the confrontation with the existential condition, the killer is the apotheosis of the bad faith actor, the end-result of the loneliness and despair of denying *Sorge*. But the longing for a deeper contact with the Other, the love Morrison seeks that is *the answer to all things*, is exactly what is missing from Dasein. All that Heidegger's Dasein therefore can offer is a one-sided commitment without any trace of reciprocity, because for Heidegger, the necessary transcendence for reciprocity is a hollow illusion.

And we can perhaps go so far as to read into Morrison's plea – the fact that he expresses it as an unresolved desire rather than as a real connection – that the same was true for him. In the end perhaps, as with Heidegger, Morrison's commitment to the purity of the finite subjective Self, to living-in-the-moment, was too strong to accept the adulterated and alien experience of the Other. And in this we can perhaps read two parable theses: that transcendence from the isolation of the Self requires compromising that Self and adulterating it with the Other; but also about the existential value of narrative, as not just a medium of communication, but an essential and vital part of our humanity.

7.8 Conclusion

Thus far, we have presented a wide range of examples to demonstrate the significance of theme and archetype in the description of narrative. We started off with Friedrich's painting *The Wanderer*, then proceeded to the Grim Reaper archetype, both of which are quite unconventional examples of narrative. Next, we explored the exemplary narrative and particularly the folktale narrative genres,

demonstrating the original thematic prominence of the earliest narratives as a medium for the transmission of cultural learning. This naturally results in the archetypal narrative of the hero's journey, which is the model which forms the basis of all narrative.

In this chapter, we continued to demonstrate this evolution from exemplary to modern narrative, looking at Aesop's *The Fox and the Grapes*, Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*, Biblical parables, The Vizier's Fable from *One Thousand and One Nights.* An analysis of various permutations, both old and new, of the popular fairy tale of *Red Riding Hood* covers the transition from older to modern narrative Finally, we looked at two short modern narratives, the short story *What the Moon Brings* by H.P. Lovecraft and the song *Riders on the Storm* by The Doors.

In the next two chapters, we will turn our attention to two modern novels, namely Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* In this sense, a conclusion at this point is still somewhat premature.

Nevertheless, we can say that in this, the goal was (and will continue to be in the following chapters) both to convey an idea of the historical genesis and evolution of narrative's thematic function, as well as to demonstrate the versatility of the thematic approach to narrative to all kinds of narrative. Indeed, the formalist description has long been hampered by its restricted definition of narrative, which was one of the main spurs behind the post-classical revolution in narratology. But as we argued in Chapter 3, the post-classical retention of a taxonomic definition as opposed to the functional approach of thematic narrative means that this revolution is necessarily a failure in this goal. Hopefully, you will be convinced at the end of this thesis that thematic narrative does a better job at this.

Chapter 8

Existential uncertainty in *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever*

According to the theory of Labov and Waletsky (2006), and as demonstrated by Pratt (1977), narrative is often introduced by an abstract, a pseudo synopsis of the story (c.f. Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 15). Use of abstracts serves several functions. Firstly, it invites the audience's interest, convinces them that the narrative is worth hearing. Secondly, it provides a frame of reference to help them understand what it is about and the relevance of details communicated therein. The abstract is in part about introducing the audience to the plot as well as the style and tone of the story. But firstly and foremostly, it is about introducing the reader to the themes, since it is this which informs and defines other features like plot and style.

Novels, as reflected by their greater length, typically develop more elaborate and complex themes than the typical exemplary narrative or folktale which we studied in the previous chapter. In order to demonstrate the usefulness of thematic narrative analysis, it is necessary to look at something closer in form to the traditional novel. However, the close-reading and linguistic analysis approach we've used up until now is unsuited for longer texts due to its exhaustiveness. Therefore, even though *The Chronicles* runs to over a thousand pages in length, it serves as a perfect candidate, since it provides us with an ideal example of the narrative abstract. In the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is handed a note from God in the form of a homeless beggar on which is scribbled a riddle. This riddle presents in precis the essential challenge which the protagonist will be confronted with. These basic themes are then developed into the core concepts which propel the story in exposition, which comprises the first two chapters of the story. Furthermore, the author himself has written and spoken extensively on the intended themes of the story in various interviews and an essay (1986), so that we can indeed corroborate the results of our analysis with the author's own words.

In the following chapter, we will thus analyse these first two chapters in detail in order to demonstrate how the thematic narrative model applies to the thematic structure of novels, as the abstract essentially provides us with a condensed version

of the narrative as a whole. Close-reading and linguistic analysis are not tools that are meant to be applied to literary texts in their entirety, but rather analytical aids which can be used to assist the critic in the analysis of key passages of text (as explained in the introduction to Chapter 6). This more conventional approach will be demonstrated in the next chapter, where key sections relating to a specific problem in the text will be examined in detail.

The Chronicles is not only a brilliant and seminal yet neglected literary work deserving of more attention than it has thus far received. It is also an interesting subject for thematic analysis due to its narrative mode. *The Chronicles* is a symbolist fantasy, a mode of fiction which emphasises its own thematicity. Fantasy is a mode of fiction where the abstract is made manifest, where concepts are treated as tangible phenomena. Symbolic fantasy, in turn, is to ordinary fantasy what exemplary narrative is to ordinary narrative. Through both of these traits, *The Chronicles* becomes a perfect subject for the current approach: through the ensuing analysis, I hope not only to demonstrate the thematic model's value in exploring this interesting approach to thematic instantiation, but also to reveal the superb artistry in a work which has been undervalued through the use of traditional narratological methods.

The first three opening Sections of this chapter will discuss the narrative context of the narrative, specifically, the theme (Seciton 8.1) and the genre (Sections 8.2 & 8.3). The following three Sections will then proceed to a close linguistic analysis of key sections of the novel, demonstrating how the theme is presented to the audience. Section 8.4 and 8.5 will explore some of the central images presented in the text, and Section 8.6 will explain how these are expanded and linked with thematically related semantic domains in order to fully flesh out the theme. The last two Section assesses the results, Section 8.7 describes how the semantic spaces introduced in the previous Sections are exemplified in the first two chapters of the novel. Finallly Section 8.8 discusses how together all of these components may serve to completely transform the average reader's perspectives on these topics.

The next work which we will analyse should need no introduction, though unhappily it does. Stephen Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever* (Donaldson 1993 [1977]) (*The Chronicles*, henceforth), is one of the bestselling works in fantasy, and the author often ranked alongside the greatest literary figures of the twentieth century such as J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis (Barkley 2009:1). Yet,

in spite of being one of the greatest literary geniuses of our time, the work and its author have not received much attention in academic circles.

What is it about this story that has appealed to so many readers? In other words, what is it about? *The Chronicles* could hardly be termed milquetoast pop fic by any standards. Besides the story's thematic complexity, the highly technical register has elicited abundant criticism (Senior 1995:25). Most challenging of all is its disturbing subject matter. As Senior relates, 'readers and reviewers seem to fall into two diametrically opposed camps, those who applaud Covenant and those who excoriate him' (Senior 1995:51), or as the author himself puts it, when the new reader cosies up before the fireplace, either the book quickly ends up in the fireplace or else the reader sweats it out under extreme duress (Elohimfest 2007).

The strong reactions the story evokes are to be expected when we consider the devastating intimacy of its theme. Donaldson states the theme of the story as 'conflict with the Adversary' (Olsen 2001), or elsewhere, an answer to Sartre's claim that 'mankind is a futile passion' (Donaldson 1986:10). Put in simplest terms, it is the redemption tale of a paedophile.

Given such a theme, the virulent reactions of many readers are hardly surprising. Less comprehensible is why it has won the acclaim of so many others. Or at least, so it might appear on the surface. At least by a certain logic, this should not be in the least surprising either, because at the bottom of it, *The Chronicles* story is also our own story. By this same logic, every one of us shares some degree of culpability in Covenant's crime, and the search for redemption is the story of humanity.

This is hardly a novel idea. For Christians, it is encapsulated in the concept of original sin. In political theory, it is the concept of the social contract, the idea that societies, whatever form they take, only exist by the consent of their members – after all, if society, and by extension, we the individual members of that society, are not to be held responsible for its ills, then who is? In economics, it is the notion of the free market, that because we engage in transactions freely, we in turn are equally responsible for their negative externalities. Sartre encompasses the same idea in the concept of total responsibility: 'and, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men ....' (Sartre 1960 [1946]). This same notion makes its

appearance in a myriad different guises in innumerable cultures throughout history. Really, it is the story of morality and of free will, which is the essence of all tales – a person is confronted with a choice and what follows next.

Admittedly, there is an element of hyperbole here. Whatever your philosophy, most of us acknowledge the concept of morality in some form or other, that there is a difference between right and wrong, and that sometimes we all do wrong. Child rape, most would agree is one of these wrongs, but it is hardly the first thing we jump to when we think of those wrongs we are all guilty of by association. Rather, we typically think of less severe examples like pride, anger, deceit, prejudice. We say that when someone lies and you turn a blind eye, or when someone abuses another and you don't lift a hand to stop it, you are as guilty as the perpetrator. Perhaps not equally, but at least to some degree, most would agree. We flinch from taking any share in responsibility at all when it comes to the worst wrongs. Even though it is an extreme example, it is nonetheless true to some degree by the same token as the rest.

Furthermore, it is hardly unusual for art to traffic in hyperbole: Venus is the exemplar of beauty, Christ of compassion and self-sacrifice. We explore the human potential for evil not in its everyday manifestations (irritability, thoughtlessness, self-absorption), but in its most excessive expressions. And given the purpose of this story, namely to ask whether humanity is ultimately morally redeemable, shouldn't we seek an answer which is applicable to all wrongs, even the most appalling ones we can imagine.

From this perspective, the deeply etched mark *The Chronicles* leaves on so many of its readers is unsurprising. This is because *The Chronicles* is by definition one of the most important tales you will ever read. It is a story about the purpose of all stories, which is the story of morality and human choice.

Of course, it is not a very palatable one, which perhaps explains why it is not more celebrated. It is the essence of narrative, stripped bare of all its adornments down to its ugliest naked brutality. Its main protagonist, Thomas Covenant, is a rather loathsome character. Moreover, the novel demands that we accept and even immerse ourselves in it – because his loathsomeness is also our own, and the story is about confronting it to see if there is anything redeemable to be found beyond it.

The novel itself unflinchingly confronts the darker, more horrific aspects of life which most other authors of disturbing materials, like Conrad, often only hint at. For this reason, it has sometimes been termed horror fantasy (Senior 1995:23), though rather than a kind of sub-genre, this has become a hallmark of much modern fantasy. Indeed, Donaldson, perhaps more than any other, is responsible for the synthesis of the early dark fantasy typical of Lovecraft with the more mainstream epic high fantasy tradition of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, a synthetic mode which has come to be known as Grimdark[37] fantasy (Emery 2018:49). Today this is very much the dominant in modern fantasy, as we see in the works of George Martin or Steven Erikson. Most who have read the book are familiar with the extreme reactions which readers often tell of. Physical nausea, horror, despair, outrage are all regular experiences for its readers, as it vividly depicts the traumatic aspect of life which we so conveniently overlook. Graphic violence, genocide, sacrilege, disease, rape, bleak despair, torture, starvation, the entire catalogue of human misery can be found within its pages. But *The Chronicles* is no gore-fest. It takes no pleasure in this misery, but only invokes these horrors to reveal the sterling quality of humanity, the tormented glory of the human spirit. The appeal that so many readers have found in its pages is its promise of revealing the light in even the darkest places.

Although *The Chronicles* is often unbearably bleak, readers who recoil from it or fail to see past it, inevitably fail in their reading of the book, fail to see the hope that lies beyond despair. Brian Attebury's study of American fantasy (1980:159-160), for instance, illustrates this failure to see beyond, and the inevitable failure to comprehend the paradoxes of life which it depicts. For Attebury, the story remains until the end a mere psychotherapy for its hero, a failure of the fantastic suspension of disbelief. But while it certainly starts off as such, and reaffirms this in its conclusion, the story simultaneously goes beyond it. It is for this reason that Donaldson (1986) himself classifies his work as clearly in the epic fantasy tradition. *The Chronicles* ultimately seeks to find a middle ground between the unbelief that typifies the modern realist outlook, and the indomitable optimism of the Tolkienian epic fantasy tradition (Stableford 1988:23-4, Ward 2011:197-200).

In short, *The Chronicles* challenges us to affirm the Levinasian *trace of the Other*, or for Ricoeur and Frye, the Christian call to *love thy neighbour*. The themes are very

[37] A genre of speculative fiction characteristically dystopian

much the same as in the previous narrative analysis of *Riders on the Storm*. It is the philosophical challenge to overcome existential isolation and alienation through affirmation of our authentic ability to connect with the other. Only, it presents the challenge with its most abhorrent face, in the knowledge that if the reader can overcome their innate revulsion for this Other in its most extreme form, he or she can in any other. And once again, thematic narrative plays an essential role, both practically and philosophically, in one's ability to overcome such a degree of alienation.

8.1 Fantasy in *The Chronicles*

Before we begin our analysis, it is necessary to provide some context. Firstly, it is necessary to point out that *The Chronicles* is a work of fantasy, specifically of the grimdark, symbolic and portal fantasy genres (Mendlesohn 2008). Fantasy pertains to the epistemic relationship between reader and story, and therefore between theme and story. More importantly though, fantasy is central to the themes of *The Chronicles* itself. Therefore, a definition of fantasy as it applies to *The Chronicles* is a necessary first step to analysing its themes.

Critics have panned the many similarities between *The Chronicles* and *the Lord of the Rings*, to the extent that it could be said that if Tolkien defined the prototype, Donaldson and Terry Brooks made the die (Stableford 1998:23-4). But although Donaldson does emulate Tolkien, it is in the form of a critique (Shippey 2000:320-1). While there is much alike between the two books, there are also many stark differences. Donaldson is among the first to demonstrate the bestselling potential for modernist sophistication within the fantasy tradition (Ward 2001:149). But while *The Chronicles* juxtaposes literary modernism and post-modernism with popular high-fantasy, it is primarily to expose the poverty of the former in comparison with the latter. *The Chronicles* was written in part as an apology for fantasy against the prejudices of literary academia (Shippey 2000). Ultimately, Donaldson consciously employs Covenant's leprosy and despair as a metaphor for academia's biases against fantastic affirmation and its attitude of reductivist disillusionment towards more traditional affirmations of faith (Ward 2001:151). But at the same time, he also

criticises the Tolkienian concept of Secondary-world Fantasy, which denotes an inferior status to imagined world in comparison to the *real* world. He does this through his realisation of such a secondary world which transcends the primary in its reality (Ward 2001:156, Slethaug 1984).

But what is fantasy? According to the conventional definition, fantasy is defined by its unreality (Todorov 1973 [1970]: 26, Rabkin 1976: 3-41). Indeed, Gary Wolfe documents the definitions provided by many of the most notable authors and scholars on the subject, almost all of which are variations on this theme: fantasy comprises narratives which are *impossible, supernatural, strange, non-factual, improbable, unexpected, having non-existent subjects, irrational*, etc. or at least believed to be so by the reader (1986:38-40). Other common definitions, such as fantasy as escapism (Rabkin 1976:42-73, Tolkien 1939), or as desire for the unattainable (Jackson 1981:1-10) are simply elaborations of this basic premise, an attempt to account not only for what, but also why it is.

How then does this differ from other fiction? Well, it doesn't. Fiction too is defined as non-factual, that is to say, unreal narrative (Abrams 1993 [1957]: 64). In terms of the above-mentioned definitions then, fantasy is simply a synonym for fiction. And there certainly is some truth to it. All fiction subverts the real with unrealistic elements, characters which never existed or events which never took place. To complicate matters, even science has an element of fictionality or even fantasy to it (Pratt 1977: 87-88), in that it aims to produce abstractions of real-world experiences (c.f. Kintsch & van Dijk 1983: 68-9). Similarly, a grammar isn't the actual language faculty we employ to understand language, but an idealised representation of it. Except, on this point, all the scholars and authors agree, that even though they are clearly identical, they are certainly nothing alike at all. Most fiction is written in the mode termed realist, which consists of narratives which are *truthful, natural, possible, plausible*, etc. (Abrams 1993 [1957]: 174-175) in other words, exactly opposite to the definition of fantasy as well as fiction. Based purely on the definition, one wouldn't be at fault to imagine they were describing some genre of non-fiction.

How are we to make sense of this? To do so, we have to return to the formalist theory of narrative (Section 3.3). In this theory, narrative is construed as deferring its meaning to a representative equivalent of the real-world of experience. As a representation, it can both be true-seeming without being true in fact, in the same

way that a photograph of a dog can be an accurate representation without being in fact a dog.

But where then does this leave fantasy? The problem with fantasy is that it reveals the artificiality of all representation, and hence must be marginalised, quarantined in a category of its own. But fantasy is only different from other fictional works in degree, not in kind. Fantasy reveals that fiction refers not to the world out there or some replica of it, but to the world of the mind, and realist fiction only differs from fantasy in that it refers to the more experiential pole of the instantiation-abstraction cline, while fantasy tends to the more abstract end. (Recall that the distinction between theme and exemplar is not absolute, but a scale, and exemplars can be closer or more distant from their theme on this scale.) But this prejudice against fantasy for revealing the emperor's nakedness has resulted in many of the greatest works of literature being thrust into obscurity and warped out of all recognition (Shippey 2000).

This warped interpretation of fantasy is most visible in Rosemary Jackson's influential study of the genre (1981). Starting from the formalist definition of narrative, Jackson reasonably concludes that since fantasy constitutes a deviation from the familiar and accepted model of reality we all know, the gauge of fantastic literary value is its success in questioning this model. Hence, the fact that many great works of fantasy, such as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Chronicles* itself do not pursue this objective, means that they can be conveniently written off as artistic failures, compared for instance to Kafka, whose fantasies are deeply rooted in contemporary social commentary.

The problem with this definition is that it fails when applied to the complex and varied modes of reference which we find in *The Chronicles*, parts of which are written in a realistic mode, others in a figurative, poetic mode, parts in an absurdist or magic-realist mode, and others in a fantastic mode. Once again, and as discussed previously, a theory which ascribes meaning to a referent simply cannot furnish the nuance required to explain a reference which is at once both concrete and wholly abstract. Instead, only a theory which acknowledges meaning as essentially cognitive in nature, and hence fully abstract in all its guises, can accommodate such variety. This is the essential difference between the formalist and thematic accounts of narrative previously discussed (see Chapter 3). In other words, it is in fantasy that

narrative appears in its truest abstract cognitive nature, while *realism*, as Ricoeur argues (Section 2.3), constitutes fantasy pretending at reality – exactly the opposite as that advanced by the formalist theory of narrative. Neither can the formalist theory accurately reflect the narrative functions of these different modes. The very claim that fantasy is a literature of escape or desire is difficult to reconcile with a story dedicated to confronting the most repulsive face of humanity. This conflict between theory and actuality is even more strident in the face of *the Chronicle's* committed anti-escapism.

However, although the formalist definitions fail to explain why, fantasy *is* distinct from most fiction. The alternative explanation I propose is the same as Gardner's definition of the metaphysical conceit (Gardner 1985 [1971]:19-23). Indeed, I propose that fantasy is simply a narrative version of this poetic device. To illustrate what I mean with an example, consider what is fantastical about a dragon. Here we find the same kind of blend of analogy and identity. A dragon is both a symbol or metaphor and a referent. We understand the dragon not in itself, indeed we cannot since dragons do not exist, but rather through those things it represents. But at the same time we do not conceive of the dragon as a mere symbol, but as a living, breathing entity.

Just as the metaphysical conceit is defined by the construal of some metaphor as more than mere analogy, as though it were true, fantasy construes abstract, metaphoric compositions as though they were real. As Everman puts it, science fiction and fantasy are 'a literature of absence, because the language of science fiction makes that which is absent present to the reader' (1986:25). When in Donne's 'A Valediction: forbidding mourning' the metaphor LOVERS ARE THE TWIN ARMS OF A COMPASS is realized as an actuality, this is a semantic phenomenon of the same order as the fantastic conceit.

To give an example, a bared sword blade may normally signify a potential threat, and its sheathing safety from harm. But with King Arthur's magical sword Excalibur, the sword and scabbard's symbolic potentials become manifest. The sword's lethal potential is fantastically realized, making its wielder invincible, and the scabbard realizes the symbolism of safety as wielder invulnerability. Similarly, the dragon is essentially a metaphor, a mapping of a variety of source domains onto a target domain, but unlike ordinary metaphors, this is construed as a tangible, living, fire-

breathing being, not a mere analogy. In the metaphor ATTRACTIVENESS IS HEAT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989), the source domain HEAT is construed abstractly. We do not recoil in fear of getting burned whenever we meet an attractive person or accoutre ourselves in fire-retardant for a hot date – we understand it as mere analogy. But in fantasy we do. In the fantastic conceit GREED IS A DRAGON, the dragon actually despoils, consumes and hoards wealth and resources. Similarly, magic in fantasy, usually a metaphor for some abstract conception of power, is presented as though it were a real, physical force. Magic in *The Chronicles*, for instance, is a metaphor for the abstract concept of the power of creativity (Senior 1995:85-7). Yet through fantasy, abstract creativity is realized as a kind of raw power which flashes out from magical staves and white-gold rings.

Crucial to the identification of fantasy is this realization of the abstract elements in metaphoric schemata, that the dragon is not only an abstract source domain in the metaphoric schema, but one which is instantiated as though it were a real determinate entity. Viewed in this way, we can see a clear progression from narrative instantiation to fictive instantiation to fantastic instantiation. Each of these comprises a different kind of the category-to-member relationship, with each being differentiated by a further remove away from direct experience towards greater abstraction. (Keep in mind again, we are not speaking of the level of abstraction of the theme – these are all still instantiations/exemplars. Only these exemplars are at a higher level of abstraction than with realism.)

Donaldson is an adherent of a specific fantastic mode we might call symbolic, present as well in the works of C.S. Lewis, Mervyn Peake and to a lesser extent in Tolkien (Bacon 1979). Symbolism describes the platonic association of abstract cultural beliefs and values to various elements in the experiential world. Essential, this describes a similar process to narrative thematics, only on a smaller scale (Watt 1979: 321-2). In symbolic fantasy, fantasy in a sense mimics allegory, or at least adopts an allegorical semantic structure. The result is a far more direct and concentrated use of symbolism than in most fantasy (Senior 1995:75). As Donaldson puts it, ‘in realistic fiction, the characters are expressions of their world, whereas in fantasy the world is an expression of the characters’ (1986:7). As Donaldson further elaborates, character in turn is the expression of the core themes of the narrative. In other words, in symbolic fantasy, the fantastic world has an exemplary or allegorical

relationship to the story's themes. Lewis' works, such as the *Narnia* books, are allegorical in that the fantasy world is introduced through characters from the real world, and much of the drama revolves around their construal of fantastic elements as meaningful symbols. We find the same with Peake's Titus of the *Gormenghast* trilogy, the world of Gormenghast being an expression of the main character's coming of age struggles. In this way the unreal is reconciled with the real through explicitly rendered grounding or governing symbols.

There is something of this in Tolkien's works as well, where hobbits and the Shire are very much idealizations of English culture (Shippey 2000:1-11), and through these real-world references the fantastic symbolic layer is anchored in real experience. But at the same time, much of the fantasy of Middle Earth escapes the sphere of this symbolic schema, and are required to be apprehended more independently, as a direct epistemological relation between the reader and the fantastic world, without the intermediation of conciliatory symbols. This kind of fantasy is more characteristic of high fantasy, where fantasy is construed in a clearly ontologically separate world (Wolfe 1986:52). This results in a fantastic symbolism which is potentially broader in significance, since instead of constrained to a central theme, the reader has the freedom of any number of possible thematic interpretations. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings*, we can alternately view the sword Anduril as a component of the symbolism of the hero Aragorn, or Aragorn as a component of the symbol of Anduril. Each interpretation renders a distinctly different meaning and *The Lord of the Rings* provides its readers the freedom to explore these various possibilities. At the same time, this comes at the cost of precision. That fantastic symbols all coalesce around the core themes exemplified by Donaldson's hero Thomas Covenant in *The Chronicles* results in a far more unified and integrated structure. On the other hand, the more variable symbolism that one finds in *the Lord of the Rings* lends it greater breadth of significance and meaning than *The Chronicles*. Donaldson's aesthetic corresponds to a general Howardian[38] emphasis on intensity, characterised by bold and dark themes and their exemplification through a protagonist and his actions, as opposed to Tolkien's subtler and more ambiguous symbolism (Emery 2018:48-9). The distinction of symbolic vs. non-symbolic comes

[38] Referencing Robert E. Howard, author of the famous Conan the Barbarian tales.

down to a question of depth vs. breadth – *The Chronicles*, by virtue of its fictional mode, is able to explore a small number of themes to a much greater extent.

Abrams defines allegory as ‘narrative fiction in which the agents and actions and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the “literal,” or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts and events’ (1993 [1957]:4). Are *The Chronicles* then still fantasy, or merely a kind of allegory? I believe that symbolic fantasy, and *The Chronicles* above all, is both. This is perhaps best exemplified through Covenant’s relationship to the Land, the fantastic world into which he is cast. Covenant begins with the firm belief that the fantastic otherworld of the Land is merely allegory, that the beings he encounters there are mere projections of his own psychology. This leads to disastrous consequences as it allows him to reject his responsibility to the Land and its denizens and thus permits their victimization at the hands of the Despiser, constituting a subtle betrayal. But at the same time, as other characters, such as Hile Troy, who in many ways serves as his narrative foil, demonstrate to him, full affirmation of the authenticity of the Land can only lead to equally damning consequences. When Troy forgets who he is and the limitations of his nature, this also constitutes a betrayal, in that he pretends to be someone he is not. Rather Covenant must accept the paradox that the Land contains some meaning which is greater than him, and therefore worth his commitment and even his life, but that at the same time it is still an expression of himself. In the same way, *The Chronicles* both embraces its function as an allegory, and at the same time rejects it. Donaldson himself confirms this bifocal perspective in his essay on *The Chronicles, Epic Fantasy in the Modern World* (1986).

