THE Narrative
READER

EDITED BY
MARTIN McQUILLAN
the corpus. This in turn implies that a narrative theory makes describable only the narrative aspects of a text and not all the characteristics of a narrative text. It is, therefore, impossible to specify a fixed corpus; we can only specify a corpus of texts in which the narrative characteristics are so dominant that their description may be considered relevant. Another possibility is to use the theory to describe segments of non-narrative texts as well as the narrative aspects of any given text, such as, for example, the above-mentioned poem by Eliot. The problem of specifying a corpus is then solved in the sense that the relativity of such a specification is clearly established.

Christain Metz, "Notes Toward a Phenomenology of the Narrative"*

See also:
- Lévi-Strauss (2.i)
- Barthes (2.iii)
- Berger (3.iii)
- Mulvey (4)
- Heath (4)
- Iser (7)
- Ricoeur (7)

According to Algirdas Julien Greimas (Semantique structurale), the minimum structure any signification requires is the presence of two terms and the relationship linking them; thus, he notes, signification presupposes perception (of the terms and of their relation). Similarly, it might be said that the main interest of structural analysis is only in being able to find what was already there, of accounting with more precision for what a naive consciousness had 'picked up' without analysis. Let us also remember what Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote about myths in his Structural Anthropology: that a myth is always recognized as being such by those to whom it is recited, even when it has been translated from one idiom into another, even when its exact formulation has been somewhat modified.

Let us say, therefore – perhaps a little cavalierly – that structural analysis always assumes, by virtue of an implicit or explicit prior stage, something like a phenomenology of its subject, or, again, that signification (which is constructed and discontinuous) renders explicit what had first been experienced only as a perception (which is continuous and spontaneous). It is from this point of view that I would like to explore some answers to the question: How is a narrative recognized, prior to any analysis?

A narrative has a beginning and an ending, a fact that simultaneously distinguishes it from the rest of the world and opposes it to the 'real' world. It is true that certain types of narrative, culturally highly elaborated, have the peculiarity of cheating on the ending

(conclusions that are withheld or are evasive, 'mirror' constructions in which the end of the recited event establishes and explains the conditions that produced the instance of recitation, denouements in an endless spiral, etc.), but these are only secondary elaborations, which enrich the narrative without destroying it, and which are neither intended nor able to remove it from its basic requirement of enclosure. It is the reader's imagination, and not the substance of the narrative sequence, that these trick endings project into infinity. In a literary narrative that trails off in points of suspension (whether real or implied), the effect of being suspended does not apply to the narrative object, which, for its part, retains a perfectly clear ending—indicated, precisely, by the three dots. The British film Dead of Night concludes in a spiral,¹ but, as a suite of images, it has a definite ending—the last image of the film.

Children are not fooled when being told stories. For them, the question of knowing whether the story has ended is always relevant, even when they have the maturity to glimpse possible extensions of the semantic substance of the story (but not of the story itself). They ask, 'Is that the end? But afterward what does the prince do?'

II

A beginning and an ending—that is to say, the narrative is a temporal sequence. A doubly temporal sequence, one must hasten to specify: there is the time of the thing told and the time of the telling (the time of the significate and the time of the signifier). This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives (three years of the hero’s life summed up in two sentences of a novel or in a few shots of a ‘frequentative’ montage in film, etc.). More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme—and that is what distinguishes narrative from simple description (which creates space in time), as well as from the image (which creates one space in another space).

The example of the cinematographic narrative easily illustrates these three possibilities: A motionless and isolated shot of a stretch of desert is an image (space-significate-space-signifier); several partial and successive shots of this desert waste make up a description (space-significate-time-signifier); several successive shots of a caravan moving across the desert constitute a narrative (time-significate-time-signifier).

This example was purposely simplified (in film, indeed, space is always present, even in the narrative, because the cinematic narrative is produced by images). But their simplification is of little importance here, and it was intended only to show that the narrative is, among other things, a system of temporal transformations. In any narrative, the narrative object is a more or less chronological sequence of events; in any narrative, the narrative instance takes the form of a sequence of signifiers that has a certain duration—for the literary narrative, the time it takes to read it; for the cinematographic narrative, the time it takes to see it, etc.

