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Masters of Interiority
Figural Voices as Discursive Appropriators and as Loopholes
in Narrative Communication

Abstract

The article addresses the peculiarities of figural voice in consciousness representation and the disruptive effect that this voice has on our narratological readings of minds and of narrative transmission. Instead of taking the natural narrative as my starting point, I base my arguments on a diachronic reconsideration of figural voices in literary fiction. First, I will argue that the seeds of the “unnaturalness” of figural voice are already planted in epistolary narration. The psychologically “natural” (mimetic) reading of fictional minds—favored by both classical and cognitive narratology—will be shown to foreground the “unrestrained” expression of thought and emotion via figural voice. Yet the conventions of consciousness representation bear in themselves the traces of mediacy (“diegesis”): conventional frames of verbalization; intentional structure; communicative features. I will continue by tracing the evolution of this charged relationship between mediacy and immediacy in the third person narrative context and in instances of focalization and stylistically unmarked free indirect discourse. The key argument of this article concerns both narrative as well as thematic conventions. Characters who master their own interiority by appropriating narratorial conventions form a recurrent motive in the development of the modern novel. This literary convention is— and at the same time, peculiarly, is not—in contradiction with the hierarchization and the naturalization of literary discourse prevalent in narratology. The “narrativizing focalizers” and the like also issue a threat to the currently much favoured rhetorical approaches to narrative fiction, since verbalized fictional minds highlight the nature of consciousness representation as incommunicable communication. Finally, encouraged by the epistolary digression, *The Princess of Clèves*, *Madame Bovary* and Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, I wish to set forth a narratological take on consciousness representation as a

derivative of, not speech, but *writing* (with a faint nod towards Bakhtin and Derrida).

Introduction: Narratology and the Easy Access Fallacy

Narratorial voices in literary fiction may be strange—as demonstrated in many articles of the current volume—but never quite in the same manner as figural voices are. Here I mainly refer to the unuttered, internal “voices” of story-internal literary characters that are conveyed to us through multiple means of consciousness representation. The long history of discourse narratology attests to the fact that the figural voice is even more perplexing than the narrative voice. Yet this is strangeness in respect to linguistic and cognitive based *theoretical* categories, not strangeness before the reading audience—quite the contrary, a lay reader is perfectly comfortable with passages of narrative literature exposing a hidden discursive agency of a story-internal character. This type of narration—third-person past-tense narratorial report intermingled with recurrent outbursts of characters’ language—has been exhausted by popular fiction from hard-boiled crime stories to *Harlequin* romances. Nothing strange here. Yet, such double-voiced or double-intentional narrative discourse has inspired some of the most prominent narratologists (most notably McHale 1978a, Cohn 1978 and Fludernik 1993), as well as evoked some illustrious theoretical controversies (*e. g.* Banfield 1982 vs. McHale 1983; Miller 1988, Seltzer 1984 & Bender 1987 vs. Cohn 1999 [1995]). Despite of the fact that this mode has been through several narratological redefinitions and contestations, it is still best known by the name of *free indirect discourse* (FID), which has its origins in the linguistic “speech categories” (cf. Palmer 2004)—long since discarded as insufficient and replaced by contextual (McHale 1978a) and cognitive (Fludernik 1993) approaches. The persistence of the linguistics-originated term perhaps hints at the unsettling effect that this mode has on the relationship between verbalization (language) and discursive agency (“mind”).

The paradigm shift in narratology from classical, linguistic-based model building to the postclassical variety of approaches has not significantly altered the narratological take on figural voice. Are you reading the narrator’s voice or the character’s voice, or both at the same time? A considerable amount of narratological work has been dedicated to isolating the alleged “voices” of narrative agents from the discourse of narrative fiction. In order to put one’s finger on the discursive “self” of the character a diligent student of narrative discourse immediately starts to dissect the discourse and label some parts as narratorial (the informative, the authorial),

other parts as figural (the colloquial, the expressive). However deeply rooted in narratology this separation procedure might be, one question remains largely unanswered and even unaddressed in both classical and postclassical studies: whence all the *ambivalence* between the narratorial-objective and the figural-subjective?

Narrative instances that continue to trigger the narratological imagination are those that seem not just to represent alternating voices, but also to *amalgamate* narratorial report with the unuttered voice of the figural consciousness. Even if we were to ultimately “reestablish” individual figural and narratorial voices from ambiguously voiced discourse, would not these individuated discursive selves bear in themselves the traces of the one-time discursive union?

Now I must hasten to add that the narratively and thematically productive effects of this ambivalence have, indeed, been widely studied as *narratorial functions*. Roy Pascal’s seminal study on FID (*The Dual Voice*, 1977) considered the mode mainly as a vehicle for either narratorial empathy or irony, and this well-argued interpretation was echoed in several subsequent studies (e.g. Cohn 1978, Aczel 1998, Gunn 2004). Monika Fludernik’s massive study on speech and thought representation (1993) continues in the same vein of regarding ambivalence of discursive agency mainly as narratorial mimicry: in Fludernik’s theory, figural voice is but a “linguistic hallucination” and reducible to the narratorial voice. Yet how about *figural functions*? Can we assign any discursive intentions to the silent reflector-characters whose inner flow we nonetheless “hear”? Another strand in studies of free indirect (or just fuzzy) discourse, the one that foregrounds the figural component, has been dominated by ideological readings: Kathy Mezei (1996) sees an emancipatory potential in FID as a mode which allows the characters to “have their say,” more supported than restricted by narratorial framing; conversely, the Foucauldian readers of FID such as Mark Seltzer (1984), D. A. Miller (1988) and John Bender (1987) regard the mode as a form of ideological oppression, and as inheriting a biased power relation for the benefit of the authoritative narrator who is able to survey the characters’ mental life (especially inner discourse) with its non-reciprocal gaze.

What, all in all, seems to characterize those approaches—whether they foreground narratorial functions or emphasize the (emancipatory or oppressive) transparency of characters’ internal discourse—is to automatically regard narratorial discourse as a representative of narrative *mediacy* and character’s discourse as an access to the *immediate* experience or impression. If we were to take at a face value all the hierarchically driven efforts for analyzing narrative discourse during the past four decades, I think we could actually agree with the Foucauldian theorists in that the literary

character appears, indeed, as an object of narrative-discursive oppression, as the unfortunate passive creature at the end of the narrative food chain. The roots of this preconception are traceable all the way to Plato-Aristotelian distinction between *diegesis* and *mimesis*: to the dichotomous conception that separates telling (narration as mediation) from showing (the experience of immediacy).

The only theorist to fully acknowledge the rhetorical potential of figural interiority is the one who committed what according to his successors seems to be a crucial taxonomic blunder: for Booth, a reflector qualifies as an unreliable agent just as any first person narrator—the focalizers of *Mrs. Dalloway* appear in the same record with Holden Caulfield (see Booth 1991: 493–494, “A Gallery of Unreliable Narrators and Reflectors”). Might it even be that this alleged misunderstanding in the theory of narrative rhetoric in fact reveals the counter-intuitivity of the Genettean distinction between speakers and perceivers? Clearly, Booth is inclined to ascribe communicative features to figural internal discourse, but does not really address the *differences* between unreliable narration and unreliable focalization; he does not problematize the pseudo-communicative quality of consciousness representation. This productive blunder lives on in Tamar Yacobi’s formulations on “fictional mediation” and unreliability that place reflectors and narrators on the same axis of the “mediation-gap”, the perspectival distance between the fictional mediator and the author (Yacobi 1981 and 1987). Yet also Yacobi—herself an observant critic of theoretical “package-dealing” (see Yacobi 2001)—settles for the evident (“natural”) package-deal as far as the position of the silent reflector/monologist is concerned: inner speech in fiction is, by definition, *unconsciously* communicative (Yacobi 1987: 338). Yet, one might wonder whether the reader’s sense of being led on by a focalizer would not also insinuate rhetorical intention.

