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Represented speech and thought and auctorial irony: ambiguity and metarepresentation in literature

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Metaphorically, we can say that we house a jungle in our heads.

G.M. Edelman & Giulio Tononi, *Consciousness*.

Abstract: In this paper, I want to discuss one type of “pragmatic ambiguity”, i.e. utterances of which it is not clear whether they are sentences of narration or represented speech and thought. Through the discussion of these examples, I will introduce a few notions which seem to me important for the analysis of represented speech and thought, notably the notion of *metarepresentation*. I will then turn to another example of metarepresentation in literature, that is auctorial irony. Having shown that it is indeed a case of metarepresentation, I will then point out that its existence raises difficulties for the notion, traditional in literary studies, of a *narrator*, distinct from the author, and responsible of the narration itself. I will then conclude that the notion of *author*, which is not theoretical but relative to the actual producer of the text, should be rehabilitated and take pride of place in literary studies.

1. Introduction

In linguistics, two types of ambiguity have been considered: syntactic ambiguity, of which (1) is an example (see (2) and (3) which give its two syntactic structures) and lexical ambiguity, illustrated in (4) and (5)¹:

- (1) This American football player is good
- (2) [s[NP[Det This [ADJ American[NP football player]]][VP is good]]
- (3) [s[NP[Det This [NP American football [N player]]] [VP is good]]
- (4) I went for a walk on the *banks* of the Tames.
- (5) I went to the City and saw a lot of *banks*.

These are examples of linguistic ambiguity, which, or so it is claimed, are the only ones to allow for different truth-conditions for the same sentence.

I will not, however, be interested in such examples here, but I would like to turn to other classes of examples where, in fact, it is not the sentence which is ambiguous — i.e. which, in linguistic terms, correspond to two different sentences² or more —, but the utterance. Note that the claim that the two types of ambiguity evocated above, syntactic and semantic (or lexical) ambiguity, are the only ones to influe on the truth-conditions of the sentence will be chalenged below. Indeed, this claim, which goes hand in hand with the claim that truth-conditions can be, are, and should only be determined linguistically, will be shown to be false in what follows.

Rather, I will be interested here primarily in represented speech and thought as it can be found in literature. Let me hasten to say that I strongly disagree with the idea that represented speech and thought can only be found in literature or in that portion of

¹It has become common recently to distinguish between semantic ambiguity which stems from accidental homonymy (e.g. bank ⇔ financial institution *vs* bank = side of a river) and semantic ambiguity which is not contingent but comes from the meaning of the word (e.g. door = pannel of material which can pivot on its hinges *vs* door = aperture). As semantic ambiguity will not be my concern here, I will not further discuss this distinction. For more about it, see, among others, Pustejovsky 1995, Reboul 2000.

²Syntactic structures.

literature which is fictional. However, the examples used here will be drawn from literature and, more precisely from fiction.

Let us come back to linguistic ambiguity, before we turn to “pragmatic ambiguity”, and see what the problem raised from ambiguity is: in the case of (1), depending on the syntactic construction attributed to the NP *the American football player*, it will be taken to refer to a football player who happens to be American, or to refer to a player of American football, who, for all we know, might be a European. In other words the two interpretations cannot be both valid at the same time of the same person. This leads us to a major semantic distinction between two types of problems for truth-conditional semantics: *gaps* and *gluts*.

2. Gaps and gluts

The distinction between gaps and gluts has become common place in the semantic literature and is often illustrated by examples drawn from fiction, for reasons which will shortly become obvious. A *gap* occurs when something cannot not be determinate but there is no way to determine it: a notorious example of gap is the number of Lady Macbeth’s children, of whom Shakespeare tells us that she is a mother without saying how many children she has. In the fiction³, it is true that she has children (given that truth in fiction is fixed by what the author says), and necessarily the number of children she has is determinate; however it is inaccessible to us and hence epistemically underdetermined. A *glut* occurs in something like the reverse situation: we not only know that something has to be determinate, we are given two (or more) conflicting informations, all apparently equally creditable, as to its determination. A notorious example of that is Dr. Watson’s injury which is said in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* to be in the shoulder and to be in the tight and which cannot truly be situated in those two different places.

