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### ► To cite this version:

John Pier. After this, therefore because of this. John Pier and José Angel Garcia Landa. Theorizing Narrativity, Walter de Gruyter, pp.109-140, 2008, Narratologia, 978-3-11-020244-1. hal-03939877

**HAL Id: hal-03939877**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03939877>**

Submitted on 3 Feb 2023

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Pier, John. "After this, therefore because of this". In *Theorizing Narrativity*, John Pier and José Ángel García Landa (ed.) (Narratologia 12). Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, pp. 109-140.

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### After this, therefore because of this

Perhaps no concept in the study of narrative casts its web so wide as narrativity, and perhaps no other defies definition more stubbornly. A narrative of any kind—verbal, non-verbal, fictional, non-fictional, etc.—as well as other cultural artifacts containing elements of narrative—lyric poetry, painting and sculpture, but also conversation, computer games, etc.—would hardly be thinkable in the absence of narrativity or, given the fairly recent coinage of the term, some principle or function fulfilling this role. But what constitutes narrativity? Can narrativity be defined by its formal features? Is it one narrative category among others? Are there types of narrativity?, degrees of narrativity? Do narratives possess narrativity or do they exhibit narrativity? Do they produce narrativity or are they produced by narrativity? Does narrativity in, say, a novel differ from narrativity in a short story or a film? Can narrativity be perceived in different ways?

While consensus on such questions is unlikely ever to be achieved, the fact that narrativity and its impact on narrative theory have grown since the inception of the notion in the 1960s and 1970s, understood at the time as an "immanent" property of narrative by some and as a marginal consideration by others, into something compellingly more multifaceted reflects the historical mutations of narratology as researchers have expanded the object of their analyses from written narratives to include a broader spectrum of cultural artifacts and as narratology itself has developed into a bewildering array of theories and methodologies.<sup>1</sup> Further evidence of the evolution of narratological paradigms can be found in the rise of "trans-generic" narratology for the analysis of poetry<sup>2</sup> and drama.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the relations between narrative, music and the visual arts have given rise to an "intermedial" narratology,<sup>4</sup> while "transmedial" narratology focuses on

<sup>1</sup> For a helpful inventory of present-day "narratologies," see Nünning (2003).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Hühn/Kiefer (2005); Schönerth/Hühn/Stein (2007).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the contributions of Nünning/Sommer and Fludernik to the present volume.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Wolf (1999), (2003), (2004); Nünning/Nünning (2002).

how the properties of the various semiotic media (writing, image, sound, electronic media) influence the form and affect the experience of narrative.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the expansion of narratology to include non-epic forms within its purview would never have come about without the corresponding emergence of reflection on the nature of narrativity. As Marie-Laure Ryan has explained:

[...] if we accept the possibility of narrativity in drama, movies, and painting, the presence of a narrator is no longer a necessary condition, and if lyric poetry, philosophy, legal cases, and simply life are able to display the property of narrativity, we may have to reconsider the dependency of this property on the explicit presence of a plot. From a property we could take for granted, the narrativity of the text becomes a problematic issue.<sup>6</sup>

In response to this situation, Ryan outlines a theory of twelve "modes of narrativity" which regards story not as a coherent and knowable point of departure to be described at the discourse level but proceeds, rather, "from the text to the story, taking the story as a problematic meaning to be recovered from the text."<sup>7</sup> Three principles form the "basic conditions of narrativity":

1. A narrative text must create a world and populate it with characters and objects. Logically speaking, this condition means that the narrative text is based on statements asserting the existence of individuals and on statements ascribing properties to these individuals.
2. The narrative world must undergo changes of state that are caused by physical events: either accidents or deliberate human action. These changes create a temporal dimension and place the narrative world in the flux of history.
3. The text must allow the reconstruction of an interpretive network of goals, plans, causal relations, and psychological motivations around the narrated events. The implicit network gives coherence and intelligibility to the physical events and turns them into a plot.<sup>8</sup>

As principles underlying the conditions of narrativity, these criteria are incontrovertible, for it could hardly be the case that a story is told which does not populate a world with characters and objects, in which no change takes place and which is expressed in a medium that does not enable read-

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<sup>5</sup> E.g. Ryan (2004), (2005a).

<sup>6</sup> Ryan (1992: 368–69).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: 369.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*: 371.

ers<sup>9</sup> to determine the coherence and intelligibility of events formative of plots. Some of the modes are plot-typological while others involve “the mental operations necessary to retrieve and/or properly evaluate the narrative structure,”<sup>10</sup> and among the modes some are binary, others relative. Following a somewhat different set of criteria and emphasizing degrees rather than modes of narrativity, Gerald Prince distinguishes narratives from non-narratives as an aspect of narrativity that he calls “narrative-hood” (what, extensionally speaking, defines narratives as entities) as opposed to “narrativeness” (the ways in which the traits of a narrative qualify it intensionally), and he further differentiates these textual features from contextual factors contributing to the “narratability” of a story.<sup>11</sup> Another notion, closely related to narrativity, is that of “eventfulness” according to which, within a narrative world, events are both “real” and “resultative” (necessary conditions), but with respect to context-sensitive factors are also more or less “eventful” to the extent that changes of state are relevant, unpredictable, persistent, irreversible and non-iterative.<sup>12</sup>

The present paper seeks to identify the ways in which narrativity is both born out of and a condition of stories. In order to achieve this aim, it grants particular interest to the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy—“the mainspring of narrative activity,” as Roland Barthes put it in a suggestive formula.<sup>13</sup> The attractiveness of Barthes’ metaphor lies in the idea that narrativity is not so much a category to be included among the properties of narrative as it is a source of the dynamic action of narrative, the emphasis being on the “how” of narrative rather than on the “what.” However, Barthes fails to exploit the full potential of his insight, and for this reason the present contribution will seek to provide a more satisfactory theoretical framework for the fallacy as a key to the principle of narrativity.

<sup>9</sup> Or listeners, spectators and viewers. Except where “reader(s)” is used specifically with regard to written texts, this term will be understood, for the sake of economy, as the receiver of narratives in any semiotic medium.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.: 382.

<sup>11</sup> See Prince’s article in this volume and Prince (2005).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Schmid (2003) as well as Peter Hühn’s contribution and Hühn (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> Barthes (1966: 10). The English translation of Barthes’ article gives “the mainspring of narrative” for “le ressort de l’activité narrative” (1977: 95)—revelatory of a confusion in reflection about narrativity from the outset between “categorical” and “functional” approaches. For Prince (2003 [1987]: 78), Barthes identifies the fallacy in question as “the mainspring of narrativity.”