To explain this on a more technical level, narrative was described as the exemplification of themes through phenomena which instantiate them. In exemplary narrative, this relationship between the exemplar and its theme is of a far more concrete or definite nature. This explains the sense of over-simplification which is often attributed to exemplary narrative (Tolkien 1991 [1955]: xv-xviii). To give an example, we saw that in the fable *The Fox and the Grapes*, the narrative is structured around the theme of *truth vs. appearance*. Contrasting this with another previous example, with the less allegorical fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*, the

themes are there, but in a far less ordered manner. The story includes several related themes, but without the same degree of comprehensive integration.

So, in the allegorical meaning of *The Chronicles*, the entire Land, a richly described separate world, is reduced to an extension of the psychology of a single individual. But what of its fantastic meaning? As we said before, symbolic fantasy marries allegorical with fantastic meaning. What does this second qualifier denote?

Fantasy, or at least the fantasy which is more typical of high fantasy, is more varied in its plurisignification. To give an example, when we look at the dragon of Western and Middle Eastern myth and fantasy, such as the dragon Fafnir of Norse mythology, St. Georges' Dragon, Beowulf's dragon, the dragon of Christian and Judaic tradition, dragons in Persian mythology, we have a composite of a broad array of semantic domains. There is typically an association with the archetypal ADVERSARY of the hero, especially in relation to epic narratives, but in contrast to the embodied ADVERSARY, the VILLIAN, its non-human and unnatural qualities are often emphasized, so that in contrast with the embodied, familiarised VILLIAN, it serves as the archetypal disembodied and abstract ADVERSARY.

Besides this, many more specific significances are often affixed to it: The most prominent is the serpentine physiology and volcanic symbolism, a strange combination on the surface until one considers their shared chthonic associations (in mythology volcanoes and other fissures and cavities into the earth are often gateways to the underworld). Another is water and hence the netherworld, as previously discussed in the *Red Riding Hood* and Lovecraft analyses. There is also gold or other precious objects in the form of the dragon's hoard. Another is greed and human vice in general, as we see for instance with Fafnir of Norse mythology whose serpentine form is a curse for parricide, treachery and theft. One other is knowledge, as we see in the motif of riddle-contests or other forms of knowledge exchange (Gheerbant et al. 1996, Ferber 1999, Birkalan & Garry 2005, Seigneuret 1988). These last two associations may appear to personify and embody the dragon, in contrast to its general disembodiment and de-personification, but there is always an abstract, supernatural quality to these associations – the dragon's vice is the viciousness of the natural order of the cosmos, and its wisdom is that of the supernatural. Through its extensive semantic domain, the dragon comes to signify many things: its defeat at the hands of the hero can mean the ascendancy of human

virtue over instinctive nature, or the precedence over Death, or the supremacy of the human intellect, amongst many other things. It becomes a field for play between many diverse meanings, for free association, or *différance* if you will.

This metaphoric aspect of fantasy emphasizes the free associative aspect of language, its plurisignification, and also contrasts with allegory, which emphasizes the more denotative, referential aspect of language. In this sense, the symbolic fantasy of *The Chronicles* attempts a balance between these two, or perhaps a paradoxical coexistence of both alternative aspects.

8.2 Fantastic affirmation

In *The Chronicles* we encounter a variety of fictional modes. In the passages which provide an account of Covenant's life in the "real" world, the dominant mode is realistic. There is an emphasis on the detail of commonplace and everyday experience, a resistance towards the abstract and surreal, and an emphasis on factuality, the dominant traits of realism (Abrams 1993 [1957]:174-175). Of everything, it is leprosy and its reality which is described in the starkest realistic style.

But Covenant's realist present is interspersed with recollections from an idyllic earlier life with a more poetic style, rich in imagery and highly connotative language. Covenant's own writing is described in terms of lofty creative imagery, and his wife through richly evocative symbolism. But Covenant soon comes to realize that this idyllic world of 'hills and crags, trees bent by the passionate wind, night-ridden people' (Donaldson 1993 [1977]:18 (all text quotes henceforth from this source)) is just a shallow façade. When he returns to read his novels, the 'blind poverty' of the world-view they express 'left him aghast.' (29) They are impoverished because they remain abstractions which never find realization.

Consequently, Covenant rejects this creative perspective, resolving himself purely to the realistic mode. Realism, however, pushed to extremes becomes unrealistic, as we find increasingly in Covenant's real life. There is a distinct correspondence between realism and Covenant's leprosy, deliberately drawn by Donaldson, for whom the story is a mutual interrogation of realism with fantasy (1986:18). In his extreme exactitude toward the concrete reality of existence, even the metaphysics of realism which holds it all together fails the critical benchmark, and consequently we

increasingly find magic-realist or absurdist elements dominating the tale. Magic-realism is defined as 'narratives in which the fantastic element intrudes on the "real world"' (Wolfe 1986:67). Absurdism, in contrast, is when realistic devices lose their significance in the absence of a natural order to reality (Hinchliffe 1969:2-7). We see an instance of the former in the works of Kafka, and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is the epitome for the latter, a tale in which characters divert themselves with insignificant facts, trivial props and mundane habits from the meaninglessness and utter arbitrariness of their existence. While to a certain extent they are opposites of one another, magic-realism presenting an unreal element posited in a realist ontology, and absurdism providing realist elements lost in an unreal universe, they are similar in the collision of opposing ontologies.

This distinction between magic-realism and absurdism on the one-hand and fantasy on the other, distinguishes Covenant's impoverished life in the real world versus the fantastic affirmation he realises in the Land. In this way, Donaldson also makes a trenchant criticism of the poverty of the escapist theory of fantasy of Jackson, Todorov and others of mainstream literary academia who maintain this limited view of fantasy (Senior 1995).

The first major intrusion of the absurd is leprosy itself. Leprosy is a supernatural affliction, one which defies human and scientific comprehension: 'study of the bacillus has been consistently foiled by the failure of the researchers to meet two of Koch's four steps of analysis' (24). "'Leprosy,' he heard night after night, 'is perhaps the most inexplicable of all human afflictions. It is a mystery, just as the strange, thin difference between living and inert matter is a mystery'" (26). It is a curse or a nightmarish fantastic intruder which has no place walking down the street in the twentieth century urban landscape. Appropriately, doctors respond to it with fear and ritual rather than modern scientific medical practice.

Rooted in the high-fantasy tradition, it goes without saying that *The Chronicles* follows the archetypal model of the hero's journey (c.f. Senior 1995:101-10), But what is significant is that Covenant's mythologisation occurs through leprosy. As leprosy personified, the epitome of this supernatural curse, Covenant's life begins to adopt a mythical framework. Alienated from reality, and imprisoned within his abstract, internal world, Covenant's life begins to adopt attributes of the absurd. Like the hero travelling into the unknown, constantly imperilled, facing dangers on every

side, Covenant's every moment is life in the perilous realm. 'bruises, bumps…scrapes… maim, cripple or even kill…' Life is all 'hard corners and sharp edges…you can't rest' (28). His life is only construable in terms of symbols and rituals, and the conflict between himself and his society is fought through ancient rituals. The townsfolk use the rituals of leprosy as weapons against him and practice the banishment rituals of undeath against him, and Covenant responds with the ancient hex of *Beware! Leper outcast unclean*, at once a threat and an appeal for mercy, an affirmation and outcry against his mythical damnation.

On his return from the leprosarium, Covenant attempts to 'crush himself to fit the mould of the facts' (31). He rearranges his house to resemble his cell in the leprosarium. He burns his novels in order to symbolically purge his mind of treacherous imagination. Importantly, here symbols attain a real power. By destroying the novels which symbolize his imagination he also destroys it in reality. By rearranging his house, he is rewriting the natural laws of his world. Similarly, shaving becomes an absurdist version of the mythical hero's trial by fire, the ordeal which proves him worthy of his heroic role. And, when he finds himself faltering, he steels his nerves with the clear threat of his penknife, his hero's magical blade, though significantly, it is turned against its wielder, signifying the paradox (this will be fully explained below), the internalization of Covenant's struggle, the double-edged nature of power.

> First, he found his old straight razor. Its long, stainless-steel blade gleamed like a leer in the fluorescent light of his bathroom; but he stropped it deliberately, lathered his face, braced his timorous bones against the sink, and set the edge to his throat. It felt like a cold line of fire against his jugular, a keen threat of blood and gangrene and reactivated leprosy. If his half-unfingered hand slipped or twitched, the consequences might be extreme. But he took the risk consciously to discipline himself, enforce his recognition of the raw terms of his survival, mortify his recalcitrance. He instituted shaving with that blade as a personal ritual, a daily confrontation with his condition.
>
> For the same reason, he began carrying around a sharp penknife. Whenever he felt his discipline faltering, felt threatened by memories or hopes or love, he took out the knife and tested its edge on his wrist. (30)

Covenant finds himself being slowly and inextricably cut off from his society by black charity. ‘The townspeople were not only shunning him, they were actively cutting off every excuse he might have to go among them’ (31). First, they pay his electrical bills, then begin delivering his groceries. The only reason he still has to defy his banishment is his phone bill. In this way, bills, legal battles and phone calls in *The Chronicles* become epic battles for survival, to ‘assert the rights of his common mortal blood’ (17), and in this way, his everyday life becomes an absurd myth. Before he heads into town for this epic confrontation, he accoutres himself with his hero’s panoply, his penknife, tough jeans and sturdy boots. Similarly, he prepares himself with his rituals of shaving and VSE[39], bitter absurdist mockeries of the hero’s ordeal to prove his worthiness. The town presents itself as a gauntlet, the hero’s trial, ‘the small businesses stood close together like teeth poised on either side of the road’ (33), with the ‘gilt-lettered: Bell Telephone Company’ (17) sign up ahead, like a golden vision of heaven.

Absurdism is characterized by the loss of natural order, so that we can say that absurdism is simultaneously characterized by the absence of clear theme, or the presence of conflicting themes. Absurdism is not so much the opposition of reality and unreality, but rather the existence of two or more equally authentic, yet mutual exclusive realities. It is this state of ontological contradiction which correlates absurdist and magic-realist modes and explains why absurdism is so prominent a device in post-modern fiction with its ontological dominant (McHale 1987:10-11). It also explains why perhaps *The Chronicles* has received such a lukewarm reception. *The Chronicles* only invokes the academically popular post-modern mode in order to reject its poverty. Rather, as we shall see, its aim is rather a kind of existentialist humanism (c.f. Barnes 1959:3-5), humanism being a system of thought which modernism and post-modernism is generally in revolt against (Barry 1995:32-34; Eagleton 1983).

The mode of absurdism serves to highlight the semantic oppositions of the narrative, the irreconcilable semantic boundaries which permeate the narrative: ‘The patients who survive find someone somewhere who is willing to help them want to live. Or they find somewhere inside themselves the strength to endure’ (28), ‘yet that horror and death explained, made comprehensible, almost vindicated the rejection which

[39] Visual Surveillance of Extremities (explained below in section 8.5)

denied him support or encouragement.' (31) and hope is precisely what leprosy denies one. 'You cannot hope' (27). 'His struggle arose from the same passions which produced his outcasting' (31). Leprosy requires 'that they cling to life without desiring any of the recompense which makes life worthwhile' (29). Here we clearly find the different conflicting domains of Covenant's life – society vs. isolation, hope vs. despair, life vs. meaninglessness, aspiration vs. futility.

Unreality doesn't reside in any particular facet – the mythic heroic facet of Covenant's life, for instance, is no more unreal than the realistic world-view which it opposes – but rather in the oppositions themselves. And we see that each of the opposing realities relates to one of the opposing domains. The phone-bill in relation to the Covenant space is merely an insignificant piece of paper, but in relation to the external world and society spaces, it is a representation of societal incorporation. The pen knife, in the Covenant space, signifies a mere danger, but in the domain of mythology, it signifies the symbolic manifestation of the hero's agency and presidency over the mortal obstacles in his path.

What Covenant must confront in the tale are these absences of reconciling themes to mend the fractured experiential domains of his existence. It is these untraversable fissures which produce the contradictions and the unbearable absurdism of his existence, and he needs to discover the means of transcending these boundaries and of reconciling the various fragments of his life into a whole. He finds this answer in fantasy. It is the interaction between the contradiction of absurdism and the paradox of fantasy which drives most of the story, absurdism in defining the obstacle, and fantasy in providing the resolution.

Absurdism is the defining feature of his ordinary life, and he must travel to the fantastic realm of the Land in order to discover the restorative power of fantasy. Corresponding to this difference between absurdism and fantasy is the also a distinction between a predominance of simile or metaphor (Emery 2018:48). The distinction between simile and metaphor is that between explicit and implicit comparison (Croft & Cruse 2004). Explicit comparison emphasises the contrastive boundary between comparative domains, between reality and abstraction. In metaphor, this distinction fades. Simile in this context is associated with low-

fantasy[40] and the real world where associated entities are clearly distinguished through the overt comparison of simile and therefore contradictory and absurd. In the high-fantasy[41] realm of the Land, metaphor predominates. Metaphor in contrast blurs distinctions between entities, and in this way resolves contradiction into paradox, resulting in fantastic affirmation.

As *The Chronicles* in effect argues, fantasy is a literature of affirmation (c.f. Tolkien 1939), in contrast to realism, which is a literature of rejection and nihilism. It is this dialectic which is crucial to the meaning of *The Chronicles*. Covenant's spiritual and intellectual quest in the Land is a progression from a nihilistic realist ontology to a fantastic affirmative one. The nihilistic realist doctrine taught to Covenant at the leprosarium, is a rejection of the potential or essential nature of reality in its refusal to treat *what might be* as *what is*. Realism thus is the living person's denial of the fact of death until its final advent, not as a force which is present in every moment. It is the treatment of a weapon as a mere object, not as an incarnation of death and misery, or a symbol of resilience in the face of death and misery and the means of prevailing over it. Realism is the rejection, while in despair, of the reality of happiness, which is also the rejection of the possibility of happiness, for a person who denies the existence of happiness cannot seek it and make it real. Of course, this realism is also inherently hypocritical, since reality is incomprehensible, merely a chaos of sensations (if even that, since chaos itself is an essential concept), without some level of fantastic affirmation of essences. And Covenant's journey of discovery is a progression from the hypocrisy of contradiction to the affirmation of the paradox, the affirmation that even in the pit of deepest despair there is a glimmer of earthly paradise, in the same sense that to affirm one thing is necessarily to affirm its polar opposite.

The power of the fantastic paradox lies at the core of the message of *The Chronicles*:

> he who wields the white wild magic gold
>
> is a paradox –
>
> for he is everything and nothing,

[40] That is, fantasy set, at least partially, in the real world.
[41] That is, fantasy set in a wholly separate world.

hero and fool,

potent, helpless –

and with the one word of truth or treachery

he will save or damn the Earth

because he is mad and sane,

cold and passionate,

lost and found. (212)

As we saw in the previous chapter, paradox is also an essential attribute of narrative themes – plots typically feature inversions, characters are defined through contrast, etc. *The Chronicles* manages to take the essence of narrative and transform it into a fundamental philosophical tenet, an answer to the ordeal at the heart of the human condition. Fantasy thus is not merely a stylistic choice but the essential meaning and message of the tale.

This affirmation of the relevant paradox is the essential difference between absurdism and true fantasy. The traditional definitions of fantasy we observed earlier are rather definitions of absurdism or magic-realism, where the narrative is that of the contention between real and unreal, the escape from real to the unreal. Fantasy is a literature of desire, because in fantasy, where affirmation reconciles opposites, desire is fulfilled as real becomes unreal, and unreal becomes real. Here there can be no escape because the boundary which defines the escape has been dissolved – prison and freedom are one and the same. Fantasy is thus the rejection of boundaries and contraries and the affirmation of continuities. Through this we discover that fantasy is not a special mode of thought, but rather one of the most fundamental. It is the very process of meaning-making. When one sees a knife lying on a table, there is nothing in the experience of it to suggest that it is a knife, a cutting instrument. It is only through the power of imagination, of the affirmation of what-is-not that we can realize its meaning – the imaginative act of construing on the basis of its form and constructing an analogy with previous experiences of instruments cutting. For all we know it is not actually a knife – that still awaits confirmation and may well still prove to be false. But that conceptual leap of faith, whereby one spans the boundary between what is and what may be, is essential for

the very confirmation of the possibility. This perhaps explains fantasy's dominance in the narrative of primitive cultures. In mythology, which was early man's science, religion, ethics and common sense are all rolled into one (c.f. Frazer 1990 [1890]), fantasy predominates.

Absurdism, in contrast, by affirming the boundaries, affirms the non-realization of potentials, and thus denies creativity itself, and its contingent meaning-making ability. As stated before, this view is inconsistent, since the world is chaotic and unordered without some level of fantastic affirmation. This same inconsistency is demonstrated by Covenant, the narrative representative of the artist of the absurd, when thrust into a bind. When forced to confront the repercussions of his ethos, such as his callous rape of a young girl, or his tricking his daughter to die in his stead, or his thoughtless binding of the Ranyhyn and the Ramen to an oath which leads them to their own genocide, he cannot but acknowledge a transcendent order to the universe which bestows meaning on his actions. Indeed, his very actions affirmed that transcendent order all along, only he didn't want to acknowledge it.

8.3 Existentialism

The Chronicles was inspired by the existentialist disillusionment which Donaldson sees as dominant in modern literature, and it is largely here whence derives its austere countenance (Donaldson 1986, Laskar 2004). *The Chronicles* confronts directly both problems of essentialist and existential futility. Existentialism, in its turn, arose as a response to the problem of essentialist determinism. If we exist in a deterministic universe, where all outcomes are predetermined by the essential properties of existents, where we are reduced to the role of mere cogs in a machine, then what is the value in human consciousness and free will (Barnes 1961:48-55)? Existentialism in response proposed that, existence precedes essence, and hence nothing is predetermined. But what existentialists realised was that in the absence of determination, choice is ultimately arbitrary, and hence consciousness is equally meaningless. Thus, Sartre ultimately concludes, *mankind is a futile passion*. Either we live in a deterministic universe absent of free will, or we live in a non-deterministic universe where choice is meaningless. Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Together existentialism and essentialism constitute the fundamental paradox of life, the paradox of freedom and determinism, of the secure complacency of the known past and the terrifying disorientation of the unknown future, unbelief and belief, knowledge of what is and what may be, the void of the self and the alienation of the other, the inundation of the external world and the emptiness of the inner world. The idea that existence is essentially paradoxical is central to the story of *The Chronicles*:

> I trace it to Blake and Camus – strange bedfellows, about both of whom at least half my knowledge is second-hand. Blake in his numinous world-view – like Camus in his pragmatic one – insisted on the affirmation of contradictions. For Blake, neither God nor the devil was evil: Evil lay in separating God from the devil (Heaven from Hell, soul from body, stasis from energy, black from white) and trying to choose one over the other. All choices are evil unless the contradiction is made whole, unless both sides of the paradox are affirmed. For Camus, man is in the absurd position of being a questioning animal in an unanswering universe (no, worse than that – a universe which contains no answers, which is utterly void of purpose or meaning); and Camus' response is to affirm both the blankness of the universe and the importance of the questions – to affirm the absurd, the paradox, because it is the vital stuff of life. "Sisyphus is happy". (Wilgus 1979)

It is this dilemma which *The Chronicles* seeks to resolve, but it presents no easy solution. Constantly tempted with various forms of the simple response of complacent denial of existential authenticity, Covenant repeatedly responds 'that's too easy' (35), to the point that it almost becomes his personal mantra. In fact, one can say *The Chronicles* provides no solution to the existential impasse at all. Instead, it frames a response in terms of existentialism itself, inverting it against itself.

Donaldson stated in an interview once that the theme of *the First Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever* was "Conflict with the adversary" (Olson 2001). The adversary of *The Chronicles* is Despite, a catch-all for both essentialist and existentialist rejections of the paradox which binds the two inextricably. It is in the paradoxical coexistence of both that Covenant finds resolution, and it is in the conflict of paradox that an escape from the existentialist impasse is found. In a way similar to Hegelian dialectics, from the paradox new possibilities are born allowing

one to grow to meet new challenges and surpass prior limitations. Covenant begins as the archetypal existentialist hero but finds peace in the reconciliation with determinism. But as said before, *The Chronicles* presents no simple solution. Rather, the true breadth of the novel comprises the exploration of this paradox through dialectic, the growth beyond the stalemate of essentialism and existentialism.

In this way, the existentialist themes and the fantastic mode mirror one another. Existential and fantastic affirmation occur in the final pages of the first two chapters. Covenant is driven to confront the townsfolk's black charity by paying his phone-bill in person. But Covenant is doomed to be foiled. Arriving in town, he finds his telephone bill paid upfront for at least a year. He turns to his lawyer, but is here similarly doomed from the outset. Lawyers and ministers, religion and justice, represent the necessary evil which demands his being an outcast. They are servants of the greater good which leaves no room for individual mercy and empathy. Instead, Covenant's salvation comes from an unlooked-for source. Along the way, Covenant encounters a beggar, a broken social cast-off like himself. And like him, he also stands defiant against the courthouse's 'belittling eyes', against his socially prescribed damnation. Also, like an earlier Covenant, some kind of secret power surrounds the beggar. The beggar also seems out of place in the present, a mythical intruder walking in broad daylight.

As we soon learn, the beggar is identified as the Creator, the Despiser's nemesis. Covenant, too, is a creator figure, as the imagery of his creative past suggests. The Creator figures of *The Chronicles*, however, are not omnipotent immaculate beings, but rather tormented, flawed creatures. Later, in Covenant's journeys in the Land, he hears the story of the Land's Creation:

> "'Of course the Creator lives,' she repeated. 'How else? Opposites require each other. Otherwise the difference is lost, and only chaos remains. No, there can be no Despite without Creation. Better to ask how the Creator can have forgotten that when he made the Earth. For if he did not forget, then Creation and Despite existed together in one being, and he did not know it.
>
> 'This the elder legends tell us; into the infinity before Time was made came the Creator like a worker in a workshop. And since it is the nature of creating to desire perfection, the Creator devoted all himself to the task. First he built

> the arch of Time, so that his creation would have a place in which to be – and for the keystone of that arch he forged the wild magic, so that Time would be able to resist chaos and endure. Then within the arch he formed the Earth. For ages he laboured, formed and uniformed, trialled and tested and rejected and tested again, so that when he was done his creation would have no cause to reproach him. And when the Earth was fair to his eye, he gave birth to the inhabitants of the Earth, beings to act out in their lives his reach for perfection – and he did not neglect to give them the means to strive for perfection themselves. When he was done, he was proud as only those who create can be.
>
> Alas, he did not understand Despite, or had forgotten it. He understood his task thinking that perfect labour was all that he required to create perfection. But when he was done, and his pride had tasted its first satisfaction, he looked closely at the Earth, thinking to gratify himself with the sight – and he was dismayed. For behold! Buried deep in the Earth through no will or forming of his were banes of destruction, powers virile enough to rip his masterwork to dust.
>
> Then he understood or remembered. Perhaps he found Despite itself beside him, misguiding his hand. Or perhaps he saw the harm in himself. It does not matter. (238-239)

The Creator's tale reflects Covenant's own and resembles the existentialist view of the human condition. The Creator represents pre-existential innocence, the belief that perfection is all that is necessary, and the Creator's workshop outside of Time represents a world without the manifestation of Despite. However, once existential freedom is grasped, and creation is begun, so too does the torment of responsibility for that creation begin. Creation requires imagination, the naivety to place more faith in what might be than what is, and this pride and ignorance grants an opportunity to Despite. The fulfilment of creation sees its independence from its creator, just as Covenant is distanced from his family and his own creative liberty. The necessary distancing of the Creator is similarly visible in Joan and Roger's (Covenant's wife and son) distancing themselves from Covenant.

The stage of innocence and creative ignorance reflects the existentialist concept of *bad faith*, the belief in an ordered reality where our actions have predictable consequence and clear value, and where we maintain a willed ignorance of the responsibility of our actions by acknowledgement of the supposed determinism of existence (Barnes 1959:48-55). But then comes a moment of revelation, the Creator's discovery of Despite, or Covenant's diagnosis of leprosy, where the creation, the object, asserts its independence from the subject. Camus termed this moment of insight *the Absurd*, the moment of the revelation of freedom and indeterminacy (Camus 1980 [1942]). Accompanying the Absurd is the experience of Nausea (Hinchliffe 1969:26-30). This comes from the discovery of the formlessness of things and thus the alienation of mankind in this indeterminate universe. It also originates in the awareness of the oppressive nature of determinacy, the feeling of the material world's oppression of the freedom of human existence. This is reflected in VSE's view of reality as a threat, something which restricts the most fundamental freedom, the ability to respond to threats and to survive. It also affects us through the awareness of universal responsibility, the awareness not only that by being free and self-determined beings, we are not only responsible for ourselves and our actions, but also for our world through the effects of our actions (Breisach 1962:99-102).