It is important to note that gaps and gluts are neither specific to fiction, nor to language. Indeed, the resolution of gaps and gluts seem to be a central problem for consciousness: as Edelman & Tononi (2000, 27) say, “Many neuropsychological disorders demonstrate that consciousness can bend or shrink and, at times, even split, but it does not tolerate breaks of coherence”. This implies a choice “between fusion and suppression in the interest of coherence” (*Ibid.*, 26). *Fusion* means that one will fuse representations by closing over the gap, either by ignoring it or else by recognising its existence and filling it. *Suppression* is seen in the treatment of gluts when one representation is ignored, leaving only one determination. Interestingly enough, fusion and suppression also are the means by which logic has approached gaps and gluts⁴, though I will not speak of it here.

I would like to propose that ambiguities can be seen as a type of gluts, i.e. as proposing two divergent representations for a given word, sentence or utterance. As can be seen from examples (4) and (5), it seems that examples of lexical ambiguity can easily be solved through suppression: there is no doubt that in (4) *banks* refers to the sides of the Thames, while in (5) it refers to financial institutions. However, it is more difficult to see how, in the absence of further information, one can decide whether (1) should be

³ To borrow Lewis’ expression (see Lewis 1983).

⁴ See Cresswell 1983, 1985, Lewis 1983, Varzi 1997. *Suppression* can be seen as what Lewis (1983) calls the *method of intersection* and *fusion* as what he calls the *method of union*. For a general criticism of these approaches for some kind of gluts, see Reboul to appear.

interpreted as in (2) or as in (3). This tendency of syntactic ambiguity not be amenable to simple solutions has been exploited in so-called garden-path sentences, such as (6):

(6) I saw that gasoline can explode, and a brand new gasoline can it was too!

The first part of the sentence can be understood to say either of two things: gasoline has a dispositional property which makes it subject to explosion or a specific object, a gasoline can, exploded. Though the second part of the sentence rules in favour of the second interpretation, if it did not exist, there would not be any way of deciding between the two interpretations, which, though they can both be true, cannot both be the correct interpretation of the first part of the sentence. This last point calls for a short digression on the distinction between sentence and utterance.

3. *Sentence vs utterance*

The distinction between pragmatics and linguistics rests on a parallel distinction between sentence and utterance. Whereas the sentence is a linguistic unit, the utterance is not and though it is dependant on the sentence, it should not — and, indeed, cannot — be confounded with it. To show this, examples of sentences with deictics have traditionally been used, demonstrating that the same sentence, depending on its occasions of use, can come to have widely divergent meanings, though its linguistic signification, by definition determined in isolation, cannot. For instance, depending on whether (7) is said by myself in Sainte-Cécile, France, on the third of january 2001, or by Jacques Moeschler in Geneva, Switzerland on the fifth of february 1998, its meaning will not be the same:

(7) I am here now.

However, the sentence uttered is the same in both cases and its linguistic meaning (determined independently of its use) has not changed: what has is the utterance and the two utterances corresponding to the single sentence in (7) have different meanings.

Though examples of syntactic ambiguities have not generally been used to justify the sentence/utterance distinction, it should be clear that they could have been. There is nothing to say what syntactic structure is the right one either for (1) and for the first part of (7)⁵, and it seems perfectly legitimate to say that sentence (1), when uttered, can give raise to utterances corresponding to sentences with the syntactic structure in (2) or to utterances corresponding to sentences with the syntactic structure in (3). In other words, it is a matter of syntax which syntactic structures a given sentence potentially has, but in cases of syntactic ambiguity, which syntactic structure the sentence actually has in a given use is a matter of pragmatics.

Let us now come to pragmatic ambiguities.

