Conceptions of Place, Space and Narrative: Past, Present and Future

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1. What we talk about when we talk about space and narrative

Since Michel Foucault's suggestion that ours may be "the epoch of space" ([1984] 1998) and the post-Sojan "spatial turn" (Soja 1989), we often imagine any early theoretical neglect of space in narrative theory has long been compensated. Some may have thus been surprised when, as late as 2006, James Phelan suggested that "narrative space" was one of several directions still to be explored by narratology (Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg 2006: 336). In continental theory, too, Dietrich Jägers (1998) has written of an "*erzählten Raum*" still largely ignored by German theory, on which Armin von Ungern-Sternberg more recently concurred: "Um den literarischen Raum hat sich die Literaturwissenschaft kaum je gekümmert" (2003: 548). In a more recent overview of notions on space in narrative theory, Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz note that "despite some earlier notable efforts by A.J. Greimas and Gabriel Zoran," narrative theory has only recently ("as a result of work by David Herman and Susan Stanford Friedman, and others") "begun to take up more sophisticated questions about space and setting and to give them the attention they deserve" (Herman et al. 2012: 84). Aside from setting's often overly-simplistic associations with symbolism, two problems, Phelan and Rabinowitz surmise, have delayed such work. First, they note, the notion of setting, in being conflated with "background" generally, often "begins to merge with character," as "'environment' and psychology begin to intertwine."[1] Second, a tendency to conflate setting with "description" often turns setting "(one element *within* narrative) into a discursive mode that is, from certain philosophical perspectives, *in opposition* to narrative" (Herman et al. 2012: 85).

There are, of course, good reasons why "narrative space" has been closely tied with character, environment, "psychology" and description. Indeed, such "conflations" are perhaps less pitfalls to analysis than essential to consider: speaking about "narrative space" makes little sense without considering the places within it and our relationships with them. It is, after all, our own sense or understanding of spaces and places from which we create narratives about them, or project narratives *onto* them. This article takes up a number of ways space has been talked about and conceived by theory, pointing to gaps where we might begin to dig further, particularly in one of the several directions Marie-Laure Ryan has laid out as topics on space for further investigation in narratology: "studies of the historical and cultural variability of the

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[1] Mike Baynam (2003) has offered one article engaged in such issues.

semiotic oppositions (such as 'high-low,' 'inside-outside,' closed-open') that determine the topology of narrative worlds" ([2009] 2014: par. 31). Before looking at how we have conceived of space's relationship to narrative causality, it begins by looking at how our notions of diegetic "setting" have been elaborated, what, exactly, we mean by "place" and "space" when we talk about narrative, and how we might usefully import understandings of these terms as they appear in other fields.

3. Setting, landscape and place

In more or less classical narratological terms, setting is "a set of propositions referring to the same (backgrounded) spatio-temporal complex" (Prince 1982: 73), a sort of meaningful blueprint for a "complex" of interrelations in space and time, while "backgrounded" in a way which may leave it difficult to pin down. To determine setting's function *within* narrative, Rabinowitz and Phelan divide "setting" into three components. Setting's "synthetic" or "formal" component has a "framing dimension" (Herman et al. 2012: 85–87), making a story possible. This frame setting, in "[m]ost narratives," takes advantage "of the way representation of distinct spaces […] can signify, support, or heighten differences of various kinds." By putting distinct settings in contrast, "it may be the contrast itself, rather than the inherent qualities of the settings, that's crucial." A second component of setting is its "purely mimetic aspects" of description, presumably provided only for "readerly pleasure." Finally, setting's "thematic" component is more or less its symbolic or semiotic function: the socio-political or cultural "meaning" setting reveals to the careful or initiated reader, again often prompted by dramatic contrasts between "spaces" within it.

A year after Prince offered his definition, Leonard Lutwack called attention to the lack of theorization on setting's outlying areas. "Setting," he wrote, "denotes a place of action," but "is not adequate to describe the use of places unrelated to action, such as metaphors or evocations of places in the speeches or unconsciousness of characters" (Lutwack 1984: 28) – which indeed, as Phelan and Rabinowitz suggest, often provide or imply important contrasts establishing values and meaning. Two years later, Ruth Ronen hit on a solution in the matter by suggesting the term "frames" to describe "places and locations which provide a *topological determination* to events and states in a story" (1986: 423). Ronen's frames "differ according to their position in the overall organization of [...] the fictional universe." While a setting is "the zero point where the *actual* story-events and story-states are localized," what Ronen called "distant frames" are "spatial locations capable of extending over a sequence of actions, events and situations," but "independent of any of them." These literary spaces "outside the spatial focus of the narration (i.e., outside story-space), are no less significant than frames forming part of the actual story-space" (423). Much as visions of an unvisited South America in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* or

in Joyce's "Eveline" provide contrasts to Paris or Dublin, and indeed help establish these settings' meanings, "[a] distant frame incorporated into the structure of the fictional space may draw attention to an aspect of the setting with which it is juxtaposed" (428). Setting, it would seem, is a set of propositions backgrounding action when action itself, not place, assumes primary importance.

Marie-Laure Ryan began delving into these complications by defining setting as "the general socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action takes place," as contrasted with "spatial frames" (the immediate surroundings of actual events, shifting scenes of action), "story space" (the space relevant to the plot), and the "narrative (or story) world" (diegetic space completed by the reader's imagination on the basis of cultural knowledge and real world experience) ([2009] 2014: § 2.1) – the latter forming the basis of contributions to the journal *Storyworlds*, edited by David Herman. Ryan's story spaces are, as Ruth Ronen wrote, "the *inactualized* parts of narrative space" (1990: 32), imagined spaces perhaps implying inactualized events, indeed often setting contrasts and thus marking setting more clearly as unactualized *places* outside setting's "set of propositions."

Our understanding of such spaces and worlds might be linked to the idea of a landscape, a term curiously under-used in literary narrative theory, though one Ryan ([2009] 2014: par. 28) mentions in her discussion of recent trends in narratological thinking on space ("landscape narratives," as in Azaryahu and Foote's [2008] research). How such landscape narratives might relate to literature, however, often remains unclear, as such theory becomes entangled in the geography of real extratextual spaces referred to in texts themselves, as in the work of Moretti (1998) and Piatti (2008) – and even more so in classical geocritical texts like those of Julien Gracq or the more recent geocritical theory proposed by Bertrand Westphal (2007). Landscapes, "characterized by all those features that Ricœur identifies as definitive of a text" (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 6), much like narratives, as J.B. Jackson wrote, are "the place where we establish our own human organization of space and time," where "we speed up or retard or divert the cosmic program and impose our own" (Jackson 1984: 157). W.J.T. Mitchell proposed that landscape, again much like narrative, "works as a cultural practice" and is "an instrument of cultural power" (1994b: 1–2). It is, he wrote, a medium "in which cultural meanings and values are encoded," an "emblem of the social relations it conceals" (Mitchell 1994a: 14–15), much as Ann Bermingham found that landscapes teach viewers to observe their surface as "an ordered, coherent pictorial whole rather than as a chaotic collection of bits and pieces" (1994: 86). Likewise, for David Bunn, a landscape, much like a narrative, is "a system of aesthetic, conventional, and ideological ordering useful in the management of political contradictions" (1994: 127). As Edward E. Casey writes, "[b]ody and landscape present themselves as coeval epicenters around which particular places pivot and radiate" (1993: 29). Essential for understanding how and

why, as Phelan and Rabinowitz suggest, our notions of setting are often conflated with character is that, as Casey writes, "place" is "what takes place between body and landscape" (1993: 29). Indeed, as Ryan writes, readers "gather spatial information" from literary texts largely from "the movements of characters" ([2009] 2014: par. 21), who themselves provide the focus of "interest in the fictional world […] rather than, for instance, fictional time or space or narrative situations" (Ryan 2003: 236). Characters' movements provide readers with "mental models of narrative space" which, "centered on the characters," thus "grow out of them" (236). Yet, as Donald Polkinghorne (2014) has recently suggested, little work has been done on narrative and embodied schemas or "image schemas" which arise from recurrent bodily movements through space.