# 1. From an Atemporal Toward a *post hoc/propter hoc* Narrative Logic

Approaches to narrativity such as those referred to above have by no means been adopted by everyone who has studied the question. In one of the earliest explicit formulations of the concept, dating from 1969, A. J. Greimas spoke of "an *immanent level*, constituting a sort of common structural core where narrativity is located and organized prior to its manifestation," i.e. prior to (and distinct from) the "*apparent level* of narration, [...] whatever the language chosen for manifestation."<sup>14</sup> An even broader claim is made when it is stated that narrativity is "the very principle of all narrative [...] and non-narrative discourse" and that "generalized narrativity [is] the organizing principle of all discourse."<sup>15</sup> The dubious claim of the inherent narrativity of all discourse (both narrative and non-narrative) aside, it has been suggested, somewhat erroneously, that Greimas's identification of immanent story structure with narrativity follows in the footsteps of Propp.<sup>16</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that in his morphological study of the Russian folktale, Propp sought to classify the thirty-one "functions" of the *dramatis personæ* forming "the basic components of the tale": "Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, he deliberately set aside the "style of the tale" and laid no claim as to the status of these functions with regard to something comparable to Greimas's "apparent level" or to the "signifying structures" focused on by various linguistic and semiotic theories. A milestone in the modern study of narrative and one of enduring influence, Propp's contribution is nonetheless marred by reductionism insofar as, unlike anthropologists and socio-linguists, he worked not in the field where these oral tales were actually told and listened to, but with written transcriptions. By bracketing these factors out, he necessarily failed to take account of the "performance" of oral storytelling and of the possible impact on the un-

<sup>14</sup> Greimas (1970 [1969]: 158). Cf. Hénault (1993 [1979]: 144): "It can be said there is narrativity when a text describes, on the one hand, a state of departure in the form of a relation of possession or dispossession with a valorized object and, on the other hand, an act or a series of acts productive of a new state, exactly the opposite of the state of departure." (All translations from the French mine)

<sup>15</sup> Greimas/Courtés (1979: 248–49).

<sup>16</sup> Rimmon-Kenan (2002 [1983]: 7).

<sup>17</sup> Propp (1968 [1928]: 21) (*italicized in the original*).

folding of the story of the interaction between the teller and his audience through gesture and other proxemic features, phatic and deictic expressions, the social relations among participants, etc. The alternative to identifying narrativity with immanent story structure<sup>18</sup> dates from Labov and Waletzky's (1967) important article, subtitled "Oral Versions of Personal Experience," introducing such notions into the pragmatics of narrative as "point" and "tellability" that have become key terms in the analysis of conversational storytelling.<sup>19</sup> As a result of adapting methodologies to account for written as opposed to conversational narratives, for example, rather than attempting to identify a formal deep structure that embraces all manifestations of narrative, narrativity can no longer be considered a property of or synonymous with the "immanent structure" of narrative.<sup>20</sup>

Theories that ground narrativity in deductive and axiomatic models inspired by what Paul Ricœur characterized as "semiotic rationality" seek to provide an achronic simulacrum of narrative. In doing so, they allow for little if any distinction in principle between fictional and historiographic narratives or, we might add, narratives as they appear in legal discourse, psychoanalytic discourse, conversational discourse, etc.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the "elementary structure of signification" that enters into Greimas's "constititutional model," based on the logical categories of contrariety, contradiction and presupposition, postulates a set of formal requirements that cannot be met by narratives: were these conditions to be fulfilled, Ricœur notes, "*nothing would happen*. There could be no event, no surprise. There would be nothing to tell."<sup>22</sup> In fact, readers and listeners of narra-

<sup>18</sup> The critiques of the over-extension of Propp's method by structuralist narratology to include complex literary works, for example, are too numerous to cite here.

<sup>19</sup> For the necessity of taking account of the interactional dimension of narrative in the elaboration of a "transmedial" narratology, see Herman (2004). For a brief survey of the notion of "tellability," see Ryan (2005b).

<sup>20</sup> On the "open-endedness" of conversational storytelling, weak in the narrative levels and teleologically-ordered temporal sequences exploited by written narratives, for instance, see Ochs/Capps (2001). Fludernik's (1996) "natural" narratology, in which "experientiality" rather than "mere sequentiality and logical connectedness" (ibid.: 26) lies at the root of narrativity, derives in large part from the ramifications of this form of narration for narrative theory, including its narratological varieties, traditionally bound to the features and parameters of written narratives.

<sup>21</sup> Ricœur (1985 [1984]), especially chapter 2: "The Semiotic Constraints of Narrative." The criticism bears on the École de Paris, but also pertains to other formal models.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.: 57. For Claude Bremond (1973 [1972]: 99), the major defect of Greimas's method is that "it ignores a law of narrativity: the option, or rather the obligation, to de-

tives are constantly confronted at the surface level of texts with quasi-contradictions, quasi-contrarities and quasi-presuppositions that serve to trigger the operations of "narrative intelligence."

Now, for me, it is precisely out of such quasi-logical or even logically-defective operations that narrativity is born—a dynamic process engaged during the unfolding of a narrative rather than a built-in textual property. Narrativity operates through trial-and-error inferential reasoning in which suppositions and conjectures are entertained, consciously or not, subsequently to be confirmed, invalidated or revised, or perhaps left in suspense, displaced by unforeseen or improbable incidents, contradicted by incompatible or inconclusive developments, etc. Involved is a process of "heuristic" reading completed by "semiotic" reading which, we will see, has important implications for narrativity whose driving force, as already suggested, is the fallacy "after this, therefore because of this."

It is enlightening to note, however, that while this fallacy, or something resembling it, has long been associated with reflection on narrative, its emergence as a principle of narrativity can in no way be characterized as resolute. Closer examination of Barthes' article reveals that the word "narrativity" occurs three times, but in conjunction with "signs" and "signifiers" rather than with the Scholastic formula.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the author is careful to take his distance from "the very confusion between consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read in narrative as *caused by*," so that "narrative activity" is ultimately founded on a "logical error."<sup>24</sup> In line with Lévi-Strauss's dictum that "[t]he order of chronological succession is absorbed into an atemporal matrix-like structure,"<sup>25</sup> he goes on to state that the tendency of narrative analysis at the time (the 1960s) was to "dechronologize" and then "relogicize" narrative content: from the perspective of "narrative logic," time is a "chronological illusion" included

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velop as a series of choices made by the narrator at each moment of the narrative between several ways of continuing his story."

<sup>23</sup> I owe this observation to Sturges (1992: 156).

<sup>24</sup> Barthes (1966: 10). It is paradoxical that the "functionality" of "catalyses" (chronological) and the "double functionality" of "cardinal functions" (chronological and logical)—the "smallest narrative units"—are characterized as a "logical error." It should be noted, however, that in his *S/Z* (1974 [1970]), Barthes sought to redress such difficulties through the introduction of the "proairetic" code (sequence of actions) and the "hermeneutic" code (an enigma that arouses a sense of curiosity and suspense in the reader. For a commentary, see Baroni (2007: 70–74).

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Barthes (1966: 12).

within a more general "referential illusion."<sup>26</sup> Barthes' argument thus simultaneously points to the potential of the formula "after this, therefore because of this" for a theory of narrativity and, in the name of the logical form of narrative content, built up from the "smallest narrative units" deployed along the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes postulated by structuralist linguistics, relegates it to a parasitic status in the name of "an atemporal logic behind the temporality of narrative,"<sup>27</sup> thereby underrating the powerful synthesizing nature of narrativity. The search for such an atemporal narrative logic, in line we might note with Greimas's notion of "temporalization" (which "consists, as its name indicates, in producing the meaning effect [*effet de sens*] 'temporality', and thus of transforming a narrative organization into a 'story'"),<sup>28</sup> predictably encounters a serious objection: "Surely, the logic of causality does not oppose (break, override, replace) but presupposes and tightens the line of chronology."<sup>29</sup>

Closer to the perceptions of readers, and without appeal to an underlying "atemporal logic" of narrative, is Gérard Genette's discussion of the "arbitrariness of narrative," a feature of storytelling found by Valéry to be both irritating and fascinating.<sup>30</sup> Focusing on the functional nature of narrative units, he adopts Saussurean terminology in conjunction with Russian Formalist concepts, opposing an "arbitrariness" of *direction*—the *possible-at-each-instant*, or contingency of linear succession—to *retrograde determinations*, or the determination of causes by effects, the end commanding the beginning teleologically in such a way that an *a posteriori* justification or "causal alibi" constitutes the "motivation" of narrative. In this way, fiction is governed by a "finalist determination": "the *because* assigned to making one forget the *for what?*—and thus to naturalizing fiction or *realizing* it (in the sense of causing to pass for real) by concealing how it is artificial." According to the degree of motivation, he differentiates two types of narrative, akin respectively to *récit* (or *histoire*) and *discours*:<sup>31</sup> "non-motivated" narrative, subdivided into "arbitrary" ("The

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Greimas/Courtés (1979: 388).