Despite is not directly related to either existentialist authenticity or inauthenticity. Rather, it is related to the existentialist impasse, the acceptance of existentialist alienation, anguish and nausea, the acceptance that *mankind is a futile passion* (Donaldson 1986:10). Despite is the attempt to be either wholly inauthentic (that is, irresponsible, at one with reality and society, and believing that one's actions are sufficient), or wholly authentic (implying universal responsibility, alienation and futility). As the opponent of Despite, the Creator unites these oppositions. The beggar carries a begging bowl in one hand, and a staff surmounted with a sign which reads 'beware' (20). Creation is a paradox, a double-edged weapon. The begging bowl symbolizes the generative potential of creation, its ability to render through humble faith something from nothing, while the sign represents its opposite, the fear and despair which takes hope and dreams and leaves nothing. He is the opposite of the hermit who Covenant meets in the leprosarium, who represents the absence of creation and Covenant's ultimate fate. The hermit is a self-willed outcast, a cripple without feet which symbolically ground one in something greater than oneself, a

creator-figure without hands, who has lost his ability to create and now can only destroy. The hermit is associated with the other flawed symbols of creative power, ministers and lawyers, religion without faith, law without compassion. He has lost faith, and where he once had the power to enlighten others, his decrees now only breed despair. He gives advice which pretends to give while in truth only takes away, reducing and diminishing. This also resembles Covenant at the start of the story, who suffers from the contradiction rather than managing to resolve or affirm the paradox.

The beggar hands Covenant a piece of crumpled paper. 'The old printing said:

> A real man – real in all the ways that we recognize as real – finds himself suddenly abstracted from the world and deposited in a physical situation which could not possibly exist: sounds have aroma, smells have colour and depth, sights have texture, touches have pitch and timbre. There he is informed by a disembodied voice that he has been brought to that place as a champion for his world. He must fight to the death in single combat against a champion from another world. If he is defeated, he will die, and his world – the real world – will be destroyed because it lacks the inner strength to survive.
>
> The man refuses to believe that what he is told is true. He asserts that he is either dreaming or hallucinating, and declines to be put in the false position of fighting to the death where no 'real' danger exists. He is implacable in his determination to disbelieve his apparent situation, and does not defend himself when he is attacked by the champion of the other world.
>
> *Question*: is the man's behaviour courageous or cowardly? This is the fundamental question of ethics. (32-33)

That the crumpled paper concludes by raising the subject of ethics is significant: 'In [existentialist philosophy] there is no sharp or clear distinction between ethics and the rest of philosophy. [Existentialists] sought, all of them, to get us to see the world in a new light, and if they succeeded, this would no doubt affect, to some extent, the way we behaved, and the way we thought about our own behaviour and that of others, as much as it would affect how we thought about other things' (Warnock 1967:2).

The beggar note's confronts Covenant with the paradox (and equally importantly with the concept of fantastic affirmation). The anecdote is incomprehensible and presents the irreconcilable paradox of existence. One must accept the negative in order to affirm the positive, but to affirm the negative is to deny its opposite. Can one affirm the sanctity of life, that it is worth preserving, even worth killing for, without affirming the act of killing, which in itself denies the sanctity of life? Can one affirm divine law without acknowledging its worldly powerlessness against being broken? Can one reject futility and affirm self-worth without acknowledging the potential futility which engenders the value of self-worth?

But Covenant has denied the value of such questions, and appropriately scoffs at the riddle. Instead, the beggar is forced to confront him. Covenant responds to this confrontation by giving him his ring: 'It was an icon of himself. It reminded him of where he had been and where he was…of his vestigial humanity… "Look, is there anything I can do for you? Food? A place to stay? You can have what I've got."' (34-35). In this act Covenant both affirms his own value and the value of his environment, his freedom *and* the determinacy of his environment through the responsibility it allocates to him, his integrity with and his independence from his world. This conclusion to his epic quest to confront the townsfolk's 'mounting bereavement which was practiced against him' (16) is perhaps anti-climactic, but deeply meaningful nonetheless. Like the absurdist images, the shaving ritual, the epic quest to pay a phone-bill, etc. it affirms both the insignificant details of life and their epic significance; here the opposites are not conflicting but are rather resolved into a unified paradox.

8.4 Thematic exposition in *The Chronicles*

The beggar's note presents us with the thematics of the story in precis: the real vs. the apparent, faith vs. unbelief, moral right vs. wrong. Let us see how these are expanded in the first two chapters:

> She came out of the store just in time to see her young son playing on the sidewalk directly in the path of the grey, gaunt man who **strode** down the centre of the walk like a mechanical derelict. For an instant, her heart quailed.

> Then she jumped forward, gripped her son by the arm, snatched him out of harm's way.
>
> The man **went by** without turning his head. As his back **moved** away from her, she hissed at it, 'Go away! Get out of here! You ought to be ashamed!'
>
> Thomas Covenant's stride **went on**, as unfaltering as clockwork that had been wound to the hilt for just this purpose. But to himself he **responded**, *Ashamed? Ashamed?* His face **contorted** in a wild grimace. *Beware! Outcast unclean!*
>
> But he **saw** that the people he passed, the people who knew him, whose names and houses and handclasps **were known** to him – he **saw** that they stepped aside, gave him plenty of room. Some of them **looked** as if they were holding their breath. His inner shouting collapsed. These people did not need the ancient ritual of warning. He **concentrated on** restraining the spasmodic snarl which **lurched** across his face, and let the right machinery of his will **carry** him forward step by step. (boldface added) (15)

In these first paragraphs, there are a number of striking parallels across a variety of linguistic dimensions or layers of the text. The base vantage point (Langacker 2008:75-7) of the narrative is an omniscient third person narrator, but more particularly, we see a limited point of view adopted through an additional secondary vantage point. It is the woman referred to in the first word of the first paragraph of the first page, through whose eyes we view the first two paragraphs. When *the man* is described as (*going) by*, when he is portrayed from behind, and when *his back* is described as *moving away*, it is in relation to her point of view. Furthermore, in relation to the vantage point, he is depicted peripherally. In terms of the cognitive grammar concept of scope, the mother is in the foreground, with the child second in prominence, and it is only in relation to the child that the man is described – *directly in the path of the grey, gaunt man* (Langacker 2008: 57-85). The man's epistemic position is derived in relation to the child's, and the man is later vaguely referred to as *harm*, again semantically defined in his relation to the child.

Semantically, especially in terms of emotive language, we can distinguish two groups of entities. Firstly, there is the image of a mother sheltering her son in a protective embrace. Fretful mothers, grocery shopping, children playing on the

sidewalk constitute high-value social icons and something familiar and intimate to most people. On the hand, there is the man who bears down on these icons hazardously, even intentionally – *directly in (his) path*. The sidewalk frames the scene, and construes a spatial image schema in which the man is described as moving through *the centre*. The author includes this significant word because in semantic terms, the centre is the position where an entity occupies a schematic space to its fullest extent, in the same way as in the metaphors X IS AT THE CENTRE/THE HEART OF Y, which attributes to x the greatest authenticity in the space. The mother and child rightly occupy the centre of this space as central social icons, with Covenant's intrusion representing a symbolic attack on basic social values, by a hostile outsider or interloper (a *derelict*). This also corresponds with pedestrian etiquette, where *making way, stepping aside*, etc. is considerate behaviour, and in terms of which (*striding) down the centre of the walk* implies an obnoxious, reckless attitude. The man is described as *grey, gaunt, mechanical, harm*, which contrasts with essentially human qualities which characterize the mother: emotion, volition, vitality, care. Spatial imagery and its associated values are emphasized by the repeated imperative, *Go away! Get out of here*! The imperative voice here reinforces and reemphasizes the interpersonal metafunctional contrast between the roles of the man and the woman (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 [1985]: 138-53), and maps these onto the semantic spatial image schema, attributing authority to the mother and son of the interior space, and subordination to the outcast in outer space.

The peripherality of the man in this semantic space, epistemically, conceptually and emotionally, is immediately striking once we come to realize that this man is Covenant, the namesake of the title, the main protagonist of the trilogy and its central semantic grounding. In language and cognition, there is an inherent epistemological magnetism towards the human, as expressed by the embodiment principle of cognitive linguistics. When we objectivize a scene it is prototypical for epistemic grounding to relate to a person rather than a non-human object (Halliday 1999:189-196). This is the fundamental basis of the embodiment thesis. In this passage however, mechanical metaphors are repeatedly used to describe Covenant: *mechanical derelict*, *clockwork…wound to the hilt, machinery of his will*, dehumanising, objectifying, marginalising and othering him. The mechanical metaphor used to describe Covenant is loaded with symbolic connotation, and it

draws our attention to certain grammatical features as well. Covenant is only depicted as materially active through the eyes of the woman.

After the first two paragraphs, however, the point of view shifts to Covenant, and once this occurs, suddenly all verbs are mental processes: *responded, were known, saw, looked, concentrated on.* At one point he responds, but as the italics point out, this discourse is all internal, as if it cannot breach the boundary between himself and his world. In contrast, when he does act materially, it is not him, but a metonymic extension of him, such as his body, which is the subject of material clauses: *his back moved, Covenant's stride went on, His face contorted, the spasmodic snarl…lurched*. These material clauses also employ a rich lexis which emphasizes the contrast between his lively and expressive body and Covenant himself, the ghost within the machine, who except for thoughts, is inert and volitionless, and which also accentuates the independence of his body from his will through the connotation of involuntary action.

In the fourth paragraph, the spatial image schema developed in the first two paragraphs broadens out into a street scene, and the relation between Covenant and the woman and child is extended to include the relationship between individual and society as a whole. Society in general expresses the same loathing and fear toward him as the woman and child do. Spatial differences are again accentuated – *he saw that they stepped aside, gave him plenty of room*. Although epistemic scope is inverted, centred on Covenant now, his isolation from physical reality, including his own body remains the same: *he saw…the people…whose names and houses and handclasps were known to him*. People are only known metonymically, through their *houses and handclasps*, their superficial attributes.

Several salient features rise to the foreground through the course of the first paragraphs of the novel: epistemic distance, social distance and antagonism, lack of bodily control, uncleanliness. These constitute together a boundary between Covenant and his world, his body, his society, which is encapsulated by his *ancient ritual of warning*, *Beware! Outcast unclean*' Threat. Outsider. Tainted. Still, the essential nature of Covenant's affliction remains unknown at that point in the narrative. For the moment, Donaldson only supplies us with hints which serve more to incite dread than relieve with answers.

8.5 The symbolism of VSE

In the fifth paragraph, Covenant is shown as looking himself over for any kind of damage. The last two fingers of his right hand have been amputated.

> He could hear the doctors saying, 'VSE, Mr Covenant. Visual Surveillance of Extremities. Your health depends upon it. Those dead nerves will never grow back – you'll never know when you've hurt yourself unless you get in the habit of checking. Do it all the time – think about it all the time. The next time you might not be so lucky.'
>
> VSE. Those initials comprised his entire life. (15)

Here a central narrative symbol is introduced. Covenant, it is revealed, is sick. It is this blended space which now enables us to compress the different salient features of Covenant into an integrated structure. It supplies us with a source of Covenant's uncleanliness and a reason for his social ostracism. Furthermore, his sickness is of the nervous system, which also explains the estrangement of his body, as well as his epistemic alienation, due to damage to his senses, specifically his ability to feel.

VSE is the doctors' prescribed remedy for Covenant's illness. Importantly, as we will soon see, it isn't a remedy, but a kind of ritual or incantation. Doctors tell him that his life depends on it, on replacing the natural defences of his nervous system with the learnt defence of VSE. *Do it all the time – think about it all the time*. Here *do* and *think* are combined through collocation. It is stressed that VSE must be both a behaviour and a state of mind, an absolute self-conditioning. It is to occur *all the time*. *All* here constitutes a relative quantifier, one which profiles the nominal as a mass rather than a count noun (Langacker 1991:13-186), and profiles the maximum extent. Time is thus construed as a single, homogeneous, amorphous whole (compare to *every moment*, which profiles time as a series of discernible units). The statement then continues, *The next time you might not be so lucky*. Here *next* profiles future time (again profiled as a mass noun), and attributes to it potential danger. Thus, VSE comes to be mapped onto his entire existence, both his external interactions with reality and the inner world of his thoughts, and the entirety of his present and the totality of his future. The future becomes a constant threat, a sword of Damocles floating above him. In this way, through the subtle semantics of grammar, Covenant's supposed saviour has become his master. The logic is

revealed to be twisted: *VSE*. *Those initials comprised his entire life*. VSE preserves his life, but in doing so consumes it entirely. In short, he must perform VSE in order to perform VSE. VSE has changed his existence into a hellish torment, and himself into a Sisyphus, a man damned to an eternal, futile labour.

In *The Chronicles*, certain unifying images, symbols and concepts, serve as a nexus for various meanings and spheres of meaning. Covenant's disease constitutes one of these, as we have seen, as does VSE. These constitute blended spaces, which coordinate the different semantic domains of the text into a unified structure. Like Covenant's affliction, VSE is a meeting point of various semantic domains. It determines how Covenant and his society relate, the relationship between his mind and its dislocated body, and between his body and his alienated reality.

Firstly, as a grammatical construction, *visual surveillance of extremities*, demonstrates some key attributes: *Surveillance* is in origin a nominalized process (verb) (Langacker 1991:22-31) (from French *surveiller*), and is still construed as a kind of action, as most dictionaries will corroborate. Nominalisation transforms an abstract process into a concrete object by unifying a series of distinct actions into an integrated mass noun by bounding them in quality space (Langacker 1987:203-207). The nominalised verb profiles a series of moments as defined by the quality *surveillance* rather than a defined temporal quantity – in other words, it is not clear when this *surveillance* started or when it will end, only that it is presently on-going – this emphasises the internal homogeneity, repetitiveness and indeterminate boundaries of the action. Because it is bounded in quality space, in terms of the similarity of properties, rather than in *physical* time or space, it has no definite boundaries – it is again something which continues indefinitely. At the same time, profiling the action in terms of quality space foregrounds the active properties of the process - it is something which cannot just be, but must be actively, continually and consciously performed. It is this sense of incessant labour imposed by the doctor's nostrums, that once again gives it its Sisyphean character. This grammatical abuse by the doctors is emphasised by this bounding in quality space, which foregrounds its empty repetitiveness in contrast to meaningful pursuits (such as living truly, hoping, having faith), rival concerns which it prohibits as complacent diversions and inevitably suicidal.

Visual surveillance and *extremity* are both detailed semantic domains. *Extremities*, in the sense employed here, denotes both body and environment. It is as significant in what it encompasses as in what it excludes. It serves as a catchall for all of physical reality, the physical world which threatens the body with injury, and the physical body itself which is treacherously insensitive to life-threatening injury. What it excludes (or rather defines as landmark) is the immaterial self, the soul or life force whose survival is endangered by material reality. This Cartesian duality serves as a simplistic world model which categorizes the innumerable objects in Covenant's life into a coherent order essential to his survival, in terms of the danger they pose to him. It also serves to explain his character and action, and to anticipate these, an important element of the reading experience.

The value of blending is two-fold: firstly, it organizes and integrates disparate domains of experience, and secondly, it provides a semantic springboard for new insights, emergent structure in Blending Theory terms or new manifest meanings in relevance theory nomenclature. Similarly, in the blend accomplished by the schema of VSE, new emergent structures or manifest meanings arise. We can for instance select a specific sub-component from the input space domains, and construe it in terms of this blended space. For instance, one such sub-component of Covenant's social environment is his former wife Joan. Significantly, Covenant's society is also encompassed within the indefinite lump of menace termed *extremity*, and like his community, she also comes to revile Covenant for his affliction. Similarly, she is also distanced from him, in this case by the rift of their divorce. However, through the VSE blend, she is also epistemically distanced, and when he sees his ex-wife in his mind, he remarks on the *opaque nightgown* (17) she is wearing and her incomprehensibility, her mysterious capability and her daunting sufficiency (as opposed to his constant insufficiency in the face of his trials). As such, all she means to him also becomes an extremity, something which is obscure and beyond his control and therefore a danger to him.

Extremity is construed through an image-schema composed of a scale in which extremity designates the ultimate outer edge of the scale. This scalar image-schema also includes an implicit base, in relation to which the farthest point possible is determined, and between this base and profile occurs the intervening space which constitutes the boundary between these two elements. The implication of this figure

is emphatic dislocation and distance, in the same way that the fairytale formula *a faraway land* emphasizes a boundary of extreme remoteness between an audience and the story world. This scalar model explains many other meanings of extremity, such as the ethical meaning of danger or dilemma, since what is most distant is also, in terms of embodied experience, also the most uncontrollable. Similarly, extremity, in the sensory domain, is also the most obscure. Things which are far away are also less perceptible. In this way, VSE figuratively implies the scrutiny of the imperceptible, a somewhat contradictory statement, since what Covenant is being told to observe is that which is most imperceptible. Similarly, what he is told to control through VSE is that which is least controllable. It also plays upon another contradiction, which implies that increase in distance is decrease in importance. This is what we could classify as an instance of a basic-level metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). We see this, for instance, in the connotations of central versus *peripheral*, or *an outside chance*. We notice this in the disdain with which Covenant treats such *extremities*. But what is distant is also obscure, and what is obscure is also threatening. These different connotations are, thus, mapped onto the denotative meaning of extremities, so that body, environment, society, in short all of physical reality, gains the added meaning of being a threat to Covenant, being a problem which he must solve, but also being an object he is isolated from by the barrier of distance, and therefore uncontrollable and unknowable.

The scalar image-schema which defines *extremity* is a highly versatile figure, and thus is very fluid in terms of cross-mapping and blending. One domain which this image-schema easily maps onto is time. Time itself is often construed as a linear scale, in which future or past events are conceived of in terms of spatial distance, as we see, for instance, in expressions like *distant future*, *in the near future*, and the more complex image-schema in terms of which time is construed as a path on which a person is travelling, as seen for instance in expressions like *hindsight* or *foresight* (as discussed at length previously in Section 5.6). Each of the various domains incorporated into these metaphoric schemata are rich in meaning content, which in turn can be incorporated into these complex metaphoric mappings. The future is, for instance, the domain of hope, and the past the domain of certainty. In terms of the metaphoric schema of VSE, just as future and past are extremities in relation to the present, so too are hope and certainty. Thus, the connotations of *extremities* comes

to undermine hope and certainty, so that they are replaced with obscurity, uncontrollability and danger. Hope and certainty are elusive, and therefore are unreliable, which also makes them treacherous. But anticipation and certainty are crucial for our epistemic grounding, and thus Covenant's rejection of these as false hope and false certainty becomes a source of existential alienation.

Finally, the distance between Covenant and his reality also, by consequence, condemns him to unreality. By dislocating him from all physical reality, he is reduced to the role of mere spectator, a literal ghost in the machine. This lack of material intercourse with reality, in addition connotes to Covenant a degree of immateriality, disembodiment, which relates to important governing symbols, such as undeath and mechanism.

In this way, VSE serves as a compression of the different domains of Covenant and his world. Both grammatically and semantically, literally and figuratively, VSE blends these different domains into a coherent unity. It allows us to perceive the unity underlying Covenant's social and epistemic alienation, as well as the psychology and ideology demanded by the disease. The semantic role of VSE as exemplification resembles the role of VSE in Covenant's life. Just as VSE serves as a dominant interpretive device for the reader, so too is it the means by which Covenant experiences and interprets his world, creating a subtle identity, even sympathy, between readers and the rather repellent main character. And in the same way that this becomes a kind of religion for Covenant, we as readers too are made to adopt these principles to some degree.

At the same time, the VSE blend paradoxically also emphasises the irreconcilable contradictions between its inputs. In this, it highlights the difference between conventional or integrative blends and contrastive blends (Section 3.7.1). Conventional blends seek to maximize integration between inputs, even to the extent of concealing disparities. But contrastive blends by comparison emphasise the differences, the absence of integration. Blending is a very useful cognitive ability. It reduces the overwhelming cognitive load of experience by simplifying diversity through generalisation and consolidation. But in this there is a danger of oversimplifying important differences, as *The Chronicles* demonstrates. The contrastive blend, by comparison, simplifies while at the same emphasising key differences.

This distinction between integrative and contrastive blends is highly relevant to narrative, due to the importance of contrast in this register. We observed this in the study of folktale narrative as well as in many of the individual short narratives analysed, such as the use of narrative double perspective in *The Pardoner's Tale*, or the striking existential oppositions of Lovecraft's *What the Moon Brings*.

For Donaldson, leprosy and VSE provided the central exemplification around which the entire story came together. Donaldson was intimately familiar with leprosy, both in its physiological and its psychological effects through his parents, who worked at a leprosarium in India. While the themes of *The Chronicles*, the conflict between existentialism and metaphysical realism, and the answer to this philosophical impasse found in fantastic affirmation, had been brewing in his mind a long time, it is only when he realised that the only way to tell his story was to make his protagonist a leper that his 'brain took fire' (Ward 2001:351). VSE, then, serves as a narrative exemplification of the concept of philosophical realism and its idolisation of the physical and disdain for metaphysics. But VSE also reveals the invisible similarities between it and its diametric opposite, existentialism, specifically the similarities between essentialist determinism and existential alienation in their shared impasse in the untraversable boundary between consciousness and material existence.

Sickness then becomes a metaphor for philosophical malaise. Like leprosy, these problems cripple us, they destroy our ability to engage with our world and thus become mere empty nostrums, rituals deprived of the faith which grants them meaning. VSE demonstrates how realism, like all philosophies which seek to divorce faith from the pursuit of meaning and truth, dissolves into meaninglessness. Covenant's world is reduced to one word, *extremity*; all external reality, all human society, even his own body is reduced to an indefinite menace. Life then is reduced to a disembodied hell of unending effectless toil. No meaningful action can be taken, nothing certain can be known, and because the distance is uncrossable, there can be no hope of succour.

8.6 Other symbols

As previously argued, archetypes and exemplifications are the foundation of narrative. One of these has been discussed, namely VSE, which is largely an

invention of Donaldson, but is also rooted in the old and well-known schema of leprosy, as well as many basic concepts in philosophy such as the mind-body debate and the problem of epistemic uncertainty. But *The Chronicles* also employs several other more well-established archetypes.

THE BODY IS A MACHINE is one such metaphor, which we have already seen is used to provide a coherent framework for the target domain of Covenant's semi-insensate body. This metaphor exploits our instinctive affinity for embodied thought, and the consequent disorientation and alienation of disembodiment, to convey to the reader the effects of Covenant's nervous decay.

This metaphor elucidates the relationship between Covenant's disembodied soul and his body. In terms of control, it resembles the mechanistic relationship between machine-operator and machine, in which the operator exerts some control, but not as if it were an extension of his own self. Like a machine, his body is something which he manipulates, but in its numbness it is a disembodied, mechanical extension, not fully part of him anymore. Operator and machine are also ontologically separate, and this sense of separation is also mapped onto Covenant to render him and his body as distinctly separate bounded entities.

It also explains his dislocation from life: just as a machine is limited in its operations, so too does Covenant's ability to adapt to changing circumstances diminish as he becomes shackled to the rigid thinking of VSE. When one interacts with reality through a machine, say, a mechanical arm, or communicates via telephone versus in-person, our interaction with reality, and thus our presence in that reality, is reduced. In the same way, Covenant's numbness makes him somewhat insubstantial in relation to reality. These are only some of the entailments produced in the domains of numbness, volition, animacy and the supernatural.

Another important component of the domain MACHINE is INSTRUMENT, and it is this instrumentalism (that is, automatism) that also characterises Covenant's identity. As prescribed by the VSE regimen, Covenant tries to mechanise and dehumanise himself, to sever himself from betraying emotions, false hopes and immaterial beliefs. By rejecting these very human qualities, Covenant himself becomes an automaton of his medical conditioning, simply reacting to immediate sensory stimuli rather than exerting self-determination.

Related to this is the image of vertigo. Vertigo is an unfortunate consequence of the nerve damage caused by his medical condition, negatively affecting his sense of balance. Yet the vertigo that afflicts Covenant is more than physiological. Because any kind of cut or abrasion can prove deadly to him, any stumble or misstep is as deadly as a fall from a precipice, and because of his numbness, his purchase is always precarious – he is permanently dangling from the lip of a sheer drop, always vertiginous.

But Covenant's instability is not just limited to his physical grounding but also to his mental grounding. Certainty, hope, feelings, everything that connects him with the world outside is unstable and teetering on the edge of a chasm:

> he stood on the precipice of his future and looked down at jagged, eager dangers - rough damnations multiplied below him. He recognized the various possible deaths of lepers. But the panorama steadied him. It was like a touchstone of familiarity in a fantastic situation; it put him back on known ground. He found that he could turn away from his fear (35).

Consequently, vertigo becomes a metaphoric domain which he projects onto his entire existence. However, this too accentuates the myriad paradoxes of his condition. VSE demands he keeps a safe distance from the world around him, yet that safe distance arouses the vertigo which threatens to destroy him. And just as we view success as heights and failures as depths, in keeping with the generic metaphor GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN, success arouses his vertigo, while failure relieves him. This is perhaps most demonstrable in the foreboding and distress with which Covenant responds to the acceptance and health which the Land freely offers him. This relates directly to the ideology of VSE, which disdains hope, joy and security in favour of 'realism'.

Another important archetype is UNDEATH. This serves to blend the domains of Covenant's social anathematization, his disease and the dissociation from reality it causes as well as his sense of his life being deprived of meaning and hence him not being truly alive. Covenant is treated as 'some kind of minor horror or ghoul', and he finds himself facing 'mounting bereavement' (16), through his gradual ostracism by the townsfolk, which is a form of living burial. This finally begins to make sense when we are told that Covenant is a leper. Leprosy has historically borne strong

associations with death. Leprosy was associated with the Wandering Jew, condemned to undeath. In medieval Christian tradition, lepers received the requiem in place of mass (Browne 1975). Their image of living decomposition makes them the archetype of the living dead, and these strong associations explain the almost instinctive revulsion Covenant evokes in his fellow man.

