



UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

This document has been downloaded from
TamPub – The Institutional Repository of University of Tampere

Post-print

The permanent address of the publication is
<http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:uta-201410092197>

Author(s):	Mäkelä, Maria
Title:	Cycles of Narrative Necessity : Suspect Tellers and the Textuality of Fictional Minds
Main work:	Stories and Minds. Cognitive Approaches to Literary Narrative
Editor(s):	Bernaerts, Lars; et al.
Year:	2013
Pages:	129-151
ISBN:	978-0-8032-4481-8
Publisher:	University of Nebraska Press
Series and number:	Frontiers of Narrative
Discipline:	Literature studies
School /Other Unit:	School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies
Item Type:	Article in Compiled Work
Language:	en
URN:	URN:NBN:fi:uta-201410092197
Additional Information:	From Stories and Minds: Cognitive Approaches to Literary Narrative edited by Lars Bernaerts, et al. by permission of the University of Nebraska Press. Copyright 2013 by the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska.

All material supplied via TamPub is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorized user.

<CN>6</CN>

<CT>Cycles of Narrative Necessity</CT>

<CST>Suspect Tellers and the Textuality of Fictional Minds</CST>

<CA>Maria Mäkelä</CA>

A narratologist who happens to be mainly interested in literary fiction should not feel impeded by the cognitive turn and the ensuing erosion of disciplinary borders. On the contrary: now that we acknowledge the presence of narrative everywhere and embrace every social situation as a lesson in mind reading, it seems that reading literary narratives has come to be considered a privileged form of intercognitive activity. The study of fictional minds has been given a boost by theorists such as Monika Fludernik, David Herman, Uri Margolin, Alan Palmer, and Lisa Zunshine, who have blended literary analysis with "real-mind discourses" (see Palmer 2004, 4), and with most persuasive results. But beyond "drawing on tools from the cognitive sciences to develop new descriptive and explanatory techniques for the study of fictional mental functioning," literary narratologists are in a position to suggest how "more careful scrutiny of fictional minds can help illuminate the 'real minds' . . . on which specialists in the cognitive sciences have traditionally focused" (Herman 2003, 23). The literary minds of Richardson's *Clarissa*, Austen's *Emma*, and Nabokov's *Humbert*

Humbert have thus ended up not just as subjects of cognitive-psychological vivisection but also as illustrations of actual human cognition as well as tools for understanding the mental processes of real minds. And why not? One of the goals of literary experimentation has been—at least from the early modernist to the late modernist era—to depict the mind "as it is," be it verbalized, streaming, intersubjective, unconscious, or fragmented.

Yet the recent use of ideas from the cognitive sciences to naturalize fictional minds departs from the emphases of early narratologists such as Käte Hamburger and Dorrit Cohn: for these scholars, the representation of fictional consciousness is precisely what distinguishes novelistic discourse from other kinds of discourse, narrative fiction being the only representational mode to grant us a look inside other people's heads (see Hamburger 1993, 81-89; Cohn 1978, 5-7, and 1999, 117-23). Alan Palmer's pathbreaking study on fictional minds critiques Cohnian notions of consciousness representation, claiming that structuralist analysis focused exclusively on the verbal aspects of fictional mind construction—to the exclusion of other, nonverbal aspects (Palmer 2004, 9-12). Making acquaintance with fictional characters may indeed bear more resemblance to a real-life cocktail party where everybody tries to figure out other people than to meticulous linguistic

analysis where alleged thought-segments are classified as direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse. Palmer succeeds in broadening the notion of fictional minds from verbal to nonverbal mental functioning, and as such his theoretical arguments are more illuminating than reductive. Yet, despite the benefits of these new approaches to studying fictional minds, for me George Butte's response to Paul John Eakin's (2004) cognitive-psychological analysis of autobiographical writing still resonates: "Would improved knowledge of, say, the superior colliculus's communication with the thalamus . . . eventually clarify the functioning of free indirect discourse?" (Butte 2005, 300).

This chapter aims at a constructive critique of those "cognitivist"¹ developments in literary theory that—to my mind—may lead to reductive views on fictional consciousness representation. My concern is twofold. First, I believe that by reducing fictional minds to exempla of actual human cognition we miss the essential dynamics between verbal art and real-life experientiality. Second, if we assume that reading literary fiction requires the use of exactly the same cognitive frames we use when coping with our everyday lives, we will suffer serious literary-theoretical losses. At times the argumentation in this chapter may raise suspicions of a nostalgic plea for formalist notions of narrative art as autonomous and estranging in its

relation to the real world and to actual human cognition. Indeed, in the context of the volume at hand, I wish to emphasize the peculiarly textual and constructed nature of literary experientiality. One does not necessarily have to embrace Cohn's (1999) somewhat uncompromising distinction between factual and fictional narratives to appreciate her earlier (1978) formulations concerning the unique nature of fictional minds: for Cohn, the same narrative techniques used to achieve the highest degree of psychological vraisemblance (such as free indirect discourse) are the most literary or, in a sense I discuss below, the most "unnatural" techniques. As Cohn puts it, "[i]n depicting the inner life, the novelist is truly a fabricator" (1978, 6). Thus the capacity for mimesis of the mind constitutes both the essence and the great paradox of novelistic discourse.

In what follows, I will argue for the distinctiveness of fictional minds by analyzing two literary texts in which making sense of the narrating protagonist's "cognitive mental functioning" (see Palmer 2003; Margolin 2003) presents a pressing interpretive challenge. My aim is not, however, to adduce alien modes of consciousness representation and thereby prove that, in the context of literary fiction, we are indeed dealing with something that is radically different from our own cognitive mental functioning. In other words, my purpose is not

to add to the catalogs of types of "unnatural narration" being developed within the emerging field of "unnatural narratology" (see especially Richardson 2006; Abbott 2008; Alber et al. 2010; Alber and Heinze 2011; Hansen et al. 2011). Instead, my two test cases, both of them short stories by Richard Ford from the collection A Multitude of Sins (2002), are, at first glance, strikingly unexceptional; and this is precisely the reason for their choice as examples. Both narratives display textual and narrative techniques that are effective in evoking a sense of both cognitive familiarity and cognitive estrangement. Further, it is the dynamic interplay between naturalization and denaturalization—assimilation and estrangement—that I take to be the hallmark of readers' engagements with fictional minds.