We may also be reminded of Franz K. Stanzel’s classical study on narrative mediacy (1984), where also the character’s perceptual and discursive presence has mediating functions: the “figural narrative situation” or “reflector-mode narrative” defined by Stanzel are narrative instances where mediacy brought on by the narratorial voice is replaced by mediacy via figural consciousness. However, also Stanzel’s formulations reveal the underlying discordance:

Realistic presentation of consciousness seems to require the illusion of immediacy, that is, the apparent suspension of mediacy, more than does presentation of external events. The modern novel especially shows a very pronounced tendency to give the presentation of consciousness the semblance of immediacy, of the unedited and the spontaneous. [...] Interior monologue, free indirect style [FID] and figural narrative situation, that is, the forms of the reflector-mode and of in-

ternal perspective, suggest immediacy, that is, the illusion of direct insight into the character's thoughts. (Stanzel 1984: 127)

Why does Stanzel speak of “the *illusion* of immediacy [...] the *apparent* suspension of mediacy” without specifying the illusory quality of the mimesis of the mind?¹ Everything is illusory in fiction; what is it that is specifically illusory in our sense of immediacy when reading fictional minds?

Stanzel's most appreciative follower and interpreter Monika Fludernik also pays abundant attention to the “evocation of figural voice.” Yet both her theoretical assertions and textual analyses are inclined to downplay the discursive agency of a figural consciousness and reduce multi-voicedness to narratorial functions of empathy, irony, and stylistic parody. In her vocabulary of ambiguous discursive agency, both “reflectorization” and “figuralization” are varieties of narratorial mimicry or appropriation of figural (expressive and deictically marked; individual, collective, or impersonal) voice (see Fludernik 1996: 178-221). Indeed, she dispenses with the dual-voice approach on the level of language and narrative technique and considers ambiguity of voices only an interpretive effect (see, e.g. Fludernik 1993: 322-356). Yet one of the cornerstones of Fludernikian natural narratology (1996) is an unlimited access to figural experience via, among other narrative elements, discursive markers of expressivity—*qua* indicators of experientiality. In cognitive terms, the figural narrative situation defined by Stanzel requires a deictic shift inside the character's experiential plane:

Telling can be dispensed with, readers simply orient themselves to a position within the fictional world [...]. Such a reading experience is structured in terms of the natural frame of experiencing, which includes the experiences of perception, sentiment and cognition. Real-life parameters are transcended. Instead of merely observing and guessing at other people's experiences, frames naturally available only for one's own experience become accessible for application to a third person. (Fludernik 1996: 48)

These “frames [...] available [...] for one's own experience” must surely include discursive frames as well. Yet both Fludernik as well as other cognitive narratologists who emphasize the importance of a deictic shift for the readerly immersion in the figural experience tend to treat the discursive shift from narratorial to figural as a mere catalyst. However, the ultimate frame for interpretation is, and remains, discursive.

For Fludernik, the natural frames of TELLING (domination of narratorial discourse) and EXPERIENCING (immersion in figural experience) are basic units on the level of reading; she does not, however, consider the possible overlapping between these two frames in cases when the reader is

¹ Alongside with Stanzel, also Fludernik (1996: 48) refers to the reading of fictional minds as the “willing suspension of disbelief”.

confronted with a *figural narrative situation that displays diegetic qualities or appropriates narratorial functions*. In the notoriously double-voiced narration of *Madame Bovary* (1857), we find a sentence illustrating Emma's restlessness after Léon has left her alone with the stultifying company of her disappointing husband and the rest of the Yonville:

- (1) Now the bad days of Tostes came back again. This time she thought herself far more unhappy: for she was experienced in sorrow, with the certainty that it would never end. *Any woman who had imposed such great sacrifices on herself could well be permitted a few fancies.*² She bought a Gothic prie-dieu, and in one month she spent fourteen francs on lemons for cleaning her nails [...] (115; italics mine)

The cited passage opens with an undisputable occurrence of psychonarration (indirect “thought report”; see Cohn 1978: 21–57; Palmer 2004: 75–80), indicated by a linguistic marker of indirectness (“she thought herself...”).³ However, already the second sentence leaves the intentional stance somewhat ambivalent: who is of the opinion that Emma is “experienced in sorrow”? When we reach the third sentence (“Any woman who...”) we are ready to give up insistence on linguistically marked speech categories, since what we are dealing with must be free indirect discourse camouflaged as narratorial judgement.

Already the classical definitions of FID (by, for example, McHale 1978a and 1983, Pascal 1977, Ginsburg 1982) include such instances of discursive double-intention as in the sentence “Any woman who...”: the utterance does not display any overt, linguistic or expressive markers of the character's inner discourse but reads as a subjective construction of the storyworld only when considered in its narrative and thematic context (the *extralinguistic* markers that guide our *contextual* interpretation of the discursive agencies or voices *behind* the surface of language). After the breakthrough of ‘Natural’ and cognitive narratology, perennial questions raise their heads: Why give the subjective perspective of a character the

² In the French original: “Une femme qui s’était imposé de si grands sacrifices pouvait bien passer des fantaisies”. (217)

³ As to Cohn's term “psycho-narration” and Palmer's notion of “thought report” it should be noted that both theorists in fact express a distrust of figural verbalizations of experience, which is partly in tune with my own assertions. For Cohn, it is precisely the narrator-dominated psycho-narration that allows for the most penetrating look “inside” fictional minds since the mode is independent of figural capacities of verbalization and introspection (Cohn 1978: 46, 56, 139–140). One crucial point in Palmer's critique of the classical speech category approach is the rehabilitation of the indirect modes of consciousness representation that, according to Palmer, are capable of rendering the non-verbalized component of fictional minds: for Palmer, consciousness representation involves “the whole mind” in its “social and physical context.” (Palmer 2004: 76)

persuasiveness of an objective report? Why must the identification of the subject behind the discourse necessarily be based on all sorts of extra evidence? Where is the fictional voice, if not in the utterance itself?

I think that it is precisely at the face of such narrative instances as the Bovary example above that the cognitive-narratological approaches fall short, partly because of their insistence on such natural categories as TELLING and EXPERIENCING, partly because of their conviction that as all narratives, also any literary narrative is mainly concerned with qualia, of the “raw feels” of an individual, of the “what is it like to be x” quality of human experience (see esp. Herman 2007: 256–257). In these exhaustive approaches to mind and narrative the peculiarities of figural voice dissolve into “natural” readings: problematic discursive agency is overlooked in favour of establishing a firm experiential plane from which the feeling of being-in-the-fictional-world can emanate. Yet there is nothing raw in the sentence “Une femme qui s’était imposé de si grands sacrifices pouvait bien passer des fantaisies,” a sentence, which read in context is wrought with subjectivity. We do not enter Emma’s consciousness all the way through; instead, we bump into an inner persuasion process, which, being verbalized in narrative discourse, comes disturbingly close to resemble an objective narratorial report—or even an authorial gnomic statement on how things *are* in the world. The passage seems to require more than an alternating application of the TELLING and the EXPERIENCING frame; we must appreciate literary narrative’s capacity to activate these frames simultaneously—as well as the resultant unreliability of both frames.