4. Place, space and narrative

3.1. *Place*

"Place," writes David Harvey, has an extraordinary range of metaphorical meanings. We talk about the place of art in social life, the place of women in society, our place in the cosmos, and we internalize such notions psychologically in terms of knowing our place, of feeling we have a place in the affections or esteem of others. We express norms by putting people, events and things in their proper place and seek to subvert norms by struggling to define a new place from which the oppressed can freely speak. Place has to be one of the most multi-layered and multi-purpose words in our language. (1993: 4)

As Harvey's work suggests, "place" often has more to do with where we place ourselves than with abstract notions of space. "The question 'what is place?' presents many difficulties," wrote Aristotle, one of the first to comment on the question. The very existence of place, he contended, is proved by the fact that things can take each other's place, for "[w]here water now is, there in turn, when the water has gone out as from a vessel, air is present," suggesting that "clearly the place or space into which and out of which they passed was something different from both" (*Physics*, Book IV, Part 1).

Meanwhile, place's ties to character, as many of the theorists above highlight, are not so easy to cut. "[P]lace is 'the most basic way' in which one thing can be *in* another," writes Casey quoting Aristotle (1997: 58; cf. *Physics*, Part II). Something counts as a place only when it is a "possible habitat" for a possible body (or an imagined "virtual body"), he goes on, referring to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (235). Place is lived place (226), and "all places are resting places" (228). Yet "[t]he body itself is place-productive, bringing forth places from its expressive and orientational

movements" (236). "If we think of space as that which allows movement," writes Yi-Fu Tuan, "then place is a pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (1977: 6). We "discover new places by means of bodily movement," finding ourselves "in the midst of places we already know thanks to the intimate link between their abiding familiarity and our own corporeal habituality" (Casey 1997: 233). Moreover:

[*I*]*f* I move my body in a certain way, *then* things will appear differently – including the places in which they appear. Put more directly: the way I feel my own body being/moving in a place will have a great deal to do with the way I experience that place itself, [for a place] is a complex qualitative whole that answers to my kinesthetic experience of it. (219)

As such, then, a place "is more an *event* than a *thing*," observes Casey (26).[1] Given that much early narrative theory worked under the assumption that events are narrative's most essential feature, Casey's suggestion is one worth taking note of. For Sextus Empiricus, writes Casey, "place" (*topos*) is space when occupied by a body (1997: 83), while sites, imagined places, once occupied, are often found to be spaces more than the places we expected. Space, wrote Michel de Certeau, "*is practiced place*" ([1980] 1984: 117) and may or may not be what its "site" represents – or its schema suggests. Imagined from a distance as fixed sites of meaning, places become spaces when "practiced."

3.2. Space

Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) underlined a difference between "'ideal' space" (what I will here call "place") and "'real' space" (what I will here call "space"). Lefebvre's "ideal" space (place) has to do with mental categories and symbolism, while "real" space (space) is the space of social practice, though "each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins and presupposes the other" (14). Place is semiotically manifested space, while space is physically and socially construed (Knox and Marston 2001). Lefebvre's third type of space, "conceived space," is more or less what we mean by "site," a representation of space used, for example, in planning. We might speak, then, of "sites" within storyworlds but outside of "real space" (such as Eveline's Argentina, a conceived location with meaning, to be sure, but unexperienced), "places" (perhaps more personally semiotically-charged, known spaces of representation) and "space" itself, where social practices and socio-political

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[1] Chaudhuri evidently coined the term "platiality" to mean "a recognition of the signifying power and political potential of specific places" (1995: 5), in much the same way Casey and Foucault use the term "site," which is "defined by relations of proximity between points or elements" (Foucault [1984] 1998: 238).

interactions, still unsettled, may leave a definite, immediately readable semiotics more obscure. And yet place overlaps with both space and site: Argentina is certainly symbolically-charged for Eveline; her home in Dublin, while a space where social powers play out, is no less symbolically-charged for her and becomes perhaps even more so once she finds herself in the position of leaving it behind.

Place, for Kant, is simply parts of space related to one another by fixed positions (cf. Casey 1997: 182). Yet, as Casey glosses Deleuze and Guattari, "*where something is situated* has everything to do with *how it is structured*" (302, original emphasis). For Neoplatonist Iamblichus of Apamea (c. 245-325 AD), Casey writes,

[o]ne has to conceive place not only as encompassing and establishing in itself the things existing in place, but as sustaining them by one single power. Regarded thus, place will not only encompass bodies from outside, but will fill them totally with a power that raises them up. And the bodies sustained by this power, falling down by their proper narrative, but being raised up by the superiority of place will thus exist in it. [Place is] a power that acts. (1997: 89, 90)

Indeed, its schema, suggesting an established narrative, "acts" on the character in the place.

For Lefebvre, "spatial practices," dependent on certain levels of competence and performance, ensure continuity and a degree of cohesion in society, while "representational spaces" are embodiments of complex societal symbolism. They are first and foremost constructed. In literature, writes Zoran, there are three levels of spatial construction: 1) a "*topographical level*: space as a static entity," 2) a "*chronotopic level*: the structure imposed on space by events and movement, i.e. by spacetime," and 3) a "*textual level*: the structure imposed on space by the fact that it is signified within the verbal text" (1984: 315). The first two levels correspond roughly to our definitions of place and space, respectively seen as the product of movement between places. For Lefebvre, space is the product of energy, which is not content filling an empty container (space), for "empty" space does not exist, except as a mathematical abstraction ([1974] 1991: 13). Likewise, for de Certeau, "pedestrian movements form one of these 'real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.' They are not localized; it is rather that they spatialize" ([1980] 1984: 97). Meanwhile, perhaps thanks to the traces and paths they leave, according to Casey, places "gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts [...] in their midst." This "gathering" is not "merely amassing," but implies having
a peculiar hold on what is presented (as well as represented) in a given place. Not just the contents but the very mode of containment is held by a place. […] it is a

holding *together* in a particular configuration; hence our sense of an ordered arrangement of things in a place even when those things are radically disparate and quite conflictual. The arrangement allows for certain things – people ideas, and so forth – to overlap with, and sometimes to occlude, others as they recede or come forward together." This holding is both "a holding *in* and a holding *out*," capable of moving "place-holders toward the margins of its own presentation while, nevertheless, holding them within its own ambiance. (Casey 1996: 24–25)
Talking about space and place in narrative theory, then, certainly requires talking about character, as Phelan and Rabinowitz suggest, for it "begins to merge with character" much as "'environment' and psychology begin to intertwine" (Herman et al. 2012: 85). This hardly means one can speak of space as something in "opposition" to narrative. Quite the contrary.

