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The Diachronization of Narratology

Dedicated to F. K. Stanzel on his 80th birthday

In recent decades narrative theory has moved from its early structuralist stage to a phase in which it has opened itself to other methodologies and has thus widened its scope. Besides the "narratologies" collected in David Herman's recent volume (*Narratologies*), a great number of narratological praxeis have developed in the past twenty years. These mostly American orientations include feminist and queer narratology (Lanser; Mezei; Roof), psychoanalytic narratology (Brooks; Chambers), poststructuralist narratology (Gibson), and cultural studies narratology with a heavy emphasis on multicultural and postcolonial narrative (Doyle; Spurr; Fludernik, "When the Self is an Other"). These newer approaches have been flanked by a number of more traditional schools specializing in formal and theoretical questions familiar from Gérard Genette or F. K. Stanzel that are now treated with greater theoretical sophistication or applied to new areas of research.[1] Moreover, two main schools have emerged that continue the formal orientation of traditional narratology but extend it, on the one hand, to the newest linguistic and cognitive approaches;[2] and, on the other, to the new media (possible worlds theory as represented in the work of Marie-Laure Ryan).[3] The major developments in recent narrative theory have therefore concerned theoretical and systematic issues.

Despite this impressive variety of new narratological approaches, however, there has been comparatively little interest on a theoretical level in the history of narrative forms and functions. Classical structuralist narratology, with its "geometrical imaginary" (Gibson), necessarily had a synchronic outlook, and the same is true of possible worlds theory and many poststructuralist approaches. Nevertheless, the lack of emphasis on historical developments in the realm of cultural studies narratology is surprising. Indeed, the only area of narratology mentioned so far that has had a keen interest in the history of narrative is feminist narratology. This interest presumably

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arose in connection with feminist studies, a large section of which has been concerned with discovering forgotten and neglected women's texts. For feminist approaches to the novel, therefore, looking at the work of Aphra Behn as one of the antecedents of the novel already constituted a useful exercise in the diachronic study of narrative (Fludernik, *"Natural" Narratology* 139–59). Robyn Warhol's seminal book on nineteenth-century fiction likewise anticipated more narrowly historical analyses of women's writing. A concern for the history of narrative forms therefore developed only slowly and on the margins of mainstream narratological theorizing.

This takes me to two more general critical orientations that, it seems to me, have helped to finally put diachrony back on the agenda—even if that agenda has so far remained unacknowledged. These two developments are, for one, the study of narrative outside the genre of the novel, especially the comparison of literary and historical texts, and, secondly, the research into the origins of the novel. The two areas are associated, most prominently, with the work of Hayden White on the one hand and that of Michael McKeon (besides Paul K. Hunter, Lennard J. Davis, and Barbara Foley) on the other. The latter group of scholars has concentrated on the way in which fictional and nonfictional texts, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, related to each other and evolved into what later became the novel, whereas critics in the first camp, like Rigney, Wesseling, and Carrard, have analyzed historical narratives from a narratological point of view.

It is in the wake of these studies that a reorientation of narratology in the direction of diachronic inquiry is now on the cards—no longer as a weird antiquarian interest but as a vital and exciting new area of research. Indeed, once one starts to cast around for historical questions touching on narrative, one soon finds that the sheer number of relevant topics and their significance are overwhelming. Opening up narratology to diachronic inquiry in fact provides access to a terrain of research that has so far been charted only very superficially. In terms of the prospects afforded by diachronic narratology, a major breakthrough is imminent. It is the aim of this essay to provide some guidelines for the prospectors keen to participate in this paradigm shift. In this essay, I propose a programme for diachronic narratological study and discuss one selected theoretical issue that is meant to illustrate the importance of a diachronic approach.

NARRATIVE IN A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

The historical approach to narrative can take a number of forms. For instance, one can look at narrative genres in each historical period and discuss how they develop over time. This is perhaps the only type of diachronic narrative study that has been performed with any consistency so far. In particular, research on the origins of the novel and the romance/novel distinction has helped to broaden our understanding regarding a large number of text types prevalent in the early modern period and has suggested how they may have impinged on the eventual shape of the novel. By contrast, other issues have not drawn critics' interest, such as the question of whether the medieval romance finds its continuation in the early modern verse epic; whether the

fifteenth-century prose romance develops into the Elizabethan romance; or at what point in the seventeenth century Elizabethan romance can be said to develop into what William Congreve and Clara Reeves called a "romance" (in opposition to the "novel"). I have myself attempted to tackle this particular minefield by means of a linguistic model of narrative structure that, in its terms, yields one possible type of answer to these questions.[4]

