

PART 1 // ARCS & ANATAGONISMS

When and how to achieve something like *momentum* in a time-based medium – experienced as the interest on the part of a viewer or reader to keep watching or reading? Is it a basic plot problem? A pattern-and-beat problem? A tension-and-release problem? What part does genre play (memory and expectations)? Where exactly does this engaging energy come from? How to talk about it, visualize it and work with it, both at the interrelated level of the small part (the micro-interaction, the shot, the scene) and the duration of work as a whole? And when and why might an artist propose to do without it – cultivating disinterest, boredom, the partial viewing (as in an installed work))?

It was Aristotle who proposed that a narrative should begin with exposition, initiate a rising action or complication, reach a peak or climax, then ease: lower the tension (by way of a falling action) and end in resolution. It is a truism: narratives, to function and be received as narratives, require something like ‘conflict’ – there’s an intention and then there’s an obstacle, there’s resistance then change, force and counter-force. What to make of this basic energetic description? What effects (and satisfactions) can be achieved by reproducing it? What values are reinforced? Which narrative traditions might we look to for alternatives?

Throughout our interest will be in taking a measure of momentum, potentially described as tension, charge, suspense, excitement, rising action, falling action, quiet, lull, inaction, minor modulations, sharp contrasts... We will be inventing our own technical-affective vocabulary for the effects we observe and want to achieve. As part of this, we will improvise methods of ‘scoring’ our works and those of others as a diagnostic tool: from story-boarding to diagramming to tracking beats to other as yet un-invented forms of notation with the aim to achieve more precision than general terms such as ‘linear’ vs. ‘non-linear’ when speaking about narrative lines, breaks, patterns and shapes...

Day 1: PLOT-LINES

E.M. Forster, ‘The Story’ and ‘The Plot’ from *Aspects of the Novel* (1927)

Jane Alison, ‘Point, Line, Texture’ and ‘Movement and Flow’ from *Meander, Spiral, Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative* (2019).

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Let me tell you a story. Another one, for I tell stories all the time. Perhaps this course description could be described as a kind of story? At least in the minimal sense that it tries to make one proposition follow on after another; it starts somewhere with the aim of arriving somewhere else. But certain arrangements and treatments of materials tend to feel more emphatically (or strategically) 'story-like' than others. It's a felt quality, a set of techniques, even kind of attitude, which depends on a complex combination of contexts, intentions and decisions. 'Narrativity' is a useful general term for describing this sense of a work's 'story-ness'. The degree to which a work reactivates an ancient story-structure, for example. Or, by contrast, how a different work might present as deliberately 'un'-storied: closer to a document, a direct transcription of life in the world. Through readings and group discussions and – crucially – short and often playful practical exercises, this thematic provides a general introduction to some key questions of narrative composition, approaching them first as practical options (available to us all); then, as consequential artistic decisions. 'Narrative thinking' is the phrase we'll use to describe our active interest in the potentials of composition (the placing and treatments of materials) and their effects (aesthetic, rhetorical, ethical, political). A further tenet of the course is that 'narrative practice' necessarily involves 'narrative participation': rather than inventing new strategies from scratch (is that even possible?), we'll be learning from existing works and interested in citing, repurposing, recombining, renewing and translating existing strategies of narration across time (traditions) and space (languages and cultures).

KB will be available for individual tutorials later on in the spring / summer.

PART 2 // STORYTELLERS AND STORYZONES

A story changes depending on who (or what) is telling it. Narrative point of view acts on the scope or zone of the story: what falls within its purview and therefore what is describable, what is narratable. On Days 1 and 2 we will try get to grips with the possibilities of different narrative positions & points of view, linked to the differences (the viewing and knowing capacities) of narrative agents (or 'actants'), and develop our own vocabularies for describing them. This may lead us to consider important and timely questions around legitimacy and authority – the 'right' to tell stories, one's own story or other people's. Particular emphasis will be put on the voice-over, and the choice of language (and therefore also the work of subtitling) as important narrative tools. On Day 3 we'll consider how a story changes depending on the claims the teller makes about it: fiction, documentary, poem, essay. Does *composition*, the placing and treatment of materials, pre-exist or pre-empt an understanding or intervention of fiction? If so, what does 'fiction' bring in – what narrative possibilities does it open up, or close down? When working with fiction and / or 'real life', what responsibilities do we have to our materials -- to our (made-up or real-life) stories and their protagonists? To audiences?

Day 4: BEARING STORIES

Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller' (1936) -- in *The Narrative Reader*, ed. Martin McQuillan
Trin Minh-Ha 'Grandma's Story' (1989) --- in *The Narrative Reader*, ed. Martin McQuillan
Will Harris, 'Art doesn't own it' (2023) (<https://tlth.co.uk/tlth1>)

Day 5: FRAMING NARRATIVES & AUTHORITY:

What happens when one story is framed by (or nested within) another? It's one of the most ancient forms of narrative organisation. It is as a way of introducing a counterview, a way of staging or disrupting authority – frame or nested narratives as exercises in offsetting points of view and exploring their limitations.

Screening of *Weightless* (2022) and Q&A with the artists.

Day 6: WHO / WHAT TELLS?

Ursula Le Guin, 'Point of View and Voice' and 'Changing Point of View' from *Steering the Craft: A 21st Century Guide to Sailing the Sea of Story* (2015)

Jane Bennett, excerpt from *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2009)

End of day round up of the thematic: new vocabulary and questions to carry forward...

*Please bring with you a recent work of your own and a work (moving image or piece of writing) that you find interesting and inspiring in terms of its narrative construction.

DAY 2: NON-ACTION (OR expanded conceptions of what counts as ACTION)

Ursula Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (first published 1981)

Jen Gish, Introduction and 'My Father Writes his Story' from *Tiger Writing: Art, Culture & the Interdependent Self* (2012)

<https://www.elle.com/culture/books/a45127506/no-plot-just-vibes-books/>

DAY 3: NARRATIVE PARTICIPANTS & NARRATIVE FORCES

Vladimir Propp, 'The Method and Material' and 'The Functions of Dramatic Personae' in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1958)

Ursula Le Guin, Rhythmic Pattern in *The Lord of the Rings* from *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (2004)

R.D Laing, excerpts from *Knots* (1970)

Materials related to the ballad exercise, with Simon Pummell:

Amanda Petrusich, 'Harry Smith's Musical Catalogue of Human Experience', *The New Yorker* (2020).

Bob Dylan, lyrics to 'Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts' – a folk song, a narrative construction, an interplay of narrative players and forces, a Western in the genre of Westerns with all the narrative expectations that brings. How might it be translated to release alternative stories?

'Oral-Formulaic Method' (page from *A Poet's Glossary*).

SCREENING 6.30pm: Sabine Groeneweg's *Odyssey

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DAY 5: FRAMES AND AUTHORITIES

***SCREENING 10am: Marta Hryniuk & Nick Thomas (WET), *Weightless* (2022)**

+ conversation with the artists

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NARRATIVE PRACTICE / READINGS

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***SCREENING 6.30pm: Robert Altman's *McCabe & Mrs Miller* (1971)**

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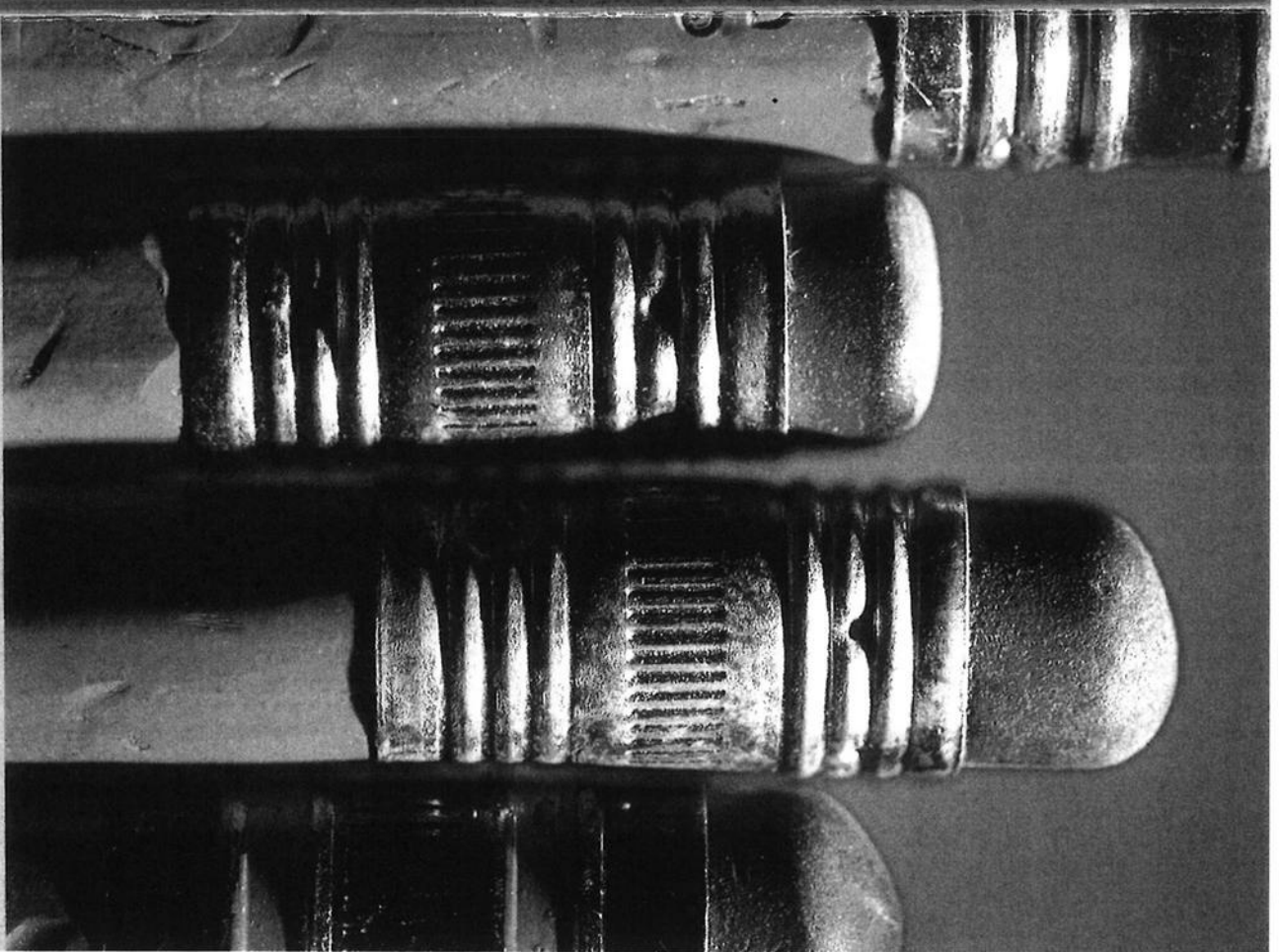
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E. M. Forster Aspects of the Novel



THE STORY

We shall all agree that the fundamental aspect of the novel is its story-telling aspect, but we shall voice our assent in different tones, and it is on the precise tone of voice we employ now that our subsequent conclusions will depend.

Let us listen to three voices. If you ask one type of man, 'What does a novel do?' he will reply placidly: 'Well - I don't know - it seems a funny sort of question to ask - a novel's a novel - well, I don't know - I suppose it kind of tells a story, so to speak.' He is quite good-tempered and vague, and probably driving a motor-bus at the same time and paying no more attention to literature than it merits. Another man, whom I visualize as on a golf-course, will be aggressive and brisk. He will reply: 'What does a novel do? Why, tell a story of course, and I've no use for it if it didn't. I like a story. Very bad taste on my part, no doubt, but I like a story. You can take your art, you can take your literature, you can take your music, but give me a good story. And I like a story to be a story, mind, and my wife's the same.' And a third man, he says in a sort of drooping regretful voice: 'Yes - oh dear yes - the novel tells a story.' I respect and admire the first speaker. I detest and fear the second. And the third is myself. Yes - oh dear yes - the novel tells a story. That is the fundamental aspect without which it could not exist. That is the highest factor common to all novels, and I wish that it was not so, that it could be something different - melody, or perception of the truth, not this low atavistic form.

For, the more we look at the story (the story that is a story, mind), the more we disentangle it from the finer

THE STORY

growths that it supports, the less shall we find to admire. It runs like a backbone - or may I say a tapeworm, for its beginning and end are arbitrary. It is immensely old - goes back to neolithic times, perhaps to palaeolithic. Neanderthal man listened to stories, if one may judge by the shape of his skull. The primitive audience was an audience of shock-heads, gaping round the camp-fire, fatigued with contending against the mammoth or the woolly rhinoceros, and only kept awake by suspense. What would happen next? The novelist droned on, and as soon as the audience guessed what happened next they either fell asleep or killed him. We can estimate the dangers incurred when we think of the career of Scheherazade in somewhat later times. Scheherazade avoided her fate because she knew how to wield the weapon of suspense - the only literary tool that has any effect upon tyrants and savages. Great novelist though she was - exquisite in her descriptions, tolerant in her judgments, ingenious in her incidents, advanced in her morality, vivid in her delineations of character, expert in her knowledge of three oriental capitals - it was yet on none of these gifts that she relied when trying to save her life from her intolerable husband. They were but incidental. She only survived because she managed to keep the king wondering what would happen next. Each time she saw the sun rising she stopped in the middle of a sentence, and left him gaping. 'At this moment Scheherazade saw the morning appearing and, discreet, was silent.' This uninteresting little phrase is the backbone of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, the tapeworm by which they are tied together and the life of a most accomplished princess was preserved.

We are all like Scheherazade's husband, in that we want to know what happens next. That is universal and that is why the backbone of a novel has to be a story. Some of us want to know nothing else - there is nothing in us but primeval curiosity, and consequently our other literary

judgements are ludicrous. And now the story can be defined. It is a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence—dinner coming after breakfast, Tuesday after Monday, decay after death, and so on. Quia story, it can only have one merit: that of making the audience want to know what happens next. And conversely it can only have one fault: that of making the audience not want to know what happens next. These are the only two criticisms that can be made on the story that is a story. It is the lowest and simplest of literary organisms. Yet it is the highest factor common to all the very complicated organisms known as novels.

When we isolate the story like this from the nobler aspects through which it moves, and hold it out on the forceps—wriggling and interminable, the naked worm of time— it presents an appearance that is both unlovely and dull. But we have much to learn from it. Let us begin by considering it in connection with daily life.

Daily life is also full of the time-sense. We think one event occurs after or before another, the thought is often in our minds, and much of our talk and action proceeds on the assumption. Much of our talk and action, but not all, there seems something else in life besides time, something which may conveniently be called 'value', something which is measured not by minutes or hours, but by intensity, so that when we look at our past it does not stretch back evenly but piles up into a few notable pinnacles, and when we look at the future it seems sometimes a wall, sometimes a cloud, sometimes a sun, but never a chronological chart. Neither memory nor anticipation is much interested in Father Time, and all dreamers, artists and lovers are partially delivered from his tyranny; he can kill them, but he cannot secure their attention, and at the very moment of doom, when the clock collected in the tower its strength and struck, they may be looking the other way. So daily life, whatever it may be really, is practically composed of two

lives—the life in time and the life by values—and our conduct reveals a double allegiance. 'I only saw her for five minutes, but it was worth it.' There you have both allegiances in a single sentence. And what the story does is to narrate the life in time. And what the entire novel does—if it is a good novel—is to include the life by values as well; using devices hereafter to be examined. It, also, pays a double allegiance. But in it, in the novel, the allegiance to time is imperative: no novel could be written without it. Whereas in daily life the allegiance may not be necessary: we do not know, and the experience of certain mystics suggests, indeed, that it is not necessary, and that we are quite mistaken in supposing that Monday is followed by Tuesday, or death by decay. It is always possible for you or me in daily life to deny that time exists and act accordingly even if we become unintelligible and are sent by our fellow citizens to what they choose to call a lunatic-asylum. But it is never possible for a novelist to deny time inside the fabric of his novel: he must cling, however lightly, to the thread of his story, he must touch the interminable tapeworm, otherwise he becomes unintelligible, which, in his case, is a blunder.

I am trying not to be philosophic about time, for it is (experts assure us) a most dangerous hobby for an outsider, far more fatal than place; and quite eminent metaphysicians have been dethroned through referring to it improperly. I am only trying to explain that as I lecture now I hear that clock ticking or do not hear it ticking, I retain or lose the time-sense; whereas in a novel there is always a clock. The author may dislike his clock. Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights* tried to hide hers. Sterne, in *Tristram Shandy*, turned his upside down. Marcel Proust, still more ingenious, kept altering the hands, so that his hero was at the same period entertaining a mistress to supper and playing ball with his nurse in the park. All these devices are legitimate, but none

of them contravene our thesis: the basis of a novel is a story, and a story is a narrative of events arranged in time-sequence. (A story, by the way, is not the same as a plot. It may form the basis of one, but the plot is an organism of a higher type, and will be defined and discussed in a future lecture.)

Who shall tell us a story?

Sir Walter Scott of course.

Scott is a novelist over whom we shall violently divide. For my own part I do not care for him, and find it difficult to understand his continued reputation. His reputation in his day – that is easy to understand. There are important historical reasons for it, which we should discuss if our scheme was chronological. But when we fish him out of the river of time, and set him to write in that circular room with the other novelists, he presents a less impressive figure. He is seen to have a trivial mind and a heavy style. He cannot construct. He has neither artistic detachment nor passion, and how can a writer who is devoid of both create characters who will move us deeply? Artistic detachment – perhaps it is priggish to ask for that. But passion – surely passion is lowbrow enough, and think how all Scott's laborious mountains and scooped-out glens and carefully ruined abbeys call out for passion, passion, and how it is never there! If he had passion he would be a great writer – no amount of clumsiness or artificiality would matter then. But he only has a temperate heart and gentlemanly feelings, and an intelligent affection for the countryside; and this is not basis enough for great novels. And his integrity – that is worse than nothing, for it was a purely moral and commercial integrity. It satisfied his highest needs and he never dreamt that another sort of loyalty exists.

His fame is due to two causes. In the first place, many of the elder generation had him read aloud to them when they were young; he is entangled with happy sentimental mem-

ories, with holidays in or residence in Scotland. They love him indeed for the same reason that I loved and still love *The Swiss Family Robinson*. I could lecture to you now on *The Swiss Family Robinson* and it would be a glowing lecture, because of the emotions felt in boyhood. When my brain decays entirely I shall not bother any more over great literature. I shall go back to the romantic shore where 'the ship struck with a frightful shock', emitting four demigods named Fritz, Ernest, Jack and little Franz, together with their father, their mother, and a cushion, which contained all the appliances necessary for a ten years' residence in the tropics. That is my eternal summer, that is what *The Swiss Family Robinson* means to me, and is not it all that Sir Walter Scott means to some of you? Is he really more than a reminder of early happiness? And until our brains do decay must not we put all this aside when we attempt to understand books?

In the second place, Scott's fame rests upon one genuine basis. He could tell a story. He had the primitive power of keeping the reader in suspense and playing on his curiosity. Let us paraphrase *The Antiquary* – not analyse it, analysis is the wrong method, but paraphrase. Then we shall see the story unrolling itself, and be able to study its simple devices.

THE ANTIQUARY

CHAPTER I

It was early on a fine summer's day, near the end of the eighteenth century, when a young man, of genteel appearance, journeying towards the north-east of Scotland, provided himself with a ticket in one of those public carriages which travel between Edinburgh and the Queensferry, at which place, as the name implies, and as is well known to all my northern readers, there is a passage-boat for crossing the Firth of Forth.

That is the first sentence – not an exciting sentence, but it gives us the time, the place, and a young man, it sets the

story-teller's scene. We feel a moderate interest in what the young man will do next. His name is Lovel, and there is a mystery about him. He is the hero, or Scott would not call him genteel, and he is sure to make the heroine happy. He meets the Antiquary, Jonathan Oldbuck. They get into the coach, not too quickly, become acquainted, Lovel visits Oldbuck at his house. Near it they meet a new character, Edie Ochiltree. Scott is good at introducing fresh characters. He slides them in very naturally, and with a promising air. Edie Ochiltree promises a good deal. He is a beggar - no ordinary beggar, a romantic and reliable rogue, and will he not help to solve the mystery of which we saw the tip in Lovel? More introductions: to Sir Arthur Wardour (old family, bad manager); to his daughter Isabella (haughty), whom the hero loves unrequited; to Oldbuck's sister Miss Grizzel. Miss Grizzel is introduced with the same air of promise. As a matter of fact she is just a comic turn - she leads nowhere, and your story-teller is full of these turns. He need not hammer away all the time at cause and effect. He keeps just as well within the simple boundaries of his art if he says things that have no bearing on the development. The audience thinks they will develop, but the audience is shock-headed and tired and easily forgets. Unlike the weaver of plots, the story-teller profits by ragged ends. Miss Grizzel is a small example of a ragged end; for a big one I would refer to a novel that professes to be lean and tragic: *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Scott presents the Lord High Keeper in this book with great emphasis and with endless suggestions that the defects of his character will lead to the tragedy, while as a matter of fact the tragedy would occur in almost the same form if he did not exist - the only necessary ingredients in it being Edgar, Lucy, Lady Ashton and Bucklaw. Well, to return to *The Antiquary*, then there is a dinner, Oldbuck and Sir Arthur quarrel, Sir Arthur is offended and leaves with his daughter, and they walk back

across the sands. The tide rises. Sir Arthur and Isabella are cut off, and are confronted by Edie Ochiltree. This is the first serious moment in the story and this is how the story-teller who is a story-teller handles it:

While they exchanged these words, they paused upon the highest ledge of rock to which they could attain; for it seemed that any further attempt to move forward could only serve to anticipate their fate. Here, then, they were to await the sure though slow progress of the raging element, something in the situation of the martyrs of the Early Church, who, exposed by heathen tyrants to be slain by wild beasts, were compelled for a time to witness the impatience and rage by which the animals were agitated, while awaiting the signal for undoing their grates and letting them loose upon the victims.

Yet even this fearful pause gave Isabella time to collect the powers of a mind naturally strong and courageous, and which rallied itself at this terrible juncture. 'Must we yield life,' she said, 'without a struggle? Is there no path, however dreadful, by which we could climb the crag, or at least attain some height above the tide, where we could remain till morning, or till help comes? They must be aware of our situation, and will raise the country to relieve us.'

Thus speaks the heroine, in accents which certainly chill the reader. Yet we want to know what happens next. The rocks are of cardboard, like those in my dear *Swiss Family*; the tempest is turned on with one hand while Scott scribbles away about Early Christians with the other; there is no sincerity; no sense of danger in the whole affair; it is all passionless, perfunctory, yet we do just want to know what happens next.

Why - Lovel rescues them. Yes; we ought to have thought of that; and what then?

Another ragged end. Lovel is put by the Antiquary to sleep in a haunted room, where he has a dream or vision of his host's ancestor, who says to him, 'Kunst macht Gunst,' words which he does not understand at the time, owing to

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his ignorance of German, and learns afterwards that they mean 'Skill wins Favour': he must pursue the siege of Isabella's heart. That is to say, the supernatural contributes nothing to the story. It is introduced with tapestries and storms, but only a copybook maxim results. The reader does not know this, though. When he hears 'Kunst macht Gunst' his attention reawakes . . . then his attention is diverted to something else, and the time-sequence goes on.

Picnic in the ruins of St Ruth. Introduction of Dousterswivel, a wicked foreigner, who has involved Sir Arthur in mining schemes and whose superstitutions are ridiculed because not of the genuine Border brand. Arrival of Hector McIntyre, the Antiquary's nephew, who suspects Lovel of being an impostor. The two fight a duel; Lovel, thinking he has killed his opponent, flies with Edie Ochiltree, who has turned up as usual. They hide in the ruins of St Ruth, where they watch Dousterswivel gulling Sir Arthur in a treasure-hunt. Lovel gets away on a boat and - out of sight, out of mind; we do not worry about him until he turns up again. Second treasure-hunt at St Ruth. Sir Arthur finds a hoard of silver. Third treasure-hunt. Dousterswivel is soundly cudgelled, and when he comes to himself sees the funeral rites of the old Countess of Glenallan, who is being buried there at midnight and with secrecy, that family being of the Romish persuasion.

Now the Glenallans are very important in the story, yet how casually they are introduced! They are hooked on to Dousterswivel in the most artless way. His pair of eyes happened to be handy, so Scott had a peep through them. And the reader by now is getting so docile under the succession of episodes that he just gapes, like a primitive cave-man. Now the Glenallan interest gets to work, the ruins of St Ruth are switched off, and we enter what may be called the 'pre-story', where two new characters intervene, and talk wildly and darkly about a sinful past. Their names are:

THE STORY

Elspeth Mucklebackit, a Sibyl of a fisherwoman, and Lord Glenallan, son of the dead countess. Their dialogue is interrupted by other events - by the arrest, trial and release of Edie Ochiltree, by the death by drowning of another new character, and by the humours of Hector McIntyre's convalescence at his uncle's house. But the gist is that Lord Glenallan many years ago had married a lady called Evelina Neville, against his mother's wish, and had then been given to understand that she was his half-sister. Mad-dened with horror, he had left her before she gave birth to a child. Elspeth, formerly his mother's servant, now explains to him that Evelina was no relation to him, that she died in childbirth - Elspeth and another woman attending - and that the child disappeared. Lord Glenallan then goes to consult the Antiquary, who, as a Justice of the Peace, knew something of the events of the time, and who had also loved Evelina. And what happens next? Sir Arthur Wardour's goods are sold up, for Dousterswivel has ruined him. And then? The French are reported to be landing. And then? Lovel rides into the district leading the British troops. He calls himself Major Neville now. But even Major Neville is not his right name, for he is who but the lost child of Lord Glenallan, he is none other than the legitimate heir to an earldom. Partly through Elspeth Mucklebackit, partly through her fellow servant whom he meets as a nun abroad, partly through an uncle who has died, partly through Edie Ochiltree, the truth has come out. There are indeed plenty of reasons for the dénouement, but Scott is not interested in reasons; he dumps them down without bothering to elucidate them; to make one thing happen after another is his only serious aim. And then? Isabella Wardour relents and marries the hero. And then? That is the end of the story. We must not ask 'And then?' too often. If the time-sequence is pursued one second too far it leads us into quite another country.

ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL

The Antiquary is a book in which the life in time is celebrated instinctively by the novelist, and this must lead to slackening of emotion and shallowness of judgement, and in particular to that idiotic use of marriage as a finale. Time can be celebrated consciously also, and we shall find an example of this in a very different sort of book, in a memorable book: Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale*. Time is the real hero of *The Old Wives' Tale*. He is installed as the lord of creation – excepting indeed of Mr Critchlow, whose bizarre exemption only gives added force. Sophia and Constance are the children of Time from the instant we see them romping with their mother's dresses; they are doomed to decay with a completeness that is very rare in literature. They are girls, Sophia runs away and marries, the mother dies, Constance marries, her husband dies, Sophia's husband dies, Sophia dies, Constance dies, their old rheumatic dog lurches up to see whether anything remains in the saucer. Our daily life in time is exactly this business of getting old which clogs the arteries of Sophia and Constance, and the story that is a story and sounded so healthy and stood no nonsense cannot sincerely lead to any conclusion but the grave. It is an unsatisfactory conclusion. Of course we grow old. But a great book must rest on something more than an 'of course', and though *The Old Wives' Tale* is strong, sincere, sad, it misses greatness.

What about *War and Peace*? That is certainly great, that likewise emphasizes the effects of time and the waxing and waning of a generation. Tolstoy, like Bennett, has the courage to show us people getting old – the partial decay of Nicolay and Natasha is really more sinister than the complete decay of Constance and Sophia: more of our own youth seems to have perished in it. Then why is *War and Peace* not depressing? Probably because it has extended over space as well as over time, and the sense of space until it terrifies us is exhilarating, and leaves behind it an effect like

THE STORY

music. After one has read *War and Peace* for a bit, great chords begin to sound, and we cannot say exactly what struck them. They do not arise from the story, though Tolstoy is quite as interested in what comes next as Scott, and quite as sincere as Bennett. They do not come from the episodes nor yet from the characters. They come from the immense area of Russia, over which episodes and characters have been scattered, from the sum total of bridges and frozen rivers, forests, roads, gardens, fields, which accumulate grandeur and sonority after we have passed them. Many novelists have the feeling for place – Five Towns, Auld Reekie and so on. Very few have the sense of space, and the possession of it ranks high in Tolstoy's divine equipment. Space is the lord of *War and Peace*, not time.

A word in conclusion about the story as the repository of a voice. It is the aspect of the novelist's work which asks to be read out loud, which appeals not to the eye, like most prose, but to the ear; having indeed this much in common with oratory. It does not offer melody or cadence. For these, strange as it may seem, the eye is sufficient; the eye, backed by a mind that transmutes, can easily gather up the sounds of a paragraph or dialogue when they have aesthetic value, and refer them to our enjoyment – yes, can even telescope them up so that we get them quicker than we should do if they were recited, just as some people can look through a musical score quicker than it can be rapped out on the piano. But the eye is not equally quick at catching a voice. That opening sentence of *The Antiquary* has no beauty of sound, yet we should lose something if it was not read aloud. Our mind would commune with Walter Scott's silently, and less profitably. The story, besides saying one thing after another, adds something because of its connection with a voice.

It does not add much. It does not give us anything as important as the author's personality. His personality – when he has one – is conveyed through nobler agencies, such as the

characters or the plot or his comments on life. What the story does do in this particular capacity, all it can do, is to transform us from readers into listeners, to whom 'a' voice speaks, the voice of the tribal narrator, squatting in the middle of the cave, and saying one thing after another until the audience falls asleep among their offal and bones. The story is primitive, it reaches back to the origins of literature, before reading was discovered, and it appeals to what is primitive in us. That is why we are so unreasonable over the stories we like, and so ready to bully those who like something else. For instance, I am annoyed when people laugh at me for loving *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and I hope that I have annoyed some of you over Scott! You see what I mean. Intolerance is the atmosphere stories generate. The story is neither moral nor is it favourable to the understanding of the novel in its other aspects. If we want to do that we must come out of the cave.

We shall not come out of it yet, but observe already how that other life – the life by value – presses against the novel from all sides, how it is ready to fill and indeed distort it, offering it people, plots, fantasies, views of the universe, anything except this constant 'and then . . . and then', which is the sole contribution of our present enquiry. The life in time is so obviously base and inferior that the question naturally occurs: cannot the novelist abolish it from his work, even as the mystic asserts he has abolished it from his experience, and install its radiant alternative alone?

Well, there is one novelist who has tried to abolish time, and her failure is instructive: Gertrude Stein. Going much further than Emily Brontë, Sterne or Proust, Gertrude Stein has smashed up and pulverized her clock and scattered its fragments over the world like the limbs of Osiris, and she has done this not from naughtiness but from a noble motive: she has hoped to emancipate fiction from the tyranny of time and to express in it the life by values only. She fails, because as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot

express anything at all, and in her later writing we can see the slope down which she is slipping. She wants to abolish this whole aspect of the story, this sequence in chronology, and my heart goes out to her. She cannot do it without abolishing the sequence between the sentences. But this is not effective unless the order of the words in the sentences is also abolished, which in its turn entails the abolition of the order of the letters or sounds in the words. And now she is over the precipice. There is nothing to ridicule in such an experiment as hers. It is much more important to play about like this than to rewrite the Waverley Novels. Yet the experiment is doomed to failure. The time-sequence cannot be destroyed without carrying in its ruin all that should have taken its place; the novel that would express values only becomes unintelligible and therefore valueless.

That is why I must ask you to join me in repeating in exactly the right tone of voice the words with which this lecture opened. Do not say them vaguely and good-temperedly like a busman; you have not the right. Do not say them briskly and aggressively like a golfer; you know better. Say them a little sadly, and you will be correct. Yes – oh dear yes – the novel tells a story.

the long run variety and colour to the experiences we receive. A quantity of novelists, English novelists especially, have behaved like this to the people in their books: played fast and loose with them, and I cannot see why they should be censured.

They must be censured if we catch them at it at the time. That is quite true, and out of it arises another question: may the writer take the reader into his confidence about his characters? Answer has already been indicated: better not. It is dangerous, it generally leads to a drop in the temperature, to intellectual and emotional laxity, and worse still to facetiousness, and to a friendly invitation to see how the figures hook up behind. 'Doesn't A look nice - she always was my favourite?' 'Let's think of why B does that - perhaps there's more in him than meets the eye - yes, see - he has a heart of gold - having given you this peep at it I'll pop it back - I don't think he's noticed.' 'And C - he always was the mystery man.' Intimacy is gained but at the expense of illusion and nobility. It is like standing a man a drink so that he may not criticize your opinions. With all respect to Fielding and Thackeray, it is devastating, it is bar-parlour chatiness, and nothing has been more harmful to the novels of the past. To take your reader into your confidence about the universe is a different thing. It is not dangerous for a novelist to draw back from his characters, as Hardy and Conrad do, and to generalize about the conditions under which he thinks life is carried on. It is confidences about the individual people that do harm, and beckon the reader away from the people to an examination of the novelist's mind. Not much is ever found in it at such a moment, for it is never in the creative state: the mere process of saying 'Come along, let's have a chat' has cooled it down.

Our comments on human beings must now come to an end. They may take fuller shape when we come to discuss the plot.

THE PLOT

'CHARACTER,' says Aristotle, 'gives us qualities, but it is in actions - what we do - that we are happy or the reverse.' We have already decided that Aristotle is wrong, and now we must face the consequences of disagreeing with him. 'All human happiness and misery,' says Aristotle, 'take the form of action.' We know better. We believe that happiness and misery exist in the secret life, which each of us leads privately and to which (in his characters) the novelist has access. And by the secret life we mean the life for which there is no external evidence, not, as is vulgarly supposed, that which is revealed by a chance word or a sigh. A chance word or sigh are just as much evidence as a speech or a murder: the life they reveal ceases to be secret and enters the realm of action.