This symbol expresses the sense of doom that haunts Covenant throughout the story. Leprosy makes him acutely aware of his mortality – both physically in terms of his disease literally stealing parts of him bit by bit, and in the abstract sense of him losing pieces of his existence, his purpose in life, his connection to the rest of humanity, his sense of control over his own life, etc. Nor can it simply be reduced to a state of mind, since, in part, his undead status is the product of society's treatment of him. The world responds to him with revulsion and shunning rather than with the usual compassion for the sick. Similarly, his numbness to reality in part, if not entirely, is rooted in the fact of his nervous decay. Even for us, as readers, the grim reality of his illness is so stark, it is hard to see Covenant as a human being rather than as a leper.

All of these symbols, VSE, MECHANISM, VERTIGO and UNDEATH radiate from the central symbol of LEPROSY. Leprosy produces the nerve death which results in the disembodiment which reduces Covenant to the role of a ghost in the machine. This epistemic alienation manifests as his VSE code and his instrumentalist psychology, it results in his social ostracism and undeath, diminishes his control over his body to that of a machine, and thus causes both his physiological and philosophical vertigo. It is the primary determinant of narrative progression throughout the novel. As Donaldson explains in an interview, it was the realization that Covenant was a leper which provided the organising metaphor which enabled him to transform the ideas which had been fermenting in his mind into a narrative (Elohimfest 2007).

8.7. The narrative abstract of *The Chronicles*

With the necessary context established, it is possible at this point to outline the abstract provided in the opening chapters of *The Chronicles* which serves essentially as an exemplification for the narrative as a whole.

These introductory pages (Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Chronicles*), like many abstracts, serve to present a précis of the story as a whole. Nor is it the only one of its kind. As with many narratives, *The Chronicles* repeats this same narrative structure many times over before the close of the tale, each permutation demonstrating new facets or elaborating existing aspects of its complex, universal theme. Each of the three books repeats the same general structure: a real-world confrontation with society, a near-death experience, a transportation to the Land, a journey lead by a guide, who acts both as spiritual counsellor and protector, culminating in a journey into the underworld and a confrontation with Despite, and finally a return to reality. Each of these is subdivided into several episodes, in each of which some particular aspect of Covenant's predicament is confronted, so that the same over-arching narrative framework repeats in each individual episode. These repetitions serve to highlight the thematic resonances within each individual exemplar, and in this way, to demonstrate to the reader how these all form part of the same story, the same essential message.

We first meet Covenant as a leper on an absurd mythical quest to pay his phone bill. But he hadn't always been that way. As he passes the courthouse, he is reminded of his ex-wife. At one time Covenant had been happy and competent. He had a family and achieved success as a writer. He had health, hope and faith in the constants of his existence. He had been arrogant enough to imagine, which in turn had bestowed on him the ability to create as a writer, and this writing had earned him social esteem. 'Women…had at one time chosen to discuss his novel in their literary clubs' (16).

> Laughing – now there's a real insight. Hellfire.
>
> Did I do a whole life's laughing in that little time?
>
> He felt that he was asking an important question. He had laughed when his novel had been accepted – laughed at the shadows of deep and silent thoughts that had shifted like sea currents in Roger's face, laughed over the finished product of his book, laughed at its presence on the best-seller lists. Thousands of things large and small had filled him with glee. When Joan had asked him what he found so funny, he was only able to reply that every breath charged him with ideas for his next book. His lungs bristled with imagination

> and energy. He chuckled whenever he had more joy than he could contain. (16)

Joan's role in the story is ultimately inconsequential in formalist narratological terms – she is only one among the multitude who shun Covenant after his contraction of leprosy. But in thematic terms her role is essential as an exemplar of Covenant's ostracism – as a means for Donaldson to put a human face to an idea, to instantiate an abstraction in all its definitive detail.

Joan represents everything that Covenant had and lost. She represents the ability to connect with something outside of himself, to his world and his society, to believe in the existence of something outside of himself despite the absence of certainty. And through imagination he is able to create, to transcend his own limitations and become more than he is. Joan is the source of Covenant's creative power: 'the warm spell of her pride and eagerness kept him burning like a bolt of lightning' (18) and hence is also associated with the symbol of gold (19). She also captures an essence which is beyond him: 'Watching her, Covenant had felt daunted by her ability' (19). He is terrified by the horses which she tames. Other contrasts abound. Joan is a woman of few words who expresses herself through her presence. While Covenant's abilities are extravagant but often inadequate, Joan's are humble but ever-sufficient. Joan represents the completion of his spirit, but when he loses it, for the same reason it is something he cannot attain on his own. Tellingly, Joan's maiden name is 'Macht' (19), and he dedicates his novel 'For Joan, who has been my keeper of the possible' (22). Joan comes to represent everything Covenant lacks, and in this way, she represents everything which he loses when he is sundered from society and the world as a whole through leprosy. His marriage to Joan thus represents his integrity with his world, and his divorce from her, his divorce from reality.

Significantly, at the same time as he contracts leprosy, she gives birth to their son. When he secludes himself to start work on his second novel, surrendering himself entirely to his creative urges, he instead finds himself diagnosed with gangrene. In hindsight, he realizes even then that there were moments of impending doom. 'He had heard the warnings, and had ignored them…he was not seawise enough to see the coming storm.' (22) 'After he was born, Joan announced that the boy was to be named Roger, after her father and her father's father' (19), signifying a matrilineal autonomy from patrilineal tradition. Through his son, his wife gains a new human

connection that makes him disposable. Her creative ability achieves its apogee, while his dries up. From the act of faith which is imagination or fantastic affirmation springs creation. The nature of creativity and the hope and meaning which it engenders is essentially communal, dependent on the ability to cross the gulf between the self and the other, to connect with something outside of oneself. When Covenant loses his faith, Joan retains that connection through her son. The world retains its fundamental generativity without us. The world goes on without us. The onus instead is on us to take the leap of faith necessary to reintegrate as part of its generative cycle.

Without fantastic affirmation, we are condemned to a state of living death. While he is recovering from surgery, Joan visits him only to inform him that he has leprosy and she is leaving him. 'Your hands and feet are going to rot away, and your legs and arms will twist, and your face will turn ugly like fungus…I can't stand it…And – oh, Tom, Tom! It's catching…Children are more susceptible than adults. Roger – I can't risk – I've got to protect Roger from that!' (24) Covenant's existential despair threatens the fabric of society and thus excludes him from its wellspring of life.

When we are introduced to Covenant's past, it is the divine creative power captured in his profession as a writer which is emphasized:

> …one long wild discharge of energy that seemed to create the landscape of the earth out of nothingness by the sheer force of its brilliance…rendered into being by that white bolt striking into the heavens from the lightning rod of his writing. (18)

When leprosy first reveals itself, it is though the destruction of this creative ability, though the destruction of his ability to feel, to stand on his own, undaunted. Covenant's fingers 'slipped uncertainly on the keys…he only stamped his feet against the ice that seemed to be growing in them. And when he found the numb purple spot on his right hand near the base of his little finger, he put it out of his mind.' (22-23). Hands metonymically represent the act of writing, as the tools of the literary creator's expression, and writing in turn represents creativity itself, again metonymically, so that when Covenant's hands are mutilated by amputating gangrenous fingers, metonymically this represents the destruction of his creative ability. The Covenant who returns from the leprosarium is one utterly bereft of all

vestiges of creativity. Instead, he imprisons himself in the protective cage of the fixed, unchangeable routine of VSE, a code of absolute determinacy unbending to any possibility of change and thus creativity. This is striking as a stark antithesis to the creativity of his earlier life.

Creativity is defined as the combination of two entities or phenomena, separated by the gulf of their differences, to produce something new. This is the process we have defined as Blending. But Blending is dependent on imagination and the ability to compromise, to accept loss in exchange for the discovery of new possibilities. The story of *The Chronicles* is then essentially the story of narrative itself; Covenant's plight is that of a story seeking its own purpose.

In a state of disbelief, Covenant is taken to a leprosarium to learn to manage his disease.

> …the doctor took another tack. Abruptly, he said, 'Mr Covenant, you don't seem to understand what's at stake here. Come with me. I want to show you something.'
>
> …'I want you to meet another of our patients. He's the only other primary case we have here at present. He used to be a sort of hermit – lived alone away from everyone in the West Virginian mountains. He didn't know what was happening to him until the army tried to get in touch with him – tell him his son was killed in the war. When the officer saw this man, he called in the Public Health Service. They sent the man to us.'
>
> …As he stepped across the threshold, Covenant's nostrils were assaulted by a pungent reek, a smell like that of rotten flesh lying in a latrine. It defied mere carbolic acid and ointments to mask it. It came from a shrunken figure sitting grotesquely on the white bed.
>
> 'Good afternoon: the doctor said. 'This is Thomas Covenant, He has a primary case of Hansen's disease, and doesn't seem to understand the danger he's in.'
>
> Slowly, the patient raised his arms as if to embrace Covenant.
>
> His hands were swollen stumps, fingerless lumps of pink, sick meat marked by cracks and ulcerations from which a yellow exudation oozed through the

medication. They hung on thin, hoped arms like awkward sticks. And even though his legs were covered by hospital pyjamas, they looked like gnarled wood. Half of one foot was gone, and in the place of the other was nothing but an unhealable wound.

Then the patient moved his lips to speak, and Covenant looked up at his face. His dull, cataractal eyes sat in his face as if they were the centre of an eruption. The skin of his cheeks was as white-pink as an albino's; it bulged and poured away from his eyes in waves, runnulets, as if it had been heated to the melting point; and these waves were edged with thick tubercular nodules.

'Kill yourself,' he rasped terribly. 'Better than this.'

Covenant broke away from the doctor. He rushed out into the hall and the contents of his stomach spattered over the clean walls and floor like a stain of outrage.

In that way, he decided to survive. (25-26)

He slowly comes to understand the laws of leprosy:

'In country after country, culture after culture around the world, the leper has been considered the personification of everything people, privately and communally, fear and abhor.

People react this way for several reasons. First, the disease produces an ugliness and a bad smell that are undeniably unpleasant. And second…people fail to believe that something so obvious and ugly is not contagious. The fact that we cannot answer questions about the bacillus reinforces their fear…In the absence of any natural, provable explanation of the illness, people account for it in other ways, all bad – as proof of crime or filth or perversion, evidence of God's judgement, as the horrible sign of some psychological or spiritual or moral corruption or guilt.

…That brings us to the other problem. It sounds simple, but you will find it can be devastating. Most people depend heavily on their sense of touch. In fact, their whole structure of responses to reality is organized around touch. They may doubt their eyes and ears, but when they touch something they know it's

> real. And it is not an accident that we describe the deepest parts of ourselves – our emotions – in terms of the sense of touch. Sad tales *touch* our *feelings*. Bad situations *irritate* or *hurt* us. This is an inevitable result of the fact that we are biological organisms.' (27-28)

Leprosy, like unbelief, denies some of the most basic needs of human beings, the need for human attachment, the need to feel, the need for the certitude of the senses, even for hope and imagination. 'You cannot hope…thinking about all the kinds of life you can't have can drive you to despair and suicide' (27-28). Imagination kills. Instead, Covenant is taught to train himself into rigid, fact-based thinking, to depend solely on 'realistic' knowledge. By this means, Covenant is dissociated from his past and future, and entrenched in the immediate present. His dreams are replaced by endless repetitions of the rules of his existence. Living is replaced by VSE. And the knowledge of doom has replaced the reassurance of hope.

> he stood on the precipice of his future and looked down at jagged, eager dangers - rough damnations multiplied below him. He recognized the various possible deaths of lepers. But the panorama steadied him. It was like a touchstone of familiarity in a fantastic situation; it put him back on known ground. He found that he could turn away from his fear (35).

In accordance with VSE, Covenant 'excoriated himself': he strangles his memories and attempts to 'crush himself to fit the mould of the facts' (31). When he returns home, he destroys his manuscripts, his imagination, and instead rewrites his own life in accordance with VSE.

These first two introductory chapters slowly develop the history behind the character of Thomas Covenant, and structurally they are composed of two main narrative domains, life pre-leprosy and life after being diagnosed with the disease, with the contraction and diagnosis of the disease itself forming the central dividing line. Each of these two domains corresponds with one of the poles of the central oppositions defined by leprosy: sickness, dislocation from the body, dislocation from reality, dislocation from society, and the state of normalcy it is in contrast with: health, the self as a whole, epistemic integrity, social acceptance. It is the schema of leprosy which provides a coherent and uniting framework to these opposing domains.

Having arrived at a general outline of the narrative abstract of *The Chronicles*, let us look at a section of text from later in the narrative and see how it can assist us in deciphering the narrative themes:

> In the first rush of trepidation, he lowered his feet to the stairs with eyes closed. But he could not face the descent without his eyes; the leper's habit of watching himself, and the need to have all senses alert, were too strong. Yet with his eyes open the height made his head reel. So he strove to keep his gaze on the rock in front of him. From the first step, he knew his gravest danger lay in the numbness of his feet. Numb hands made him feel unsure of every grip, and before he had gone fifty feet he was clenching the edges so hard that his shoulders began to cramp. But he could not see – not unless he looked down. He could only tell that his foot was on the stair when his ankle felt the pressure of his weight. In each downward step he lowered himself onto a guess. If he felt an unexpected flex in his arch, he had to catch himself with his arms and get more foot on to the unseen stair. He tried kicking his feet forward so that the jar of contact would tell him when his toes were against the edge of the next stair; but when he misjudged, his shins or knees struck the stone corners, and that sharp pain nearly made his legs fold (51).

Confronted with the need to take a leap of faith, to entrust his fate to his imagination, Covenant is instead overcome by vertigo. It forces his eyes closed, even though he knows trying to descend the stairwell blindly is suicidal. This confronts him directly with the crippling contradictions of his VSE: it instils discipline through constant terror, yet forbids succumbing to fear; certainty is only possible through objective empirical experience, yet those same senses are denounced as treacherous, deceitful. In concert with the metaphor, NEAR IS MANAGEABLE/DISTANT IS UNMANAGEABLE, Covenant concentrates only on what is in front of him. But in doing so, he also deprives himself of the context of why he is doing it, of the hope and meaning of an ultimate goal. Instead, he seeks hope and courage in the limited scope of what is directly in reach. But this comes at the cost of meaning, since his immediate objective only has conceivable purpose in relation to the ultimate goal of reaching the ground.

The clause, *So he strove to keep his gaze on the rock in front of him*. once again references the inherent contradiction of VSE. Covenant's eyes are open, yet he

cannot see anything but the rock in front of his face, so that he is still effectively climbing blind. …*before he had gone fifty feet he was clenching the edges so hard that his shoulders began to cramp*. As in his real life, the constant stress of trying to maintain the contradictions wears him down. VSE actually debilitates him rather than making him stronger: *He tried kicking his feet forward so that the jar of contact would tell him when his toes were against the edge of the next stair; but when he misjudged, his shins or knees struck the stone corners*. VSE actually causes the life-threatening injuries it is supposed to prevent.

Through the various explanatory exemplifications provided in the abstract, what may appear as an insignificant episode in the narrative is revealed as a deeply instructive illustration of Covenant's existential predicament and the central theme of the narrative. But this is not just another rote facsimile – each exemplar provides its own insights, enriches the original template in its own way. Just as he takes his first step blindly, filled with trepidation, his first days at the leprosarium are characterized by ignorance and dread. Then VSE asserts itself in the same way in which it does through the horrors and endless instruction at the leprosarium. But the consolation it provides is purely illusory, as before. It makes no meaningful change to his condition, only lulls him into a sense of complacent resignation to his damnation. Yet the demands of VSE soon wear him out and make him despair, just as opening his eyes terrifies and dizzies him, and the constant strain of clenching the stairs weakens him. His gaze, fixed on the stairs in front of him, becomes a pretence, just as VSE and his life as a leper does. Even though VSE tells him his past is meaningless and he must live solely in the present, he can only find meaning in his memories. The present of his condition is meaningless, without any hope.

In this way, we observe how theme defines narrative through the constant repetition and elaboration of the same patterns. It is through this system of repetition and variation that narrative communicates. And just like all narrative exemplifications, it not only helps us to recognise, explain and evaluate the experiences we are presented with, but also to predict what will come. On his arrival Covenant succumbs to the allure of Land, just as he takes his first steps blindly. But just as his training forces him to open his eyes, soon the reality of the situation and the absolute terror and madness of his predicament drives him to a moment of insanity, in which he rapes a young girl. He reaffirms the conditions of his existence and steels himself in

his routine, but finds that his condition, like his attempts to secure himself on the stairwell, is insufficient and even detrimental.

And just as we are able to identify the source of Covenant's predicament through the exemplifications, through their explanatory power they also enable us to recognise what Covenant is missing and so to anticipate the fantastic affirmation he needs to embrace to resolve his tale.

8.8 Conclusion: the message of *The Chronicles*

The case of the importance of *The Chronicles'* message is not hard to make. As stated in the introduction, the themes it broaches are those eternally essential to narrative itself, namely the nature and purpose of morality, free-will and human existence itself, as well as the role of narrative in answering these questions. Its value is not only literary. It also provides a significant contribution to the debate concerning the fundamental philosophical contradictions that exist between free-will and determinism, reason and faith, mind and body, morality and pragmatism. These are not mere philosophical abstractions, but existential questions rooted in everyday experience, and the narrative medium renders these problems in a familiar and relevant setting that makes it easily approachable to the average reader.

The Chronicles' message of the importance of faith should not be seen as simplistic. Authentic faith is a complex idea, and *The Chronicles* spends most of its over 1000 pages exploring this difficult concept. For example, one of the most disturbing episodes in the story is when Covenant chooses to surrender himself to faith entirely, blindly entrusting his fate to his daughter's hands, only to realise eventually that in doing so, he was instead foisting his own responsibilities onto her, and ultimately offering her up as a sacrificial lamb to die in his own stead. Paradox is at the heart of *The Chronicles*. The wild magic needed to save the Land can only be awakened though a leap of faith, yet unbelief is also the key to Covenant's victory over the Despiser (Ward 2001:171). *The Chronicles* should by no means be understood as a simple exhortation of faith over rational scepticism, but instead as an attempt to resolve the contentious contradiction into a harmonious paradox, to affirm both opposites and deny neither.

Narrative is the perfect medium for this message, because it communicates its message indirectly, through illustration rather than explanation. We can only resolve the relevant contradictions and appreciate *The Chronicles'* theme of fantastic affirmation through faith and creative imagination on our own part. This is because fantastic affirmation itself is a kind of Blending. Through the narrative experience, we ourselves are able to experience in a minor way Covenant's own journey. The restorative power of narrative, and particularly fantasy narrative, is a repeated theme throughout *The Chronicles*. Covenant's despair is intimately bound to this loss of the ability to tell stories. Similarly, the giant Foamfollower repeatedly attributes supernatural powers to narrative, and, tellingly, in his dying words at the climax of *The Chronicles*, he confirms his victory over his personal crisis with the simple lines: *I am at Peace. I have beheld a marvellous story*'

Fantasy promotes the polysemic consciousness over the rational – it emphasises the multiplicity of meaning and the potential over the actual. But in this fantasy is not anti-realist or escapist, but instead super-realist. Fantasy rejects the unreality of realism's insistence on only what is and insists on equal recognition for the reality of what might be, for to deny it is to deny the reality of futurity and the free-will to shape it. For instance, the reality of Covenant's condition is that he is sick and needs to be isolated to protect others from contracting the same terrible condition. But as real as this is, it is equally real that no individual can survive in complete isolation, and the townsfolk's banishment of him is nothing less than a convoluted and exceptionally cruel form of murder. In this way, the affinity of *realist* philosophies for self-interestedly selecting its truths is exposed.

The modern attitude represented by the doctrine of VSE toward faith and imagination is displayed in an impromptu poem Covenant composes while walking:

> Golden boy with feet of clay,
> Let me help you on your way.
> A proper push will take you far –
> But what a clumsy lad you are!
>
> The doggerel chuckled satirically through his thoughts, and its crude rhythm thumped against him like an insult, accompanied by slow stripper's music. He wondered if there were an overweight goddess somewhere in the mystical

> heavens of the universe, grinding out his burlesque fate: A proper push *leer* will take you far – but what a clumsy lad you are! *mock pained dismay.* Oh, right, golden boy. (18)

Covenant composes a poem which mythologizes the metaphysics of his personal doom. Several metaphors combine to construe this image. The overarching image is that of religious experience mapped onto the domain of striptease. This encompasses several specific analogies: biblical prophecy, which is a moment of human ascendance beyond mortal limitation to a momentary contact with the ineffable divine, is presented in the form of the dream of the golden colossus with feet of clay. This is mapped the sexual teases of a stripper. Creation is equated to a burlesque, God to a lascivious seductress, fate to an endless temptation with empty promises, degrading taunts, a vicious joke and sham compassion. Through this analogy, faith in divinity becomes a mere sexual taunt, prophecy, the possibility of divine providence, a false hope. And the emphasis on empty social repertoires, also extends this image to include society in divine conspiracy against Covenant.

At the same time, the prophecy also contains hidden insight into Covenant's predicament. Feet have a specific symbolism in *The Chronicles*, as does gold, and the implicit vertigo and imbalance of the brittle feet. Gold furthermore signifies false embellishments, opposed to clay, the substance from which man was wrought and will return to after death. But in *The Chronicles*, gold is a two-sided symbol, just as with Christian symbolism, a social deception, a false idol, an incitement to sin, but it is also something more, a sovereign metal signifying the supernatural, the divine. The one is a material substance, the other a spiritual substance, and Covenant's fixation on the material and consequent overlooking of the spiritual, is the crux of much of the plot. As has often been pointed out, *The Chronicles* is laden with biblical symbolism, as the name Thomas Covenant itself suggests (Thomas, an allusion to the apostle, and Covenant, to the various biblical covenants), and has even been interpreted as an allegory of the life of Christ (Fike 1988). As a son of Christian missionaries, and with strong influences from Christian fantasists like Tolkien and Lewis, for Donaldson Christian symbolism and belief forms an important semantic referential domain in *The Chronicles* (Bacon 1979).

Just as gold-symbolism is two-sided, so too is the metaphor. Metaphors are often paradoxical in this way. The metaphor construes an association between two

semantic domains, the source and target domains, distinguished by the greater focus which the target domain receives. But this distinction can easily be reversed, and frequently is in metaphor. The metaphor here equates divinity with the debased, but more tacitly it also achieves the opposite. It necessarily reveals an essence of divinity in what is seen as impure and construes the possibility of sublimation of the utterly debased. And once this hopeful paradox is revealed, it transfers onto other metaphoric schemata as well. It implies also that false prophecies might well be realized, that behind the seeming mockery of empty promises of hope there might by a hidden divine providence.

Chapter 9

Heart of Darkness as anti-polyphonic narrative

The final narrative we shall analyse is Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness* (*HoD* henceforth). Narrative, it has been argued, is the indirect communication of an idea through the experiences which instantiate it. This indirectness allows it a kind of artistic expression which more direct forms of language are less conducive to. As such, narratives fall between two poles, namely the thetic, which also more closely resembles expository language, where meaning is more explicit and definite, and the thematic, where meaning is implicit and ambiguous. These correspond with the two primary narrative functions (Section 3.5.2). The thetic function seeks to explicate an abstract concept by detailing the experiences which ground it. The thematic function, on the other hand, presents a series of apparently related experiences and tasks the audience with discovering this relationship. As stated previously, both of these functions are present to some extent in all narratives.

As can be expected, in our present theoretical concern with explaining the relationship between theme and exemplar, we've focused on more thetic narrative in previous analyses. However, in the interest of comprehensiveness it is also useful to demonstrate the theory's application to narratives which fall on the more thematic end of the scale. *HoD* is one such example.

HoD it shall be argued here, contrary to the mainstream critical consensus, falls in the extreme end of the thetic-thematic pole, similar to another example previously analysed, namely *Red Riding Hood* (*RRH*). There, we argued that the wide array of reinterpretations the story has spawned is due to its rich archetypal layering accompanied by a relatively impoverished thematic structuring. In other words, the story provides the reader with richly evocative scenes, but simultaneously leaves is most up to the audience to decide how to interpret them.

Likewise, *HoD* similarly throws both a great many unsettling exemplars (in keeping with its impressionist style) and themes (in terms of its symbolism) without any clear unifying structure to render them coherent. Moreover, Conrad deliberately accentuates their incompatibilities, thus even denying the reader the freedom to

impose their own interpretations. That many critics have done so in spite of the contradictions this inevitably produces doesn't change the nature of Conrad's text, and if anything, only further demonstrates its purpose.

Contrary to *RRH*, the absence of a clear and all-encompassing theme doesn't free the readers' imaginations to produce a meaning of their own. Rather, the purpose is clearly to discredit the power of ideology to render such easy explanations, to cast into doubt the very basic belief in the possibility of thematic unities, and particular, its morality.

In Section 9.1, we return to Ricoeur's concept of the *double perspective*, which refers to narrative's use of the discontinuities between experience and thought to cause us to revaluate both. But contrary to its typical use, where it is exploited to inspire creativity and the renovation of antiquated ideas, here it is used to cast into doubt our very belief in the possibility of interpretation. In *HoD,* Conrad exploits the opposing styles of impressionism (which foregrounds the exemplar) and symbolism (foregrounding theme) against one another to emphasis their fundamentally irreconcilable natures.