From a more specifically narratological perspective, a great number of other issues are also ready to be broached. For instance, the issue of narrator-narratee communication and the vexed question of the author/narrator distinction (a problem little heeded by structuralist narratologists mainly dealing with texts after the mid-eighteenth century) yield a great deal of material that will certainly produce interesting insights into the development of narrative in conjunction with, or perhaps irrespective of, genre. Such an analysis will tell us, for instance, how much reader address occurs across the centuries and whether these formulas have specific functions that remain constant, or whether they alternate between a number of functions. Middle English narrative, for example, has numerous instances of the narrator addressing the protagonist, a feature that also occurs widely in Renaissance narrative but slackens off in the novel, although some passages can still be found in the Victorian age.[5]

Metanarrative and metafictional commentary—the area from which I will take my illustration in this essay—is another hopeful field of inquiry. I will not at this point go into the details of narrative structure, but some of the main outlines can be mentioned briefly here. It is clearly exciting to analyze the handling of orientational patterns at the beginning of narratives, or to compare the ways in which main characters are introduced in older and in more recent texts. Most analyses of the opening of novels concern the eighteenth- to twentieth-century period, which means that the continuities and discontinuities in form and structure between Renaissance texts and the eighteenth-century novel have disappeared from sight. Much work is to be done, particularly in determining which forms and functions prominent in medieval and early modern texts survive into the twentieth century, which survive in modified ways, and which become obliterated and are replaced by new forms and/or new functions.

To provide an example. Medieval narrative has very little description in its orientation sections or even in the settings inside the text. This clearly changes in the Renaissance. Yet the descriptive passages one encounters at the beginning of sixteenth-century narrative texts still differ drastically from what one is likely to find in Charles Dickens or Elizabeth Gaskell, where long depictions of a town or village, often in what I would like to call the metaphoric mode, take up entire chapters and often in a very sophisticated manner lead from the generality of the setting to the specificity of one of the protagonists. *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a good case in point. The wind blowing through town on the evening described at the opening of the story pushes the door into Mr. Pecksniff's face and throws him down the stairs. It is a wind sweeping out the metaphoric Augean stables of Pecksniffian hypocrisy and anticipating that justice will be done at the end of the narrative.

Another line of inquiry that a diachronic narratology would have to pursue concerns the various narratological categories that clutter the traditional narrative ty-

pologies: focalization, person, tense, etc. Not only will it be interesting to find out when certain techniques or constellations were first used, or when they became current and, even later, predominant, but also it will be exciting to take up the question of refunctionalization. Do certain features and techniques acquire a different function at crucial points of the restructuring process of the narrative paradigm? Stanzel's thesis about the rise of first-person narrative, or the gradual development of figural narrative, or his speculations about authorial aperspectivism changing to figural perspectivism (117–25) can be complemented by analyses of what types of internal focalization come into fashion precisely when, and which narrative devices are used to evoke this consciousness factor. Other aspects of narrative such as plot structure, the manner in which characters are introduced and described,[6] or the handling of settings, structurally and lexically, can also be counted among the many types of questions that are raised by narratological diachrony.

Obviously, one could go on. The list of topics is nearly interminable since so very little has been done on historical aspects of narrative from a narratological point of view. To illustrate what the diachronic approach can achieve I would now like to turn to an example. The subject is entirely simple; indeed, it is so basic that the sheer fact that there has not been any work on this issue *per se* demonstrates the depth of neglect of diachronic concerns that is prevalent in narratology.[7] The example that I have chosen is the scene shift: how do narratives manage to get from one set of characters in one location to another set of characters in a different location?[8]

SCENE SHIFTS FROM MALORY TO MODERNISM

The following remarks are based on a preliminary analysis of some fifty texts of British literature between the late medieval period and the early twentieth century.[9]

The first theoretical aspect to note in relation to the scene shift is that I am assuming a concurrent change in location and dramatis personae. This is not a proposition one can necessarily take for granted, but it does represent by far the most common type of scene shift. Secondly, and even more importantly, the change of setting (and characters) needs to be contrasted with a mere shift in time. What one would actually need to analyze is a threesome of (*a*) time remains the same but scene changes; (*b*) time changes and scene changes; and (*c*) time changes but scene (and character) remain the same. In what follows I will only concentrate on (*a*) and (*b*), with the focus on how the narrator moves from one set of characters to the other. The question will be put from a macrostructural as well as a microstructural perspective; in fact, one of my conclusions will be that a formula that used to be employed to shift between plot strands ends up at chapter beginnings coinciding with scene shifts, and later on acquires an analeptic, metaleptic, and metafictional function. However, let us for the moment leave aside these theoretical questions and turn to the examples and their diachronic analysis.