4. *Pragmatic ambiguities*

In what remains of this paper, I will mainly be interested in cases where it is not obvious who is speaking, or who the “subject of consciousness” is. In order to do this, we will examine examples which can be interpreted, along the lines defined by Banfield (1982), as either *sentences of narration* or the *represented speech or thought* of a given character. Let me first explain the distinction: Banfield, following the traditions of narratology, distinguishes between sentences of narration, produced by the narrator, who can be either an implicit narrator (no first person pronouns are to be interpreted as referring to it) or an explicit narrator (at least some first person pronouns must be

⁵ Note that the first part of (7) cannot be syntactically disambiguated by the second part: they constitute two different sentences and the domain of syntax is the sentence, not the concatenation of sentences.

interpreted as referring to it). In classical literary studies, the first case would correspond to omniscient narrators of, for instance, Flaubert types in French Literature or Henry James types for Anglo-saxon literature, whereas the second would typically correspond to (fictional) autobiographies, such as, for instance *Barry Lindon*⁶. The narrator, on the terms outlined by Genette (1980), whether explicit or implicit, should not be confounded with the author: in fact the author imagines a narrator who describes what he sees.

Given those premises, the narrator can, not only describe what he “sees”, but also express the mental states — feelings, information, perceptions, etc. — of other characters. This often occurs in the case of implicit (omniscient) narrators and their main tool for the purpose of expressing other characters’ mental states is represented speech and thought.

Let us take a step back. If Peter has said: “I’m hungry”, and if I want to represent his speech, there are three possibilities:

(8) Peter said: “I’m hungry”.

(9) Peter said that he was hungry.

(10) He was hungry, (said Peter).

These three possibilities are respectively called *direct speech*, *indirect speech* and *represented speech and thought*. It is important to note that in represented speech and thought, the parenthetical postface is not mandatory. This is precisely what can give raise to the “pragmatic ambiguity” we will be concerned with below. Consider (11), which is (10) without its postface:

(11) He was hungry.

There does not seem to be any reason to see (11) as an example of represented speech or thought rather than as a sentence of narration which corresponds to the narrator’s “objective” description.

It may not seem important in such a case as (11), where after all it does not matter whether it is Peter who says or thinks that he is hungry or the narrator who says it, so to speak, from the outside. It is however much more important when the character’s thought or the narrative sentence anticipates on what will happen afterwards: in such a case of ambiguous sentence, if it is interpreted as the represented speech and thought of a (fallible) character, the reader may not want to base on it his hypotheses of what will come next; however, if it is interpreted as a narrative sentence of the (omniscient) narrator, it can be used to reliably form hypotheses on what the future will be in the story.

This can be seen through a short digression on the “pragmatic paradox”, before I introduce authentic examples of this kind.

5. The “pragmatic paradox”

The “pragmatic paradox”, also named *Moore’s paradox*, is formulated as follows:

(12) It rains but I don’t believe it rains.

The first thing to note about it is that it is in no way a paradox. Indeed, it is not even a contradiction: there is nothing contradictory in its raining and my not believing it is raining. Contradiction would only arise with a sentence such as (13):

(13) It rains and it doesn’t rain.

Though there certainly are a good number of possible states of affairs in which it is both true that it rains in a certain location at a certain time and that I do not believe that it

⁶ By Thackeray.

rains at that location and time⁷, there is just as certainly no possible state of affairs in which it is both true that it rains at a certain time and location and that it does not rain at the same time and location⁸.

Thus, (12) is neither a *bona fide* paradox nor a *bona fide* contradiction. It is nevertheless rather weird as was noted by Moore, and the question that it gives rise to is why this should be so. Let us separate the two conjuncts in (12), yielding (14) and (15):

(14) It rains.

(15) I don't believe it rains

Let us now suppose that (14) and (15) are not said by the same person but by two different individuals, respectively Fred and Tina. Observe that the weirdness immediately disappears. In such an exchange, what we see is at most a mere disagreement, commonplace and unthreatening. Why should this be?

(14) is commonly interpreted as implying (in a non-logical sense) that the speaker — Fred here — believes that it rains, while (15) does not imply but says that the speaker — Tina here — does not believe that it rains⁹. Now, suppose that rather than having two speakers respectively saying (14) or (15), you have a single speaker — Natalia for instance — saying (12). There is still no contradiction internal to the sentence, whose truth-conditions would be:

(16) It rains at a given time T and location L.