3.3. Narrative

One can understand why place, as approached through literary description, is difficult to consider when theorizing on narrative. Place is, in a sense, static whereas we tend to think of narratives as dynamic structures. For de Certeau, a place
is the order [...] in accordance with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place), [for in] place […] the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own "proper" and distinct location, a location it defines, [thus implying] an indication of stability. ([1980] 1984: 117).
A space, meanwhile, "exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements" and is "actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it" (de Certeau [1980] 1984: 117). Still, as Yi-Fu Tuan notes, "ideas of 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa" (1977: 6). Stories, meanwhile, "carry out the labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" and "organize the play of changing relationships between places and spaces" (de Certeau [1980] 1984: 118). "The story," Mieke Bal once theorized, "is determined by the way in which the fabula is presented. During this process, places are linked to certain points of perception. These places seen *in relations to their perception* are called space" ([1985] 1992: 93, original emphasis). Space, and indeed narrative itself, *is*, after all, only as it is perceived from a place or point of perception. Much as de Certeau saw stories as organizing changing relationships between (experienced) locations, Bal viewed "contrasts between locations and the borderlines between them" as "predominant means of highlighting the significance of the fabula *or even of determining it*" (93, emphasis mine). If

narration is the act of sequencing of events, it can also be that of sequencing places. "Narrative structures," writes de Certeau, "regulate changes in space [...] in the form of places put in linear or interlaced series" ([1980] 1984: 115). Whatever role it plays in this "interlacing," time, wrote Lefebvre, "is known and actualized in space, becoming a social reality" through "spatial practice," while space is "known only in and through time" ([1974] 1991: 219). If space is "the envelope of time" (339), then for de Certeau "movement always seems to condition the production of a space and to associate it with a history" ([1980] 1984: 118).

Even so, Zoran wrote in 1984, space still lacks "a recognized and clear-cut status within the text." Space has been understood by narrative theory "in various ways," he points out, none of which is

as clear and unambiguous as the term *time*. This lack of symmetry in the relationship between space and time is evident not only in their status in the text, but also in the extent of the progress of research on these concepts. Although the subject of space has been dealt with more than once, research in general on the subject is quite diffuse, and there are few assumptions that have become generally accepted. (Zoran 1984: 310)

Because of this, even today, literature is still often considered to be "basically an art of time." And though, wrote Zoran, "no one today would state this as baldly as Lessing did, the dominance of the time factor in the structuring of the narrative text remains an indisputable fact" (310). Zoran published these lines the year de Certeau's work was translated to English, and much has since been published to ameliorate earlier theoretical neglects of space.

Even before the development of classical narratology, there had been a great deal of general thinking on space and place in literature in the years after Joseph Frank, in "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," examined how modernist fiction allows readers to imagine elements juxtaposed in simultaneous space instead of "unrolling in time" ([1945] 1981: 10). By 1990, "many different theoretical approaches" had "seen a shift in focus from a poetological reflection oriented towards categories of time to an approach which tends to give precedence to categories of space" (Fischer-Lichte 1990: 15). Edward Soja (1989) was able to see, in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, a return to a focus on space, mainly through the work of Lefebvre and Foucault, and as Marxian theory took an interest in geography, geographers became interested in Marxism. And though there was in the late 1980s and early 1990s what has often been called a "spatial turn" in theory, Soja noted that while

others joined Foucault to urge a rebalancing of this prioritization of time over space, no hegemonic shift has yet occurred to allow [critics] to see spatiality with the same acute depth of vision that comes from a focus on *durée*. The critical hermeneutic is

still enveloped in a temporal master-narrative, in a historical but not yet comparably geographical imagination. (1989: 11)[1]

Twenty years after Frank's work, Susan Sontag suggested that what literary studies in the United States (which still had yet to hear of "narratology") needed first and foremost was "a vocabulary – a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, vocabulary – for forms." Yet, she lamented, "[o]ne of the difficulties is that our idea of form is spatial (the Greek metaphors for form are all derived from notions of space)" (Sontag 1966: 12).[2] Sontag suggested that our shortcoming in speaking about literary form is deeply ingrained historically. But it is also, as Mark Turner (1996) observed, ingrained psychologically. Indeed, one of the most common ways we use spatial metaphors for speaking of form is in describing the form of time: "when we project spatiality onto temporality […] we think of time itself, which has no spatial shape, as having a spatial shape – linear, for example, or circular" (Turner 1996: 17–18).

3.4. Spatial metaphors in narrative theory

If Frank's spatial metaphor for literary form (highly influential in its day and still so today) is drawn from physically spatial, embodied arts, Ryan, like Frank, has pinpointed this "notion of spatial form in literature" as being "born out of dissatisfaction with Lessing's distinction between the temporal arts (music, literature) and the spatial arts (sculpture, painting)" (2003: 350).[3] Today, she writes, much as Turner suggests, "[m]any of the spatial concepts developed in literary and cognitive theory" are in fact only metaphorically spatial "because they fail to account for physical existence" ([2009] 2014: par. 3). Ryan mentions Fauconnier's mental spaces and mapping "whose origin in the visual representation of space has been overshadowed by its extension to any kind of analogical thinking" as well as Susan Stanford Friedman's "spatial reading" of narrative and Turner's "spatial stories"

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[1] Soja was writing specifically on a "transformative retheorization of space, time and social being" as "taking shape in contemporary social theory and philosophy" (1989: 163).

[2] In de Certeau's later writings, this problem of spatial Greek metaphors for form would be broadened: "narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes." They are "spatial trajectories" ([1980]: 1984 115). Meanwhile, one might note here Lévi-Strauss's idea (already available in an English translation at least eight years before Sontag's call for a focus on form over content), that it is precisely in the genre of myth that "*form* takes precedence over the *content* of the narrative" (Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1963: 204). Yet questions regarding this situation persist, as Ruth Ronen and Efrat Biberman point out: "Narrativity, according to analytic thought, either conducts the narrated content, or insulates it. In both cases the content is regarded as distinct from the act of narrating, although the narrative mode is clearly presented as constitutive of the final narrative object. The question that remains to be answered is how can these two assumptions co-exist: in what sense does the narrative modality manifest itself, and affect narrated content, and if so, how and to what extent" (2006: 127).

[3] More recently, Klaus Speidel (2013) has published work picking apart Lessing's distinction, arguing for the narrative potential of single images.