In Middle English verse and prose narrative scene shifts are signaled with great frequency by means of a standard phrase, translatable as the formula "Now let us leave X and Y (in location A) and turn to O and P who were walking/riding/sitting in

location B." Here are two examples of this formula, one from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the other from Thomas Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones*:

> Deiphebus gan this lettre for t'unfolde
> In earnest greet . . .
> This ilke thing they [Deiphebus and Eleyne] redden him bitwene;
> And largely, the mountance of an houre
> Thei gonne on it to reden and to poure.
> *Now lat hem rede, and torne we anon*
> To Pandarus, that gan full faste prye
> That al was wel . . .
>
> (Chaucer bk. 2, ll. 1702–11)

> *Now leve we* sir Launcelot in Joyus Ile wyth hys lady, dame Elayne, and sir Percivayle and sir Ector playyinge wyth them, and *now turne we* unto sir Bors de Ganys and unto sir Lyonell that had sought sir Lancelot long, nye by the space of two yere, and never coude they hyre of hym. (Malory 504)[10]

This standard pattern occurs with some frequency, though by no means regularly, in Middle English verse narratives (romances, saints' legends, Chaucer). In Malory it is employed often two or three times per page and seems to be the regular way of moving from one scene to the next. In Chaucer other signals, such as episode-beginning markers, may be used instead. For instance, in "The Clerk's Tale" we move from Griseldis at her father's house to her husband (who had cast her off) returning from Bologna with the marchioness whom he is supposedly going to marry:

> *Fro Boloigne is* this Erl of Panyk *come*, [prepositional phrase preposing; inversion]
> Of which the fame up sprang to moore and lesse,
> And to the peples eres ["ears"], alle and some,
> Was kouth eek that a newe markysesse
> He with hym broghte . . .
>
> (E 939–43)

The first important conclusion to be drawn from the above summary concerns the *structural* position of this formula in comparison to the later novel. In Middle English texts the scene shift coincides with an episode (or macroepisode) beginning,[11] while in the novel it usually coincides with a *chapter* beginning that initiates a different set of characters in a new setting. The move from episodic narrative to more extended prose narratives and the later typographical invention of the chapter unit has therefore resulted in a reduction of the number of scene shifts; there are, after all, many more episodes in episodic narrative than there are chapters in a standard novel.

A second major aspect of these scene shifts relates to the narrational context in which they occur. I have so far found almost no examples in the first-person novel.[12]

The technique seems to be nearly exclusive to heterodiegetic narrative. This makes sense if one considers the continuity of the protagonist in homodiegetic narrative. A scene shift therefore involves a change in setting and time, but not a shift in the main actant. The narrator (the narrating self) has few opportunities to move from one plot strand to another. Any information about other characters would be bound to involve the experiencing self hearing about it, and the narrating self would therefore tend to focus on his or her learning the latest news instead of thematizing the shift to a different scene. After all, the homodiegetic narrator is not omniscient and cannot easily move to a different location, except by physically going there herself.

The third major difference consists in the fact that the Middle English formula becomes extremely rare after the seventeenth century and is increasingly replaced by phrases with a temporal conjunction indicating simultaneity:[13]

> Adeline, *mean while*, and Peter proceeded on their voyage, without any accident, and landed in Savoy, where Peter placed her upon the horse, and himself walked beside her. (Radcliffe ch. 16)
>
> *While* Nicholas, absorbed in the one engrossing subject of interest which had recently opened upon him, occupied his leisure hours with thoughts of Madeline Bray, . . . Mrs Nickleby and Kate continued to live in peace and quiet . . . (Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* ch. 49)
>
> *In the meantime* Eustacia, left alone in her cottage at Alderworth, had become considerably depressed by the posture of affairs. (Hardy, *Return* bk. 4, ch. 8)

Besides *while* clauses or adverbials like *in the meantime*, other markers are used in the eighteenth- to twentieth-century novel. Thus, since the scene shift frequently coincides with a temporal shift, the temporal adverbial alone suffices to mark a new phase of the narrative, which is then likely to involve a change to a different set of characters as well. For instance, chapter 63 of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* opens with: "*Some weeks had passed*, and the first shock of these events had subsided. Madeline had been removed; Frank had been absent; Nicholas and Kate had begun to try in good earnest to stifle their own regrets, and to live for each other and for their mother." This marks the start of the final resolution of the plot towards the end of the novel and involves a major temporal hiatus as well as a change in scene and character. (The previous chapter deals with old Nickleby's suicide.)