In the following, I wish to argue that ambivalence of voices should not merely be reduced to either narratorial functions or to a challenge to dig out the truth about a character’s truest motives, intentions or emotions. Ambiguous discourse may also give rise to figural takeovers that cannot be explained away by cognitive or rhetorical approaches. It will be argued that it is precisely the multi-layered communicational and discursive structure of narrative fiction that provokes the violations of that structure; the literary hierarchy of voices has inspired the writers as well as the readers to explore the nexus between mind, language and narrative in ways that are not completely compatible with our everyday cognitive mechanisms of understanding the world and each other.

I will try to make my point with a simulated diachronic shift in the history of literary representation of figural voice. I will start with a couple of canonical examples from epistolary narration to highlight the fact that figural voice is much more than a literary extension of the theories and conceptions concerning the “real mind” or human subjectivity in general. I argue that, by having recourse to the epistolary first-person forerunners

of figural narrative situations, we are able to trace back the literary evolution of the “strangeness” of figural voice—a strangeness that, at least partly, originates from a mind that is both *writing* and *written*. From epistolary fiction I move on to a very limited corpus of examples displaying ambivalent focalization and stylistically unmarked free indirect discourse in third person contexts. Fictional minds will be considered as displaying a distortedly dualistic angle to literary experientiality: (1) the allegedly *represented* consciousnesses appear as discursively mastering their own minds, appropriating narratorial functions and thus playing the “willing suspension of mediacy” game on us readers; yet simultaneously (2) such diegetic mind games undermine fundamentally the entire mimetic agency of these figural consciousnesses and their existence as anything else but writing.

Epistolary Minds: Mediated Immediacy

(2) *O my dearest Father and Mother,*

LET me write and bewail my miserable hard Fate, tho' I have no Hope that what I write will be convey'd to your Hands! – I have now nothing to do but write, and weep, and fear, and pray; and yet, What can I pray for, when God Almighty, for my Sins, to be sure, vouchsafes not to hear my Prayers; but suffers me to be a Prey to a wicked Violator of all the Laws of God and Man! —But, gracious Heaven, forgive me my Rashness! O let me not sin against thee; for thou best knowest what is fittest for thy poor Handmaid!
(98)

Here, to be sure, we have a beautiful exemplar of a fictional figural voice in distress—unmediated by any narratorial framing or temporal distance. Similarity to an unuttered voice of third person consciousness representation is made even more evident by the “eclipse of the confidant,” a conventional rhetorical move in the epistolary novel: the writer’s (the narrator’s) discourse turns inward and the locus of the receiver (the narratee) appears to be empty. As Janet Gurkin Altman notes, such an eclipse is likely to occur whenever the letter-writer is going through an emotional turbulence. (Altman 1982: 57-59.) In the above example, the disappearance of the audience is made literal since the poor Pamela, kidnapped by her tormentor Mr B, will not be able to send the letter to her parents. Moreover, the heroine is convinced that even God himself ignores her prayers. Yet Pamela’s outburst cannot be considered as completely gratuitous, since the feminine master plan, which ultimately dominates over Mr B’s stratagems, relies on the fact that Pamela knows Mr B to be reading her letters. A gap opens up for a non-mimetic reading of consciousness: the immediate distress appears as a discursively mediated fabrication.

The pioneering role of epistolary narration in consciousness representation has been only fleetingly considered by postclassical narratologists such as Fludernik (see 1996: 48), Zunshine (see 2006: 86), or Palmer (see 2004: 242-243). Moreover, if mentioned at all, epistolary narration's contribution to the evolution of fictional minds is considered to be its allowing of an "immediate access" to figural consciousness. Such a take on the epistolary clairvoyance echoes the words of the 18th century masters themselves, Samuel Richardson's famous and triumphant characterization in his preface to *Clarissa* ("the only natural Opportunity [...] of representing with any Grace those lively and delicate Impressions which Things present are known to make upon the Minds of those affected by them"; cit. McKeon 1997: 259) as well as Samuel Johnson's praise of Richardson's ability to "dive into the recesses of the human heart" (cit. Watt 1984: 261). A notable exception to this psychologically mimetic approach is offered by Joe Bray, whose study on the epistolary novel draws out the discontinuity between the perceiving self and the perceived self (Bray 2003: 16 *passim*)⁴; between the distressed captive Pamela and the Pamela who verbally constructs herself as her Lord's poor Handmaid. The outcome is a disturbing mixture of hysterical expressivity and persuasive rhetoric. According to Bray, "the impossibility and unseizability of the epistolary present" as well as the "constant interaction between the narrating self and the experiencing self" in the early modern epistolary fictions foreshadow the ambiguous voice and identity games (such as free indirect discourse) between the heterodiegetic narrator and the diegetic character displayed by later, realist and modernist novels (ibid. 19–28).

Indeed, we may notice how some modes as well as recurring themes of epistolary narration seem to controvert the entire notion of figural voice as immediacy—let alone as quasi-authentic "experientiality"—or as a simulation of "raw feels." In Richardson's *Pamela*, Mr. B. repeatedly refers to Pamela as an "artful slut"; in a deceitful letter to Pamela's father, he makes an observation which many interpreters of the novel find to be quite apt: "with all her pretended Simplicity and Innocence, I never knew so much romantic Invention as she is Mistress of" (*Pamela*, 93). In fact, most of the literary letter writers are artful sluts. This can be said even of the very trendsetter of epistolary passion, sister Mariana in Guilleraques' *The Portuguese Letters* (*Les Lettres Portugaises*, 1669), whose verbalized anguishes have served as inspirations and examples for letter writers, both fictional and real, for centuries. As Joe Bray remarks, Mariana's frantically

⁴ Also Janet Gurkin Altman's classical study (1982) dwells on the unnatural aspects of the epistolary mode as well as points out some recurrent epistolary homologies between modes of writing and thematic patterns.

emotional letters to the deceitful lover were read as close simulations of “natural” feminine passion and as models on how to verbalize unpremeditated sensations (Bray 2003: 29-30). Yet, as Bray goes on to claim, the letters display order in their disorder and reflect distance in their expressivity (31-32). And when Mr. B refers to Pamela as a “mighty letter-writer,” he does not only point to the unnatural volume of those letters but to the improbable skill they exhibit in their power to construct and manipulate interiority. Already this narrow evidence suggests that even the early exemplary texts of epistolary fiction foreground themselves the linguistic and narrative mediacy of the immediate.

Yet, in the letters of Pamela and sister Mariana, the verbal mannerisms or the discursive façade of an ingénue figure are ultimately all that we have—these sentences *form* the figural interiorities and the literary experientiality that we readers are so keen on capturing. This paradox leads us to my central assertion: that the syntheticity of a textualized “inner voice” is an elementary part of literary fiction and does not get lost in translation from the first person epistolary form to the focalized third person narration of mainstream psychological realism. The earlier mentioned study by Joe Bray examines carefully the shaky relationship between the experiencing self and the writing self and suggests that this shakiness gets transferred into the ambiguous relationship between the heterodiegetic narrator and the experiencing character. However, I think something elementary gets lost if we—again—consider the problem of verbalization always to come down to the narrator-character controversy; I would claim that the figural voice’s *internal* controversy lives on, just as well in the third person context as in the hysterical and yet well-composed voices of epistolary heroines. If we take this road (chose to emphasize figural functions over narratorial functions) we may conclude that in many narrative instances, the most productive ambivalence lies between the “voice” of an unmediated experience and the unavoidable sense of premeditation brought on by language, intentional structure and communicativeness.