(17) Natalia does not believe that it rains at T and L.

However, the first part of (12) implies (18) and (18) is indeed contradictory with (17):

(18) Natalia believes that it rains at T and L.

Thus, though the contradiction is not between two truth-conditions for (12), it exists between one truth-condition for (12) (i.e. (17)) and an implication of (12) (i.e. (18)), hence the weirdness of the whole sentence.

What has this got to do with sentences that can be interpreted either as narrative sentences or as represented speech and thought? Quite simply this: their truth-conditions are widely divergent¹⁰, in that in the first case, they are first-level sentences of type (16), while on the second, they are second-level sentences of type (17), and, hence, metarepresentations¹¹. Let us now turn to such examples.

6. "Pragmatic ambiguity"

Banfield (1982), in her excellent book about represented speech and thought, offers a good example of the specific type of "pragmatic ambiguity" we are interested in, taken from a novel with an implicit narrator (Flaubert's *L'éducation sentimentale*). I will also propose another example, taken from a novel with an explicit narrator (Dickens' *Great expectations*). Let us begin with Flaubert¹²:

⁷ Because I did not go outside, look out of the window, believe other people's or the weather report, etc.

⁸ This is nothing more nor less than a trivial application of the law of excluded-middle which is the foundation of all bivalued logic.

⁹ Note that this means that Fred's belief in the rain is not part of the truth-conditions of (14) though the rain or its absence obviously is. On the other hand, Tina's disbelief in the rain is part of the truth-conditions of (15), though the rain is not.

¹⁰ Though as noted for Moore's paradox, they are not contradictory.

¹¹ Conditions for a representation (linguistic or non-linguistic) to be a metarepresentation are rather stringent (see Perner 1990, Reboul to appear). However the truth-conditions of represented speech and thought are clearly metarepresentational.

¹² This example is borrowed, as just said, from Banfield (1982, 219, n° 40). English translation by Banfield (*idem*).

(19) Il s'y montra gai. Mme Arnoux était maintenant près de sa mère, à Chartres. *Mais il la retrouverait bientôt, et finirait par être son amant.*

[He seemed in high spirits about it. Mme Arnoux was now with her mother in Chartres. But he would meet her again soon, and would end up by being her lover]

The character designated by the third person pronoun is the main character in the novel, i.e. Frédéric. The italicized part of (19) can be interpreted either as (20) or as (21):

(20) Frédéric thinks that he will meet Mme Arnoux again and will end up by being her lover.

(21) Frédéric will meet Mme Arnoux again and will end up by being her lover.

As is well known, Frédéric will never be Mme Arnoux's lover. Thus, unless we take Flaubert's narrator to be unreliable, it seems that the italicized part of (19) is a representation of a thought of Frédéric, i.e. that its truth-condition is (20) rather than (21).

Let us now turn to Dickens:

(22) My dream was out; my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale.

Dickens, *Great expectations*, Penguin Books, 1965, 165.

Again, this example can be interpreted in two divergent ways:

(23) Pip thought that his dream was out, that his wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality, that Miss Havisham was going to make his fortune on a grand scale.

(24) Pip's dream was out; his wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make his fortune on a grand scale.

And again, the rest of Pip's story shows that Miss Havisham was not in anyway his benefactor and that he was mistaken in thinking such a thing, i.e. (22) should be interpreted as (23) and not as (24). In other words, in the case of (19), the utterance is interpreted as expressing Frédéric's point of view— i.e. having Frédéric as a subject of consciousness — and (22) as expressing the past-Pip's point of view — i.e. having the past-Pip as a subject of consciousness.