Critics have similarly emphasised Conrad's heavy-handed use of narrative framing to impose interpretive frameworks onto readers. However, here it will be argued that the frames Conrad presents are manifold and mutually incompatible. In particular, Sections 9.2 and 9.3 will explore a previously unremarked example of this, namely its polyphonic abstracts. The importance of the use of the frame narrative to provide the reader with a frame of reference with which to interpret a narrative has previously been discussed (Sections 5.4.1, 7.2 and 7.4). *HoD* however doesn't give us one but several frame narratives, all of them conflicting. This, more than anything demonstrates the author's intentions.

Bakhtin's concept of polyphony (1984) was original developed to demonstrate narrative's power of thematic unity, to consolidate the disparities of experience and transcend our discordant individualities into a coherent harmony. But as will be demonstrated in Section 9.4, Conrad uses Bakhtin's concept against itself, to instead demonstate the limitations of language and consciousness and thereby the fundamental incomprehensibility of reality and inadequacy of ideology.

Rather, Conrad's moral seems to be that coherence can only be achieved through the forceful imposition of conformity and the violent erasure of differences. And if anything, the critical concensus on the interpretability of *HoD* in spite of its prolific contradictions seems to bear this out. In the final Secion of this chapter (9.5), we will turn our attention from the text itself to its critics, to ask whether *HoD* doesn't perhaps present a much-needed criticism of literary criticism itself.

9.1 The double-perspective in *Heart of Darkness*

HoD is almost universally agreed upon to have two primary themes, a literal fictionalised commentary on the Belgian colonisation of the Congo, and a symbolic journey into the human psyche (Knowles & Moore 2000, Armstrong 2006a). Both of these themes are mentioned in the earliest reviews of *HoD* (Garnett 2006 [1902], Manchester Guardian 2006 [1902]), and recur through all the critical literature of the following years (Haugh 1988). Indeed, the title itself is polysemic, suggesting both the *dark continent* of Africa and the human soul (Watt 1979:331), and much of the proceeding critical analysis of the novel has focused on reconciling the conflicting themes of African colonialism and 'the break-up of one petty European mind' (Achebe 1988: 257).

However, the obvious themes of *HoD* pose more of a problem than a solution to understanding the text. This is because the novel is fundamentally and committedly paradoxical, even contradictory (Miller 2008, Brooks 2006: 376). Conrad deploys the two themes not in mutual support, but against one another, to present the audience with a riddle, one which is ultimately unsolvable because all the clues presented are circular (Watts 2012: 2-4). Even the title itself is a paradox: is it the heart that is dark or the darkness that possesses a heart? (Watts 2012: 6)?

Furthermore, Conrad undermines our confidence in these two themes. Never is Africa explicitly identified, nor does the landscape of *HoD* even much resemble that of the actual Congo (White & Finston 2010, Miller 1996:91-2, Thomas 1996). Conrad uses 'Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor' (Achebe 1988:257). This might lead us to prioritise the psychological theme over the historical exemplar, except that it is the nature of narrative that theme and exemplar

are inextricably interdependent, so that undermining the one necessarily undermines the other.

But if the account of Belgian colonialism is an exemplar to the theme of the inner journey, how can the former then itself be a theme as well? The fact that most critics have read it this way indicates that despite its apparent fictionality, Conrad places too much emphasis on the exemplar to easily discount it as a mere exemplar. In this way, *HoD* exemplifies the same narrative quality that we observed previously in Chaucer's *the Pardoner's Tale*, namely the double perspective. As Ricoeur states, this double perspective, created by narrative's inherent pursuit of competing objectives, produces a natural tension which characterises all narrative (Section 2.3). This is because an exemplar's narrow focus on individual events is naturally at odds with the broader scope pursued by the symbolic theme. But at the same time, the double perspective is also obviously more pronounced in certain narratives and events in narratives. If the double perspective is defined by the ratio of uniformity versus heterogeneity between themes and/or exemplars, in the case of *HoD*, heterogeneity pushes this balance to the breaking-point.

Within this context, when Watt (1979: 312) characterises the primary styles of *HoD* as impressionism and symbolism, the observation comes across as almost trite. After all, if the function of narrative truly is thematic exemplification, then don't these qualities characterise most narratives? But Watt's insightful analysis reveals how these two contrasting styles contribute to the effect of the double perspective.

Watt thus ascribes much of the literary significance of *HoD* to its innovative impressionist and symbolist styles (1979: 311). However, he ultimately admits that Conrad should be credited less for their invention than for their application to the particularly modernist problems of epistemology and language, as well as their popularisation within the modernist movement (1979: 328-9). Impressionism and symbolism are time-old narrative devices (as we observed in the *Red Riding Hood* analysis, for instance (Section 6.5)). However, modernists like Conrad can take credit for employing these techniques to bring to the popular consciousness the problems of language and epistemology (Wasserman 1974).

Some of the techniques which fall under these categories include delayed-decoding (the comparison of immediate impressions with posterior comprehension) (Watt

1979: 317), impressionistic estrangement (describing phenomena in such detail that they become unfamiliar), various forms of disembodiment (objectification, externalised perspective, disembodied descriptions of human behaviour) (Watts 2012: 59-62), sensory imagery, stream-of-consciousness, *progression d'effet* (symbolic narrative structure), thematic-apposition (linking separate events to point out a common theme), spatial linking (placing disparate events side-by-side in the narrative), chronological reordering (Johnson 1988: 338), and the use of modals to dislocate the association between sense and meaning (McClintock 1984).

Through these techniques, both symbolist embodiment and impressionist disembodiment are omnipresent through the novel. In many ways, *HoD* is a study of embodiment, particularly the human affinity for the embodiment of one's environment. Marlow continually substitutes the incomprehensibility of the wilderness with the metaphysical landscape of his own psychological turmoil. But at the same time, much like Donaldson whom Conrad greatly inspired, *HoD* explores themes of existential alienation and the Absurd through the disembodiment of reality. As in *The Chronicles*, through the essential role of embodiment and projection in perception, the failure to understand the other becomes a failure to understand the self (McClintock 1984).

Conrad describes his own narrative style through the voice of his narrator:

> "The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine." (20) (quotations from Conrad 1996 [1899])

Both impressionism and symbolism are characterised by their concentration on the externalities of signification. Signification is defined as a conventional association between a sign, be it word or object, and its associated meaning. But impressionism concerns itself with the totality of the experience, particularly that which falls outside of conventional signs. Similarly, symbolism is concerned primarily with the broader associations that lie beyond the conventionally denoted meaning. In this way, *HoD*

intentionally resists the conventions of language and cognitive association and seeks a meaning that lies somewhere beyond it.

Johnson defines impressionism in terms of the impulse to purge experience of its posterior rationalisation, thereby experiencing the unbiased truth of existence (Johnson 1988: 356). In this case however, it is a phenomenological rather than an empirical understanding of truth, concerned with the irreducible subjectivity of experience rather than objective reality – in other words, the experience or awareness of experience (1988: 345-8).

Symbolism in its purest sense describes thematics, namely the broader cultural associations attached to elements of the experiential world. However, the symbolist *movement* is distinctive in terms of its Romantic tendency to prioritise the creative associative ability of the individual artist over the taught conventions of the cultural consciousness. The purpose of symbolism in this sense then is the pursuit of the artistic equivalent of the platonic ideal – the perfect representation of a concept (Watt 1979: 321-2).

Yet Conrad ultimately rejected both appellations (1979:316), and in terms of these definitions, Conrad if anything is an anti-impressionist and anti-symbolist. No matter how well his style mimics these artistic schools, Conrad's application of each departs diametrically in intent. Conrad instead delights in the ambiguity and indeterminacy of symbolism, symbols which point to nothing in particular but hint at a great many things, many of them contradictory (1979: 322. Watts 1989: 327-8). In this way, Conrad employs symbolism against itself, to ridicule the very notion of the symbolist ideal (Watt 1979:327). In the same way, Conrad displays a clear anti-impressionism in his confused and deceptive portrayal of raw sensation. Thus, the only thing that Conrad's impressionism clarifies and illuminates is the fallibility and limitation of perception (1979:312). The device of delayed-decoding for instance contrasts exactly this experience vs. thought comparison, yet it is invariably the posterior rationalisation which proves more illuminating. Thus, while the terms may be perfectly appropriate to his technique, they could not be more inappropriate to his motives. Both impressionism and symbolism, despite their differences, were mutually sympathetic in their shared aim of achieving a more truthful aesthetic. Yet by contrast, Conrad's use of both is a strategy of employing one against the other in a nihilistic rejection of the possibility of ultimate truth, instead only 'inducing hypnotic

stupor' in the reader (Achebe 1988:253). It is in this sense that Conrad rejects any association with either movement, despite the obvious equivalences in style.

It is in this way too that the problematic thematics of *HoD* become clear, for it is a narrative in which exemplar doesn't exemplify theme but instead stubbornly resists it. Nor do theme and exemplar themselves even comprise coherent unities, unlike Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*. Kimmel (2005) provides perhaps the most exhaustive analysis of symbolism and archetype in *HoD* through the lens of cognitive linguistics and reveals an unresolvable polysemy which most critics fail to appreciate. By blending source and target spaces, both abstract and physical (Africa, Europe, the river, Kurtz, etc.), by combining both conventional and non-conventional metaphors, *HoD* creates a complex nexus of symbolism (Kimmel 2005:214-7, Levenson 1986, Baker 1988:343-4). At the same time, this results in numerous thematic inversions, so that darkness is both knowledge and ignorance, the wilderness is both menacing and alluring. Most significantly, Conrad demonstrates the inherent contradictions of the inner journey archetype, as a journey of discovery is both a progression from the familiar to the unfamiliar and from ignorance to discovery, so that self-discovery simultaneously becomes losing oneself (Kimmel 2005: 219-20). The result is a narrative whose meaning is at once illimitable and indeterminate.

Perhaps the most obvious symbol is the archetypal HERO'S QUEST. Marlow journeys into the perilous realm to acquire sacred knowledge through the rescue of the archetypal MENTOR and returns it home to the SACRED FEMININE to ensure his society's regeneration, or at least so he intends. But the journey archetype is not only physical and mental, but also spiritual. Significantly, it is a journey over water, where, as previously discussed, water is the archetypal symbol of DEATH, so that his JOURNEY is also the archetypal Orphic or Dantesque journey to the underworld (Stewart 1988, Berman 1977, Guerard 1988). Marlow invokes the image of a pilgrimage to a sacred heart or *axis mundi* when he speaks of a journey to *the centre of the earth*, but also ultimately the failed test of faith, where venal rewards and symbols of DEATH replace religious icons. In this way, the failure of the HERO'S QUEST to save a mentor is also mapped onto the inner (spiritual) journeys of discovery, resulting in a failure of epistemology and faith (Kimmel 2005: 214, McClintock 1984, Watt 1979:322-5, Watts 2012).

Yet this is only one of a seemingly innumerable host of symbols the novel evokes. To mention only a few, there is the MADNESS IS LUST inversion of the archetypal LUST IS MADNESS metaphor (Kimmel 2005), the CONFRONTATION WITH DEATH, the RIVER AS BIBLICAL SERPENT, the THREE FATES (Berman 1977), the symbolism of WHITE AS PURITY, OBSCURITY (fog) and DEATH (bones), the SOLAR MYTH, the UNCARING UNIVERSE, EVOLUTION, PSYCHOLOGICAL ATAVISM, the FAILURE OF REASON, EMPTY SIGNIFIERS, SOLIPSISM, DETERMINISM (Watts 2012), the PROMETHEUS archetype (Baker 1988), DISEMBODIED VOICES (Brooks 2006), the SEXUAL SYMBOLISM OF THE RIVER JOURNEY (Kimborough 1988:411), PHYSICAL AND METAPHYSICAL DARKNESS (Levenson 1988: 405), the BLINDNESS OF TRAVELLERS (Achebe 1988) and the FEATURELESSNESS OF THE FOREIGN (McClintock 1984).

Ultimately the end product is very much akin to *Red Riding Hood*. It is a narrative bound not by shared theme but shared exemplification, and through its absence of a universal theme it become a space for the free play of interpretations, as is evident from the bewildering variety of critical readings (Brantlinger 1996: 288). Like *Red Riding Hood*, as the vast array of interpretations attest, it is less a story in itself than an enticement for readers to insert their own stories. Yes, there are the clear 'facts' of Marlow's testimony, but to what end? The facts alone are inconclusive, in need of some encompassing frame to make sense of them. Yes, there are also Marlow's own thoughts and unconscious associations. But like the facts they are rent by their own inconsistencies and even contradictions. Like *Red Riding Hood*, *HoD* provides the lure of a half-finished canvas filled with evocative images but no consolidating composition to bring it all together.

But perhaps this, in itself, constitutes its theme, the intended message of its author. There is enough evidence from within the text and without to justify such an interpretation. Repeatedly, Marlow attests to the unfathomable and inconclusive nature of reality, so that perhaps this incompleteness itself is the message; the theme.

9.2 Polyphonic narrative

Perhaps one of the most conspicuous features of *HoD*, yet one which has mostly been ignored by critics, is the number and length of the embedded narratives within

this comparatively short story. Firstly, there are the multiple levels of narrative framing, or as Kimborough humorously puts it, 'When Kurtz utters "The horror! The horror!" what do you think that the narrator thought that Marlow thought that Kurtz thought?' (1988:408) Secondly, there is the number of framing narratives, or what Watts terms the 'false starts' (1983:198): the companions on the Nellie, Marlow's primeval Britain narrative, his childhood fascination with maps, Fresleven's story, his visit to the company offices, and the journey on the French steamer. Aside from this, most of what we are learn about Kurtz is second hand, stories from other people Marlow meets on his travels: the accountant, the brickmaker, the station manager, the 'harlequin', and finally, Marlow's own present-day recollections, told to the companions on the Nellie. The primary role of embedded narrative is to provide an interpretive frame for the main story. By presenting so many divergent and often conflicting embedded narratives, the audience at best is presented with a mystery to solve, at worst with a mystery without any solution. This section analyses these embedded narratives within the framework of the current thematic theory of narrative and Bakhtinian polyphonics (Bakhtin 1984) to differentiate both the common and divergent themes and how they may shape readers' interpretations of *HoD*.

Given the topic of this analysis, namely how Conrad conveys most of the subject matter of the narrative to the reader through conflicting narratives transmitted through a multitude of different voices, it only seems appropriate to analyse the narrative through the lens of Bakhtin's dialogic theory and specifically his concept of the polyphonic novel.

It is not difficult to understand the contemporary popularity of Bakhtin. Anticipating the flourishing of sociolinguistics in the late twentieth century, he defines language as an inherently social phenomenon, not as an individual capacity. Similarly, his materialism foretells the present prominence of the embodiment thesis in cognitive linguistics and the increasing interest in the pragmatics of language.

Bakhtin's theory of language is primarily informed by his Marxist ideology. For him language is defined by two primary characteristics, namely its essentially social nature and its materialism (Clark & Holquist 1984:212, Dentith 1995:21-30) (as opposed to the predominantly individualistic perspective and the abstraction of the formalist linguistics he opposes, particularly that of de Saussure and the Russian Formalist school). In this way, Bakhtin also presciently adopts a more functionalist

perspective, interested less in what language is than in what language does, that is to say, its role in society.

Contrary to de Saussure's sign, which comprises an association between a signified, as a semantic representation of the referent, and a signifier, which is defined by a set of syntactic roles within the linguistic system, Bakhtin expands the definition of the sign to an association between society and its material basis. In this sense, Bakhtin's materialism closely reflects the Formalists concern with the deautomatisation of experience to perceive reality afresh, except for Bakhtin the concern is with the material basis of society rather than with the individual subject-object relationship (Clark & Holquist 1984 200-2). For him, the individual speaker is merely a projection of the socially defined conventions of language (Clark & Holquist 1984:219), and whereas formalists like de Saussure attribute the rules that define the sign to the abstraction of the system, Bakhtin places them in the concrete entity that is society (Clark & Holquist 1984:223-30). Based on Vygotsky's theory of language acquisition, Bakhtin sees the individual linguistic faculty solely as a historical accretion of social interactions (Clark & Holquist 1984:229-33).

The foresight of Bakhtin's idea of language lies in his emphasis on linguistic pragmatics, specifically on understanding language in the context of its use. In short, Bakhtin refuses to be limited to the study of language *itself*. Instead, he seeks to understand communication. Thus, Bakhtin's focus is not only the sentence but on the utterance, which is the sentence *in situ* (Clark & Holquist 1984:215-6, Dentith 1995 27-31). The utterance is objectively the basic unit of language, since language doesn't *appear* in its systemic form, but only in its instantiations (Dentith 1995:36). Moreover, there is also a constant tension between grammar and performance, between the imposed uniformity of the language system and the unique demands of each contextual application (Murray 1987:117). Furthermore, no utterance ever occurs on its own, but rather as part of an exchange, and can never be truly isolated from the latter. Thus, Bakhtin asserts that language has an inherent diachronicity which opposes the synchronicity of linguistic description (Dentith 1995:37). Similarly, any expression is based on diachronically determined precedents in the language. Language is forever quoting others (Murray 1987 117).

He also rejects the notion of literal meaning, stating that since connotation is comprehensible, it needs to comprise part of the encoded meaning on an equal

basis (Clark & Holquist 1984:205-7, Lähteenmäki 2004). Contrary to the conventional view at the time, in terms of which a word has a conventionally prescribed denotation, and contextually derived connotations, Bakhtin argues that it is the context which prescribes the particular denotation from a range of linguistically encoded connotations. As such, language is inherently polysemic (Murray 1987:117, Dentith 1995:22-23, Clark & Holquist 1984 212). This is similar to the modern cognitive linguistic perspective (Taylor 2003).

This emphasis on the symbolic and contextual uniqueness of each expression (albeit incongruous in a theory which staunchly rejects individualism) demonstrates a great deal of sympathy with the linguistic aesthetic of *HoD*. But the narrative also points out the problem of even this point of view. Emphasising the uniqueness of each expression tends towards linguistic fragmentation, breaking language apart into a set of isolated, disconnected utterances, resulting in an anti-social and anti-materialist atomisation of meaning.

Given Bakhtin's Marxist outlook, it should come as no surprise when he equates language with ideology (Clark & Holquist 1984:224-5, Dentith 1995:33). After all, if language is defined by society and is its material basis, and society and materialism are ideologically determined (this is a central Marxist tenet – that ideology shapes society which in turn determines the material culture it produces), then it only follows that language is ideology. While there is undoubtedly some truth to this, it also runs into the problematic territory of linguistic relativism (Dufva 2004, Mcwhorter 2016), denying that there are also other factors at play, such as biology, human physiology, etc.

All of this only serves as a backdrop to the lynchpin of Bakhtin's theory, which is heteroglossia. Bakhtin states that language, like society, is, in reality, a plurality. Within this plurality, there is a centripetal tendency towards conformity, monoglossia. Dialogics is then the study of the tension between the centrifugal forces of language or heteroglossia and the centripetal or monoglossia (Dentith 1995:33, Clark & Holquist 1984:269-70, Murray 1987:116, Brandist 2002:112-5).

Bakhtin equates monoglossia with high-culture and heteroglossia with popular culture, but history demonstrates that language is not so simple. Firstly, monoglossia is not absolute but the product of ever-shifting currents within the heteroglossia.

Instead, the official or formal languages of societies themselves exhibit the constant tension between conformity and variety in their evolution. We witness this for instance in the evolution of the English language with its manifold foreign influences, or in the arts themselves, where following Shklovsky's famous statement, we see that artistic legacy passes not from father to son, but from uncle to nephew (in other words, every new generation of high-culture art is never a response to the previous generation, but rather to popular art – high-culture art always reaches outside itself to popular art for inspiration) (Erlich 1980 [1955]:259-60). Nor does this simple dichotomy reflect the complexity of power relations in reality, as we witness for instance in the complex relationships between different national and local varieties of English throughout the world. In conclusion, this oversimplification of labelling something as overwhelmingly complex as a language as either heteroglossia or monoglossia stunts the theory's descriptive potential.

This question of uniformity and variation is of even greater pertinence to the interpersonal dimension of language. In Relevance Theory terms (Sperber & Wilson 1995 [1986]), we communicate *because* of our heterogeneity, which means that individuals have knowledge unique to themselves worth sharing. Yet through that sharing, uniformity is also created, and a certain amount of uniformity is required to make that sharing possible. In this way, heteroglossia and monoglossia point to a complex interdependence not acknowledged by Bakhtin's valorisation of the polyphonic and his demonisation of conformity.

The concept of heteroglossia is essential to Bakhtin's theory because it serves as the basis for the polyphonic novel. The polyphonic novel is one which represents the true heteroglossic nature of language, and he reduces all literary value to the representation of the centripetal forces in language. This is because for Bakhtin, like Frye, artistic merit doesn't lie in the artwork itself, but rather in something outside of itself, and the literary work only has value to the extent that it represents this external paragon. However, whereas for Frye true literary value lies in the cultural ideas which are exemplified through archetype in narrative, for Bakhtin it lies in heteroglossia, and only in the individual narrative to the extent that it represents the true nature of language (Murray 1987:120, Brandist 2002:115-6).

Similar to the argument presented in this thesis (Section 4.2.1), Bakhtin argues that narrative is imbued with polyphony by virtue of its display-text quality. That is to say,

narratives have an inherent tellability that makes them semi-independent of immediate context. They achieve this by internalising the context. Bakhtin argues that since the context of language is heteroglossia, narrative incorporates this into itself in the form of polyphony (Clark & Holquist 1984:208-9).

Although he accords significance to ideas, it is not the ideas themselves which have value, but rather their relationship to others (Clark & Holquist 1984:240-2). We see an example of this in the previous chapter, where fantastic affirmation is presented by *The Chronicles* as an answer to the futility of existence. But at the same time, the answer is only made relevant by the question. For Bakhtin then, it is the marketplace of ideas that has value. It is the understanding of choices and what those choices mean that matter.

This literary ideal is closely tied to Bakhtin's Christian faith. But following Dostoevsky, through his understanding of the exemplifying nature of narrative, Bakhtin views the role of literature not as preaching Christian doctrine, but as illustrating Christian ideas and the Christian way of life. Similarly, Bakhtin and Dostoevsky see the Bible as less a set of laws than a collection of stories. Bakhtin's definition of aesthetics is thus rooted in the Christian value of love, of understanding the other, and hence of liberation from individual limitations. By encoding heteroglossia, that is the other, to its greatest extent, literature becomes the most compassionate form of communication. For Bakhtin, particularly in the case of Dostoevsky, polyphony then provides a means for divine will to manifest in discourse. Polyphony recaptures the vital moment in early Christianity when Christian doctrine was still forming and ordinary people took part in the interpretation and discussion of the meaning of Christian faith (Clark & Holquist 1984:208-11, 248-50). We witnessed the same Christian polyphony in Chaucer (Section 6.2), which was written in the period of the religious renaissance of Wycliffe, which would later, in turn, give birth to the Reformation.

It is curious that, for Bakhtin, the highest form of empathy and liberty is to be found in the moral absolutism of the polyphonic novel. Bakhtin glorifies heteroglossia for its inclusivity, but this inclusivity clearly only extends so far. For one, no polyphonic novel can include all voices. In many ways, with its multi-voicedness, *HoD* is a paragon of the polyphonic novel – yet it is precisely in these types of novels that the exclusions ring out the loudest, for example, the silence of African voices (Achebe

1988). For another, Bakhtin's untameable, regenerative, anti-absolutist, universalist, pacificist, etc. heteroglossic stereotype, aside from being unrealistic, displays a distinctly monoglossic homogeneity (Clark & Holquist 1984 310).

In conclusion, Bakhtin's concept of the polyphonic novel is both deeply fascinating and insightful but also flawed. Baktin's theory in many ways was both decades ahead of his time and deeply rooted in the limited understanding of his contemporaries. These strengths ensure an enduring relevance nearly a century later, but only through simultaneously acknowledging its weaknesses.

9.3. The polyphonic abstracts of *HoD*

Among the several Bakhtinian analyses of *HoD* (Murray 1987; Brooks 2006, Henricksen 1992), most attention has been given to narrative framing. In *HoD* the reader is insulated from the actual events by several layers of narration. Conrad tells the tale of an unnamed narrator recounting a narrative told by one Marlow, relating the experiences of a younger self, much of which is stories told by other narrators. According to Lothe (1999), the purpose of these multiple narrators is both to distance the reader from experience, as well as to allow Conrad to easily shift between multiple perspectives and ideologies, and thus contrast them. For Brooks (2006:376-7), this narrative framing introduces uncertainty into the narrative which, in turn, foregrounds the selective nature of narration and the unspoken motives of the narrators. For Watts (2012:19-20, 30-1), the frame narrative is motivated by the principle of entanglement. According to him, the narrative framing makes the narrative feel more mimetic by placing the reader there among the crew of the *Nellie*, along with a fabricated audience representing a variety of perspectives with which the reader might identify. In this way it serves as a rhetorical device to allow Conrad to address the reader's reservations directly in a way that still seems natural, while also distancing Conrad from the narrative and the audience's criticisms of it, while also subtly implicating the audience through their identification with the ideologies represented.

This frame narrative device continues the theme of thematic fragmentation. Watts is correct in stating that it 'entangles' the audience in certain ways (2012:19-20, 30-1), but he ignores the fact that it simultaneously defamiliarises the narrative for others.

The shifts in perspective and ideology also fracture the narrative into multiple conflicting themes, contributing to the thematic polyphony of the text. In this, we again see another example of the contrastive blend (Section 4.7.1), which is a blend which rather than integrating inputs, instead only juxtaposes them.