An illustrative example of bringing this ambivalence to an overtly thematic level is Choderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), where the notorious seducer Valmont makes an art of verbally fabricated passions. In letter No. 70, he describes the production of an emotionally charged and *seemingly* incongruous letter (No. 68) to Madame de Tourvel:

- (3) I have therefore declined her precious friendship and insisted upon my claim to the title of lover. Since I am under no illusions as to the real importance of securing this title (though it might appear at first to be a mere quibbling about words), I took great pains with my letter and attempted to reproduce in it that disorder which alone can portray feeling. I was, at all events, as unreasonable as I was capable of being: for there is no showing tenderness

without talking nonsense. It is for this reason, it seems to me, that women are better writers of love-letters than men. (150)

Valmont's calculated evocation of a figural voice and the disclosure of his methods form the most crucial metatext for the entire novel: the Richardsonian dive "into the recesses of the heart" proves a mere illusion produced by writerly conventions. Furthermore, Valmont's perception of (feminine) epistolary passions seems to suggest that there is *always* a method in textual madness; even in the final letter of the hysterical Madame de Tourvel, dictated from her death bed and addressed to no one particular. Her unrestrained flow of thought speaks to Valmont ("Cruel and malignant man..."), to her husband ("Return and punish an unfaithful wife") and to no one ("Where are the friends that love me, where are they? [...] No one dares come near me"). In Tourvel's letter, the irrationality of reference completes the eclipse of the (anonymous) confidant. And yet, it is in this letter where we find epistolary expressivity reaching its peak. Here we get to one of the greatest paradoxes of consciousness representation: how can one *express* anything without an audience?

Through this intrinsic turn in narrative communication the epistolary novel ushers in a new kind of figural voice. This voice represents a non-communicative and yet speaking subject and it comes to be thoroughly conventionalized by later novelistic techniques such as internal focalization, free indirect discourse and stream-of-consciousness narration. In terms of the narratological easy access fallacy, the *expressivity* of language gives rise to an uncensored figural experience. Yet something gets thrown away with the bathwater when narratologists turn from letters to consciousness representation: the *intentionality* behind an utterance, the pseudo-communicative nature of figural voice, the *artfulness* with which the unuttered emotion, experience or thought is formulated. Yet this ambivalence between immediacy and mediacy of expression (between Tourvel and Valmont) is already thematized in epistolary fictions: the experiential logic of epistolary narration is based on double-dealing between intentional structure ("art") and free expression ("life"). *This* controversy is the most salient legacy that the epistolary novel of the early modernity has passed on to our days: the notion of a constructed and mediated nature of written experience – not that of an immediate and amorphous one.

When reading Laclos or Richardson, we may discern how the evocation of figural immediacy is deconstructed and the entire communicational design seems to loop from the rendering of "true" subjectivity back to the origins of fictional representation—that is, to authorial design. As Altman (1982: 105) notes, a recurrent theme in epistolary novels are letters as self-fulfilling prophecies; the extratextual events are often scripted and man-

oeuvred in letters that, at least for the unsuspecting diegetic reader, first appear as pure expressions of emotion. Here is Pamela's pen at work again:

- (4) the unparalleled wickedness, stratagems, and devices, of those who call themselves gentlemen, yet pervert the designs of Providence in giving them ample means to do good, to their own everlasting perdition, and the ruin of poor oppressed innocence! (83)

Indeed, Altman parallels Pamela's "artfulness" and Mr B's ambivalent role play as her "reader" with the more explicit masterminding of Laclos' characters: "B's consciousness of Pamela's letters as her "novel," *their* novel—which he reads and yet is an agent in—resembles Valmont's and Mer-teuil's awareness of themselves as creators and readers of their own story" (Altman 1982: 105). The above example (4) shows Pamela (again) in distress, and *yet* at her most authorial, occupying the discursive locus of an 18th century intervening and judging narratorial voice. As a discursive Trojan horse, she appropriates the pre-modern narratorial convention of an *exemplum* and constructs herself as the proverbial virtuous victim *while simultaneously representing one*. Consequently, the elements that narratologists lump together under the term "expressivity"⁵ such as exclamations ("O...!") and the breathless syntax reappear to us as means to a narrative end.

One is led to ask: why would all the "artful sluts" stop discursive manoeuvring when cast into the third person context, even though this modern position might—at a first glance—imply the narrative role of a mere innocent victim (of representation)?

Unmarked FID: Downplaying of Discursive Agency and Appropriation of Narratorial Conventions

Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), the allegedly first "psychological novel", plays the role of an intermediary between epistolary forms and modern consciousness representation. Indeed, the novel itself seems to be a work in progress, representing concretely the historical transition from the external to the internal focalization and from first person to third person experientiality. We may find one striking example that displays this change in an ingeniously formed nutshell: a letter, followed by an ancestral occurrence of free indirect discourse. The case is that of an anonymous letter which circles around the court of Henry II and arouses admiration and upheaval; the letter is mistakenly thought to be addressed

⁵ On the slackness of the narratological uses of this term, see Jongeneel 2006.

to the Duke of Nemours by a jealous mistress; and it misleads Madame de Clèves to read it as an evidence of Nemours' false-heartedness in the affections he has been showing to her.

- (5) [From the anonymous woman's letter:] never was grief equal to mine; I thought you had the most violent passion for me, I did not conceal that which I had for you, and at the time that I acknowledged it to you without reserve, I found that you deceived me, that you loved another, and that in all probability I was made a sacrifice to this new mistress. [...] I was of opinion that if anything could rekindle that flame, it would be to let you see that mine was extinguished, but to let you see it through an endeavour to conceal it from you, as if I wanted the power to acknowledge it to you: this resolution I adhered to; but what a painful decision and how difficult, once I had seen you again, to put into practice! (59)

Madam de Clèves read this letter, and read it over again several times, without knowing at the same time what she had read; she saw only that the Duke de Nemours did not love her as she imagined and that he loved others who were no less deceived by him than she. What a discovery was this for a person in her condition, who had a violent passion, who had just given marks of it to a man whom she judged unworthy of it, and to another whom she used ill for his sake! Never was affliction so cutting as hers [...] in short, she thought of everything that could add to her grief and despair. What reflections did she not make on herself, and on the advices her mother had given her! How did she repent, that she had not persisted in her resolution of retiring [...]. (60–61)

The content—and more remarkably, the *form*—of the letter are perplexing enough to give rise to a pioneering narrative mode such as FID. Since this is but an early manifestation of the mode, the extradiegetic narrator's empathetic voice (or psycho-narration /thought report) dominates—"What a discovery was this...!"—and we may sense how the figural voice emerges only gradually from the narration: "... and to another whom she used ill for his sake!". It is almost as if we were let to read how FID is *born* as a result of discursive pairing between the authorial and the figural; springing from mere hypotheses made by the narrator, then growing towards the narrator's empathizing and imitating exclamations—and gradually evolving into a discourse that actually reflects the form of thoughts as they appear to the experiencing mind.

Yet I would also claim that it is a justifiable interpretive move to foreground the figural discursive component from the very beginning. It is the preceding letter that provides us with the most crucial frame: if we compare the letter's syntax and the expressions to those in the following third person passage, we may notice striking similarities:

[The letter:]

never was grief equal to mine
Jamais douleur n'a été pareille à la mienne.