What makes examples such as (19) and (22) interesting is the fact that, by contrast with examples such as (11), both interpretations (in terms of narrative sentences or in terms of represented speech and thought), given the rest of the story, cannot be true: it's either one or the other and, in this case¹³, the represented speech and thought interpretation, which is true. In other words, the reader is not free to leave the matter underdetermined or to suppress one interpretation randomly in favour of the other, and, what is more, though the two interpretations might have both been true (i.e. Frédéric might have become Mme Arnoux's lover and Miss Havisham might have been Pip's benefactor), there was no *a priori* reason to think so and hence no secure way to choose among them.

Before we proceed further, I want to come back for a few second to Moore's paradox and its (vernacular) truth-conditions:

(25) Natalia: "It rains but I don't believe it rains".

(26) It rains (at a given time T and location L) & Natalia doesn't believe it rains (at T and L).

What (26) highlights is the fact that there is no paradox. However, and it is striking, the weirdness of (25) has completely disappeared in (26). In other words, it seems to be strongly dependent on the use of the first person in (25), which of course is not present in (26)¹⁴. This leads us directly to the philosophical notion of the *essential indexical*.

¹³ Indeed, presumably in every such case.

¹⁴ Truth-conditions have to identify the referents of indexicals.

7. *The essential indexical*

The notion of the essential indexical was introduced by John Perry (1993) and can best be explained from Perry's own example (Perry 1993, 33):

"I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my cart down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn sack to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch.

I believed at the outset that the shopper with a torn sack was making a mess. And I was right. But I did not believe that I was making a mess. That seems to be something I came to believe. And when I came to believe that, I stopped following the trail around the counter and rearranged the torn sack in my cart. My change in beliefs seems to explain my change in behavior"

Perry's thesis is that indexicals, such as the first person pronoun, are *essential* in that they are crucial for the explanation of our behaviour. Perry changed his behaviour in the example above, not because he believed that John Perry was making a mess, but because he believed that *he* was making a mess. In other words, his operative thought, which was effective in changing his behaviour, was **not** (27) but (28):

(27) John Perry is making a mess.

(28) I am making a mess.

Though *I* in (27) and *John Perry* in (28) are coreferential and as such should be — and, indeed, are — interchangeable without any change in truth-value, nevertheless (28) is effective in both changing John Perry's behaviour and in an explanation of the change, whereas (27) is not.

Consider again now the case of (25) and (26) above: (25) is weird and (26) is not exactly for the same reasons that (28) is effective and (27) is not, i.e. because (25) incorporates an indexical as well as unarticulated time and location constituents¹⁵ and (26) incorporates the referents of the indexical and the unarticulated constituents. Let us now come back to represented speech and thought.

8. *Essential (quasi-)indexicality in represented speech and thought*

I want to claim that in fact pronouns in represented speech and thought, whether they are, as in (19), third person pronouns, or, as in (22), first person pronouns are essential in the above sense, i.e. though (19) and (20) have the same truth-value and though (20) actually is the truth-condition of (19) — of course, the same thing goes for (22) and (23) —, (19) has an explanatory power relative to Frédéric's mental states and behaviour which (20) lacks. In other words, the third person pronoun in (19) plays a role equivalent to the first person pronouns in both (22) and (28) and cannot be considered as a pure anaphoric. Indeed, I want to propose that pronouns referring to the subject of consciousness, as well as deictics of space and time¹⁶, in represented speech and thought are quasi-indexical in the following sense¹⁷:

- i. Quasi-indexicals are necessarily internal to psychological contexts, they necessarily appear in interpretive discourse and notably in represented speech and thought;

¹⁵ I will not speak here of *unarticulated constituents*, but see Perry (1993). Let me just add here that time and space unarticulated constituents can be seen as indexical in essence. For a discussion of unarticulated constituents in relation to Moore's paradox, see Reboul (in progress).

¹⁶ Which, just as first person pronouns, are considered as essential by Perry (1993)

¹⁷ I developed the notion of *quasi-indexical* from Castañeda's notion of *quasi-indicator*. See Castañeda (1989), Reboul (2000).

- ii. A quasi-indexical does not necessarily look for its referent in a situation of communication described in a linguistically articulated constituent;
- iii. Quasi-indexicals represent the indexical reference made by the subject of consciousness;
- iv. Quasi-indexicals are propositionally transparent in their contexts;
- v. Quasi-indexicals are essential.