In the collection's opening story, "Privacy," a first-person narrator confesses to having stalked—for a few times—a female neighbor undressing in an opposing window. The story is conveyed to us as the protagonist tries both to confess and to relive his past sensations. However, the narrator only hints at the consequences of his actions and enigmatically refers to these subsequent events as the "first cycle of necessity" in his life. In the other story, "Reunion," we encounter another first-person confessor: the protagonist tells a story of how—as he specifies, "before Christmas last year"—he happened to spot his ex-mistress's husband in the midst of a crowd at Grand

Central station. Disturbingly, both the narrator and the experiencing I try to reconstruct this moment as the climax in a story that would otherwise remain just plain old adultery-turned-ennui.

These stories display narrative situations where the first-person narrators seem to operate within the "natural" frames of narrativization (as defined by Fludernik 1996) and reflect experientiality (Fludernik 1996, 12-13, 28-30; or "qualia," Herman 2007a, 256-57). However, at the same time, these narratives create an effect of false or projected experientiality, displacement of agency, and displacement of narrative focus, even to the point of questioning the narrators' authority as verisimilar "tellers." Instead of merely activating our theory of mind, these narrators disclose the textual and intentional designs of their minds. In Ford's stories, the illusion of subjective, unmediated experience is constantly undermined by the narrator's need to organize his story into a meaningful, coherent (even artistic) whole—and vice versa. What we end up with are conflicting cycles of narrative necessity: Whose hand actually draws the cycle of narrative coherence? Does the hand belong to the experiencing I, the narrating I, or the reader?

Ultimately, with these not-quite-naturalizable stories, I wish to question some of the premises of prototype-driven

cognitive narratology, as well as some aspects of its emergent narratological counterforce, unnatural narratology and its pronounced avoidance of the conventional. On the one hand, as cogently demonstrated by leading figures of unnatural narratology (Alber et al. 2010), an interdisciplinary reliance on shared narrative schemata—along with the notion of naturally occurring narratives as the default (cf. Herman 2007a, 9; Ryan 2007, 24)—directs us away from the anti-mimetic (see also Mäkelä 2006). On the other hand, I am not convinced by the account of literary realism that the unnatural approach seems to presuppose; according to the argument of Alber et al. (2010), "ordinary realist texts" appear at the same end of the natural-unnatural axis as naturally occurring ("natural") narratives (114). This claim strikes me as a misreading of Fludernik's idea of a natural narratology, since the starting point of her theory is not the plausibility of the events presented in a given narrative (in contrast to the "physically and logically impossible" emphasized in Alber et al. 2010; see also Alber 2009) but instead the real-world anchoring experiential schemata shared by the teller and the reader. The point is made even clearer when we notice that one of the main cases treated by David Herman (see, e.g., 2007b, 6-7) is a ghost story, obviously "physically and logically unnatural," yet still evoking natural frames of storytelling. At the same time,

stories with realistic settings or, for that matter, novels of mainstream classical realism may well present the most unnatural communicative and experiential situations whose thematic import is not affected by conventionalization. In fact, Alber et al. (2010) also point toward this possibility in the conclusion of their essay (131).

At the same time, researchers hailing from the camp of narrative psychology and sociology, instead of settling for the unproblematic prototype model of an integrational, coherence-driven, and firmly subjective narrative, have likewise directed their attention to increasingly problematic stories and narrative agencies (see especially Hydén and Brockmeier 2008; Hyvärinen et al. 2010). Combined with the considerations discussed in my previous paragraph, this work suggests that the distinction between naturally occurring and literary narratives is far from being clear-cut. This complex relationship between the natural and the literary will be one of the starting points of my analysis of Ford's two short stories, which point to the possibility of distinctive literary-textual mechanisms—mechanisms that foreground types of experientiality and narrative design different from those attaching to stories encountered in our social environment. Another point I would like to make through these analyses is that we do not have to resort to avant-garde literature to realize that the potential

unnaturalness—or the peculiarly literary type of cognitive challenge—is always already there in textual representations of consciousness (see also Tammi 2008, 46); what makes it perceivable is the way making sense of fictional minds requires a to-and-fro movement between establishing and transcending natural frames of experience and narrativization.

<A>Troublingly Natural Confessions?

What would be a more mundane narrative act than an intimate confession from one person to another? As Samuli Hägg remarks in his discussion of Fludernik's Towards a "Natural" Narratology, the first-person narrative situation, the form most easily graspable in the cognitive frame of "telling," should be the "<'>home-base' of Natural narrativity" (Hägg 2006, 181), the mode of narration most unlikely to cause cognitive estrangement. As Fludernik's theory of "natural narratology" has it, all storytelling and story processing is based on experientiality, "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real life experience'" (Fludernik 1996, 12). The narrative situation in the short story "Privacy" should thus be well tuned with our real-life cognitive parameters: it seems we have a troubled man confessing a chain of events and his own reaction to them, which resulted in failures both in his marriage and in his work as a writer. Already the title "Privacy," as well as the opening sentence—

"This was at a time when my marriage was still happy"—call for interpretive strategies acquired in everyday oral narrative situations: this is something we could hear in a pub. After a while, the narrator-protagonist breaks off from the iterative description of his habitual married life of earlier days and goes back to the moment when he—for the first time—takes a pair of silver opera glasses from a drawer and yields to his nightly obsession.