I thought you had the most violent
 passion for me, I did not conceal that
 which I had for you, and at the time
 that I acknowledged it to you without
 reserve, I found that you deceived
 me, that you loved another

*Je croyais que vous aviez pour moi une pas-
 sion violente; je ne vous cachais plus celle que
 j'avais pour vous et, dans le temps que je
 vous la laissais voir tout entière, j'appris que
 vous me trompiez, que vous en aimiez une
 autre*

this resolution I adhered to; but what
 a painful decision and how difficult,
 once I had seen you again, to put into
 practice!

*Je m'arrêtai à cette résolution; mais qu'elle
 me fut difficile à prendre, et qu'en vous re-
 voyant elle me parut impossible à exécuter!*

[The reaction:]

never was affliction so cutting as hers
*Jamais affliction n'a été si piquante et si vi-
 ve.*

who had a violent passion, who had
 just given marks of it to a man whom
 she judged unworthy of it, and to an-
 other whom she used ill for his sake!

*qui avait une passion violente, qui venait
 d'en donner des marques à un homme
 qu'elle en jugeait indigne et à un autre
 qu'elle maltraitait pour l'amour de lui!*

What reflections did she not make on
 herself, and on the advices her moth-
 er had given her! How did she repent,
 that she had not persisted in her reso-
 lution of retiring.

*Quels retours ne fit-elle point sur elle-même!
 quelles réflexions sur les conseils que sa mère
 lui avait donnés! Combien se repentit-elle de
 ne s'être pas opiniâtrée à se séparer du com-
 merce du monde.*

In fact, it seems that Madame de Clèves *absorbs the art of the letter-writer* to convey her own experience—the alleged uniqueness of it (“Jamais affliction n’a été si piquant et si vive”). Yet, ironically, we as readers see the two women’s anxieties as juxtaposed—and as identical (“Jamais douleur n’a été pareille à la mienne”). Their passions are not unique but schematic, at least when verbalized. The third person consciousness representation imitates the passionate syntax of the letter as well as the exclamation “Combien/Que...!”—a structure that later became a conventional marker of free indirect discourse in French. In this early context, however, the sentences such as “Quelle vue et quelle connaissance...” or “combien se repentit-elle...” remain doubly-voiced in a very peculiar manner because they foreground both the figural expressivity and the hypothetical nature

of figuralization. We could actually interpret the narrator as *asking*, rhetorically: “combien – “ , “quelle vue – “.⁶

Ultimately, the ambivalence between the narratorial and the figural can be seen as culminating in the sentence “never was affliction so cutting as hers.” It offers the reader a seemingly objective report of the unequalled emotional load of the heroine—of a woman throughout the novel characterized as, indeed, a *sui generis* case both in appearance as in character. However, in its narrative context, the sentence gains in figural expressivity at the expense of objectivity. The letter’s exemplary dame in distress suggests a reading where the incomparability and uniqueness of Madame de Clèves’ shock is the heroine’s *own* interpretation—just as the following sentences are the result of her misguided conclusions (we learn later that the letter was not addressed to Nemours and all the emotional fuss was unnecessary—a fact that the chronicler-narrator of La Fayette was well aware of all along).

Moreover, such wavering between uniqueness and schematicity, between expressivity and authorial design is one of the trademarks of the courtly (literary) traditions in which La Fayette herself lived and from where she found her inspiration. As Mary Jo Muratore has noted in connection of her La Fayette study, the courtly life of the 16th and the 17th century was dominated by *exemplaires*: the perfection of one’s conduct *as well as of one’s inner life* was to be accomplished by imitating superior examples (Muratore 1994: 94–95). In *La Princesse de Clèves*, the virtuous heroine who, even after her husband’s death, rejects Nemours and dies in a monastery, becomes the absolute “exemplaire inimitable.” Yet, before that it is the letter-writer who sets the *literary* example for passion and true interiority: the found letter is introduced to the court as a masterpiece both in writing and in sentiment, as “the finest letter that was ever writ”. The art of emotion is reduced to the art of writing, and when transferred (or copied) into the third person context of Madame de Clèves’ affliction, this art of verbally mastering one’s interiority translates into an uncanny figural voice, which is simultaneously the producer and the result of consciousness representation.

We may also be reminded of Madame de Clèves’ successor Emma Bovary and our introductory example (2) where the sentence “Any wom-

⁶ Indeed, a post-Lafayettean pattern of emotional letters giving rise to turbulent free indirect discourse can be traced from Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* (1809) and Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* (1828-32). Pascal 1977: 39 offers an illustrative example from Goethe (but does not consider the connections between FID and the preceding epistolary expression): “This last expression flowed out of his [Eduard’s] pen, not his heart. Yes, as he saw it on paper he began bitterly to weep. In one way or another he was to renounce the happiness, yes the unhappiness, of loving Ottilie!”

an who had imposed such great sacrifices on herself could well be permitted a few fancies” occurs. Might there be something similar going on in La Fayette’s narration, even in the seemingly most objective evaluations such as “What a discovery was this for a person in her condition...!”? Another point of contact can be found in the example (4) where Pamela writes about Mr. B’s “stratagems [...] to the ruin of poor oppressed innocence”. Just as Pamela takes on an authorial tone in the midst of persecution and crisis, also Madame de Clèves and Emma gain authority for their subjective constructions by applying the narratorial convention of making a character (themselves) an exemplum. All the three heroines are “Mistresses of romantic Invention,” as Richardson’s Mr. B would put it, and derive the language of their experience from literary exempla; yet only one of them is writing.

The rub with FID is, as noted by several literary theorists, that more than often it appears as unmarked by linguistic or expressive signals, and yet does not go unnoticed by the readers. As Cohn herself points out, FID is still relatively easy to tell apart from other modes of consciousness representation but often impossible to distinguish from the allegedly reliable narratorial report (Cohn 1978: 106). Sentences such as “Never was affliction so cutting as hers” or “Any woman who had imposed such sacrifices on herself...” jumble the logic of mimesis and diegesis, of figural and authorial (cf. Ginsburg 1982 and Ron 1981). What has gone largely unnoticed is the fact that narrative literature teems with “artful bitches”—characters in the diegetic fictional worlds—who take advantage of this available discursive loophole in order to establish their own idiosyncratic version as a preferable truth.

Roy Pascal’s commentary on what he calls “narrative usurpation” crystallizes the uneasiness that narratologists experience with such disrespect towards the hierarchy of voices. When analyzing consciousness representation in *Madame Bovary*, Pascal fixes his critical eye on descriptions of Emma’s sensations that are *too* artistically accomplished to render a realistic image of Emma’s imagination. (Pascal 1977: 103–111) Furthermore, when approaching modernist texts, Pascal recognizes the *opposite* tendency: to give the figural voice the persuasiveness and apparent authority of narrator’s discourse. Yet Pascal is reluctant to theorize this phenomenon any further in the framework of his “dual voice hypothesis”. (Ibid. 108) As McHale (1978b: 400) notes, Pascal fails to appreciate Flaubert’s resistance to “the interpretive strategy by which we assign impressionism to a character’s vision”. As I have been trying to demonstrate, this narratological disinclination towards thematically potential narrative takeovers is manifest in its reverse meaning as well, as the “easy access fallacy”. Yet the au-

thorization and pseudo-communicativeness of figural voices are not merely stylistic blunders that dilute the effects of psychological realism: they are the paradoxical *essence* of psychological realism.