The change to a different set of characters mostly involves not the introduction of entirely *new* protagonists, but the return to a set of characters with whom the reader is familiar and to whose problems he is now reverting. (While new protagonists may be introduced at chapter beginnings, especially early in the novel, they are more frequently introduced when encountered by another protagonist.) It is therefore quite easy for the narrative to return to a situation left pending at the end of a previous chapter by noting a temporal lapse, even if different characters have been discussed in the meantime. For example, in a chapter from Hardy's *Return of the Native* that is initially concerned with the characters Wildeve and Thomasin, the narrator re-

turns us to circumstances described earlier: "Therefore, *when a week or two had passed away*, Mrs Yeobright began to wonder why she had never heard from her son of the receipt of the present" (bk. 4, ch. 1).

Besides these temporal alignments, a number of other connecting techniques can be observed, although these are not as prominently distributed. Among the linking strategies that I have found in my preliminary corpus may be noted:

1. some reference to facts mentioned in the previous chapter:

   As Donald stated, Lucetta had retired early to her room because of fatigue. She had, however, not gone to rest, but sat in the bedside chair reading and thinking over the events of the day. (Hardy, *Mayor* ch. 35)

2. long gnomic or descriptive passages of a general nature leading to the particular case of a character of the novel:

   A ride of two hundred and odd miles in severe weather is one of the best softeners of a hard bed that ingenuity can devise. Perhaps it is even a sweetener of dreams, for those which hovered over the rough couch of Nicholas and whispered their airy nothings in his ear were of an agreeable and happy kind. He was making his fortune very fast indeed, when the faint glimmer of an expiring candle shone before his eyes, and a voice he had no difficulty in recognising as part and parcel of Mr Squeers, admonished him that it was time to rise. (Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* ch. 8)

3. even jocular comments by the omniscient narrator who foregrounds his superior knowledge:

   Quite unconscious of the demonstrations of their amorous neighbour, or of their effects upon the susceptible bosom of her mama, Kate Nickleby had, by this time, begun to enjoy a settled feeling of tranquillity and happiness. (Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* ch. 38)

No doubt other techniques will emerge when a larger corpus of texts has been analyzed.

The most important point of comparison between the Middle English texts and the classical novel, therefore, consists in the fact of "chapterification" and the attendant emphasis on the chapter beginning as a salient point for temporal or locative shifts. In the earlier episodic narratives and in narratives that did not yet have the kind of chapter structure common in the nineteenth-century novel, internal narrative structure was handled by means of macroepisodic markers. Not all of these necessarily involved a change of dramatis personae, particularly since not many early narratives had more than one plot line, so when the protagonist moved on to a new stage of adventure, the setting obviously changed, with or without an accompanying temporal shift. The more plot lines and sets of protagonists, though, the more important

it became to mark the move from one plot line to the other, and since Middle English romances were still being performed orally (even if the oral or written nature of their composition may continue to be an unresolved puzzle), such shifts stood in greater need of clear marking than in the later novel literature (where the reader can easily leaf backwards to the point to which the scene shift refers). This may explain the fact that the Middle English formula, which is a decidedly metanarrative one foregrounding the narrator, was used so extensively. It also fitted nicely into a style of narrating in which the narrator persona (*qua* bard) was an active participant in the act of narration, employing numerous forms of reader address and exclamatory idioms ("lo"; "alas").

METANARRATIVE USES OF THE FORMULA

These frame conditions obviously no longer apply in the nineteenth and twentieth century, when the invisibility of the narrator comes to acquire premium significance. As a consequence, the Malorian formula runs counter to the realistic conventions of the classical nineteenth-century novel and occurs only very rarely indeed. The decline of the metanarrative scene-shifting technique can be illustrated from Renaissance texts to the nineteenth century. What is very interesting, however, is the context in which the old pattern survives at all, and the modified—metafictional—use to which it is increasingly being put.

The metanarrative strategies of the Malory type survive well into the nineteenth-century novel, for instance in relatively inconspicuous locutions such as the following:

> Therefore *now I must tell you* that mistress Mopsa . . . was, at the parting of her parents, attending upon the princess Pamela . . . (Sidney 169)
>
> *We now return to the Marquis de Montalt*, who having seen La Motte safely lodged in the prison of D—y, and learning the trial would not come on immediately, had returned to his villa on the borders of the forest where he expected to hear news of Adeline. (Radcliffe ch. 20)
>
> *I must go back a little to explain* the motives which caused Esther to seek an interview with her niece. (Gaskell ch. 21)
>
> *We go back* for a moment to the preceding night, to account for Henchard's attitude. (Hardy, *Mayor* ch. 22)

These formulas echo the familiar "now let us turn to M" formula. Note the preponderance of the semantics of *return*—I will come back to this point in my final summary.