([2009] 2014: par. 3).¹ Indeed, in Friedman's "Spatialization: A Strategy for Reading Narrative," which proposes to consider narrative as "the play of desire in space" and in time (1993: 12), the "space" referred to is finally extratextual space.² Her *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* perhaps finally moved closer than Fauconnier's and Turner's work to treating diegetic literary space itself as at least a means of comparing narrative forms of different authors, drawn as it is from "geographic formulations of the politics of identity" in which, she notes, the social sciences have already made "widespread use of spatial rhetoric" (Friedman 1998: 245). Because "the spatial dimension of narrative has been so relatively unexamined," Friedman suggests a focus on textual analysis "based in the spatial plotting of intercultural encounter" (139) and "emphasizing location instead of time to see what aspects of narrative emerge more visibly" (138). Once applied to individual texts, however, her "mappings" again tend use geographic metaphors to describe identity, character development and action rather than illuminating physical location in the diegesis as a "symbolic geography" (137) with a plot of its own. William V. Spanos at one point saw the focus on literature's "spatial element" as even broader and more long-standing than Ryan's examples suggest, tracing it back to Romanticism's and Imagism's perverted "appropriation" of "Platonic or Neo-Gnostic transcendentalism" (Spanos 1970: 94), Joseph Frank's work being simply the most obvious example of a long tradition. Nevertheless, one might argue that this "technique of spatial analysis," however pervasive, did not go far enough in dealing with space itself, rather using "space" as a metaphor for dealing with temporality in literature. Reflecting Sontag's complaint, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák has suggested that research in "the poetics of narrative"

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¹ Joseph A. Kestner, if his work might be taken as a precursor or at least a background to the texts Ryan mentions, typically, defines "four possible functions of space in the novel. First, space functions as the operative secondary illusion in the text [for Kestner, space is "secondary" to time, and thus illusory], the agency by which spatial properties are realized in the temporal art. Its second function is revealed through geometric qualities like point, line, plane, and distance. The relation of the novel to the spatial arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture constitutes its third spatial function. […] Finally, spatiality influences the interpretive act, for the texts creates a 'genidentic' field, incorporating the reader in a dynamic relation with it" (Kester 1978: 21–22). Here, notably (and one fears typically), the enumeration of "space's functions" in the novel does more to obscure any specific study of diegetic space in and of itself, for though they are separated, these categories tend to be combined in comparisons that blur their boundaries. (For Kestner, the "geometric function" of space is essentially the diegetic space of the novel; yet any notions of the "space" of the setting are quickly conflated with the "space" between characters and the "space" of the plot or even genre itself.)

² According to Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg (Herman et al. 2012: 305), Friedman's "central point is that narrative has not only a horizontal movement through time but also a vertical dimension that brings back a spatial view of plot. The vertical dimension links the horizontal surface to literary, historical, and psychic intertexts. Literary intertexts include both generic patterns and specific prior narratives; historical intertexts involve the broader social order, including cultural narratives; and psychic intertexts involve the patterns of repression and return within the text itself as well as those involved in the author's relation to the material."

still cannot dispense with such spatial metaphors as surface and depth, inside and outside, linearity, intersection, and distance. It follows from the metaphoric use of these words that they refer to various, sometimes quite dissimilar phenomena. As a result, there is some deep-seated ambiguity in the language of most narratologists. (1990: 103)

Bertrand Westphal has gone so far as to suggest that such metaphors, arising in the late 1960s, were part of spatial theory's "counter-attack" on temporally-oriented theory (2007: 43). But they might just as well be seen as signs of lip-service to undercurrents of research from other, sometimes better-funded fields of the era. W.J.T. Mitchell's "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory" distinguished four different ways we speak about spatiality in literary texts:

first, the text itself as a spatial form in the non-metaphoric sense [i.e., the page or screen itself, font sizes, etc.]; secondly, the spatial realm that a text describes, the world it represents [setting or storyworld]; third, the spatiality that pertains to elements of structure and form, the patterns of coherence that a text seems to suggest; and fourth, the spatiality that characterizes the "overall meaning," "the metaphysics" that we assign to a text. (Mitchell 1980: 550–553; cf. Sielke 2004: 78)

If Mitchell's first category has since been taken over by book and media studies, text/image studies, intermedial studies and the most basic poetics, his third and fourth categories provoked a storm of work following Joseph Frank's. As for his second feature, space, it is often relegated, much as Phelan and Rabinowitz suggest, to studies of "symbolism," "ambience" or "mood."

More simply, and in narrative theory more specifically, Andrew Gibson underlines that the approach of literary studies to narrative has "traditionally concerned itself with two distinct kinds of space" with "profoundly ideological" connections:

On the one hand, there is the space of representation. This is understood as the space of the real, the homogenous space of the world. On the other hand, there is the space of the model or describable form. (Gibson 1996: 3)[1]

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[1] De Certeau, writing on Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," saw these two "spaces" as working in intertwined conjunction: "what is the place of the other? [...] This line of questioning places into question both the text's power of composing and distributing places, its ability to be a narrative of space, and the necessity for it to define its relation to what it treats, in other words, to construct a place of its own. The first aspect concerns the space of the other; the second, the space of the text. On the one hand, the text accomplishes a spatializing operation which results in the determination or displacement of the boundaries delimiting cultural fields (the familiar vs. the strange). In addition, it reworks the spatial divisions which underlie and organize a culture. For these socio- or ethno-cultural boundaries to be changed, reinforced, or disrupted, a space of interplay is needed, one that establishes the text's difference, makes possible its operations and gives it 'credibility' in the eyes of its readers, by distinguishing it both from the conditions within which it arose (the context) and from its object (the content). Montaigne's essay functions both as an *Index locorum* (a redistribution of cultural space) and as the affirmation of a place (a locus of utterance). These two aspects are only formally distinguishable, because it is in fact the text's reworking of space that simultaneously produces the space of the text" (de Certeau [1980] 1984: 67–68).

By focusing on this second kind of space, "the narratological imaginary has been haunted by […] dreams of the geometric" (3). Gibson goes on to outline this "geometrisation" of theory in the work on Mieke Bal, Barthes, Greimas, Propp, Iser, Eco, Seymore Chatman, Stanzel and Genette ("the arch-geometrician of narrative"; 5), followed, in turn, by "revisionist" (7) American theorists including Peter Brooks, Ross Chambers, Karl Kroeber and James Phelan, who "only further reconfirmed narratological geometrics" (8), even though they have more recently issued a call to remedy the situation while at the same time highlighting the difficulties inherent in any eventual remedy.

Gibson's "arch-geometrician of narrative" bears a visit in gauging this spatialization of our conception of literary form. In an early essay, Gérard Genette proposed that language itself has a primal, elementary spatiality and seems almost naturally apt to "express" spatial relations, leading it to symbolize all relations (and reality itself) as spatial, and to use space as a metaphor for any relationship. "Treating everything in terms of space, language spatializes everything," he summarized (Genette 1969: 44, translation mine). Indeed, as Derrida wrote, spatial "metaphors" are not simply metaphors, but are inherent to phenomenological processes themselves: "The phenomenon of so-called spatializing metaphors is not at all accidental, nor within the reach of the rhetorical concept of 'metaphor.' It is not some exterior fatality" (1983: 78). Our "spatialization" of literary form would thus seem inextricably tied to the structure of language itself, or indeed even to phenomenology on a deeper level. But is it perhaps not also symptomatic, as Gibson seems to suggest, of our overlooking literature's *other* spatiality? In theorizing on the spatiality of literary form, thought about narrative has often eschewed the seemingly more modest task of focusing on Gibson's first "kind of space": that of the fictional world itself. Hopefully our wealth of spatial metaphors for literary form has prepared us to look, too, at how diegetic space itself performs a narrative function. If "*[f]orms and substances, codes and milieus* are not really distinct," but are "abstract components of every articulation" (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987: 502, original emphasis), one might best fulfill Sontag's call for a non-spatialized description of literary form by inverting it, considering not only "place as a formal element in literature" (Lutwack 1984: 2), but spatiality *as* content. Might one imagine literary space itself (setting or storyworld) as offering (or at least suggesting) its own "content" without speaking of literary form as spatial?