<EXT>(1) I don't know all that I thought. Undoubtedly I was aroused. Undoubtedly I was thrilled by the secrecy of watching out of the dark. Undoubtedly I loved the very illicitness of it, of my wife sleeping nearby and knowing nothing of what I was doing. It is also possible I even liked the cold as it surrounded me, as complete as the night itself, may even have felt that the sight of the woman—whom I took to be young and lacking caution or discretion—held me somehow, insulated me and made the world stop and be perfectly expressible as two poles connected by my line of vision. I am sure now that all of this had to do with my impending failures. ("Privacy," 5)</EXT>

The narration evokes the natural frame of retrospection—indicated by gaps in memory that are only to be expected. But, at the same time, we get an uncannily vivid description of the

intense coldness and secrecy of the moment. The narrator distances himself by modalizing expressions ("It is also possible I even liked . . . may even have felt . . ."), doubts his memory, and shifts the focus to the moment of narration by alluding to the possibly severe consequences of his peeping activities. We are led to believe that these consequences are what prompt the narrator's confession, but we never actually hear about the "failures" he alludes to at the end of the passage.

Using classical narratological terms, we see here a peculiar combination of dissonant and consonant first-person narration: the narrator is both distancing himself from his earlier experience and reliving it. However, if we look closer at Cohn's original definitions of dissonance and consonance, we find that, in these terms, the narrator also fails at both strategies. With all his doubts and inconsistencies, he is neither "the enlightened and knowing narrator who elucidates his mental confusions of earlier days" nor "a narrator who closely identifies with his past self, betraying no manner of superior knowledge" (Cohn 1978, 143). Can the flash-like, illuminated—"enlightened"—vision be a product of the narrating I's superior interpretive ability? Or is it an impression already gained during the incident, perhaps only suppressed until the moment of recounting? Using Fludernik's cognitive angle, we end up with

much the same result: there is some serious overlapping and ambivalence between prototype models of narrative mediacy. The frame of "telling" (somebody recounting what happened) triggered earlier starts to give way to the emerging cognitive frame of "experiencing" (deictic and psychological transition to the narrated past moment; reader's alleged access to "what is it like"). It seems that the passage quoted in (1) offers not one but two "models of the human mind at work" (see Margolin 1999, 165)—two cognitive mappings of the same situation—which, moreover, seem to be pulling the rug out from under each other. The narrator's insistence that he does not quite remember what he thought and the use of modalizing expressions build up into an interpretive dilemma: where does the experiential focus lie, in the retrospective act of the narrating I, or in the perceptions of the protagonist's earlier self?

And yet, this is still something we could hear in a pub. Or, depending on how we interpret the "impending failures" the narrator alludes to, perhaps during a police interrogation or a testimony. One of the established narratological reading strategies used to humanize fictional narrators is diagnosing them as unreliable. This strategy may well provide motivation for the dissonances in passage (1) and turn them into either a conscious (rhetorical) or an unconscious (psychological) strategy:² "A-ha! He remembers quite a lot, after all!" The

thematic context of the narrative may even encourage such a diagnostic reading: the story is the first one in a collection of stories on adultery, thick with psychological undercurrents. However, condemning the narrator for unreliability—either for glossing over his "crime" or for self-denial—is, ultimately, just as unproductive an interpretation as condemning him for adultery. As Peter Brooks argues in his aptly titled work Troubling Confessions, both real and fictional confessions are verbal performatives that actually create the inwardness of the person confessing (Brooks 2000, 2). Passage (1) from "Privacy" could thus be read as a representative example of this process: the inwardness—or experientiality—is created by linguistic means, by a shift from doubtful modality into an illustrated report on the past sensation. In this manner, the narrator actually brings to mind the sorts of false confessions that Brooks discusses in the context of legal history. We may be prompted to ask questions similar to those raised by Brooks: Is the confessor creating his past or present inner states? And furthermore, is it the language that creates the criminal mind, retrospectively? Confession is just as much a fabrication, a performance (Brooks 2000, 21), as is the consequent "cognitive mental functioning" that we believe shows through this verbal act.

Ford's "Reunion" has the same air of confession, or of a personal reckoning. The story's narrative situation is framed by the narrator's attempt to recount his encounter with the man he has cuckolded, Mack Bolger, but as becomes evident, he has more than this to unload on his audience:

<EXT>(2) What went on between Beth Bolger and me is hardly worth the words that would be required to explain it away. At any distance but the close range I saw it from, it was an ordinary adultery. . . . Because it is the truth and serves to complicate Mack Bolger's unlikeable dilemma and to cast him in a more sympathetic light, I will say that at some point he was forced to confront me (and Beth as well) in a hotel room in St. Louis . . . with the result that I got banged around in a minor way. ("Reunion," 66)</EXT>

The narrators of "Privacy" and "Reunion" both suggest the pertinence of Meir Sternberg's (2005) remarks about the "transmission-mindedness" of narrative agents: their discourse is very much audience-oriented. However, on reading example (1), although we could have been sitting in a pub or in a courtroom listening to an oral narrative, we had, or at least should have, an uncanny feeling of double or constructed experientiality. Example (2), for its part, makes even more explicit the

connection between addressing an audience and constructing one's confession. The quoted passage reveals the narrator's self-reflexivity not just as a confessor who wants to tell the truth but also as a narrator who wants to cast a particular kind of light on his story—and moreover, on his characters. Later we learn that the protagonist's obsessive attempts to paint a psychologically "round" portrait of Mack Bolger—which would at the same time serve as a tribute to the deceived man and as an atonement for the betrayal—form one of the main thematic threads of the story. For now, however, suffice it to say that both examples suggest not just transmission-mindedness but construction-mindedness.