While the peculiar narrative framing of *HoD* has been extensively discussed, another striking quality of the novel, namely the polyphonic abstracts at the start of the novel, has been curiously overlooked for the most part. As previously stated, the start of a story traditionally also provides an interpretive framework termed an abstract. But as becomes clear from a close-reading of Watts' numerous 'false-starts' (1983:198), this is a narrative which introduces not one, but a multitude of such conflicting interpretive frameworks. Besides some ambiguous statements about finding a 'poor chap' up a river, nuts, vapour and moonshine, *HoD's* abstract provides little in the way of thematic coherence. It is an abstract in the wrong sense of the word, in the sense of confusing rather than summative. That is not to say that there are no continuous themes and symbols to lend the narrative an impression of coherence, for example perception, knowing and obscurity, the river journey, civilisation vs. the wilderness, etc. Yet often these are themselves fraught with internal contradictions and an ambiguity that only compounds the incongruities.

In this way, the untraversable divide of the double perspective proliferates into a polyphony of irreconcilable symbols and impressions. As a result of these symbols, together with the almost infinite possible heteroglossic archetypal-hybrids that arise between them, *HoD* becomes the ultimate polyphonic novel, a novel without any centre other than perhaps the absolute void created by its own irreconcilable centrifugal tensions.

But in this, *HoD* could also be considered an anti-polyphony, a novel of unremitting silence wherein all voices are reduced to an incomprehensible jabber devolving into an undifferentiated drone. In this, *HoD* represents the antithesis of Bakhtin's fecund multiplicity of voices.

It is the purpose of the opening of a narrative to set its tone and subject matter, to present the story's abstract, and predictably then it is in the 'false start' narratives which introduce the story that its incongruities are most palpable.

> The *Nellie*, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.(17)

The tale's opening scene is of a 'cruising yawl' (17) on the Thames. The boat 'Swung to her anchor…and was at rest' – 'The flood had made'; 'without a flutter of the sails' – 'the wind was nearly calm': the image is one of all-pervading stasis – that of the boat is mirrored by the river course and wind. Right from the start we have two distinct spaces, each foregrounded as the subject of its own sentence. These are the boat and the river, at once both different and the same. This is the essential schema[42] of contradiction, namely the superimposition of uniformity and disparity.

They are 'bound down the river' but waiting 'for the turn of the tide'. This too is an introduction of a crucial interpretive schema: Once again, the two spaces are equated, each in stasis, each awaiting change. But the temporal boundaries are indeterminate. This suspense is an important theme in the narrative, where we are presented with an unfathomable moral deadlock between two forces, but with the vague assurance of resolution.

Both of these schemata, boat and river, relate to two different kinds of blending, namely blends of assimilation and accumulation, or what Todorov terms indices of lack and indices of excess (1982 [1978]:31-32). These two opposing spaces serve as the kernels for the many complex diametric oppositions which populate the novel. And with every semantic extension (accumulation) of each space, we are told that this additional piece of the puzzle is the one which will finally provide the promised resolution (assimilation) to the cental narrative conflict between them. But each time we are disappointed, and ultimately it is their irreconcilability which is the only thing that unites them. Previously, these were discussed under the terms *conventional* or *integrative* vs. *contrastive* blends (Section 4.7.1). In the former, the establishment of an initial association between two inputs is followed by their thoroughgoing synthesis into a new blend, or an assimilation. In the latter however, inconsistencies between inputs reject complete synthesis, resulting in linked yet still separate and distinct

[42] The term schema will be preferred here over the previous space, input or domain due to the emphasis on their visual/imagistic properties, specifically the boundaries.

concepts, or, in other words, an accumulation. As we find, *HoD* continually promises assimilation, yet only delivers more and more accumulations.

The thematic schema (Section 4.6.3) of indeterminate or vanishing boundaries, and hence epistemological uncertainty, is elaborated upon in the second paragraph's description of the river.

> The Sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas, sharply peaked with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth. (17)

The sea-reach extends from this point illimitably, to the horizon and beyond, as 'the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint', together comprising a single 'luminous space', and there is an emphasis on the stillness and blankness of detail. Boats are motionless, wind and tide are absent, the gloom broods motionlessly, everything is serene, still, pacific, the river 'rested unruffled' (18). Similarly, lines of distinction blur – the Thames is an interminable waterway, sky and sea fused into one, shore meets sea 'in vanishing flatness' (17), and mists blend river, shore and sky into one – and detail is lacking – the sky is 'without a speck', the light is 'unstained' (18). Again, we find the exchange of definite bounded space for indeterminate quality space (Langacker 1991: 18-19).

From here the description pans around to the haze which obscures the shoreline, and then to a mournful gloom over the urban inland. The Thames is defined as the nexus between light and dark, and in the absence of detail, the illusion of the plenitude of reality is reduced to its underlying fundamental truths, an irreducible binary, a 'luminous space' and a 'mournful gloom', mediated by the first two spaces, the *Nellie* and the river. Yet in the absence of definite boundaries the different spaces blend and interpenetrate. The luminous bleeds into the gloom, making them hard to distinguish. Overlaying these is another image of the sun passing from light into the darkness. The trajector of this schema bears important symbolic

associations: it is a bearer of light, a shining begemmed vessel, ‘a spark from the sacred fire’ (19). But contrary to ordinary expectations, the light darkens the darkness and darkness extinguishes the light: the gloom ‘became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun (18). Once again, we find the interpretive schema of betrayed promises – change promises a resolution to static tension, yet the resolution is not the one which is promised.

The third and fourth paragraphs returns the reader to the inner space of the ship and introduces us to the audience of the incipient tale.

> The Director of Companies was our Captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realise his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.
>
> Between us there was as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other’s yarns—and even convictions. The Lawyer—the best of old fellows—had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The Director satisfied the anchor had good hold made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes. We felt meditative and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically, the sky without a speck was a benign immensity of unstained light, the very mist on the Essex marshes was like a gauzy and radiant fabric hung from the wooded rises inland and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the

> west brooding over the upper reaches became more sombre every minute as if angered by the approach of the sun.
>
> And at last in its curved and imperceptible fall the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men. (17-8)

A full paragraph is devoted to their leader, the Director of companies. He is elevated above the 'us' space of the rest of the companions, both physically (standing in the bows apart from the rest) and semantically ('We four affectionately watched his back…nothing looked half so nautical…he resembled a pilot'). Yet still a part of it too – still one of 'us'. Significantly, he is superimposed on the 'luminous space', yet in truth actually belongs to the darkness behind him. This use of superimposition, which appears to offer reconciliation when instead only highlighting the contraditions, will also be an important and recurring interpretive schema.

Next the narrative extends into the history of the river.

> Forthwith a change came over the waters, and the serenity became less brilliant but more profound. The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea" with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service crowded with memories of men and ships it has borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled—the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests—and that

> never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith—the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; Captains, Admirals, the dark "interlopers" of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned "Generals" of East Indiafleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth? . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires. (18-9)

The river is anthropomorphised as a familiar and trusted servant, yet the descriptions are conflicted with ironic undertones. The 'Names like jewels flashing in the night of time' are 'the *Erebus* and *Terror*' (19). Examples of heroic knights are Drake's *Golden Hind*, a privateer, a licensed marauder and Franklin's arctic expedition, which became trapped in ice and reputedly turned to cannibalism, what Conrad elsewhere calls 'the darkest drama' (Conrad 1988 [1926]:144). These examples are also schematic of the two categories of men whom we encounter in the heart of darkness, the plunderer (like the station manager) and the explorer lost in shadow (like Kurtz). Other oddities appear. The sea, which was previously described as a 'luminous space', is now a battlefield which knights must enlighten with torches and sparks, while the 'brooding gloom' is the hearth of the sacred fire of home and a place of rest to the warriors. In the context of the *Golden Hind*, the 'jewels' are in fact plunder. The knights are shown as 'bearing the sword', and belatedly the narrator adds 'and often the torch'. But its proximity to sword blurs its normal association. Is it the torch which enlightens or the torch which razes and ruins? Knights or nights? These ironies are perhaps not immediately apparent, but Marlow's strong ironic tone encourages us in hindsight to greater sensitivity to such contradictions.

Finally, the narrative returns to the external boundary spaces of light and darkness, but now they are inverted.

> The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway—a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of

> the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars. (19)

The sea and the river are dark, while inland there is now a ‘lurid glare’, with the smaller lights of ships setting forth from it. This final image may seem insignificant at first, but it signifies the promised resolution and is as such a portentous hint at how the story will end.

A new tangent is initiated. Suddenly attention both turns to Marlow and doesn’t.

> “And this also,” said Marlow suddenly, “has been one of the dark places of the earth.”
>
> He was the only man of us who still “followed the sea.” The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class. He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life. Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them—the ship—and so is their country—the sea. One ship is very much like another and the sea is always the same. In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance, for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing. The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted) and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that, sometimes, are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.
>
> His remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow. It was accepted in silence. No one took the trouble to grunt even, and presently he said very slow: (19-20)

Marlow is described in terms of all the ways he isn't the typical seaman. Important to note is the inherent ambiguity of such negative description, since defining something by what it is not still leaves what it is highly unclear and ambiguous. Ironically, this same kind of negative description that the narrator uses for Marlow, is said to be characteristic of Marlow's own stories. This hints to the reader that the ambiguity of negative description is another important theme, as well as an underlying identity between the narrator's high-sounding imperialist rhetoric and the more ambivalent and cynical voice of Marlow.

Marlow's characterisation again invokes earlier thematic schemas. Marlow is explicitly defined in terms of the Thames River space described above – his passivity, his narratives as misty and interminable, and wrought of the boundary between light and shadow. The ironic hero schema, where a person is simultaneously elevated and denigrated, first introduced with the Director of Companies, and then extended to Drake and Franklin, reappears. He is a 'buddha' 'in European clothes, and without a lotus flower' (21), an 'idol' (18) which straddles the contradiction of the divine and profane.

Marlow himself suddenly interrupts the narrator, heading off on a new tangent.

> "I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day. . . . Light came out of this river since—you say Knights? Yes, but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine—what d'ye call 'em—trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft the legionaries—a wonderful lot of handy men they must have been too—used to build, apparently by the hundred, in a month or two, if we may believe what we read. Imagine him here—the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina—and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages, precious little to eat fit for a civilised man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian wine here, no going ashore. Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness like a needle in a bundle of hay—cold, fog, tempests, disease,

> exile, and death—death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush. They must have been dying like flies here. Oh yes—he did it. Did it very well too, no doubt, and without thinking much about it either, except afterwards to brag of what he had gone through in his time, perhaps. They were men enough to face the darkness. And perhaps he was cheered by keeping his eye on a chance of promotion to the fleet at Ravenna, by and by, if he had good friends in Rome and survived the awful climate. Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga—perhaps too much dice, you know—coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader even—to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery. The utter savagery had closed round him—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible which is also detestable. And it has a fascination too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender—the hate." (20-21)

The light space is again characterised as transient, both a 'flash of lightning' and 'as long as the old earth' (20). As in the present, so in the past the river was also 'one of the dark places of the earth' (19). It is like the 'very old times' which is also 'yesterday' – the distant past which is also the proximal past. All of this serves to affirm the ephemerality and constant inversion of boundaries. In this way, river journeys are equally vagary – the quest for light is also a descent into darkness. Time is cyclical – a familiar image schema – but therefore also space. *HoD* inverts the relationship between the embodied schema of space and the more disembodied time. Space is more concrete, time more abstract, and hence we employ the spatial metaphor of the path to construe time. But here, the disembodied schema of time is instead imposed onto that of space. Just as temporal boundaries are indefinite and shifting, so too is space pliable and metamorphic. Hence destinations are inherently ambiguous. The river journey of life schema becomes at once a journey into the future as well as the past, destinations are simultaneously origins.

This paradoxical image then becomes the setting for a story about Roman legionaries. Unsurprisingly, the previous heroic ironies are also transferred to them:

They are ‘bearers of the spark from the sacred fire’ (19), yet, at the same time, we are assured they are not all alike (21). The legionaries ‘run overland across the Gauls in a hurry…(are) wonderful handy men…(who) used to build (triremes), apparently by the hundred, in a month or two’. ‘Did it very well, too, no doubt, and without thinking much about it either’. But the ships are ‘rigid as a concertina’, they cannot even supply their basic necessities like food or clean water, or make landfall. And they die like flies. Once again emissaries of light are double-sided, both victimizers and victims of hostile forces of the unknown beyond, intrepid seamen and wanderers lost in unfamiliar waters.

By contrast, we are assured that ‘What saves us is efficiency’.

> He paused.
>
> “Mind,” he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that with his legs folded before him he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower—“Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps were not much account really. They were no colonists, their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . .” (20)

But then the Romans too were efficient, building triremes by the hundred without even thinking about it, while in contrast, modern civilization takes months to patch up a single boat. He reconsiders – ‘the devotion to efficiency’. Perhaps we aren’t efficient, but at least we try. Inexorably, his position becomes less and less tenable,

and idealism more and more tenuous through concession. First it is efficiency which saves, then ‘devotion to efficiency’, then ‘the idea only’, and finally only the belief that there is an idea. I do not believe that it is possible to construe efficiency in a more tenuous modality than *a belief in an idea of a commitment to an action which may redeem*. The consequence is the distancing of redemption through several intervening semantic modals, a demonstration of the extreme dislocation between reality and ideal. The consequence of this is also paradoxical. Redemption becomes so distant as to appear almost impossible, yet still it is there serving as a justification for actions, and also for their failures. Aptly, despair sets in. Ideals become idols, civilization becomes savagery: ‘something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to…” (21).

It is at this point that Marlow first introduces something resembling an abstract:

> “I don’t want to bother you much with what happened to me personally,” he began, showing in this remark the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear; “yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough too—and pitiful—not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. No. Not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light (21-2).

Yet it isn’t *really* an abstract. Because as Marlow tells us, the abstract isn’t what the story is about, like the narrator’s description of Marlow and his metaphor about nutshells. Rather it is about the idea at the back of it, which the experience only serves to illuminate, and like all such negative description, it is ‘not very clear either’ (22). It resembles the maps which Marlow tells us of in another digression (22-25), maps whose true worth lies in showing what they do not show, ‘a blank space of delightful mystery…for a boy to dream gloriously over’ (22).

> “Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth and when

> I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say: When I grow up I will go there. The North Pole was one of these places I remember. Well, I haven't been there yet and shall not try now. The glamour's off. Other places were scattered about the Equator and in every sort of latitude all over the two hemispheres. I have been in some of them and . . . well, we won't talk about that. But there was one yet—the biggest—the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after.
>
> "True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window it fascinated me as a snake would a bird—a silly little bird. Then I remembered there was a big concern, a Company for trade on that river. Dash it all, I thought to myself, they can't trade without using some kind of craft on that lot of fresh water—steamboats! Why shouldn't I try to get charge of one. I went on along Fleet Street,9 but could not shake off the idea. The snake had charmed me. (22-23)

Detail here is associated with darkness and civilization, while blankness is linked with the white of light and wonder. Yet maps are not natural but a mental imposition, and the white that signifies the unknown in maps is also a colour, another signpost of European occupation and the worst kind of opportunism.

Other contradictions and ambiguities populate the map: in its midst is a river like a 'snake uncoiled' (22), like a dragon on an antiquated map. But are the dragons the savages or their conquerors. Are they both? What's the difference? Whoever has the accidental fortune of standing behind the gun instead of in its sights? The statement, 'strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others' (21), cuts both ways. The aggressor is distinguished from his victim by no other virtue than accident, but then so too is the victim. The Edenic serpent which this snake represents (Fincham 1990), captures this paradox. Charmed by the snake one becomes at once both victim and villain, sinner and victim of sin.

Marlow's story of Fresleven, the last of the introductory anecdotes, playfully parades its deceptions in its strong ironic tone.

> "I got my appointment—of course; and I got it very quick. It appears the Company had received news that one of their Captains had been killed in a scuffle with the natives. This was my chance and it made me the more anxious to go. It was only months and months afterwards, when I made the attempt to recover what was left of the body, that I heard the original quarrel arose from a misunderstanding about some hens. Yes, two black hens. Fresleven—that was the fellow's name, a Dane—thought himself wronged somehow in the bargain, so he went ashore and started to hammer the chief of the village with a stick. Oh, it didn't surprise me in the least to hear this and at the same time to be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. No doubt he was, but he had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way. Therefore he whacked the old nigger mercilessly while a big crowd of his people watched him, thunderstruck, till some man—I was told the chief 's son—in desperation at hearing the old chap yell, made a tentative jab with a spear at the white man—and of course it went quite easy between the shoulder-blades. Then the whole population cleared into the forest expecting all kinds of calamities to happen, while, on the other hand, the steamer Fresleven commanded left also in a bad panic, in charge of the engineer, I believe. Afterwards nobody seemed to trouble much about Fresleven's remains till I got out and stepped into his shoes. I couldn't let it rest, though, but when an opportunity offered at last to meet my predecessor, the grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones. They were all there. The supernatural being had not been touched after he fell. And the village was deserted, the huts gaped black, rotting, all askew within the fallen enclosures. A calamity had come to it, sure enough. The people had vanished. Mad terror had scattered them, men, women, and children, through the bush and they had never returned. What became of the hens I don't know either. I should think the cause of progress got them, anyhow. However,

> through this glorious affair I got my appointment before I had fairly begun to hope for it. (23-4)

Fresleven was ‘the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs…Therefore he whacked the old nigger mercilessly’ (23). ‘Engaged in the noble cause…he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect’. This is complicated by the subtle resemblance between Fresleven and the chief’s son. Like Fresleven, the chief’s son is also portrayed in gentle overtones, ‘in desperation at hearing the old chap yell, [the chief’s son] made a tentative jab’ (23). But tentative jabs don’t kill people. It recalls the earlier statement – ‘strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others’ (21) – an axiom which cuts both ways, simultaneously distinguishing two dominant classes of persons by diametric opposition and blurring their differences.

The employment of abstracts clearly has a lot to do with the psychological phenomenon called priming (Eysenck & Keane 1995:161-163; Moates & Schumacher 1980:225-226; Gorfein 1989), where an exposure to one stimulus consequently influences responses to apparently related stimuli. In other words, introducing a specific interpretive schema within a specific context at the start of the narrative disposes the audience to interpret similar contexts in the same way across the remainder of the story.

To give an example, the anecdote of the Roman legionaries outlines a clear template of the psychology of the traveller into the heart of darkness. Why does Marlow provide this anecdote when he can draw directly from his own experiences? A reason may be to unwittingly predispose us, to create a series of reflexive responses to what we experience through Marlow, automatic projections onto the alien landscapes we will be introduced to – all the while telling us ‘Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this’ even though he knows he is priming us unconsciously for exactly that response: ‘Land in a swamp, march through the woods’ – the same circumstance which Marlow will soon intimate us to; ‘feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had losed around…mysterious…There’s no initiation either into such mysteries…the incomprehensible, which is also detestable…the fascination of the abomination…growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate’ (21).

On a conscious level, Conrad is presenting us with an interpretive tool to grasp complicated ideas. But on an unconscious level, he is also instilling certain subconscious biases. This is always the danger of exploiting archetypal fabrications like the NOBLE SAVAGE or the DAMSEL IN DISTRESS – useful as they may be as story-telling devices, repetition may also instil reflexive and unquestioning associations in real-life of what is in truth a fictional hyperbole. If Watts' argument (1983:198) is to be believed, Conrad is not only conscious of the potential subconscious biases he is instilling in his readers, but does so intentionally to inculpate his readers in the same evils he depicts the colonials as perpetrating in his stories. And by the simple precedent that modern literature is in part a product of European Imperialism, the reader of *HoD*, be they Westerners or an African like Achebe, is hence also partially complicit in its wrongs.

Significantly, on the French Steamer, just before we enter into the heart of darkness, Marlow once again primes our responses, leading us through the entire catalogue of prejudices. And often when Marlow departs from this manual, the incongruity of his responses is obvious, as Achebe (1988:253-254) and several other critics (cf. Rosmarin 1989) point out. The names of trading places he says 'belong to some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth'. For a moment it seems that he reports faithfully. When he sees the black rowers he describes, 'the white of their eyeballs glistening…They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration' (28). Then he adds, 'they had faces like grotesque masks'. On the river he constantly makes prehistoric references, even going so far as to imagining hearing an ichthyosaur (45). Although Marlow apparently tells of a river-journey through a wilderness, it is in fact, as Achebe states, more appropriately conceived of as a journey through a European mental landscape (1988:257). Marlow continually exhibits this constant retreat of reality before the ingress of fantastic notions.

Several critics have emphasized the heavily reported nature of experience in *HoD* (Murray 1987:123; Henricksen 1992:47-80; Brooks 1996). Stories which have been told over and over so many times become referential isolates, purged of whatever connection to specific circumstances they might have had, being replaced by a catalogue of archetypal categories. In short, they become archetypal narratives, myths. Myth-making resembles the process of schematization or abstraction, whereby specific details are abstracted into generalizations which as explications

have greater adaptability, but at the cost of the specificity which captures the distinct individual experience.

In this way, steeped in the conceptual archetypes of the mind, the myth becomes a story about us ourselves rather than about our world, and emphasizes the distance between these two poles. This is accentuated by the various other abstracting characteristics of *HoD*, such as the clear a-temporality of the narrative (cf. Thomas 1996), seen in the broader historical framework posited by the author or the constant atavistic symbolism of Marlow's journey. One might expect the estrangement of the environs to emphasize the experiences themselves. Instead, like I suspect is true for most people, it only draws us further into the haven of our social preconditioning, our civilized myths. The blindness of foreigners is well-documented (Achebe 1988, McClintock 1984)

But then, faced with the unfamiliarity of his environment, Marlow has little choice. And we are forcefully thrust into the same situation of trying to interpret the conceptually incongruous, whether we be European or non-European, for the simple fact that we only have Marlow's cues to go on. Like it or not, we are implicated to some degree in imperialist ideology because the narrative is presented to us through imperialist eyes. Certainly, our own post-imperialist cognitive schemata give us a modicum of objective distance from *HoD's* imperialist ideology, but this freedom only extends so far.

The primary purpose of archetype and theme is to blend disparate experiences into a coherent whole. But as we observe, the archetypes and themes we are provided with in the abstracts of *HoD* instead serve to confuse and fragment experiences and ideas. Archetypes, we have said are normally supposed to provide a basis for the blending of inputs. But instead of itegrative, they instead are contrastive, emphasising and polarising the differences between the inputs. In this way, they foreground the natural *différance* and indeterminacy of language. The dominant impression we receive in the text's first pages is of contradiction, the contraposition of similar inputs only to emphasize their incommensurability and diametric antitheses – their fundamental ambiguity. Multiple schemas are presented and then superimposed, none in perfect symmetry with any other, yet not wholly incommensurate either.

At this point, one must ask whether *HoD* will eventually begin providing answers rather than more questions, or even if there is any answer which could reconcile all these diverse disparities without succumbing to internal oppositions or becoming so contrived as to be incredible? Given that the abstract serves to provide an indication to the reader of what is to come, the answer to these questions is likely to be *no*. The novel's last lines – 'The offing was barred by a bank of black clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky – seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness' (95) – returns us once again to the contradictory images of the opening scene, and strongly suggest their endless circularity.

9.4 The anti-polyphony of Kurtz

Upon first glance, it may almost appear that Bakhtin developed his theory of dialogics with *HoD* in mind: the impressionistic concern with material reality, the symbolist preoccupation with ideological myths, the emphasis on the ineffable and unique moment of the utterance, and the focus on a plurality of voices and the conformity and illusory uniformity imposed by power, to name but a few.

There is a tendency to oversimplify the ideologies in *HoD*, to interpret it as the conflict between an ideology of darkness, usually associated with imperialism, and one of light, typically some kind of opposing liberal stance. But as Brooks (1996) and Henricksen (1992) demonstrate, things are more complicated. Instead, the novel sees the adoption and abandonment of several different ideologies through its course, with the opposed symbols of light and darkness employed to represent not specific ideologies, but rather a universal evaluative framework representing the pros and cons of each. Through the lens of Lyotard's metanarrative theory (1996), Henricksen associates the numerous themes of *HoD* with the various individual ideologies which Marlow *tries out* during the course of the narrative (1992: 61-2). Examples of several of these have been mentioned among the list of various symbols *HoD* invokes.

However, Conrad invokes each ideology not as an endorsement of any single one, but only to play them off against one another, to demonstrate the failure of

metanarratives to explain reality more than partially and the hypocrisy which ensues from any attempt to do so. This is enhanced by the thematization of the limitations themselves, limitations of experience and knowledge, the internal contradictions which fracture them and the arbitrariness and fragmentation which this results in (1992:47-61). In this, *HoD* demonstrates a definite polyphonic quality - the term referring to the inherently interactive mutually-dependent quality of language – that every articulation is also an eliciting of a response (Bakhtin 2004).

Consequently, through the numerous voices he cites, Marlow himself no longer becomes a distinct voice, but instead a mouthpiece for others. However, Marlow is not alone in this. Much of the dialogue in the narrative is people reporting the speech of others, be it the aunt mindlessly regurgitating the rhetoric she reads, or the various witnesses repeating the rumours they hear regarding Kurtz. Neither is it impartial reporting either, but often clouded by opinion or mockery (Murray 1987:125-6).

In this way, *HoD* is the quintessential polyphonic novel. But in another, it is also its antithesis. The fractures which permeate the novel provide a perfect example of multi-voiced narrative (Said 1984: 102). Yet these same fractures also produce an incommunicability which rejects entirely the positive aspects of meaningful dialogue among the heteroglossia which renders the polyphonic novel valuable. *HoD* exposes the poverty of the polyphonic concept in its great many silences or in the great many voices that are muted, such as the Africans, or for most of the narrative, Kurtz himself (Murray 1987: 129, Achebe 1988). No narrative can represent all voices, and the selection of who may or may not express the privilege of speech implies an obvious contrivance to the illusion of multi-voicedness. And *HoD* makes this artificiality palpable through its concentration on these voiceless multitudes. Moreover, even those who are granted a voice are deprived of meaning, reduced to ‘chattering idiot(s)’ (38) or empty mouthpieces of ideological rhetoric.