4. Greek metaphors

Before following up on this proposal, we might have a look at where Sontag's "Greek metaphors" for form originate and at how form (and eventually literary form) came to be associated with space in western thought to begin with. One might start with Aristotle's supposition that nothing exists without there first being a place for it, an idea resonating with the slightly earlier "Archytian Axiom," which Casey glosses as

"Place is the first of all things" (1996: 16). For Aristotle, while a thing cannot exist without a place, places may exist quite well independently on their own. "Form," meanwhile, is for Aristotle the boundary of a thing, while place "is the boundary of the body which contains" the thing itself (the form), much as place (*topos*) was, for Strato of Lampsacus, "the interval in the middle of the container and the contained" (Casey 1997: 85). Place "is thought to be a kind of surface, and as it were a vessel, i.e. a container of the thing." Place is "coincident" with the thing it contains, "for boundaries are coincident with the bounded." Tracing the boundaries of form (to be perfectly un-spatial, one would not say its outline), place is a more or less reliable spatial reference if one wishes to visualize any form (the boundary of a thing) within it (*Physics*, Book 4, part 4). Our own contemporary understandings of visual perception are that figure, not ground, signals shape to the human eye. We perceive a figure's boundary or outline as part of the figure, not of the ground (place). Greek (visual) space, with Aristotle, merged "background [place] with form" (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1984: 495). How this was reasoned at the time deserves explanation. For Aristotle, "if place is what primarily contains each body, it would be a limit, so that the place would be the form or shape of each body […]: for this is the limit of each body. If, then, we look at the question in this way the place of a thing *is* its form" (*Physics*, Book 4, part 2). This would seem to be the state of affairs Sontag saw as an essential difficulty in describing form without spatial metaphors. Still, Aristotle pressed his point yet further: "This is why Plato in the *Timaeus* says that matter and space are the same; for the 'participant' and space are identical" (*Physics*, Book 4, part 2). Place not only corresponds to form but provides a visual contour of whatever body is within it, which allows a body's identification, perhaps shaping it, but certainly revealing its shape. For Aristotle, things correspond to "their proper" place almost in terms of *belonging* to it, and movement is only the result of a thing's not yet being in its proper place. Of what effects place has on the things it contains (other than stopping movement), he writes only that "the typical locomotions of the elementary natural bodies – namely, fire, earth, and the like – show not only that place is something, but also that it exerts a certain influence" (*Physics*, Book 4, Part 1). Such notions may seem distant and abstract to us today, but they are not necessarily so for authors. As Elizabeth Bowen wrote, "[n]othing can happen nowhere. The locale of the happening always colours the happening, and often, to a degree, shapes it" ([1946] 1999: 39).

Aristotle does not describe exactly *how* a place's "influence" exerts itself. Pre-Aristotelian Greek chorography, however, with which he was surely familiar, did describe this in detail: different areas of the earth (and their contents) are situated under different star constellations and are guided by a particular theme, sign or archetype, itself based on (or inspiring) a mythological narrative. This idea perhaps finds its clearest contemporary echo in Franco Moretti's suggestions of a "narrative

matrix" based on "space." Different geographic areas depicted as literary settings, Moretti theorizes, are "not just different landscapes," but "different *narrative matrixes.* Each space determines its own kind of actions, its plot – its genre" (Moretti 1998: 84). "Space," or at least *a* specific space, can thus be theorized as that from which a plot's form takes its direction, a sort of template for a narrative within it. The word "plot," interestingly, from Old English "plot," meaning "small piece of ground," took the sense of "ground plan" or of a map or chart in the 1550s, and by the 1580s, that of "plan" or "scheme" (likely because of its similarity to the French *complot*), and by the 1590s could also mean "to make a map or diagram," while its meaning "set of events in a story" is only attested from the 1640s (Online etymology dictionary). If this may only be a curious coincidence, it's worth noting that the meaning of "plot" changed from "a place" to "a way narrative is organized," and that this change took place at just the time western philosophy began to reevaluate Aristotle's work.

Michael Curry (2002), examining developments in the notion of place from pre-Aristotelian Greece to the 1990s, divides the original study of place into three areas: 1) chorography is the art of writing about regions (places conceptualized as areas within a larger spatial container and related to abstract terms which provide their identity and guide movement within them); 2) topography is the art of writing about places (mapping them by physically going, like Greek sailors along a coast, from one place to the next, and representing these places as points on a chart, together reproducing a coast's outline); 3) geography is the art of writing about the earth as a whole. Chorography, founded on astrology, related places on earth to what was visible in the heavens above them, making visual mapping possible. From this, the earth was divided into horizontal bands, with each region and what it contained (objects, creatures, people and their dispositions) having different characteristics related to what lay above it in the heavens. *Choros*, Curry writes, "originally appealed to subjective meanings, to the emotional cast associated with a place, as well as to the more 'objective' features of location" (2002: 503). Meanwhile, "the newer topos, which appeared for the first time in Aeschylus in about 470 BC," typically referred to a "more objective" sense of "place" (503) as a point mapped in relation to other points.[1] By the third century BC, "topos had begun to be used in the expression for holy places, while choros had begun to be used to refer to what we would now think of as regions, to administrative districts, and in the process had begun to lose its emotional tinge." By the second century AD, the topographic tradition "appeared to require skill in drawing, and the chorographic dealt 'for the most part, with the nature rather than the size of the lands' and with 'qualitative matters' (Ptolemy, 1948: 163)" (Curry 2002: 503).

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[1] Archytas (c. 428–347 BC) made a distinction between *topos* (place) and space, the latter which "differs from matter and is independent of it" (Jammer 1969: 10).

Topography's origins are quite different from what this later conceptualization of the study of space might lead us to imagine. Narrative, intertwined with the notion of *choros* from the beginning, also left its mark on the development of *topos*: "in classical geography 'Topography' was defined as the order of discrete units one to another" with topographical location "referent solely to the contiguity of places" (Curry 2002: 503). An "essential feature of topographical accounts" is that they do not only provide "a simple list of the order of places (one would have the equivalent of a railroad timetable, without the time)" but also take "the form of a chronology or narrative of what was seen as one went from place to place" (503). Curry suggests that topographical mapping itself developed out of a series of terms in a narrative – that narratives were used as maps, or maps used to signify narratives – in *periploi*, Greek accounts of sailing explorations describing the order in which travelers came to different places *through* story (504). One can imagine the usefulness of narrative as a mnemonic device for keeping account of the positions of these places and as a system for ordering space. And, much as Phelan and Rabinowitz note our difficulty in talking about space without conflating it with symbolism, Curry writes,

these early topographic accounts describe a world awash in symbols, [a world in which, for example] the snail can be a sign of the season for work, but where the snail is connected with the heavens, with the place of the Pleiades, and where both are connected to what one sees on the earth – the labour of farmers, [with] the snail, the heavens and the farmer [all] elements of a larger web of symbols, where the elements that make up the world are all and always actively significatory. [This is] not a world captured in maps, or lists, or other written descriptions, [but rather] a world in which people inhabit places, where the relationships between those places and others are represented just in terms of narrative and symbol. If within the topographic tradition places are represented through narrative accounts, we can see the places themselves as constituted through the practices that are the subject matter of those accounts. (2002: 504)

These narratives "describe what is acceptable and what is not" within a given place, defining places "as constituted of sets of possibilities and constraints" (504), much as in Bowen's description.