In still photography, by contrast, what is represented as a point in time that has been frozen; the viewer's intake is also supposed to be instantaneous; and, even when it is prolonged, it is not a reading of the signifiers in a single, controlled order of concatenations.
It is within the framework of this opposition between the narrative and the image that one can perhaps explain the awkward, hybrid position of description. We all assume that description differs from narration, and that is a classical distinction, but, on the other hand, a large number of narratives contain descriptions, and it is not even clear that descriptions exist other than as components of narratives. Thus, description appears simultaneously as the opposite of narration and as one of the great figures, or one of the important moments, of narration. This curious mixture of antinomy and kinship, which intuitively defines the relationship between narration and description, can be made a little clearer if one brings a third term into the system—the image. Narration and description are opposed in common to the image because their signifiers are temporalized, whereas the image’s signifier is instantaneous; thus, the kinship. But within this ‘narrative-descriptive’ category, which is defined by a feature of the signifier, narration and description are contrasted by a feature of their significates, for in the narrative the signified is temporalized, whereas it is instantaneous in description; thus, the antinomy.

Within the narrative, the descriptive passage immediately reveals itself: it is the only one within which the temporal concatenation of the signifiers—though it is not interrupted—ceases to refer to the temporal relation (whether consecutive or not) among the corresponding significates, and the order it assigns to their signified elements is only one of spatial coexistence (that is to say, of relationships supposed to be constant whatever moment in time is chosen). From the narrative to the descriptive, we pass through a change of intelligibility, in the sense in which one speaks of a change of gears in automobiles.

III

A closed sequence, a temporal sequence: every narrative is, therefore, a discourse (the converse is not true; many discourses are not narratives—the lyric poem, the educational film, etc.).

What distinguishes a discourse from the rest of the world, and by the same token contrasts it with the ‘real’ world, is the fact that a discourse must necessarily be made by someone (for discourse is not language), whereas one of the characteristics of the world is that it is uttered by no one.

In Jakobsonian terms, one would say that a discourse, being a statement or sequence of statements, refers necessarily to a subject of the statement. But one should not hastily assume an author, for the notion of authorship is simply one of the forms, culturally bound and conditioned, of a far more universal process, which, for that reason, should be called the ‘narrative process.’ It is true that in certain highly elaborated narratives of modern Western society the subject of the statement is most often the author, but, aside from that, there are the myths, the folk tales, the many narrative films of everyday consumption, which are passed from hand to hand in the course of their industrial or ‘craft’ manufacturing, the many radio and television shows put together by teams (whether as an organized group or in gleeful disorder), etc.—in short, all the authorless narratives, at least in the sense ‘author’ has in the humanist tradition of ‘high culture.’

Narratives without authors, but not without narrators. The impression that someone is speaking is bound not to the empirical presence of a definite, known, or
knowable speaker but to the listener’s spontaneous perception of the linguistic nature of the object to which he is listening; because it is speech, someone must be speaking.

Albert Laffay, in Logique du cinéma, has shown this to be true of film narrative. The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some ‘master of ceremonies,’ some ‘grand image-maker’ (‘grand imagier’) who (before being recognized as the author, if it is an auteur film, or, if not, in the absence of an author) is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object (since the spectator always knows that what he is seeing is a film), or more precisely a sort of ‘potential linguistic focus’ (‘foyer linguistique virtuel’) situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible. That is the filmic form of the narrative instance, which is necessarily present, and is necessarily perceived, in any narrative.

IV

A closed sequence, a temporal sequence, discourse – therefore, the perception of the narrative as real, that is, as being really a narrative, must result in rendering the recited object unreal.

I will not linger over deliberately imaginary narratives (fantastic tales, legends, etc.); far from being convincing examples of the process of unrealization (irréalisation), which is at the heart of every narrative act, they would divert our attention toward a second level of unrealization, which is unnecessary and is very different from the first. Whether the narrated event follows nonhuman logic (a pumpkin metamorphosed into a carriage, etc.) or the ordinary logic of everyday life (‘realistic’ tales of various kinds), it has, because it is perceived as narrated, already been unrealized. Realism is not reality. No one expects to meet in the street the hero of some scrupulously realistic contemporary novel. Realism affects the organization of the contents, not narration as a status. On one level of perception, Emma Bovary is no less imaginary than Cinderella’s fairy godmother.