Such downplaying of discursive agency is thematically and formally titillating precisely because it momentarily deconstructs what is conventionally regarded as the communicational hierarchy of the literary narrative. Furthermore, these loopholes are in a contrapuntal relationship to the evolution of recurrent literary themes: the double standards of virtue (*Pamela*); the conflict between individual experientiality and shared conventions of narrativization (*La Princesse de Clèves*); or the anxiety of language and literary communication (*Madame Bovary*). Thus the impression of a figural consciousness “writing their own novel” should not be regarded merely as a discursive side effect; on the contrary, the figure of the pseudo-hysterical “artful slut” or that of the “(over)narrativizing focalizer” are recurrent literary tropes produced in the interplay between narrative techniques and thematic foregrounding.

Every time one addresses overlapping discourses in a novel one name should—and will—come up: the indie-theorist Bakhtin is closely connected to the arguments I am defending in this article. For Bakhtin, as well, novelistic techniques are deeply rooted in writing—and silent reading which leaves the construction of voice(s) to the reader (Bakhtin 1981: 3; see also Lock 2001: 7-77).⁷ It has been suggested that Bakhtin is, in fact, more “graphocentric” than Derrida (Robert Cunliffe, cited in Lock 2001: 71). Yet what prevents me from simply embracing Bakhtin’s dialogism and accepting a sentence such as “Any woman who had imposed such great sacrifices on herself could well be permitted a few fancies” as a mere locus of an eternal heteroglossia, of an unresolved play of subjectivities (cf. Bakhtin 1981: 324-325; “another speech in another’s language”; see also Grishakova in this volume) is that the Bakhtinian angle to double-voicedness ignores the interplay between the “freedom” of free indirect discourse and the suggested hierarchy of narrative agents that contravenes it. In my view, the most significant novelistic dialogue is conducted between the possibility and the *impossibility* of dialogue between narrative agents on different diegetic levels; it is the hierarchical backdrop of novelistic communication against which the discursive freedom—or the unencumbered nature of the written word—is played. Consequently, as much as I sympathize with Lars-Åke Skalin’s arguments in the present volume on the peculiarity of fictional (non-)communication, I cannot fully em-

⁷ The Bakhtinian notions about the novel as an emphatically written genre tie in with the early theories of free indirect discourse as “unspeakable” and as such (exclusively) a novelistic mode (see Bally 1912 and 1914, Vološinov 1986: 136-159, see also Lock 2001: 80-83).

brace his notion of third-person literary narratives as elementarily *tellerless*: the uncanny intentionality and rhetorical design of figural voices is created in a dynamic dialogue with the constructed narratorial position. Furthermore, the thematic potential of narrative usurpation and exploitation attests to the *readerly intuition* of an underlying structure of voices. To interpret Emma Bovary or the Princess of Clèves as “artful sluts” reaching for narrative authority is to presuppose an “upper” and a “lower” discursive agency (the authority of the narratorial report and the controversiality of local truths). In short, we cannot say that literary discourse or literary interpretation is a play if we do not recognize the bricks with which one plays; and the alleged hierarchical structure, to my mind, is one of the most fundamental bricks.

At this point it may be warranted to turn to a late modern text which obviously flaunts the figural discursive takeover, bringing heterodiegetic narratorial functions to the verge of omission—and we should turn to this narrative precisely in order to reflect on the interpretive effects it *shares* with the allegedly more authorial “traditional” novels and their conventional use of free indirect discourse.

J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999) begins with an iterative framing of the protagonist’s habitualities as a 52-year old divorcé:

- (6) For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well. [...] Soraya is tall and slim, with long black hair and dark, liquid eyes. Technically he is old enough to be her father; but then, technically, one can be a father at twelve. He has been on her books for over a year; he finds her entirely satisfactory. (1)

In all its innovativeness, Coetzee’s novel is indebted to the long tradition of those ambiguous figural voices that appear as if “narrated” inside someone’s head and yet being caught in the middle of their experiential confusion.⁸ The contradictory effect is amplified by the use of present tense and unpredictable changes between singular and iterative narration. Thus the literary frame of epistolary tension between experiencing and transcribing (or fabulating) lives on even more forcefully than in conventional FID narration. The Coetzeean present-tense-third-person narrative situation allows for exquisite changes from temporarily unanchored interpretation and value judgements (“He is all for double lives, triple lives, lives lived in compartments” (6)) to reports on singulative, temporarily marked sequences (“Then one Saturday morning everything changes” (6)).

⁸ As in the double temporality reflected in a sentence describing a filmed dance performance, Lurie is showing to his young student mistress: “the instant of the present and the past of that instant, evanescent, caught in the same space”. (15)

Yet many thought acts of the protagonist David Lurie are left lingering between iterative and singulative. Especially his (reoccurring?) moments of insight (“His needs turn out to be quite light, after all, light and fleeting, like those of a butterfly” (5)) are a constant source of ambiguity: is he really a master of his existentially lingering way of life, or is his confusion only shallowly covered by his eloquence?

Temporal changes and third person reference suggest extradiegetic manoeuvring behind the scenes of *Disgrace*: in fact, at a first blush, the narrative situation resembles conventional psycho-narration. In the same conventional vein, the present tense reinforces the protagonist’s role as the receiver of unmediated sensations and not as a retrospective organizer of experience. By definition, then, we should have the extradiegetic narrator to verbalize, organize and summarize the thoughts of the focal character in a manner typical of analytic psycho-narration—even if occasionally resorting to free indirect quotation of thoughts already verbalized in the character’s mind. Narratorial functions are not the way to approach the ambiguities in Coetzee’s narration, however. Any classical approach to the use of free indirect discourse or psycho-narration in this novel would find ample evidence of both sympathy and irony towards the inner life of Lurie, but it would be redundant to attribute these stances to narratorial intentions, since Lurie himself, a professor of literature and communication, seems perfectly capable of being the empathizer as well as the shrewdest ironizer of his own discourse—and more troublingly, the apparently “narratorial” discourse. A recurring stylistic feature in the narration of Lurie’s experiential flux is a search after *le mot juste*: “a moderate bliss, a moderated bliss” (6), “this daughter, this woman” (62), “to pass him tools—to be his handlanger, in fact” (136), “Her hips and breasts are now (he searches for the best word) ample” (59). This apparently hesitant verbalization of experience gives rise to contradictory effects, that of almost autistic repetition and that of intentional poeticization: “A ready learner, compliant, pliant” (5). The mind of Lurie appears both as an unedited flux and as a conscious, even artistically motivated editor of language.

If we take another look at the beginning of *Disgrace*, we may notice how the authorial schematization of one’s own experience, already at play in the minds of Emma, Pamela and Madame de Clèves, is given another ironic twist. The focalizer-character’s tendency to assume narratorial activities is clear from the outset: the conventional expository mode that introduces the protagonist with the help of familiar categories (“a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced”) is already focalized through Lurie: internal focalization is indexed by the absence of the protagonist’s name (“...he has, to his mind...”). Moreover, as we read on, we conclude that the evocation of prototypes and even the reference to the subjective nature of

this “good solution” (“to his mind”) are in fact the first evidence of the protagonist’s ability to self-ironical distancing. Again, as in the example (1) from *Madame Bovary* or in the anguish of the Princess of Clèves, we may notice how the figural mind exploits the convention of psycho-narration by transforming the markers of indirectness into figural self-reflection on one’s own cognitive processes (cf. “His needs turn out to be quite light, after all”; see Ron 1981: 35).