However, as early as the Renaissance we encounter strongly metafictional strategies that implicate the narrator *qua* inventor and composer of the tale and even indulge in metaleptic somersaults. Take these examples from Sir Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia*: (*a*) "But alas, sweet Philoclea, how hath my pen forgotten thee, since to thy

memory principally all this long matter is intended. Pardon the slackness to come to those woes which thou didst cause in others and feel in thyself" (95); (*b*) "But methinks *I hear the old shepherd Dorus calling me to tell you* something of his hopeful adventure" (162). These are clear instances of metalepsis—of a crossing of narrative levels that transgresses mimetic rules of verisimilitude. In the first passage the narrator calls out to Philoclea, whereas in the second he pretends to have a character claim his attention.

One of the most stunning metafictional ploys in *The Old Arcadia* is the deliberate shift away from Pamela and Musidorus, who are being beset by a group of "clownish villains," to Cleophila (i.e., Pyrocles dressed up as a woman and now being courted by King Basilius) on page 177 of the text: "But Cleophila (whom *I left* in the cave hardly bested . . .), *makes me lend her my pen awhile* to see with what dexterity she could put by her dangers." This shift, which the reader hopes will be brief, extends to nearly one hundred pages, since it is only on page 265 that the narrator deigns to return to Musidorus and Pamela in their plight: "Long methinks it is since anything hath been spoke of the noble prince Musidorus, especially having been left in so impatient a case as he should hardly brook a tedious respite." It is quite apparent that what we are dealing with here is a delibarately frustrating narrator who likes to keep his readers on tenterhooks regarding the amorous couple. Since this narrator clearly voices his authority to determine the topics of the narrative discourse, he emphasizes the *fictio* character (or constructedness) of the text (Wolf) and therefore uses a metafictional ploy.

Less radically metafictional strategies can be observed in a variety of narratives that refer to the composition of the text when shifting from one scene to the next. Thus, already in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, a fairly harmless reference to the act of writing can be noted. Immediately following a paragraph dealing with Zacharie, Nashe's narrator proceeds: "*Spare we him a line or two* and look back to Juliana, who, conflicted in her thoughts about me very doubtfully, adventured to send a messenger to Zacharie in her name, very boldly to beg me of him" (350). In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* there is a reference to the "last chapter": "It was about a month after the day which closed as in the *last chapter*. Elizabeth-Jane had grown accustomed to the novelty of her situation, and the only difference between Donald's movements now and formerly was that he hastened indoors rather more quickly after business hours than he had been in the habit of doing for some time" (ch. 45). Dickens has a more playful and allegorical version of this common formula in *Nicholas Nickleby*: "The course which these adventures shape out for themselves, and imperatively *call upon the historian* to observe, *now demands* that they should *revert* to the last point they attained previous to the commencement of the *last chapter*, when Ralph Nickleby and Arthur Gride were left together in the house where death had so suddenly reared his dark and heavy banner" (ch. 56).

The most interesting development in relation to the scene shift, however, combines an analeptic aspect with a foregrounded reference to the art of narration. This is a strategy noted by Gérard Genette and later commented on by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (93–94). Genette had come across the device in Honoré de Balzac's *Les Souffrances de l'inventeur*:[14]

> "*While* the venerable churchman climbs the ramps of the Angoulême, *it is not useless to explain* the network of interests into which he was going to set foot. / After Lucien's departure, David Séchard . . . [analeptic account of previous events follows]." Here is how the first narrative resumes, more than one hundred pages further on: "At the moment when the old curé de Marsac was climbing the ramps of Angoulême to go inform Eve of the condition her brother was in, David had been hidden for eleven days only two doors from where the worthy priest had just come out." This [is a] play between the time of the story and the time of narrating (to *tell* of David's misfortunes "while" the curé de Marsac climbs the staircase) [and which will be discussed in the chapter on voice]. (Genette 65; qtg. Balzac)

In the chapter on voice Genette identifies the technique as narrative metalepsis and continues:

> We will extend the term *narrative metalepsis* to all these transgressions. Some of them, as ordinary and innocent as those of classic rhetoric, play on the double temporality of the story and the narrating. Here for example, is Balzac, in a passage already quoted from *Illusions perdues*: "While the venerable churchman climbs the ramps of Angoulême, it is not useless to explain . . . ," as if the narrating were contemporaneous with the story and had to fill up the latter's dead spaces. This is the very prevalent model Proust follows when he writes, for example, "but I have no time left now, *before my departure for Balbec* . . . , to start upon a series of pictures of society," or "I confine myself at present, *as the train halts and the porter calls out 'Doncières,' 'Grattevast,' 'Mainville,' etc.,* to noting down the particular memory that the watering place or garrison town recalls to me," or again: "*But it is time to rejoin* the Baron as he advances . . ." (235 emphasis original)

The technique can be described as a "hypercorrect" handling of mimetic illusionism. The narrator is talking simultaneously with the unfolding of events that he is narrating. Since this simultaneity leads the act of mimesis *ad absurdum*, the effect of the strategy is metafictional. It implies the fictivity of the narrative that emerges, precisely, under the conditions of the narrator's discourse, and—contrary to the illusionistic pretense explicitly proffered in the narrative discourse—does not simply exist out there ready to be randomly taken up by the narrative or to be dropped at the narrator's discretion.