Some of the characteristics enumerated above have important consequences: for instance, i. implies that represented speech and thought necessarily corresponds to second-order propositions; ii. implies, as already noted, that the parenthetical postface in represented speech and thought does not have to be explicitly expressed — hence the “pragmatic ambiguity” of (14), (19) and (22) —; iii. implies that third person pronouns in represented speech and thought are not anaphoric, as pointed out before.

The notions of *propositional transparency* vs *propositional opacity* have been proposed by Castañeda (1989) and are orthogonal to the classical notions of *referential transparency* and *referential opacity*. Referential opacity typically occurs in propositional attitude contexts, where substitution of coreferential expressions does not preserve truth-value:

(29) Fred believes that Aristote was the tutor of Nero.

(30) Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander.

(31) Fred believes that the tutor of Alexander was the tutor of Nero.

Though both (29) and (30) are true, this is not enough to ensure that (31) is true¹⁸. Contexts such as (29) — i.e. contexts introduced by a propositional attitude preface — are said to be *referentially opaque* and so are the referring expressions inside their scopes¹⁹. Outside of referentially opaque contexts, referential expressions generally are referentially transparent, i.e. corefering expressions can be substituted *salva veritate*. In represented speech and thought contexts, referring expressions, and notably pronouns, behave in the same way as referentially opaque expressions in referentially opaque contexts. This should not be surprising: if represented speech and thought is, as I have claimed before, second-order representation, it presumably is a referentially opaque context as well.

What, now, of propositional transparency or opacity? There is a trade-off between referential opacity and propositional transparency. Propositional transparency occurs when the proposition used to represent the mental states or discourse of others is faithful to the proposition used by these others to represent their own mental states. In other words, referentially opaque contexts should contain propositionally transparent expressions and referentially transparent contexts should contain propositionally opaque expressions.

To sum up: represented speech and thought are metarepresentations; as such they are referentially opaque contexts; the pronouns referring to the subject of consciousness in them are quasi-indexicals; as such they are propositionally transparent and essential.

9. The place of the narrator in third-person represented speech and thought

In sentences of narration, the place of the narrator seems obvious. In Genette's terms (see Genette 1980), he is responsible for the production of the narration and hence

¹⁸ Note that (31) would be true if (30) ran as follows: *Fred believes that Aristote was the tutor of Alexander.*

¹⁹ Another way of saying it is through the traditional distinction between uses *de dicto* and uses *de re*. Referential expressions in referentially opaque contexts are used *de dicto* rather than *de re*.

for the production of all utterances in the text. In first-person represented speech and thought, he is the subject of consciousness, reporting his (generally past) own mental states as well as the (present) producer of the represented speech and thought utterance. But what is his place in third-person represented speech and thought? There he is not the subject of consciousness but merely the producer of the represented speech and thought utterance. In other words, a complete²⁰ analysis of our previous examples (reproduced below as (32) and (34)), would yield the formulas in (33) and (35):

(32) Il s'y montra gai. Mme Arnoux était maintenant près de sa mère, à Chartres. *Mais il la retrouverait bientôt, et finirait par être son amant.*

[He seemed in high spirits about it. Mme Arnoux was now with her mother in Chartres. But he would meet her again soon, and would end up by being her lover]

(33) The narrator says that Frédéric thinks that he will meet Mme Arnoux again and will end up by being her lover.

(34) My dream was out; my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale.

(35) Pip_{present} says that Pip_{past} thought that his dream was out, that his wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality, that Miss Havisham was going to make his fortune on a grand scale.

This analysis, which is consistent with Genette's views, is contradicted by Banfield, according to whom nobody speaks in represented speech and thought. She also strongly enforces a view according to which, in a given represented speech and thought utterance, there can be at most one subject of consciousness, designated by the third-person pronoun²¹. Though I disagree with Banfield over the importance of the third-person pronoun in represented speech and thought and though I have argued elsewhere that quasi-indexicals in a given represented speech and thought utterance can indeed refer to several individuals — i.e. the singleness of the subject of consciousness cannot be intrinsic to represented speech and thought —, I nevertheless think that the Genettian analysis, in terms of narrator, comes to grief over another instance of metarepresentation in literature, that is *auctorial irony*.