There is, however, no occasion to be hard on Aristotle. He had read few novels and no modern ones - the *Odyssey* but not *Ulysses* - he was by temperament apathetic to secrecy, and indeed regarded the human mind as a sort of tub from which everything can finally be extracted; and when he wrote the words quoted above he had in view the drama, where no doubt they hold true. In the drama all human happiness and misery does and must take the form of action. Otherwise its existence remains unknown, and this is the great difference between the drama and the novel.

The speciality of the novel is that the writer can talk about his characters as well as through them, or can arrange for us to listen when they talk to themselves. He has access to self-communings, and from that level he can descend even deeper and peer into the subconscious. A man does not talk to himself quite truly - not even to himself; the happiness or misery that

he secretly feels proceed from causes that he cannot quite explain, because as soon as he raises them to the level of the explicable they lose their native quality. The novelist has a real pull here. He can show the subconscious short-circuiting straight into action (the dramatist can do this too); he can also show it in its relation to soliloquy. He commands all the secret life, and he must not be robbed of this privilege. 'How did the writer know that?' it is sometimes said. 'What's his standpoint? He is not being consistent, he's shifting his point of view from the limited to the omniscient, and now he's edging back again.' Questions like these have too much the atmosphere of the law courts about them. All that matters to the reader is whether the shifting of attitude and the secret life are convincing, whether it is *πυθαγόριον* in fact, and with his favourite word ringing in his ears Aristotle may retire.

However, he leaves us in some confusion, for what, with this enlargement of human nature, is going to become of the plot? In most literary works there are two elements: human individuals, whom we have recently discussed, and the element vaguely called art. Art we have also dallied with, but with a very low form of it, the story: the chopped-off length of the tapeworm of time. Now we arrive at a much higher aspect, the plot; and the plot, instead of finding human beings more or less cut to its requirements, as they are in the drama, finds them enormous, shadowy and intractable, and three-quarters hidden like an iceberg. In vain it points out to these unwieldy creatures the advantages of the triple process of complication, crisis and solution so persuasively expounded by Aristotle. A few of them rise and comply, and a novel which ought to have been a play is the result. But there is no general response. They want to sit apart and brood or something, and the plot (whom I here visualize as a sort of higher government official) is concerned at their lack of public spirit: 'This will not do,' it seems to say. 'Individualism is a most valuable quality; indeed my own position depends upon individuals;

I have always admitted as much freely. Nevertheless there are certain limits, and those limits are being overstepped. Characters must not brood too long; they must not waste time running up and down ladders in their own insides, they must contribute, or higher interests will be jeopardized. How well one knows that phrase, 'a contribution to the plot'! It is accorded, and of necessity, by the people in a drama; how necessary is it in a novel?

Let us define a plot. We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Or again: 'The queen died, no one knew why, until it was discovered that it was through grief at the death of the king.' This is a plot with a mystery in it, a form capable of high development. It suspends the time-sequence, it moves as far away from the story as its limitations will allow. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say: 'And then?' If it is in a plot we ask: 'Why?' That is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel. A plot cannot be told to a gaping audience of cave-men or to a tyrannical sultan or to their modern descendant the movie-public. They can only be kept awake by 'And then - and then -' they can only supply curiosity. But a plot demands intelligence and memory also.

Curiosity is one of the lowest of the human faculties. You will have noticed in daily life that when people are inquisitive they nearly always have bad memories and are usually stupid at bottom. The man who begins by asking you how many brothers and sisters you have is never a sympathetic character, and if you meet him in a year's time he will probably ask you how many brothers and sisters you have, his mouth again sagging open, his eyes still bulging from his head. It is

difficult to be friends with such a man, and for two inquisitive people to be friends must be impossible. Curiosity by itself takes us a very little way, nor does it take us far into the novel — only as far as the story. If we would grasp the plot we must add intelligence and memory.

Intelligence first. The intelligent novel-reader, unlike the inquisitive one who just runs his eye over a new fact, mentally picks it up. He sees it from two points of view: isolated, and related to the other facts that he has read on previous pages. Probably he does not understand it, but he does not expect to do so yet awhile. The facts in a highly organized novel (like *The Egots*) are often of the nature of cross-correspondences, and the ideal spectator cannot expect to view them properly until he is sitting up on a hill at the end. This element of surprise or mystery — the detective element as it is sometimes rather empty called — is of great importance in a plot. It occurs through a suspension of the time-sequence; a mystery is a pocket in time, and it occurs crudely, as in 'Why did the queen die?', and more subtly in half-explained gestures and words, the true meaning of which only dawns pages ahead. Mystery is essential to a plot, and cannot be appreciated without intelligence. To the curious it is just another 'And then —' To appreciate a mystery, part of the mind must be left behind, brooding, while the other part goes marching on.

That brings us to our second qualification: memory.

Memory and intelligence are closely connected, for unless we remember we cannot understand. If by the time the queen dies we have forgotten the existence of the king we shall never make out what killed her. The plot-maker expects us to remember, we expect him to leave no loose ends. Every action or word in a plot ought to count; it ought to be economical and spare; even when complicated it should be organic and free from dead matter. It may be difficult or easy, it may and should contain mysteries, but it ought not to mislead. And over it, as it unfolds, will hover the memory of the reader (that

dull glow of the mind of which intelligence is the bright advancing edge) and will constantly rearrange and reconsider, seeing new clues, new chains of cause and effect, and the final sense (if the plot has been a fine one) will not be of clues or chains, but of something aesthetically compact, something which might have been shown by the novelist straight away, only if he had shown it straight away it would never have become beautiful. We come up against beauty here — for the first time in our enquiry: beauty at which a novelist should never aim, though he fails if he does not achieve it. I will conduct beauty to her proper place later on. Meanwhile please accept her as part of a completed plot. She looks a little surprised at being there, but beauty ought to look a little surprised; it is the emotion that best suits her face, as Botticelli knew when he painted her risen from the waves, between the winds and the flowers. The beauty who does not look surprised, who accepts her position as her due — she reminds us too much of a *prima donna*.

But let us get back to the plot, and we will do so via George Meredith.

Meredith is not the great name he was twenty or thirty years ago, when much of the universe and all Cambridge trembled. I remember how depressed I used to be by a line in one of his poems: 'We breathe but to be sword or block.' I did not want to be either and I knew that I was not a sword. It seems, though, that there was no real cause for depression, for Meredith is himself now rather in the trough of a wave, and though fashion will turn and raise him a bit he will never be the spiritual power he was about the year 1900. His philosophy has not worn well. His heavy attacks on sentimentality — they bore the present generation, which pursues the same quarry but with neater instruments, and is apt to suspect anyone carrying a blunderbuss of being a sentimentalist himself. And his visions of Nature — they do not endure like Hardy's, there is too much Surrey about them, they are fluffy and lush.

He could no more write the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native* than Box Hill could visit Salisbury Plain. What is really tragic and enduring in the scenery of England was hidden from him, and so is what is really tragic in life. When he gets serious and noble-minded there is a strident overtone, a bullying that becomes distressing. I feel indeed that he was like Tennyson in one respect: through not taking himself quietly enough he strained his inside. And his novels: most of the social values are faked. The tailors are not tailors, the cricket matches are not cricket, the railway trains do not even seem to be trains, the county families give the air of having been only just that moment unpacked, scarcely in position before the action starts, the straw still clinging to their beards. It is surely very odd, the social scene in which his characters are set; it is partly due to his fantasy, which is legitimate, but partly a chilly fake, and wrong. What with the faking, what with the preaching, which was never agreeable and is now said to be hollow, and what with the home counties posing as the universe, it is no wonder Meredith now lies in the trough. And yet he is in one way a great novelist. He is the finest contriver that English fiction has ever produced, and any lecture on plot must do homage to him.

Meredith's plots are not closely knit. We cannot describe the action of *Harry Richmond* in a phrase, as we can *Great Expectations*, though both books turn on the mistake made by a young man as to the sources of his fortune. A Meredithian plot is not a temple to the tragic or even to the comic Muse, but rather resembles a series of kiosks most artfully placed among wooded slopes, which his people reach by their own impetus, and from which they emerge with altered aspect. Incidents spring out of character, and having occurred it alters that character. People and events are closely connected, and he does it by means of these contrivances. They are often delightful, sometimes touching, always unexpected. This shock, followed by the feeling 'Oh, that's all right', is a sign

that all is well with the plot; characters, to be real, ought to run smoothly, but a plot ought to cause surprise. The horse-whipping of Dr Shrapnel in *Beauchamp's Career* is a surprise. We know that Everard Romfey must dislike Shrapnel, must hate and misunderstand his radicalism, and be jealous of his influence over Beauchamp; we watch too the growth of the misunderstanding over Rosamund, we watch the intrigues of Cecil Basklett. As far as characters go, Meredith plays with his cards on the table, but when the incident comes what a shock it gives us and the characters too! The tragic-comic business of one old man whipping another from the highest motives - it reacts upon all their world, and transforms all the personages of the book. It is not the centre of *Beauchamp's Career*, which indeed has no centre. It is essentially a contrivance, a door through which the book is made to pass, emerging in an altered form. Towards the close, when Beauchamp is drowned and Shrapnel and Romfey are reconciled over his body, there is an attempt to elevate the plot to Aristotelean symmetry, to turn the novel into a temple wherein dwells interpretation and peace. Meredith fails here: *Beauchamp's Career* remains a series of contrivances (the visit to France is another of them), but contrivances that spring from the characters and react upon them.

And now briefly to illustrate the mystery element in the plot: the formula of 'the queen died, it was afterwards discovered, through grief'. I will take an example, not from Dickens (though *Great Expectations* provides a fine one), nor from Conan Doyle (whom my priggishness prevents me from enjoying), but again from Meredith: an example of a concealed emotion from the admirable plot of *The Egoist*: it occurs in the character of Laetitia Dale.

We are told, at first, all that passes in Laetitia's mind. Sir Willoughby has twice jilted her, she is sad, resigned. Then, for dramatic reasons, her mind is hidden from us, it develops naturally enough, but does not re-emerge until the great

midnight scene where he asks her to marry him because he is not sure about Clara, and this time, a changed woman, Laetitia says 'No'. Meredith has concealed the change. It would have spoiled his high comedy if we had been kept in touch with it throughout. Sir Willoughby has to have a series of crashes, to catch at this and that, and find everything rickety. We should not enjoy the fun, in fact it would be boorish, if we saw the author preparing the booby-traps beforehand, so Laetitia's apathy has been hidden from us. This is one of the countless examples in which either plot or character has to suffer, and Meredith with his unerring good sense here lets the plot triumph.

As an example of mistaken triumph, I think of a slip – it is no more than a slip – which Charlotte Brontë makes in *Villette*. She allows Lucy Snowe to conceal from the reader her discovery that Dr John is the same as her old playmate Graham. When it comes out, we do get a good plot-thrill, but too much at the expense of Lucy's character. She has seemed, up to then, the spirit of integrity, and has, as it were, laid herself under a moral obligation to narrate all that she knows. That she stoops to suppress is a little distressing, though the incident is too trivial to do her any permanent harm.

Sometimes a plot triumphs too completely. The characters have to suspend their natures at every turn, or else are so swept away by the course of fate that our sense of their reality is weakened. We shall find instances of this in a writer who is far greater than Meredith, and yet less successful as a novelist – Thomas Hardy. Hardy seems to me essentially a poet, who conceives of his novels from an enormous height. They are to be tragedies or tragi-comedies, they are to give out the sound of hammer-strokes as they proceed; in other words Hardy arranges events with emphasis on causality, the ground-plan is a plot, and the characters are ordered to acquiesce in its requirements. Except in the person of Tess (who conveys the feeling that she is greater than destiny), this aspect of his work

is unsatisfactory. His characters are involved in various snares, they are finally bound hand and foot, there is ceaseless emphasis on fate, and yet, for all the sacrifices made to it, we never see the action as a living thing as we see it in *Antigone* or *Bethanee* or *The Cherry Orchard*. The fate above us, not the fate working through us – that is what is eminent and memorable in the Wessex novels. Egdon Heath before Eustacia Vye has set foot upon it. The woods without the Woodlanders. The downs above Budmouth Regis with royal princesses, still asleep, driving across them through the dawn. Hardy's success in *The Dynasts* (where he uses another medium) is complete, there the hammer-strokes are heard, cause and effect enchain the characters despite their struggles, complete contact between the actors and the plot is established. But in the novels, though the same superb and terrible machine works, it never catches humanity in its teeth; there is some vital problem that has not been answered, or even posed, in the misfortunes of Jude the Obscure. In other words the characters have been required to contribute too much to the plot; except in their rustic humours, their vitality has been impoverished, they have gone dry and thin. This, as far as I can make out, is the flaw running through Hardy's novels: he has emphasized causality more strongly than his medium permits. As a poet and prophet and visualizer George Meredith is nothing by his side – just a suburban roarer – but Meredith did know what the novel could stand, where the plot could dun the characters for a contribution, where it must let them function as they liked. And the moral – well, I see no moral, because the work of Hardy is my home and that of Meredith cannot be; still, the moral from the point of these lectures is again unfavourable to Aristotle. In the novel, all human happiness and misery does not take the form of action, it seeks means of expression other than through the plot, it must not be rigidly canalized.

In the losing battle that the plot fights with the characters, it often takes a cowardly revenge. Nearly all novels are feeble

at the end. This is because the plot requires to be wound up. Why is this necessary? Why is there not a convention which allows a novelist to stop as soon as he feels bored? Alas, he has to round things off, and usually the characters go dead while he is at work, and our final impression of them is through deadness. *The Vicar of Wakefield* is in this way a typical novel, so clever and fresh in the first half, up to the painting of the family group with Mrs Primrose as Venus, and then so wooden and imbecile. Incidents and people that occurred at first for their own sake now have to contribute to the dénouement. In the end even the author feels he is being a little foolish. 'Nor can I go on,' he says, 'without a reflection on those accidental meetings which, though they happen every day, seldom excite our surprise but upon some extraordinary occasion.' Goldsmith is of course a lightweight, but most novels do fail here — there is this disastrous standstill while logic takes over the command from flesh and blood. If it was not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude. Death and marriage are almost his only connection between his characters and his plot, and the reader is more ready to meet him here, and take a bookish view of them, provided they occur later on in the book; the writer, poor fellow, must be allowed to finish up somehow, he has his living to get like anyone else, so no wonder that nothing is heard but hammering and screwing.

This, as far as one can generalize, is the inherent defect of novels: they go off at the end; and there are two explanations: firstly, failure of pep, which threatens the novelist like all workers; and, secondly, the difficulty which we have been discussing. The characters have been getting out of hand, laying foundations and declining to build on them afterwards, and now the novelist has to labour personally, in order that the job may be done to time. He pretends that the characters are acting for him. He keeps mentioning their names and using inverted commas. But the characters are gone or dead.

The plot, then, is the novel in its logical intellectual aspect; it requires mystery, but the mysteries are solved later on; the reader may be moving about in worlds unrealized, but the novelist has no misgivings. He is competent, poised above his work, throwing a beam of light here, popping on a cap of invisibility there, and (qua plot-maker) continually negotiating with himself qua character-monger as to the best effect to be produced. He plans his book beforehand; or anyhow he stands above it, his interest in cause and effect gives him an air of predetermination.

And now we must ask ourselves whether the framework thus produced is the best possible for a novel. After all, why has a novel to be planned? Cannot it grow? Why need it close, as a play closes? Cannot it open out? Instead of standing above his work and controlling it, cannot the novelist throw himself into it and be carried along to some goal that he does not foresee? The plot is exciting and may be beautiful, yet is it not a fetish, borrowed from the drama, from the spatial limitations of the stage? Cannot fiction devise a framework that is not so logical yet more suitable to its genius?

Modern writers say that it can, and we will now examine a recent example: a violent onslaught on the plot as we have defined it, and a constructive attempt to put something in the place of the plot.

I have already mentioned the novel in question: *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* by André Gide. It contains within its covers both the methods. Gide has also published the diary he kept while he was writing the novel, and there is no reason why he should not publish in the future the impressions he had when re-reading both the diary and the novel, and in the future perfect a still more final synthesis in which the diary, the novel and his impressions of both will interact. He is indeed a little more solemn than an author should be about the whole caboodle, but regarded as a caboodle it is excessively interesting, and repays careful study by critics.

We have, in the first place, a plot in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* of the logical objective type that we have been considering – a plot, or rather fragments of plots. The main fragment concerns a young man called Olivier – a charming, touching and lovable character, who misses happiness, and then recovers it after an excellently contrived *déroulement*; confesses it also; this fragment has a wonderful radiance and ‘lives’, if I may use so coarse a word, it is a successful creation on familiar lines. But it is by no means the centre of the book. No more are the other logical fragments – that which concerns Georges, Olivier’s schoolboy brother, who passes false coin, and is instrumental in driving a fellow pupil to suicide. (Gide gives us his sources for all this in his diary; he got the idea of Georges from a boy whom he caught trying to steal a book off a stall, the gang of coiners were caught at Rouen, and the suicide of children took place at Clermont-Ferrand, etc.) Neither Olivier, nor Georges, nor Vincent a third brother, nor Bernard their friend is the centre of the book. We come nearer to it in Edouard. Edouard is a novelist. He bears the same relation to Gide as Clissold does to Wells. I dare not be more precise. Like Gide, he keeps a diary, like Gide he is writing a book called *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, and like Clissold he is disavowed. Edouard’s diary is printed in full. It begins before the plot-fragments, continues during them, and forms the bulk of Gide’s book. Edouard is not just a chronicler. He is an actor too; indeed it is he who rescues Olivier and is rescued by him; we leave those two in happiness.

But that is still not the centre. The nearest to the centre lies in a discussion about the art of the novel. Edouard is holding forth to Bernard his secretary and some friends. He has said that truth in life and truth in a novel are not identical, and that he wants to write a book which shall include both sorts of truth.

‘And what is its subject?’ asked Sophroniska.

‘There is none,’ said Edouard sharply. ‘My novel has no

subject. No doubt that sounds foolish. Let us say, if you prefer, that it will not have “a” subject. . . . “A slice of life,” the naturalistic school used to say. The mistake that school made was always to cut its slice in the same direction, always lengthwise, in the direction of time. Why not cut it up and down? Or across? As for me, I don’t want to cut it at all. You see what I mean. I want to put everything into my novel and not snip off my material either here or there. I have been working for a year, and there is nothing I haven’t put in: all I see, all I know, all I can learn from other people’s lives and my own.’

‘My poor man, you will bore your readers to death,’ cried Laura, unable to restrain her mirth.

‘Not at all. To get my effect, I am inventing, as my central character, a novelist, and the subject of my book will be the struggle between what reality offers him and what he tries to make of the offer.’

‘Have you planned out this book?’ asked Sophroniska, trying to keep grave.

‘Of course not.’

‘Why “of course not”?’

‘For a book of this type any plan would be unsuitable. The whole of it would go wrong if I decided any detail ahead. I am waiting for reality to dictate to me.’

‘But I thought you wanted to get away from reality.’

‘My novelist wants to get away, but I keep pulling him back. To tell the truth, this is my subject: the struggle between facts as proposed by reality, and the ideal reality.’

‘Do tell us the name of this book,’ said Laura, in despair.

‘Very well. Tell it them, Bernard.’

‘*Les Faux-Monnayeurs*,’ said Bernard. ‘And now will you please tell us who these *faux-monnayeurs* are.’

‘I haven’t the least idea.’

Bernard and Laura looked at each other and then at Sophroniska. There was the sound of a deep sigh.

The fact was that ideas about money, depreciation, inflation, forgery, etc., had gradually invaded Edouard’s book – just as theories of clothing invade *Sartor Resartus* and even assume the functions of characters. ‘Has anyone here ever had hold of a false

coin?' he asked after a pause. 'Imagine a ten-franc piece, gold, false. It is actually worth a couple of sous, but it will remain worth ten francs until it is found out. Suppose I begin with the idea that—'

'But why begin with an idea?' burst out Bernard, who was by now in a state of exasperation. 'Why not begin with a fact? If you introduce the fact properly, the idea will follow of itself. If I was writing your *Faux-Monnayeurs* I should begin with a piece of false money, with the ten-franc piece you were speaking of, and here it is!'

So saying, Bernard pulled a ten-franc piece out of his pocket and flung it on the table.

'There,' he remarked. 'It rings all right. I got it this morning from the grocer. It's worth more than a couple of sous, as it's coated in gold, but it's actually made of glass. It will become quite transparent in time. No — don't rub it — you're going to spoil my false coin.'

Edouard had taken it and was examining it with the utmost attention.

'How did the grocer get it?'

'He doesn't know. He passed it on me for a joke, and then enlightened me, being a decent fellow. He let me have it for five francs. I thought that, since you were writing *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, you ought to see what false money is like, so I got it to show you. Now that you have looked at it, give it me back. I am sorry to see that reality has no interest for you.'

'Yes,' said Edouard; 'it interests me, but it puts me out.'

'That's a pity,' remarked Bernard.¹

This passage is the centre of the book. It contains the old thesis of truth in life versus truth in art, and illustrates it very neatly by the arrival of an actual false coin. What is new in it is the attempt to combine the two truths, the proposal that writers should mix themselves up in their material and be rolled over and over by it; they should not try to subdue any

¹ Paraphrased from *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, pp. 238-46. My version, needless to say, conveys neither the subtlety nor the balance of the original.

longer, they should hope to be subdued, to be carried away. As for a plot — to pot with the plot! Break it up, boil it down. Let there be those 'formidable erosions of contour' of which Nietzsche speaks. All that is prearranged is false.

Another distinguished critic has agreed with Gide — that old lady in the anecdote who was accused by her nieces of being illogical. For some time she could not be brought to understand what logic was, and when she grasped its true nature she was not so much angry as contemptuous. 'Logic! Good gracious! What rubbish!' she exclaimed. 'How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?' Her nieces, educated young women, thought that she was *passé*; she was really more up-to-date than they were.

Those who are in touch with contemporary France say that the present generation follows the advice of Gide and the old lady, and resolutely huris itself into confusion, and indeed admires English novelists on the ground that they so seldom succeed in what they attempt. Compliments are always delighful, but this particular one is a bit of a backhander. It is like trying to lay an egg and being told you have produced a paraboloid — more curious than gratifying. And what results when you try to lay a paraboloid, I cannot conceive — perhaps the death of the hen. That seems the danger in Gide's position — he sets out to lay a paraboloid; he is not well advised, if he wants to write subconscious novels, to reason so lucidly and patiently about the subconscious; he is introducing mysticism at the wrong stage of the process. However, that is his affair. As a critic he is most stimulating, and the various bundles of words he has called *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* will be enjoyed by all who cannot tell what they think till they see what they say, or who weary of tyranny by the plot and of its alternative, tyranny by characters.

There is clearly something else in view, some other aspect or aspects which we have yet to examine. We may suspect the claim to be consciously subconscious, nevertheless there is a

vague and vast residue into which the subconscious enters. Poetry, religion, passion – we have not placed them yet, and since we are critics – only critics – we must try to place them, to catalogue the rainbow. We have already peeped and botanized upon our mothers' graves.

The numbering of the warp and woof of the rainbow must accordingly be attempted, and we must now bring our minds to bear on the subject of fantasy.

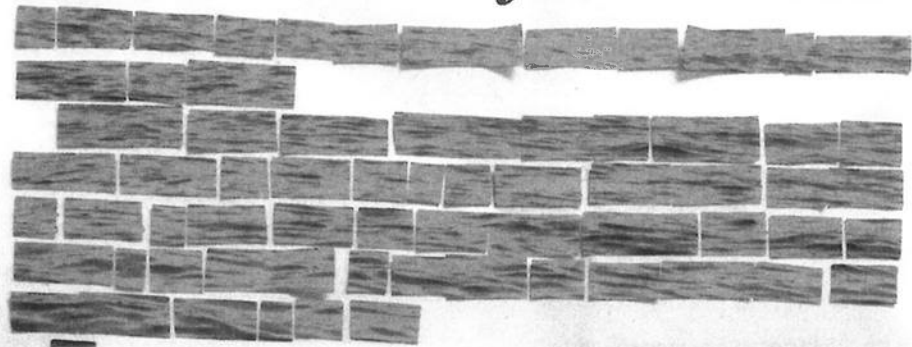
6

FANTASY

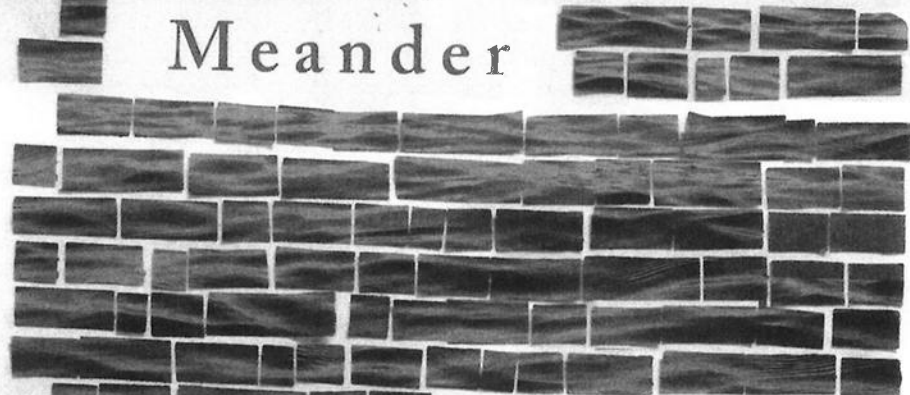
A course of lectures, if it is to be more than a collection of remarks, must have an idea running through it. It must also have a subject, and the idea ought to run through the subject too. This is so obvious as to sound foolish, but anyone who has tried to lecture will realize that here is a genuine difficulty. A course, like any other collection of words, generates an atmosphere. It has its own apparatus – a lecturer, an audience or provision for one – it occurs at regular intervals, it is announced by printed notices, and it has a financial side, though this last is tactfully concealed. Thus it tends in its parasitic way to lead a life of its own, and it and the idea running through it are apt to move in one direction while the subject steals off in the other.

The idea running through these lectures is by now plain enough: that there are in the novel two forces: human beings and a bundle of various things not human beings, and that it is the novelist's business to adjust these two forces and conciliate their claims. That is plain enough, but does it run through the novel too? Perhaps our subject, namely the books we have read, has stolen away from us while we theorize, like a shadow from an ascending bird. The bird is all right – it climbs, it is consistent and eminent. The shadow is all right – it has flickered across roads and gardens. But the two things resemble one another less and less, they do not touch as they did when the bird rested its toes on the ground. Criticism, especially a critical course, is so misleading. However lofty its intentions and sound its method, its subject slides away from beneath it, imperceptibly away, and lecturer and audience may awake with a start to find

Jane Alison



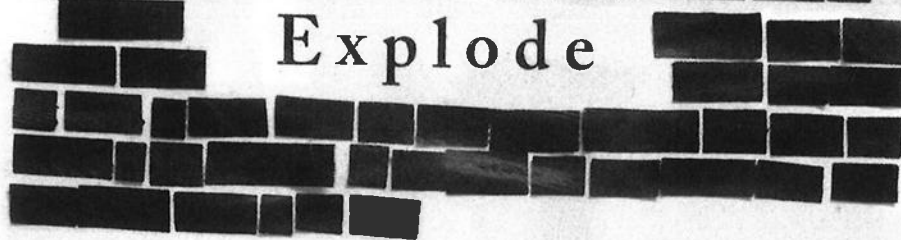
Meander



Spiral



Explode



Design and Pattern in Narrative

"[A] boundlessly inventive look at narrative form . . . filled with clarity and wit, underlain with formidable erudition."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

As Jane Alison writes in the introduction to her insightful and appealing book about the craft of writing: "For centuries there's been one path through fiction we're most likely to travel—one we're actually told to follow—and that's the dramatic arc: a situation arises, grows tense, reaches a peak, subsides . . . But something that swells and tatters until climax, then collapses? Bit masochistic, no? So many other patterns run through nature, tracing other deep motions in life. Why not draw on them, too?"

W. G. Sebald's *Emigrants* was the first novel to show Alison how forward momentum can be created by way of pattern, rather than the traditional arc—or, in nature, wave. Other writers of nonlinear prose considered in her "museum of specimens" include Nicholson Baker, Anne Carson, Marguerite Duras, Gabriel García Márquez, Jamaica Kincaid, Clarice Lispector, Susan Minot, David Mitchell, Caryl Phillips, and Mary Robison.

Meander, Spiral, Explode is a singular and brilliant elucidation of literary strategies that also brings high spirits and wit to its original conclusions. It is a liberating manifesto that says, Let's leave the outdated modes behind and, in thinking of new modes, bring feeling back to experimentation. It will appeal to serious readers and writers alike.

ON

a

nation from Ovid

MEANDER,

SPIRAL,

EXPLODE

Design and Pattern in Narrative

JANE ALISON

Catapult  New York

1

POINT, LINE, TEXTURE

Before flying overhead to view spirals, meanders, or branching patterns in stories, I want to look at text close-up: how it feels to travel word-by-word as the narrative unfurls around you. This is the first way we move through a story: one-way motion, word after word until the end. Narratologists call it movement on the *discourse* or textual level. (*Discourse* comes from *discurro*, to run back and forth: think of your eyes reading lines on this page.) Other movement takes place inside the content of the story: what happens, whether things happen chronologically or are tangled and must be unraveled, whether you move less through events than through ideas, and so on. These storyworld movements can be more complex than the word-after-word transit and

form the large patterns we'll look at soon. First, that one-way trip.*

A physical way to envision the trip: think of swimming along a river. Stroking, kicking, floating, you'd feel or see the water's chills and warm plumes, its siltiness or clarity, when it burbles over pebbles or grows still, when it's tangled with greenery, when it sparkles or flows through shade. Moving word-by-word through a story is analogous: we "see," "hear," "feel" what we read as we flow forward, line after line.

Fine for a metaphor, but how do writers create those primary sensations of speed or sluggishness, transparency or murk, that a reader meets in our medium? What actually are the elements of our medium? Most craft books say that the "elements of fiction" are character, plot, place, etc. But I want to go down to true elements, the tiniest particles a reader encounters: letters, phonemes. These gather to form words, which line up as sentences, which clump in paragraphs or *crots* (prose stanzas, *stanza* being Italian for "room"), everything flowing over white space.

* I won't address the use of explicit visual devices such as varied typography, or photographs and other graphic images embedded in the text, even though all of these can add to or trouble how we absorb or make sense of the language. See works cited by Simon Barton, Glyn White, and Nigel Krauth. Some thoughts on the uses of space and gaps will appear, but mostly I'm interested in patterning on the contentual level of text, not the graphic.

With all of this we create the medium, or texture, through which a reader moves.

Text and *texture* are joined at the feet, for both come from *texere*.

Although we first absorb printed letters or words as pictures, we also "hear" them: neural activity registering sound is about the same whether a word is read silently or aloud; a part of the brain called Broca's area generates the "sound" of a word internally. So, reading, we see a picture and "hear" a sound, and in both cases we experience the word in time. (The sense of a word, its clarity or cascade of connotations, naturally also affects how long a word feels to us.) In English, the sounds of letters and syllables are so varied that their length isn't as measurable as scored notes of music, but we still sense differences among them. The letter *t* is quicker than *m*; *bit* is quicker than *bite*. We see and hear the difference in length between *tot* and *tomb*, between *tot* and *tomatillo*. We might also see and hear commas, semicolons, question marks, periods—the tribe of punctuation—and the spaces between marks. All of these take portions of time. So, types of letters, lengths of words, friction or fluidity among them, repetition, pauses or littings within our inner ear signaled by commas or question marks: these are our elementary particles, the visual, auditory, and temporal units with which we first design.

On to the sentence. Even a one-word sentence

fragment can take surprising time and open up space in our minds, if that word is long or has long sounds, as of course does a very long sentence. Something fascinating about sentences is that when I'm in the thrall of one, I'm held in its temporal and spatial orbit; it begins and ends when it must, holding and directing me until ready to let me go. I move slowly through tricky syntax; luxurious language makes me linger; or I warily await a final word that will snap the whole into sense.

For more on sound and syntax, see Ellen Bryant Voigt's beautiful *Art of Syntax*. Now, though, some examples. Look at this two-part paragraph in David Foster Wallace's "Forever Overhead." The story's about a boy sensing new things in himself on his thirteenth birthday—and learning alarming facts about time:

And dreams: For months past, there have been dreams like nothing before: moist and busy and distant, full of yielding curves, frantic pistons, soft warmlths and great fallings; and you have awakened through fluttering lids to a rush and a gush and a toe-curling scalp-snapping jolt of feeling from an inside deeper than you knew you had, spasms of a deep sweet hurt, the streetlights through your window blinds cracking into sharp stars

against the black bedroom ceiling, and on you a dense white jam that lrips between trembling legs, trickles and sticks, cools on you, hardens and clears until there is nothing but gnarled knots of pale solid animal hair in the morning shower, and in the wet tangle a clean sweet smell you can't believe comes from anything you made inside you.

The first two words form not a sentence but a fragment ("there have been" is understood), yet the single word *dreams* lingers long in my mouth and skull. Then that 132-word sentence is fabulous as it meanders, flows, rushes, explodes, and finally stills in a pool of reflection. These two are different animals, ant and giant squid, each with its own motion and life span. So, a fundamental way to design narrative is to work with a range within our smallest units, from syllable to word to phrase, clause, and sentence, much as you'd plant a garden with different leaves: pixelated baby's breath, spike of aloë, palm.

Another way to design on this level is to play with sentence *patterns*. You see and hear the boredom of a row of sentences starting with "the"; ditto when all sentences follow the same syntax: subject-verb, single clause. Here, by subtle contrast, is the opening of Raymond Carver's "Why Don't You Dance":

In the kitchen, he poured another drink and looked at the bedroom suite in his front yard. The mattress was stripped and the candy-striped sheets lay beside two pillows on the chiffonier. Except for that, things looked much the way they had in the bedroom—nightstand and reading lamp on his side of the bed, nightstand and reading lamp on her side.

His side, her side.

He considered this as he sipped the whiskey.