It will perhaps come as a surprise to the reader that this strategy—discovered by Genette in the (French) nineteenth-century novel and later noted in the Victorian novel by a number of other critics—has in fact a history of earlier and later manifestations. Not only that; as I will argue, this metaleptic strategy increasingly comes to be used in a parodic way, thereby making the outmoded scene-shifting function more palatable to modern ears. If one traces these developments, the history of the Malorian formula could then be described as starting from a prevalence in Middle English literature, moving through a period of gradual decrease, on to a phase in

which the device is practically dead in its original function but can be used for ironic and increasingly metafictional, metaleptic, and parodic purposes. Once this ironic potential has been recognized, one starts to find traces of the technique in most of the previous examples that I have quoted so far.

I now turn to a few instances of the Genettean device that demonstrate its existence already in the sixteenth century and illustrate its early metafictional quality.

> And so, with consent of both parents . . . their marriage day was appointed; which, because it fell out in this time, I think it shall not be impertinent to *remember a little our shepherds while the other greater persons are either sleeping or otherwise occupied.* (Sidney 212)

> As we have now brought Sophia into safe hands, the reader will, I apprehend, be contented to *deposit her there awhile, and to look a little after other personages*, and particularly poor Jones, whom we have left long enough to do penance for his past offences, which, as is the nature of vice, brought sufficient punishment upon him themselves. (Fielding, *Tom Jones* bk. 11, ch. 10)

> As we cannot therefore at present get Mr. Joseph out of the inn, we shall *leave* him in it, and *carry our reader on* after Parson Adams. (Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* bk. 2, ch. 2; qtd. in Füger 124)

> But *leaving now* the General in his Quarters, and the Citizens to their jollity, *we will retreat* a little while, (though late) to Westminster, and see what this new named Rump Parliament had, this Afternoon and Evening, been doing there. (Skinner, *The Life of General Monk*; qtd. in Füger 125)

> *Leaving* it [the coach] to pursue its journey at the pleasure of the conductor aforementioned . . . *this narrative may embrace the opportunity of ascertaining* the condition of Sir Mulberry Hawk, and to what extent he had, by this time, recovered from the injuries consequent on being flung violently from his cabriolet, under the circumstances already detailed. (Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* ch. 38)

Whereas in Sidney's *Old Arcadia* the narrator returns to the shepherds while the princes are sleeping (i.e., will talk while the protagonists are asleep), Fielding's narrator invades the fictional world by actively "depositing" Sophia, or by "carrying" the reader to Parson Adams. In both cases ontological boundaries are being transgressed in the process. Even more noticeable is Thomas Skinner's formulation since he employs a military metaphor in the narration that carries the subject of the story (military exploits) into the discourse about them. (The text is a lesser-known biography from 1724.) One could therefore argue that the explicit shift from one set of characters to another, which needed to be marked quite clearly in episodic narrative, became less important structurally as episodic narrative developed into extended prose narrative of the romance and novel type. The shifts from one setting to the next tend to occur at the opening of new chapters that were, in themselves, sufficiently

salient. As a consequence, the original function of the Middle English formula no longer applied; it was *de trop* and could be refunctionalized for ironic purposes and used as one of those venues in which the narrator could display his inventiveness *ad libitum.*

The ending of that story coincides with the death of the intrusive narrator. I had therefore assumed that the twentieth-century novel would not display the device at all. In that assumption I had, however, forgotten about parody. A parodic narrative will find such metafictional devices especially useful. Rereading Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, I had the good luck to stumble on two passages that illustrate the parodic potential of the formula in full. The first, still rather harmless passage occurs after Orlando's sex change:

> He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess—he was a woman.
>
> The sound of the trumpets died away and Orlando stook stark naked. No human being, since the world began, has ever looked more ravishing. . . . Orlando looked himself up and down in a long looking-glass, without showing any signs of discomposure, *and went, presumably, to his bath*.
>
> *We may take advantage of this pause in the narrative to make certain statements*. Orlando had become a woman—there is no denying it. (137–38)

The second, longer passage is much more parodic and intrusive. Orlando, portrayed as looking out of the window, is waiting for something: a momentous event, announced to be imminent. Yet the narrative fools the reader with a trick of procrastination: the event that is first narrated is merely the playing of a street organ. It takes another three pages for the reader to learn of Orlando's delivery of a son (295). Before this, the narrative expatiates on the street organ:

> And, with her hands clasped, she stood for a considerable space of time wondering. Suddenly she started—and here we could only wish that, as on a former occasion, Purity, Chastity, and Modesty would push the door ajar and provide, at least, a breathing space in which we could think how to wrap up what now has to be told delicately, as a biographer should. But no! Having thrown their white garment at the naked Orlando and seen it fall short by several inches, these ladies had given up all intercourse with her these many years; and were now otherwise engaged. *Is nothing, then, going to happen this pale March morning* to mitigate, to veil, to cover, to conceal, to shroud this undeniable event whatever it may be? For after giving that sudden, violent start, Orlando—*but Heaven be praised, at this very moment there struck up outside* one of these frail, reedy, fluty, jerky, old-fashioned barrel-organs which are still sometimes played by Italian organ-grinders in back streets. *Let us accept the intervention*, humble though it is, as if it were the music of the spheres, and allow it, with all its gasps and groans, *to fill this page with sound until the moment comes* which it is impossible to deny is coming, which the footman has seen coming and the maidservant, and the reader will have to see too . . . (292)

This passage of course is a hoax, a metafictional bravura performance. The words on the next three pages of the text are, precisely, the gasps and groans of a melody too clichéd for comfort. Woolf's passage radicalizes the metafictional tendencies of the technique; it is an extended exercise in metafiction.

SUMMARY

As a consequence of changes in narrative structure, the scene shift that was an important functional element in Middle English narrative became downgraded to a supernumerary element occurring at chapter beginnings. The originally highly important scene shift was connected to the oral delivery of episodic narrative and depended on the overt manipulations of the narrator *qua* bard.[15] The metanarrative quality of the scene shifts, although salient from the perspective of the twentieth-century novel, was far less salient in Middle English narrative, since such narrative included much more striking abstract and coda sections in which the narrator played a crucial role. In the development of prose narrative, the figure of the narrator, still prominent in the Renaissance and of special importance in Fielding's work, increasingly lost his position of privilege. At the same time the structural patterns of drama acquired a hold over narrative production and started to influence scene shifts. Thus, in most novels the narrative moves from one scene to the other, rarely changing the setting within a chapter. In this manner the novel, despite its diegetic surface structure, comes to obey the deep-structural patterns of drama, in which scene changes occur either when a new setting is introduced or when a new set of protagonists appear on stage. The introduction of lengthy dialogue scenes and, later, of consciousness scenes in the novel underlines this development (Fludernik, *"Natural" Narratology* ch. 4).

The analysis that I have undertaken does not merely relate to the structural patterns of narrative discourse but also touches on the function of narratorial management. The formula is a metanarrative formula, but—as we have seen—this metanarrative function already in the Renaissance texts increasingly acquires an additional metafictional load, with foregrounded metaleptic instances. One can interpret this development as part of a parodic refunctionalization of a technique whose practical usefulness is on the wane as soon as chapter divisions become common. However, this cannot be the complete story since Elizabethan texts did not yet have automatic chapter divisions (as late as Defoe, in fact, the text does not have any macrostructural dividers). Another way of interpreting the development could be in relation to the move from orality to literacy. With the inscribing of writing into the discourse, the originally oral bardic formula becomes weird. One way of deploying the technique that is still necessary but slightly outmoded would be, precisely, to use it in a tongue-in-cheek fashion and to start ironizing it.

Even more interestingly, it is possible to detect another development in the use of the formula. Whereas in the Middle English texts the narrator always turns towards a new (though familiar) set of characters, thereby foregrounding the process of narration in which the bard is responsible for the progress of the narrative, the Renaissance and eighteenth-century examples predominantly *return* to a previous set of

characters. The emphasis is no longer on the act of (oral) narration but on the *text* in which we do indeed *return* to (and as readers could leaf back to) a former point in the narrative.[16] By contrast, the *while* clauses and *in the meantime* formulas tend to shift to new scenes, whereas the Malorian formula reverts to already introduced settings:

> We now return to the Marquis de Montalt . . . (Radcliffe ch. 20)
> I must go back a little to explain . . . (Gaskell ch. 21)
> We go back for a moment . . . (Hardy, *Mayor* ch. 22)
> But leaving now the General . . . we will retreat a little while . . . (Skinner; qtd. in Füger 125)
> Spare we him a line or two and look back to Juliana . . . (Nashe 350)[17]