<sup>29</sup> Sternberg (1990: 916). And of course Ricœur's *Temps et récit*, from another perspective, is predicated precisely on refuting the evacuation of time from the narrative art.

<sup>30</sup> Genette (1968: esp. 17–21).

<sup>31</sup> Terms taken from Émile Benveniste for the two modes of linguistic enunciation and adapted by Genette (1966: 159ff.) to designate, respectively, "pure" narrative and language in its "natural" form, showing traces of subjectivity.

marquise asked for her coach and went to bed”) and “verisimilar” (“The marquise asked for her coach and went for a ride”), as opposed to “motivated” narrative (“The marquise asked for her coach and went to bed, for she was quite capricious”). Although expressed in a language characteristic of the structuralist “moratorium on representational topics”<sup>32</sup> and despite the objection that the linkages “depend [...] only on the institutionalized beliefs of the reading public,”<sup>33</sup> Genette’s examples do serve nonetheless to bring out a process of reasoning which is unmistakably narrative: having read that the marquise has ordered her coach, one is more likely to assume, prospectively, that she will take a ride than go to bed, take a bath or dress for tea; should the marquise do the unexpected, however, an explanation is in order so as to justify, *a posteriori*, the unforeseen course of action by stating that the marquise is capricious, for instance, or by inferring, retroactively and through circumstantial evidence, that she is capricious or possibly that she has suddenly been taken ill or that the coachman is nowhere to be found.

Now, it is both noteworthy and instructive that Genette, in keeping with structuralist narratology generally, does not incorporate these insights into his *Narrative Discourse*. Defining narrative as “a linguistic production undertaking to relate one or several events,” he proposes (as is well known, but bears repeating for present purposes)

- 1) to treat narrative as “the expansion of a verb. *I walk*, *Pierre has come* are [...] minimal forms of narrative”;
- 2) to analyze narrative discourse according to the categories of the verb: tense (*temps*); mood (*mode*); voice (*voix*);
- 3) to examine the relations between story (*histoire*: “the signified or narrative content”), narrative (*récit*: “the signifier, statement [*énoncé*], discourse or narrative text itself”) and narrating (*narration*: “the producing narrative act and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place”).<sup>34</sup>

In this narratology geared to “discourse” rather than to “story” (cf. Bremond’s *récit racontant* as opposed to *récit raconté*) or, in Genette’s terms, a “modal” narratology (“analysis of narrative as a mode of ‘repre-

<sup>32</sup> Pavel (1986: 6).

<sup>33</sup> Sternberg (1983: 161).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Genette (1980 [1972]: 30–1, 27). I have adopted “to relate one or more events” for “la relation d’un ou plusieurs événement(s)” in place of the published translation’s “to tell of” and “narrative act” for “acte narratif” in place of “narrative action.”

sensation' of stories," ruling out drama, for example),<sup>35</sup> narrative is considered the "expansion of a verb."<sup>36</sup> Thus, "Pierre has come," relating a single event, forms a "minimal narrative," further reduction of which would result in nothing to narrate at all and which, from the utterer's standpoint, is susceptible to limitless if not aimless expansion. However, unlike "The marquise called for her carriage and went to bed," it allows little if any place to narrativity in the makeup of narratives, leaving the question of linkages in suspense with meager hope, for the reader, of resolution: Why has Pierre come? Having come, what will he do next?...

Gerald Prince goes some way toward settling this issue with the notion of "minimal story," which consists of "three conjoined events," as in: "He was unhappy, then he met a woman, then as a result, he was happy."

The first and third events are stative, the second is active. Furthermore, the third event is the inverse of the first. Finally, the three events are conjoined by the three conjunctive features in such a way that (a) the first event precedes the second in time and the second precedes the third, and (b) the second event causes the third.<sup>37</sup>

As the term "minimal story" indicates, the focus here is on an idealized narrative content, purged of the parasitical discursive variables that intervene to a greater or lesser extent in actual narrative communication and in stories that are not reduced to their bare minimum. One might also wonder about the meaning of "stative event" and whether stories truly portray such symmetrical inversions without further ado, either at the beginning or at the end.<sup>38</sup> Be that as it may, Prince has identified what, in principle, would occur in narrative in its "purest" form, namely, the unqualified coincidence of causality and chronology (no fallacy here), meeting the standards we are entitled to expect of any reliable narrator worthy of his name: "The hallmark of narrative is assurance. It lives in certainty: this happened then that; this happened because of that; this happened and it was related to that."<sup>39</sup>

Of uncontested conceptual clarity, the criteria for minimal story seem overly stringent and restrictive vis-à-vis actual narratives, and it is perhaps for this reason that Prince later proposed to define narrative (*sans* "minimal") as "the representation of *at least two* real or fictive events or situa-

<sup>35</sup> Genette (1988 [1983]: 12).

<sup>36</sup> Genette (1980 [1972]: 30).

<sup>37</sup> Prince (1973: 31).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Sternberg (1992: 465–66).

<sup>39</sup> Prince (1982: 149).

tions in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other.”<sup>40</sup> This definition is more accommodating to Genette’s *marquise* narratives, but at the same time it may underestimate the role of presupposition and entailment, opening the way to a potentially unrelated sequence of events devoid of any narrative cohesiveness. To the extent that *Marcel becomes a writer* can be expanded to encompass Proust’s entire *Recherche*, it is presupposed, firstly, that Marcel exists within a certain universe of discourse and secondly, that the statements contained within that novel pertain predominantly to Marcel, notwithstanding the impact of stories about secondary characters, potentially disruptive violations of the basic presupposition, etc. Similarly, *Marcel becomes a writer* is entailed by “Marcel learns to tell stories, writes a novel and publishes it,” but also by “Marcel enrolls in journalism school, earns a diploma and joins a newspaper staff” as well as by a number of other possible scenarios that might be encountered in stories. Proceeding in the opposite direction, moreover, engages one in an inductive process whereby on reading *Marcel becomes a writer* it is possible to infer, but only with a certain degree of probability, to be verified subsequently, that he becomes a novelist, a journalist or a screenwriter.<sup>41</sup> This being the case, it may be desirable to amend Prince’s definition of narrative to read: “the representation of *at least two* real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence, either of which *might* presuppose or entail the other.”

All in all, then, it seems that these “minimal” forms—narrative or story—serve to broach questions that can be adequately explored only in larger stretches of discourse. Their very artificiality (unless one wishes to construe them as “mini-stories”) limits the extent of their applicability to texts as such, if for no other reason than that they virtually squeeze out the possibility of narrativity as an active or dynamic process engaged when reading, viewing or listening to stories. Perhaps the main interest of these minimal forms is that they underscore the necessity of reflection on narrative linkages.