The first sentence is grammatically simple, with a single subject even if it takes two verbs: he poured . . . and looked. It also begins with a prepositional phrase rather than the subject. With two independent clauses, the second sentence is compound, a step more elaborate: the mattress was stripped, and the sheets lay beside two pillows. The third sentence, like the first, begins with a phrase but steps farther up the scale in being complex, with main and dependent clauses: things looked much the way they had. Next comes no sentence at all but a fragment repeating two phrases from the sentence above—his side, her side: the structure mirrors the split bed. Then we start back down the scale of single-compound-complex-fragment with another complex sentence: he considered this as he sipped. This is

a crisp way to create texture via sentence variety, even in Carver's spare prose. Just break down each of these sentences to be syntactically simple (and complete), in subject-verb formation, to feel the dulling effect:

He poured another drink in the kitchen.

He looked at the bedroom suite in his front yard. The mattress was stripped.

The candy-striped sheets lay beside two pillows on the chiffonier. They'd looked much like this in the bedroom. A nightstand and reading lamp had been on his side of the bed. A nightstand and reading lamp had been on her side.

There had been his side. There had been her side.

He considered this. He sipped the whiskey.

You lose a lot if you run from complex sentences with their depths, the way they pull one time zone or idea into the light and let another sink. Things looked much the way they had in the bedroom. That bedroom, that marriage, that love: all gone. What's here now are relics on the lawn and this man at a window, looking.

A complex sentence can not only take longer to wade through but can almost be a mini-story. Here's one from Nicholson Baker's *Mezzanine*:

From the men's room came the roar of a flushed urinal, followed immediately by "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy" whistled with infectious cheerfulness and lots of roccoco tricks—most notably the difficult yodel-trill technique, used here on the "ee" of "dandy," in which the whistler gets his lips to flip the sound binarily between the base tone and a higher pitch that is I think somewhere between a major third and a perfect fourth above it (why it is not a true harmonic but rather perceptibly out of tune has puzzled me often—something to do with the physics of pursed lips?): a display of virtuosity for-givable only in the men's room, and not, as some of the salesmen seemed to think, in the relative silence of working areas, where people froze, hate exuding from suspended Razor Points, as the whistler passed.

This is its own cosmos! Truly designed—and look at that menu of punctuation. (Try writing a page-long sentence using every kind. And why not every letter?) Even though the main action's over in the first line—*from the men's room came the roar*—you'd be missing an amusement park of a sentence if you didn't read on. A

different effect comes in a sentence that also gives its main action at the start but then rolls on and on with a series of paratactic ("and") phrases tumbling forward. Here's one from Jamaica Kincaid's *Mr. Potter*:

And the dew was vanishing quickly from
 the presence of the early morning sun,
 and the dew rose up, forming a picture
 of thin, worn-out old curtains, shield-
 ing a landscape filled up with sea and
 sky and ships with masts and boats for
 rowing and canoes and men who will
 fall overboard, never to be heard from
 again, and women with trays of fruit on
 their heads on their way to market, and
 children who are completely absorbed in
 the child's world that is made up of pow-
 erlessness and pain and the margins of
 joy, and wet clothes hung on a clothes-
 line, and goats bleating and cows crying
 as they are milked or just before they are
 slaughtered, and policemen marching
 to their station at the governor's house,
 and the governor just getting out of bed,
 and the hen laying an egg and the egg be-
 ing scrambled and then being eaten be-
 tween two slices of bread and the bread
 was made by the baker Mr. Daniel, and

Mr. Daniel was descended from men and women brought from Africa many years ago and made slaves, and Mr. Daniel, in blissful ignorance, had become a Seventh-Day Adventist.

And here's the opening sentence from Joyce Carol Oates's *Black Water*, based on the Chappaquiddick horror:

The rented Toyota, driven with such impatient exuberance by The Senator, was speeding along the unpaved unnamed road, taking the turns in giddy skidding slides, and then, with no warning, somehow the car had gone off the road and had overturned in black rushing water, listing to its passenger's side, rapidly sinking.

Am I going to die?—like this?

Oates's syntax—her speedy paratactic clauses, modifying phrases that add neat packets of information, and a veto on commas between adjectives—races as fast as the Senator's car.

How about sentences that try to reflect human thought, with its fumbblings, pauses, corrections? Look at this from B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, in which

the narrator returns to the town where his friend Tony lived; as he walks through town, his thoughts wander:

Perhaps they had a doctor to me on Saturday morning, the next day, yes, I remember they did, I was counting my pulse rate, knew what it was normally, then, do not know, now, no. . . . June was out for Saturday, perhaps all day, certainly for lunch, for lunch Tony came in and said he was cooking fish fingers, he said they tasted okay if they were fried, a curious thing to remember, all memories are curious, for that matter, the mind as a think of an image . . .

Then there is the space around text (or, in this passage, interrupting it to make bubbles of wordlessness). A pool of white surrounding a raft of words rests the eye and creates the time-space for a reader to draw connections or ponder. Marguerite Duras uses white space in an especially designed way in *The Lover*, which I'll talk about later: Dinty Moore has a fine essay on the uses and misuses of white space called "Positively Negative"; Nigel Krauth and Simon Barton also have much to say on the kinetic and semantic properties of space.

Super-short paragraphs and line breaks can aerate prose, throwing light into density, giving the reader space to think. They also create dynamism, letting the eye swing to the left more often, each swing shifting the thought. Here's the opening of David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, about a woman who might be the last person on earth:

In the beginning, sometimes I left messages in the street.

Somebody is living in the Louvre, certain of the messages would say. Or in the National Gallery.

Naturally they could only say that when I was in Paris or in London. Somebody is living in the Metropolitan Museum, being what they would say when I was still in New York.

Nobody came, of course. Eventually I stopped leaving the messages.

To tell the truth, perhaps I left only three or four messages altogether.

I have no idea how long ago it was when I was doing that. If I were forced to guess, I believe I would guess ten years.

Possibly it was several years longer ago than that, however.

And of course I was quite out of my mind for a certain period too, back then.

These mini-paragraphs, some a single line, are being typed by Markson's narrator as she struggles to assemble what she knows of the world, to draw a thread between it and herself with language. She's having a solo dialogue, a desperate thinking-through. But with no way to check the "truth" of anything she thinks, she helplessly begins to weave a new net of "knowledge" from ever flimsier fiber. She's a lone, last Penelope, weaving and unraveling meaning as she types—a process we feel at the start of each line, each fragile warp or weft.

In her novella *Days*, Dorthé Nors also imagines a female narrator writing a personal account of solitude; she keeps a cryptic diary of daily lists as spare as bone. Yet they gradually reveal her inner and outer worlds, through both what they give and what they leave out, an unnerving emptiness around each line. Here's the first day:

1. *So much for that winter,*

2. I thought, looking at the last
crocuses of spring;

3. they lay down on the ground

4. and I was in doubt.

5. Chewed out an entire school because
a single sentence bugged me

6. and drank my hot chocolate, *sweet/
bitter.*

7. Worked,

8. considered traveling somewhere I never imagined I'd find myself
9. yet stayed where I was
10. and banged on my neighbor's wall,
11. was in doubt, but sure,
12. was insecure,
13. stood still by the window,
14. let my gaze move from running shoes to wool socks
15. and lay down on the bed.

Compare those spare, lonely passages with the quicksand of Sebald or Knausgaard, where there's no breath of white space for days. Akin to this literal textual density—what we see on the page, how much relief we get—is the degree of resolution in what is actually being said: the density of detail or association. On one end of the spectrum could be Tao Lin's *Shoplifting from American Apparel*; here is its opening:

Sam woke around 3:30 p.m. and saw no emails from Sheila. He made a smoothie. He lay on his bed and stared at his computer screen. He showered and put on clothes and opened the Microsoft Word file of his poetry. He looked at his email. About an hour later it was dark outside. Sam ate cereal with soy milk.

Not only are the sentences short, simple, and mostly subject-verb, but the vision is low-resolution. With no grit or detail beyond a brand name, this writing (deliberately) has the texture of a cartoon or emoji. It's as flat as the screen Sam stares at.

Now consider another passage from Baker's *Mezzanine*. Here the narrator describes a tie, as everyday a subject as Lin's:

it was made of a silk that verged on crepe, and its pattern was composed of very small oval shapes, each containing a fascinating blob motif that seemed inspired by the hungry, pulsating amoebas that absorb excess stomach acid in Rolaid's great dripping-faucet commercial, and when you looked closely you noticed that the perimeter of each oval was made of surprisingly garishly colored rectangles, like suburban tract houses; an order so small in scale, however, that those instances of brightness only contributed a secret depth and luminosity to the overall somber, old-masters coloration of the design.

This single sentence winds far longer and more intricately than Lin's seven short ones, offering elaborate phrases and clauses that give it different depths

(this is in fact the second part of a longer, colon-split sentence). Several of Baker's words have four or five syllables, while no word of Lin's has more than three. Baker makes more texture with his detail and range of vision, from a microscopic look at amoebas to an overhead view of the suburbs; from lowbrow Rolands to Old Master painting. These two references themselves carry different cargoes of imagery and tone, and that Baker pairs them gives his sentence even more texture, like moving from a hard plastic surface to velvet. Both Lin's and Baker's passages treat minor content. Yet their different kinds of words, syntax, and associations—style and sensibility, you can say—create strikingly different textures. Further, Lin's passage narrates, making the storyworld advance in time, while Baker's describes: a portrait. And this takes me to the subject of movement in time.

2

MOVEMENT AND FLOW

A few years ago my mother had a phase in which every three or four months something would short in her heart or brain, and she'd slump to the floor. Whatever did this left no trace; we guessed some kind of seizure. By the time I'd find her in the emergency room with her skinny arms taped and wired, she'd be back to herself, toss her head, and say, Oh, never mind. I'm *fine*. The last time this happened, as she again lay wired in a hospital bed, we played an alphabet game to kill the dull time as tests were run (names of flowers from *a* to *z*; names of birds; names of cities or cocktails). She began to fall silent for longer spells between words, forgetting which letter we'd reached or fumbling the topic, and her hand in mine grew still. I thought she was exhausted, drifting to sleep—when suddenly her machines flashed and buzzed, her face went hollow,

and just as I cried out the medics ran in. They pushed me away, circled her, pounded, defibbed, injected, until her thin body arched from the bed—alive.

When the cardiologist came back later, he looked pleased: they'd captured what kept going wrong and had an easy solution. Pacemaker.

Since then, twice a year I take her to the "device clinic" so a technician can test the tiny box of technology bulging the thin skin at her collarbone. We sit in a small room with illegible screens, my mother in her wheelchair, me on a stool. The technician types up codes, makes connections, then turns to her. I'm just going to speed you up a few seconds, he says. My mother raises her brows at me, but when he touches a key to make her heart race, her face goes still. Yet I see her eyes change, her gaze turn inward. After a moment he rolls back from his screen. How'd that feel? he asks. Well, she says, exciting. And I marvel at the power in his hand.

*

Ben Marcus calls the best stories "stun guns," says they hold you "paralyzed on the outside but very nearly spasming within." Yes. Think of what we can do. Our hands (as I type I realize that once I'd have said *hand*, but now most writing takes two hands: curious) can hold a reader fixed, making her feel not her own time

but the time we devise. A story covering millennia can fit by in six minutes. A storyworld of just a minute can burn four hours in your life. It's magic, but a magic that can be mapped, which I suppose makes it technology. For there are different speeds in narrative, and shifting among them—sedating a reader, making him race—is in our hands, to be done with skill, with care.

SPEEDS

Call them speeds or flows or even *narrative hydraulics*. Henry James knew how important scenes are, "scene" being one of narrative's steals from drama, letting a writer portray an incident so that a reader almost sees it. After each scene, James said, a curtain can drop, and summary can let a writer hurry over moments that don't deserve the stage. Scene summary; walk, run: a smart way to get through a novel.

Since James, narratologists such as Gérard Genette and Seymour Chatman have studied the differences between story time (how long an event in the storyworld takes) and text time (how long the telling on the page takes) and have named speeds according to the ratio between the two. There have been more refinements since (see Brian Richardson's *Narrative Dynamics* for many essays on this, or Anežka

Kuzmičová). But here's a basic menu drawn from Genette and Chatman:

gap	fastest	no text/much story time
summary	fast	little text/much story time
scene	"real time"	text time = story time
dilation	slow	much text/little story time
pause	slowest	much text/no story time

Starting at the middle: if an event in the story and its telling on the page take about the same time, we're in "real time." A scene usually comes closest to this, with dialogue, choreography, and slivers of description holding our attention as we "watch" the incident play out. The purest form of real time would actually be the transcription of a character's diary entry or letter or some other page of print: then words on the story's page would equal what's "happening" in the story (printed words on a page), so text time = story time.

If a story's events would take much longer than a reader spends reading them, the narrative speed is fast: *summary*. Here is the Australian writer Murray

Bail moving quickly over several years in his novel *Eucalyptus*:

Early on [Holland] had packed his daughter off to the nuns in Sydney, until—for no apparent reason—abruptly bringing her back. At least in Sydney she learned to sew and swim and to wear gloves. In the dormitory she developed the eager way of talking, between girlfriends, and the uses of silence; on weekends at distant relations' Ellen while scraping vegetables liked to overhear the stories told by men, and she could watch as lipstick was carefully applied. On the property she roamed about wild. He seemed to allow it. Then she became quiet: in her teens.

Seven or eight years here? Summary can be deadly dull, but Bail splices sensory glimmers into his to draw the reader in: gloves, scraping vegetables, lipstick.

I'll take Bail's "uses of silence" to move now to *gap*. This is the fastest, when the text goes mute and we can leap over eons of story time. White space! Overused often, but so useful. All sorts of things can "happen" in white space: a few minutes, a month, centuries—leaving a place for a reader to ponder or guess. On the other side of the gap, back in the

stream of words, you might need to figure out what you missed. In Salarrué's short-short "We Bad," a sliver of space between the story's halves equals several hours one night—but in this space, a man and his son are murdered. This we learn obliquely a few paragraphs after the gap: "In the nearby gully, Goyo and his youngster fled bit by bit in the beaks of vultures." Salarrué doesn't have to picture the murder. He makes us do it, makes us complicit.

So: scene = real time; summary = fast; ellipsis or gap = fastest. Now, back down the scale from real time. If the printed words showing a story event take more time to read than the event would: *dilation*. Tobias Wolff's "Bullet in the Brain," about a book critic named Anders who gets caught in a bank robbery, is the best showcase I know of all speeds, especially dilation. (Try reading the story line by line, noting the speed of each.) Here is one of two specimens of dilation in "Bullet." We're mid-story, once the robber has grown annoyed with Anders; in the below lines we'll start with real-time/scenic treatment (dialogue, narration) before making a deft switch. Anders has caught the robber's attention and been told to look away:

Anders fixed his gaze on the man's shiny wing-tip shoes.

"Not down there. Up there." He struck

the pistol under Anders' chin and pushed it upward until Anders was looking at the ceiling.

Anders had never paid much attention to that part of the bank . . . The domed ceiling had been decorated with mythological figures whose fleshy, toga-draped ugliness Anders had taken in at a glance many years earlier and afterward declined to notice. Now he had no choice but to scrutinize the painter's work . . . The ceiling was crowded with various dramas, but the one that caught Anders' eye was Zeus and Europa—portrayed, in this rendition, as a bull ogling a cow from behind a haystack. To make the cow sexy, the painter had canted her hips suggestively and given her long, droopy eyelashes through which she gazed back at the bull with sultry welcome. The bull wore a smirk and his eyebrows were arched. If there'd been a bubble coming out of his mouth, it would have said, "Hubba hubba."

"What's so funny, bright boy?"

Story time passes as we gaze with Anders at the ludicrous ceiling: we know this because the robber responds to Anders's evident snickering: "What's so

funny, bright boy?" I've deleted several lines from the passage, yet it still takes a bit longer to read about the ceiling than for Anders to study it. Dilation: text time is greater than story time. Wolff dilates extravagantly a few lines later, when the robber (spoiler alert) shoots Anders in the head:

The bullet smashed Anders' skull and ploughed through his brain and exited behind his right ear, scattering shards of bone into the cerebral cortex, the corpus callosum, back toward the basal ganglia, and down into the thalamus. But before all this occurred, the first appearance of the bullet in the cerebrum set off a crackling chain of ion transports and neurotransmissions. Because of their peculiar origin these traced a peculiar pattern, fluently calling to life a summer afternoon some forty years past, and long since lost to memory.

What follows is a brilliantly counterintuitive *pause*. All action in the story has stopped, and we are told instead what is *not* happening: what Anders doesn't remember. Not his first lover and "the cordial way she had with his unit," not his wife, not his daughter, not the sweet moments when he saw that he

loved literature. The account of what Anders did not remember goes on for a page, and while we read, the story has frozen. Lots of text, but no event: the slowest narrative speed, a pause. But given what we are waiting for—to see what Anders does remember, and for the bullet to "do its work and leave the troubled skull behind"—I'm happy to sit suspended.

When the pause is over, we learn at last what Anders recalls, in a return to scenic treatment. But it's the sort of scene that exists in memory, occupying an enchanted space in Anders's altered brain-time: "This is what he remembered. Heat. A baseball field. Yellow grass, the whirr of insects. . . ." Do you hear that word *heat*? A single word, small as can be. But it takes up time: the long diphthong; the reconfiguration of my inner mouth to move from *remembered* to the opening *H*; another reconfiguration to move from that final *t* and onward. *Heat*. This single word slows me, creates a lull between the act of remembering and what's remembered. This word clears a glade in the mind for the potent, lingering scene that will be Anders's final memory and the end of his story.

Why have a menu of speeds? For illusion, economy, variety, of course. Also for magic and power. See the reader, paralyzed by a white page marked with tiny pictures. Only her eyes move, from cluster to cluster of letters, a dot or two, a curl, but in her brain: synaptic lightning, a whirring glade, *heat*.

PATTERNING WITH SPEEDS OR FLOW

- Choosing different types or lengths of words, sentences, and speeds lets you design a narrative as variegated as a garden. But you can also create *patterns* with speeds, manipulating the story so that repetitions and rhythms emerge just below the surface. You can switch among narrated action, a reflective pause, speedy summary, more action, a curious gap, a pause for comment, and so on: you can make a pattern of flow and still-spots. Chandra's story "Shakti" is a fine specimen of this.

VIKRAM CHANDRA'S "SHAKTI"

This long story from *Love and Longing in Bombay* is about Sheila Bijlani and her cheery ambition to rise socially, which means bartling the old-world socialite Dolly Boatwalla. It's a mini-mock epic told by gossiping men:

What you must understand about Sheila Bijlani is that she was always glamorous. Even nowadays, when in the corners of parties you hear the kind of jealous bitching that goes on and they say there

was a day when she was nothing but the daughter of a common chemist-type shopkeeper growing up amongst potions and medicines, you must never forget that the shop was just below Kemp's Corner. . . . [S]he saw the glittering women who went in and out of the shop, sometimes for aspirin, sometimes for lipstick, and Sheila watched and learnt a thing or two.

Two pages of chatty summary follow Sheila as she becomes a hostess for Air France, marries unlikely, sweaty Bijlani, who manufactures "mixies" (blenders), and lands in a huge apartment on Malabar Hill. "So now Sheila was on the hill, not quite on the top but not quite at the bottom, either, and from this base camp she began her steady ascent. . . . [T]he top of the hill was the Boatwalla mansion, which stood on a ridge surrounded by crumbling walls."

Clear lines. Sheila belongs to a world of mixies and airplanes: newness, fluidity, ascent. Dolly, atop the hill, belongs to crumbling walls and old freighters (she is a "kind of stately ship"). A battle will rage between women and social classes, and it will last years, from a snubbing to a blackballing, to the founding of an exclusive club, to a marriage proposal to a buy-out effort, and at last to a marriage-merger. Chandra

could sum up all incidents in a few sentences, or give each incident full scenic treatment. Neither would be smart. Instead, he gives each element its due time on the page. He shows scenes that are truly dramatic, where something happens that we must see, and intersperses them with summary, gaps, and so on. Good pacing. But the variations in speed over forty pages also reveal two patterning systems that help give the story motion and form.

I see the first system in the *content* of the scenes. Each (insulting) act meets a counteract: attack A, counterattack A', attack B, counterattack B'. This system of retribution has a larger parallel in the social rectification going on throughout the story: the Sheilas of India will rise, and what helps Sheila do this is her ability also to "descend": unlike Dolly, she is empathetic to the woman who works for her, Ganga, who's on a far lower stratum but will repay a favor of Sheila's with an even greater one. Like the airplane that would be her attribute were she painted as a goddess or saint, Sheila can fly up and down. Dolly can only glide on a level. This first pattern, then, is a system of balances.

But when I look through content and instead chart the shifts among speeds, I find another kind of patterning. At the story's key moments, after a dramatic scene comes a nearly still spot. Dolly snubs Sheila in a vivid scene, and then Sheila "sat in her office among

the books and tried to think about what she had felt at that moment. It hadn't been anger, more a kind of recognition," which she parses for a paragraph. We watch her think—time passes—but it is slowed, making this a dilation, and one the narrative's health needs. An incident happens and then is pondered, its deeper sense revealed. A comparable still-spot comes pages later, once Sheila has delivered a crafty snub to Dolly, again in real time. After this friction, narrative and reader need a chance to recover, and we get this in a relaxed description from a safe distance. This pairing of drama with stillness soon happens again, and here the story's flow is not reflective so much as compressed, an inward rage that would look motionless from outside. Sheila wants to crush the Boatwallas: She's thinking about money, but the image is apt: "she saw how it could be like a stream, unpredictable and underground, and she was going to turn it into a torrent that would flow up the hill instead of down, crumbling the bloody Boatwalla gate like paper. It was going to burst out of the hillside under the mansion like a fountain from the interior rock." Later, sleepless,

[s]he could see the shapes of the companies they owned, how they fit together, and she moved the segments against one another like the pieces on a chessboard,

DAY 2: NON-ACTION (OR expanded conceptions of what counts as ACTION)

Ursula Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (first published 1981)

Jen Gish, Introduction and 'My Father Writes his Story' from *Tiger Writing: Art, Culture & the Interdependent Self* (2012)

(<https://www.elle.com/culture/books/a45127506/no-plot-just-vibes-books/>)

URSULA K. LE GUIN

THE CARRIER BAG
THEORY OF
FICTION

Introduced by
DONNA HARAWAY



In the temperate and tropical regions where it appears that hominids evolved into human beings, the principal food of the species was vegetable. Sixty-five to eighty percent of what human beings ate in those regions in Paleolithic, Neolithic and prehistoric times was gathered; only in the extreme Arctic was meat the staple food. The mammoth hunters spectacularly occupy the cave wall and the mind, but what we actually did to stay alive and fat was gather seeds, roots, sprouts, shoots, leaves, nuts, berries, fruits and grains, adding bugs and mollusks and netting or snaring birds, fish, rats, rabbits and other tuskless small fry to up the protein. And we didn't even work hard at it – much less hard than peasants slaving in somebody else's field after agriculture was invented, much less hard than paid workers since civilisation was invented. The average prehistoric person could make a nice living in about a fifteen-hour work week.



Fifteen hours a week for subsistence leaves a lot of time for other things. So much time that maybe the restless ones who didn't have a baby around to enliven their life, or skill in making or cooking or singing, or very interesting thoughts to think, decided to slope off and hunt mammoths. The skillful hunters then would come staggering back with a load of meat, a lot of ivory and a story. It wasn't the meat that made the difference. It was the story.

It is hard to tell a really gripping tale of how I wrested a wild-oat seed from its husk, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then I scratched my gnat bites, and Ool said something funny, and we went to the creek and got a drink and watched newts for a while, and then I found another patch of oats . . . No, it does not compare, it cannot compete with how I thrust my spear deep into the titanic hairy flank while Ooh, impaled on one huge sweeping tusk, writhed screaming, and blood spouted everywhere in crimson torrents, and Boob was crushed to jelly when the mammoth fell on him as I shot my unerring arrow straight through eye to brain.

That story not only has Action, it has a Hero. Heroes are powerful. Before you know it, the men and women in the wild-oat patch and their kids and the skills of the makers and

the thoughts of the thoughtful and the songs of the singers are all part of it, have all been pressed into service in the tale of the Hero. But it isn't their story. It's his.

When she was planning the book that ended up as *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf wrote a heading in her notebook, 'Glossary', she had thought of reinventing English according to a new plan, in order to tell a different story. One of the entries in this glossary is *heroism*, defined as 'botulism'. And *hero*, in Woolf's dictionary, is 'bottle'. The hero as bottle, a stringent re-evaluation. I now propose the bottle as hero.

Not just the bottle of gin or wine, but bottle in its older sense of container in general, a thing that holds something else. If you haven't got something to put it in, food will escape

you – even something as uncombative and unresourceful as an oat. You put as many as you can into your stomach while they are handy, that being the primary container, but what about tomorrow morning when you wake up and it's cold and raining and wouldn't it be good to have just a few handfuls of oats to chew on and give little Orn to make her shut up, but how do you get more than one stomachful and one handful home? So you get up and go to the damned soggy oat patch in the rain, and wouldn't it be a good thing if you had something to put Baby Oo Oo in so that you could pick the oats with

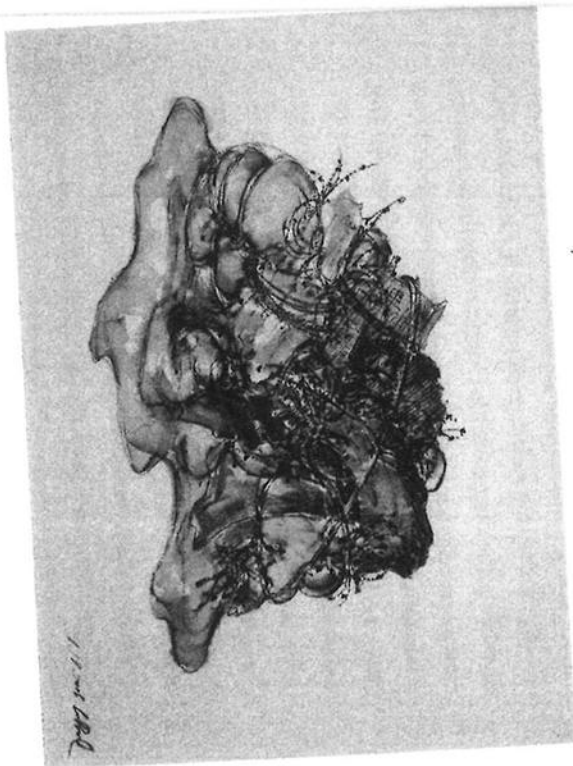
both hands? A leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient.

The first cultural device was probably a recipient... Many theorists feel that the earliest cultural inventions must have been a container to hold gathered products and some kind of sling or net carrier.

So says Elizabeth Fisher in *Women's Creation* (McGraw-Hill, 1975). But no, this cannot be. Where is that wonderful, big, long, hard thing, a bone, I believe, that the Ape Man first bashed somebody with in the movie and then, grunting with ecstasy at having achieved the first proper murder, flung up into the sky, and whirling there it became a space ship thrusting its way into the cosmos to fertilise it and produce at the end of the movie a lovely fetus, a boy of course, drifting around the Milky Way without (oddly enough) any womb, any matrix at all? I don't know. I don't even care. I'm not telling that story. We've heard it, we've all heard all about all the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news.

And yet old. Before – once you think about it, surely long before – the weapon, a late, luxurious, superfluous tool; long before the useful knife and axe; right along with the indispensable whacker, grinder and digger – for what's the use of digging up a lot of potatoes if you have nothing to lug ones you can't eat home in – with or before the tool that forces energy outward, we made the tool that brings energy home. It makes sense to me. I am an adherent of what Fisher calls the Carrier Bag Theory of human evolution.

This theory not only explains large areas of theoretical obscurity and avoids large areas of theoretical nonsense (inhabited largely by tigers, foxes and other highly territorial mammals); it also grounds me, personally, in human culture in a way I never felt grounded before. So long as culture was explained as originating from and elaborating upon the use of long, hard objects for sticking, bashing and killing, I never thought that I had, or wanted, any particular share in it. (What Freud mistook for her lack of civilisation is woman's lack of *loyalty* to civilisation?, Lillian Smith observed.) The society, the civilisation they were talking about, these theoreticians, was evidently theirs; they owned it, they liked it; they were human, fully human, bashing, sticking, thrusting, killing. Wanting to be human too, I sought for evidence that I was;



but if that's what it took, to make a weapon and kill with it, then evidently I was either extremely defective as a human being, or not human at all.

That's right, they said. What you are is a woman. Possibly not human at all, certainly defective. Now be quiet while we go on telling the Story of the Ascent of Man the Hero.

Go on, say I, wandering off towards the wild oats, with Oo Oo in the sling and little Oom carrying the basket. You just go on telling how the mammoth fell on Boob and how Cain fell on Abel and how the bomb fell on Nagasaki and how the burning jelly fell on the villagers and how the missiles will fall on the Evil Empire, and all the other steps in the Ascent of Man.

If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it's useful, edible or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair, or what have you, and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people, and then later on you take it out and eat it or share it or store it up for winter in a soldier container or put it in the medicine bundle or the shrine or the museum, the holy place, the area that contains what is sacred, and then next day you probably do much the same again – if to do that is human, if

that's what it takes, then I am a human being after all. Fully, freely, gladly, for the first time.

Not, let it be said at once, an unaggressive or uncom-bative human being. I am an aging, angry woman laying mightily about me with my handbag, fighting hoodlums off. However I don't, nor does anybody else, consider myself heroic for doing so. It's just one of those damned things you have to do in order to be able to go on gathering wild oats and telling stories.

It is the story that makes the difference. It is the story that hid my humanity from me, the story the mammoth hunters told about bashing, thrusting, raping, killing, about the Hero. The wonderful, poisonous story of Bortulism. The killer story.

It sometimes seems that that story is approaching its end. Lest there be no more telling of stories at all, some of us out here in the wild oats, amid the alien corn, think we'd better start telling another one, which maybe people can go on with when the old one's finished. Maybe. The trouble is, we've all let ourselves become part of the killer story, and so we may get finished along with it. Hence it is with a certain feeling of urgency that I seek the nature, subject, words of the other story, the untold one, the life story.

It's unfamiliar, it doesn't come easily, thoughtlessly to the lips as the killer story does; but still, 'untold' was an exaggeration. People have been telling the life story for ages, in all sorts of words and ways. Myths of creation and transformation, trickster stories, folktales, jokes, novels...

The novel is a fundamentally unheroic kind of story. Of course the Hero has frequently taken it over, that being his imperial nature and uncontrollable impulse, to take everything over and run it while making stern decrees and laws to control his uncontrollable impulse to kill it. So the Hero has decreed through his mouthpieces the Lawgivers, first, that the proper shape of the narrative is that of the arrow or spear, starting *here* and going straight *there* and THOK! hitting its mark (which drops dead); second, that the central concern of narrative, including the novel, is conflict; and third, that the story isn't any good if he isn't in it.

I differ with all of this. I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us.

One relationship among elements in the novel may well be that of conflict, but the reduction of narrative to conflict

is absurd. (I have read a how-to-write manual that said, 'A story should be seen as a battle', and went on about strategies, attacks, victory, etc.) Conflict, competition, stress, struggle, etc., within the narrative conceived as carrier bag/belly/box/house/medicine bundle, may be seen as necessary elements of a whole which itself cannot be characterised either as conflict or as harmony, since its purpose is neither resolution nor stasis but continuing process.

Finally, it's clear that the Hero does not look well in this bag. He needs a stage or a pedestal or a pinnacle. You put him in a bag and he looks like a rabbit, like a potato.

That is why I like novels: instead of heroes they have people in them.

So, when I came to write science-fiction novels, I came lugging this great heavy sack of stuff, my carrier bag full of wimps and klutzes, and tiny grains of things smaller than a mustard seed and intricately woven nets which when laboriously unknotted are seen to contain one blue pebble, an imperturbably functioning chronometer telling the time on another world and a mouse's skull; full of beginnings without ends, of initiations, of losses, of transformations and translations, and far more tricks than conflicts, far fewer triumphs than snares and delusions; full of space ships that get stuck,

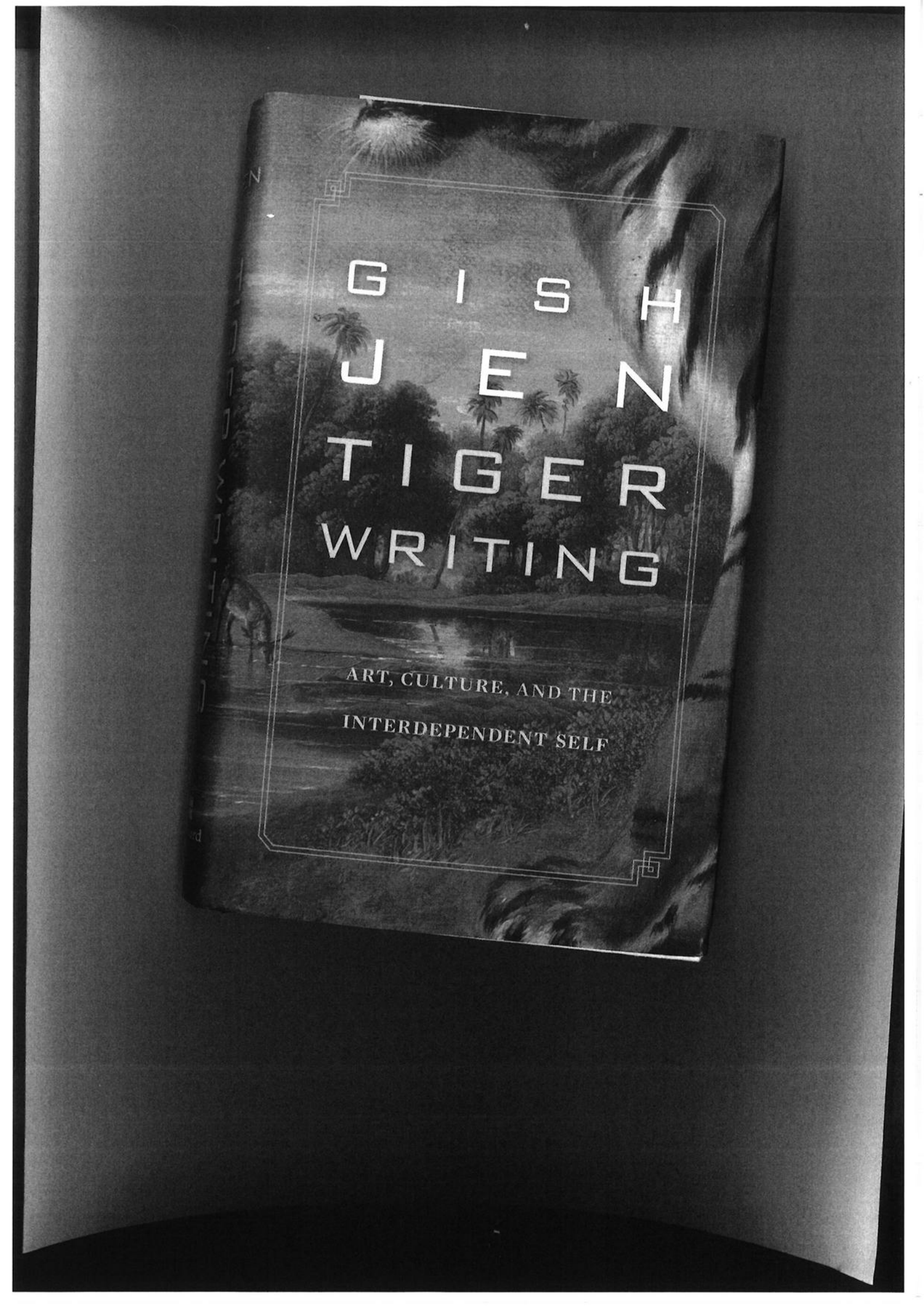
missions that fail and people who don't understand. I said it was hard to make a gripping tale of how we wrested the wild oats from their husks, I didn't say it was impossible. Who ever said writing a novel was easy?