<A>Projected Experientiality and Displacement of Agency

So far I have pointed out some conversational elements in my test cases that are likely to trigger natural frames of narrativization and mind reading. In the following I try to highlight the nature of literary narrative as a multi-level cognitive performance. Drawing on Fludernik's account of the dominating function of "consciousness" in narrative (Fludernik 1996, 49-50), I highlight one sentence I think holds especially true for narrative fiction: "this consciousness [i.e., the consciousness mediating the narrative] can surface on several levels and in different shapes" (1996, 49). The mediacy brought

about by literary minds is different—if not radically different—from the real-world mediating functions of consciousness, since the processes of literary mediation and world-construction are necessarily multilayered. Consequently, it may prove impossible to separate transmission-mindedness from construction-mindedness. My two test cases demonstrate that the literary construction of experience disturbs our attempts to naturalize the minds of the protagonists as either tellers or subjects of experience. Their minds are ultimately private, and yet they reflect the features of literary communication. Thus the distinction in literary fiction between internal and external—or between experiencing, thinking, and speaking—turns out to be problematic.

When the protagonist of "Privacy" finally gets a closer look of the woman he has been peeping at, he finds out that this Chinese woman is surprisingly old.

<EXT>(3) When I stopped and looked at her she turned and gazed down the steps at me with an expression I can only think now was indifference mingled with just the smallest recognition of threat. She was old, after all. I might suddenly have felt the urge to harm her, and easily could've. But of course that was not my thought. . . . I said nothing, did not even look at her

again. I didn't want her to think my mind contained what it did and also what it did not. ("Privacy," 7)</EXT>

What sort of mediating consciousnesses are at work in this passage? This is the only instance in the story where the mind of the protagonist interacts with another mind and thus gives evidence of embodied mind reading, an aspect of fictional consciousness representation that has been the focus of recent research (see Zunshine 2006; Butte 2004; Palmer 2004; Mäkelä 2006). It also displays the same overlap among telling, experiencing, and (re)construction as in example (1). We can see how modalities ("Undoubtedly I was aroused," "may even have felt") turn, at the end of the story, into complete negation: the narrator reports what he did not think. But do we believe him? If we have a closer look at the sentence "I might suddenly have felt the urge to harm her, and easily could've," we can come up with at least three different interpretations: (1) the possibility of violence crosses the mind of the narrator only at the moment of recounting; or (2) the sentence does produce the past sensation of the experiencing I; this possibility is implied when the narrator says he did not want the woman to think what he was or was not thinking; or (3) we can read the sentence as a free indirect discourse-like approximation of the woman's thought (that man may want to harm me and easily could).

This third interpretation, however, loops back into the other two: the narrator-protagonist projects his own violent and abusive obsessions into the woman's unnecessary fear.

The passage does not so much give an account of a true encounter with an other—of "deep intersubjectivity" (Butte 2004)—as it displaces the protagonist's own experience. In this connection, note that cognitively oriented studies on the interaction between literary minds are mainly interested in the horizontal relations between "cognizers." Less attention has been paid to vertical symmetries, contradictions, and overlaps in the cognitive mental functioning of characters, narrators, and their audiences. In this exemplary case, the main tension arises not from social relations (the real-life-like intersubjective communication on which, for example, Alan Palmer grounds some of his claims about fictional minds) but from the textual and structural interconnections among cognizers, as well as on their frames for producing and interpreting the narrative. The cognitive trick lies in the fact that in literary representation, telling, experiencing, and the construction of the fictional world and its agents all happen on the same level—that of narrative discourse. We have no 3-D model of embedded consciousnesses, but only a syntactic-linear display from which the reader's mind has to infer the relevant levels of mediation (see figs. 6.1 and 6.2).

<F6.1>

<F6.2>

Lisa Zunshine makes a very illuminating observation in claiming that narrative fiction tests and teases our mind-reading capacity by providing us with characters whose mental states we must infer from their behavior, or whose intentions we must "track down" from the representation by using our "metarepresentational capacity" (Zunshine 2006). Yet, instead of displaying all the levels of intention involved, like the New Yorker cartoon that Zunshine uses as her introductory example ("Of course I care about how you imagined I thought you perceived I wanted you to feel" [2006, 30]), narrative discourse in fiction more often than not hides the agencies behind cognitive activity, as suggested by example (3) above. Moreover, the task of "keep[ing] track of who thought, wanted, and felt what and when" (2006, 5) requires that the reader consider the hierarchical nature of narrative and thus the vertical relations between fictional agents: On which diegetic level are things perceived, experienced, processed, verbalized, constructed, or reflected? Does the cognitive agency manifest itself on the level of the former, experiencing I, on the level of the extradiegetic telling I, or on the level of the actual

reader? And if the cognitive activities situated on different hierarchical levels overlap, what happens to processes of naturalization?

However, even after all the effort I have put into demonstrating how experientiality is defamiliarized in the story of the Peeping Tom and the old Chinese woman, the same pressing question, posed by natural narratology, remains: might we not hear this in a pub? It is one thing to claim that textual representations of intercognitive activity are not congruent with social dynamics between real human minds; it is another thing to prove that a fictional sequence narrated in the first person would be unimaginable as a sequence of conversational storytelling. Thus, to develop a model nuanced enough to capture the interplay between naturalization and defamiliarization in readers' engagement with fictional minds, instead of proposing a dichotomy between everyday minds and the minds created in literary fiction, I suggest the relevance of processes of foregrounding—in the sense specified in stylistics research. In other words, even the slightest deviances from cognitive verisimilitude generated by the textuality and narrative determination of fictional minds will inevitably call for reading strategies different from those applied in real-world social navigation.