We must, however, go one step further, for, along with realistic stories (which nobody believes have really occurred), there are also real stories: accounts of historical occurrences (the assassination of Marat), accounts of daily life (I tell a friend what I have done the evening before), accounts to oneself (my memories as I recall them), and the news accounts of film, radio, the press, etc. Now, these ‘true’ accounts are characterized, just as much as the imaginary accounts, by the form of unreality that we are examining here. The reader of a history book knows that Marat is not actually being assassinated now; the friend to whom I am talking understands that, although I am describing my activities, I am no longer living them (or, more precisely, that, because the narrative act is, in turn, another part of my life, that part of my life I am recounting to him ceases to be lived as it is being told); the viewer of television news does not consider himself a direct witness to the event the images bring to him.

Reality assumes presence, which has a privileged position along two parameters, space and time; only the here and now are completely real. By its very existence, the narrative suppresses the now (accounts of current life) or the here (live television coverage), and most frequently the two together (newsreels, historical accounts, etc.).
An account is perceived as such only as long as a margin, even an infinitesimal one, separates it from the fullness of here and now. Certain examples of minimum unreality are very enlightening: the paradoxical situation has occasionally been noted of participants in a political parade who, transistor radio in hand, were listening, while demonstrating, to the live coverage of their own demonstration. But, perhaps because the inordinate overvaluation of the specificity of the audiovisual media may occasionally blur more general truths, sufficient attention has not been given to the fact that, for the listening demonstrators, the radio report remained entirely an account: for, at the precise moment they were listening, they were no longer demonstrating (or at least it was not their listening self which was demonstrating), and the narrated parade they were hearing could only be confused with the demonstration they were taking part in from a positivistic point of view, introducing the notion of secondary information (whether or not the demonstrators had availed themselves of this intelligence). To be sure, between these two parades there is not the same difference as, say, between a parade held on May 15 and one held on May 16, but this order of difference is not the only possible one, and indeed one substantial parade can, as is the case here, correspond to two phenomenal parades. The first parade is the one the man with the radio knows he is participating in, and which he is experiencing instant after instant, at the precise point in the march where he finds himself each second - a parade that, like Fabrice at the battle of Waterloo, he will never dominate. The second is the one whose account he is listening to, and it is only the first parade made unreal - this unrealization being due to the presence of the newscaster, who is, however, notably absent from the first parade, as well as to a spatiotemporal displacement (reduced to a minimum in this example), which necessarily brings about the intrusion of the narrator. It is this second parade, and only this second parade, that the man with the radio can dominate, like the reader of Victor Hugo's 'Waterloo' (A.J. Greimas would say that the man with the radio is actually two actors: the demonstrating actor and the listening actor).

We are approaching a concept that has been developed frequently since Jean-Paul Sartre made his studies of the world of the imagination: reality does not tell stories, but memory, because it is an account, is entirely imaginative. Thus, an event must in some way have ended before its narration can begin. One might add that, in the case of the strictly simultaneous accounts that live television coverage offers, spatial displacement - that is, the fact of the image itself - can assume the sole of temporal displacement (which is the predominant feature of traditional narratives), thereby alone ensuring the correct functioning of narrative unrealization (otherwise how could one explain the remarkable absence of traumatism in the television-viewer?): the event described by live news coverage is real, but it occurs elsewhere. On the screen, it is unreal.

NOTE

1. It is morning. The hero, an architect, wakes up. He has had a bad night: always that same recurring dream. The telephone rings. It is a neighboring landowner who wishes to make some improvements on his property and invites the architect to spend the weekend at his manor. The hero accepts. Upon his arrival, he gradually recognizes the manor of his dream. The party takes place, and ends as the hero wakes up. He gets out of bed; so it was a dream after all. The same recurring dream. The telephone rings, etc. . . .
ii THEORIES

Gérard Genette, ‘Order in Narrative’*

See also:
Aristotle (1.i)
Barthes (2.iii)
Gibson (3.ii)
Lanser (5)
Diengott (5)
Derrida (6)
Miller (6)

NARRATIVE TIME?