However, as the simultaneity trope discussed by Genette illustrates, a further functional shift occurs after the Renaissance. The examples move from instances of a mere backward shift (which serves to pick up a thread previously dropped) to a narrative pause utilized for more extensive narratorial purposes. Most eighteenth-century examples of the Malorian formula and the elaborate nineteenth-century device that plays with the two temporalities of the narrative deploy the formula in order to signal an orientational flashback or, more properly speaking, a narrative explanation of antecedents. Thus, Gaskell's narrator retraces her steps to "explain the motives which caused Esther to seek an interview with her niece," Hardy's wants "to account for Henchard's attitude" while Balzac's believes "it is not useless to explain," and Melville's uses the opportunity to "let it be said who Lucy Tartan was."[18] In other words, the technique is increasingly used to signal no longer a return to a previous scene than to mark a pause in the narrative that the narrator can use for additional explanatory commentary. Seen from this perspective, Virginia Woolf's *tour de force* constitutes the high point of the formula's development towards narratorial emancipation from the mere scene-shifting function in reference to the plot. It frees the formula from its connection with the story level, allowing the metanarrative to become pure metadiscursivity.

We have looked at what initially appeared to be a very minor example of historical change. Its significance became apparent in relation to the more general development of narrative structure between the late Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. In addition, the scene shift was ideally suited to demonstrate that formal analysis needs to be complemented by a functional approach. In this way I was able to demonstrate how a function can be superseded and its former expressions still used for new purposes. The example of the scene shift was chosen for its very mundaneness. If even such basic features of narrative have so far remained unanalyzed from a diachronic perspective, it becomes self-evident how many questions there still are to be answered, how much there is still to be done in narrative studies, particularly from a diachronic perspective. If such historical analysis is taken into account, the field of narratology could be on the brink of a major revolution. These questions will keep professors busy for at least a few decades and will provide ample opportunities for dissertations. The train has started in Europe. The motto is "Westward Ho!"

ENDNOTES

1. See, for instance, Chatman's *Story and Discourse* and *Coming to Terms*; Prince's *Narratology*; O'Neill's *Fictions of Discourse*; Nelles's *Frameworks*; or Cohn's *The Distinction of Fiction*.
2. One can here mention Jahn; Fludernik, *Fictions of Language* and *"Natural" Narratology*; and Herman, "Scripts," "Toward a Socionarratology," and *Story Logic*.
3. One could speend a great deal more time on sketching these developments, but I will refer the interested reader to the surveys provided by Richardson, Fludernik ("Beyond Structuralism"), and Nünning.
4. See my *"Natural" Narratology* and *Narrative Structure, 1250–1750: A Genre-by-Genre Analysis*.
5. See, for instance, chapter 5 in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
6. See, for example, Barbara Korte's interesting book on body language, which has a diachronic focus.
7. I have only found one discussion of the matter in relation to Defoe's work and that of his contemporaries in Wilhelm Füger's 1963 Ph.D. thesis.
8. For the purposes of this essay I disregard those cases where the same protagonist changes location or where the setting remains the same but a different set of characters is focused on. I am here focusing on spatial shift; an alternative analysis, based on temporal shifts at chapter beginnings, has recently been conducted by Ken Ireland in his *The Sequential Dynamics of Narrative*.
9. The list of works includes Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a number of medieval romances and saints' legends, Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, as well as a selection of Renaissance prose: John Lyly's *Euphues*; Sir Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia*; Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* and *Pandosto*; Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*; George Gascoigne's *Adventures of Master F.J.*; and Thomas Deloney's *Jack of Newbury*. Works on the list from the seventeenth century include Thomas Dangerfield's *Don Tomazo*; Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters* and *Oronooko*; John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; and William Congreve's *Incognita*. Selected works from the eighteenth century include Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders, Robinson Crusoe,* and *Roxana*; Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, Amelia*, and *Jonathan Wild*; Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*; and Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* and *The Italian*. Works from the nineteenth century include Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*; eight of Charles Dickens's novels; George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss*; Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton and North and South*; Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*; Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*; Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*; and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Finally, works from the twentieth century include Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*; and E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View* and *A Passage to India*.
10. For better retrievability, important syntactic elements have been highlighted in italics in the quotations throughout this esssay.
11. The macroepisode is a larger textual unit (Fludernik, *"Natural" Narratology* 145–51).
12. There is one example in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* abounds in metaleptic flourishes of this type, but Tristram is really narrating his father's and Uncle Toby's stories at that point.
13. The same *while* conjunction or adverbial can be found, though infrequently, in Middle English.
14. Rimmon-Kenan's example is "While Pierre and Lucy are now rolling along under the elms, let it be said who Lucy Tartan was" from Melville's *Pierre*. (qtd. in Rimmon-Kenan 94)
15. It will have to be determined whether the formula, therefore, is a technique typical of the written text. If so, its first general emergence in Chaucer and fifteenth-century prose would be suggestive. I do not yet have sufficient data for corroborating this thesis.

16. Naturally, this “orality” is a carefully established fiction of the text.
17. All passages were quoted earlier.
18. See note 14 above.

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