As Uri Margolin points out, "[t]hrough its use of nonstandard, often strongly deviant or deficient manners of narration, literature makes us aware ex negativo of the default clause, the standard or normal mechanisms and patterns of information processing" (2003, 277). Furthermore, for Margolin, it is precisely a "breakdown or failure" in fictional cognitive mechanisms that supplies the most effective "tool" for understanding the actual human mind (278). This formulation in many ways goes straight to the point, but still it seems that Margolin takes a shortcut from "manners of narration" to "our own mental functioning." Are we to be defamiliarized from conventions of thought or rather from conventions of writing? If we take another look at example (1), we may notice how defamiliarization works both ways. On one hand, the passage's opening sentence, "I don't know all that I thought," violates not the natural frames of storytelling but the conventions of first-person narrative fiction, where we are likely to confront narrators with an extraordinary memory (see Cohn 1978, 162; Nielsen 2004, 135-36). Who in the world would remember all he thought, except for Marcel in À la recherche du temps perdu? But on the other hand, when the memory of the narrator starts to come alive miraculously and the experience of the narrator's past self is vivified in front of our eyes, we are situated in the realm of literary frames, inside which immediate access to

another consciousness, no matter how distant in time, is something to be expected (see Fludernik 1996, 48). Thus example (1) both instantiates and departs from the conventions of literary narrative, and thereby both transgresses and conforms to conventions associated with everyday storytelling.

Despite Margolin's claims, however, this complex structure of norm-confirmation and norm-violation does not point to the deviant mental functioning of the protagonist. The deviance, rather, seems to be created in and by the narrative discourse: the fictional mind is diegetic and mimetic at the same time; experiencing and telling are equally foregrounded in the "flat" discourse of narrative prose. This textual effect is reinforced by passage (3) toward the end of the story, where experiential agency is radically displaced by negation. The thought of violence must have been experienced by the protagonist at some point; furthermore, what is the difference between what his mind "contained" and "what it did not"? The hypothesis of the woman's fearful thoughts, created with the help of the protagonist's theory of mind, reveals experientiality behind the words, even if it is of the embedded or of the projected type. In any case, the discourse encloses both what the mind contained and what it did not. Even while acknowledging this, we do not have to resort to diagnosing the protagonist as a schizophrenic.

All in all, "Privacy" may ask, via its themes and techniques, the same question we find at the core of cognitive science: what does it mean for a mind to contain something? Some additional questions, focusing on more literary issues, are raised as well: What is the relationship between a mind "containing" and a mind verbalizing, narrativizing, or constructing an experience? What is the relationship between cognitive and literary construction? These are the types of questions that we, as literary theorists, should be asking as well. The story further touches upon one fundamental difference between an experience lived and an experience read: literary experientiality is always, by nature, projected. In his confrontation with the old woman the protagonist seems to dwell on the same kind of second-degree experientiality as the reader when entering a fictional character's experiential plane.

The narrator of "Reunion" is more explicit in his construction-mindedness—in his urge to create experientiality. Consequently, the problematic relationship between mental and literary construction remains more foregrounded than it does in "Privacy."

<EXT>(4) I was taken by a sudden and strange impulse—which was to walk straight across through the eddying sea of travelers and speak to him, just as one might speak to anyone you casually

knew and had unexpectedly yet not unhappily encountered. And not to impart anything, or set in motion any particular action (to clarify history, for instance, or make amends), but simply to create an event where before there was none. And not an unpleasant event, or a provocative one. Just a dimensionless, unreverberant moment, a contact, unimportant in every other respect. ("Reunion," 67)</EXT>

This passage displays telling, constructing, and experiencing not only as intermixed but also in a cognitively reverse order: narrative construction precedes the experience. The reader may be further puzzled by the motivation given by the narrator for his urge to create a signifying "reunion" between himself and Mack Bolger: not to "set in motion any particular action," and so on. This is, I would say, a very anti-cognitivist view of narrative dynamics: not to create sequences in order to approach something in terms of causality, "[b]ut simply to create an event where before there was none." The narrator's activity seems to come closer to that of an author or an auteur rather than that of a conversational storyteller. But, again, we may see the realistic psychological motivation showing through: the guilt-ridden ex-lover escaping into aesthetics and not clarifying what really should be clarified, not making the amends that should, perhaps, be made.

<EXT>(5) Everything Beth and I had done was gone. All that remained was this—a series of moments in the great train terminal, moments which, in spite of all, seemed correct, sturdy, almost classical in character, as if this later time was all that really mattered whereas the previous, briefly passionate, linked but now-distant moments were merely preliminary. ("Reunion," 71)</EXT>

When the protagonist, wandering through the grand terminal, really gets his machinery for narrativization going, he seems to substitute his former non-causal conviction for a new kind of causality that allows the narrative weight of adultery to be diminished in favor of the "classical" scene he himself will create. As indicated in example (2), the protagonist's narrative urge expends itself also on the character of Mack Bolger, who—at least for a while—becomes the protagonist's creation: "as though in a peculiar way the man I saw was not Mack Bolger but a good-looking effigy situated precisely there to attract my attention" (66).

In both stories, our own frames for reading are further complicated by the self-reflexive construction-mindedness of the narrators. Both are anything but ignorant of the artistic dimensions of framing. In "Privacy," the narrator peeps through

a pair of opera glasses like some Nabokovian hero. Furthermore, example (1), with its Kandinsky- or Mondrian-like abstractions of perception and space, foregrounds the narrator's capability for self-conscious framing. On a thematic level, both stories can also be read as narratives of artistic failure. In "Reunion" the protagonist ultimately fails in creating a "moment," whereas in "Privacy" the "impending failures" that the narrator alludes to—apart from clearly referring to marital problems—can also be interpreted as his bankruptcy as a writer. The narrators' narrativization of their own experience by projecting and reframing comes close to the work of a fiction writer, but it also weakens their agency both as "centers of consciousness" in the narrated world and as tellers.

The feelings of not exactly being there, of not exactly telling or experiencing, may be familiar to most of us. The stories analyzed here reflect such perceptual, emotional, verbal, and narrative displacement, but they appear to achieve those effects through their textual design. I now move on to discuss these macro-structural displacements in both stories and their effects on readers' attempts to naturalize the narrators' experiences and their (subsequent?) acts of telling.