If science fiction is the mythology of modern technology, then its myth is tragic. 'Technology', or 'modern science' (using the words as they are usually used, in an unexamined shorthand standing for the 'hard' sciences and high technology founded upon continuous economic growth), is a heroic undertaking, Herculean, Promethean, conceived as triumph, hence ultimately as tragedy. The fiction embodying this myth will be, and has been, triumphant (Man conquers earth, space, aliens, death, the future, etc.) and tragic (apocalypse, holocaust, then or now).

If, however, one avoids the linear, progressive, Time's-(killing)-arrow mode of the Techno-Heroic, and redefines technology and science as primarily cultural carrier bag rather than weapon of domination, one pleasant side effect is that science fiction can be seen as a far less rigid, narrow field, not necessarily Promethean or apocalyptic at all, and in fact less a mythological genre than a realistic one.

It is a strange realism, but it is a strange reality.

Science fiction properly conceived, like all serious fiction, however funny, is a way of trying to describe what is in fact going on, what people actually do and feel, how people relate to everything else in this vast sack, this belly of the universe, this womb of things to be and tomb of things that were, this unending story. In it, as in all fiction, there is room enough to keep even Man where he belongs, in his place in the scheme of things; there is time enough to gather plenty of wild oats and sow them too, and sing to little Om, and listen to Oo's joke, and watch newts, and still the story isn't over. Still there are seeds to be gathered, and room in the bag of stars.

The book cover features a tiger's face in the upper right corner, looking towards the center. The background is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a jungle scene with palm trees and a body of water. The title 'GISH JEN TIGER WRITING' is printed in large, white, sans-serif capital letters, arranged in four lines. The text is enclosed within a white rectangular border with decorative corner motifs. Below the title, the subtitle 'ART, CULTURE, AND THE INTERDEPENDENT SELF' is written in smaller, white, sans-serif capital letters, arranged in two lines.

G I S H
J E N
T I G E R
W R I T I N G

ART, CULTURE, AND THE
INTERDEPENDENT SELF

INTRODUCTION

A couple of years ago I attended an East-West literary conference, over the course of which a young mainland Chinese writer was asked why she wrote.¹ To this she answered, not to tell stories, or to bear witness, or to be in sacred communion with Jane Austen, but rather that she wrote because she did not like to go out, and thought that by writing novels she could make money and stay home. To which all I could think was, *Oy!*—which was just Yiddish for what I suspect many of the Westerners in the audience were thinking.

And you know, I have been thinking about this ever since—this question of why, when we in the West think of writers who like to stay home, we think *Emily Dickinson* and *Art* (capital A), whereas

the Chinese are perfectly capable of thinking *Conscience* (capital C). Last winter, for example, I met a woman who is organizing a rocket to take works of art up into space. This is part of a contest whose point, she said, is for "the worlds beyond our earth to receive human-made works of beauty." An amazing project, I think you'll agree, and one to which my first reaction was, *A rocket! What fun!* but my second, *Now here is something that only an American would be doing*—this person's attitude toward the value and purpose of human expression being quite different than that of the Chinese writer, and the difference between them, I would argue, representing the tip of a very large iceberg.

In inviting me to give these lectures, John Stauffer suggested that I consider an intellectual autobiography—a polite way of suggesting, perhaps, that I address the one and only subject on which I am a worldwide expert, namely myself. That, though, could still mean a great many things; and so it is that I have chosen to use my own case as a way of talking about the aforementioned iceberg. I will not be able to map it definitively in our short time together. Still, via my own story, I plan to talk a bit about both culture with a small c and Culture with a large, with a particular focus on different con-

structions of the self. By this I mean the independent, individualistic self that dominates in the West, especially America, and the interdependent, collectivist self that dominates in the East, including China, from whence my parents emigrated in the 1940s.

I have been interested in this difference for a while. In talking a few weeks ago to my old teacher from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, James Alan McPherson, I was reminded that it was the subject of the essay I wrote in conjunction with my master's thesis in 1983. And if I look back over the novels that followed, I can see that if I have embodied a dialectic, as some writers do, it is the tension scholar Werner Sollors has so pithily put as between consent and descent, which in my case is also a struggle between Emerson and Confucius. I think we all feel this tension to a degree: between an independent self that finds meaning in the truth within, and to whom rights and self-expression are important; and an interdependent self that finds meaning in affiliation, and duty, and self-sacrifice. That is to say that if we think of Hamlet's assertion, "I have that within me that passes show," we resonate, feeling that we, too, have something in us that others can't see, and to which we must "above all be true."² Yet if we think

of the end of *Casablanca*, when Humphrey Bogart says, "the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world," we find we resonate as well.

My tension is simply a more extreme version of this. Thanks to globalization, it is also one whose acuteness is shared by more all the time, what with the difference in self typically thought of as East-West actually being, as psychologist Richard Nisbett notes, between the "West and the rest"—with "the West" here referring to Europe and North America, and "the rest" referring to the rest of the world; and what with accelerating modernization now bringing to "the rest" a veritable epidemic of individualism. I should probably say here that to the extent that I bring cross-cultural studies into these lectures—as I will especially in the first half of the second lecture—I will keep to various East-West findings—that focus being, as I think you'll agree, quite broad enough. Still, what with the traditionally interdependent but now fluctuating orientation of many African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American cultures, not to say numerous European and American subcultures, there are more and more people like me every day—changing, often usefully able to tap into our inter- or independent

selves as the situation warrants, but connoisseurs of a certain dissonance, too. As for what sort of children we changeling adults will raise, who knows? And what their children will be, and their children's children, is obviously impossible to say. But in any case, in describing, over the next few days, some of the ironies and gifts of my own experience, I hope to bring perspective not only to the enterprise of novel-writing, but to the experiences of many with no particular connection to literature.

Before I begin, I'd like to say that with this, as with all discussions involving cultural difference, I am aware of the danger of stereotyping: "Simplistic and overexaggerated beliefs about a group, generally acquired second-hand and resistant to change," as sociologist Martin M. Marger put it, are obviously to be roundly condemned and absolutely avoided. I am also aware, though, that fear of stereotyping has sometimes led to a discomfort with any assertion of cultural difference, no matter how thoroughly accepted by psychologists or how firmly grounded in research. This concern is, sadly, altogether reasonable. In his 1932 classic, *Remembering*, psychologist Frederic C. Bartlett describes an experiment in which British test subjects were asked to repeatedly retell a Native American ghost tale after intervals

that ranged from a matter of minutes to a matter of months. The results were revealing: with each new round, the subjects misremembered yet more, unconsciously editing and reshaping the tale—changing seal hunting to “fishing,” for example, and removing and altering what seemed to them weird story elements—until it had become something no longer Native American at all—until it had become, in fact, pretty bloody British.

Existing schema are powerful. We hear the expected far better than the unexpected and recall things in light of what we already think. And should we doubt that even the best of us is capable of irrationally defending our schema, novelist Alan Lightman reminds us that the likes of Einstein and Max Planck have been known to defend theirs in the face of opposing evidence. So when we are dense, we do have good company. At the same time, tendencies are only tendencies. Though these lectures may well be misconstrued and misremembered, I hold out hope that they will not—that they will not be filtered so much as they will draw attention to our filters, and that this will ultimately foster constructive conversation.

A note about terminology: I have not used the word “independent” as it is popularly used, to mean

self-sufficient or free from outside control; neither have I used the word “interdependent” to mean interconnected or mutually dependent. Rather I have used these words as cross-cultural psychologists do, as a way of describing two very different models of self-construal. The first—the “independent,” individualistic self—stresses uniqueness, defines itself via inherent attributes such as its traits, abilities, values, and preferences, and tends to see things in isolation. The second—the “interdependent,” collectivist self—stresses commonality, defines itself via its place, roles, loyalties, and duties, and tends to see things in context.³ Naturally, between these two very different self-construals lies a continuum along which most people are located, and along which they may move, too, over the course of their lives or even over the course of a moment. Culture is not fate; it only offers templates, which individuals can finally accept, reject, or modify, and do. For example, true as it clearly is that Americans love cars, many people don’t drive, or don’t drive much, or don’t like what driving does to the environment, or find that cars make them carsick.

At the same time, ours is indisputably a car culture, with the fact of the car influencing everything from our city design to our foreign policy. And so it

is with the inter-/independence spectrum. Wherever along its length people typically situate themselves, and however widely they tend to range, its endpoints nonetheless represent influential cultural realities—realities that give rise, as we shall see, to profoundly different ways of perceiving, remembering, and narrating both self and world. My ultimate focus in exploring these will be on the role of their difference in the spawning and sustaining of my writing life. However, as I have suggested, this difference has implications far beyond that—for our understanding of art and of the novel, for our understanding of ourselves, and for our understanding of culture and of cultural change, which is to say of the world in which we live.

As for my plan of action, we will begin with a “roots” lecture that is also an example of how an interdependent self might narrate a life. That is to say that we will be looking at the opening of a wonderful autobiography my father wrote when he was eighty-five. This section is about growing up in China—a bit of writing that I hope will move and interest us, but also ground us, supplying the sort of feel for interdependence that we cannot get from studies alone.

Not that we will deprive ourselves of studies. In

the first half of the second lecture we will in fact turn, as I mentioned, to a number of studies in cross-cultural psychology as a way of deepening our understanding of my father’s story. They will also give us insight into its opposite, that highly independent enterprise, Western narrative, on which we will focus in the second half of the lecture. Here we will be looking at the relationship between culture with a small c and Culture with a large, and what all this has to do with my beginnings as a writer.

Then, in the third lecture, we will consider what comes of all we have been discussing besides a migraine. What happens when interdependence meets independence? I will be setting myself and my work in this unsettled context, as well as the work of others, and paying a visit, besides, to a most unorthodox engineering classroom.

As for my plans for after that, they are to spend the day in a hot tub. But first: art, culture, and the interdependent self.

MY FATHER WRITES HIS STORY

In 2005, when he was eighty-five, my father sat down to write his life story.¹ This begins simply: "It is few days before my 86th birthday. I am writing my personal history for my family." As for what follows, it is notably un-self-centered. Written over the period of a month and totaling thirty-two pages, it does not begin à la David Copperfield with "I was born", in what we will come to recognize as true interdependent style, my father does not, in fact, mention his birth at all. We do not hear how much he weighed or whether he peed on the nurse, much less anything remotely like "the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously." In fact, he does not even give his birth date until page eight, when he includes "Norman Chao-Pe Jen, June 26, 1919" in conjunction with another event, and in parentheses.²

Instead he begins: "(1) Ancient History," drawing his information from his family genealogy book. This is an item those of you who have read my novel *The Love Wife* will recognize as the bait with which Carnegie Wong's mother, Mama Wong, gets Carnegie to take in a woman who appears to be a second wife. It is the sort of genealogical record that was traditionally kept by any family who could afford to do so, and was of course always prized—but never more so than now, what with every book that survived the Cultural Revolution having done so by a miracle. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma's family genealogy book, for example, long hidden inside a wall, was found during a home renovation; and my mother's was found when Shanghai families whose things had been confiscated during the Cultural Revolution were allowed inside a warehouse with the idea that if you could find what was taken from you, you could reclaim it. I don't think you have to be a novelist to imagine the piles of stuff, and the crowds and the chaos, and the despair with which people like my aunts pored over the heaps. Finally, though, my youngest aunt simply stopped and, closing her eyes, prayed to our ancestors to help; and when she opened her eyes and turned around, right there, at eye level, was the family genealogy book.

My father's family was less lucky; the physical

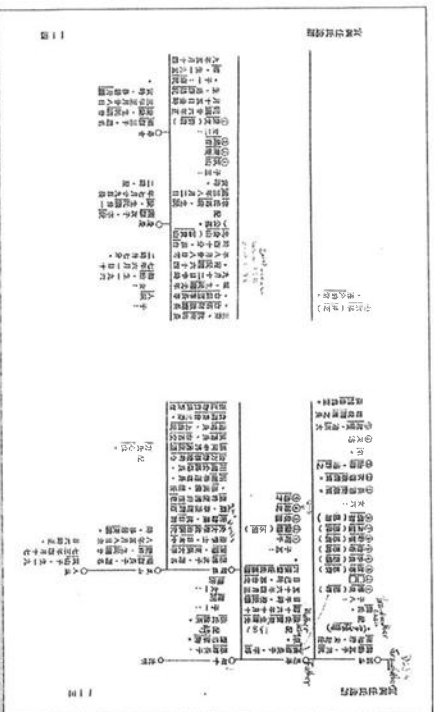
book itself did not survive. At least one copy, though, did, thanks to the Japanese, who for reasons perhaps related to their use of the Jen family compound as their regional headquarters during their occupation of China, preserved one in a Japanese library. This served as the basis for an unofficial update, done by a Taiwan relative. But in any case, my father, drawing upon genealogical charts like the one shown on the next page, begins:

(1) Ancient History

Chinese history book indicated that about 4,000 years ago, one of the Emperor's . . . w[iv]e[s] gave birth [to] two sons. The Emperor was happy [and gave] the last name of "Jen" to his two sons. To-day we recognize them as first generation of cycle 1[.]

These two sons and their descendants lived in Shandong [province] for many years. One [of] their descendants [in the] 69th generation move[d] away to Shanxi [province]. He started . . . [the] first generation of cycle 2. Some of their descendants moved to Henan, but [still cycle 2] continued . . . for 78 generation[s].

By the year . . . 1131 which was [in the] South Song Dynasty and 874 years before 2005, Some of [the Shanxi Jens moved] to [the town of] yi-Xing [and] started [the] first generation of cycle 3. My grandfather [belonged to the 26th] generation . . . of cycle 3. My father was 27th [generation] and myself is 28th generation.



A chart from the update of the Jen family genealogical book

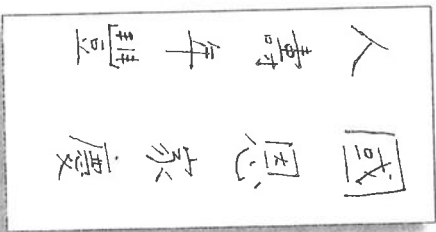
Of course, it is a bit hard for us in the West to imagine that a family should even think to claim to trace its ancestry back 4,500 years to Huángdì, the legendary Yellow Emperor who founded Chinese civilization. To trace your family back to the *Mayflower* is one thing; this is more like tracing your family to Adam and Eve. It is, however, not an uncommon way for Chinese genealogies to begin. As for how accurate the older records are, who knows. The Yixing genealogy of the last twenty-eight generations, though—the 874 years before my father sat down to write this personal history—is apparently correct.

My Father Writes His Story

Not that historical accuracy exactly matters for our purposes, since you may gather in any case how deeply tied up our sense of family is with place. Of course, things have changed for us as for many Chinese families. My siblings and I were born in America, and not long ago I heard a Malaysian in-law say, “Home is where the job is.” And yet I think it fair to say that when the Chinese talk about their hometowns—the word for which is literally “old home,” *lǎojiā*—they are talking about an association difficult to fathom in peripatetic America. Traditionally, your hometown meant everything—interweave that it was of your physical context, your historical context, and your relational context; and a certain density of weave being common in China. Your place in the family, for example, was often worked into your name, which could in turn, as in my father’s case, be worked into the house. That may be a little hard for us to get, but after the summary of the generations, my father explains it, saying:

My grand father’s house [had eight words] posted . . . on the door[s]. These 8 words . . . [provided] the middle names for the following 8 generations. My grand father has the first word. My father has the second word and my middle name is the third word.

That is to say that there were eight characters posted on the doors that faced one of the house's courtyards. The source of these eight characters was a couplet the emperor gave our family, *Gǎo ěn jiā qīng*

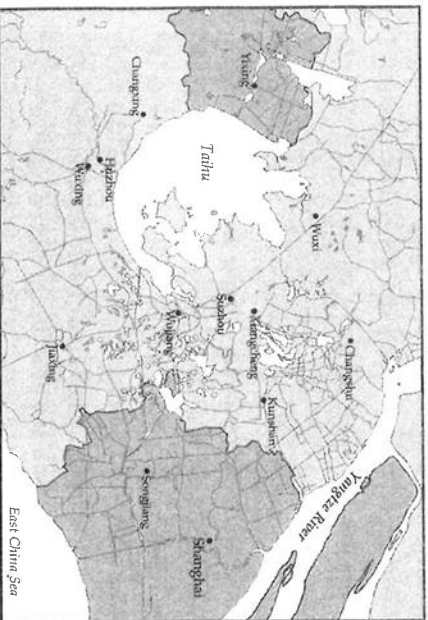


The couplet, written out by my mother

Rén shòu nián fēng which might be loosely translated, "May the emperor grant us favor, May the family celebrate, May everyone live a long time, and May the year bring a good harvest." A bit of off-cialise, one suspects. And yet it was taken quite seriously by my great grandfather and used to defy the interdependence of our family, with the middle

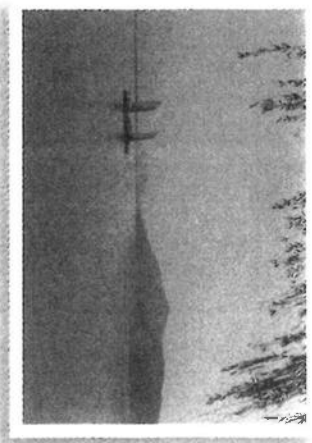
name of every male Jen drawn from it, and with all the men of each generation bearing the same name. For example, the names of all the males in my father's generation have the word *jiā* in them. (My father's "official" name is *Rén Jiā Zòu*.)³ The names of all the males in my generation similarly include the word *qīng*,⁴ and though, thanks to the traditional sexism, neither my Chinese name nor my sister's follows suit,⁵ I am happy to report that my daughter, *Kāng Rén Mǐn*, does have a generation name, *rén*, like her brother, *Kāng Rén Yào*. As for what happens when my great-great-grandchildren reach the end of the couplet, my understanding is that they simply start at the beginning again. And as for the first names that go with the generation names, I have recently been thinking of having my parents draw some up the way my great-grandfather used to do. Supporting some of what I will be claiming in these lectures about the relative de-emphasizing of uniqueness in the East, my great-grandfather reportedly used to have a little wine and then just sit and make up names he liked. When children were born, they were assigned the next name on the list. My father, in any case, using the couplet to organize his narrative, follows his introduction with a section about the generation named after the first

character, *gǔo*—his grandfather’s generation. He devotes the next section to the generation named after the second character, *ēn*—his father’s generation—and so on. This is an organization that would actually make sense even independent of the couplet, since the granting of the couplet was to begin with a recognition of my father’s grandfather’s status. He was, after all, the one who put this branch of the family on the map—the one who made its fortune, built its compound, and in many ways defined the Edenic years of peace and prosperity my father enjoyed in Yixīng.



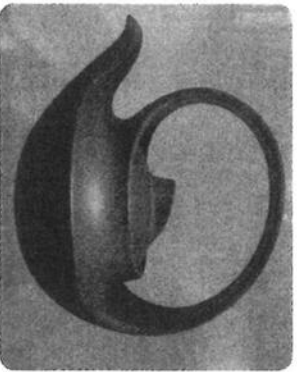
A map of the Shanghai area, showing Yixing.

Today Yixing is a place you can find easily enough on Google Maps. For me, though, growing up in the days when China was “closed,” it was as legendary as Babylon or Troy. It lies in Jiangsu province, just west of Shanghai, on the west shore of Taihú—Lake Tai—the third largest freshwater lake in China, and a lake that I always imagined as timeless and warm, with the slow-moving water, and fishing nets, and ancient sampans you see in children’s books like *The Story of Ping*—all of which it really did still have when we first visited in 1979. You may imagine my shock and dismay, therefore, when it suddenly showed up for the first time in my present world in a 2007 *New York Times* article about pollution: someone had written about the lake because it had started to luminesce.



An old picture of Lake Tai

The Yixing of a generation ago, in contrast, was a veritable Shangri-la, home to ancient forests of giant bamboo and a famous brownish-purple clay that gets made into bonsai planters and world-class teapots. That clay is famous, not because it does not absorb odors, the distinction of so much Western cookware, but rather because it will absorb the flavor of every pot of tea made in it; so that over time, the many pots of the past come to lend an inimitable depth to what is steeped in it today. This idea



An Yixing teapot

of a prized quality that can only be achieved by slow accumulation over time is, by the way, characteristically Chinese, as is the interdependent suggestion that while the individual pot of tea is less than a be-all and end-all, it gains complexity and subtlety

from the pots that preceded it and enriches the pots that follow.

In describing his grandfather, for example, my father first puts him, like a pot of tea, in generational



My father's grandfather

context: the youngest of a family of five boys, he is also the father of seven sons and six daughters by his wife, and an eighth son by a servant. Next comes his place in society. "He was a successful businessman," my father writes.

He built 7 pawn shops in 7 villages around Yi-xing. That time, pawn shop[s] worked as small bank[s] might to-day. He also had 2 grocery stores [in 2 nearby villages] which supplied all kinds of basics, such as rice, salt, cooking oil etc.⁶

Then, instead of describing his grandfather's appearance or personality or tastes—the sorts of things we in the West might include as a way of conveying both his uniqueness and his importance as a figure in the narrative—my father describes, at striking length and in striking detail, his context—namely, the family house.

This house, I will say, really was quite something. Even today my father will laugh to recall his advisor's shock when, as a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota many years later, he was asked how big his family's house was, and answered, "oh 400 rooms, something like that." When the house was torn down by the Communists, they made a movie of the demolition, that they might show it as a lesson to others; and in his autobiography, my father calls it simply "the biggest and best house in the town." It was, he writes,

enclosed inside of a[n] 8 foot [high] white wall, the front [of which had] a set of 8 doors on South Main Street. Once [in] a while, one of these door[s] would be] open. As you walk thru the door [there] was an open courtyard and two rooms [.] one [to] each side. The right side room ha[d] another door to South Main Street which was open all the time. Then a hall, [which] open[ed to]

the courtyard. The back side of the hall [also had] two doors. On . . . [those] doors [were] posted [the] 8 words [that were] . . . the middle names for our 8 generations. These two doors [were] also closed most of the time.

And so on. The description continues for a number of paragraphs and includes two more sets of eight doors—eight, if you are wondering, being a lucky number because the word for "eight" in Chinese, *bā*, sounds like the word for "prosperity," *fā*—as well as numerous other spaces. For example,

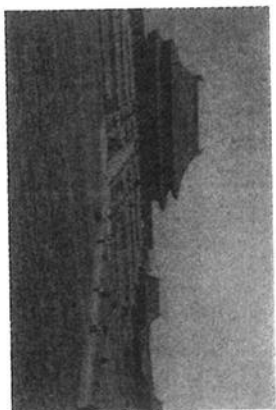
My grand father's living quarter[s] . . . [were on the] other side of the long hall walk way. He has living room, two bedroom[s] and] two studies, [and] one [of] his bedroom ha[d] a] back bedroom [as well, that] connected [to] the 2nd garden. His second floor [was] just big as the first floor which we never was there.⁷

Is it a sign of Westernization that my father thinks to mention there being twenty or thirty servants as well, and how "Where they stray/sleep . . . i did not know"? Contrary, in any case, to what we Western readers might have learned to expect from narratives like *Heidi* and Harry Potter, he says nothing about where he slept, either.

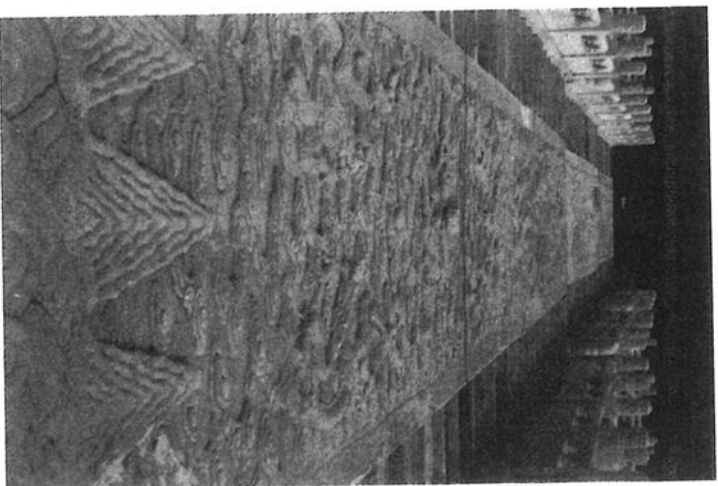
Instead he seems to focus obsessively on the num-

ber of doors in the house, and whether they were open or shut. Over and over again we hear, "Once a while, one of these door was open . . . These two doors also closed most of the time . . . One end of the long hall walk way is the door in hall which we use the door all the time," and so on—passages in which we can still discern, I think, eighty years later, a little boy making his way through a highly socially constructed maze. Like the amount of room that his grandfather's suite takes up, which has clearly made an impression on him, the fact that access to certain spaces is being controlled—that certain doors are open and certain doors shut—has very much registered, too.

That power can literally open doors in this world is brought home by the most notable occasion of my father's early childhood, namely the marriage, when he was four years old, of his fifth aunt to the grandson of Fêng Guózhāng, one of the "presidents" who came to power after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Those of you who have visited or seen pictures of the Forbidden City in Beijing may recall the marble axis that runs down its middle, over which only the emperor was traditionally carried. Well, in conjunction with her wedding, my great-aunt was also carried over this axis. The enormous front gate of



The marble axis of the Forbidden City in Beijing



Close-up of the marble axis

the Forbidden City was opened for her as well, and so, perhaps somewhat less momentarily and yet still momentarily, were all three sets of eight doors in the Yixīng family compound. As my father says,

In my life time, I [only] saw all these doors open[ed] once[. for the] big wedding of my 5th aunt to the . . . [grand]son of Chinese President Fung. That day, we had two military bands [in the house,] one in each courtyard and [also] many high government officials.

All of which is to say that, before he describes any person, my father describes the power structure of his world as it was inscribed in its architecture.

In this, my father's account bears an intriguing resemblance to parts of *Six Records of a Life Adrift*, a rare and highly prized example of Chinese autobiography written in the nineteenth century by Shen Fu—a writer greatly esteemed in the East, though barely known in the West. This work was interestingly examined for its fitful plot by scholar Earl Miner, who offers as an example of its "essayistic" passages:

Poor scholars who live in small crowded houses should rearrange their rooms in imitation of the sterns of the

Taiping boats of my home country, the steps of which can be made into three beds by extending them at the front and back. Each bed is then separated from its neighbor by a board covered with paper. Looking at them when they are laid out is like walking a long road—you do not have a confined feeling at all.

Is this narrative? Miner wants to know. An interesting question, though what we might recognize in this touching passage is perhaps a narrator not unlike my father, negotiating the givens of his world in a spirited and creative way. Shen Fu, too, seems less interested in describing himself than in describing his context, although—again like my father—he in fact conveys much about himself all the same. As Graham Sanders, a recent translator of the *Records*, compassionately notes, Shen Fu

continually constructs or encounters small, limited spaces—both physical and in his imagination—where he can feel and express his emotions [but is] constantly subjected to the pain of losing his small worlds.⁸

And so it is, perhaps, ultimately, with my father. He does find, in the world of opening and closing doors, places where we might imagine that he also escapes "a confined feeling." There is the front garden, with its cow and its vegetable and flower beds,

and the back garden, with its pond and three small bridges. He recalls with obvious fondness the "Good size fishes . . . [that] swim on top of the water in the early morning[,] which I enjoyed very much," adding,

[T]hose fish was rather big, 10-15 inches long in black or golden colors . . . I [would get] up in the morning, stay under the shade for few hours, just [to] watch those fishes.

As an aside, I might add here that there is a quality to this leisure that would stay with my father all his life—that to this day, he can sit outside and watch nothing much for hours on end, perfectly content. This is the part of him that liked to talk, in a Daoist way, about becoming a monk in the mountains,⁹ and a part of him that resurfaces in his personal history when he talks about the "2 or 3 horses in town," and how "I also stay there to watch for 1 or 2 hours." It is there as well as when he describes his family's summer garden, which he says "was similar to the Back Garden but much bigger." My father remembers:

Almost next [to] our summer Garden, there is a bridge over a small river. [If y]ou look at the water from the bridge [you will see] the water turn around and make . . . two swirls.

But, alas, what befalls Shen Fu befalls him; these things are lost to him for many, many years. We can only imagine what he feels when he writes,

On my 60 year old birthday, I saw the swirls in the river again.

No love of swirls for his grandfather, in the meanwhile, whom my father continues to describe in terms of his social role:

My grand father was well known as the richman in town. Also he was very generous and gave food, clothing, [and] medicines [to people], [as well as] helping [with] tuitions, paving city streets and [doing] many other . . . [things] for [them.]

He further notes that his grandfather

also owned real estate in Shanghai [including] Several store building[s] on Nanking Road, which [was] equivalent to Fifth Ave of New York City

and so on. My father does mention, interestingly, that "Grand father always ha[d] 3 meal by himself"—even, it seems, during holidays—but does not speculate as to what this unusual practice might say

Day 3: NARRATIVE PARTICIPANTS & NARRATIVE FORCES

Vladimir Propp, 'The Method and Material' and 'The Functions of Dramatic Personae' in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1958)

Ursula Le Guin, Rhythmic Pattern in *The Lord of the Rings* from *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (2004)

R.D Laing, excerpts from *Knots* (1970)

Materials related to the ballad exercise, with Simon Pummell:

Amanda Petrusich, 'Harry Smith's Musical Catalogue of Human Experience', *The New Yorker* (2020).

Bob Dylan, lyrics to 'Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts'
'Oral-Formulaic Method' (page from *A Poet's Glossary*).

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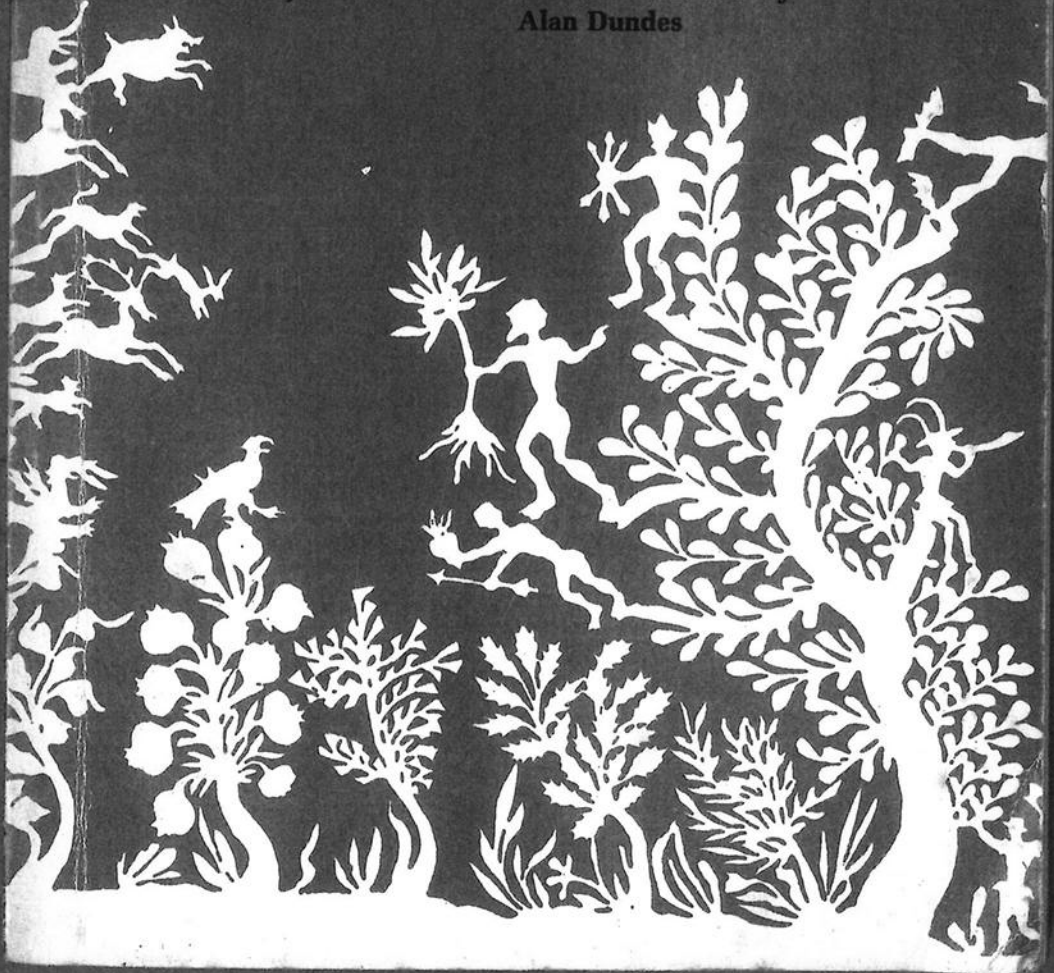
SCREENING 6.30pm: Sabine Groeneweg's *Odyssey

Morphology of the Folktale

By V. Propp

First Edition Translated by
Laurence Scott with an
Introduction by
Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson

Second Edition Revised and
Edited with a Preface by
Louis A. Wagner
New Introduction by
Alan Dundes



wide Tale in a Cultural-Historical Interpretation"] (*Russkaja Mysl'*, 1893, XI); R. Koehler, *Aufsätze über Märchen und Volkslieder* (Berlin, 1894); M. G. Xatan-ski, "Skazki" ["Tales"], in *Istorija russkoj literatury pod redakciej Anichovaa, Borozdina i Ovsjantiko-Kulikovskogo*, Vol. I, Fasc. 2, chap. 6 (Moscow, 1908); A. Thimme, *Das Märchen* (Leipzig, 1909); A. Van Gennep, *La formation des légendes* (Paris, 1910); F. v. d. Leyen, *Das Märchen*, 2nd ed. (1917); K. Spiess, "Das deutsche Volksmärchen," in *Aus Natur und Geisteswelt*, Fasc. 587 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1917); S. F. Oldenburg, "Stranovannie skazki" ["The Wandering of the Tale"] in *Vostok*, no. 4; G. Huot, *Les contes populaires* (Paris, 1923).