Although many attribute the voicelessness of Africans in the novel as a deliberate and racist attempt to silence them (Achebe 1988), this is contradicted by their numerous attempts to communicate. Marlow associates the sound of drums to churchbells, attributes powerful emotions to the unintelligible expressions of Africans, and even senses something profound in the silence of wilderness. At the same time, the intelligible speech of the whites is attributed a meaninglessness that undermines the value of language in any case (Wasserman 1974). It is not that the characters in

HoD choose not to speak, but rather that language itself denies them. In this way, polyphonic reciprocity is degraded from a fecund fount of creativity, liberty and empathy to an empty farce where one statement is as meaningless as another, and the reciprocity of language is merely a trick to include others in the degradation of meaningless prattle.

As stated previously, the polyphony of *HoD* is most evident in three elements: the framing of the narrative through multiple narrators, the multiple conflicted narrative abstracts serving as interpretive frameworks for the rest of the novel, and finally the fact that almost all the clues we are presented with in relation to the central narrative problem of Kurtz's guilt is comprised of hearsay and contradiction.

Kurtz' prominence is visible not only in the critical literature, most of whom feel it unavoidable to pronounce judgement on the character, but also in the narrative itself, which becomes increasingly obsessed with the character as Marlow's despair increases. This may be rather surprising given that he is first named only 17 pages in, and then only fleetingly and cryptically. It is only on his arrival at the central station and facing the deep disillusionment of the reality of his childhood dreams, that Marlow latches onto Kurtz' image as his personal cynosure. Yet his central place is already cemented at the start of the story in the anti-abstract, where Marlow reveals that his story is of the rescue of the 'poor chap'. Even though we do not know it, Kurtz is present from the very start.

The first mention we get of Kurtz (aside from a few earlier vague hints from Marlow) is from the accountant of the Outer station, and as yet, there is no indication of the narrative significance of this person. He is deliberately described in glowing terms: 'a first-class agent…a very remarkable person…he will go far, very far…will be a somebody in the Administration before long.' (33-4), hardly resembling the description of 'poor chap'. Hence it comes as a complete surprise to the reader when upon the moment of reaching the Central station it is revealed that they are one and the same.

Yet even then, the thematic significance of Kurtz, his role in the message the story seeks to convey, is still hidden. The first hints we get is from the highly dubious source of the brickmaker, the Manager's spy, the 'papier-mâché mephistopheles' (41). He reveals that there are other dimensions to Kurtz aside from his spectacular

success, that he is also an artist, an idealist, an emissary of light. ‘Each station should be a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course but also for humanising, improving, instructing’ (48). From this point on, allusions to the imagery of the abstracts appear with increasing frequency.

The significance of Kurtz to Marlow’s situation is entirely personal. Isolated amidst treacherous (and potentially murderous: ‘Anything—anything can be done in this country’ (48)) company, disillusioned with the reality of his childhood dreams, made helpless by the futility of his situation, alienated within a bewildering and threatening landscape, Marlow latches onto the only hope within reach, the only figure in that world seemingly untarnished by incompetence and dissipation: ‘I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time’ (47). In this way, Kurtz becomes for Marlow, and the reader as well, the mystery whose solution offers up the beacon of clarity and redemption so sorely absent from the narrative, the salvation of his ideals. But most of our understanding of Kurtz comes directly from Marlow himself. Significantly, just before our first encounter with the man, Marlow embarks on a lengthy preamble on the character of Kurtz (65-7). This report is presented as a mere sidenote, a momentary rambling digression, but it carefully serves to prime all our responses to what we will soon bear witness to, colours our interpretations, in short, prejudices us.

As with all else in the tale, nothing definite is rendered. Instead, we are only proffered hints and insinuations, more suggestive symbolism. Kurtz as seduced by the Wilderness, as a Faustian figure, as a personification of insatiable Greed, as the trespasser against all civilized constraints, as the Great Deceiver, as a Luciferian impostor, in short, Kurtz as everything that is Other to civilized man (c.f. Underberg 2005a). The description is so formulaic it almost comes across as a farce. In the end, the figure of Kurtz is so thoroughly interwoven with the manifold symbols of the narrative that it is impossible to see him at all.

More than anything, our ideas about Kurtz are shaped by Marlow himself. But how much can we trust his account? Marlow provides very little evidence to support his claims. One would hope that to condemn a man as a monster would demand more than hearsay or insinuation. But that is all Marlow gives us: ravings of a fevered mind, the postscript scribbled on the end of Kurtz’ pamphlet, absent of context and written by who knows, shrunken heads mounted on stakes in the vicinity of his hut. Perhaps the most incriminating testimony is that of the Harlequin (71-5), who tells us

that when Kurtz ran out of trade goods, he turned to his plentiful supply of cartridges, and that he raided the country. Of the shrunken heads, he informs us that they were rebels and remained there by order of Kurtz. Yet even if his testimony could be trusted, all of this could have a perfectly justifiable explanation. Once again, we are not provided with any definitive evidence of guilt, certainly nothing that would convict him in most courts.

In all, it is the testimony of Marlow himself which is the most moving. But even though Marlow has a bond of trust with his fellow sailors on the *Nellie*, declares a deep aversion to lying, and excuses his lie to Kurtz' Intended as a kindness to a moral inferior, it is still hard to believe him. After all, Marlow lies repeatedly to the 'brickmaker', to the pilgrims, to the Russian, to the Company, to the journalist, to himself, and eventually to the Intended. Moreover, the rest of Marlow's narrative is so drenched in irony, sarcasm, half-truths, omissions and outright contradictions, that his manifold lies then seem perfectly in keeping with his character. After all this, are we to believe that he is being honest towards us about Kurtz? Like the postscript of Kurtz' report on *The Suppression of Savage Customs* which Marlow tore off, and the omission of the dying man's last words to the Intended, one cannot but wonder what final apocalyptic phrase he has omitted from us (c.f. Stewart 1988).

Given the critics' virtually unanimous denunciation of Kurtz as the representative of everything satanic about colonialism, this would appear to be the majority opinion. His last words of '*the horror'* are universally treated as a deathbed confession, but what does it even truly signify? I recall on my own first reading of *HoD* interpreting it as a joke on Conrad's part, a thumbing of his nose at his readers, a final confirmation that the intricate mystery he had crafted would provide no solution. What significance can even be attributed to the delirious dying words of a mad man? Is that even what he said, or did Marlow mishear as some critics have suggested (Straus 1987)? His words are so shorn of context as to be virtually meaningless, just another addition to the heap of enigmas. One should at least want a smoking gun, but the only smoking guns we encounter are those belonging to Marlow's pilgrims, the same people who condemn Kurtz. In light of the evidence, the Kurtz that appears from the murk is disappointingly human. Not the monster so many make him out to be, but not the saviour we were promised either, which is perhaps the reason for the critical lynch mob.

Despite the critical consensus, there is in fact little definitive evidence with which to condemn Kurtz. And we must eventually conclude that this is deliberate. After all, Conrad leaves us with little doubt about the moral destitution of many other Europeans – repeatedly they are shown committing morally reprehensible actions - and he could have easily done the same with Kurtz. But of the heaps of clues regarding Kurtz character he gives us, all are tantalisingly obscure. And the frequency with Conrad does this must also ultimately be seen as deliberate.

Like so much else of HoD, Kurtz eventually is simply another empty narrative symbol, a childishly naïve good-guy-bad-guy trope presented to the reader to entice them into a sense of closure when the reality is anything but. From the start, we are told that the story is about Marlow's meeting with Kurtz: 'how I went up that river to place where I first met the poor chap' (22). And throughout the story, we are promised that the solution to the puzzles posed by the narrative will all by made clear by Kurz. We are told that he is the blended space which will finally satisfyingly resolve the conflicting inputs.

But what we get instead is a lie. Almost nothing definite can be known about Kurtz. What little he says, is steeped in the same delirious obscurity and confusion as the rest of the story. Instead, as Marlow demonstrates himself, Kurtz becomes an empty space to be filled with whatever pleases us. Yet the confusion and contradictions remain as blatant as ever, so that whatever self-deceptions we elect to impose into this empty space are clearly visible as lies. This is made most evident by the final episode in this drama, the famous Lie to the Intended.

What is surprising rather is how regularly readers seem to fall for Marlow's trick, and how eagerly as well despite all his warnings. One is reminded of Chaucer's Pardoner who first confesses his full catalogue of confidence tricks before trying them out on his canny audience. Except in Marlow's case, he seems to succeed every time in spite of his warnings, because his con is simply too good to refuse.

The determination of the critics to cast colonialism in the role of villain appears to blind most of them to the indeterminacy of the character of Kurtz – the fact that we know next to nothing for certain about him, in fact see precious little of him at all (Henricksen 1992:69-80). That everything we are told about him is hearsay and conjecture, moreover from rather unreliable sources (Brooks 2006: 376). In this

sense, Kurtz himself is almost set up as an idol, a foil for the critics' own culpability in the crimes of humanity that HoD exposes, the heart of darkness in every one of us.

While the many indeterminacies of the text have been emphasized, it seems implausible, as Todorov does (1996), to deny that there are determinate meanings to the text. There are clear justifications behind the critical consensus on certain issues – that it exposes the criminal inhumanity of imperialism in the Congo, or that it contains numerous statements which are undeniably racist or sexist. But these isolated facts still do not magically resolve the apparent lack of a unified theme. While as Watts warns us (1983: 203), it is easy to oversimplify complexity through resignation to contradiction and paradox, it is equally easy to use those same oppositions to reduce a work to a set of clear statements and unproblematic closures. Determinate meanings exist, but so too do indeterminacies which defy the desire to arrive at a determinate comprehensive meaning to the text as a whole.

If a single theme to the text were to be identified, it is the incommensurability of ideological and epistemic contradictions. In blending theory terms, we could put it as the primacy of contrastive over integrative blends. Blending is the mechanism by which we create coherence by resolving disparities through the power of generalisation. But *HoD* demonstrates that this coherence is ultimately illusory. It exists only through a trick of perception, by highlighting similarities while thrusting disparities into the invisible background. Blending doesn't so much create coherence as gloss over natural incoherences. By placing the contrastive blend in the foreground and defining it as the archetype for all narrative blendings in the novel, Conrad effectively neutralises all possibility of blendings. This is an archetype which highlights inconsistencies and rejects their occlusion, and in so doing, *HoD* shows blending for the lie it essentially is.

Henricksen finds Marlow trying out several successive ideologies during the course of the narrative (1992:61-62). But the narrative does so to play the oppositions off against each another, for the purpose of demonstrating the failure of all such metanarratives to adequately interpret our realities and their inevitable devolution into corrupt hypocrisy. This is achieved by such means as thematizing the fragmentation of ideology, the disparity between identity and discourse, the readerliness of the narrative, conflicting voices, and the conflicts between the metanarratives themselves (1992:47-61). So should we leave it at that then and

console ourselves to the impossibility of interpretation? This solution is made equally problematic by the moral imperative which *HoD* simultaneously raises, insisting on the impossibility of a complacent acceptance of moral ambiguities and the evil hypocrisies this permits. 'Historically, *Heart of Darkness* has seduced readers into accepting and then elaborating on certain assumptions of Marlow's discourse, as though to view this discourse with complete detachment would be too dark altogether' (Henricksen 1992:70).

In spite of Marlow's disillusionment with metanarratives, Marlow increasingly finds he must affirm them to provide the foundation for a moral response to the evil he encounters in the heart of darkness, as the reader must, lured on the one hand by the writerliness of the text and compelled by the traumas of despair and confrontation with evil, even though in doing so he and we ourselves become an accessory to that evil by affirming the very evil we recoil from (1992:61-71). It demands of us that we take a stand, or at least try, as Marlow does, but simultaneously condemns us for the hypocrisy and prejudice involved in taking such a stand. By providing us with conflicting information and then demanding a judgement, it forces us to choose in the absence of a universal yardstick of truth, and thereby exposes our own native prejudices.

The result of this is the surfacing consciousness of the contradictions inherent in ideologies (1992:71-80), and for Henricksen, the literary value of *HoD* lies in this awareness. This awareness then constitutes a *petit recit*, a little story, through which we can counter the various metanarratives of imperialism. Henricksen however eventually admits ambivalence regarding this result (1992:161-9), for as he has shown, the idea that awareness or knowledge grants precedence over predicaments is precisely one of the metanarratives which *HoD* deconstructs (1992:64-65). Even Lyotard's theory is ultimately a Christian Imperialist myth of metanarrative sin and *petit recit* redemption.

For Brooks (2006: 380-1), the positioning of Marlow's lie to the Intended demonstrates an authorial intention. Throughout the story we are promised an ultimate apocalypse to the contradictions in faith and perception we are confronted with. But *HoD's* promised solution is always 'endlessly deferred' (Miller 2006: 473), and finally we are instead presented with a blatant lie. In the face of existential

horror, fabrications are perhaps the only real possibility, the closest approximation of authenticity achievable.

It is my contention that the contradictions and paradoxes which permeate *HoD* ultimately make it indefinable, confusing. As Thomas (1996) argues, Conrad assaults the very foundations of the belief that truth can be known, and therefore lies become the sole alternative. Moreover, I believe it is intentionally so, demonstrating that any ideological thesis collapses in the face of the unseen antithesis which naturally accompanies it, an unseen which the tale renders so confusingly clear. As we see, the narrative repeatedly places apparent answers before our eyes, enticements of closure, only to reveal these to be an elaborate illusory torture. For instance, we are told that 'What saves us is efficiency' (21), even while the narrator describes how the Romans failed in spite of their remarkable efficiency and thus shows the readers the deplorable inefficiency of colonialism. Later, communion with the voice of Kurtz is presented as a new beacon of hope, only for it soon to be dashed by the reality of what Marlow witnesses in the heart of darkness. As Watt (1979: 332) puts it, the final question HoD asks is whether the authentic affirmation of the impossibility of truth is superior to the bad faith of ideology?

It is this that defines *HoD* as the antithesis to Bakhtin's polyphonic novel. While for Bakhtin, the true polyphonic novel is an acknowledgement and engagement with the Other, *HoD* is perhaps better read as a testament to the fundamental ineffability and alienness of the same. Brooks suggests that in *HoD*, retelling is a sign of the failure of telling (2006: 383-4). *HoD* is a story retold, of Kurtz' telling of his story, or Marlow's retelling it to the Intended, and later to the crew of the *Nellie*, of the narrator to us, etc. The tale is retold not because it contains some transcendent resolution, but precisely because of its permanent irresolution. Conrad's tale certainly is a polyphony in style, but his polyphony, rather than including the full breadth of humanity within its orbit, instead only emphasises the untraversable distances that exist between us – it acknowledges the polyphony of language while denying its value (Brooks 2006: 384). To the end, Kurtz remains an enigma. As a mentor figure, he represents the knowledge that lies beyond the limits of individual consciousness, and the failure of the archetypal quest for the mentor symbolises the essential impossibility of a true transcendence of our solipsistic existence.

Stephen Donaldson names Joseph Conrad as one of his principal influences (Bacon 1979), and between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (*HoD*) and Donaldson's *Chronicles* there are more than a few parallels. Excepting for the ship imagery of *The Chronicles*, which is also a strong binding image in *HoD*, most of the parallels are thematic or stylistic – the epistemic failure, the failure of language, existential alienation, absurdism, etc. – and in both these texts contradictions are reconciled by a set of paradoxes, arguably, by a central uniting paradox. But while in *The Chronicles*, the paradox is ultimately positive, the keystone of human sufficiency, in *HoD* it is wholly negative, it is a heart of darkness, a horror and a universal lie we natural recoil from.

Ultimately, if we are to draw a single conclusion from the manifold narrative analyses, it is of the centrality of paradox to narrative. Narrative is essentially a statement of a paradox – the hero vs. the villain, an exposition and a complication, theme vs. exemplar – the various manifestations of the essential peripatetic narrative juxtaposition of Frye and Ricoeur (the requirement of extraordinary reversal/inversion). In modern narrative, this essential paradox has almost become a Nicene creed, as we've observed in Conrad, Donaldson, Morrison and Lovecraft. Yet what distinguishes Donaldson from Conrad and the rest is that their responses are ultimately passive and defeatist[43]. To be sure, Donaldson doesn't present any easy solution – the entire narrative is a denial of all such easy answers – but he does offer the choice between mastery and victimhood. We cannot escape the paradox of existence, but we can seize control of the paradox and exploit it to our own ends, and thereby retrieve a measure of authenticity in the midst of the impossible. Many deem Conrad and *HoD* specifically as predicting the future of literature and particularly prescient regarding the rise of modernism and postmodernism. If this is the case, it's lack of any redemptive message doesn't say anything good about the latter.

This difference in theme leads to different narrative arrangements. Both explore the paradox, but whereas in *The Chronicles* the narrative begins with a fundamental paradox and then proceeds to elaborate and reveal its generative potential, in *HoD* the process is reductive. Contradictions proceed from being relatively subliminal, but

[43] At least in the examples we've looked at. to be fair. In another of his famous novels, *Lord Jim,* Conrad seems to arrive at a conclusion surprising similar to *The Chronicles.*

then becoming increasingly blatant, dominant and disconcerting as the narrative continues, perhaps manifesting most fully in the arrival in the heart of darkness, at which point contradictions are overwhelming and confusion at its strongest.

The second plotline largely takes over from this point on, and reconciles these contradictions through the idea of *the lie*. However, any sense of resolution it provides is illusory – as all easy resolutions to the insoluble paradox of experience and consciousness must be. In the end, the paradox remains, and the only escape is through self-deception, willingly blinding oneself to the contradictions of existence through consoling lies.

In this way, each narrative is very much the inverse of the other. In a sense, *Chronicles* takes off where *HoD* ends. The latter starts off with an illusory state of harmony, which is steadily shredded through the friction between its various internal contradictions. Denouement climaxes in the restoration of illusory harmony, without any real reconciliation of contradictions, a state which precisely mirrors the starting quandary of Covenant. But as his tale shows, just as such contradiction is destructive, so too is it generative.

If all is paradox, then choice is also a paradox. There cannot only be the acceptance of futility. If that were the only choice, then choice wouldn't be a paradox, and that would deny the founding premise of the conclusion. Futility must have its diametric opposite, namely hope. The paradox is inescapable – choice appears futile in that no matter what choices we make we find ourselves facing the paradox once more regardless of which way we turn. But as Donaldson puts it, even though no matter what choice we take the paradox remains, by affirming our freedom to choose we are at least confronted by the paradoxes of our own choosing. Perhaps in this sense, *The Chronicles* could be seen as redeeming Bakhtin's optimistic view of polyphony against *HoD's* pessimism.

9.5. Conclusion

Given the numerous paradoxes, as we have observed, *HoD* is littered with, and more so, given the amount of critical literature on *HoD,* it is surprising that there isn't more disagreement on the primary themes or message. Compare this for instance to the variety of interpretations of *The Pardoner's Tale* (Section 7.2). While

interpretations certainly differ, there seems to be a general consensus that the novel is a commentary on colonialism.

For early criticism perhaps the most striking quality about *HoD* was its ambiguity (Murfin 1996:99-102; Miller 1996:98-99; Haugh 1988:239-240). In contrast, modern criticism seems more assured of its clarity. Haugh states, 'my feeling about both Leavis and Forster is…they do not really understand the images and actions of the story. With a better understanding of what Conrad intends, objections to his language disappear' (1988:240), apparently a common feeling. Indeed, it seems that that there is a clear message to *HoD* is the one thing all critics can agree on.

Given the amount of literature on the subject, and *HoD's* inherent problems of interpretation, one would expect views on the character of Kurtz to vary a great deal more than they do. Yet critics are virtually unanimous in their condemnation of Kurtz and everything he stands for. Even critics who acknowledge the problems of interpretation inherent to the narrative only dispute the nature of his guilt, not the matter of it (Brooks 2006). Hillis Miller, in his essay on the novel, asks the poignant question of who 'bears witness for the witness' (2006: 465)? Yet even while pointing out the untrustworthy nature of *HoD's* witnesses, he inexplicably accepts Marlow's testimony on face value. The notion that the entire Kurtz narrative itself may just be another red herring, another mystery without a solution, is dismissed out of hand. This blind faith in the moral frame of reference Marlow supplies even while questioning such framing devices is, I would submit, is questionable.

As Henricksen (1992: 55-7) explains, *HoD* counterbalances various totalising meta-narratives in a self-cancelling equipoise. In response, contemporary criticism seeks to resolve this stalemate through more restrained *petit recits* or little stories. The argument Lyotard (1996) makes is that metanarrative monologues fail through their reductivistic abstractions and instead he proposes more instantiated, individuated and restrained local narratives dedicated only to the specific situation rather than all-encompassing metanarrative solutions. But by invalidating metanarratives entirely rather than merely reducing them to the level of *petit recits,* the *petit recits* become in effect all-encompassing in their absence – they become in effect metanarratives themselves. We see this in the critical literature's universal damnation of Kurtz and the colonialist ideals he stands for. As we have shown, many and blatant ambiguities

and contradictions surround the novel's portrayal of Kurtz, yet the critical literature is clearly metanarrativistic in its absolute denial of this ambiguity.

We see another example of this in the critical consensus on *HoD* as a topical narrative on European colonialism. One of these significant contradictions in the novel is between the actual Congo and Conrad's wilderness. Achebe's primary contention is that *HoD* presents Africa not as a real place, but as an empty set-piece, 'a foil to Europe' (Achebe 1988:251), as many others agree (Thomas 1996:246), and that onto this foil it imposes a fantastic landscape whose only purpose is to provide a negative space to reflect positively onto Europe. If Conrad intended to make a public comment on Belgian colonialism, why then was he so hesitant to get involved with Casement's Congo Reform Association and its campaign to expose to the European public the atrocities occurring in Leopold's colony (Brantlinger 1996: 280)? According to Hawkins, the author's reticence is because for Conrad 'words were meaningless, human nature unimprovable, and the universe dying' (Hawkins 1979: 292-3). Furthermore, most of Conrad's sources for *HoD* were second-hand, having personally witnessed little of the atrocities he recounts (Brantlinger 1996: 281-2). In addition, Conrad deliberately omits any direct reference to Africa, nor does the landscape he describes bear more than a superficial resemblance to the actual Congo (White & Finston 2010, Miller 1996:91-2, Thomas 1996). Conrad's wilderness is vague enough to be placed anywhere on the globe, and even 'blacks' is a vague specification – Conrad elsewhere even refers to Inuit as blacks (Brantlinger 1996: 281). Undoubtedly, Conrad was inspired both by his own experiences and events at the time of his writing, but whether the Congo plays any larger role than a distant inspiration is difficult to ascertain. As stated before, the critical consensus is that *HoD* has two main themes, one psychological, the other political. But while the evidence for the first is clear, the evidence for the second is more ambivalent.

This raises the question of whether *HoD* was even intended to be read as having two themes, namely the exemplary theme of commentary on contemporary Belgian colonialism vs. the more abstract exploration of the human psyche. In fact, so unquestioned has this assumption become, that critics even criticise Conrad for his inaccurate representation of Africa (Nayak 2012:34), as if the very fact of its inaccuracy shouldn't be seen as evidence that it might not even be intended to be accurate. Is the first theme then even valid, or is Conrad's wilderness, as Achebe

(1988) claims, just a fictional representation of the novel's abstract themes, without any real intended connection to Africa other than that imposed on it by readers and critics alike? Certainly, for the psychological theme, it matters little whether the story takes place in the Congo or some other imaginary locale (Brantlinger 1996: 289). Yet even Achebe doesn't question that *HoD* was intended as a representation of Africa – his contention instead is that Conrad just didn't care enough about Africa to make his representation accurate of the reality. Viewed in the light of many critics' trenchant views on imperialism, it isn't hard to believe that this is an intentional distortion in order to force an agenda where in reality it is out of place.

Curiously however, *HoD* offers a cautionary tale to exactly ideologies of restraint, such as the post-modern *petit recit*. In the novel, it is their restraint which differentiates the civilised man from the savage, and it is Kurtz' increasing lack of restraint that marks his descent into depravity: 'Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts' (74). Yet as the narrative ultimately demonstrates, Marlow's philosophy of moral restraint, individual efficiency and self-sufficiency is no antidote to the Lie. As with all metanarratives, this philosophy is also shown to similarly fail in the face of environmental pressures.

At first, Kurtz is presented as a diametric opposite to the naked imperialist rapacity Marlow witnesses at the Central station, an emissary of light who instead advocates a benevolent and empathetic patronage over the benighted natives. Critics then should read a clear warning in the cautionary tale of Kurtz, of how high-minded rhetoric like Kurtz' pamphlet, mockingly similar to both Leopold's *The Sacred Mission of Civilisation*, so often instead serves only as a mask for the worst expressions of greed.

> 'That some British people condemned the exploitation of the blacks by Leopold's Belgians in the Congo was surely admirable; if they were not so prompt to condemn British misdeeds, that may have been because no British misdeeds at the time were equally appalling; and if they were at fault, that was because they needed more liberalism not less' (Watts 1983:202).

Our modern ideals, liberalism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, etc. are presented as some unattainable floating symbol, one which can never itself fail but only ever falls short through the mortal limitations of its advocates. It almost appears unattainable,

too noble or divine for mere mortal men, much like the ideologies of *HoD* which never manage to approach near enough to reality to be soiled by it.