<A>After Closure

"Privacy" and "Reunion" seem to evoke a sense of failure, not only in marital, social, or psychological terms but also in terms of the characters' construction of their experiences in narrative terms. In a way, those shortcomings might suggest the kind of "breakdown or failure" in cognitive mechanisms that Margolin regards as essential for cognitive estrangement in literature. Yet these effects cannot be properly analyzed without considering the way the stories are structured as fictional narratives. How does the outer cycle define the inner one, the author's textual design comprehend and structure the character-narrator's act of telling?

A sample of three sentences gives us an overall view of "Privacy"; the narrative, like a canopy, is stretched between these three sentences.

<EXT>(6<SC>a</SC>) [the opening sentence:] This was at a time when my marriage was still happy. ("Privacy," 3)

(6<SC>b</SC>) [the approximate middle of the story:] I am sure now that all of this had to do with my impending failures. ("Privacy," 5)

(6<SC>c</SC>) [the closing sentence:] . . . my life entering, as it was at that moment, its first, long cycle of necessity. ("Privacy," 7)</EXT>

These are the sentences that really frame the whole narrative—and they all point outside its own "cycle." The dominant feeling after reading this story is that you never actually got the chance to hear it. The real story concerns the cycles of necessity that follow from the narrated events. It seems that as readers we are victimized by the nature of the fictional universe as a closed system. A police interrogator, or even a random acquaintance in a pub, would not drop the matter here but ask further questions; for the reader, the cycle closes. Something similar happens in "Reunion" when we learn that the hero fails to create a climax in his encounter with Mack Bolger at the railway station.

<EXT>(7) "Nothing happened today," Mack Bolger said. "Don't go away thinking anything happened here. Between you and me, I mean. Nothing happened. I'm sorry I ever met you, that's all. Sorry I ever had to touch you. You make me feel ashamed."

("Reunion," 73; emphasis in the original)

<1L#>

(8) I had, of course, been wrong about the linkage of moments, and about what was preliminary and what was primary. It was a mistake, one I would not make again. None of it was a good thing

to have done. Though it is such a large city here, so much larger than, say, St. Louis, I knew I would not see him again. ("Reunion," 74)</EXT>

In example (7) we read Mack Bolger absolutely refusing to play the part that the other man has constructed for him: "Nothing happened today," he says. "Don't go away thinking anything happened here." Example (8) is the closing chapter of the story, showing us how the narrator admits being mistaken about the narrative dynamics and causalities. He also mentions St. Louis in passing—the setting, as the reader may well remember, for the truly significant encounter during which he "got banged around in a minor way" in a hotel room. Finally, it seems he ends up telling us something that he ultimately considers not worth telling. But why has the narrating I not revised his version of "the linkage of moments"? He is, after all, telling something that, as he says himself, happened "before Christmas last year," and so he has had all that time to revise his account.

So finally, what we end up with are conflicting cycles of narrative necessity—and by those I mean conflicting aspirations toward narrative closure, in the sense defined by H. Porter Abbott: as "the satisfaction of expectations and the answering of questions raised over the course of any narrative" (2005, 65–66). In both stories, it is as if some narrative pullback

mechanism kept returning the focus from the narrated events to the moment of narration. This process may reinforce our impression of the narrators as confessors with an audience in mind. But, then again, both narrators end up telling something that does not illustrate their own positions. Nor do their stories create narrative causality in any conventional sense. Indeed, these stories seem to be following a kind of ex negativo principle, since (1) the experiential impulse for narration seems to come from outside the narrated events, and (2) the reader has the same kind of nagging feeling about both narrators: this is not what they would tell us—or anyone—if they had a choice.

These narrators are very likely to possess a narrative urge to mold their lived experiences into well-formed stories with a satisfying closure. Yet as we read their stories it seems that they violate precisely such a cognitive-scientific ideal of narrative functioning as a recovery formula. Galen Strawson (2004) has expressed his vehement objection to the "psychological narrativity thesis" (we all process our experiences into a narrative) as well as to the "ethical narrativity thesis" (narrative understanding of life as a prerequisite for self-understanding and morally sound behavior), and the critique, it seems, has hit some nerve in the body of

contemporary narrative theory (see responses, e.g., by Phelan 2005 and Battersby 2006).

In a way, my chosen examples hit that same nerve by refusing "cognitive closure"; yet, at the same time, they attest to the role of the "ethical narrativity thesis" in the narrators' own self-narrations—though along with the narrative agency and focus, the "moral" of these stories also seems somehow misplaced. Unable to achieve any sort of atonement, the narrator of "Reunion" contents himself with admitting that "[n]one of it was a good thing to have done." As Pekka Tammi suggests, against the cognitive grain, this kind of questioning of narrative unity is precisely what narrative literature is for: "[Is it] not the capacity of literary fiction—unlike that of standard narratives evoked by theorists—to deal specifically with the impossibilities, the paradoxes and problems, of our human efforts to order experience?" (2006, 30; emphasis in the original).

But how conscious are the narrating characters of their narrative efforts, ultimately? Meir Sternberg (2005) has called narratologists' attention to a significant but largely ignored feature of literary representation: the ambivalent status of fictional agents as both mimetic entities and conveyors of representation. Indeed, we can imagine the protagonists of "Privacy" and "Reunion" shuttling on a scale ranging from highly

self-conscious and context-conscious tellers to solitary introverts unself-consciously (perhaps unwillingly) exposing their secret or even suppressed inner selves (cf. Sternberg 2005, 33). Theoretically, we would be hard pressed to prove that in some particular segment of narration (e.g., in the sentence "I don't know all that I thought") we would have, either on linguistic, structural, or even "cognitive" grounds, an informed teller-person present, whereas in some other segment of the same narrative (such as in "I might suddenly have felt the urge to harm her, and easily could've") we appear suddenly to lose this teller. But even if it were possible, an analysis of this sort would only flatten the narrative dynamics produced by the "shuttling." It is the multi-level, multi-cognitive structure of literary representation that allows for the frames of "telling" and "experiencing" to prevail at the same time and so renders the shuttling possible. As readers, we get the uncanny feeling of being told and yet ignored by the teller at the same time. This ambivalence is already suggested by the title "Privacy," which can just as well refer to the privacy of a corner table as to the privacy of one's thoughts.