A second trait of Genette’s narrative model, also characteristic of structuralist narratology in this regard, is the absence of the principle of

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.: 4 (emphasis in the original). Cf. Prince (2003: 58) which defines narrative as “[t]he representation (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictive EVENTS communicated by one, two, or several [...] NARRATORS to one, two, or several NARRATEES,” thus downplaying the earlier formal definitions of event.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Pier (1980: 332–33).

plot. As his definitions of "story" and "narrative" show, the assimilation of narrative content and narrative text into concepts of structural linguistics shifts the focus away from the notion of plot. This is confirmed in the chapter titled "Mood," devoted to the degrees of affirmation and their modal variations in narrative ("regulation of narrative information"), where Genette takes up Plato's discussion of the poet speaking "in his own name" ("pure narrative," or *haplè diégesis*) and speaking "as if he were someone else" ("imitation," or *mimêsis*), and he accordingly adopts the terms "narrative of events" ("transcription of the (supposed) non-verbal into the verbal") and "narrative of words" ("imitation" of character discourse).<sup>42</sup> Nowhere in *Narrative Discourse*, however, is there a mention of "plot," or *mûthos*—"the arrangement of the incidents" (*sûnthesis tôn pragmatôn*)—in other words, of the fact that, for Aristotle, tragedy (and stories generally, as tradition would have it) is the "imitation or representation of the action [*praxis*]" of people.<sup>43</sup>

The absence of plot in modal narratology has a number of consequences. Since it includes no differentiation comparable to that between "simple" plots ("an action which is one and continuous" and in which "the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation [*peripeteia*] and without Recognition [*anagnôrisis*]" ) and "complex" plots (an action "in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal or Recognition or by both"),<sup>44</sup> the problems of causality and chronology do not arise. For Aristotle, it is precisely because of the distinction between simple and complex plots that *propter hoc* can be opposed to *post hoc*, for reversal and recognition, it is pointed out,

should arise from the internal structure of the plot [i.e. the arrangement of the incidents], so that what follows should be the necessary [*anagkê*] or probable [*eikos*] result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of *propter hoc* or *post hoc*.<sup>45</sup>

It stands out here that causality is not to be confused with chronology, although this is not to say (as Barthes would have it) that narrative is absorbed into an atemporal logic or that causality and chronology cannot cohabit. A second point is that the above passage must be read against the backdrop of Aristotle's holistic conception of tragedy, based on the rela-

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<sup>42</sup> Genette (1980 [1972]: 162ff.).

<sup>43</sup> *Poetics* 1450a.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*: 1452a.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

tions of necessity and probability between the parts of the action within the context of the whole, the resultant functional tension between *hólos* and *mûthos* being an important but little-explored theme of the *Poetics*.<sup>46</sup> "A whole," says Aristotle,

is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity or as a rule, but has nothing follow it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, when *hólos* and *mûthos* coincide (as in "He was unhappy, then he met a woman, then as a result, he was happy"), that is, when causality and chronology are coterminous with beginning, middle and end, no particular emotion is produced in the reader (such as pity or fear in the case of tragedy). However, an unexpected chain of events will come as a surprise ("He was unhappy, then he met a woman, then as a result, he was bankrupt"), touching off a series of questions, conjectures, suppositions, etc. in an attempt to get a better grasp of what has occurred. Surprise is heightened, moreover, when such events "follow as cause and effect" rather than "of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design."<sup>48</sup> Put another way, the relations of cause and effect in plots can be determined only in function of the whole, and not within their local context.

This being the case, it is notable that Aristotle's commentary on simple and complex plots (quoted above) does not employ the word *ergo*, the emphasis being on the difference between what happens next and what happens as a result. In other words, Aristotle does not introduce here the logical mechanism that would allow us to infer, fallaciously or not, that because the marquise went to bed after ordering her coach, she is capricious. Or that, on reading "The king died and then the queen died," the queen died of grief.

I will not dwell on E. M. Forster's illustrations of story ("a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence") and plot ("also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality"),<sup>49</sup> as familiar to students of narrative as "The cat is on the mat" is to several generations of logicians.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Sternberg (1992: 474ff.).

<sup>47</sup> *Poetics* 1450b.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*: 1452a.

<sup>49</sup> Forster (1962 [1927]: 27).

However, I would like to draw attention a curious and insurmountable ambiguity of the two sentences that has perhaps not been sufficiently taken into account. Given that both story and plot are abstractions that must be reconstituted and that plot can be dispensed with, but not story, if a text is to be considered a narrative, what is the textual status of Forster's sentences? Are they intended to summarize a larger stretch of discourse? Are they verbalizations of underlying textual structures? Or are we to suppose that they actually occur in the text? Whatever the answer, it is clear that the two sentences contain a number of unspoken assumptions: the king is the legal heir to the throne and both the king and queen in question are monarchs of the same realm; they are lawfully married to each other and are of the same or approximately the same generation.

But now let us imagine a story that begins as follows: "The king died and then the queen died." Toward the end, we learn the identity of the two individuals: Charles I of Spain (died in 1558) and Elizabeth I of England (died in 1603). The historical facts are correct, but can we conclude in this case that what comes after is caused by what comes before? And can we entertain the idea that Elizabeth I died of grief as a result of the death of Charles I? A cleverly crafted text may well lead us down this path for many pages until the facts are revealed, at that point casting the intervening pages in a very different light and possibly prompting us to reread. And what if, after this opening sentence and several pages of narration, it were to turn out that the "king" and the "queen" are the nicknames of two exotic characters living in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco? In another imaginary story, the situation would be different yet again if, somewhere in the middle, it became evident that "The king died and then the queen died" were a set of instructions given by a kindergarten teacher to her pupils for acting out a fairy tale.

In all of the above cases, the formula "after this, therefore because of this" applies to the sentence in question, but with effects distinctly at variance with those of the sentence in its isolated form. More precisely, the formula applies provided some causal relation between the death of the king and the death of the queen is inferred, which, however, would tend to blur the boundary between story and plot as intended by Forster. Applied over the longer stretch of discourse in the narratives imagined above, the situation is altered markedly: the causal relation assumed within the initial sentence is projected onto the text to come, conditioning not only how the local sequences will be apprehended, but also how the relations between the parts and the whole will be understood, only to be reevaluated in retro-

spect. Clearly, then, something more is at issue here than what can be gleaned from Forster's story and plot: involved is a process that can be related to what Genette, borrowing from structuralist terminology, describes as "arbitrariness" vs. "motivation" of narrative, but which will be examined here in terms of what Louis O. Mink calls "the contingencies of forward references" as they are "canceled out" by "the necessity of backward references," culminating in "configuration," or an act of "seeing-things-together" which is peculiar to the understanding of stories.<sup>50</sup> In an earlier study, I analyzed configuration from an intertextual perspective, showing how narrative (using Nabokov's *Lolita* [1955] as a test case) assimilates intertextual frames to a greater or lesser degree through operations of inferential reasoning based on Umberto Eco's text-semiotic theory of abductions. Lower-order abductions, it was argued, are triggered in the process of linear or "heuristic" reading, while retroactive or "semiotic" reading engages higher-order abductions.<sup>51</sup> Working largely within the same parameters, the present study shifts the emphasis to narrativity.