In *HoD*, idealist rhetoric has its strongest base amongst women. Liberal rhetoricians like Marlow's aunt are so vociferous that she can even be heard by the paper-mache mephistopheles in the heart of darkness itself. But Marlow warns,

> 'It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and it they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over' (27).

Our modern idealism here reflects the change of Marlow from ideologue to acolyte of Kurtz. This parallels the shift from an earlier Marlow who occupies his time lounging around and discoursing while he waits, to a later Marlow who is constantly working and confronting the challenge of his environs. The lesson seems clear: as soon as ideology touches on reality, violence must be exerted to reconcile the two, and so necessarily devolves into hypocrisy. By this same virtue it can come to endorse evil, since it fosters a belief in what should be fantastically unbelievable, while at the same time concealing the reality which must inevitably fall before it.

In the absence of honest critical inquiry, criticism becomes performative, a social ritual defined by convention rather than real moral inquiry (Miller 2006), and makes it impossible to take most assessments of the narrative seriously.

HoD, through its criticism of such floating symbols which lack any firm grounding in actuality, provides a necessary warning against such ideological self-assurance. In addition, the thematic approach, in its ability to reveal and dissect the internal inconsistencies in ideas, and its sensitivity to the relationship between idealistic concepts and the evidence from experience used to justify them, perhaps provides exactly the antidote needed. Hopefully, this potential contribution is precisely what this chapter has demonstrated, both in the analytical tools the theory provides, as well as through its use to reveal the criticism *HoD* offers of such ideological contradictions.

Chapter 10

Conclusion: Thematic narrative and the sciences

Based on the thematic theory of narrative proposed here, narrative forms the foundation of all human knowledge and experience. Every thought you have ever had, began as a story, your own life-story, or someone else's. This is because all thoughts are either based in experience or derived from it through abstraction. Newton's theory of gravity, for instance, started out as a story of an apple falling from a tree, and for Newton, the theory of gravity was the moral of that story – that is to say, the theme or abstraction he derived from it. In actual fact, we believe the story of the apple falling from a tree was made up as a simplified way to illustrate his theory to the layman. In reality, the story of the theory of gravity was likely far more convoluted, but even so, if the thematic theory of narrative is correct, the essential process would have been the same.

If this is true, then it means that narratology is not merely a science of narrative, but a science of the human consciousness, of the essential human experience itself. And if this is the case, the implications of a thematic theory of narrative carry over not only to all of narratology, but more broadly to the humanities and social sciences, and even to knowledge in all its forms, including the natural sciences and the very essence of the human experience, or in other words, epistemology.

10.1 Narrative in science

That narrative is an expression or representation of human experience seems to be something that all narratologists agree upon. However, in this study we have demonstrated two different approaches to what this means. The approach that we have promoted here is that narrative represents experience in its containing, that is, cognitive form. The mainstream view we have argued against, in contrast, takes a more naïve view that narrative is capable of representing experience more directly, as though it were able to replicate the raw sensory data itself, thereby in many ways recreating the experience for the audience as though they were experiencing it first-hand. By doing so, formalists seek to evade the cognitive dimension of narrative, thereby simultaneously evading the conventionally determined signified of the

narrative signifier and thus liberating narrative (Sections 1.3, 3.1 & 3.3) . Hence the formalist definition promotes the narrative window-onto-a-story-world metaphor, and defines narrative in experiential rather than cognitive terms, in terms of the kinds of objects and events perceived and their temporal ordering rather than the cognitive architecture itself (c.f. Herman 2004: 9-14, Herman 2017).

As we saw, this difference is both slight but also far-reaching in its significance. The thematic theory implies a complete transformation of how we envision narrative and the terms with which to describe it. For one, it requires a far closer exchange with linguistics. Since its arrival in the 1980s, cognitive linguistics has completely revolutionised our understanding of language. The idea of language as a transparent medium is no longer sustainable – rather, language entails a transformative representation, one which at once incorporates elements of raw experience as well as elements of their cognitive structuring. Even were the formalist story-world window theory sustainable, these changes in our understanding of the language medium through which narrative is communicated would impose on it an essential and irreducible cognitive/thematic dimension that the formalist definition would have to contend with. In short, the fact that narrative is communicated via language leaves us only with two options: either a purely thematic theory of narrative, or a formalist definition framed within a thematic theory. Either way, I argue here that the only sustainable definition of narrative must be a thematic one.

Due to its role in our understanding of the mind's construal of experience, narratology is a foundational discipline for much of science broadly construed, in much the same capacity as philosophy and linguistics. This role is already implicitly acknowledged in the social sciences, as previously mentioned (see Section 1.5). As was argued there, the cognitive, thematic theory of narrative has already been widely adopted in these sciences. Instead, we find ourselves in the awkward position where it is the subject discipline itself which needs to play catch-up. It may seem odd, after having spent several hundred pages demonstrating the shortcomings of mainstream narratology, to then argue for narratology as a foundational discipline for the sciences as a whole. But this doesn't change the fact that narrative does seem to be integral to human consciousness, and therefore a rigorous science of narrative is a necessity for all theories of knowing, that is, epistemology – hence, the need for a

thematic revision of formalist narratology rather than simply casting it aside as redundancy.

When we explore the reason why the thematic theory of narrative has proven to be so influential in so many sciences outside of narratology, it is likely due to the theoretical value that lies in the definition itself, which revolves around the concept of the abstraction-instantiation cline (Section 4.3). This is namely that narrative comprises an abstract cognitive structure which allows for the integration of disparate experiences. Our ability to render the eternal-universal patterns which constitute much of human consciousness from seemingly unique and ephemeral experiences is a ubiquitous one, and is of concern specifically for those sciences which trade in experience in its more instantiated forms, disciplines such as cognitive science and psychology in general, sociology and languages. Yet this is certainly not a problem unique to these disciplines, but one which is relevant to all forms of knowing. A thematic approach to narrative seems to provide a basis for understanding this fundamental ability.

Thus, if we accept the thematic theory of narrative, this pertains to some extent to all sciences which concern themselves with the relationship between real-world experience and its cognitive integration. As previously discussed, narrative is not merely a form of expression, but a fundament of human consciousness (Section 4.2). 'Virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences' (Schank & Abelson 2014:1). Narrative expresses the relationship between distinct and individual experiential instances, and the abstract systems which we use to integrate these isolates into a coherent conceptual unity. The mind has a rather specific model of coherence which is closely tied to what we term narrative, and hence any coherent body of knowledge necessarily occurs within such a narrative framework (Morgan & Wise 2017). Thus, this relationship between our experience of the world and our comprehension of it touches upon virtually every aspect of human experience, including all the sciences, at least to some degree. In a real sense, narratology then constitutes a branch of epistemology, and as such constitutes a foundational discipline for all the sciences.

An understanding of this relationship between narratology and epistemology is provided by the previously mentioned concepts of a anthropolinguistics and an anthroponarratology (Section 1.6). Anthropology, that is, the holistic study of the

human talent for meaning-making, provides a unified, integrated and collaborative framework for all these associated disciplines, namely linguistics, narratology and epistemology, and many others besides.

We see this distinction between experience and concept for example in the scientific distinction between data and theory: data is an experiential isolate, absent of context and coherence, a story, as it were, whereas a theory is data provided with a framework of relations which renders it coherent – a narrative theme, in other words (Meuter 2011). Hence, it is necessary to understand this narrative aspect that all knowledge possesses if we are to understand at all what knowledge itself is. And this pertains not only to the sciences alone, but to much of human experience. It is for this reason that an accurate understanding of the concept is so crucial.

We observe an example of this epistemic aspect in the role of narrative in the monumental discoveries of physicists like Einstein, who when asked how he came up with his ground-breaking theories described the process of narrative imagining, by literally imagining theoretical physics as a story and then exploring its various entailments (Saturday Evening Post 2010), a creative process mirrored by many others (Evernote 2017, c.f. Plotnitsky 2005). Thus, even in the hard sciences, narrative pertains through its intimate connection to epistemology, that is, the mind's representation and experience of reality. It is not hard to conceive that at least some of the problems faced in the natural sciences may have less to do with limited data and more to do with the lacunae stemming from the mental shortcuts exploited by the sciences' narrative basis (Section 2.3). We see an example of this in Lakoff and Nunez's well-known *Where Mathematics Comes From* (2000), which demonstrates how many of the narrative metaphors described in this study are also present in mathematics. While science in general, and the hard sciences in particular, may disguise their narrativity through the objectivist framework of the scientific method, the fundamental narrativity of the human consciousness means that narrative is present just beneath the surface of every science.

This concealment of the cognitive (and narrative) dimension of science mirrors that of formalist narratology, where there appears to be more concern with the truth-value of scientific propositions than with understanding their semantic (conceptual) meaning. But while truth-value is a necessary scientific goal, it is a futile endeavour unless preceded by first determining the precise meaning of the proposition. This

may sound like an over-complication, particularly given how science seeks to simplify its propositional structures to be evident at face-value. But complex phenomena render complex descriptions, and simplification can only ever go so far.

Narrative, as it most often manifests in science, is, however, not narrative in the conventional form we have explored across most of this study, but rather narrative in its more subliminal and ubiquitous form; termed the ‘narrative consciousness’ or ‘narrative imagining’ (Section 4.2). Yet, as we have seen throughout this study, conventional narrative and the underlying narrative consciousness of language are not so different fundamentally, despite outward appearances. The instance to abstraction relationship (see Section 4.3), the interactions between experiential or folk-modelling and more abstract technical models and event modelling (Section 4.4), semantic compression (Section 4.5) and the integration of broader associative networks of meaning (Section 4.6), and finally the conceptual blending process itself (Section 4.7) are elements of the narrative consciousness universal to all cognition.

Indeed, it is only really in its use of narrative archetypes that conventional narrative departs significantly from other forms of cognition, and then only at a surface level. This is because for most narrative archetypes, there exists a non-archetypal but still conceptual equivalent, because the concepts which these archetypes express are not only meaningful to conventional narrative, but express general truths which are applicable to many other facets of human experience as well. For example, the archetype of THE FALLEN IDOL, is merely a particular expression of the broader concept of *the failure to achieve one’s goals or ideals*, or the archetype of THE LIGHT AND DARK TWINS expresses *the dichotomy of choice* concept. This is because it is the purpose of archetype to instantiate abstract truths through their experiential realisations. In this way, conventional narrative is an explanation of a theme in the same way that a scientific theory serves to explain a central proposition or problem statement. It is this relationship between the theme-exemplar binary of narrative and the abstraction-instantiation cline universal to all cognition that demonstrates the epistemic fundamentality of the narrative consciousness.

We can already see the epistemic significance of narrative in the proliferation of narratologies across the sciences. Narrative already plays an important role in the humanities (Kreiswirth 2005). The arts not only acknowledge the significance of narrative, but also of theme (Kleiner et al. 2001 [1926]: xxxvi-viii). Despite all the

disputes regarding what exactly constitutes a work of art, the communicative intent of the artist, that is, the theme, still remains one of the primary qualifiers (2001:2). Narrative, as we have seen, also plays a key role in philosophy and history (Section 3.3, c.f. Roth 2017, Fulda 2011, White 1980), as well as the study of religion (c.f. Prickett 2009, Rupke 2011, Finnern 2011) and law (Olson 2011, Presser & Sandberg 2015). As previously explained, there is a particularly close relationship between narrative and history, since history, like narrative, is the attempt to envision real-life experiences on the basis of symbols, or traces, as Ricoeur terms it, as well as the desire to derive meaningful generalities therefrom. The philosophical significance of narrative is also obvious from its epistemological role.

Aside from its well-known role in the humanities, *the Living Handbook of Narratology* includes sections on Corporate Storytelling (Norlyk et al. 2011) and Narration in Medicine (Goyal 2011, c.f. Hyden 1997), and Meuter (2011) furthermore adds various subsections on subjects like Narrative Pedagogy or the natural sciences, although he admits that 'a specifically narratological inquiry in the natural sciences remains a desideratum' (2011: 214).

Narrative may only be one register among several in language, but by all appearances it is possibly the most significant. If the earlier association between folk-modelling and narrative cognition is correct (Section 4.4.1), it implies that narrative is the most fundamental expression of the natural human experience, and as such, it may be very much the case that narrative is the unmarked or 'natural' language register from which all other forms of expression derive. As many have proposed (Frye, Bruner, Schank and Abelson, etc.), experience and language are intimately related because we experience the world through linguistic categories. Hence, contrary to the common philosophical view, language is not so much a relationship between perceiver and perceived as between a society and its environment, since these linguistic categories are handed down by society.

There is a growing consciousness of the role of narrative in psychology (Laszlo 2008), and the foundational role of narrative in language also suggests a similar fundamental role in cognition (c.f. Herman 2013). As we have seen, conventional narrative appears to be merely an exaggerated form of more universal narrative properties fundamental to general cognition (Section 4.2). Through its epistemic role in the integration of experience and thought, it applies to all the sciences and as

such has the potential to revolutionise our understanding of science in a way which few past scientific breakthroughs have.

10.2 The problem of formalist narratology

In *Story Logic*, Herman (2004: 311) reiterates the call for a transdisciplinary narratology, one which applies to all branches of science, the natural and social sciences and the humanities, based on the understanding of the fundamental epistemic role narrative plays in the human consciousness. The problem is that such calls are nothing new and can be traced back to even before the foundation of narratology to the structuralism which preceded it (Kreiswirth 2005, Plotnitsky 2005).

The answer that seems most likely is the flawed definition which underlies the mainstream formalist position. Formalists like Herman adopt a scientific framework which denies the same fundamental cognitive dimension of narrative from which its scientific ubiquity stems. In formalist narratology, the label 'cognitive' applies only to the experiential dimension of narrative, not to its conceptualisation, as explained previously (Section 1.3, 3.1 and 3.3). By denying the underlying cognition and looking only at the surface manifestations, formalists make impossible the very object they profess to seek.

While the thematic theory of narrative emphasises the epistemological significance of narrative, the formalist definition by contrast obscures it. By emphasising the idea of narrative as a mere representation of real-world experiences rather than as a faculty for meaning-creation, formalist narratology has continuously undermined the discovery of this epistemological role of narrative in the sciences. As Polkinghorne (1988: 93) puts it, formalist narratology has supplanted the true function of narrative as a negotiation between thought and experience with a theory that narrative is a representation of reality itself, and with narratology providing the mystical code needed to decipher it. In doing so, it has obscured a vital element in our understanding of human knowing.

As was stated previously (see Chapter 3), formalist narratology has consistently opposed the functional definition of narrative in favour of taxonomic description. We see this, for example, in the repeated definition of narrative as a formal description of temporal succession and causality (Morgan & Wise 2017). But the simple description

of a precedes b, or a causes b has little or no significance outside of its semantic significance. The mind is not a *tabula rasa* that fills with everything that chances to fall into it, but a highly selective filter designed to absorb only the most useful information. We continuously observe causalities and temporal successions without taking any notice. Instead, it is only those which signify something in terms of our semantic frame of reference which we consider noteworthy. In other words, contrary to the formalist perspective, experiences have no inherent significance, but are only significant relative to conceptual semantics. Narrative organises that information into highly subjective and specific structures designed to put it to its most effective use. The formalist description of narrative as little more than an imprint of reality clearly detracts from our essential understanding of those highly selective cognitive filters and meaning-creating structures that defines narrative's epistemological function.

We regularly see the effects of formalist narratology's resistance to acknowledging the cognitive dimension of narrative and its consequent epistemological role. To give only two examples, Norris et al. (2005) describe the value of narrative in science through its ability to provide an experiential framework for abstract scientific facts. Morgan (2017) demonstrates the same with respect to narrative's role in historical science. In other words, even though claiming to seek the essential narrativity of the human consciousness, they simultaneously reject it when it doesn't conform to their taxonomic approach. By defining narrative in terms of its surface forms rather than the underlying cognitive processes, it becomes impossible to identify those same processes. From this perspective, the formalist approach itself rejects any possibility of scientific progress for narratology.

We thus witness the detrimental effect of formalist narratology in the flawed attempts to explore narrative ubiquity in the sciences. Too often, as in the examples above, instead of attempting to uncover the presence of the narrative function in the various disciplines, these instead amount to just more taxonomic lists of superficial similarities to conventional narrative. Alternatively, as in White's (1980) narratological analysis of historiography, the exploration of the narrative semantics of history is replaced with an attempt to divine some kind of mystical code granting access to historical reality. Once again, narrative is presented as some kind of encrypted truth and narratology as providing the magical cipher.

In this study we have listed the evidence that supports the thematic narrative position and contrasted this evidence with the comparative poverty and indeterminacy of the evidence used to support the formalist definition, aside from the weight of tradition. We have presented all the evidence from psychology (Chapter 1), from within the narratological and literary critical traditions themselves (Chapter 2), from linguistics (Chapters 2-5), from folkloristics and mythography (Chapters 5-6). Finally, in the last three chapters we demonstrated Ronen's claim that the analysis of actual narratives is incontrovertibly thematic (1994:147-9) (see Section 3.2), by looking at a wide range of narratives from paintings (Section 5.1) to popular music (Section 7.7), from ancient myths to modern fiction, through both concise (Chapter 7) and in-depth analysis (Chapters 8 & 9), from exemplary narratives like the fables of Aesop (Section 7.1) where themes are explicitly stated, to the most open or readerly narratives like *Red Riding Hood* (Section 7.5) where the creative freedom to interpret theme is almost unlimited.

In this way, we have argued that the weight of evidence from actual narratives themselves contradicts the formalist position. Formalist analysis focuses on experiential inputs alone, and while certainly significant in their own right, it ignores their semantic categorisation and how these are blended in specific ways by narrative. As we have seen, in the numerous narrative analyses, this is where most of the work in narrative is done – at the conceptual rather than the experiential level. The formalist approach, while not entirely incorrect *per se,* misses most of what makes narrative so important. At the same time, we demonstrated how most of the evidence for the formalist position falls apart at closer inspection (Chapter 3), how defining narrative in terms of real-world existent categories like event, character, setting, etc. runs afoul of the taxonomic fallacy (Section 3.2), and how the philosophical basis for the very notion of narrative worlds, even though indisputably based in semantics, contradicts with the latter's most basic principles (Section 3.3).

Correcting the shortcomings of the traditional formalist definition of narrative therefore doesn't matter merely to the science of narratology, but through its epistemological significance to science as a whole. Moreover, it is only through acknowledging the thematic theory of narrative, one which views narrative not merely as a kind of representation, but rather as an essential facet of the human consciousness, that we are made aware of this significance. While this study has

focused mainly on conventional, particularly fictional, narrative, this narrow focus should not blind us to the ubiquity of narrative.

10.3 Closing word

Clearly, the present study is only a first step in a far larger project. As was put forth previously (see Section 4.4), the semantic/thematic redefinition of narrative requires a complete revision of all associated theoretical concepts, such as the concept of fiction and truth in narrative, the related theories of narrative composition, as well as general concepts like narrative point of view.

The present study is envisioned only as a meaningful first step, and thus also as convincing argument for such larger ambitions, by providing a lucid beginning to a thematic theory of narrative.

It is a fitting place to end this dissertation on emphasizing again the profound significance of narrative to all conscious human endeavours and that the cognitive, thematic theory of narrative reveals this significance. We started this study with the statement that the current mainstream formalist definition of narrative occludes its true cognitive nature and significance, and nothing demonstrates the failure of the formalist definition of narrative more than the way in which formalist narratology has failed the sciences as a whole through its obfuscation of narrative's foundational epistemological role in the human consciousness.

The truth is that we simply cannot gauge yet how significant this role is, whether it is ultimately trivial or whether it has produced the same profound distortions elsewhere as it has within our understanding of conventional narrative itself. Some of these issues have been pointed out, such as the innate metaphoric and figurative nature of consciousness, the way in which it complicates our understanding of concepts like subjective and objective, and the role of evidentiary substantiation in the sciences in general, the relationship between scientific models and the practical folk models we utilize in day-to-day experience, or that between the experience of individual events and the extensive abstract conceptual frameworks that render these experiences

meaningful, or lastly, the effect of the automatic cognitive processes and unconscious biases such as those described by blending theory or theories of embodied thought on our scientific understanding of our world.

Nevertheless, given the ubiquity of narrative, even an answer in the negative would be a worthwhile result, if only to lay to rest the questions of the influence of narrative consciousness in the sciences and human knowledge in general.

This thesis was composed of two parts, the first outlining a theory of thematic narrative, the second demonstrating its application to narrative texts.

The first part began by outlining several important arguments, namely:

- That narrative is thematic in nature, defined by the general communicative intention of language, but more specifically by the narrative function of communicating abstract concepts (themes) through the experiences that they are derived from (exemplars),
- That this conflicts with the formalist definition of narrative advanced by mainstream narratology,
- And that the thematic narrative theory has the weight of evidence supporting it, from several disciplines, but most importantly from the linguistic evidence.

Chapter 2 surveyed the prior literature on thematic narrative, mainly focusing on the work of Northrop Frye, Paul Ricoeur and cognitive linguistics.

Next, focus shifted to formalist narratology in Chapter 3, which is defined as any theory which replaces the signified with the referent in the signifier-signified binary, thereby erasing the role of abstract conceptualisation (narrative theme). This results in two main problems, namely the taxonomic fallacy – describing narrative in terms of arbitrary features rather than its communicative function – and equating plot with reality rather than conceptualisations. This leads to two main problems, firstly, obscuring the cognitive role of narrative by erasing the role of conceptualisation, and secondly, obscuring its social role by excluding the communicative intent from its definition.

On this basis, the next two chapters proceeded to outline a theory of narrative theme. This was described as comprising two dimensions, namely the innate narrativity of language, which occurs in all language to some degree (but is more

pronounced in narrative), and conventional narrative, which is distinguished primarily by the use of exemplification and archetype (though occasional exceptions were noted).

As such, narrative is defined both by degree (as a foregrounding of the narrative quality that all language possesses) and by kind (by the use of specifically narrative conventions for interpreting the theme-exemplar relationship). This definition is furthermore specifically grounded in the aforementioned socio-cognitive function of narrative. This is the creation of models for integrating experience with our abstract cultural belief systems so that those beliefs can be enacted in everyday life. In this way, the thematic theory of narrative not only provides a high-resolution, process-based model of narrative cognition, but also one which is firmly grounded in our understanding of human consciousness and social interaction.

The main purpose of the second part was twofold: firstly, to demonstrate how the thematic narrative model applies to narrative analysis, but also secondly, to demonstrate the value of that application through actual contributions to central topics of scholarly discourse around each of the narratives.

In the previous chapter on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we applied our model to the difficult problem of the novel's polyphony. Indeed, as with most of these chapters, as much time was spent discussing the academic literature as on the thematic analysis itself. This is pointedly done precisely to demonstrate the model's potential for contribution to existing debates.

As mentioned, the problem of the novel's polyphony is continually referenced in the scholarly literature, yet until now appears to have mostly resisted attempts at close analysis – likely because the necessary tools were lacking. Watt's exploration of its contrasting use of symbolist and impressionist techniques is perhaps the best attempt until this point, but while admirable in the range of techniques he identifies, it is comparatively lacking in the degree of precision and clarity of its generalised descriptions of each particular technique. Hopefully, this chapter demonstrated the valuable contribution thematic narrative offers in the increased resolution of the analyses it provides of these same defining features.

In the preceding chapter, the goal was different. Here the aim was less to contribute to an existing debate, but rather to demonstrate the potential of the thematic analysis

model to open up new discourses on valuable topics heretofore neglected by the theoretical blind spots of the prevailing formalist theories. It was argued that Donaldson's novel provides valuable new insights and evaluations of key existentialist concerns, which the thematic narrative theory is particularly suited to exploring.

In Chapter 7, seven short narratives were analysed. This is in addition to the two previous analyses of Friedrich's painting *The Wanderer* and the Grim Reaper archetype in Chapter 6. Here the goals were varied, as mentioned: to demonstrate the continued thematicity of modern narrative through its evolution from its more exemplary folktale origins; to demonstrate the natural adaptability of the thematic approach to a wide range of narratives and issues (something formalist narratology has long struggled with due to its taxonomic principles, compared to the functionalist principles of the thematic approach – which is rooted in the narrative communicative intent rather than its form); as well as the previously mentioned goals of demonstrating how the thematic model is applied as well as its valuable contribution to longstanding scholarly debates.

The second part however began with a discussion of the folktale roots of narrative in exemplary narrative. It was argued that one of the original main purposes of narrative was as a primitive substitute for the modern function of scientific description. Narrative thus was originally primarily a way of explaining things, and it was argued that science has less supplanted than transformed this function, focusing less on ontological themes and more on cultural ones. Narrative has become less a way of explaining the natural world and more one of the transmission of cultural beliefs and interpretive frameworks. A broad range of these were discussed in Olrik and Luthi's laws, laws still applicable to varying degrees to modern narrative, and in particular, the most universal and foundational archetype of all, namely Frye's four narrative mythoi.

Together, these various objectives argue for the necessity of a thematic revision of narratology. These arguments are:

- the importance of theme in the communicative function of narrative – both diachronically in the evolution of narrative, and synchronically in the cognitive

role of narrative as a means of grounding thought in experience and its social role of transmitting cultural beliefs and interpretive frameworks;

- the usefulness of the narrative blending model in exploring and explaining narrative thematics;
- and the valuable contribution of the results of thematic narrative analysis to significant academic discourses;

In summary, it is hoped that this argues for, at the very least, the need to further research the thematic approach to narrative. This thesis has sought to prove the central role of conceptualisation in narrative, as well as that current mainstream approaches do not sufficiently take this vital element into consideration. The thematic approach instead was proposed as a solution to this quandary at the core of contemporary narratology, and it is hoped that this transformation of the theory of narrative will enable the discipline to finally fulfil its important epistemic role in the sciences in general.

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