Narrative is a . . . doubly temporal sequence. . . . There is the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative (the time of the signified and the time of the signifier). This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives (three years of the hero’s life summed up in two sentences of a novel or in a few shots of a ‘frequentative’ montage in film, etc.). More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme.¹

The temporal duality so sharply emphasized here, and referred to by German theoreticians as the opposition between erzählte Zeit (story time) and Erzählzeit (narrative time),² is a typical characteristic not only of cinematic narrative but also of oral narrative, at all its levels of aesthetic elaboration, including the fully ‘literary’ level of epic recitation or dramatic narration (the narrative of Théramène,³ for example). It is less relevant perhaps in other forms of narrative expression, such as the roman-photo⁴ or the comic strip (or a pictorial strip, like the predella of Urbino, or an embroidered strip, like the ‘tapestry’ of Queen Matilda), which, while making up sequences of images and thus requiring a successive or diachronic reading, also lend themselves to, and even invite, a kind of global and synchronic look – or at least a look whose direction is no longer determined by the sequence of images. The status of written literary narrative in this respect is even more difficult to establish. Like the oral or cinematic narrative, it can only be ‘consumed’, and therefore actualized, in a time that is obviously reading time, and even if the sequentiality of its components can be undermined by a capricious, repetitive, or selective reading, that undermining nonetheless stops short of perfect analexia: one can run a film backwards, image by image, but one cannot read a text backwards, letter by letter, or even word by word, or even sentence by sentence, without its ceasing to be a text. Books are a little more constrained than people sometimes say they are by the celebrated linearity of the linguistic signifier, which is easier to deny in theory than eliminate in fact. However, there is no question here of identifying the status of written narrative (literary or not) with that of oral narrative. The temporality

of written narrative is to some extent conditional or instrumental; produced in time, like everything else, written narrative exists in space and as space, and the time needed for ‘consuming’ it is the time needed for crossing or traversing it, like a road or a field. The narrative text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading.

This state of affairs, we will see below, has certain consequences for our discussion, and at times we will have to correct, or try to correct, the effects of metonymic displacement; but we must first take that displacement for granted, since it forms part of the narrative game, and therefore accept literally the quasi-fiction of Erzählzeit, this false time standing in for a true time and to be treated – with the combination of reservation and acquiescence that this involves – as a pseudo-time.

Having taken these precautions, we will study relations between the time of the story and the (pseudo-) time of the narrative according to what seem to me to be three essential determinations: connections between the temporal order of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative, which will be the subject of the first chapter; connections between the variable duration of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative – connections, thus, of speed – which will be the subject of the second chapter; finally, connections of frequency, that is (to limit myself to an approximate formulation), relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative, relations to which the third chapter will be devoted.

ANACHRONIES

To study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue. Obviously this reconstitution is not always possible, and it becomes useless for certain extreme cases like the novels of Robbe-Grillet, where temporal reference is deliberately sabotaged. It is just as obvious that in the classical narrative, on the other hand, reconstitution is most often not only possible, because in those texts narrative discourse never inverts the order of events without saying so, but also necessary, and precisely for the same reason: when a narrative segment begins with an indication like ‘Three months earlier...’ we must take into account both that this scene comes after in the narrative, and that it is supposed to have come before in the story: each of these, or rather the relationship between them (of contrast or of dissonance), is basic to the narrative text, and suppressing this relationship by eliminating one of its members is not only not sticking to the text, but is quite simply killing it.

Pinpointing and measuring these narrative anachronies (as I will call the various types of discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative) implicitly assume the existence of a kind of zero degree that would be a condition of perfect temporal correspondence between narrative and story. This point of reference is more hypothetical than real. Folklore narrative habitually conforms, at least in its major articulations, to chronological order, but our (Western) literary tradition, in contrast, was inaugurated by a characteristic effect of anachrony. In the eighth line of the Iliad, the narrator, having
evoked the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon that he proclaims as the starting point of his narrative (ex hou de ta prōta), goes back about ten days to reveal the cause of the quarrel in some 140 retrospective lines (affront to Chryses – Apollo’s anger – plague). We know that this beginning in medias res, followed by an expository return to an earlier period of time, will become one of the formal topoi of epic, and we also know how faithfully the style of novelistic narration follows in this respect the style of its remote ancestor, even in the heart of the ‘realistic’ nineteenth century. . . . We will thus not be so foolish as to claim that anachrony is either a rarity or a modern invention. On the contrary, it is one of the traditional resources of literary narration.