Curry goes on to describe how, between the time of Hesiod (who, according to Aristotle, implied that "things need to have space first, because […] everything is somewhere and in place. If this is its nature, the potency of place must be a marvelous thing, and take precedence of all other things"; *Physics*, Book 4, part 1), and that of Ptolemy, "the discourse about places underwent a subtle but dramatic set of changes":

[While] within the topographic tradition a description of places did not involve a clear distinction between the question 'What is next to this?' and 'What did we come to next?', [leaving] distance and extension […] in a certain way equivalent to time

and sequence, [by the fourth century BC], the conceptualization of space and place [was formalized, as empirical observation] showed that the world tends toward stasis. Objects move until they stop. [Essential here, explains Curry], is why they stop: they stop because they have reached the place where they belong, [their] natural place. (Curry 2002: 506)

Aristotle's work is thus "based on a conceptualization within which place is absolutely central, and in which an adequate account of the world needs to be couched in terms of the question of what goes where" (506), rather than of what *goes on* where. Following developments from this point up to a Newtonian switch of emphasis on space over place, Curry concludes with references to contemporary theorists who stress that space (in the Cartesian sense) is imaginary, while only places are real, a position Curry himself champions.

Space can only be defined by the measurements of distances between named points within it – places – distances that themselves only derive any physical relevance from their relationship to speed of movement. Space, in effect, can only be conceived in terms of time, for, as Aristotle put it, "we measure both the distance by the movement and the movement by the distance; for we say that the road is long, if the journey is long, and that this is long, if the road is long – the time, too, if the movement, and the movement, if the time" (*Physics*, Book 4, part 12). Speed itself being relative, space is thus in a sense always differently mappable, while place, in contrast, is named, marked and fixed to the symbolic. Space, the space of movement between places, is both experienced (as time) and (because of this) unmappable with any permanent certainty. An extreme case of this unmappable yet experienced space would be Deleuze and Guattari's "smooth space" (as opposed to "striated space") – of which the sea, they wrote, is, as it was for Greek sailors, "perhaps principal" ([1980] 1987: 387).

If Aristotle's is a physics "grounded within a world of places, and their relationships one to another" (Curry 2002: 506), it is so in no small measure because form can be apprehended in place. Thus, reasoned Aristotle, form corresponds to place in a direct and measurable way – in terms of shape, rather than of movement and sequence in time. Thus, he writes,

we measure the movement [of a thing] by the time, but also the time by the movement, because they define each other. [As] time is neither movement nor independent of movement, [yet] belongs to movement, [and as] what is moved is moved from something to something, [the distinction between] 'before' and 'after' holds primarily, then, in place. (*Physics*, Book 4, part 11)

This is an idea whose implications for narrative theory have been largely overlooked. Within space, writes Casey,

there is never merely *one* place anywhere, not even in the process of creation. It is as if cosmogony respected the general rule enunciated by Aristotle in another

connection: 'the minimum number, strictly speaking, is two.' To create in the first place is *eo ipso* to create two places. (2002: 12)

While Ryan has suggested that readers understand literary space through the movements of characters, might narrative itself not be read in the very patterns formed between places and self during movement in space between places?

5. Description and schemata

5.1. *Description*

Auerbach saw descriptions of diegetic space (which he suggested earlier Hebraic works would have mistrusted as iconography) as developing in western literature from Homeric texts. Given that Monika Fludernik's (2003) work on early English written narration finds evidence of development from episode-based to non-episode-based, with descriptions of setting eventually included as a later addition, one might wonder why and under what circumstances descriptions of place became important to western fiction and what function they play, if any, other than to provide "readerly pleasure" (as if action, plot and character were not equally obvious sources of a reader's "pleasure"). Henri Lafon surmises that European authors began including lengthier place descriptions in fiction to guarantee an effect of realism (1997: 160). Whether "realism" or "readerly pleasure," the differentiation of "narrative" (typically linked to action and time) from "description" (often imagined as narrative's antithesis, linked as it is to lyric forms) has long been entrenched. For Louis Marin, for example, "[e]ven though description, being language, must yield to the same basic laws of narrative, it develops against the grain of narrative. [...] Description's time is present: a timeless present," creating an illusion that the thing or place described is present at all times, with or without the subject's presence, unlike narrative (Marin [1973] 1984: 202). Philippe Hamon nuances this view by suggesting that while "description is the point where the narrative comes to a temporary halt, while continuing to organize itself (with foretokens of what will happen, redundancy or content, metonymic duplication of the psychology or fate of the characters)," an author's job is to "turn this empty thematic into a full one," so that "the anaphoric redundancy of content becomes a dialectic of content" (Marin [1981] 1982: 170). Description, for Marin, puts plot on hold, while for Hamon the pause it creates can be fully engaged in a productive critique of action and plot development.

More recently, Kelly A. Marsh (2009) has suggested one way such a "dialectic of content" – "timeless" description's active part in plot itself – might be accomplished. "Frequently," she writes, "elements of a narrative that appear to be expository, merely background, are signs of the submerged plot" (79). This "submerged plot," for Marsh, is the story which cannot be told directly, due to societal, generic, formal, or authorial convention: the "unnarratable." Much as Robyn Warhol's "Narrating the Unnarratable: Gender and Metonymy in the Victorian Novel" "focuses on textual details to explain how the unnarratable [is] rendered through metonymy," Marsh's

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approach "focuses on details of the surface plot to reveal how this subcategory of the unnarratable is rendered through the interaction of surface and submerged plots" (2009: 79). Marsh (like Warhol) focuses on textual "details" to outline a secondary (indeed perhaps primary) plot that cannot be directly voiced. Just as important as "details" in finding a "submerged plot" is something perhaps easier to overlook simply because it is not a detail: descriptions of setting and the ways various settings and spaces are arranged.

Aside from such touchstones, and despite Mikhail Bakhtin's ([1920–1930] 1990) famous insistence on the inseparability of time and space in literature, theory, as Susan Stanford Friedman notes, has historically set "narrative" off as a binary opposite to "description." Citing H. Porter Abbott as an example of this view ("Narrative gives us what could be called the shape of time"; 2002 [2008]: 3), she suggests that, instead,

[we] need a compensatory emphasis on space in order to bring back into view Bakhtin's continual attention to the function of space as an active agent in the production of narrative. We need a *topochronic* narrative poetics, one that foregrounds *topos* in an effort to restore an interactive analysis of time with space in narrative discourse. (2005: 194)

Space would in this way be seen as "the container of history and the generator of story." For in literature, frontiers between spaces "are not the background of narrative, mere description where time unfolds its plot," but "the generative energy of narrative, the space that contains time" (203).