Here, as well as with the earlier examples, one is reminded of Fludernik’s inspiring study on schematic language representation. In short, Fludernik claims that representation of speech and thought relies on mechanisms of *schematization* and *typification* (based on cognitive prototype modelling). Whenever narrative reproduces an utterance, mental or oral, it is not actually a matter of reproduction but of *construction*. As Fludernik demonstrates, this construction relies on approximation, on rendering utterances and expressive features that are *likely* within certain situational and narrative frames. It is through “typical” markers of expressivity that the illusion of a figural voice is projected into the narration. (Fludernik 1993: 398-408 and *passim*.) Consequently, in the context of fictional consciousness representation, schematization and typification are considered narratorial functions. Yet in the cases of our artful focalizers—the Princess of Clèves, Emma Bovary, or David Lurie—schematization appears (on the level of our quasi-mimetic interpretation) as intended by the characters themselves; they seem to want to evoke markers of interiority that are somehow representative of something they identify with—more or less willingly (“Technically he is old enough to be her father; but then, technically, one can be a father at twelve”). These examples seem to suggest that *stylistically*, the mechanisms of typification and schematization are malleable and often attributable to the alleged intentions of the focalizing characters.

Schematization and typification of one’s own “narrative” and one’s own experiences demonstrate how *narrator as function* can be turned into *narrator as style*. Richard Aczel’s study on narrative voice (to my mind, one of the most progressive ones in the field) moves towards a more textually oriented approach by emphasizing the recognition of narratorial idiom (Aczel 1998: 467-468). Aczel maintains that in FID, the voice of the narrator is identifiable only through its absence, as “voice-different-from” (*ibid.* 478). Thus the system of voices in a narrative text is a system of differences: the narratorial idiom is identified through its deviation from the figural voice (*ibid.* 478, 494)—and vice versa. However, Aczel continues in the familiar narratological vein by assigning intentional discursive agency almost exclusively to the narrator and not to the figural voice.

If we follow Aczel's argument on the centrality of stylistic differences all the way through, we may conclude that a figural voice that attempts to deconstruct these differences by incorporating narratorial conventions into its own discourse also upends the power relations of this system: the resident of the diegetic world appears, if only momentarily, as the organizer of the discursive and narrative elements of her own story. Thus in the case of Emma Bovary's fancies (example 1), the context works reversely to Aczel's theory of voice-as-difference: Emma's subjective attempt to frame and narrativize her own motives is nested—chameleon-like—within the objective report on her moods and behaviour. One of the hackneyed definitions of FID has been its naturalization as narratorial mimicry. One step towards deconstructing such reductionist interpretations is offered by focalizers who create the interpretive illusion of mimicking the narratorial style: they use seemingly objective qualifiers, distance themselves from their experience, dissolve their subjectivity into generalizations; replace self-reference with authority. In such narrative situations, the *absence of expressivity* creates the subjective experientiality by negation. As Fludernik remarks about FID, “there is a deliberate attempt to erase stylistic difference, the difference between background and foreground” (Fludernik 1993: 331). The only expansion I would suggest to Fludernik's argument is that there might be a deliberate attempt—not just on the narrator's side, as Fludernik suggests, but *on both sides*. Or, stripped from any narrative illusions, this is the uncanny interpretive effect created by the absence of agency markers (“Emma thought”) and the contravening default understanding of narrative voices as hierarchically structured.

Such reading of narrative style and of the objective-expressive binary opposition would also potentially upend the conventional reading of the *Uncle Charles Principle* (Kenner 1978) as “linguistic parody” of the otherwise anti-colloquial narrator (cf. Fludernik 1993: 332). In fact, Lucy Ferriss' recent article on UCP is already well ahead in doing this when she coins the term APP, named after the short story “A&P” by Updike. In short, APP is UPP's counterpart in first person fiction and in internally focalized narrative, referring to the contagion of the (otherwise colloquial) character-narrator's or focalizer's language by authorial (literary, well-formed, persuasive) idiom (Ferriss 2008: 185). The most notable difference between my own arguments and Ferriss' concerns the *interpretive* effects of ambiguous discursive agency. Ferriss encapsulates her own idea by suggesting that authors lending their authorial idiom to their characters' discursive plane “are saying, in effect: ‘However idiosyncratic my character may appear, however broken-off his or her world, we can connect and unify it if we only supply the right language’” (ibid. 190). In my interpretation, however, the uncanniness of the figural voice persists and the “ex-

change of syntactic structures” (ibid. 185) never really ceases, and this *instability of the figural voice as a vehicle of experientiality* continues to be thematically productive.

In Coetzee’s novel, these ambiguities of voice and authority are deeply entangled with the major theme of confession and remorse. Lurie refuses to express public contrition for his having an affair with a young student, but, along with the story, is made to feel remorse for an entire post-apartheid nation as well as for his own sex. This ethically unstable position is reflected in the narration: Lurie is established as the only focalizer of events that seem to pass by as an uncontrollable present-tense flow, and yet it seems that it is his figural voice that controls the narrative discourse in a poignantly literary fashion, as if in artistically motivated retrospect. In fact, this ethically unstable positioning of voice comes very close to resembling the notorious first-person fabulator Humbert Humbert who, as the leading theorist of character (*i.e.* first-person) narration James Phelan has noted, is able to turn the discourse into a story;

Nabokov is using Humbert’s act of telling as itself part of the represented action of the novel, a present-tense story running parallel to the past tense story of Humbert and Dolores [...] More specifically, Nabokov uses this present-tense story to add a significant layer to the whole narrative: the ethical struggle of Humbert the Narrator. (Phelan 2005: 121)

Perhaps due to his emphasis on homodiegetic narration, Phelan’s rhetorical poetics ignores the uncanny role of third person focalizers in narrative communication – and thus all the “living to tell about it” that has no discernible speaker function attached to it.⁹ Yet if we consider the narration of *Disgrace* in the light of Phelan’s reading of *Lolita*, we may notice a similar tension between being in the middle of things and the re-evaluation of that experience. It is through this tension that the focalizer David Lurie, the man in the middle of things (increasingly awful things, as we learn) just happening to him, at the same time resembles an informed narrator, yet not extradiegetic and not even an intradiegetic one since there is no outer narratorial frame in the classically hierarchical sense; no signifying difference between the extradiegetic and the figural voice arises from the discourse (cf. “There is still Soraya. He ought to close that chapter. Instead, he pays a detective agency to track her down.” (9)). The persuasiveness of Lurie’s evaluations and self-irony creates a communicational fallacy and makes the boundary between homo- and heterodiegetic narration seem artificial. A literary mind such as Lurie is even likely to use the third per-

⁹ For a critique of the narratological “standard theory of narrative transmission”, see Skalin 2005, and also Nielsen’s article in this volume.

son to refer to himself. His evident intertextual counterpart Humbert Humbert, who, at the moment of the death of Lolita's mother and Humbert's wife, assumes the third person perspective of others who mistakenly treat him as a mourning widower, provides a plausible model.