ANALEPSES

Every anachrony constitutes, with respect to the narrative into which it is inserted – onto which it is grafted – a narrative that is temporally second, subordinate to the first in a sort of narrative syntax that we met in the analysis we undertook above of a very short fragment from Jean Santeuil. We will henceforth call the temporal level of narrative with respect to which anachrony is defined as such, ‘first narrative’. Of course – and this we have already verified – the embeddings can be more complex, and an anachrony can assume the role of first narrative with respect to another that it carries; and more generally, with respect to an anachrony the totality of the context can be taken as first narrative . . .

This distinction is not as useless as it might seem at first sight. In effect, external analepses and internal analepses (or the internal part of mixed analepses) function for purposes of narrative analysis in totally different ways, at least on one point that seems to me essential. External analepses, by the very fact that they are external, never at any moment risk interfering with the first narrative, for their only function is to fill out the first narrative by enlightening the reader on one or another ‘antecedent’. This is obviously the case with some of the examples already mentioned and it is also, and just as typically, the case with Un amour de Swann in the Recherche du temps perdu. The case is otherwise with internal analepses: since their temporal field is contained within the temporal field of the first narrative, they present an obvious risk of redundancy or collision . . .

We have seen how the determination of reach allowed us to divide analepses into two classes, external and internal, depending on whether the point to which they reach is located outside or inside the temporal field of the first narrative. The mixed class – not, after all, much resorted to – is in fact determined by a characteristic of extent, since this class consists of external analepses prolonged to rejoin and pass beyond the starting point of the first narrative . . .

[In Proust’s Recherche] the boldest avoidance (even if the boldness is pure negligence) consists of forgetting the analeptic character of a section of narrative and prolonging that section more or less indefinitely on its own account, paying no attention to the point where it rejoins the first narrative. That is what happens in the episode – famous for other reasons – of the grandmother’s death. It opens with an obviously analeptic beginning: ‘I went upstairs, and found my grandmother not so well. For some time past, without knowing exactly what was wrong, she had been complaining of her health.’ Then the narrative that has been opened in the retrospective mood continues uninterruptedly on up to the death, without ever acknowledging and signalling the
moment (although indeed necessarily come to and passed beyond) when Marcel, returning from Mme de Villeparisis's, had found his grandmother 'not so well'. We can never, therefore, either locate the grandmother's death exactly in relation to the Villeparisis matinée, or decide where the analepsis ends and the first narrative resumes. The case is obviously the same, but on a very much broader scale, with the analepsis opened in Noms de pays: le pays. We have already seen that this analepsis will continue to the last line of the Recherche without paying its respects in passing to the moment of the late insomnias, although these were its source in his memory and almost its narrative matrix: another retrospection that is more than complete, with an extent much greater than its reach, and which at an undetermined point in its career is covertly transformed into an anticipation. In his own way -- without proclaiming it and probably even without perceiving it -- Proust here unsettles the most basic norms of narration, and anticipates the most disconcerting proceedings of the modern novel.

PROLEPSES

Anticipation, or temporal prolepsis, is clearly much less frequent than the inverse figure, at least in the Western narrative tradition -- although each of the three great early epics, the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Aeneid, begins with a sort of anticipatory summary that to a certain extent justifies the formula Todorov applied to Homeric narrative: 'plot of predestination.' The concern with narrative suspense that is characteristic of the 'classical' conception of the novel ('classical' in the broad sense, and whose center of gravity is, rather, in the nineteenth century) does not easily come to terms with such a practice. Neither, moreover, does the traditional fiction of a narrator who must appear more or less to discover the story at the same time that he tells it. Thus we will find very few prolepses in a Balzac, a Dickens, or a Tolstoy, even if the common practice, as we have already seen, of beginning in medias res (or yet, I may venture to say, in ultimas res), sometimes gives the illusion of it. It goes without saying that a certain load of 'predestination' hangs over the main part of the narrative in Manon Lescaut (where we know, even before Des Grieux opens his story, that it ends with a deportation), or a fortiori in The Death of Ivan Ilych, which begins with its epilogue.