With these considerations in mind, let us now return to the fact that in his account of complex plots Aristotle is careful to separate causality and chronology conceptually, but provides no link between them, no "therefore" from which to derive a causal chronology. Even so, the possibility of relating the two is not ruled out—nor, interestingly, is there any mention of the fallacy in the *Poetics*. For a discussion of this point, it is necessary to turn to two other texts, firstly, the *Sophistical Refutations*, a treatise on sophisms ("contentious arguments") that has recently come to be seen as a key to understanding the long-neglected dialogical aspect of Aristotle's logic.<sup>52</sup> A refutation is defined as "a proof of the contradiction" and sophistical refutations as "what appear to be refutations, but are really fallacies instead,"<sup>53</sup> in other words, arguments that appear to be valid but that are not. Among the thirteen fallacies employed in sophistical refutations is that of "treating as a cause what is not a cause,"<sup>54</sup> a form of "deduction *ad*

<sup>50</sup> Mink (1970: 551ff.).

<sup>51</sup> Pier (2004); cf. Pier (2003: 85–93).

<sup>52</sup> C.L. Hamblin's *Fallacies* (2004 [1970]) is regarded as a watershed in this revaluation and comes within the context of the development of informal logic, the theory of argumentation and pragmatics. The following discussion draws on *ibid.*: 37–8, 78–80 *passim*; Allwood/Andersson/Dahl (1977); Łukasiewicz (1957 [1951]); Mackie (1967); Walton (1995); Woods/Walton (1989 [1978]).

<sup>53</sup> *Sophistical Refutations* 168a, 164a.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: 167b.

*impossibile*" that consists of inserting "irrelevant matter" into the argument—a move that may threaten the validity of that argument, somewhat like a violation of the Gricean Cooperative Principle. "Non-cause as cause" is taken up again in the *Rhetoric*, this time not as an error in the form or the premises of syllogisms, but in a way that bears more directly on the problems of narrative:

Another line [i.e. topic] consists in representing as causes things which are not causes, on the ground that they happened along with or before the event in question. They assume that, because *B* happens *after A*, it happens *because of A*.<sup>55</sup>

In a way, it is easy to see why this passage was not included in the *Poetics*, for it says that a causal relation inferred from a temporal sequence is unwarranted—hardly a basis on which to get a good story going! This form of "non-cause as cause," as the *Rhetoric* calls it—later to be known as the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy—corresponds to "false cause" in the modern sense of the natural sciences, not the logical sense. It has generally been acknowledged since Hume that the logical necessity of a causal connection can never be demonstrated: the fact that *B* follows *A* in time does not mean that *A* entails *B* or that *B* can be derived deductively from *A*. To compensate for this situation, the sciences have developed methods of inductive testing which include checking up with adequate control cases so that it may be possible to establish a high degree of probability values or of correlation coefficients between *A* and *B*; in this way, it may be found that causality and temporal succession coincide in a certain percentage of cases. With insufficient statistical data, however, there is a risk of making unwarranted inductive generalizations—"the fallacy of jumping to a conclusion."<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, even a generic statement with a high level of correlation such as "Eating fast food causes cardiovascular disease" does not provide an adequate basis for establishing a causal relation in any particular instance of individuals who both eat fast food and suffer from cardiovascular disease.

Now, the differences between the two forms of our fallacy—the logical, which appears in syllogistic form, and the causal, pertaining to the natural sciences—has to my knowledge been largely if not entirely overlooked by theoreticians seeking to employ it in the analysis of narrative.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Rhetoric* 1401b.

<sup>56</sup> Salmon (1963: 56); quoted in Hamblin (2004 [1970]: 46).

<sup>57</sup> The two forms are fully conflated in Barthes' "Introduction," and since this model rests on the deductive procedures of structuralist linguistics, the fallacy must ultimately give

Syllogistic fallacies, whether deductive, inductive or retroductive (hypothetical), serve to structure arguments, not narratives, and strictly speaking the causal form is not a fallacy but an insufficiently tested natural law, the characteristics of which are unlike those of narratives, whatever their semiotic media. In any case, narrative, as any other cultural object, is constituted only through and in the various semiotic media, so that what is at issue in narrative cannot be the nature of causality *per se* but rather, “that of the function and representation of what is *interpreted as* ‘causality’ in narrative (and in common speech)”; for this reason, causality is inevitably “relativized” in narrative—a function of the inferences that can be drawn from the formula “after this, therefore because of this” within a narrative context.<sup>58</sup>

## 2. Heuristic Reading, Semiotic Reading

Given the considerations debated so far, I would like now to suggest that there are considerable advantages to analyzing narrativity as a negotiation between the fallacy in question (as presented in the *Rhetoric*) and the theory of abductions. While the former is an error of induction, the latter is an adaptation of the syllogism in Peircean semiotics to the procedure of scientific inquiry,<sup>59</sup> but it is also highly relevant to the theory of textual

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way to an “atemporal logic.” Robert Scholes proceeds somewhat differently. Defining narrativity as “the process by which a perceiver actively constructs a story from the fictional data provided by any narrative medium,” he then argues that narrativity is based on “a mental operation similar to a logical fallacy: *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. What is a fallacy in logic is a principle in fiction: that a cause-and-effect relationship links the temporal elements in any sequence. I am not suggesting that fiction itself is fallacious in some way, but rather that it is constructed so as to make this fallacy a feature of the fictional world” (Scholes [1982: 60, 62]). The definition seems closer to that of “narrativization” (cf. Alber [2005]) than it does to one of narrativity, and the mental operation involved posits the fallacious nature of causal and temporal relations in narrative sequence as a characteristic of the ontology of fiction, the implicit assumption being, among other things, that fiction and narrative are synonymous; in light of more recent research on fictionality, this assumption is no longer tenable (cf. Schaeffer [1999]).

<sup>58</sup> Genot (1980: 19). The principles focused on in the present comments seek to clarify the conditions according to which causality is constituted in narrative. Conceptually, they lie upstream of what Brian Richardson (2005) in his excellent overview of causality in narrative describes as the connections among narrative units, events and character action in contrast to the system of causation, along with space and time, that govern the ontology of a storyworld.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Eco (1983).

communication. The interest of the theory of abductions for textual matters, and more particularly for the problems of narrative, lies in the fact that it leaves considerable room for non-deductive forms of reasoning, in other words for inferences that may be valid with a greater or lesser degree of probability. Such reasoning is better adapted to the analysis of narratives than deductive inferences, which are valid only when their conclusions are logically entailed by their premises, for stories, contrary to the claims of advocates of narrative grammars, are not the emanations of axiomatic systems. The various forms of abduction offer a promising framework for demonstrating how specification and semiotic mediation of the fallacy in narrative contexts proceed. (For want of space, the following discussion, which lies against the backdrop of my two articles already mentioned, will remain brief.)

In an "overcoded" abduction, an inference occurs in a somewhat mechanical fashion when, in a given context of utterance and co-text, one proceeds unquestioningly from a general rule to a specific case. Referring back to Aristotle's non-cause as cause, the tendency to assume that if B happens after A, then B happens because of A (an assumption that may not be fallacious in all cases) "overcodes" the segment in question; as a matter of hypothesis, this pattern is then projected forward, possibly covering the entirety of the narrative. If the overcoded abduction is not subsequently confirmed (B is not caused by A, or its cause is unspecified), a plausible alternative will be sought out.<sup>60</sup> This is an "undercoded" abduction, an inference to a probable rule possibly involving an "inferential walk" outside the text in search of an appropriate solution. Reaching backward, undercoded abductions seek the causes of effects (marquises who go to bed after ordering their coach are capricious), but at the same time project forward, seeking confirmation that may never come.