An interpretive leap from the third to the first person may find support from some postclassical studies on the so-called simultaneous narration (first-person-present-tense; Cohn 1999: 96-108, and Hansen 2008), a mode familiar from, among many others, Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). Per Krogh Hansen continues Dorrit Cohn's work on simultaneous narration by pointing out some interpretive challenges that the unnatural combination of immediacy and mediacy sets forth; this is what he notes about one of his compelling exemplary texts: "[...] even though [the] text is so obviously marked as 'narrated' [...] one cannot consider this as a sign of a narratorial or authorial instance beyond the character-narrator, even though the latter occupies a non-naturalizable narrational situation" (Hansen 2008: 327). At a first glance, Lurie seems to occupy this same untenable position, yet one is tempted to think that precisely the use of third person is crucial here and the meanings and aesthetic effects of *Disgrace* would not survive translation to first person. In order to create the illusion of a discursive takeover—which, thematically, seems to generate from a mixture of denial, defence, literary sensibility and literary obsession—the narrative situation needs to cast the shadow of a possible authority (the heterodiegetic "presence") towards which the diegetic discursive agent is reaching through narratively and stylistically "authorizing" strategies. What strikes me as an interesting difference between Hansen's and my own examples has to do with the stylistic effects: Hansen's first-person-present-tense create "a disturbing apathetic sense" and indicate incapability of narrative framing (at least in psychological or ethical terms), whereas my examples from epistolary narration, canonical third-person FID and *Disgrace* display narrative *overcapacity* and disturbing *eloquence* in a narrative position which, by definition, should be that of an unwilling and unconscious mediator (cf. Yacobi 1981: 123-124, 2005). In fact, these anti-narrators betray such crafty design in their flux of experience that not only we experience narrativity, we get the sense of *writing*.

As Henrik Skov Nielsen demonstrates in the present volume, one of the pitfalls of structuralist narratology is its mostly unchallenged reliance on pronominal reference even in fictional contexts. Yet I think that a questioning of the conventional functions of third- and first-person reference should not lead to a conclusion that the pronouns "I" and "(s)he" would in any literary context be *interchangeable*. Just as narrative takeovers and usurpations presuppose a hierarchy of voices, similarly it is the conven-

tional use of pronouns and their reference functions that provide the ground for the uncannily narrativizing and quasi-communicating figural voices. Only through violation can they create a sense of structural loopholes and question the fixed statuses of the constructor and the constructed.

Meir Sternberg has reminded us of the varying degrees of communicativeness of textual agents and their awareness of their function as narrative mediators: “[...] discourses in narrative polarize (or shuttle) between tellers and informants: those who communicate with another about the world, as against those who lead their secret life and unwittingly mediate in the process another’s higher-level communication” (Sternberg 2005: 233). Although Sternberg rightly points out that the discourser’s status is flexible, he does not look into cases in which the leaders of secret lives reflect communicative features in their discourse. Literary narratives do not only demonstrate the fact that evocation of a voice is always in some measure an evocation of communicativeness: this loophole in structure opens up new thematic possibilities. Such techniques foreground the linguistic and literary mediacy at work in the human mind; and furthermore, display the nature of fictional minds as overly verbalized and overdetermined in their verbal design.¹⁰ Consequently, I find it fundamentally counterintuitive when Tamar Yacobi writes that the “purely informative status” of Emma Bovary and other subjects of consciousness representation “makes [them] the diametric opposite of the invariably self-conscious author, a passive participant in the text’s communicative process” (Yacobi 1987: 338).

I should think that cognitive narratology would have the potential to go beyond the hierarchization of voices and explore the readerly effects of the ultimate multi-voicedness of literary communication. Yet it seems that cognitive narratologists are too keen on keeping their feet on the oral and naturally social ground of storytelling to address the sort of *discursive foregrounding* in fictional minds that I have been after in this article.¹¹ When Lisa Zunshine (very persuasively) suggests that “fictional narratives [...] rely on, manipulate, and titillate our tendency to keep track of who thought, wanted, and felt what and when” (2006: 5), she does not consider the manipulative effects that are brought along to consciousness representation by multi-level verbalization and narrativization processes. The

¹⁰ Cf. Jahn 1996: 247: “Interior monologues may indeed have a quality of “voice,” but this is only because thought has a quality of voice, and not because thought equals voice or is a kind of voice, let alone a narrative voice.”

¹¹ More on this skepticism towards the study of fictional minds in cognitive narratology can be found in an article where I study the phenomenon of characters constructing each other’s minds—a topic that is closely related to the current one. (Mäkelä 2006)

downplaying of discursive agency in FID is *designed against* our meta-representational capacity and is not reducible to formulaic representations such as “X interprets that Y tells that A assumes B to think...” and so on. As Michael Peled Ginsburg notes well before any narratological Theory of Mind applications, “[FID] deserves our attention because it makes explicit the fundamental characteristic of discourse in the novel, its double focus, its existence both as a representation of an object and as in itself an object of representation” (Ginsburg 1982: 140). Thus a formulaic representation is bound to run into its own impossibility (“X interprets/tells/assumes/-represents/is X?”).

Another persuasive point is made by Palmer, who criticizes classical narratology for its internal speech bias and calls for a more holistic approach to fictional minds as embodied and as social constructs (Palmer 2004: 9-12). Especially Palmer’s critique of classical narratology’s “speech category approach” (the dissection of narration into direct, indirect and free indirect discourse) is well deserved, as already mentioned earlier. However, again something is lost with the bathwater: the fact that literary minds *are* verbally biased, they consist of nothing but language. We hear unuttered, even unintended sentences communicating to us.

A Short Conclusion: Fictions of Authority

This article has been an attempt to rehabilitate the role of the figural voice as a quasi-intentional discursive agency. I have suggested that readerly intuition finds nothing alarming in fictional minds that speak to them, persuade them and try to convince them of the legitimacy of their own interpretations—these features can be found at the very heart of literary conventions. Yet there seems to be no berth for such unnatural textual agencies in narratological reasoning. The shift from classical to postclassical narratology has not significantly altered the hierarchically driven standard assumptions about narrative communication and about the fixedness of the levels of intentionality in narrative discourse.

Yet the history of figural masterminding goes way back and is already thematized and even parodied by the 18th century epistolary fictions. The voice of an unmediated experience is shown to run into its own impossibility and is replaced by a subjectivity that reflects its own intermediary position both as a textual construct and as a textual constructor. By the emergence of modern novelistic practices, the status of the figural voice has been further complicated, since, in terms of naturally occurring human communication and cognition, it has become incommunicable. As a result, this experiential ambiguity is reflected in structural uncertainty—to a

point where the entire notion of the structure of voices becomes debatable.

Ultimately, my argument does not so much spring from an urge to criticize existing narratological categories as it is inspired by the multiple ways fictional minds seem to reflect, shadow, challenge and even carnivalize the upper level construction processes—literary creation, the narrative act, and finally, the act of literary interpretation. Yet this is also a bilateral manoeuvre: since the reader is the final constructor of voices, we need to suppose that there is indeed a readerly interest in reading figural voices against the cognitive or the communicative grain—a willingness to defamiliarize the fictional mind. As Henrik Skov Nielsen notes in the present volume, “the question is whether the reader will always try to naturalize anything—and if so, if it can always be done successfully.”

Yet another contributor to the present volume, Rolf Reitan suggests several interpretive effects set forth by the use of narrative “you” as both reference and address; what to me seems to be the most appealing of these interpretations is to regard the narratorial voice in second person narratives as “some version of the creator’s voice *talking* (no, not talking *to*) his creation, or more accurately, *writing* his creation” (Reitan in the present volume, italics in the original). Here Reitan is going where I would also like to go: a step further from naturalizing literary communication and a step towards acknowledging the uncanny shadows that the *literary* terms of existence cast across imagined worlds and minds. As Nielsen reminds the narratological community in the wake of an interdisciplinary explosion, the peculiarity of fictional representation is the result of the paradoxical fact that “[a] work of fiction creates the world to which it refers by referring to it” (Nielsen 2004: 145).¹² Figural voices suggest that, in a way, this goes for literary experientiality as well: a verbalized fictional mind bears in itself the process of its own twofold genesis, that is, writing and reading as literary constructions.

¹² A point originally made by Käte Hamburger; see also Cohn 1999: 12-13.

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