Little work has explored this fascinating proposal in detail, elucidating concrete examples. But even traditional theory suggests entry points for doing so. For Wolf Schmid, description is set against action in narrative, but he admits that both are essential to narrative, as, "by necessity, the presentation of a story [at least in novels] combines narrative and descriptive modes" in order to function (2003: 21). Description is crucial to narrative when the two states it requires (the "before" and "after" of a tale which must somehow both differ and in some way be similar) are not connected to a single element of setting (21). Noting Tomaševskij's distinction between descriptive texts and narrative, Schmid insists that travel writing is merely descriptive when only what is seen is narrated, and not the personal adventures of the traveler. "However," he adds, "a description of travel can become a narrative without explicitly thematizing the traveler's internal state" when a transformation of the traveler (necessary for narrative) "becomes apparent from the selection of what is seen" alone. Changes in a character can be "indirectly suggested by indices or symptoms in the description" (22). Thus, in certain cases, description of setting would in itself constitute narrative development, just as action or event might. Here, then, is a place one might begin to think about space's centrality to narrative. Indeed, as Alice Jedličková suggests, Felix Vodička had already noted in 1948 that

individual textual types [like action and description] exercise typical functions in the structure of fictional prose but are flexible enough to substitute for each other. In other words, a description is capable of conveying a part of the plot, while what appears as a temporal narrative structure may fulfill a mainly descriptive function. (Jedličková 2010: 16)

Since then, Jedličková observes,

the history of narratology suggests that the vindication of description as a narratological issue during the heyday of structuralist research was purchased at the price of confirming or even producing prejudices against it, both by theoreticians, and readers. [...] The idea of modernist description considered as prone to melt into the narrative discourse even results in Lubomír Doležel's claim that the distinction between description and narration loses its legitimization eventually (in his 1960s stylistic research). (2010: 11]

The "canonical description of description as non-narrative should be given up," claims Jedličkova (13), a position also put forth by Ruth Ronen (1997).

5.2. Schemata

Schmid's reference to "narrative" description in travel narratives is interesting, for "prose fiction and the travel account have evolved together" and "are heavily indebted to each other" (Adams 1983: 279) in terms of both descriptive passages and action. James Buzard (1993) has suggested that through descriptions of places in nineteenth-century narrative, texts became attenuated because novels no longer served only as story-telling devices but, with the advent of mass travel, did double duty as guidebooks. With the advent of global travel, novels no longer only modeled textual space by describing what protagonists saw, but modeled readers' own potential (or even simultaneous) personal experiences in the "real" space depicted by the novel. Lists of places could even serve as sketches or outlines of inferred but undisclosed chains of action. In Sinclair Lewis's *Dodsworth* (1929), for example, the otherwise zeroed events of what the protagonist *does* in Paris, concludes the narrator, "may be deduced by studying a newspaper list of 'Where to Lunch, Dine, and Dance in Paris,' the advertisements of dressmakers, jewelers, perfumers, furniture-dealers, and of revues" (Lewis [1929] 1941: 370). Without describing specific events here, place offers (with a bit of narratorial prompting) a "script," that is, a prototypical structure for narrative, and

a memory structure that specifies the list of actions people perform in repeated situations [belonging to] a more general type of memory structure called *schemas*, which gather experiences [...] into units that function during narrative experiences [and allowing readers] to delineate a scene with quick gestures. (Gerrig and Egidi 2003: 41)

Place and space play an essential role in such "gatherings," as Theresa Bridgeman writes, for "[a]s a basic mechanism of reading, in texts which develop more than one

plot-line at once, location allows us to identify rapidly a return to an already-established ongoing scene ('back in Gotham City')" (2005: 56).**1**

Indeed, Emma Kafalenos, focusing on causality in narratives, suggests that "interpretations of the causes and effects of something someone does or something that happens depend on the context in which the action or happening is considered" (2006: vii). While timing may be everything, an oversimplifying aspect of her study, I would suggest, is its consideration of temporal contexts while largely ignoring spatial contexts. Kafalenos comes closest to such considerations in noting that "mention of a character's change of [geographic] position or preparations to change position often signals that character's adoption" of a new function in the text – going somewhere, or preparing to go to a new location often indicating a new role (function) for the character (14). Her work, drawing on Todorov's, adopts the idea of narrative functions (a position in a narrative sequence). As Barthes wrote, however, the "'soul' of any function" is "its seedlike quality, which enables the function to inseminate the narrative with an element that will later come to materiality, on the same level, or elsewhere on another level" ([1966] 1975: 244). Barthes never specifically mentions setting or place as a "function." Tellingly, though, in his closing example of a narrative kernel, drawn from the first passages of an Ian Fleming novel, he insists that a telephone call James Bond receives from Hong Kong (which opens the story) is not simply a detail added as a bit of realism, but that mention of this place is *itself* a kernel: "the true information, the information that will spring up from its seed later, is the tracing of the call back to its origin, namely *Hong Kong*" (271). Here, the final, most detailed example Barthes offers of narrative's smallest, most essential unit, this "kernel," "function" or "nucleus" – the seedlike "soul" from which the novel's plot will grow – is a *place* or site. Barthes' suggestion in this seminal essay, that the aim of narrative analysis is to dechronologize, then "relogify" narrative (as its chronology is essentially an illusion), is a thesis that has not prospered since (Ricœur's *Temps et récit*, Meir Sternberg's view of narrative as the play of temporalities and Phelan's "narrative progression," among many others, would, like Seymour Chatman's work, focus on time). Certainly it is not easy to talk about space without talking about time when dealing with narrative.**2**

Nevertheless, two points seem settled. First, pure "description" of diegetic space is in itself enough to constitute a narrative if it indicates changes in a focalizing character. Second, a change of diegetic "location" can "identify," trigger or activate narrative

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1 In time, writes Fludernik, "[w]hile sequentiality and thus strict adherence to chronological order are the norm, so that simultaneity stands out as an exception, this situation is reversed in respect of place and space: spaces are static; what needs to be stressed is change of scene. Many narratives," she notes, "switch to and fro between two (or more) locations. Key points in the plot are reached when characters travel from one location to another, or converge in one place; in doing so they bring separate plot strands together" ([2006] 2009: 43–44).

2 My thanks go to John Pier for this observation.

schemas (or, as Kafalenos suggests, prepare readers to consider the approach of a narrative reordering). Bridgeman's careful use of the term "location" in the quote above is telling, avoiding as it does two words by now so over-charged that one might be forgiven for hesitating to employ them for fear of treading on such metaphor-laden ground.

6. Future directions

6.1. Questioning temporality's essentiality

The role of space in narrative was often relegated to theory's sidelines in the years following Tzvetan Todorov's assertion that "the spatial order" functions, "in a certain measure, independently from" the orders of logic/causality and temporality (1969: 20, translation mine). Genette in that same year expanded the notion of space in literature so generally as to include even the shape of the printed word on the page – certainly an important line of thinking as work on paratexts developed, but weakening prospects for an immediate focus on the relation of diegetic space to plot. Barthes, meanwhile, tied causality and temporality in plot together further when he observed that

[e]verything suggests, indeed, that the mainspring of narrative is precisely the confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read in narrative as what is *caused by*; in which case narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* […]. ([1966] 1977: 94)

This claim has been examined in more detail by Kafalenos (2006), and John Pier (2008), studying the issues from the perspective of inferential reasoning, takes exception to Barthes' use of syllogistic logic. Gerald Prince would write that narrative could be defined as "the representation of *at least two* real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other" (1982: 4), suggesting widespread agreement that narrative requires (only) two non-simultaneous events or situations (145). Later, he would reiterate that "story always involves temporal sequence [...] and [that] this is its most distinctive feature," only to state later: "Of course, temporal relations between the situations and events making up a story are not the only ones possible: these situations and events may be related causally, for example" ([1987] 2003: 59).