These operations take place as the reader progresses, engaging a process of "heuristic" reading. But as this process advances, a retroactive or "semiotic" reading takes form, of greater or lesser intensity according to the complexity of the narrative in question. On encountering either indeterminacies ("gaps" to be filled in in the form of a "fair guess" as to the

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<sup>60</sup> For Schmid (2003: 19–20), the minimal definition of narrativity does not require causal connections on the grounds that literary texts rarely specify an explicit cause for a change of state and that the possible causes of a change of state lie open to interpretation. Empirically speaking, this cannot be disputed, but it does not explain away the trial-and-error attempts of readers of stories to formulate valid hypotheses in quest of narrative coherence, however tentative, incomplete or inconclusive.

future course of events, subsequently to be confirmed, or perhaps a missing element, perceived in hindsight) or heterogeneous elements that cannot be accounted for by overcoded or undercoded abductions, "creative" abductions come into play, that is, conjectures which hypothesize facts and/or a general rule that must then be submitted to inductive testing ("meta-abduction").

The latter case can be illustrated with the cinematic version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, when Cyrano says: "This is the nose that launched a thousand battles."<sup>61</sup> Although it is known from the story itself that Cyrano's long nose is at the origin of many troubles, some viewers may feel perplexed or somehow left out of the picture by this statement; but those who are familiar with Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (1592–93) are likely to recall the sentence "This is the face that launched a thousand ships," in reference to the beauty of Helen—the cause of the Trojan War. Here, an inferential walk outside the film in search of a work already known (or in any case presupposed) initiates an inductive inference regarding physical traits and their fateful consequences, but it also triggers undercoded abductions bearing on the relevance of the parallel between Helen's love for Paris in Homer and in Marlowe and Roxane's love for Cyrano in the film as well as on Cyrano's "Faustian" character, etc.

The two readings—heuristic and semiotic—include series of projections forward and reaches backward, with a dynamics of prospection, retrospection and recognition being set up as from the time of heuristic reading. But the process does not stop here. As shown by the example above, an intertextual allusion or some other heterogeneous element, even when perceived in the course of a heuristic reading, can ultimately be accommodated only as the result of a semiotic reading.<sup>62</sup> It is here that a *configuration* is achieved, a "seeing-things-together" that includes, but extends beyond, the purview of heuristic reading—a total that adds up to more than the sum of its parts, so to speak. The potential for such configurations is evidently greater in narratives with a powerful intertextual dimension than it is in those of a more "straightforward" nature, although even here there might be more than meets the eye at a leisurely reading. With configuration, the "after this, therefore because of this" encountered in heuristic reading—itsself more all-embracing than a Forster-type

<sup>61</sup> The example is taken from Ben-Porat (1976: 112–15).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Eco (1979: 205) which speaks of "a naïve and a critical reading, the latter being the interpretation of the former."

“plot”—reaches backward and projects forward beyond the limits of the narrative at hand, situating it within a web of intertextual relations on which, in one way or another, all narratives rely.

The system outlined above provides a possible theoretical framework aimed at explaining how the fallacy “after this, therefore because of this,” the “mainspring” of narrativity, is deployed in and plays a vital role in the constitution of narratives. In this process, abductive reasoning is engaged, consciously or not, but in either case and whatever their degree of sophistication and cultivation, readers are invariably drawn to wondering “What will happen next?”, “Why did such and such happen?”, etc., possibly being prompted to revision or to rereading on the emergence of unforeseen factors. In this regard, the perceiver’s experience of a narrative proves to play a crucial role in that it excites the affective forces of suspense, curiosity and surprise that set into motion a dynamics of prospection, retrospection and recognition.

It is in fact in these latter terms that Meir Sternberg defines narrativity: “the play of suspense/curiosity/surprise between represented and communicative time (in whatever combination, whatever medium, whatever manifest or latent form).”<sup>63</sup> Or again: “narrativity lives in the dynamic interplay between the told and the telling, the represented and the communicative time-sequence.”<sup>64</sup> And it is striking that, unlike many theoreticians, he does not begin with a definition of narrative to which he then appends the notion of narrativity as something of an afterthought, but that it is out of the dynamic forces of narrativity that narratives are generated: narrative is “a discourse where such play dominates,” and consequently narrativity is promoted to “the status of regulating principle, first among the priorities of telling/reading.”<sup>65</sup> To clarify these points, the following summary of Sternberg’s theory is worth quoting in full:

This interplay between temporalities generates the three universal effects/interests/dynamics of prospection, retrospection, and recognition—suspense, curiosity, and surprise, for short. *Suspense* arises from rival scenarios about the future: from the discrepancy between what the telling lets us readers know about the happening (e.g. a conflict) at any moment and what still lies ahead, ambiguous because yet unresolved in the world. Its fellow universals rather involve manipulations of the past, which the tale communicates in a sequence discontinuous with the happening. Perceptibly so, for *curiosity*: knowing that we do not know, we go forward with our mind on

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<sup>63</sup> Sternberg (1992: 529).

<sup>64</sup> Sternberg (2006: 129).

<sup>65</sup> Sternberg (1992: 529).

the gapped antecedents, trying to infer (bridge, compose) them in retrospect. For *surprise*, however, the narrative first unobtrusively gaps or twists its chronology, then unexpectedly discloses to us our misreading and enforces a corrective rereading in late re-cognition. The three accordingly cover among them the workings that distinguish narrative from everything else, because they exhaust the possibilities of communicating action: of aligning its natural early-to-late development with its openness to untimely, crooked disclosure.<sup>66</sup>

We see here that the various "effects/interests/dynamics" that characterize narrative are born out of the disjunctive relations that occur between "actional and communicative, told and telling/reading sequence";<sup>67</sup> such is the case, for instance, of stories beginning *in medias res*. As a result of these distortions and twisting of chronology, "[t]he literary text can be conceived of as a dynamic system of gaps,"<sup>68</sup> prospection, retrospection and recognition thus becoming so many operations for "filling in" these gaps, to the extent this is relevant and possible. In effect, these three "strategies" function as "basic sense-making operations [for] the construction of rival hypotheses with which to fill in the gaps opened up by the sequence about the world's affairs and whatever attaches to them by nature or art, which in narrative means everything."<sup>69</sup>

Returning now to the question of heuristic reading and semiotic reading, based on the theory of abductions through which, among other things, the fallacy "after this, therefore because of this" as it appears in narratives can be examined anew, two general observations are in order.

First, it is in the sequentiality of heuristic reading that the ordering, disordering and reordering of the told in relation to telling/reading generates the narrative interests of suspense, curiosity and surprise.<sup>70</sup> Suspense, turning on hope or fear, prompts a dynamics of prospection, a strategy which, in inferential terms, employs undercoded and/or creative abductions in order, for example, to formulate expectations about the protagonist's future course of action in light of what is already known. In re-

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<sup>66</sup> Sternberg (2001: 117).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Sternberg (1978: 50).

<sup>69</sup> Sternberg (1992: 531–32).