Sternberg's formulations come close to what Henrik Skov Nielsen (2004) has pointed out as the impersonal voice in first-person narration. Nielsen opposes the entrenched idea that in a narrative text, first-person reference as well as related

deictic elements, expressive markers, and stylistic foregrounding necessarily presuppose a personified narrator-figure. To overcome this narratological idée reçue, Nielsen provides a powerful addition to theories of first-person narration by suggesting the possibility of an unnatural, distinctively literary voice "which can talk about the protagonist in the first person" but which "neither belongs to the narrating-I nor to the narrated-I" (2004, 139).

Yet if we reopen the case of the potentially "triple voiced" sentence "I might suddenly have felt the urge to harm her, and easily could've," we could, paradoxically, use Nielsen's concept to naturalize the inconsistencies: perhaps it is actually the (momentarily intruding?) impersonal narrative voice that is responsible for the evocation of a potentially violent atmosphere. This unattached voice may verbalize the thought of the old Chinese woman; and if that is the case, then it follows that neither the mind of the experiencing I nor that of his later self would necessarily "contain" any violent thought. Alternatively, the impersonal narrator may enunciate those thoughts of the experiencing I which, at the moment of recollection, seem alien to the protagonist. After all, he does not "remember all [he] thought," and neither is his mind or its contents what it used to be. A somewhat similar explanation is applicable to "Reunion": the impersonal narrative voice enables

the protagonist's misguided "narrative project," even if none of it appears worth telling from the point of view of the later self (whose presence in the discourse is, however, indicated by a deictic expression like "before Christmas last year").

When interpreting these stories by Ford, I believe that, at least momentarily, "we are aware that as readers we read a narrative that need not ever take place on the level of the character" (Nielsen 2004, 143). However, Ford's stories highlight the fact that when discussing both cognition and literature, we should not drop the matter here. For Nielsen's arguments lead us to ask the next question: What does it mean for a narrative to "take place"? This is also what Ford's two stories seem to be asking. Does narrative presuppose intentionality, organization, communication—or simply the activation of a cognitive schema? This may sometimes be the key interpretive problem posed by a fictional narrative.

Construction(-mindedness) does not automatically suppose transmission(-mindedness), and I suggest that this fact is pointedly foregrounded in literary representations of cognitive mental functioning and experientiality. Unlike real-world confessors, fictional first-person narrators are not necessarily speaking for themselves, not even to themselves, but instead they demonstrate—in their involuntary discursivity—how the fictional mind is conditioned by verbalization and the

communicative structure of the narrative text. The narrators of the two stories share the apparent tendency to self-reflexively construct and frame their own experiences—as well as those of other people—up to a point where their shaky sketches approximate literary construction. Yet the literary minds inhabiting fictional universes are hardly ever aware of how literary, constructed, and under public scrutiny they ultimately are, even if they were to show symptoms of mental exhibitionism.

<A>Short Conclusion: On Missing the Point

So, why do we read fiction? Lisa Zunshine provides a persuasive answer in Why We Read Fiction (2006): to let fiction test and tease the same intersubjective skills (theory of mind) we use in our social reality. However, one aspect Zunshine's theory does not cover is the literary illusion of the mind as verbalizable. In one sense, the minds of narrating or experiencing fictional agents always merge the representation with the represented: the mind is simultaneously both the performer and the arena of performance. Such "schizoid" textuality, discussed at length here, may threaten the apparent connection between experience and narrative construction: in fact, many of the narrative strategies for representing consciousness seem to emphasize both the simultaneity and the

incongruence between real-time experience and its processing into a meaningful whole.

By merging lived experience with the construction of experience, Ford's stories point to the fact that there is no fixed point of construction, no true moment of absolute insight in life. While conventionally retrospective, these first-person narratives also make the process of narrative revision visible in a manner reminiscent of some present-tense narratives such as Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians. To rephrase the concern of the narrator in "Reunion," the question of what is preliminary and what is primary in the course of our lives may ultimately be left unanswered, before the cycle closes.

<A>Notes

1. Here I find Joseph Tabbi's distinction between "cognitive" and "cognitivist" approaches helpful: "The fears [of cognitive invasion in literary studies] are justified, but only so long as cognitive researchers remain inattentive to the particular language of literary works and their specific demands on readers. . . . Such a[n ignoring] view might be termed 'cognitivist' rather than cognitive" (2004, 168-69).
2. On the difference between conscious versus self-conscious (or audience-oriented versus self-oriented) unreliability in fictional narrators, see Marcus (2005; 2006).