CHAPTER II

The Method and Material

Let us first of all attempt to formulate our task. As already stated in the foreword, this work is dedicated to the study of *fairy* tales. The existence of fairy tales as a special class is assumed as an essential working hypothesis. By "fairy tales" are meant at present those tales classified by Aarne under numbers 300 to 749. This definition is artificial, but the occasion will subsequently arise to give a more precise determination on the basis of resultant conclusions. We are undertaking a comparison of the themes of these tales. For the sake of comparison we shall separate the component parts of fairy tales by special methods; and then, we shall make a comparison of tales according to their components. The result will be a morphology (i.e., a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole).

What methods can achieve an accurate description of the tale? Let us compare the following events:

1. A tsar gives an eagle to a hero. The eagle carries the hero away to another kingdom.†
2. An old man gives Sůčenko a horse. The horse carries Sůčenko away to another kingdom.

† "*Car' daet udal'cu orla. Orel unosit udal'ca v inoe carstvo*" (p. 28). Actually, in the tale referred to (old number 104a = new number 171), the hero's future bride, Poljuša, tells her father the tsar that they have a *ptica-kolpatica* (technically a spoonbill, although here it may have meant a white stork), which can carry them to the bright world. For a tale in which the hero flies away on an eagle, see 71a (= new number 128). [L.A.W.]

3. A sorcerer gives Iván a little boat. The boat takes Iván to another kingdom.
4. A princess gives Iván a ring. Young men appearing from out of the ring carry Iván away into another kingdom, and so forth.¹

Both constants and variables are present in the preceding instances. The names of the *dramatis personae* change (as well as the attributes of each), but neither their actions nor functions change. From this we can draw the inference that a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages. This makes possible the study of the tale *according to the functions of its dramatis personae*.

We shall have to determine to what extent these functions actually represent recurrent constants of the tale. The formulation of all other questions will depend upon the solution of this primary question: how many functions are known to the tale?

Investigation will reveal that the recurrence of functions is astounding. Thus Bába Jagá, Morózko, the bear, the forest spirit, and the mare's head test and reward the stepdaughter. Going further, it is possible to establish that characters of a tale, however varied they may be, often perform the same actions. The actual means of the realization of functions can vary, and as such, it is a variable. Morózko behaves differently than Bába Jagá. But the function, as such, is a constant. The question of *what* a tale's *dramatis personae* do is an important one for the study of the tale, but the questions of *who* does it and *how* it is done already fall within the province of accessory study. The functions of characters are those components which could replace Veselóvskij's "motifs," or Bédier's "elements." We are aware of the fact that the repetition of functions by various characters was long ago observed in myths and beliefs by historians of religion, but it was not observed by historians and tale (cf. Wundt and Negelein²). Just as the characteristics and functions of deities are transferred from one to another, and, finally, are even carried over to Christian saints, the functions of certain tale personages are likewise transferred to other personages. Running ahead, one may say that the number of functions is extremely small, whereas the number of personages is extremely large. This explains the two-fold quality of a tale: its

amazing multififormity, picturesqueness, and color, and on the other hand, its no less striking uniformity, its repetition.

Thus the functions of the *dramatis personae* are basic components of the tale, and we must first of all extract them. In order to extract the functions we must define them. Definition must proceed from two points of view. First of all, definition should in no case depend on the personage who carries out the function. Definition of a function will most often be given in the form of a noun expressing an action (interdiction, interrogation, flight, etc.). Secondly, an action cannot be defined apart from its place in the course of narration. The meaning which a given function has in the course of action must be considered. For example, if Iván marries a tsar's daughter, this is something entirely different than the marriage of a father to a widow with two daughters. A second example: if, in one instance, a hero receives money from his father in the form of 100 rubles and subsequently buys a wise cat with this money, whereas in a second case, the hero is rewarded with a sum of money for an accomplished act of bravery (at which point the tale ends), we have before us two morphologically different elements—in spite of the identical action (the transference of money) in both cases. Thus, identical acts can have different meanings, and vice versa. *Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action.*

The observations cited may be briefly formulated in the following manner:

1. *Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.*
2. *The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.*

If functions are delineated, a second question arises: in what classification and in what sequence are these functions encountered?

A word, first, about sequence. The opinion exists that this sequence is accidental. Veselóvskij writes, "The selection and order of tasks and encounters (examples of motifs) already presupposes a certain freedom." Šklóvskij stated this idea in even sharper terms: "It is quite impossible to understand why, in the act of adoption, the *accidental* sequence [Šklóvskij's italics] of

motifs must be retained. In the testimony of witnesses, it is precisely the sequence of events which is distorted most of all." This reference to the evidence of witnesses is unconvincing. If witnesses distort the sequence of events, their narration is meaningless. The sequence of events has its own laws. The short story too has similar laws, as do organic formations. Their cannot take place before the door is forced. Insofar as the tale is concerned, it has its own entirely particular and specific laws. The sequence of elements, as we shall see later on, is strictly *uniform*. Freedom within this sequence is restricted by very narrow limits which can be exactly formulated. We thus obtain the third basic thesis of this work, subject to further development and verification:

3. *The sequence of functions is always identical.*

As for groupings, it is necessary to say first of all that by no means do all tales give evidence of all functions. But this in no way changes the law of sequence. The absence of certain functions does not change the order of the rest. We shall dwell on this phenomenon later. For the present we shall deal with groupings in the proper sense of the word. The presentation of the question itself evokes the following assumption: if functions are singled out, then it will be possible to trace those tales which present identical functions. Tales with identical functions can be considered as belonging to one type. On this foundation, an index of types can then be created, based not upon theme features, which are somewhat vague and diffuse, but upon exact structural features. Indeed, this will be possible. If we further compare structural types among themselves, we are led to the following completely unexpected phenomenon: functions cannot be distributed around mutually exclusive axes. This phenomenon, in all its concreteness, will become apparent to us in the succeeding and final chapters of this book. For the time being, it can be interpreted in the following manner: if we designate with the letter A a function encountered everywhere in first position, and similarly designate with the letter B the function which (if it is at all present) *always follows A*, then all functions known to the tale will arrange themselves within a *single* tale, and none will fall out of order, nor will any one exclude or contradict any other. This is, of course, a completely unexpected result. Naturally, we would have expected that

where there is a function A, there cannot be certain functions belonging to other tales. Supposedly we would obtain several axes, but only a single axis is obtained for all fairy tales. They are of the same type, while the combinations spoken of previously are subtypes. At first glance, this conclusion may appear absurd or perhaps even wild, yet it can be verified in a most exact manner. Such a typological unity represents a very complex problem on which it will be necessary to dwell further. This phenomenon will raise a whole series of questions.

In this manner, we arrive at the fourth basic thesis of our work:

4. *All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.*

We shall now set about the task of proving, developing, and elaborating these theses in detail. Here it should be recalled that the study of the tale must be carried on strictly deductively, i.e., proceeding from the material at hand to the consequences (and in effect it is so carried on in this work). But the *presentation* may have a reversed order, since it is easier to follow the development if the general bases are known to the reader beforehand.

Before starting the elaboration, however, it is necessary to decide what material can serve as the subject of this study. First glance would seem to indicate that it is necessary to cover all extant material. In fact, this is not so. Since we are studying tales according to the functions of their dramatic personae, the accumulation of material can be suspended as soon as it becomes apparent that the new tales considered present no new functions. Of course, the investigator must look through an enormous amount of reference material. But there is no need to inject the entire body of this material into the study. We have found that 100 tales constitute more than enough material. Having discovered that no new functions can be found, the morphologist can put a stop to his work, and further study will follow different directions (the formation of indices, the complete systemization, historical study). But just because material can be limited in quantity, that does not mean that it can be selected at one's own discretion. It should be dictated from without. We shall use the collection by Afanás'ev, starting the study of tales with No. 50 (according to his plan, this is the first fairy tale of

the collection), and finishing it with No. 151.† Such a limitation of material will undoubtedly call forth many objections, but it is theoretically justified. To justify it further, it would be necessary to take into account the degree of repetition of tale phenomena. If repetition is great, then one may take a limited amount of material. If repetition is small, this is impossible. The repetition of fundamental components, as we shall see later, exceeds all expectations. Consequently, it is theoretically possible to limit oneself to a small body of material. Practically, this limitation justifies itself by the fact that the inclusion of a great quantity of material would have excessively increased the size of this work. We are not interested in the quantity of material, but in the quality of its analysis. Our working material consists of 100 tales. The rest is reference material, of great interest to the investigator, but lacking a broader interest.

† Tales numbered 50 to 151 refer to enumeration according to the older editions of Afanas'ev. In the new system of enumeration, adopted for the fifth and sixth editions and utilized in this translation (cf. the Preface to the Second Edition, and Appendix V), the corresponding numbers are 93 to 270. [L.A.W.]

NOTES

1. See Afanas'ev, Nos. 171, 139, 138, 156.
2. W. Wundt, "Mythus und Religion," *Völkerpsychologie*, II, Section I; Negelein, *Germanische Mythologie*. Negelein creates an exceptionally apt term, *Depossidierte Gottheiten*.

CHAPTER III

The Functions of Dramatis Personae

In this chapter we shall enumerate the functions of the dramatis personae in the order dictated by the tale itself.

For each function there is given: (1) a brief summary of its essence, (2) an abbreviated definition in one word, and (3) its conventional sign. (The introduction of signs will later permit a schematic comparison of the structure of various tales.) Then follow examples. For the most part, the examples far from exhaust our material. They are given only as samples. They are distributed into certain groups. These groups are in relation to the definition as *species* to *genus*. The basic task is the extraction of *genera*. An examination of *species* cannot be included in the problems of general morphology. Species can be further subdivided into *varieties*, and here we have the beginning of systemization. The arrangement given below does not pursue such goals. The citation of examples should only illustrate and show the presence of the function as a certain *generic* unit. As was already mentioned, all functions fit into one consecutive story. The series of functions given below represents the morphological foundation of fairy tales in general.¹

A tale usually begins with some sort of initial situation. The members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero (e.g., a soldier) is simply introduced by mention of his name or indication of his status. Although this situation is not a function, it nevertheless is an important morphological element. The species of tale beginnings can be examined only at the end of the

present work. We shall designate this element as the *initial situation*, giving it the sign α .

After the initial situation there follow functions:

I. ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF A FAMILY ABSENTS HIMSELF FROM HOME. (Definition: *absentation*. Designation: β .)

1. *The person absenting himself can be a member of the older generation* (β^1). Parents leave for work (113). "The prince had to go on a distant journey, leaving his wife to the care of strangers" (265). "Once, he (a merchant) went away to foreign lands" (197). Usual forms of absentation: going to work, to the forest, to trade, to war, "on business."
2. *An intensified form of absentation is represented by the death of parents* (β^2).
3. *Sometimes members of the younger generation absent themselves* (β^3). They go visiting (101), fishing (108), for a walk (137), out to gather berries (244).

II. AN INTERDICTION IS ADDRESSED TO THE HERO. (Definition: *interdiction*. Designation: γ .)

1. (γ^1). "You dare not look into this closet" (159). "Take care of your little brother, do not venture forth from the courtyard" (113). "If Bába Jagá comes, don't you say anything, be silent" (106). "Often did the prince try to persuade her and command her not to leave the lofty tower," etc. (265). Interdiction not to go out is sometimes strengthened or replaced by putting children in a stronghold (201). Sometimes, on the contrary, an interdiction is evidenced in a weakened form, as a request or bit of advice: a mother tries to persuade her son not to go out fishing: "you're still little," etc. (108). The tale generally mentions an absentation at first, and then an interdiction. The sequence of events, of course, actually runs in the reverse. Interdictions can also be made without being connected with an absentation: "don't pick the apples" (230); "don't pick up the golden feather" (169); "don't open the chest" (219); "don't kiss your sister" (219).

2. *An inverted form of interdiction is represented by an order or a suggestion*. (γ^2) "Bring breakfast out into the field" (133). "Take your brother with you to the woods" (244).

Here for the sake of better understanding, a digression may be made. Further on the tale presents the sudden arrival of calamity (but not without a certain type of preparation). In connection with this, the initial situation gives a description of particular, sometimes emphasized, prosperity. A tsar has a wonderful garden with golden apples; the old folk fondly love their Ivášečka, and so on. A particular form is agrarian prosperity: a peasant and his sons have a wonderful hay-making. One often encounters the description of sowing with excellent germination. This prosperity naturally serves as a contrasting background for the misfortune to follow. The spectre of this misfortune already hovers invisibly above the happy family. From this situation stem the interdictions not to go out into the street, and others. The very absentation of elders prepares for the misfortune, creating an opportune moment for it. Children, after the departure or death of their parents, are left on their own. A command often plays the role of an interdiction. If children are urged to go out into the field or into the forest, the fulfillment of this command has the same consequences as does violation of an interdiction not to go into the forest or out into the field.

III. THE INTERDICTION IS VIOLATED (Definition: *violation*. Designation: δ .)

The forms of violation correspond to the forms of interdiction. Functions II and III form a *paired* element. The second half can sometimes exist without the first (the tsar's daughters go into the garden [β^1]; they are *late* in returning home). Here the interdiction of tardiness is omitted. A fulfilled order corresponds, as demonstrated, to a violated interdiction.

At this point a new personage, who can be termed the *villain*, enters the tale. His role is to disturb the peace of a happy family, to cause some form of misfortune, damage, or harm. The villain(s) may be a dragon, a devil, bandits, a witch, or a step-mother, etc. (The question of how new personages, in general, appear in the course of action has been relegated to a special

chapter.) Thus, a villain has entered the scene. He has come on foot, sneaked up, or flown down, etc., and begins to act.

IV. THE VILLAIN MAKES AN ATTEMPT AT RECONNAISSANCE. (Definition: *reconnaissance*. Designation: e.)

1. *The reconnaissance has the aim of finding out the location of children, or sometimes of precious objects, etc. (e¹).* A bear says: "Who will tell me what has become of the tsar's children? Where did they disappear to?" (201); a clerk: "Where do you get these precious stones?" (197); † a priest at confession: "How were you able to get well so quickly?" (258); †† a princess: "Tell me, Iyán the merchant's son, where is your wisdom?" (209); ††† "What does the birch live on?" Jágsna thinks. She sends One-Eye, Two-Eye and Three-Eye on reconnaissance (101). †
2. *An inverted form of reconnaissance is evidenced when the intended victim questions the villain (e²).* "Where is your death, Koščej?" (156). "What a swift steed you have! Could one get another one somewhere that could outrun yours?" (160).
3. *In separate instances one encounters forms of reconnaissance by means of other personages (e³).*

V. THE VILLAIN RECEIVES INFORMATION ABOUT HIS VICTIM. (Definition: *delivery*. Designation: f.)

1. *The villain directly receives an answer to his question. (f¹)* The chisel answers the bear: "Take me out into the courtyard and throw me to the ground; where

† "Gde vy éti samocvetnye kamni berete?" (114^f) (p. 38). The textual reference should be 115 (= new no. 197). [L.A.W.]

†† "Očego tak skoro sumel ty popravitišja?" (114^f) (p. 38). The textual reference should be 144 (= new no. 258). [L.A.W.]

††† "Skazi, Ivan—kupučskij syn, gde tvoja mudrost?" (120^f) (p. 38). The textual reference should be 120b (= new no. 209). [L.A.W.]

‡ "Čem suka žive? dumaet Jágsna." Ona posylacet na razvedku Odnoglazku, Dvuglazku, Treglazku (56). Texts 56 and 57 (= new nos. 100 and 101) have been somewhat confused. The three daughters named are present in tale 56, but their mother is not called Jágsna, and the indicated question does not appear. On the other hand, in tale 57 Jágsna asks, "Čem suka živa žive?" but here she has only two daughters to send out, a two-eyed one and a three-eyed one. [L.A.W.]

I sick, there's the hive." To the clerk's question about the precious stones, the merchant's wife replies: "Oh, the hen lays them for us," etc. Once again we are confronted with paired functions. They often occur in the form of a dialogue. Here, incidentally, also belongs the dialogue between the stepmother and the mirror. Although the stepmother does not directly ask about her stepdaughter, the mirror answers her: "There is no doubt of your beauty; but you have a stepdaughter, living with knights in the deep forest, and she is even more beautiful." As in other similar instances, the second half of the paired function can exist without the first. In these cases the delivery takes the form of a careless act: A mother calls her son home in a loud voice and thereby betrays his presence to a witch (108). An old man has received a marvelous bag; he gives the god-mother a treat from the bag and thereby gives away the secret of his talisman to her (187).

2-3. *An inverted or other form of information-gathering evokes a corresponding answer. (f²⁻³)* Koščej reveals the secret of his death (156), the secret of the swift steed (159), and so forth.

VI. THE VILLAIN ATTEMPTS TO DECEIVE HIS VICTIM IN ORDER TO TAKE POSSESSION OF HIM OR OF HIS BELONGINGS. (Definition: *trickery*. Designation: g.)

The villain, first of all, assumes a disguise. A dragon turns into a golden goat (162), or a handsome youth (204); † a witch pretends to be a "sweet old lady" (265) and imitates a mother's voice (108); a priest dresses himself in a goat's hide (258); a thief pretends to be a beggarwoman (189). Then follows the function itself.

1. *The villain uses persuasion (g¹).* A witch tries to have a ring accepted (114); a godmother suggests the taking of a steam bath (187); a witch suggests the removal of clothes (264) and bathing in a pond (265); a beggar seeks alms (189).

† The tale reference cited (p. 39) is 118. More specifically, it should be 118c (= new no. 204). [L.A.W.]

2. *The villain proceeds to act by the direct application of magical means* (η^3). The stepmother gives a sleeping potion to her stepson. She sticks a magic pin into his clothing (232).
3. *The villain employs other means of deception or coercion* (η^3). Evil sisters place knives and spikes around a window through which Finist is supposed to fly (234). A dragon rearranges the wood shavings that are to show a young girl the way to her brothers (133).

VII. THE VICTIM SUBMITS TO DECEPTION AND THEREBY UNWITTINGLY HELPS HIS ENEMY. (Definition: *complicity*. Designation: θ .)

1. *The hero agrees to all of the villain's persuasions* (i.e., takes the ring, goes to steambath, to swim, etc.). One notes that *interdictions* are always *broken* and, conversely, *deceitful proposals* are always *accepted* and fulfilled (ϕ).
- 2-3. *The hero mechanically reacts to the employment of magical or other means* (i.e., falls asleep, wounds himself, etc.). It can be observed that this function can also exist separately. No one lulls the hero to sleep: he suddenly falls asleep by himself in order, of course, to facilitate the villain's task (θ^2 - θ^3).

A special form of deceitful proposal and its corresponding acceptance is represented by the deceitful agreement. ("Give away that which you do not know you have in your house.") Assent in these instances is compelled, the villain taking advantage of some difficult situation in which his victim is caught: a scattered flock, extreme poverty, etc. Sometimes the difficult situation is deliberately caused by the villain. (The bear seizes the tsar by the beard [201]). This element may be defined as *preliminary misfortune*. (Designation: λ , differentiating between this and other forms of deception.)

VIII. THE VILLAIN CAUSES HARM OR INJURY TO A MEMBER OF A FAMILY. (Definition: *villainy*. Designation: A)

This function is exceptionally important, since by means of it the actual movement of the tale is created. Absentation, the

violation of an interdiction, delivery, the success of a deceit, all prepare the way for this function, create its possibility of occurrence, or simply facilitate its happening. Therefore, the first seven functions may be regarded as the *preparatory part* of the tale, whereas the complication is begun by an act of villainy. The forms of villainy are exceedingly varied.

1. *The villain abducts a person* (A^2). A dragon kidnaps the tsar's daughter (131),[†] a peasant's daughter (133); a witch kidnaps a boy (108); older brothers abduct the bride of a younger brother (168).
2. *The villain seizes or takes away a magical agent* (A^2). The "uncomely chap" seizes a magic coffer (189); ^{††} a princess seizes a magic shirt (208); the finger-sized peasant makes off with a magic steed (138).
- 2a. The forcible seizure of a magical helper creates a special subclass of this form (A^2). A stepmother orders the killing of a miraculous cow (100, 101). A clerk orders the slaying of a magic duck or chicken (196, 197).^{†††}
3. *The villain pillages or spoils the crops* (A^2). A mare eats up a haystack (105). A bear steals the oats (143). A crane steals the peas (186).
4. *The villain seizes the daylight* (A^2). This occurs only once (135).
5. *The villain plunders in other forms* (A^2). The object of seizure fluctuates to an enormous degree, and there is no need to register all of its forms. The object of plunder, as will be apparent later on, does not influence the course of action. Logically, it would generally be more correct to consider all seizure as *one form* of villainy, and all constituent forms of seizure (subdivided according to their objects) not as classes, but as subclasses. Nevertheless, it is technically more useful to

[†] "Zmej porikhaet doč" carja (72). . . ." (p. 40). More accurately, the dragon suddenly kidnaps the tsar's three daughters. [L.A.W.]

^{††} "Nevzdraznyi detinka" porikhaet volšebnyj larec (111)." (p. 41). In the text cited, the fellow does not steal the coffer himself; he has his mother steal it and bring it to him. [L.A.W.]

^{†††} The original references (on p. 41) are to tales 114 and 115. Tale 114 should be 114b (= new no. 196). [L.A.W.]

isolate several of its most important forms, and generalize the remainder. Examples: a firebird steals the golden apples (168); a weasel-beast each night eats animals from the tsar's menagerie (132); the general seizes the king's (nonmagical) sword (259); and so forth.

6. *The villain causes bodily injury* (A⁹). A servant girl cuts out the eyes of her mistress (127). A princess chops off Katóma's legs (198). It is interesting that these forms (from a morphological point of view) are also forms of seizure. The eyes, for example, are placed by the servant girl in a pocket and are carried away; thus they are consequently acquired in the same manner as other seized objects and are put in their proper place. The same is true for a heart that has been cut out.

7. *The villain causes a sudden disappearance* (A⁷). Usually this disappearance is the result of the application of bewitching or deceitful means; a stepmother puts her stepson into a sleep—his bride disappears forever (232).† Sisters place knives and needles in a maiden's window through which Finist is supposed to fly in—he injures his wings and disappears forever (234).†† A wife flies away from her husband upon a magic carpet (192). Tale No. 267 demonstrates an interesting form. There, disappearance is effected by the hero himself: he burns the (outer) skin of his bewitched wife, and she disappears forever.††† A special occurrence in tale No. 219 might also conditionally be placed in this class: a bewitched kiss causes a prince to completely forget his bride. In this case the victim is the bride, who loses her betrothed (A^{VII}).

8. *The villain demands or entices his victim* (A⁸). Us-

† "Ego newesta iskerzet navegda (128)" (p. 42). The word "forever" may suggest the wrong idea. In reality, the bride leaves a letter for the sleeping hero after her last appearance, saying that he must come and seek her beyond the thirteenth kingdom. He does find her eventually, and then marries her. [L.A.W.]

†† "On ranit sebe kryl'ja, iskerzet navegda (129)" (p. 42). Here again, even though Finist no longer flies to the maiden's window, she sets out after him, though Finist no longer married. [L.A.W.]

††† The beautiful wife, fated to wear a frog's skin, takes it off in order to attend a ball. Prince Iyán finds the skin and burns it. Here too, although the wife disappears the next morning, it is not "forever" ("... ona iskerzet navegda" [p. 42]), as the hero seeks her out again. [L.A.W.]

ally this form is the result of a deceitful agreement. The king of the sea demands the tsar's son, and he leaves home (219).

9. *The villain expels someone* (A⁸): A stepmother drives her stepdaughter out (95); a priest expels his grandson (143).

10. *The villain orders someone to be thrown into the sea* (A¹⁰). A tsar places his daughter and son-in-law in a barrel and orders the barrel to be thrown into the sea (165). Parents launch a small boat, carrying their sleeping son, into the sea (247).

11. *The villain casts a spell upon someone or something* (A¹¹). At this point one should note that the villain often causes two or three harmful acts at once. There are forms which are rarely encountered independently and which show a propensity for uniting with other forms. The casting of spells belongs to this group. A wife turns her husband into a dog and then drives him out (i.e., A₁₁⁹); a stepmother turns her stepdaughter into a lynx and drives her out (266). Even in instances when a bride is changed into a duck and flies away, we actually have a case of expulsion, although it is not mentioned as such (264, 265).

12. *The villain effects a substitution* (A¹²). This form also is mostly concomitant. A nursemaid changes a bride into a duckling and substitutes her own daughter in the bride's place (A₁₂¹¹; 264). A maid blinds the tsar's bride and poses as the bride (A₁₂⁹; 127).

13. *The villain orders a murder to be committed* (A¹³). This form is in essence a modified (intensified) expulsion: the stepmother orders a servant to kill her stepdaughter while they are out walking (210). A princess orders her servants to take her husband away into the forest and kill him (192). Usually in such instances a presentation of the heart and liver of the victim is demanded.

14. *The villain commits murder* (A¹⁴). This also is usually only an accompanying form for other acts of villainy, serving to intensify them. A princess seizes her husband's magic shirt and then kills him (i.e., A₁₄²;

- 209). † Elder brothers kill a younger brother and abduct his bride (i.e., A_{12} ; 168). A sister takes away her brother's berries and then kills him (244).
15. *The villain imprisons or detains someone* (A^{19}). The princess imprisons Iván in a dungeon (185). The king of the sea incarcerates Semën (259). ††
16. *The villain threatens forced matrimony* (A^{19}). A dragon demands the tsar's daughter as his wife (125).
- 16a. The same form among relatives (A^{19}). A brother demands his sister for a wife (114).
17. *The villain makes a threat of cannibalism* (A^{17}). A dragon demands the tsar's daughter for his dinner (171). A dragon has devoured all the people in the village, and the last living peasant is threatened with the same fate (149). †††
- 17a. The same form among relatives (A^{17}). A sister intends to devour her brother (93).
18. *The villain torments at night* (A^{19}). A dragon (192) or a devil (115) torment a princess at night; a witch flies to a maiden and sucks at her breast (198).
19. *The villain declares war* (A^{19}). A neighboring tsar declares war (161); similarly, a dragon ravages kingdoms (137).

With this, the forms of villainy are exhausted within the confines of the selected material. However, far from all tales begin with the affliction of misfortune. There are also other beginnings which often present the same development as tales which begin with (A). On examining this phenomenon, we can observe that these tales proceed from a certain situation of insufficiency or lack, and it is this that leads to quests analogous to those in the case of villainy. We conclude from this that lack can be considered as the morphological equivalent of seizure, for example. Let us consider the following cases: a princess seizes Iván's talis-

† The tale reference cited (p. 43) is 120. More correctly, it should be 120b (= new no. 209). [L.A.W.]

†† "Morskoi car' deržit v zatočanii Semena (142)" (p. 43). This does not occur in tale 142. However, it may be found in tale 145 (= new no. 259). [L.A.W.]

††† "Zamej počtal vsak ljudej v deternic, ta že učast' ugrožacet poslednemu ostaršemuša v živyx mužiku (85)" (p. 43). This is not the situation in tale 85, but it is in tale 86 (= new no. 149). [L.A.W.]

man. The result of this seizure is that Iván lacks the talisman. And so we see that a tale, while omitting villainy, very often begins directly with a lack: Iván desires to have a magic sabre or a magic steed, etc. Insufficiency, just as seizure, determines the next point of the complication: Iván sets out on a quest. The same may be said about the abduction of a bride as about the simple lack of a bride. In the first instance a certain act is given, the result of which creates an insufficiency and provokes a quest; in the second instance a ready-made insufficiency is presented, which also provokes a quest. In the first instance, a lack is created from without; in the second, it is realized from within.

We fully admit that the terms "lack" (*nedostátka*) and "insufficiency" (*nevútlka*) are not wholly satisfactory. But there are no words in the Russian language with which the given concept may be expressed completely and exactly. The word "shortage" (*nedostátok*) sounds better, but it has a special meaning which is inappropriate for the given concept. This lack can be compared to the zero which, in a series of figures, represents a definite value. The given feature may be fixed in the following manner:

VIIa. ONE MEMBER OF A FAMILY EITHER LACKS SOMETHING OR DESIRES TO HAVE SOMETHING. (Definition: *lack*. Designation: *a*.)

These instances lend themselves to a grouping only with difficulty. It would be possible to break them down according to the forms of the realization of lack (see pages 53-55); but here it is possible to limit oneself to a distribution according to the objects lacking. It is possible to register the following forms: (1) Lack of a bride (or a friend, or a human being generally). This lack is sometimes depicted quite vividly (the hero intends to search for a bride), and sometimes it is not even mentioned verbally. The hero is unmarried and sets out to find a bride—with this a beginning is given to the course of the action (a^1). (2) A magical agent is needed. For example: apples, water, horses, sabres, etc. (a^2).² (3) *Wonderous* objects are lacking (without magical power), such as the firebird, ducks with golden feathers, a wonder-of-wonders, etc. (a^3). (4) A specific form: the magic egg containing Koščej's death (or containing the love of a princess) is lacking (a^4). (5) Rationalized forms: money, the means

of existence, etc. are lacking (a⁵). We note that such beginnings from daily living sometimes develop quite fantastically. (6) Various other forms (a⁹).

Just as the object of seizure does not determine the structure of the tale, neither does the object which is lacking. In consequence, there is no need to systematize all instances for the sake of the general goals of morphology. One can limit oneself to the most important ones and generalize the rest.

Here the following problem necessarily arises: far from all tales begin with harm or the beginning just described. The tale of Emelja the Fool begins with the fool's catching a pike, and not at all with villainy, etc. In comparing a large number of tales it becomes apparent, however, that the elements peculiar to the *middle* of the tale are sometimes *transferred to the beginning*, and this is the case here. The catching and sparing of an animal is a typical middle element, as we shall observe later on. Generally, elements A or a are required for each tale of the class being studied. Other forms of complication do not exist.

IX. MISFORTUNE OR LACK IS MADE KNOWN; THE HERO IS APPROACHED WITH A REQUEST OR COMMAND; HE IS ALLOWED TO GO OR HE IS DISPATCHED. (Definition: *mediation, the connective incident.* Designation: B.)

This function brings the hero into the tale. Under the closest analysis, this function may be subdivided into components, but for our purposes this is not essential. The hero of the tale may be one of two types: (1) if a young girl is kidnapped, and disappears from the horizon of her father (and that of the listener), and if Ivan goes off in search of her, then the hero of the tale is Ivan and not the kidnapped girl. Heroes of this type may be termed *seekers*. (2) If a young girl or boy is seized or driven out, and the thread of the narrative is linked to his or her fate and not to those who remain behind, then the hero of the tale is the seized or banished boy or girl. There are no seekers in such tales. Heroes of this variety may be called *victimized heroes*. Whether or not tales develop in the same manner with each type of hero will be apparent further on. There is no instance in our material in which a tale follows both seeker and victimized heroes (cf. "Ruslan and Ljudmila"). A moment of mediation is

present in both cases. The significance of this moment lies in the fact that the hero's departure from home is caused by it.

1. *A call for help is given, with the resultant dispatch of the hero (B¹).* The call usually comes from the tsar and is accompanied by promises.
2. *The hero is dispatched directly (B²).* Dispatch is presented either in the form of a command or a request. In the former instance, it is sometimes accompanied by threats; in the latter, by promises. Sometimes both threats and promises are made.
3. *The hero is allowed to depart from home (B³).* In this instance the initiative for departure often comes from the hero himself, and not from a dispatcher. Parents bestow their blessing. The hero sometimes does not announce his real aims for leaving: he asks for permission to go out walking, etc., but in reality he is setting off for the struggle.
4. *Misfortune is announced (B⁴).* A mother tells her son about the abduction of her daughter that took place before his birth. The son sets out in search of his sister, without having been asked to do so by his mother (133). More often, however, a story of misfortune does not come from parents, but rather from various old women or persons casually encountered, etc.