10. Auctorial irony

Just as there are third person and first person represented speech and thought, there can be third person and first person auctorial irony, as examples (36) and (37) show:

(36) The doctor seemed especially troubled by the fact of the robbery having been unexpected, and attempted in the night-time; as if it were the established custom of gentlemen in the housebreaking way to transact business at noon, and to make an appointment, by post, a day or two previous.

Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Penguin Popular Classics, 261.

(37) I am a man full of errors, certainly, but not the devil that these odious backbiters at Tiptoff²² represented me to be. For the first three years I never struck my wife but when I was in liquor. When I flung the carving-knife at Bullingdon I was drunk, as everybody present can testify; but as for having any systematic scheme against the poor lad, I can solemnly say that, beyond merely hating him (and one's inclination are not in one's power), I am guilty of no evil towards him.

²⁰ Though not truth-conditional.

²¹ It is one of Banfield's major tenets that represented speech and thought is non-communicative and thus cannot incorporate first and second person pronouns. That this is incorrect is shown by examples such as (34).

²² Lady Lindon's family. Bullingdon is her son by a previous marriage.

Thackeray, *Barry Lindon*, Penguin Books, 1975, 267.

In (36), the narrator is making fun of the doctor, outlining the discrepancies between his surprise at the robbers' method and normal encyclopaedic knowledge on what it usually is. In (37), the narrator, i.e. Barry Lindon, is defending himself against his wife's family by outlining how good a husband and stepfather he was. The question is, *who is making fun of Barry Lindon?* He is not making fun of himself, i.e. his defense of himself is serious. Yet, the very queer character of his defense makes it difficult to see (37) as anything but ironic.

Let us come back to the unproblematic (36) and offer an analysis of it:

(38) The narrator says (ironically) that the doctor seemed especially troubled by the fact of the robbery having been unexpected, and attempted in the night-time as if it were the established custom of gentlemen in the housebreaking way to transact business at noon, and to make an appointment, by post, a day or two previous.

This agrees with Genette's picture of fictive narration as produced by a narrator and accounts for the "echoic" character of irony, as described by Sperber and Wilson (1981). However, the corresponding analysis will not do for (37):

(39) Barry Lindon says (ironically) that he is a man full of errors, certainly, but not the devil that these odious backbiters at Tiptoff represented him to be, that for the first three years he never struck his wife but when he was in liquor, that when he flung the carving-knife at Bullingdon he was drunk, as everybody present can testify and that as for having any systematic scheme against the poor lad, he can solemnly say that, beyond merely hating him (and one's inclination are not in one's power), he is guilty of no evil towards him.

The stumbling block of course is the fact that Barry Lindon does not say it ironically: he says it seriously, and, what is more, this is the source of the irony. It is because Barry Lindon is speaking ingenuously that the passage is funny. So, how can one analyze the above passage in agreement with Genette's notion of narration and without ignoring the echoic factor in irony? A possibility would be introducing a further narrator over and above the explicit narrator:

(40) The narrator reports (ironically) that Barry Lindon says (seriously) that he is a man full of errors, certainly, but not the devil that these odious backbiters at Tiptoff represented him to be, that for the first three years he never struck his wife but when he was in liquor, that when he flung the carving-knife at Bullingdon he was drunk, as everybody present can testify and that as for having any systematic scheme against the poor lad, he can solemnly say that, beyond merely hating him (and one's inclination are not in one's power), he is guilty of no evil towards him.