<A>References

- Abbott, H. Porter. 2005. "Closure." In Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, 65-66. London: Routledge.
- <3EM>. 2008. "Unreadable Minds and the Captive Reader." Style 42 (4): 448-70.
- Alber, Jan. 2009. "Impossible Storyworlds—and What to Do With Them." Storyworlds 1:79-96.
- Alber, Jan, and Rüdiger Heinze, eds. 2011. Unnatural Narratives—Unnatural Narratology. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Alber, Jan, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson. 2010. "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models." Narrative 18 (2): 113-36.
- Battersby, James L. 2006. "Narrativity, Self, and Self-Representation." Narrative 14 (1): 27-44.
- Brooks, Peter. 2000. Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Butte, George. 2004. I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from "Moll Flanders" to "Marnie." Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

- <3EM>. 2005. "I Know That I Know That I Know: Reflections on Paul John Eakin's 'What Are We Reading When We Read Autobiography?'" Narrative 13 (3): 298-306.
- Cohn, Dorrit. 1978. Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- <3EM>. 1999. The Distinction of Fiction. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Eakin, Paul John. 2004. "What Are We Reading When We Read Autobiography?" Narrative 12 (2): 121-32.
- Fludernik, Monika. 1996. Towards a "Natural" Narratology. London: Routledge.
- Ford, Richard. 2002. "Privacy." In A Multitude of Sins, 3-7. London: Vintage Books.
- <3EM>. 2002. "Reunion." In A Multitude of Sins, 65-74. London: Vintage Books.
- Hägg, Samuli. 2006. "<SC>fid</SC> and Other Narratological Illusions." In <SC>free</SC>language <SC>indirect</SC>translation <SC>discourse</SC>narration: Linguistic, Translatological, and Literary-Theoretical Encounters, ed. Pekka Tammi and Hannu Tommola, 175-92. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Hamburger, Käte. 1993. The Logic of Literature. Trans. Marilyn J. Rose. 2nd rev. ed. Bloomington: Indiana University

Press. Originally published as Die Logik der Dichtung (1957).

Hansen, Per Krogh, Stevan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Rolf Reitan, eds. 2011. Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Herman, David. 2003. Introduction. In Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences, ed. David Herman, 1-30. Stanford: <SC>csli</SC> Publications.

<3EM>. 2007a. "Cognition, Emotion, and Consciousness." In The Cambridge Companion to Narrative, ed. David Herman, 245-59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<3EM>. 2007b. Introduction. In The Cambridge Companion to Narrative, ed. David Herman, 3-21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hydén, Lars-Christer, and Jens Brockmeier, eds. 2008. Health, Illness and Culture: Broken Narratives. London: Routledge.

Hyvärinen, Matti, Lars-Christer Hydén, Marja Saarenheimo, and Maria Tamboukou, eds. 2010. Beyond Narrative Coherence. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Mäkelä, Maria. 2006. "Possible Minds: Constructing—and Reading—Another Consciousness as Fiction." In <SC>free</SC>language <SC>indirect</SC>translation <SC>discourse</SC>narration: Linguistic, Translatological, and Literary-Theoretical

Encounters, ed. Pekka Tammi and Hannu Tømmola, 231-60.

Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Marcus, Amit. 2005. "The Self-Deceptive and Other-Deceptive Narrating Character: The Case of Lolita." Style 39 (2): 187-205.

<3EM>. 2006. "Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day: The Discourse of Self-Deception." Partial Answers 4 (1): 129-56.

Margolin, Uri. 1999. "Of What Is Past, Is Passing, or to Come: Temporality, Aspectuality, Modality, and the Nature of Literary Narrative." In Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis, ed. David Herman, 142-66. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

<3EM>. 2003. "Cognitive Science, the Thinking Mind, and Literary Narrative." In Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences, ed. David Herman, 271-94. Stanford: <SC>csli</SC> Publications.

Nielsen, Henrik Skov. 2004. "The Impersonal Voice in First-Person Narrative Fiction." Narrative 12 (2): 133-50.

Palmer, Alan. 2003. "The Mind Beyond the Skin." In Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences, ed. David Herman, 322-48. Stanford: <SC>csli</SC> Publications.

<3EM>. 2004. Fictional Minds. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

- Phelan, James. 2005. "Who's Here? Thoughts on Narrative Identity and Narrative Imperialism." Narrative 13 (3): 205-10.
- Richardson, Brian. 2006. Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2007. "Toward a Definition of Narrative." In The Cambridge Companion to Narrative, ed. David Herman, 22-35. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sternberg, Meir. 2005. "Self-consciousness as a Narrative Feature and Force: Tellers vs. Informants in Generic Design." In A Companion to Narrative Theory, ed. James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, 232-52. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Strawson, Galen. 2004. "Against Narrativity." Ratio 17 (4): 428-52.
- Tabbi, Joseph. 2004. "Matter into Imagination: The Cognitive Realism of Gilbert Sorrentino's Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things." In The Work of Fiction: Cognition, Culture, and Complexity, ed. Alan Richardson and Ellen Spolsky, 167-85. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Tammi, Pekka. 2006. "Against Narrative ('A Boring Story')." Partial Answers 4 (2): 19-40.
- <3EM>. 2008. "Against 'against' Narrative (On Nabokov's 'Recruiting')." In Narrativity, Fictionality, and Literariness: The Narrative Turn and the Study of Literary

Fiction, ed. Lars-Åke Skalin, 37-55. Örebro Studies in Literary History and Criticism 7. Örebro: Örebro University Press.

Zunshine, Lisa. 2006. Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

¹⁰²<N>Maria Mäkelä</N> is a junior assistant professor of comparative literature at the University of Tampere in Finland. She coedited Of Truths Impossible to Put in Words (2009). I have not edited such a book!!

This is completely erroneous, here is a new one (which can be shortened as much as you like):

Maria Mäkelä (Ph.D.) is a university lecturer in comparative literature at the University of Tampere in Finland. She is the author of a Finnish Ph.D. thesis *Uskoton mieli ja tekstuaaliset petokset: kirjallisen tajunnankuvauksen konventiot narratologisena haasteena* (*Textual Deceptions and the Unfaithful Mind: Conventions of Literary Consciousness Representation as a Narratological Challenge*, Tampere University Press 2011). She coedited *Narrative, Interrupted: The Plotless, the Disturbing and the Trivial in Literature* (with Laura Karttunen and Markku

¹⁰² Please review for accuracy and completeness; will appear in the Contributors section at the end of the book.

Lehtimäki, de Gruyter 2012). She has published on classical, postclassical and “unnatural” narratology, consciousness representation, intermediality, literary romance and adultery, and realism.