These four preceding forms all refer to seeker-heroes. The forms following are directly related to the victimized hero. The structure of the tale demands that the hero leave home at any cost. If this is not accomplished by means of some form of villainy, then the tale employs the connective incident to this end.

5. *The banished hero is transported away from home (B⁵):* The father takes his daughter, banished by her stepmother, to the forest. This form is quite interesting in many respects. Logically, the father's actions are not necessary. The daughter could go to the forest herself. But the tale demands parent-senders in the connective incident. It is possible to show that the form in question is a secondary formation, but this is outside the aim of a general morphology. One should take note of the fact

that transportation is also employed in regard to a princess who is demanded by a dragon. In such cases she is taken to the seashore. However, in the latter instance a call for help is concurrently given. The course of action is determined by the call and not by transportation to the seashore. This explains why transportation in these instances cannot be attributed to the connective incident.

6. *The hero condemned to death is secretly freed* (B⁶). A cook or an archer spares a young girl (or boy), frees her, and instead of killing her, slays an animal in order to obtain its heart and liver as proof of the murder (210, 197).[†] Incident B was defined above as the factor causing the departure of the hero from home. Whereas dispatch presents the *necessity* for setting out, here the *opportunity* for departure is given. The first instance is characteristic of the seeker-hero, and the second applies to the victimized hero.

7. *A lament is sung* (B⁷). This form is specific for murderer (and is sung by a surviving brother, etc.); it is specific for bewitchment with banishment, and for substitution. The misfortune becomes known, thanks to this, and evokes counteraction.

X. THE SEEKER AGREES TO OR DECIDES UPON COUNTERACTION. (Definition: *beginning counteraction*. Designation: C.)

This moment is characterized in such words, for instance, as the following: "Permit us to go in search of your princess", etc. Sometimes this moment is not expressed in words, but a volitional decision, of course, precedes the search. This moment is characteristic only of those tales in which the hero is a seeker. Banished, vanquished, bewitched, and substituted heroes demonstrate no volitional aspiration toward freedom, and in such cases this element is lacking.

[†] The original textual citations (p. 47) for this situation are tales 121 and 114. It does occur in both 121a and 121b, but not in either 114a or 114b. A correct reference to replace the second would be 115 (= new no. 197). [L.A.W.]

XI. THE HERO LEAVES HOME. (Definition: *departure*. Designation: ↑)

Departure here denotes something different from the temporary absence element, designated earlier by β . The departures of seeker-heroes and victim-heroes are also different. The departures of the former group have search as their goal, while those of the latter mark the beginning of a journey without searches, on which various adventures await the hero. It is necessary to keep the following in mind: if a young girl is abducted and a seeker goes in pursuit of her, then two characters have left home. But the route followed by the story and on which the action is developed is actually the route of the seeker. If, for example, a girl is driven out and there is no seeker, then the narrative is developed along the route of the victim hero. The sign ↑ designates the route of the hero, regardless of whether he is a seeker or not. In certain tales a spatial transference of the hero is absent. The entire action takes place in one location. Sometimes, on the contrary, departure is intensified, assuming the character of flight.

The elements ABC ↑ represent the complication. Later on the course of action is developed.

Now a new character enters the tale: this personage might be termed the *donor*, or more precisely, the provider. Usually he is encountered accidentally—in the forest, along the roadway, etc. (see Chapter VI, forms of appearance of dramatis personae). It is from him that the hero (both the seeker hero and the victim hero) obtains some agent (usually magical) which permits the eventual liquidation of misfortune. But before receipt of the magical agent takes place, the hero is subjected to a number of quite diverse actions which, however, all lead to the result that a magical agent comes into his hands.

XII. THE HERO IS TESTED, INTERROGATED, ATTACKED, ETC., WHICH PREPARES THE WAY FOR HIS RECEIVING EITHER A MAGICAL AGENT OR HELPER. (Definition: *the first function of the donor*. Designation: D.)

1. *The donor tests the hero* (D¹). A witch gives a girl household chores (102). Forest knights propose that the hero serve them for three years. The hero is to spend

three years in the service of a merchant (a rationalization from domestic life) (115). The hero is supposed to serve as a ferryman for three years, without remuneration (138).† The hero must listen to the playing of the gusla without falling asleep (216). The apple tree, the river, and the stove offer a very simple meal (113). A witch proposes bedding down with her daughter (171). A dragon suggests the raising of a heavy stone (128). Sometimes this request is written on the stone, and other times brothers, upon finding a big stone, try to lift it themselves. A witch proposes the guarding of a herd of mares (159), and so forth.

2. *The donor greets and interrogates the hero* (D²). This form may be considered as a weakened form of testing. Greeting and interrogation are also present in the forms mentioned above, but there they do not have the character of a test; rather they precede it. In the present case, however, direct testing is absent, and interrogation assumes the character of an indirect test. If the hero answers rudely he receives nothing, but if he responds politely he is rewarded with a steed, a sabre, and so on.

3. *A dying or deceased person requests the rendering of a service* (D³). This form also sometimes takes on the character of a test. A cow requests the following: "Eat not of my meat, but gather up my bones, tie them in a kerchief, bury them in the garden, and forget me not, but water them each morning" (100). A similar request is made by the bull in tale No. 202.†† Another form of last wish is evident in tale No. 179. Here, a dying father instructs his sons to spend three nights beside his grave.

4. *A prisoner begs for his freedom* (D⁴). The little brass peasant is held captive and asks to be freed (125). A devil sits in a tower and begs a soldier to free him (236). A jug fished out of water begs to be broken, i.e., the spirit within the jug asks for liberation (195).

† "Tri goda obsluživat' pervoz, ne berja voznagraždenija (71) . . ." (p. 49). This proposal is not found in tale 71; however, it does occur in tale 78 (= new no. 139). [L.A.W.]

†† The original reference (p. 50) is to tale 117. However, the request made in tale 118a (= new no. 202) would seem to fit better. [L.A.W.]

4*. The same as the preceding, accompanied by the preliminary imprisonment of the donor (*D⁴). If, for example, as in tale No. 123, a forest spirit is caught, this deed cannot be considered an independent function; it merely sets the stage for the subsequent request of the captive.

5. *The hero is approached with a request for mercy* (D⁵). This form might be considered as a subclass of the preceding one. It occurs either after capture or while the hero takes aim at an animal with the intention of killing it. The hero catches a pike which begs him to let it go (166); the hero aims at animals which beg to be spared (156).

6. *Disputants request a division of property* (D⁶). Two giants ask that a staff and a broom be divided between them (185). Disputants do not always voice their request; the hero sometimes proposes a division on his own initiative (D⁶). Beasts are incapable of sharing car- rion; the hero divides it (162).

7. *Other requests* (D⁷). Strictly speaking, requests as such constitute an independent class, while the individual types constitute subclasses; but in order to avoid an excessively cumbersome system of designation, one may arbitrarily consider all such varieties to be classes themselves. Having extracted the basic forms, the rest can be summarized. Mice ask to be fed (102); a thief asks the robbed person to carry the stolen goods for him (238). Next is a case which can immediately be assigned to two classes: A little vixen is caught; she begs, "Don't kill me (a request for mercy, D⁵), fry me a hen with a little butter, as juicy as possible" (second request, D⁷). Since imprisonment preceded this request, the designation for the complete happening is *D⁷. An example of a different character, which also involves a suppliant's being threatened or caught up in a helpless situation is: the hero steals the clothes of a female bath-er who begs him to return them (219).† Sometimes a helpless situation

† " . . . gerolj poxiščet u kupal'sčicy odeždu, ona prosiit ordar' ee (131)" (p. 51). This does not occur in tale 131, but may be found, for example, in tales 125 and 71c (= new nos. 219 and 130). [L.A.W.]

simply occurs without any pronouncement of a request (Hedglings become soaked in the rain, children torment a cat). In these instances the hero is presented with the possibility of rendering assistance. Objectively this amounts to a test, although subjectively the hero is not aware of it as such (d¹).

8. *A hostile creature attempts to destroy the hero* (D⁹). A witch tries to place the hero in an oven (108). A witch attempts to behead heroes during the night (105). A host attempts to feed his guests to rats at night (216).[†] A magician tries to destroy the hero by leaving him alone on a mountain (243).

9. *A hostile creature engages the hero in combat* (D⁹). A witch fights with the hero. Combat in a forest hut between the hero and various forest dwellers is encountered very often. Combat here has the character of a scuffle or brawl.

10. *The hero is shown a magical agent which is offered for exchange* (D:9). A robber shows a cudgel (215); merchants display wondrous objects (216); an old man displays a sword (270). They offer these things for exchange.

XIII. THE HERO REACTS TO THE ACTIONS OF THE FUTURE DONOR. (Definition: *the hero's reaction*. Designation: E.) In the majority of instances, the reaction is either positive or negative.

1. *The hero withstands (or does not withstand) a test* (E¹).

2. *The hero answers (or does not answer) a greeting* (E²).

3. *He renders (or does not render) a service to a dead person* (E³).

4. *He frees a captive* (E⁴).

5. *He shows mercy to a suppliant* (E⁵).

6. *He completes an apportionment and reconciles the*

[†]"Xozjain pytaesja odat' gostej noc'in na s'edenic krysam (122)" (p. 51). This does not occur in tale 122, but may be found in 123 (= new no. 216). [L.A.W.]

disputants (E⁹). The request of disputants (or simply an argument without a request) more often evokes a different reaction. The hero *deceives* the disputants, making them run, for example, after an arrow which he has shot into the distance; meanwhile, he himself seizes the disputed objects (E¹).

7. *The hero performs some other service* (E⁷). Sometimes these services correspond to requests; other times, they are done purely through the kindness of the hero. A young girl feeds passing beggars (114). A special subclass might be made by forms of a religious nature. A hero burns a barrel of frankincense to the glory of God. To this group one instance of a prayer might also be relegated (115).

8. *The hero saves himself from an attempt on his life by employing the same tactics used by his adversary* (E⁸). He puts the witch into the stove by making her show how to climb in (108). The heroes exchange clothes with the daughters of the witch in secret; she proceeds to kill them instead of the heroes (105). The magician himself remains on the mountain where he wanted to abandon the hero (243).

9. *The hero vanquishes (or does not vanquish) his adversary* (E⁹).

10. *The hero agrees to an exchange, but immediately employs the magic power of the object exchanged against the barterer* (E¹⁰). An old man offers to trade his magic sword to a cossack for a magic cask. The cossack makes the exchange, whereupon he orders the sword to cut off the old man's head, thus getting back the cask also (270).

XIV. THE HERO ACQUIRES THE USE OF A MAGICAL AGENT. (Definition: *provision or receipt of a magical agent*. Designation: F.)

The following things are capable of serving as magical agents: (1) animals (a horse, an eagle, etc.); (2) objects out of which magical helpers appear (a flintstone containing a steed, a ring containing young men); (3) objects possessing a magical prop-

erty, such as cudgels, swords, guslas, balls, and many others; (4) qualities or capacities which are directly given, such as the power of transformation into animals, etc. All of these objects of transmission we shall conditionally term "magical agents."⁴ The forms by which they are transmitted are the following:

1. *The agent is directly transferred* (F¹). Such acts of transference very often have the character of a reward: an old man presents a horse as a gift; forest animals offer their offspring, etc. Sometimes the hero, instead of receiving a certain animal directly for his own use, obtains the power of turning himself into it (for details see Chapter VI). Some tales end with the moment of reward. In these instances the gift amounts to something of a certain material value and is not a magical agent (F²). If a hero's reaction is negative, then the transference may not occur (F^{neg}), or is replaced by cruel retribution. The hero is devoured, frozen, has strips cut out of his back, is thrown under a stone, etc. (F^{contr.}).
2. *The agent is pointed out* (F²). An old woman indicates an oak tree under which lies a flying ship (144).[†] An old man points out a peasant from whom a magic steed may be obtained (138).
3. *The agent is prepared* (F³). "The magician went out on the shore, drew a boat in the sand and said: 'Well, brothers, do you see this boat? We see it.' Get into it." (138).
4. *The agent is sold and purchased* (F⁴). The hero buys a magic hen (197); †† he buys a magic dog and cat (190), etc. The intermediate form between purchase and preparation is "preparation on order"; the hero places an order for a chain to be made by a blacksmith (105). (The designation for this instance: F^{4s}).
5. *The agent falls into the hands of the hero by chance* (*is found by him*) (F⁵). Iván sees a horse in the field and

[†]"Staruxa ukazyvaet dub, pod kotorym naxoditsja letučij korabl' (83)" (p. 53). In the given tale, it is not an old woman, but an old man (*starik*) who indicates the tree. [L.A.W.]

^{††}"Ger'oi pokupaet volkehnju kuru (114)" (p. 54). The hero buys a hen in tale 115 (= new no. 197) but not in tale 114. In the latter he is told how to get a magic duck. [L.A.W.]

- mounts him (132); he comes upon a tree bearing magic apples (192).
6. *The agent suddenly appears of its own accord* (F⁶). A staircase suddenly appears, leading up a mountain-side (156). Agents sprouting out of the ground constitute a special form of independent appearance (F⁷), and they may be magical bushes (100, 101), twigs, a dog and a horse (201), or a dwarf.
 7. *The agent is eaten or drunk* (F⁷). This is not, strictly speaking, a form of transference, although it may be coordinated, conditionally, with the cases cited. Three beverages provide the drinker with unusual strength (125); the eating of a bird's giblets endows heroes with various magical qualities (195).
 8. *The agent is seized* (F⁸). The hero steals a horse from a witch (159); he seizes the disputed objects (197). The application of magical agents against the person who exchanged them and the taking back of objects which had been given may also be considered a special form of seizure.
 9. *Various characters place themselves at the disposal of the hero* (F⁹). An animal, for example, may either present its offspring or offer its services to the hero, making, as it were, a present of itself. Let us compare the following instances: A steed is not always presented directly, or in a flintstone. Sometimes the donor simply informs the hero of an incantation formula with which the hero may invoke the steed to appear. In the latter instance, Iván is not actually given anything: he only receives the right to a helper. We have the same situation when the suppliant offers Iván the right to make use of him: the pike informs Iván of a formula by which he may call it forth ("Say only: 'by the pike's command . . .'"). If, finally, the formula also is omitted, and the animal simply promises, "Sometime I'll be of use to you," then we still have before us a moment in which the hero receives the aid of a magical agent in the form of an animal. Later on it will become Iván's helper (F⁹). It often happens that various magical creatures, without any warning, suddenly appear or are met on the way and offer

their services and are accepted as helpers (F₉⁹). Most often these are heroes with extraordinary attributes, or characters possessing various magical qualities (Overeater, Overdrinker, Cracking Frost).

Here, before continuing with the further registration of functions, the following question may be raised: in what combination does one encounter the types of elements D (preparation for transmission), and F (transmission itself)? One need only state that, in the face of a negative reaction on the part of the hero, one encounters only F neg. (the transmission does not take place), or F contr. (the unfortunate hero is severely punished). Under the condition of the hero's positive reaction, however, one encounters the combinations shown in Figure 1.

One can see from this scheme that the connections are exceptionally varied, and that consequently a wide range of substitution of certain variations for others can be ascertained on the whole. Yet if one examines this scheme more carefully, one immediately becomes aware of the absence of several connections. This absence is in part explained by the insufficiency of material, but certain combinations would not prove logical. Therefore we conclude that there exist *types* of connections. If one proceeds to determine types from the forms of transmission of a magical agent, one can isolate two types of connections:

1. The seizure of a magical agent, linked with an attempt to destroy the hero (roast, etc.), with a request for apportionment, or with a proposal for an exchange.
2. All other forms of transmission and receipt, linked with all other preparatory forms. The request for apportionment belongs to the second type if the division is actually accomplished, but to the first if the disputants are deceived. Further, it is possible to observe that a find, a purchase, and a sudden independent appearance of a magical agent or helper are most often encountered without the slightest preparation. These are rudimentary forms. But if they nevertheless *are* prepared, then this occurs in forms of the second type, and not the first.

In connection with this, one might touch upon the question of

I. The preparatory function of the donor:

- Test, D¹.....
- Interrogation, D².....
- Requests of a dying person, D³.....
- for mercy and freedom, D^{4,5}.....
- for division, D⁶.....
- others, D⁷.....
- Attempt to annihilate, D⁸.....
- Skirmish, D⁹.....
- Proposal for an exchange, D¹⁰..

II. The forms of transmission of a magical agent:

- F¹ Transference
- F² Indication
- F³ Preparation
- F⁴ Sale
- F⁵ Find
- F⁶ Appearance
- F⁷ Swallowing
- F⁸ Seizure
- F⁹ Offer of service(s)

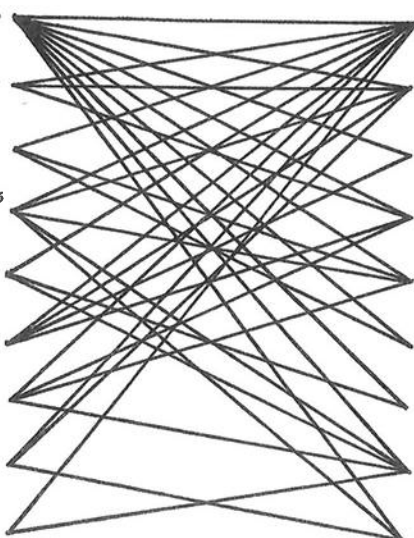


FIGURE 1

the character of donors. The second type most often presents friendly donors (with the exception of those who surrender a magical agent unwillingly or after a fight), whereas the first type exhibits unfriendly (or, at any rate, deceived) donors. These are not donors in the true sense of the word, but personages who unwillingly furnish the hero with something. Within the forms of each type, all combinations are possible and logical, whether actually present or not. Thus, for example, either an exacting or a grateful donor is capable of giving, revealing, selling, or preparing an agent, or he may let the hero find the agent, etc. On the other hand, an agent in the possession of a deceived donor can only be stolen or taken by force. Combinations outside of these types are illogical. Thus, for example, it is not logical if a hero, after performing a difficult task for a witch, steals a colt from her. This does not mean that such combinations do not exist in the tale. They do exist, but in these instances the storyteller is obliged to give additional motivation for the actions of his heroes. Here is another model of an illogical connection which is clearly motivated: Iván fights with an old man. During the struggle the old man *inadvertently* permits Iván to drink some strength-giving water. This "inadvertence" becomes understandable when one compares this incident with those tales in which a beverage is given by a grateful or a generally friendly donor. In this manner we see that the lack of logic in the connection is not a stumbling block to the storyteller.

If one were to follow a purely empirical approach, one would have to confirm the interchangeability of all the various forms of elements D and F in relation to each other.

Below are several concrete examples of connection:

Type II: D¹E¹F¹. A witch forces the hero to take a herd of mares to pasture. A second task follows, the hero accomplishes it, and receives a horse (160).

D²E²F². An old man interrogates the hero. He answers rudely and receives nothing. Later, he returns and responds politely, whereupon he receives a horse (155).

D³E³F¹. A dying father requests his sons to spend three nights beside his grave. The youngest son fulfills the request and receives a horse (180).†

† The original textual reference (p. 57) is tale 195; this is incorrect. The connection described may be found in tale 105b (= new no. 180). [L.A.W.]

D³E³F¹. A young bull asks the tsar's children to kill him, burn him, and plant his ashes in three beds. The hero does these things. From one bed an apple tree sprouts forth; from the second a dog; and from the third a horse (201).†

D¹E¹F⁶. Brothers find a large stone. "Can't it be moved?" (trial without a tester). The elder brothers cannot move it. The youngest moves the stone, revealing below it a vault, and in the vault Iván finds three horses (137).

This list could be continued *ad libitum*. It is important only to note that in similar situations other magical gifts besides horses are presented. The examples given here with steeds were selected for the purpose of more sharply outlining a morphological kinship.

Type I: D⁶E¹F³. Three disputants request the apportionment of magical objects. The hero instructs them to chase after one another, and in the meanwhile, he seizes the objects (a cap, a rug, boots).

D⁸E³F³. Heroes fall into the hands of a witch. At night she plans to behead them. They put her daughters in their place and run away, the youngest brother making off with a magic kerchief (105).††

D¹⁰E¹⁰F³. Šmat-Rázum, an invisible spirit, serves the hero. Three merchants offer a little chest (a garden), an axe (a boat), and a horn (an army) in exchange for the spirit. The hero agrees to the barter but later calls his helper back to him.

We observe that the substitution of certain aspects by others, within the confines of each type, is practiced on a large scale. Another question is whether or not certain *objects* of transmission are connected to certain *forms* of transmission (i.e., is not a horse always given, whereas a flying carpet is always seized, etc.)? Although our examination pertains solely to functions per se, we can indicate (without proofs) that no such norm exists. A

† "Byčok prosit carskix detej ego zarezat', ščec', i pepel posejati' na trex gřjadakax. Geroj što vypoľnijaet. Iz odnoj gřjadki vyrostaet jablonja, iz drugoj—sobaka, iz tretej—kon' (118)" (p. 57). This happens in tale 117 (= new no. 201), not in 118. In tale 118 the bull says, "Kill me and eat me, but gather up my bones and strike them; from them a little old man will come forth. . . ." [L.A.W.]

†† "Geroi popadajuť k jađe. Ona xočet noč'ju otrubit' im golovy. Oni podsovyva-juť ej ee dočerej. Bratja begut, mladišij poxičkaet volšebnyj platoček (61)" (p. 58). This situation does not occur in tale 61, but it may be found (with slight variations) in tale 60 (= new no. 105). [L.A.W.]

horse, which is usually given, is seized in tale No. 159.† On the other hand, a magic kerchief, which affords rescue from pursuit, and which is usually seized, is instead given as a gift to the hero in tale No. 159 and others.†† A flying ship may be prepared, or pointed out, or given as a gift, etc.

Let us return to the enumeration of the functions of dramatic personae. The employment of a magical agent follows its receipt by the hero; or, if the agent received is a living creature, its help is directly put to use on the command of the hero. With this the hero outwardly loses all significance; he himself does nothing, while his helper accomplishes everything. The morphological significance of the hero is nevertheless very great, since his intentions create the axis of the narrative. These intentions appear in the form of various commands which the hero gives to his helpers. At this point a more exact definition of the hero can be given than was done before. The hero of a fairy tale is that character who either directly suffers from the action of the villain in the complication (the one who senses some kind of lack), or who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or lack of another person. In the course of the action the hero is the person who is supplied with a magical agent (a magical helper), and who makes use of it or is served by it.

XV. THE HERO IS TRANSFERRED, DELIVERED, OR LED TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF AN OBJECT OF SEARCH. (Definition: *spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance.* Designation: G.)

Generally the object of search is located in "another" or "different" kingdom. This kingdom may lie far away horizontally, or else very high up or deep down vertically. The means of unification may be identical in all cases, but specific forms do exist for great heights and depths.

† "Kon', kotoryj kažke vsego daetsja, v skazke No. 95 poxičkajetsja" (p. 58). On the contrary, in tale 95 the witch lets Iván choose whichever foal he wants from the stable. A tale in which Iván steals a foal would be 94 (= new no. 159) [L.A.W.]

†† "Naoborot, volšebnyj platoček . . . v skazke No. 94 i dr. dartsja" (p. 58). To be more specific, in tale 94 Marija Morevna first steals the magic kerchief from Koščej, and then passes it on to Iván. [L.A.W.]

1. *The hero flies through the air* (G⁵): on a steed (171); on a bird (219); † in the form of a bird (162); on board a flying ship (138); on a flying carpet (192); on the back of a giant or a spirit (212); †† in the carriage of a devil (154); and so forth. Flight on a bird is sometimes accompanied by a detail: it is necessary to feed the bird on the journey, so the hero brings along an ox, etc.
2. *He travels on the ground or on water* (G²): on the back of a horse or wolf (168); on board a ship (247); a handless person carries a legless one (198); a cat swims a river on the back of a dog (190).
3. *He is led* (G³). A ball of thread shows the way (234); a fox leads the hero to the princess (163).
4. *The route is shown to him* (G⁴). A hedgehog points out the way to a kidnapped brother (113).
5. *He makes use of stationary means of communication* (G⁶). He climbs a stairway (156); he finds an underground passageway and makes use of it (141); he walks across the back of an enormous pike, as across a bridge (156); he descends by means of leather straps, etc.
6. *He follows bloody tracks* (G⁹). The hero defeats the inhabitant of a forest hut who runs away, hiding himself under a stone. Following his tracks Iván finds the entrance into another kingdom.

This exhausts the forms of transference of the hero. It should be noted that "delivery," as a function in itself, is sometimes absent: the hero simply walks to the place (i.e., function G amounts to a natural continuation of function †). In such a case function G is not singled out.

XVI. THE HERO AND THE VILLAIN JOIN IN DIRECT COMBAT. (Definition: *struggle.* Designation: H.)

This form needs to be distinguished from the struggle (fight) with a hostile donor. These two forms can be distinguished by their results. If the hero obtains an agent, for the purpose of

† . . . na pice (121) . . ." (p. 59). This does not occur in tale 121, but may be found, for example, in tale 125 (= new no. 219). [L.A.W.]

†† . . . na spine velkana ili duxa (121) . . ." (p. 59). This does not happen in tale 121, but occurs, for example, in tale 122 (= new no. 212). [L.A.W.]

further searching, as the result of an unfriendly encounter, this would be element D. If, on the other hand, the hero receives through victory the very object of his quest, we have situation H.

1. *They fight in an open field* (H¹). Here, first of all, belong fights with dragons or with Cúdo-júdo, etc. (125), and also battles with an enemy army or a knight, etc. (212).
2. *They engage in a competition* (H²). In humorous tales the fight itself sometimes does not occur. After a squabble (often completely analogous to the squabble that precedes an out-and-out-fight), the hero and the villain engage in a competition. The hero wins with the help of cleverness: a gypsy puts a dragon to flight by squeezing a piece of cheese as though it were a stone, by pretending that a blow to the back of the head was merely a whistle, etc. (149).[†]
3. *They play cards* (H³). The hero and a dragon (a devil) play cards (192, 153).
4. Tale No. 93 presents a special form: a she-dragon^{††} proposes the following to the hero: "Let Prince Iván get on the scales with me; who will outweigh the other?"^s (H⁴).

XVII. THE HERO IS BRANDED. (Definition: *branding, marking*. Designation: J.)

1. *A brand is applied to the body* (J¹). The hero receives a wound during the skirmish. A princess awakens him before the fight by making a small wound in his cheek with a knife (125). A princess brands the hero on the forehead with a signet ring (195); she kisses him, leaving a burning star on his forehead.
2. *The hero receives a ring or a towel* (J²). We have a combination of two forms if the hero is wounded in battle and the wound is bound with the kerchief of either a princess or a king.

[†] The original reference here (p. 60) is to tale 85. However, the trickery described takes place in tale 86 (= new no. 149). [L.A.W.]

^{††} Cf. footnote on page 68. [L.A.W.]

XVIII. THE VILLAIN IS DEFEATED. (Definition: *victory*. Designation: I.)

1. *The villain is beaten in open combat* (I¹).
2. *He is defeated in a contest* (I²).
3. *He loses at cards* (I³).
4. *He loses on being weighed* (I⁴).
5. *He is killed without a preliminary fight* (I⁵). A dragon is killed while asleep (141). Zmiulan hides in the hollow of a tree; he is killed (164).
6. *He is banished directly* (I⁶). A princess, possessed by a devil, places a sacred image around her neck: "The evil power flew away in a puff of smoke" (115).

Victory is also encountered in a negative form. If two or three heroes have gone out to do battle, one of them (a general) hides, while the other is victorious (designation: *I¹).

XIX. THE INITIAL MISFORTUNE OR LACK IS LIQUIDATED. (Designation: K.) This function, together with villainy (A), constitutes a pair. The narrative reaches its peak in this function.

1. *The object of a search is seized by the use of force or cleverness* (K¹). Here heroes sometimes employ the same means adopted by villains for the initial seizure. Iván's steed turns into a beggar who goes seeking alms. The princess gives them. Iván runs out of the bushes; they seize her and carry her away (185).
- 1a. Sometimes the capture is accomplished by two persons, one of whom orders the other to perform the actual business of catching (K¹). A horse steps on a crawfish and orders it to bring him a bridal dress. A cat catches a mouse and orders it to fetch a little ring (190).
2. *The object of search is obtained by several personages at once, through a rapid interchange of their actions* (K²).

The distribution of action is evoked by a series of consecutive failures or attempts on the part of the abducted person to escape. The seven Semjóns obtain a princess: the thief kidnaps her, but

she flies away in the form of a swan; the archer shoots her down, and another one, in place of a dog, retrieves her from the water, etc. (145). Similarly, the egg containing Koščej's death is obtained. A hare, a duck, and a fish run away, fly away, and swim away with the egg. A wolf, a raven, and a fish obtain it (156).

3. *The object of search is obtained with the help of enticements* (K³). This form, in many instances, is quite close in nature to K¹. The hero lures the princess on board a ship with the aid of golden objects and carries her away (242). A special subclass might be made out of an enticement in the form of a proposal for an exchange. A blinded girl embroiders a wonderful crown and sends it to her villainous servant girl. In exchange for the crown the latter returns the eyes, which are thus retrieved.

4. *The object of a quest is obtained as the direct result of preceding actions* (K⁴). If, for example, Iván kills a dragon and later marries the princess whom he has freed, there is no obtaining as a special act; rather, there is obtaining as a function, as a stage in the development of the plot. The princess is neither seized nor abducted, but she is nevertheless "obtained." She is obtained as the result of combat. Obtaining in these cases is a logical element. It may also be accomplished as a result of acts other than battles. Thus Iván can find a princess as the result of making a guided journey.

5. *The object of search is obtained instantly through the use of a magical agent* (K⁵). Two young men (appearing out of a magical book) deliver a golden-horned stag with the speed of a whirlwind (212).

6. *The use of a magical agent overcomes poverty* (K⁶). A magic duck lays golden eggs (195). The magic tablecloth which sets itself and the horse that scatters gold both belong here (186). Another form of the self-setting tablecloth appears in the image of a pike: "By the pike's command and God's blessing let the table be set and the dinner ready!" (167).

7. *The object of search is caught* (K⁷). This form is typical for agrarian pillage. The hero catches a mare

which was stealing hay (105). He captures the crane which was stealing peas (187).

8. *The spell on a person is broken* (K⁸). This form is typical for A¹¹ (enchantment). The breaking of a spell takes place either by burning the hide or by means of a formula: "Be a girl once again!"

9. *A slain person is revived* (K⁹). A hairpin or a dead tooth is removed from a head (210, 202). The hero is sprinkled with deadening and life-giving waters.

9a. Just as in the case of reverse capture one animal forces another to act, here also a wolf catches a raven and forces its mother to bring some deadening water and some life-giving water (168). This means of revival, preceded by the obtaining of water, may be singled out as a special subclass (K¹⁵).⁷

10. *A captive is freed* (K¹⁰). A horse breaks open the doors of a dungeon and frees Iván (185). This form, morphologically speaking, has nothing in common, for example, with the freeing of a forest spirit, since in the latter case a basis for gratitude and for the giving of a magical agent is created. Here initial misfortune is done away with. Tale No. 259 evidences a special form of liberation: here, the king of the sea always drags his prisoner out onto the shore at midnight. The hero beseeches the sun to free him. The sun is late on two occasions. On the third occasion "the sun shone forth its rays and the king of the sea could no longer drag him back into bondage."

11. The receipt of an object of search is sometimes accomplished by means of the same forms as the receipt of a magical agent (i.e., it is given as a gift, its location is indicated, it is purchased, etc.). Designation of these occurrences: KF¹, direct transmission; KF², indication; etc., as above.

XX. THE HERO RETURNS. (Definition: *return*. Designation: ↓.)

A return is generally accomplished by means of the same forms as an arrival. However, there is no need of attaching a

special function to follow a return, since returning already implies a surmounting of space. This is not always true in the case of a departure. Following a departure, an agent is given (a horse, eagle, etc.) and then flying or other forms of travel occur, whereas a return takes place immediately and, for the most part, in the same forms as an arrival. Sometimes return has the nature of fleeing.

XXI. THE HERO IS PURSUED. (Definition: *pursuit, chase*. Designation: Pr.)

1. *The pursuer flies after the hero* (Pr¹). A dragon catches up to Iván (160); a witch flies after a boy (105); † geese fly after a girl (113).
2. *He demands the guilty person* (Pr²). This form is also mostly linked with actual flight through the air: The father of a dragon dispatches a flying boat. From the boat they shout, "[we want] the guilty one, the guilty one!" (125).
3. *He pursues the hero, rapidly transforming himself into various animals, etc.* (Pr³). This form at several stages is also connected with flight: a magician pursues the hero in the forms of a wolf, a pike, a man, and a rooster (249).
4. *Pursuers (dragons' wives, etc.) turn into alluring objects and place themselves in the path of the hero* (Pr⁴). "I'll run ahead and make the day hot for him, and I shall turn myself into a green meadow. In this green meadow I'll change into a well, and in this well there shall swim a silver goblet . . . here they'll be torn asunder like poppy seeds" (136). She-dragons change into gardens, pillows, wells, etc. The tale does not inform us, however, as to how they manage to get ahead of the hero.
5. *The pursuer tries to devour the hero* (Pr⁵). A she-dragon turns into a maiden, seduces the hero, and then changes into a lioness that wants to devour Iván (155)

† " . . . vedma letit za mal'čikom (60)" (p. 64). In the text cited, the witch flies after a group of bold youths (*moldorč*). [L.A.W.]

A dragon mother opens her jaws from the sky to the earth (138).†

6. *The pursuer attempts to kill the hero* (Pr⁶). He tries to pound a dead tooth into his head (202).
7. *He tries to gnaw through a tree in which the hero is taking refuge* (Pr⁷).