<sup>70</sup> These comments draw partly on Sternberg (1978: 236–46) and (1985: 264–320). For another reading of these narrative interests, see Baroni (2007: 121ff. *passim*), which integrates them into three phases of "narrative tension": 1) the "knot" of an intrigue that elicits a questioning; 2) a "delay" that generates expectation; 3) the "dénouement" resolving the tension. This excellent work appeared too late to be given its due in the present paper.

sponse to curiosity, retrospection is engaged in an effort to find the missing link, and it is perhaps here that the assumption that if B happens after A, then B happens because of A stands out most prominently. In large part, this is no doubt for the simple reason that stories, in their vast majority, purport to relate a series of events or happenings that have occurred at some time prior to their telling.<sup>71</sup> In any case, given the arguments put forth in this paper, causes can be inferred with varying degrees of validity and are not to be confused with the causal fallacies that the scientific method strives to eliminate with empirical testing. Nor can causes be explained away with an appeal to (post)structuralist notions of “referential illusion”: had Oedipus not killed a man in the road, would there be a story of how he came to commit incest with his mother?<sup>72</sup> In heuristic reading, surprise occurs with the belated revelation of a gap, setting up a dynamics of recognition when, in the course of a series of overcoded abductions (inferences drawn from general rules to particular cases), possibly adjusted in the wake of plausible alternatives arising from undercoded abductions, an apparently settled course of events is upset by the irruption of an unforeseen element. Up to this point, the element in question may have remained ingeniously camouflaged, imperceptible even to the most astute of observers; but it may also pop up out of nowhere in the form of an intertextual trace—a trace, moreover, whose ramifications might not be evident at first sight. It is at this point that undercoded abductions and inferential walks give way to the conjectures of creative abductions in an attempt to comprehend a state of affairs that may initially appear to be, or even remain, inscrutable.

Our second observation, then, is that prospection, retrospection and recognition, which are initiated in the sequential perception of narratives, form a bridge between heuristic reading and semiotic reading. They represent strategies for binding together a “naïve” reading and a “critical” reading. But it must be stressed that these two readings are not necessarily separated from one another in time as two distinct “acts” of reading, for to one degree or another the former is presupposed by, included within, the latter. Thus in practice, heuristic reading and semiotic reading may take place more or less concurrently, although in the case of more complex and “gappier” narratives, particularly those involving an inferential walk of an

<sup>71</sup> For a discussion of the “hindsight bias” in narrative, see José Ángel García Landa’s contribution to this volume and García Landa (2002).

<sup>72</sup> In narrative, even chance, contingency and coincidence may not be what they seem; on this point, see Werner Wolf’s article. See also Richardson (1997).

intertextual nature, a semiotic reading may emerge only with multiple readings.

### 3. (Re)ordering Cause and Effect

The possibility of illustrating these principles with particular texts is clearly limited within the scope of this paper. Even so, I wish to look briefly at a work that seems of emblematic interest for our purposes, suggestive of further avenues for analysis: James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). At one level, this multifaceted novel lends itself to the fairly unobstructed reading of a story in the tradition of the *Künstlerroman*: Stephen Dedalus's schoolboy adventures at a Jesuit school; his first sexual encounters followed by repentance and his last-minute decision not to become a priest; rupture with his family and finally the blossoming of his artistic vocation at university. However, with closer attention to textual details and knowing that, initially at least, Joyce's intention was to structure his previously written "epiphanies" into an analogical ordering of five chapters, each subdivided into sections and with smaller portions of text being intricately interrelated among themselves, then the apparent flow of the narrative proves to be somewhat illusory. The text is in fact highly selective with regard to the incidents and chronological ordering of Stephen's story which, to a large degree, is structured as a succession of present moments. The result is that the cause-and-effect relations habitually associated with plot structure are quietly played down in the overall organization of Joyce's novel.

A case in point is the first section of chapter I, slightly more than a page in length but acting as a "microcosm" that reverberates through much of the novel. Scenes spread out over a number of years during Stephen's infancy evoking the awakening of his five senses together with his growing sensitivity to his surroundings are compacted to such a degree that, for lack of temporal or any other form of deictic demarcation, with the boundaries further blurred by the use of free indirect discourse, these scenes could easily be taken for a single scene; but in fact, they are a series of distinct scenes, each narrated iteratively (i.e. narrated as though it occurred once, although it actually occurs several times), punctuated with "hypothetical" ellipses of indeterminate duration.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Genette (1980 [1972]: 109, 116–17).

In what ways are the features of this introductory section manifested in other parts of the novel? How does this page engage the processes of prospection and retrospection? Before looking at a few interconnected extracts, it should be pointed out that within the overall composition of the novel, this section represents not so much a "beginning" in the chronological sense as an *ad hoc* attempt from the vantage point of a narrating instance situated later in time to determine the causes from the effects. What appears on the opening page is thus constituted partly in function of what is portrayed later, and it is only in confronting that page with specific points in the subsequent text that narrative significance emerges.

The first passage is from a song, apparently sung in the Dedalus household on several occasions:

*O, the wild rose blossoms  
On the little green place.  
He sang that song. That was his song.  
O, the green wothe botheth.*<sup>74</sup>

Three words—*rose, green, place*—will take on an importance in subsequent parts of the novel that it is all but impossible to detect at this point. A few years later, at the Jesuit school, the teacher (a priest) says to Stephen and another student during an academic competition:

—Now then, who will win? Go ahead, York! Go ahead, Lancaster! (12)

The reference is to the War of the Roses (1445–85) during which the Yorkists (supported by Ireland), whose emblem was the white rose (Stephen, leader of one team, wears a white rose), were defeated by the Lancastrians, whose emblem was the red rose (the leader of the other team, Jack Lawton [an English-sounding name], wears a red rose). The reverberations of this easily overlooked connection with historical fact throughout the novel are too numerous to be commented on here. In any case, they seem to be lost on the young Stephen, who instead muses about the "beautiful colours" of roses:

Perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and he remembered the song about the wild rose blossoms on the little green place. But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could. (12)

<sup>74</sup> Joyce (1968 [1916]: 7); page references cited hereafter in the text. Indispensable information will be found in the "Explanatory Notes" (*ibid.*: 484–550) and in Gifford (1982: 127–287).

The "little green place" reappears, but also the improbable "green rose," while the conjecture about the possible existence of such a rose seems only to confirm a pattern set up earlier: "*the green wotheth*" of "his [Stephen's] song" superimposes "green place" on "wild rose" in such a way as to produce "green rose." At the same time, the grammatical ambiguity of "blossoms"/"*botheth*" (noun or intransitive verb?) is echoed on a larger scale: is "the green rose blossoms" to be taken as a noun phrase or as a sentence? But now one other detail must be accounted for, namely, that the song, popular in nineteenth-century Ireland, is misquoted. The original reads as follows:

[...] Now the wild rose blossoms  
O'er her little green grave [...].<sup>75</sup>

Clearly, this is something quite different from the song as we have it in the *Portrait*, which says: "the wild rose blossoms on the little green place."

So what does all of this mean within the context of the novel? To answer this question (in part), it is necessary to go to the final section of the book (leaving out relevant intermediate steps, for economy's sake), where Stephen writes in his notebook:

Crossing Stephen's, that is, my green [...]. (249)

Referred to here is St. Stephen's Green, located near University College, Dublin, St. Stephen (Stephen's namesake<sup>76</sup>) being the first Christian martyr, stoned to death for blasphemy.