The 'first-person' narrative lends itself better than any other to anticipation, by the very fact of its avowedly retrospective character, which authorizes the narrator to allude to the future and in particular to his present situation, for these to some extent form part of his role. Robinson Crusoe can tell us almost at the beginning that the lecture his father gave to turn him aside from nautical adventures was 'truly prophetic', even though at the time he had no idea of it, and Rousseau, with the episode of the combs, does not fail to vouch for not only his past innocence but also the vigor of his retrospective indignation: 'In writing this I feel my pulse quicken yet.' Nonetheless, the Recherche du temps perdu uses prolepsis to an extent probably equaled in the whole history of narrative, even autobiographical narrative, and is thus privileged territory for the study of this type of narrative anachrony . . .

The importance of 'anachronic' narrative in the Recherche du temps perdu is obviously connected to the retrospectively synthetic character of Proustian narrative, which is totally present in the narrator's mind at every moment. Ever since the day when the narrator in a trance perceived the unifying significance of his story, he
never ceases to hold all of its threads simultaneously, to apprehend simultaneously all of its places and all of its moments, to be capable of establishing a multitude of "telescopic" relationships amongst them: a ubiquity that is spatial but also temporal, an "omnitemporality".

But the very ideas of retrospection or anticipation, which ground the narrative categories of analepsis and prolepsis in "psychology", take for granted a perfectly clear temporal consciousness and unambiguous relationships among present, past, and future. Only because the exposition required it, and at the cost of excessive schematization, have I until now postulated this to have always been so. In fact, the very frequency of interpolations and their reciprocal entanglement often embroil matters in such a way as to leave the "simple" reader, and even the most determined analyst, sometimes with no way out. To conclude this chapter we shall examine some of these ambiguous structures which bring us to the threshold of achrony pure and simple.

These proleptic analepses and analeptic prolepses are so many complex anachronies, and they somewhat disturb our reassuring ideas about retrospection and anticipation. Let us again recall the existence of open analepses (analepses whose conclusion cannot be localized), which therefore necessarily entails the existence of temporally indefinite narrative sections. But we also find in the Recherche some events not provided with any temporal reference whatsoever, events that we cannot place at all in relation to the events surrounding them. To be unplaceable they need only be attached to some other event (which would require the narrative to define them as being earlier or later) but to the (atemporal) commentarial discourse that accompanies them — and we know what place that has in this work. After the scene of the missed introduction to Albertine, in the Jeunes filles en fleurs, the narrator offers some reflections on the subjectivity of the feeling of love, then illustrates this theory with the example of a drawing master who had never known the color of the hair of a mistress he had passionately loved and who had left him a daughter ("I never saw her except with a hat on"). Here, no inference from the content can help the analyst define the status of an anachrony deprived of every temporal connection, which is an event we must ultimately take to be dateless and ageless: to be an achrony.

Now, it is not only such isolated events that express the narrative's capacity to disengage its arrangement from all dependence, even inverse dependence, on the chronological sequence of the story it tells. The Recherche presents, at least in two places, genuine achronic structures. Only by naively confusing the narrative's syntagmatic order with the story's temporal order does one imagine, as hurried readers do, that the meeting with the Duchess or the episode of the steeples comes later than the scene at Montjouvan. The truth is that the narrator had the clearest of reasons for grouping together, in defiance of all chronology, events connected by spatial proximity, by climatic identity (the walks to Méséglise always take place in bad weather, those to Guermantes in good weather), or by thematic kinship (the Méséglise way represents the erotic-affective side of the world of childhood, that of Guermantes its aesthetic side); he thus made clear, more than anyone had done before him and better than they had, narrative's capacity for temporal autonomy.
Seymour Chatman, ‘Point of View’*

See also
Booth (1.iii)
Prince (2.ii)
Lanser (5)
Diengott (5)
Iser (7)
Cohn (7)

Let us consider a rather straightforward literary example. *Dombey and Son* begins as follows:

Dombey sat in the corner of the darkened room in the great armchair by the bedside, and son lay tucked up warm in a little basket bedstead, carefully disposed on a low settle immediately in front of the fire and close to it, as if his constitution were analogous to that of a muffin, and it was essential to toast him brown while he was very new.

No reader, I take it, believes that the maker of the analogy between the baby and a toasted muffin is Mr Dombey, a man far too complacent about his first male offspring to entertain such a thought. So these are clearly the narrator’s words (or, to be scrupulous, they are words assigned to the narrator by the implied author). It is traditional to say that the analogy represents the narrator’s ‘point of view,’ which is here, as often in Dickens’s