XXII. RESCUE OF THE HERO FROM PURSUIT. (Definition: *rescue*. Designation: Rs.)

1. *He is carried away through the air* (sometimes he is saved by lightning-fast fleeing) (Rs¹). The hero flies away on a horse (160), on geese (108).
2. *The hero flees, placing obstacles in the path of his pursuer* (Rs²). He throws a brush, a comb, a towel. They turn into mountains, forests, lakes. Similarly, Vertogór (Mountain-Turner) and Vertodib (Oak-Turner) tear up mountains and oak trees, placing them in the path of the she-dragon (93).††
3. *The hero, while in flight, changes into objects which make him unrecognizable* (Rs³). A princess turns herself and the prince into a well and dipper, a church and priest (219).
4. *The hero hides himself during his flight* (Rs⁴). A river, an apple tree, and a stove hide a maiden (113).
5. *The hero is hidden by blacksmiths* (Rs⁵). A she-dragon demands the guilty person. Iván has hidden with blacksmiths, and they seize the dragon by the tongue and beat her with their hammers (136). An incident in tale No. 153 undoubtedly is related to this form: devils are placed in a knapsack by a soldier, are carried to a smithy and beaten with heavy hammers.
6. *The hero saves himself while in flight by means of rapid transformations into animals, stones, etc.* (Rs⁶). The hero flees in the form of a horse, a ruff, a ring, a seed, a falcon (249). The actual transformation is essential to this form. Flight may sometimes be omitted; such forms may be considered as a special subclass. A maiden

† "Zmeixa-mar' otkryvaet past' ot neba do zemli (92)" (p. 65). This does not occur in tale 92, but may be found in tale 78 (= new no. 136). [L.A.W.]

†† Cf. the footnote on p. 68. [L.A.W.]

is killed and a garden springs forth from her remains. The garden is cut down, it turns to stone, etc. (127).

7. *He avoids the temptations of transformed she-dragons* (Rs⁷). Iván hacks at the garden, the well, and so forth; blood flows from them (137).

8. *He does not allow himself to be devoured* (Rs⁸). Iván jumps his horse over the she-dragon's jaws. He recognizes the lioness as the she-dragon and kills her (155).[†]

9. *He is saved from an attempt on his life* (Rs⁹). Animals extract the dead tooth from his head in the nick of time.

10. *He jumps to another tree* (Rs¹⁰).

A great many tales end on the note of rescue from pursuit. The hero arrives home and then, if he has obtained a girl, marries her, etc. Nevertheless, this is far from always being the case. A tale may have another misfortune in store for the hero: a villain may appear once again, may seize whatever Iván has obtained, may kill Iván, etc. In a word, an initial villainy is repeated, sometimes in the same forms as in the beginning, and sometimes in other forms which are new for a given tale. With this a new story commences. There are no specific forms of repeated villainies (i.e., we again have abduction, enchantment, murder, etc.), but there are specific villainies connected with the new misfortune. They are Iván's elder brothers. Shortly after his arrival home they steal his prize and sometimes kill even him. If they permit him to remain alive then, in order to instigate a new search, it is necessary once more to place a great spatial barrier between the hero and the object being sought. This is accomplished by their throwing him into a chasm (into a pit, a subterranean kingdom, or sometimes into the sea), into which he may sometimes fall for three whole days. Then everything begins anew: i.e., again an accidental meeting with a donor; a success fully completed ordeal or service rendered, etc.; a receipt of a magical agent and its employment to return the hero home to

[†] "On uznaet v Ivice zmeixu i ubivraet ee (92)" (p. 66). However, in the tale referred to ("The Two Iváns, Soldier's Sons"; new no. 155), the first Iván does not kill the lioness, he only *threatens* to do so if she does not regurgitate his brother the second Iván. She spits up the dead brother, he is revived, and then the lioness is pardoned. Cf. the detailed analysis of this tale (Appendix II, no. 8), where the same misinterpretation appears again, resulting in some confusion. [L.A.W.]

his own kingdom. From this moment on the development is different from that in the beginning of the tale; we shall consider it below.

This phenomenon attests to the fact that many tales are composed of two series of functions which may be labelled "moves" (*zody*). A new villainous act creates a new "move," and in this manner, sometimes a whole series of tales combine into a single tale. Nevertheless, the process of development which will be described below does constitute the continuation of a given tale, although it also creates a new move. In connection with this, one must eventually ask how to distinguish the number of tales in each text.

VIII_{bis}. Iván's brothers steal his prize (and throw him into a chasm.)

Villainy has already been designated as A. If the brothers kidnap Iván's bride, the designation for this act would be A¹. If they steal a magical agent, then the designation is A². Abduction accompanied by murder is termed A_{1,2}¹. Forms connected with the hero's being thrown into a chasm shall be designated as *A¹, *A², *A_{1,2}², and so forth.

X-XI_{bis}. The hero once more sets out in search of something (G[†]) (see X-XI).

This element is sometimes omitted here. Iván wanders about and weeps, as though not thinking about returning. Element B (dispatch) is also always absent in these instances, since there is no reason for dispatching Iván, as he is the one from whom the bride has been kidnapped.

XII_{bis}. The hero once again is the subject of actions leading to the receipt of a magical agent (D) (see XII).

XIII_{bis}. The hero again reacts to the actions of the future donor (E) (see XIII).

XIV_{bis}. A new magical agent is placed at the hero's disposal (F) (see XIV).

XV_{bis}. The hero is brought or transported to the location of the object of the quest (G) (see XV). In this case he reaches home.

From this point onward, the development of the narrative proceeds differently, and the tale gives new functions.

XXIII. THE HERO, UNRECOGNIZED, ARRIVES HOME OR IN ANOTHER COUNTRY. (Definition: *unrecognized arrival*. Designation: o.)

Here, two classes are distinguishable: (1) arrival *home*, in which the hero stays with some sort of artisan (goldsmith, tailor, shoemaker, etc.), serving as an apprentice; (2) he arrives at the court of some *king*, and serves either as a cook or a groom. At the same time it is sometimes necessary to designate simple arrival as well.

XXIV. A FAISE HERO PRESENTS UNFOUNDED CLAIMS. (Definition: *unfounded claims*. Designation: L.)

If the hero arrives home, the false claims are presented by his brothers. If he is serving in another kingdom, a general, a water-carrier, or others present them. The brothers pose as capturers of the prize; the general poses as the conqueror of a dragon. These two forms can be considered special classes.

XXV. A DIFFICULT TASK IS PROPOSED TO THE HERO. (Definition: *difficult task*. Designation: M.)

This is one of the tale's favorite elements. Tasks are also assigned outside the connections just described, but these connections will be dealt with somewhat later. At the moment, let us take up the matter of the tasks per se. These tasks are so varied that each would need a special designation. However, there is no need at present to go into these details. Since no exact distribution will be made, we shall enumerate all instances present in our material, with an approximate arrangement into groups:

Ordeal by food and drink: to eat a certain number of oxen or wagonloads of bread; to drink a great deal of beer (137, 138, 144).

Ordeal by fire: to bathe in a red-hot iron bathhouse. This form is always connected with the previous ordeal (137, 138, 144). A separate form: a bath in boiling water (169).

Riddle guessing and similar ordeals: to pose an unsolvable riddle (239); to recount and interpret a dream (241); to explain the meaning of the ravens' croaking at the tsar's window, and to drive them away (247); to find out (to guess) the distinctive marks of a tsar's daughter (238).

Ordeal of choice: to select sought-after persons among twelve identical girls (or boys) (219, 227, 249).

Hide and seek: to hide oneself so that discovery is impossible (236).

To kiss the princess in a window (180, 182).†

To jump up on top of the gates (101).

Test of strength, adroitness, fortitude: a princess chokes Iván at night or squeezes his hand (198, 136); the task of picking up the heads of a decapitated dragon (171), of breaking in a horse (198), of milking a herd of wild mares (170).†† of defeating an amazon (202), or a rival (167), is given to the hero.

Test of endurance: to spend seven years in the tin kingdom (270).

Tasks of supply and manufacture: to supply a medicine (123); to obtain a wedding dress, a ring, shoes (132, 139, 156, 169); to deliver the hair of the king of the sea (240); to deliver a flying boat (144); to deliver life-giving water (144); to supply a troop of soldiers (144); to obtain seventy-seven mares (170);††† to build a palace during one night (190), a bridge leading to it (216);† to bring "the mate to my unknown one to make a pair." (240).††† *As tasks of manufacture*: to sew shirts (104, 267); to bake bread (267); as the third task in this case, the tsar asks who dances better.

Other tasks: to pick berries from a certain bush or tree (100, 101); to cross a pit on a pole (137); to find someone "whose candle will light by itself" (195).

The method of differentiation of these tasks from other highly similar elements will be outlined in the chapter on assimilations.

† The texts cited (p. 69) are nos. 105 and 106. More specifically, 105 should be 105b (= new no. 180). [L.A.W.]

†† The text cited (p. 69) is 103. More accurately, it should be 103b (= new no. 170). [L.A.W.]

††† The text cited (p. 69) is 103. More specifically, it should be 103b (= new no. 170). [L.A.W.]

† . . . most k nenu (121)" (p. 69). However, the task of building a bridge to the palace does not occur in tale 121, but may be found in tale 123 (= new no. 216). [L.A.W.]

†† "Prinesi 'k moemu neznaemomu pod paru' (113)" (p. 69). Such a task is not set in tale 113, but does occur in tale 133 (= new no. 240). What is involved here is that a princess requires Iván to produce the exact mate to some object (e.g., an embroidered slipper) without knowing beforehand what the object is. [L.A.W.]

XXXVI. THE TASK IS RESOLVED. (Definition: *solution*. Designation: N.)

Forms of solution correspond exactly, of course, to the forms of tasks. Certain tasks are completed before they are set, or before the time required by the person assigning the task. Thus the hero finds out the princess' distinctive marks before he is requested to do so. Preliminary solutions of this type shall be designated by the sign *N.

XXXVII. THE HERO IS RECOGNIZED. (Definition: *recognition*. Designation: Q.)

He is recognized by a mark, a brand (a wound, a star marking), or by a thing given to him (a ring, towel). In this case, recognition serves as a function corresponding to branding and marking. The hero is also recognized by his accomplishment of a difficult task (this is almost always preceded by an unrecognized arrival). Finally, the hero may be recognized immediately after a long period of separation. In the latter case, parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc., may recognize one another.

XXXVIII. THE FALSE HERO OR VILLAIN IS EXPOSED. (Definition: *exposure*. Designation: Ex.)

This function is, in most cases, connected with the one preceding. Sometimes it is the result of an uncompleted task (the false hero cannot lift the dragon's heads). Most often it is presented in the form of a story ("Here the princess told everything as it was"). Sometimes all the events are recounted from the very beginning in the form of a tale. The villain is among the listeners, and he gives himself away by expressions of disapproval (197). Sometimes a song is sung telling of what has occurred and exposing the villain (244). Other unique forms of exposure also occur (258).

XXXIX. THE HERO IS GIVEN A NEW APPEARANCE (Definition: *transfiguration*. Designation: T.)

1. *A new appearance is directly effected by means of the magical action of a helper (T³). The hero passes through the ears of a horse (or cow) and receives a new, handsome appearance.*

2. *The hero builds a marvelous palace (T²). He resides in the palace himself as the prince. A maiden suddenly awakens during the night in a marvelous palace (127). Although the hero is not always transformed in these instances, he nevertheless does undergo a change in personal appearance.*

3. *The hero puts on new garments (T³). A girl puts on a (magical?) dress and ornaments and suddenly is endowed with a radiant beauty at which everyone marvels (234).*

4. *Rationalized and humorous forms (T⁴). These forms are partly explained by those preceding (as their transformations), and, in part, must be studied and explained in connection with the study of tale-anecdotes, whence they originate. Actual changes of appearance do not take place in these cases, but a new appearance is achieved by deception. For example, a fox leads Kúzin'ka to a king saying that Kúzin'ka fell into a ditch and requests clothes. The fox is given royal garments. Kúzin'ka appears in the royal attire and is taken for a tsar's son. All similar instances may be formulated in the following manner: false evidence of wealth and beauty is accepted as true evidence.*

XXX. THE VILLAIN IS PUNISHED. (Definition: *punishment*. Designation: U.)

The villain is shot, banished, tied to the tail of a horse, commits suicide, and so forth. In parallel with this we sometimes have a magnanimous pardon (U neg.). Usually only the villain of the second move and the false hero are punished, while the first villain is punished only in those cases in which a battle and pursuit are absent from the story. Otherwise, he is killed in battle or perishes during the pursuit (a witch bursts in an attempt to drink up the sea, etc.).

XXXI. THE HERO IS MARRIED AND ASCENDS THE THRONE. (Definition: *wedding*. Designation: W.)

1. *A bride and a kingdom are awarded at once, or the hero receives half the kingdom at first, and the whole kingdom upon the death of the parents (W*).*

2. Sometimes the hero simply marries without obtaining a throne, since his bride is not a princess (W^*).
3. Sometimes, on the contrary, only accession to the throne is mentioned (W^*).
4. If a new act of villainy interrupts a tale shortly before a wedding, then the first move ends with a betrothal, or a promise of marriage (w^1).
5. In contrast to the preceding case, a married hero loses his wife; the marriage is resumed as the result of a quest (designation for a resumed marriage: w^2).
6. The hero sometimes receives a monetary reward or some other form of compensation in place of the princess' hand (w^3).

At this point the tale draws to a close. It should also be stated that there are several actions of tale heroes in individual cases which do not conform to, nor are defined by, any of the functions already mentioned. Such cases are rare. They are either forms which cannot be understood without comparative material, or they are forms transferred from tales of other classes (anecdotes, legends, etc.). We define these as unclear elements and designate them with the sign X.

Just what are the conclusions that may be drawn from the foregoing observations? First of all, a few *General* inferences. We observe that, actually, the number of functions is quite limited. Only some 31 functions may be noted. The action of all tales included in our material develops within the limits of these functions. The same may also be said for the action of a great many other tales of the most dissimilar peoples. Further, if we read through all of the functions, one after another, we observe that one function develops out of another with logical and artistic necessity. We see that not a single function excludes another. They all belong to a single axis and not, as has already been mentioned, to a number of axes.

Now we shall give several individual, though highly important, deductions. We observe that a large number of functions are arranged in pairs (prohibition-violation, reconnaissance-delivery, struggle-victory, pursuit-deliverance, etc.). Other functions may be arranged according to groups. Thus villainy, dispatch, decision for counteraction, and departure from home

(ABC \uparrow), constitute the complication. Elements DEF also form something of a whole. Alongside these combinations there are individual functions (absentations, punishment, marriage, etc.). We are merely noting these particular deductions at this point. The observation that functions are arranged in pairs will prove useful later, as well as the general deductions drawn here.

At this point we have to examine individual texts of the tales at close range. The question of how the given scheme applies to the texts, and what the individual tales constitute in relation to this scheme, can be resolved only by an analysis of the texts. But the reverse question, "What does the given scheme represent in *relation to the tales?*" can be answered here and now. The scheme is a *measuring unit* for individual tales. Just as cloth can be measured with a yardstick to determine its length, tales may be measured by the scheme and thereby defined. The application of the given scheme to various tales can also define the relationships of tales among themselves. We already foresee that the problem of kinship of tales, the problem of themes and variants, thanks to this, may receive a new solution.

NOTES

1. It is recommended that, prior to reading this chapter, one read through all the enumerated functions in succession without going into detail, taking note only of what is printed in capital letters. Such a cursory reading will make it easier to understand the thread of the account.
2. For what is meant by "magical agent" and "magical helper," cf. page 82.
3. The occasion will present itself further on for giving a more exact definition of the hero.
4. A more detailed account of the relationship between magical agents follows.
5. The problem of the connections of variants will be raised in the last chapter.
6. A curious rudiment of psychostasis.
7. The preliminary receipt of water could also be examined as a special form of F (receipt of a magical agent).

Ursula K. Le Guin

*the
wave
in the mind*

Talks and Essays on
the Writer, the Reader,
and the Imagination

RHYTHMIC PATTERN IN THE LORD OF THE RINGS

briefly. I found that many of the events and scenes, though each is vivid and particular, repeat or will be repeated by other events and images within the chapter and throughout the book, relating all the parts of the story by alluding back to or foreshadowing events, scenes, images, movements, relations, acts, responses, moods. Every part of the chapter is part of the pattern of the whole chapter, and the greater whole, the book, is immensely self-referential, largely through semirepetition, variations on the same themes.

I think this is how a well-written narrative works—through end-lessly complex rhythmic correspondences. Its coherence is established by inner references and backward-looking or forward-looking semirepetitions. If they are pure repetitions, adding no new vision or emotion, the story loses narrative drive (pure repetition is better suited to ritual than to narrative). If the rhythms become predictable, the coherence of the story is mechanical. But if the repetitions vary, echoing and foreshadowing others with continuous and developing invention, the narration has the forward movement we look for in a story, while maintaining the complexity and integrity proper to a living creature or a work of art: a *rhythmic* integrity, a deep beat to which the whole thing moves.

This piece, growing out of my attempts to study and consider the rhythms of prose and written for my own amusement, happily found a home in Karen Haber's anthology of writing on Tolkien, Meditations on Middle Earth, published in 2001. I have added a brief note about the film version of the first book of the Trilogy, released late in the same year.

Since I had three children, I've read Tolkien's Trilogy aloud three times. It's a wonderful book to read aloud or (consensus by the children) listen to. Even when the sentences are long, their flow is perfectly clear, and follows the breath; punctuation comes just where you need to pause; the cadences are graceful and inevitable. Like Dickens and Virginia Woolf, Tolkien must have heard what he wrote. The narrative prose of such novelists is like poetry in that it wants the living voice to speak it, to find its full beauty and power, its subtle music, its rhythmic vitality.

Woolf's vigorous, highly characteristic sentence rhythms are surely and exclusively prose: I don't think she ever uses a regular beat. Dickens and Tolkien both occasionally drop into metrics. Dickens's prose in moments of high emotional intensity tends to become iambic, and can even be scanned: "It is a far, far better thing that I do/than I have ever done." The hoity-toity may sneer, but this iambic beat is tremendously effective—particularly when the metric regularity goes unnoticed as

such. If Dickens recognised it, it didn't bother him. Like most really great artists, he'd use any trick that worked.

Woolf and Dickens wrote no poetry. Tolkien wrote a great deal, mostly narratives and "lays," often in forms taken from the subjects of his scholarly interest. His verse often shows extraordinary intricacy of meter, alliteration, and rhyme, yet is easy and fluent, sometimes excessively so. His prose narratives are frequently interspersed with poems, and once at least in the Trilogy he quietly slips from prose into verse without signalling it typographically. Tom Bombadil, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, speaks metrically. His name is a drumbeat, and his meter is made up of free, galloping dactyls and trochees, with tremendous forward impetus: Tum tata Tum tata, Tum ta Tum ta. . . . "You let them out again, Old Man Willow! What be you a-thinking of? You should not be waking. Eat earth! Dig deep! Drink water! Go to sleep! Bombadil is talking!" Usually Tom's speech is printed without line breaks, so unwary or careless silent readers may miss the beat until they see it as verse—as song, actually, for when his speech is printed as verse Tom is singing.

As Tom is a cheerfully archetypal fellow, profoundly in touch with, indeed representing the great, natural rhythms of day and night, sea, son, growth and death, it's appropriate that he should talk in rhythm, that his speech should sing itself. And, rather charmingly, it's an infectious beat; it echoes in Goldberry's speech, and Frodo picks it up. "Goldberry!" he cries as they are leaving. "My fair lady, clad all in silver green! We have never said farewell to her, nor seen her since that evening!"

If there are other metric passages in the Trilogy, I've missed them. The speech of the elves and noble folk such as Aragorn has a dignified, often stately gait, but not a regular stress-beat. I suspected King Théoden of iambs, but he only drops into them occasionally, as all measured English speech does. The narrative moves in balanced cadences in passages of epic action, with a majestic sweep reminiscent of epic poetry, but it remains pure prose. Tolkien's ear was too good

and too highly trained in prosody to let him drop into meter unknowingly.

Stress-units—metric feet—are the smallest elements of rhythm in literature, and in prose probably the only quantifiable ones. A while ago I got interested in the ratio of stresses to syllables in prose, and did some counting.

In poetry, by and large, one syllable out of every two or three has a beat on it: Tum ta Tum ta ta Tum Tum ta, and so on. . . . In narrative prose, that ratio goes down to one beat in two to four: ta Tum tatty Tum ta Tum tatatty, and so on. . . . In discursive and technical writing the ratio of unstressed syllables goes higher; textbook prose tends to hobble along clogged by a superfluity of egregiously unnecessary and understressed polysyllables.

Tolkien's prose runs to the normal narrative ratio of one stress every two to four syllables. In passages of intense action and feeling the ratio may get pretty close to 50 percent, like poetry, but still, except for Tom, it is irregular, it can't be scanned.

Stress-beat in prose is fairly easy to identify and count, though I doubt any two readers of a prose passage would mark the stresses in exactly the same places. Other elements of rhythm in narrative are less physical and far more difficult to quantify, having to do not with an audible repetition, but with the pattern of the narrative itself. These elements are longer, larger, and very much more elusive.

Rhythm is repetition. Poetry can repeat anything—a stress-pattern, a phoneme, a rhyme, a word, a line, a stanza. Its formality gives it endless liberty to establish rhythmic structure.

What is repeatable in narrative prose? In oral narrative, which generally maintains many formal elements, rhythmic structure may be established by the repetition of certain key words, and by grouping events into similar, accumulative semirepetitions: think of "The Three Bears" or "The Three Little Pigs." European story uses triads; Native American story is more likely to do things in fours. Each repetition both builds the foundation of the climactic event, and advances the story.

words, phrases, scenes, actions, feelings, and images. Very soon, sooner than I expected, repetitions began to emerge, including a positive/negative binary pattern of alternation or reversal.

These are the chief recurrent elements I listed (page references are to the George Allen & Unwin edition of 1954):

- A vision or vista of a great expanse (three times: in the first paragraph; in the fifth paragraph; and on page 157, when the vision is temporal—back into history)
- The image of a single figure silhouetted against the sky (four times: Goldberry, page 147; the standing stone, page 148; the barrow-wight, page 151; Tom, pages 153 and 154. Tom and Goldberry are bright figures in sunlight, the stone and the wraith are dark looming figures in mist)
- Mention of the compass directions—frequent, and often with a benign or malign connotation
- The question “Where are you?” three times (page 150, when Frodo loses his companions, calls, and is not answered; page 151, when the barrow-wight answers him; and Merry, on page 154, “Where did you get to, Frodo?” answered by Frodo’s “I thought that I was lost” and Tom’s “You’ve found yourself again, out of the deep water”)
- Phrases describing the hill country through which they ride and walk, the scent of turf, the quality of the light, the ups and downs, and the hilltops on which they pause: some benign, some malign
- Associated images of haze, fog, dimness, silence, confusion, unconsciousness, paralysis (foreshadowed on page 148 on the hill of the standing stone, intensified on page 149 as they go on, and climaxing on page 150 on the barrow), which reverse to images of sunlight, clarity, resolution, thought, action (pages 151–153)

What I call reversal is a pulsation back and forth between polarities of feeling, mood, image, emotion, action—examples of the stress/release pulse that I think is fundamental to the structure of the book. I listed some of these binaries or polarities, putting the negative before the positive, though that is not by any means always the order of occurrence. Each such reversal or pulsation occurs more than once in the chapter, some three or four times.

- darkness/daylight
- resting/traveling on
- vagueness/vividness of perception
- confusion of thought/clarity
- sense of menace/of ease
- imprisonment or a trap/freedom
- enclosure/openness
- fear/courage
- paralysis/action
- panic/thoughtfulness
- forgetting/remembrance
- solitude/companionship
- horror/euphoria
- cold/warmth

These reversals are not simple binary flips. The positive causes or grows from the negative state, and the negative from the positive. Each yang contains its yin, each yin contains its yang. (I don’t use the Chinese terms lightly; I believe they fit with Tolkien’s conception of how the world works.)

Directionality is extremely important all though the book. I believe there is no moment when we don’t know, literally, where north is, and what direction the protagonists are going. Two of the wind rose points have a pretty clear and consistent emotional value: east has had connotations, west is benign. North and south vary more, depending on

where we are in time and space; in general I think north is a melancholy direction and south a dangerous one. In a passage early in the chapter, one of the three great “vistas” offers us the whole compass view, point by point: west, the Old Forest and the invisible, beloved Shire; south, the Brandywine River flowing “away out of the knowledge of the hobbits”; north, a “featureless and shadowy distance”; and east, “a guess of blue and a remote white glimmer . . . the high and distant mountains”—where their dangerous road will lead them.

The additional points of the Native American and the airplane compass—up and down—are equally firmly established. Their connotations are complex. Up is usually a bit more fortunate than down, hills tops better than valleys; but the Barrow Downs—hills—are themselves an unlucky place to be. The hilltop where they sleep under the standing stone is a bad place, but there is a *hollow* on it, as if to contain the badness. *Under* the barrow is the worst place of all, but Frodo gets there by climbing *up* a hill. As they wind their way downward, and northward, at the end of the chapter, they are relieved to be leaving the uplands; but they are going back to the danger of the Road.

Similarly, the repeated image of a figure silhouetted against the sky—above seen from below—may be benevolent or menacing.

As the narrative intensifies and concentrates, the number of characters dwindles abruptly to one. Frodo, afoot, goes on ahead of the others, seeing what he thinks is the way out of the Barrow Downs. His experience is increasingly illusory—two standing stones like “the pillars of a headless door,” which he has not seen before (and will not see when he looks for them later)—a quickly gathering dark mist, voices calling his name (from the eastward), a hill which he must climb “up and up,” having (ominously) lost all sense of direction. At the top, “It was wholly dark. ‘Where are you?’ he cried out miserably.” This cry is unanswered.

When he sees the great barrow loom above him, he repeats the question, “angry and afraid”—“‘Where are you?’” And this time he is answered, by a deep, cold voice out of the ground.

The key action of the chapter, inside the barrow, involves Frodo alone in extreme distress, horror, cold, confusion, and paralysis of body and will—pure nightmare. The process of reversal—of escape—is not simple or direct. Frodo goes through several steps or stages in undoing the evil spell.

Lying paralysed in a tomb on cold stone in darkness, he *remembers* the Shire, Bilbo, his life. Memory is the first key. He thinks he has come to a terrible end, but refuses to accept it. He lies “thinking and getting a hold on himself,” and as he does so, light begins to shine.

But what it shows him is horrible: his friends lying as if dead, and “across their three necks lay one long naked sword.”

A song begins—a kind of limping, sick reversal of Tom Bombadil’s jolly caroling—and he sees, unforgettably, “a long arm groping, walking on its fingers towards Sam . . . and towards the hilt of the sword that lay upon him.”

He stops thinking, loses his hold on himself, forgets. In panic terror, he considers putting on the Ring, which has lain so far, all through the chapter, unmentioned in his pocket. The Ring, of course, is the central image of the whole book. Its influence is utterly baneful. Even to think of putting it on is to imagine himself abandoning his friends and justifying his cowardice—“Gandalf would admit that there had been nothing else he could do.”

His courage and his love for his friends are stung awake by this *imagination*: he escapes temptation by immediate, violent (*re*)action: he seizes the sword and strikes at the crawling arm. A shriek, darkness, he falls forward over Merry’s cold body.

With that touch, his memory, stolen from him by the fog-spell, returns fully: he remembers the house under the Hill—Tom’s house. He remembers Tom, who is the earth’s memory. With that he recollects himself.

Now he can remember the spell that Tom gave him in case of need, and he speaks it, calling at first “in a small desperate voice,” and then, with Tom’s name, loud and clear.

And Tom answers: the immediate, right answer. The spell is broken. "Light streamed in, the plain light of day."

Imprisonment, fear, cold, and solitude reverse to freedom, joy, warmth, and companionship . . . with one final, fine touch of horror: "As Frodo left the barrow for the last time he thought he saw a severed hand wriggling still, like a wounded spider, in a heap of fallen earth." (Yang always has a spot of yin in it. And Tolkien seems to have had no warm spot for spiders.)

This episode is the climax of the chapter, the maximum of stress, Frodo's first real test. Everything before it led towards it with increasing tension. It is followed by a couple of pages of relief and release. That the hobbits feel hungry is an excellent sign. After well-being has been restored, Tom gives the hobbits weapons, knives forged, he tells them rather somberly, by the Men of Westemness, foes of the Dark Lord in dark years long ago. Frodo and his companions, though they don't know it yet, are of course themselves the foes of that lord in this age of the world. Tom speaks—riddlingly, and not by name—of Aragorn, who has not yet entered the story. Aragorn is a bridge figure between the past and the present time, and as Tom speaks, the hobbits have a momentary, huge, strange vision of the depths of time, and heroic figures, "one with a star on his brow"—a foreshadowing of their saga, and of the whole immense history of Middle Earth. "Then the vision faded, and they were back in the sunlit world."

Now the story proceeds with decreased immediate plot tension or suspense, but undecreased narrative pace and complexity. We are going back towards the rest of the book, as it were. Towards the end of the chapter the larger plot, the greater suspense, the stress they are all under, begin again to loom in the characters' minds. The hobbits have fallen into a frying pan and managed to get out of it, as they have done before and will do again, but the fire in Mount Doom still burns.

They travel on. They walk, they ride. Step by step. Tom is with them and the journey is uneventful, comfortable enough. As the sun is setting they reach the Road again at last, "running from South-west to

North-east, and on their right it fell quickly down into a wide hollow." The portents are not too good. And Frodo mentions—not by name—the Black Riders, to avoid whom they left the Road in the first place. The chill of fear creeps back. Tom cannot reassure them: "Out east my knowledge fails." His dactyls, even, are subdued.

He rides off into the dusk, singing, and the hobbits go on, just the four of them, conversing a little. Frodo reminds them not to call him by his name. The shadow of menace is inescapable. The chapter that began with a hopeful daybreak vision of brightness ends in a tired evening gloom. These are the final sentences:

Darkness came down quickly, as they plodded slowly downhill and up again, until at last they saw lights twinkling some distance ahead.

Before them rose Bree-hill barring the way, a dark mass against misty stars; and under its western flank nestled a large village. Towards it they now hurried, desiring only to find a fire, and a door between them and the night.

These few lines of straightforward narrative description are full of rapid reversals: darkness/lights twinkling—downhill/up again—the rise of Bree-hill/the village under it (*west* of it)—a dark mass/misty stars—a fire/the night. They are like drumbeats. Reading the lines aloud I can't help thinking of a Beethoven finale, as in the Ninth Symphony: the absolute certainty and definition of crashing chord and silence, repeated, repeated again. Yet the tone is quiet, the language simple, and the emotions evoked are quiet, simple, common: a longing to end the day's journey, to be inside by the fire, out of the night.

After all, the whole Trilogy ends on much the same note. From darkness into the firelight. "Well," Sam says, "I'm back."

There and back again. . . . In this single chapter, certain of the great themes of the book, such as the Ring, the Riders, the Kings of the West, the Dark Lord, are struck once only, or only obliquely. Yet this small

part of the great journey is integrally part of the whole in event and imagery: the barrow-wight, once a servant of the Dark Lord, appears even as Sauron himself will appear at the climax of the tale, looming, “a tall dark figure against the stars.” And Frodo defeats him, through memory, imagination, and unexpected act.

The chapter itself is one “beat” in the immense rhythm of the book. Each of its events and scenes, however vivid, particular, and local, echoes or recollects or foreshadows other events and images, relating all the parts of the book by repeating or suggesting parts of the pattern of the whole.

I think it is a mistake to think of story as simply moving forward. The rhythmic structure of narrative is both journeylike and architectural. Great novels offer us not only a series of events, but a *place*, a landscape of the imagination which we can inhabit and return to. This may be particularly clear in the “secondary universe” of fantasy, where not only the action but the setting is avowedly invented by the author. Relying on the irreducible simplicity of the trochaic beat, stress/unstress, Tolkien constructs an inexhaustibly complex, stable rhythmic pattern in imagined space and time. The tremendous landscape of Middle Earth, the psychological and moral universe of *The Lord of the Rings*, is built up by repetition, semirepetition, suggestion, foreshadowing, recollection, echo, and reversal. Through it the story goes forward at its steady, human gait. There, and back again.



Note (2002): I enjoyed the film of *The Fellowship of the Ring* immensely, and feel an awed admiration for the scriptwriters who got so much of the story and the *feeling* of the story into the brevity of a movie. I was sorry not to see the barrow-wight’s hand crawling towards Frodo, but they were very wise to leave out Tom—wise in all their omissions. Nothing was disappointing but the orcs, standard-issue slimy monsters with bad teeth, bah. I expected that the greatest difference between the book and the film might be a difference of pace;

and it is. The film begins at a proper footpace, an old man joggling along in a pony cart . . . but soon it’s off at a dead run, galloping, rushing, leaping through landscapes, adventures, marvels, and perils, with barely a pause at Rivendell to discuss what to do next. Instead of the steady rhythm of breathing, you can’t even catch your breath.

I don’t know that the filmmakers had much choice about it. Movie audiences have been trained to expect whiz-bang pacing, an eye-dazzling ear-splitting torrent of images and action leaving no time for thought and little for emotional response. And the audience for a fantasy film is assumed to be young, therefore particularly impatient.

Watching once again the wonderful old film *Chushingura*, which takes four hours to tell the (comparatively) simple story of the Forty-seven Ronin, I marveled at the quiet gait, the silences, the seemingly aimless lingering on certain scenes, the restraint that slowly increases tension till it gathers tremendous force and weight. I wish a Tolkien film could move at a pace like that. If it was as beautiful and well written and well acted as this one is, I’d be perfectly happy if it went on for hours and hours. . . . But that’s a daydream.

And I doubt that any drama, no matter how un-whiz-bang, could in fact capture the singular gait that so deeply characterises the book. The vast, idiosyncratic prose rhythms of *The Lord of the Rings*, like those of *War and Peace*, have no counterpart in Western theatrical writing.

So all I wish is that they’d slowed down the movie, every now and then, even just held still for a moment and let there be a rest, a beat of silence. . . .