6.2. Focus on causality

More recently, Kai Mikkonen has questioned what is more essential to our understanding of a text as a narrative: the temporal ordering of events or inferred causality. Citing Brian Richardson's (1997) reading of Tomaševskij, Mikkonen argues that "the ability to infer causal relations between events is a necessary condition of narrativity" (2007: 291). And not only is the reader's inference of causality essential for a series (or group) of events to be considered a narrative, it is perhaps even *more* essential than an author's temporal arrangement of events. Richardson himself suggests "it is not clear that temporal succession is a necessary condition of any

possible narrative," as "one may imagine four or five utterly simultaneous though causally connected events that would constitute a narrative" as at least "a theoretical possibility" (1997: 106).[1] Meanwhile, Mikkonen cites Todorov as noting that "the logical series is in the reader's eyes a much stronger relation than the temporal series; if the two go together, he sees only the first" (2007: 303). He goes on to refer to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's proposal that "causality can often (always?) be projected onto temporality" ([1983] 2002: 3).

If causality is thus so easily projected onto temporality (and is, following Richardson, possibly even more essential to narrative, adhering even to situations of *simultaneous* events), might it not also be projected onto relationships between (inherently simultaneous) fictional places? As early as 1978, Joseph A. Kestner had reiterated [Émile Borel's] idea that causality, which we presume to be based on time, is in reality much more spatial, dependent on distance and our identity with a particular group of observers. Thus, the position one chooses to take vis-à-vis a novel is critical to whether he perceives causality in the work at all [leaving] the concept of 'temporal' causality [...] hardly certain. (17)

Travel writing, or writings fixated on place, might provide a window for such theorizing, for "[i]n travel writing," Mikkonen notes,

consecutiveness and change over time relate directly to a place or a geographic space; time can be said, so to say, compressed into space, into synchronous spatial representation, while space is also translated into the temporality of writing and possibly also that of narrative. (2007: 292)

Mikkonen insists that no such causality could be imagined without a "goal-oriented" subject, for

[i]n travel literature, typically, an individual or a group of people engage here and now in an act of movement and perception, [and] the cognitive foundations and communicative functions of the 'narrative is travel' metaphor are based, to a significant degree, on the representation of the human experience of space and movement. This involves, even when we are dealing with examples of pure description of the place of travel, the portrayal of human consciousness engaged in goal-oriented activity. (299)

Indeed, the goal-oriented subject has even been imagined by David Antin (among others) as being narrative's most central element: "Narrative is a desiring subject's confrontation with the threat or promise of transformation" (McHale 2004: 96). Antin would consider the following Aztec "definition" of a cave a narrative, though there is no plot:

"It becomes long, deep; it widens, extends, narrows. It is a constricted place, a narrowed place, one of hollowed-out places. There are roughened places, asperous places. It is frightening, a fearful place, a place of death. It is called a place of death

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[1] Richardson (1997) refers to Borges's "The Aleph" and Robbe-Grillet's "The Secret Room."

because there is dying. It is a place of darkness; it darkens; it stands ever dark. It stands wide-mouthed, it is wide-mouthed; it is narrow-mouthed. It has mouths which pass through. I place myself in the cave. I enter the cave." (McHale 2004: 96) Here, for Antin, an (almost) eventless series of described places becomes a narrative, much as Schmid suggested it might, because of its "threatened" "transformation" of a "desiring subject." Mikkonen, referring to Fludernik's *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996: 28–29), goes on to note that "recent cognitive-linguistic approaches in narratology" see "the representation of experientiality (and embodiment) as an essential condition for narrative" (2007: 299). He further notes that "[f]or Marie-Laure Ryan, fictional narrative is an imaginative 'recentering' in another possible world [...] In this regard, travel narratives are prototypical cases of all narratives" (299).

6.3. Cultural mythologies

Along with taking fuller account of travel narratives (and of how traveling readers use them to construct personal narratives of their own experiences while on the road), another key here might be in more narratological examinations of mythologies, or in reading any narrative *as* an anthropological myth. For Lévi-Strauss, any myth itself is a narrativized ideology, whose diachronically unfolding plot must be read synchronically. Friedman's "spatialized readings of narrative" echo this concern with a focus on narrative's a-temporal elements. Her goal, taking Lévi-Strauss's own material, is to "break open" the Oedipus myth by laying aside Oedipus's temporal development (and plot-driving desires) to focus on the geographic locations in the story that form his identity (Friedman 1998: 40). "[L]inear time," wrote Kristeva, "is that of language considered as the enunciation of sentences (noun + verb; topic-comment; beginning-ending)" ([1979] 1981: 17). Yet space exists without language or sentences, and verbal descriptions are, in a sense, always a means of chronologizing space. In another vein, Thomas Bender has observed that narrative history "in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic cultures has always been linear, always beginning with a beginning," but its linearity coming at the cost of screening much out, narrowing history, and reducing "the plenitude of stories." Bender suggests a solution might be found in "allowing a greater spatialization of historical narrative" (2002: 8).

Louis Marin suggested that such narrative structures can only be seen by comparing various narratives in relation to each other, in "correlations whose distinction consists in escaping from temporality, [...] not a succession but an order [...] a-chronic" ([1973] 1984: 35). Such an "a-chronic system of correlations of relations in mythic narrative constitutes a complex interchange of transformations between poles and contrary functions" where "meanings" are less "clear" than when expressed with "temporal connections" (37). While temporality "regularizes" their relationships, a travel narrative "is a narrative whose events are places," "stops or stages" "marked out by incidents, accidents, or meetings" which are not themselves

"the essential elements," but only "signals of a possible 'memorization.' […] The travel narrative is thus the remarkable transformation into discourse of the map, that geographic icon" (Marin [1979] 1984: 42). Examining narrative in terms of the geographic relationship between places, as Marin suggests, instead of in terms of the temporal relationship between events, might be a useful way to more fully explore the repression Lacan describes as the reason we have narrative in the first place. If, as Gabriele Helms writes, cultural narratology works under the assumption that as "ideology is located in narrative structures themselves," and that analysis of texts' narrative structures can reveal unspoken assumptions and ideologies inherent to a genre or period (Helms 2003: 14), then studies of narrative might do well not only to focus on the causal relationship between two places whose relationship is maintained by temporal movement of characters between them, but also to look at those places in stories as co-existing, atemporal states, existing even without their "antagonism's" repression through "logical" movement in time. Whether in fiction or in other narrative texts, characters' movements in diegetic space might be read as a symbolic shorthand in and of themselves, either complementing "surface" plots, or undermining or subverting them.

This might be one step toward a more truly cultural, intercultural, or even anthropological narratology. In imagining what events "mean," might we not only ask "what do they lead to in a causal chain?" but look more closely at where they happen and what this "where" means to those involved, be they readers, characters or narrators? Such a task would involve delving into the unsteady ground of hermeneutics (sometimes skirted around by focusing on a text's "ethics"). Yet, more and more in the world we live in, we see our environment as "an instantaneous configuration of positions" (de Certeau [1980] 1984: 117) – one we are required to make sense of as much as to act in. Narrative is our faithful standby in this task. To use it well, we need to focus not only on place and space, and what we mean by those words, but on others' notions of them and on how we describe, inscribe and interpret the meaning of our own movements – and others' – in them.

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