With these various details in mind, it is now possible to draw a number of conclusions with regard to the convergence of the passages in question.

First of all, it is clear that the grave in question is not the "green grave" of the popular song (i.e. a grave which is green), but rather a "grave on the green," i.e. a grave located on or at the green. Similarly, "green place" does not correspond to "green grave" but designates "St. Stephen's Green," the word "Green" being used in the sense of "place" or city square. On the other hand, St. Stephen's Green is not to be understood as the physical location of the saint's grave, but as the place where his martyrdom is commemorated. The accretion of meanings we see here together with their subsequent specifications—mere potentialities at the

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Gifford (1982: 133).

<sup>76</sup> For brevity of the argument, I bracket out the surname Dedalus, charged with equally resonant overtones.

beginning of the novel—take form with what we have been calling a “semiotic” reading and are thus open to analysis only by taking account of the complementary perspectives arising out of earlier and later portions of the text.

The second point is that, as is often the case in Joyce, polyvalent lexico-semantic and syntactic patterns of the type just examined are inextricably interwoven with the actions and happenings at the story level. Thus, the itinerary followed by Stephen, culminating in the affirmation of his vocation as an artist, is, metaphorically, a “blossoming” of “the green rose”: in hindsight, “*the green wothe botheth*” of Stephen’s first song proves to augur his future, the “cause” of that song being materialized in its “effects.” The two sequences (lexico-semantic/syntactic and actional) converge in “Crossing Stephen’s, that is, my green [...],” in other words, when Stephen lays claim to his name and thus to his identity as an artist. In the end, the blossoming of “the green rose” and the act of crossing St. Stephen’s culminate in the dissociation of “green” from “grave,” producing a configuration of meanings which coincides with the story of how Stephen progressively discovers the meaning of his name.

In view of the criteria adopted for analysis of these extracts from the *Portrait*, what is perhaps most striking is that despite the number of pages between them (from five to well over two hundred), the linkages are demonstrable. This is so thanks to the strategies of prospection, retrospection and recognition mobilized in the course of heuristic reading and semiotic reading discussed in the previous section. One aspect of this schema is that it lays the ground for tracing the processes of abductive reasoning which, within narrative contexts, put the fallacy “after this, therefore because of this” into a particular light. Indeed, it would hardly be illuminating or even relevant to claim that the *textual* succession from “green grave” to “green place” to “St. Stephen’s Green” or that of “*the green wothe botheth*” to “my green” mark a causal and chronological link within the narrative world of the novel. As we have seen, the filling of gaps takes place here nearly the other way around.

#### 4. Conclusion

Among the themes we have dealt with is causality in narrative, a subject that raises many questions not addressed in this paper. A fundamental question, causality is also, notes Brian Richardson, “one of the most ne-

glected and under-theorized topics of narrative theory and criticism.”<sup>77</sup> Richardson’s monograph, itself a significant step toward overcoming this neglect and the unexamined *ad hoc* associations that causality has so often inspired among students of narrative, systematically explores various dimensions of the question, three of which are relevant to a more extensive treatment than it has been possible to undertake here. The first is that cause, together with time and space, forms an integral part of narrative setting. Second is the fact that cause is open to thematic treatment in narrative and can even appear as an ideological construct. Thirdly (and most important for Richardson’s study) is that the causal settings of narrative, whether dominated by fate, providence, determinism, fortune, chance or necessity, break down into “four basic types of probability that govern fictional worlds: supernatural, naturalistic, chance, and metafictional systems of causation.”<sup>78</sup> The emphasis, then, lies on causation as a constitutive element of narrative worlds and worldviews. In this paper, by contrast, the focus has been on the connection between causality and narrativity, that is, on how causes peculiar to stories are inferred in the processes set in motion by heuristic reading and semiotic reading. There is clearly a need to investigate the links between these complementary points of emphasis more closely. This being the case, however, the processes involved in inferring “after this, therefore because of this” are, in my view, more suitable to the theory of narrativity than Richardson’s working definition of cause: “a condition that occasions a change in events.”<sup>79</sup> This definition can be likened to Lakoff and Johnson’s definition of “skeletal literal causation,”<sup>80</sup> although it does not incorporate any further refinements or analysis of the various kinds of causation such as those outlined by these authors—which, in any case, are of a different order from the “relativized” and media-bound causes characteristic of narrative.

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<sup>77</sup> Richardson (1997: 14).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.: 15.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.: 36.

<sup>80</sup> “[A] cause is a determining factor for a situation, where by a ‘situation’ we mean a state, change, process, or action. Inferentially, this is extremely weak. All it implies is that *if the cause were absent and we knew nothing more, we could not conclude that the situation existed*. This doesn’t mean that it didn’t; another cause might have done the job. The only implication is entirely negative: Given a lack of such a cause and a lack of any other knowledge, we lack a justification for concluding anything” (Lakoff/Johnson [1999: 177]; emphasis in the original). It must be noted that this book appeared two years after Richardson’s.

In her recently published *Narrative Causalities*, Emma Kafalenos adopts a more interpretive approach to causes, organized in large part around a methodology of "function analysis" derived from Propp. Here is no place to go into the complete argument of this rigorous work, but it can be noted that a number of points it develops bear on questions examined in the present contribution. Defining narrative as "a sequential representation of a sequence of events [in any medium],"<sup>81</sup> Kafalenos assigns primary importance to chronology: "This chronologically ordered, finite set provides the context in relation to which we interpret the causes and consequences of individual reported events. [...] *all narratives* unavoidably shape readers' (listeners', viewers') interpretations of the causes and effects of those events."<sup>82</sup> Chronology also plays an essential role in our own considerations. However, it is our contention that interpretations of causes and effects in narrative are determined chronologically only in part, and that to some extent they are governed by the fact that, as Aristotle puts it, we tend to "assume" that if B happens after A, then B happens because of A—an assumption subsequently to be confirmed, overthrown, in some way revised or even determined retroactively.

Another point of interest lies in the interpretation of functions. According to Kafalenos, the function of an event is interpreted in relation to a configuration (in Mink's sense) at a given point in a narrative and is possibly reinterpreted progressively as the reading of the narrative progresses, culminating in a "complete configuration" or "final fabula" (although conflicting interpretations may give rise to "incomplete configurations").<sup>83</sup> From the perspective of narrativity as outlined here, however, the question is not so much one of interpreting the causes and effects of events as a story progresses as it is that of the array of inferences—only some of which are causal—that can be drawn from the interlocking forms of abductive reasoning and the strategies of prospection and retrospection mobilized by heuristic reading and semiotic reading.

<sup>81</sup> Kafalenos (2006: 2). An event is defined as "[s]omething someone does and something that happens [...]" (ibid.: 1). See the definition of event by Prince (2003 [1987]: 28): "A change of STATE manifested in DISCOURSE by a PROCESS STATEMENT in the mode of *Do or Happen*."

<sup>82</sup> Kafalenos (2006: viii) (emphasis in the original).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.: 151–52. Interpretation is defined as "the process of analyzing the causal relations between an action or happening and other actions, happenings, and situations one thinks of as related" (ibid.: 1).

These brief observations on research into the problem of causality in narrative, itself a crucial subject calling for further examination by theorists of narrative, also suggest that causality *per se* does not provide a sufficient basis on which to account for the dynamic functioning of narrative. It has been the aim of this paper to show that a more all-embracing perspective is provided by narrativity.

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