KNOTS

R. D. LAING

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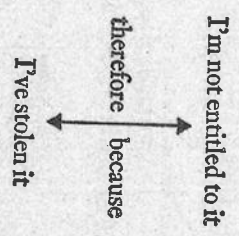
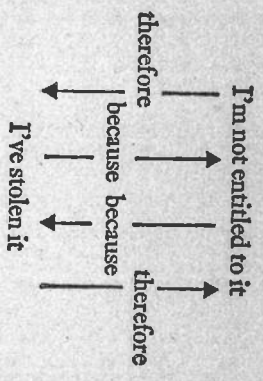
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The patterns delineated here have not yet been
classified by a Linnaeus of human bondage. They
are all, perhaps, strangely, familiar.
In these pages I have confined myself to laying out
only some of those I actually have seen. Words that
come to mind to name them are: knots, tangles,
fankles, *mbasses*, disjunctions, whirligogs, binds.
I could have remained closer to the 'raw'
data in which these patterns appear. I could
have distilled them further towards an abstract
logico-mathematical calculus. I hope they are not so
schematized that one may not refer back to the
very specific experiences from which they derive;
yet that they are sufficiently independent of 'content', for
one to divine the final formal elegance in these
webs of *maya*.

April 1969

R.D.L.



Positive and negative binds.

Negative: Can't win. Everything I do is wrong.
 Positive: Can't lose. Everything I do is right.

I do it, because it is right.
 It is right, because I do it.

She wants him to want her
He wants her to want him

To get him to want her
she pretends she wants him

Jack wants
he pretends he wants her

Jill's want of Jack

so
Jack tells Jill

Jack wants Jill
a perfect contract

Jill wants
Jack's want of Jill

so
Jill tells Jack

Jill wants Jack

Jill and Jack both want to be wanted.

Jill wants Jack because he wants to be wanted
Jack wants Jill because she wants to be wanted.

Jill wants Jack to want

*Jill to want
Jack's want of her want
for his want of her want of

Jack's want that Jill wants

Jack to want
Jill to want
Jack's want of her want
for his want of
her to want Jack to want*

*repeat sine fine

I never got what I wanted.
I always got what I did not want.
What I want
I shall not get.

Therefore, to get it
I must not want it
since I get only what I don't want.

what I want, I can't get
what I get, I don't want

I can't get it
because I want it
I get it
because I don't want it.

I want what I can't get
because
what I can't get *is* what I want

I don't want what I can get
because
what I can get *is* what I don't want

I never get what I want
I never want what I get

I get what I deserve
I deserve what I get.

I have it,
therefore I deserve it

I deserve it
because I have it.

You have not got it
therefore you do not deserve it

You do not deserve it
because you have not got it

You have not got it
because you do not deserve it

You do not deserve it
therefore you have not got it.

I am not entitled to what I have
therefore everything I have is stolen.

If I've got it,
and I am not entitled to it,
I *must* have stolen it,

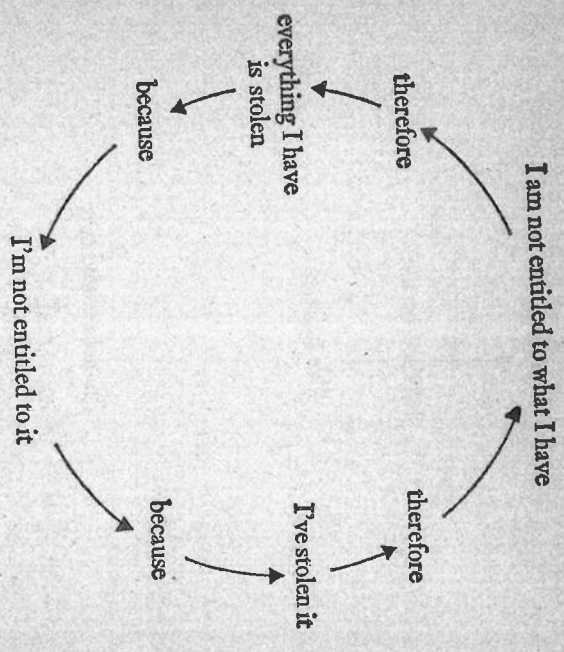
because I am not entitled to it.

I am not entitled to it
because I have stolen it.

I have stolen it
therefore I am not entitled to it.

I am not entitled to it
therefore I must have stolen it.

Or, it has been given to me as a special favour
by someone who is entitled to it
so I am expected to be grateful for all I have
because what I have
has been *given*, not stolen.



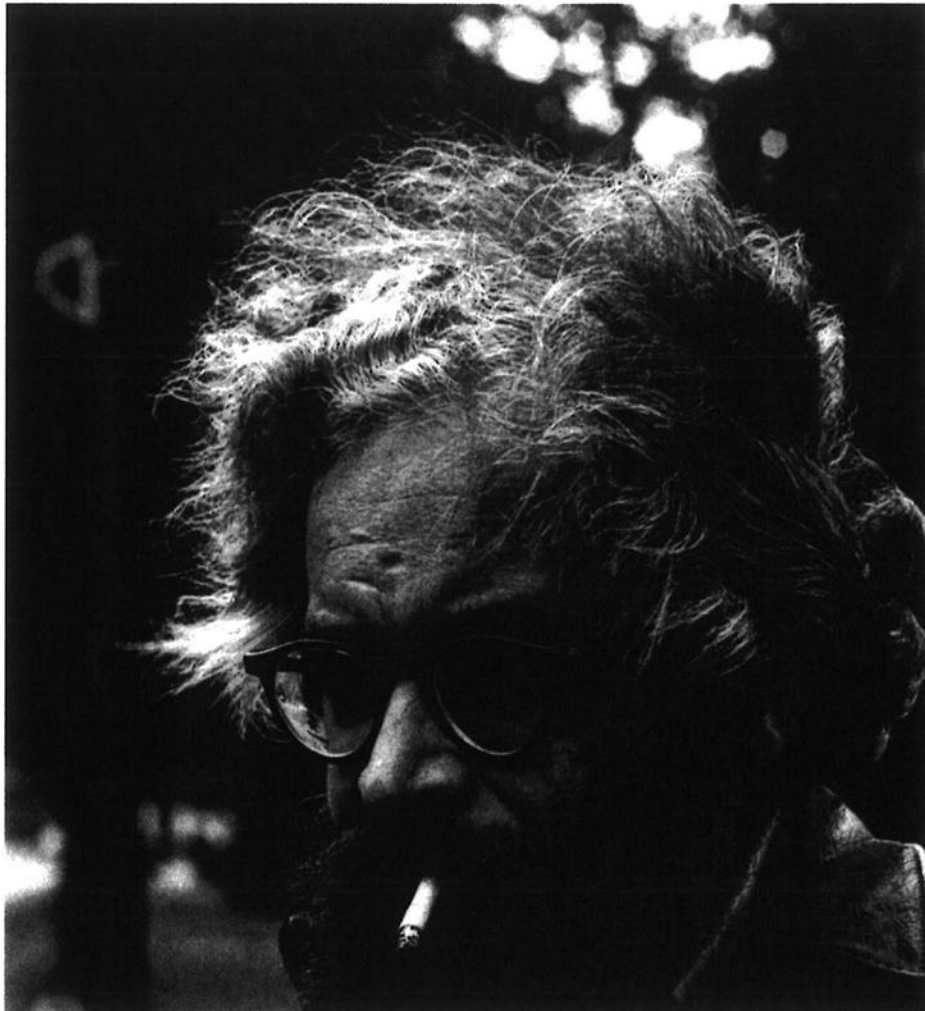
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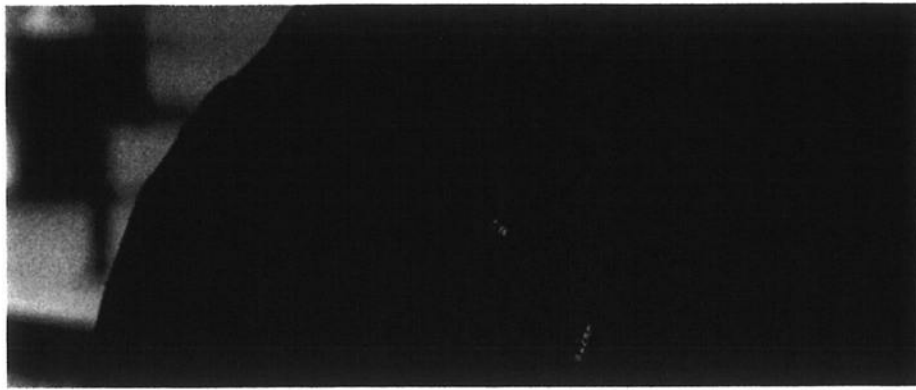
HARRY SMITH'S MUSICAL CATALOGUE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

"The Anthology of American Folk Music" is probably the most significant example of how a particular collector's preferences can shape a canon.

By Amanda Petrusich

September 28, 2020





Harry Smith's "Anthology" has long defined our heritage. Now come the B-sides. Photograph by David Gahr / Getty

In 1951, the record collector Harry Smith met with Moe Asch, a co-founder of Folkways Records, to see if Asch would buy all or part of his collection. Smith, who was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1913, and died in 1991, was an eccentric polymath. He painted, made experimental films, practiced occult alchemy (he was ordained in the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, a spiritual group affiliated with the magician and self-appointed prophet Aleister Crowley), and believed that the careful accumulation and ordering of things could bring about new knowledge. "All my projects are only attempts to build up a series of objects that allow some sort of generalizations to be made," he said, in 1968. Smith collected all sorts of stuff: paper airplanes, Ukrainian Easter eggs, figures he made by looping or weaving lengths of string, anything shaped like a hamburger, and thousands, if not tens of thousands, of 78-r.p.m. records, ten-inch platters introduced around the beginning of the twentieth century that contain about three minutes of music on each side. The first 78 Smith bought was by the Mississippi-born blues guitarist Tommy McClennan. "It sounded strange—and I looked for others," he said.

Like many serious collectors of arcane but precious objects, Smith could be irascible, mean, and single-minded to the point of

psychopathy. There are stories of his thieving, particularly when he believed that an item would be better off in his care. He never married, drank to unconsciousness, went absolutely nuts if anyone talked while he was playing a record, and, according to his friend Allen Ginsberg, kept “several years’ deposits of his semen” in the back of his freezer for “alchemical purposes.”

In addition to buying records from Smith, Asch tasked him with compiling “The Anthology of American Folk Music,” a six-LP compendium of vernacular songs recorded in the United States between 1926 and 1934. In an interview with the magazine *Sing Out!*, from 1972, Asch said that Smith “understood the content of the records. He knew their relationship to folk music, their relationship to English Literature, and their relationship to the world.” Smith’s “Anthology” was derived from his personal collection, and made up of eighty-four tracks, broken into three groups: social music, ballads, and songs. Within those categories, Smith relished the juxtaposition of regional styles. A single LP might contain an Acadian one-step, a Delta blues, a lonesome Appalachian ballad, and a Sacred Harp hymn. Each of the three sleeves was printed in a different color and featured a drawing of a celestial monochord—a single-stringed dulcimer, tuned by the hand of God—taken from “De Musica Mundana,” a book by the Elizabethan alchemist Robert Fludd, from 1618.

“The Anthology of American Folk Music” is probably the most significant example of how a particular collector’s preferences can guide (if not dictate) a historical canon. Obscure records tend to survive only when there are collectors willing to seek out and preserve them. Most early recording masters were either destroyed or melted down for reuse, so the pressed and sold records became the only material evidence of these performances. If a record is lost

to time or circumstance—78s are made from a shellac compound that is brittle and shatters easily—the performance is effectively erased.

It makes many people anxious that record collectors have come to be the default custodians of this music. (The question of who owns the music, and how the descendants of the performers should be compensated if a reissue generates revenue, is also complicated. Many of these songs are variations on traditional compositions with no single author, and many rural musicians signed their rights over to the recording company or to the record executive who recruited them.) Yet Smith's singular vision for the "Anthology"—his particular and irregular cosmology—is part of what makes it such a fascinating artifact.

The set ultimately became one of the central texts of the folk revival, guiding artists including Woody Guthrie, Joan Baez, and Bob Dylan. "I'd match the 'Anthology' up against any other single compendium of important information ever assembled," the guitarist John Fahey once wrote. Despite its title, the "Anthology" is not comprehensive. It did not contain any music from Native Americans or recent European immigrants, and there are no Spanish-language songs, although they were popular along the southern border. Some folklorists and musicologists found the "Anthology" inherently faulty, because Smith used commercial recordings, and it was believed that only field recordings could represent authentic folk music. Yet the songs on the "Anthology" still work as a dizzying catalogue of human experience. Love, lust, rage, determination, malice, envy, heartache, exhaustion, joy—it's hard to think of a feeling that is not represented here. Sixty-eight years on, the "Anthology" remains powerful evidence of the depth and fury of early American folk songs.

Serious fans of the set tend to discuss it in ecstatic terms. I've often cited it as foundational in the development of my own taste—a work that unlocks other works. Once, in a strange fury of obsession, I spent several months on the lower level of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, trying to track down Smith's own 78s, some of which he had sold to the library before he died. Smith believed that objects have power; I thought there might be something to learn from holding those records in my hands. I came up short, in the end—they may have been pilfered from the archives, or simply been mixed in with the general collection.

During the 1991 Grammys telecast, the Recording Academy gave Smith a Chairman's Merit Award, for his "ongoing insight into the relationship between artistry and society, and his deep commitment to presenting folk music as a vehicle for social change." At the time, Smith was working as the "shaman-in-residence" at Naropa University, in Colorado. In a video of his short acceptance speech, his scraggly gray hair is gathered into a ponytail. He seems vaguely amused but happy. "My dreams came true," Smith says. "I saw America changed through music."

This fall, the "Anthology" is being revisited twice. Dust-to-Digital, an Atlanta-based label that specializes in the meticulous resuscitation and repackaging of historical recordings, is releasing "The Harry Smith B-Sides," a boxed set containing the flip sides of every 78 Smith used for the "Anthology." In addition, the Harry Smith Archives is rereleasing two films, both from 2006: "The Old, Weird America," a documentary about the legacy of Smith's work, and "The Harry Smith Project Live," which includes highlights from five tribute concerts, featuring artists such as Beck, Sonic Youth, Elvis Costello, Nick Cave, and Kate and Anna

McGarrigle, all playing songs from the “Anthology.”

In a filmed introduction to “The Harry Smith Project Live,” the producer and curator Hal Willner, who died earlier this year of complications from COVID-19, describes the five shows as “happenings,” an allusion to Fluxus and other avant-garde art movements that emphasized process above all else. Willner is sitting in a recording studio, holding a battered banjo and a marionette. “I’m sure you’ll love some of it, I’m sure you’ll hate some of it,” he says. “But you’ll be a different person once this is over.” One of my favorite appearances is by Lou Reed, who covers “See That My Grave Is Kept Clean,” a blues song recorded by Blind Lemon Jefferson in 1928. Many country-blues songs already have a mesmeric, almost ghostly quality; Reed adds dissonance and drone, turning the song into a meandering dirge. The performance lasts for more than seven minutes, growing deeper and more hypnotic as it goes on. By the time Reed arrives at Jefferson’s fifth verse—“Have you ever heard a coffin sound?”—I start to feel as if my own soul has departed my body. The release also contains a minute or so of footage of Smith, speaking on an enormous portable phone and declaring, in a nasal lilt, a kind of mission statement: “Perfection may be perfect, but to hell with it.”

“The Harry Smith B-Sides,” which was produced by Eli Smith, Lance Ledbetter, April Ledbetter, and John Cohen, was first conceived of by the collector Robert Noble, who was known for his ability to revive cracked 78s with, as Lance Ledbetter writes in the set’s introduction, “nothing more than a tube of model airplane glue and a toothpick.” In 2004, Noble self-released, on CD-R, two compilations of some of the B-sides from the “Anthology,” titled “Anthology of American Folk Music, Other Sides Vol. 1 and 2,”

and sold them via mail order. Ledbetter was intrigued. “If the featured recordings are so remarkable, there’s an excellent chance that the song on the other side by the same artist probably isn’t half bad,” he writes.

Nobley died in 2005; in 2013, Eli Smith and Cohen got in touch with Ledbetter, the founder of Dust-to-Digital, about issuing a more complete version of the project. It took them several years to secure permissions from copyright holders, and even now the music can exist only on compact disk and vinyl—the licenses do not allow for streaming or downloads. In June, the producers chose to omit three tracks, because they use racist language. The set was already finished, and the decision required the remanufacturing of three of the four disks. “In our seventeen-year history, we have never published tracks with racist lyrics,” April Ledbetter, a co-director of Dust-to-Digital, told me. “Our intent to adhere to the concept for the project is what led to the recordings being included in the first place. I am thankful that we had the time to realize what a mistake that would have been, and the ability to do something about it.”

In a way, “The Harry Smith B-Sides” is a thought experiment. The “Anthology” is potent mostly because of Smith’s vision—his taste, his aesthetic, his fussy sequencing—which makes a mirror-image compilation of the sides he rejected a novelty of sorts. But I have found it to be just as moving, haunting, and profound as the original. In some cases, the producers were able to acquire cleaner source copies, resulting in especially rich audio. Smith chose Henry Thomas’s “Old Country Stomp” for the “Anthology,” but its flip side, “Bull Doze Blues,” is uncommonly beautiful—lonesome and giddy at the same time. Lance Ledbetter described it to me as “one of the very finest recordings ever made.” Most 78s exist in varying stages of degradation, but when a clean copy is properly engineered

and transferred there's something uncanny about how intimate it feels. I've never heard Thomas—who recorded twenty-four songs between 1927 and 1929, and who probably died in 1930—sound quite so close.

Some selections have changed the way I think about the original side. Bascom Lamar Lunsford's rendition of the folk song "I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground" is one of the most confounding and fascinating tracks on the "Anthology." Its narrator expresses a deep desire to be turned into a mole, or maybe a lizard. "He wants to be delivered from his life and to be changed into a creature insignificant and despised," the critic Greil Marcus wrote, in "Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century." "He wants to see nothing and to be seen by no one. He wants to destroy the world and to survive it." The record's flip side, "Mountain Dew," is an earnest appreciation of bootleg liquor. Lunsford—who was born in Mars Hill, North Carolina, in 1882, and performed in formal dress to combat stereotypes about Appalachia—also worked as a lawyer, and during Prohibition he frequently defended moonshiners. "They call it that old mountain dew, and those who refuse it are few," Lunsford sings, strumming a banjo. There's a narrative consonance between the two sides of the record—a hungering for oblivion. Smith loved these simple points of communion. He believed in interconnectedness—that every piece of art contains every piece of art.

Over the years, critics have famously described Smith's collection as "old" and "weird," which is not exactly inaccurate. Yet many of the performers included on the "Anthology" (Mississippi John Hurt, Dock Boggs, the Carter Family) were still alive and working when it was released, and, although some of the tracks may initially be inscrutable to modern ears (the lyrics can be idiomatic, the

recording technology imprecise), they open up over time. There's a lot of bleating, croaking, hollering, screeching, and moaning, which might goad a new listener into reëxamining her notions of what constitutes professional singing. As Eli Smith writes, these performers "by necessity had a very different relationship to nature, family, work, play, food, consumerism, money, et cetera. . . . It does not feel alienated." He goes on to describe the set as "an esoteric beacon, broadcasting outside of our dysfunctional culture system."

The liner notes for the "Anthology," written by Harry Smith, included punchy, all-caps summaries of each track's narrative arc, presented as newspaper headlines. The notes can be as indecipherable and compelling as the songs themselves. For "The Harry Smith B-Sides," the producers enlisted a crew of musicians and writers (including me) to compose similar notes. The set also includes an essay by Cohen, a folklorist, photographer, filmmaker, and member of the New Lost City Ramblers, who died of cancer in September, 2019. Cohen first met Harry Smith in 1962, at New York's Folklore Center. In a conversation at the Chelsea Hotel, in 1968, Smith told Cohen, "I intuitively decided I wanted to collect records. After that had been determined, what was then decided to be good or bad was based on a comparison of that record to other records." How many 78s did Smith listen to before he chose the eighty-four songs that make up the "Anthology"? Based on the enduring resonance of the collection—the way these songs, played in this order, still seem able to rearrange a person's entire world view—one gets the sense that it was probably a lot.

A few years before Moe Asch's death, he asked the Smithsonian Institution if it might be interested in acquiring the Folkways catalogue. Asch's best and most audacious requirement was that all

of the label's more than two thousand releases—which range from seminal albums by Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Leadbelly to a recording of insects chewing, walking, and flying—remain in print indefinitely. The Smithsonian agreed, and, in 1987, the Folkways archive became part of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, in Washington, D.C.

The “Anthology” was first released on compact disk in 1997. Prior to that, a person could mail a check to the Folkways office and request that an archivist transfer it to CD or cassette. Or one could attempt to hunt down the original LPs in used-record shops or at flea markets. The set's rarity somehow felt congruous with its self-styled mythology. It was talismanic; you had to put in some work before you got to hear it. When I finally got my hands on a copy, in the late nineties, I found that listening to it was a metaphysical experience, insofar as it seemed to bend the rules of space and time. Discovering new music often feels like that—it's as if you have come upon a secret room in a house that you have occupied for years.

Because the “Anthology” was literally encased in an occult symbol—the single string of the celestial monochord is meant to connect Heaven and earth—it seemed possible that others might feel the otherworldly trance I often fell into while listening to the collection. Maybe Smith was giving us permission to be rhapsodic about the experience—to finally submit to what Ginsberg once called “burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo.” To accept music as magic. ♦

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Any Price: The
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Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts

The festival was over, the boys were all plannin' for a fall
The cabaret was quiet except for the drillin' in the wall
The curfew had been lifted and the gamblin' wheel shut down
Anyone who had any sense had already left town
He was standin' in the doorway lookin' like the Jack of Hearts

He moved across the mirrored room, "Set it up for everyone, " he said
Then everyone commenced to do what they were doin' before he turned their heads
Then he walked up to a stranger and he asked him with a grin
"Could you kindly tell me, friend, what time the show begins?"
Then he moved into the corner, face down like the Jack of Hearts

Backstage the girls were playin' five-card stud by the stairs
Lily had two queens, she was hopin' for a third to match her pair
Outside the streets were fillin' up, the window was open wide
A gentle breeze was blowin', you could feel it from inside
Lily called another bet and drew up the Jack of Hearts

Big Jim was no one's fool, he owned the town's only diamond mine
He made his usual entrance lookin' so dandy and so fine
With his bodyguards and silver cane and every hair in place
He took whatever he wanted to and he laid it all to waste
But his bodyguards and silver cane were no match for the Jack of Hearts

Rosemary combed her hair and took a carriage into town
She slipped in through the side door lookin' like a queen without a crown
She fluttered her false eyelashes and whispered in his ear
"Sorry, darlin', that I'm late, " but he didn't seem to hear
He was starin' into space over at the Jack of Hearts

"I know I've seen that face somewhere, " Big Jim was thinkin' to himself
"Maybe down in Mexico or a picture up on somebody's shelf."
But then the crowd began to stamp their feet and the house lights did dim
And in the darkness of the room there was only Jim and him
Starin' at the butterfly who just drew the Jack of Hearts

Lily was a princess, she was fair-skinned and precious as a child
She did whatever she had to do, she had that certain flash every time she smiled
She had come away from a broken home, had lots of strange affairs
With men in every walk of life which took her everywhere
But she'd never met anyone quite like the Jack of Hearts

The hangin' judge came in unnoticed and was being wined and dined
The drillin' in the wall kept up but no one seemed to pay it any mind
It was known all around that Lily had Jim's ring
And nothing would ever come between Lily and the king
No, nothin' ever would except maybe the Jack of Hearts

Rosemary started drinkin' hard and seein' her reflection in the knife
She was tired of the attention, tired of playin' the role of Big Jim's wife
She had done a lot of bad things, even once tried suicide
Was lookin' to do just one good deed before she died
She was gazin' to the future, riding on the Jack of Hearts

Lily took her dress off and buried it away
"Has your luck run out?" she laughed at him, "Well, I guess you must
Have known it would someday
Be careful not to touch the wall, there's a brand-new coat of paint
I'm glad to see you're still alive, you're lookin' like a saint."
Down the hallway footsteps were comin' for the Jack of Hearts

The backstage manager was pacing all around by his chair
"There's something funny going on, " he said, "I can just feel it in the air."
He went to get the hangin' judge, but the hangin' judge was drunk
As the leading actor hurried by in the costume of a monk
There was no actor anywhere better than the Jack of Hearts

No one knew the circumstance but they say that it happened pretty quick
The door to the dressing room burst open and a Colt revolver clicked
And Big Jim was standin' there, ya couldn't say surprised
Rosemary right beside him, steady in her eyes
She was with Big Jim but she was leanin' to the Jack of Hearts

Two doors down the boys finally made it through the wall
And cleaned out the bank safe, it's said they got off with quite a haul
In the darkness by the riverbed they waited on the ground
For one more member who had business back in town
But they couldn't go no further without the Jack of Hearts

The next day was hangin' day, the sky was overcast and black
Big Jim lay covered up, killed by a penknife in the back
And Rosemary on the gallows, she didn't even blink
The hangin' judge was sober, he hadn't had a drink
The only person on the scene missin' was the Jack of Hearts

The cabaret was empty now, a sign said, "Closed for repair, "
Lily had already taken all of the dye out of her hair
She was thinkin' 'bout her father, who she very rarely saw
Thinkin' 'bout Rosemary and thinkin' about the law
But, most of all she was thinkin' 'bout the Jack of Hearts

Bob Dylan

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ROBERT ALTMAN

McCabe & Mrs. Miller

This unorthodox dream western by Robert

Altman may be the most radically beautiful film to come out of the New American Cinema. It stars Warren Beatty and Julie Christie as two newcomers to the raw Pacific Northwest mining town of Presbyterian Church, who join forces to provide the miners with a superior kind of warehouse experience. The appearance of representatives for a powerful mining company with interests of its own, however, threatens to be the undoing of their plans. With its fascinating, flawed characters, evocative cinematography by the great Vilmos Zsigmond, innovative overlapping dialogue, and haunting use of Leonard Cohen songs, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* brilliantly deglamorized and revitalized the most American of genres.



McCabe & Mrs. Miller

By Chelsea Wessels

In a 1971 interview, Robert Altman describes the story of “McCabe & Mrs. Miller” as “the most ordinary common western that’s ever been told. It’s every event, every character, every western you’ve ever seen.”¹ And yet, the resulting film is no ordinary western: from its Pacific Northwest setting to characters like “Pudgy” McCabe (played by Warren Beatty), the gunfighter and gambler turned businessman who isn’t particularly skilled at any of his occupations. In “McCabe & Mrs. Miller,” Altman’s impressionistic style revises western events and characters in such a way that the film reflects on history, industry, and genre from an entirely new perspective.



Mrs. Miller (Julie Christie) and saloon owner McCabe (Warren Beatty) swap ideas for striking it rich. Courtesy Library of Congress Collection.

The opening of the film sets the tone for this revision: Leonard Cohen sings mournfully as the camera tracks across a wooded landscape to a lone rider, hunched against the misty rain. As the unidentified rider arrives at the settlement of Presbyterian Church (not much more than a few shacks and an unfinished church), the trees practically suffocate the frame and close off the landscape. At the sight of the buildings, the rider awkwardly shrugs off his heavy fur coat and retrieves a hat from his saddlebag to complete a dapper suit, muttering angrily under his breath. This small performance reveals the revision of a familiar story: a lone rider arrives at the edge of civilization with transformative goals. But here, the rider is hardly a confident man, as McCabe’s anxiety is palpable as the miners begin to emerge and take notice of him. He wants the men to believe he is “Pudgy” McCabe, the legendary gunfighter turned gambler – “the man who shot Bill Roundtree” – but the early moments of the film set up the insecurities that will ultimately cause his demise.

McCabe’s inability to manage the women he brings in to launch his saloon leads to the arrival of an unlikely partner: Constance Miller. Mrs. Miller immediately emasculates McCabe as she out-eats and out-thinks him over their breakfast meeting and subsequently virtually takes over the business. Together, McCabe and Mrs. Miller pursue their dreams of “striking it rich” in Presbyterian Church under the banner of Manifest Destiny, yet each is thwarted by their circumstances. McCabe is unable to distinguish bluster from threat

when a mining company offers to buy him out and Mrs. Miller is ultimately a captive to his choices, unable (and perhaps unwilling) to save McCabe from his own insecurities and herself from her opium addiction. The nuances of these characters, and the performances by Beatty and Julie Christie, build greater complexity beyond what Altman calls “every character” in the western.

The landscape and characters converge in the role of the film’s production, a key element in considering “McCabe & Mrs. Miller.” Moving all the crew and actors to the remote setting in British Columbia, Altman had the set built from scratch according to specific historical parameters. Cast and crew lived in the buildings, which gradually emerged as the town of Presbyterian Church that is built up throughout the film. As Janet Walker and Richard Slotkin have argued, “the western is history,” but its representations onscreen often sketch a particular history that focuses on broad themes, rather than lived experience.² In bringing the cast and crew to the west (and, specifically, the Pacific Northwest), Altman focuses on history lived out in the minute details of daily existence in the Pacific Northwest in 1901.

History also crucially plays out in considering how these lived historical experiences echo the cultural moment of production in 1971. The film is often referred to as an “anti-western” for the way it clearly echoes the countercultural movements of its produc-

tion era. Robert T. Self notes that the film explores "the role of myth in the sustenance of American identity, the economic exploitations of corporate capitalism, the power of desire within the sublime of nature and the seduction of drugs, the potential of artistic discourse within the mass productions of Hollywood."³ These concerns, while specifically echoing the production era American consciousness, play out in the space of the Pacific Northwest in 1901 not as a focal point for the narrative, but in the small moments that make up the film: Mrs. Miller smoking opium and reading a book, McCabe fumbling with his hat, the holes in Cowboy's socks, the lawyer who dreams of being senator telling McCabe, "until people stop dyin' for freedom, they ain't going to be free." The western genre here is not a vehicle for classical myth making, but rather to explore a new western history embedded with the contemporaneous movements, such as civil rights and feminism.

Considering "McCabe & Mrs. Miller" amongst both other westerns and the films of Robert Altman illuminates its significance both in terms of genre revision and also as part of a group of films that helped define American art cinema in the 1960s. Altman and his contemporaries such as John Cassavetes and Stanley Kubrick, signaled a movement in American cinema that prioritized the director as auteur, drawing on audiences growing familiarity with European art cinema. The aesthetics of the film were unique as well, as cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond developed the use of "flashing" responsible for the unique color saturation that gives the film an almost nostalgic golden hue in many scenes. The traits associated with other Altman films are also present: the overlapping sounds that often render dialogue incoherent, the constant camera movement, and a reflexivity that resists dominant Hollywood practices.

The sober ending, with McCabe breathing his last in the snow after a failed gunfight and Mrs. Miller falling into an opium haze, reflects Altman's oft-repeated remark that "Death is the only end I know." With the western genre repeatedly declared "dead" after the 1950's, in "McCabe & Mrs. Miller," Altman offers both a critical eulogy to classical myths and a rethinking of the genre in terms of contemporary social issues.

¹ Ray Loynd, Los Angeles Times, March 1971. Janet Walker, "Introduction: Westerns Through History," in "Westerns: Films Through History," ed. Walker (New York: Routledge, 2001).

² Richard Slotkin, "Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America" (New York: Atheneum, 1992).

³ Robert T. Self, "Robert Altman's McCabe & Mrs. Miller: Reframing the American West" (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 13.

The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Library of Congress.

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Oral-Formulaic Method

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The oral-formulaic method is a formula of repetition used by oral epic singers to allow for more fluent composition and memorization.

From A Poet's Glossary

The following definition of the term oral-formulaic method is reprinted from A Poet's Glossary by Edward Hirsch.

Milman Parry (1902–1935) and his student Albert Lord (1912–1991) discovered and studied what they called the oral-formulaic method of oral epic singers in the Balkans. Their method has been variously referred to as “oral-traditional theory,” “the theory of Oral-Formulaic Composition,” and the “Parry-Lord theory.” Parry used his study of Balkan singers to address what was then called the “Homeric Question,” which circulated around the questions of “Who was Homer?” and “What are the Homeric poems?” Parry’s most critical insight was his recognition of the “formula,” which he initially defined as “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given idea.”

The formula revised the standard ideas of “stock epithets,” “epic clichés,” and “stereotyped phrases.” Such often repeated Homeric phrases as “*eos rhododaktylos*” (“rosy-fingered dawn”) and “*oinops pontos*” (“wine-dark sea”) were mnemonic devices that fitted a certain metrical pattern and aided the epic singer, or *aoidos*, in his extemporaneous composition. Such phrases could be substituted and adapted, serving as placeholders, as a response to the needs of both grammar and narrative. These formulas, which could also be extended,

were not particular to individual artists, but a shared traditional inheritance of many singers. Parry's work revolutionized the study of the Homeric poems by treating them as essentially oral texts. For example, Parry and Lord observed the same use of formulas in Serbian oral poetry that they found in the Homeric poems.

Parry and Lord discovered that the epic form was well-suited to the singer's need for fluency and flexibility, for composition as well as memorization. The singers composed poems orally by calling upon a rich storehouse of ready-made building blocks (traditional patterns), which moved well beyond phrasing. Singers could call upon this stock of lines and formulas for describing places, expressing different characters, and narrating action — and thus perform epics of 10,000 lines or more with uninterrupted fluency. Parry and Lord provided us with a generative model of epic performance. F. P. Magoun explains that oral poetry is composed “rapidly in the presence of a live audience by means of ready-made phrases filling just measures of isochronous verse capable of expressing every idea that the singer may wish to express in various metrical situations.” The oral-formulaic method has subsequently been applied to a wide variety of texts and genres, such as Babylonian, Hittite, and Anglo-Saxon epic poetry; medieval romances; Russian byliny; the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry; Toda ritual songs; Coorg dance songs; English and Spanish ballads; and even African American revivalist sermons. Oral formulas also clearly influenced written poetry. It is now possible, for example, to view Old English poems as transitional texts, written poems that embody oral formulas.

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