So far so good, but this proposal is open to severe criticism because, in a system with multiple theoretical entities, such as Genette's, it is always problematic to add another level of entities. Note that we have the level of the characters, which is supposed to be the level at which the narrator "exists" (he describes what he sees). In that sense, the narrator is a character, though a rather special one. Introducing another level of narration seems to take us outside of the fiction²³ and makes it difficult to see how this outside narrator can describe what he sees. In fact, it should be noted that very much the same type of difficulty is to be found for omniscient anonymous narrators: they are part of the world described in the fiction — given that they are describing what they see — but they are invisible for the other characters and their "presence" does not affect the events around them. In other words, it seems difficult to make sense of the notion of a narrator who is not explicitly speaking as himself, or, in other words, to make sense of the notion of a "third-person narrator". The notion of narrator does not seem to make

²³ As is the case, for instance, when a given fiction incorporates another one (as in *The thousand and one nights*) or when a (fictitious) character presents a given fiction as a document found in an attic.

sense outside of a first person narrator²⁴, and, what is more, it seems nonsensical to suppose that, in a case such as (37), where there is a first-person narrator, there is a further narrator reporting the speech of the first-person narrator without any intervention on it.

11. Rehabilitating the author

It would be nice to be able to give an analysis of (37) which would do justice to its echoic character and which also would be similar to the analysis of (36), i.e. to be able to treat as similar third-person irony and first-person irony in fiction. I want to claim here that one way to do it is by reintroducing a missing piece, i.e. the author, not seen as a theoretical construct, but seen as the real human being who produced the fiction considered, exactly as the speaker is not a theoretical entity, but a real human being who produced the utterance considered. This has an additional advantage: the speaker is responsible for his utterance and for the speech acts thus performed; the author is responsible for the fiction he produces and for the utterances in that fiction.

The problem raised by first-person auctorial irony goes deeper however: one of the reasons why Genette's system cannot account for it is precisely that no one is responsible for fiction in such a system. Yet, auctorial irony works through the production not merely of a narrative, conceived as the description by a narrator of a "reality", but through the production of the fiction itself. In the *Barry Lindon* example it is fictitious that Barry Lindon said the words that Thackeray presents him as saying, but it is through this fiction that the irony works, and that's why this example, just as the *Oliver Twist* one, is echoic. In other words, Thackeray is not describing what he sees, he is creating a fiction. This, it should be clear, is **not** something that a narrator can do — and it certainly is not what Barry Lindon, as a first-person narrator, does □—; it is the prerogative of the author.

Thus, it is the author who is responsible for the irony in cases of first-person narration (unless the narrator is explicitly presented as being ironical). What of cases of third-person irony, such as (36)? Should we postulate a narrator in (36)? And, if we do, should we consider it to be responsible of the irony? I think that the first thing to worry about, if we consider the author as responsible for the production of the fiction and, hence, as responsible for the utterances in the fiction, is what is left for the narrator. Or, in other words, if we have the author, do we need a narrator, as well? Let us re-examine the narrator: as said above, it is not a real human being, but rather a specific sort of character. The problem is that it is real neither outside of the fiction not inside the fiction: its presence is not felt. What is more, if the author is responsible for the production of the text — i.e. of the narration —, the narrator cannot be responsible for it. But, if he is not responsible for it, it seems obvious that there is no role that the narrator would have.

I thus would like to advocate not only the rehabilitation of the author but also the abandonment of the narrator. The only cases where the notion of narrator makes sense are cases where he is designated by first person pronouns, in which case he is a character of whom it is fictitious that he is producing the story we are engaged in reading.

²⁴ Note that this would not confine narrators to (fictional) autobiographies: in *Tom Jones*, which is not autobiographical, there is a first-person narrator who occasionally gives his opinions on what is currently happening. Another example of a first-person narrator in a non-autobiographical narrative is to be found in *Wuthering Heights*.

Let us now come back to (36) and (37), reproduced below as (41) and (42):

- (41) The doctor seemed especially troubled by the fact of the robbery having been unexpected, and attempted in the night-time; as if it were the established custom of gentlemen in the housebreaking way to transact business at noon, and to make an appointment, by post, a day or two previous.
- (42) I am a man full of errors, certainly, but not the devil that these odious backbiters at Tiptoff represented me to be. For the first three years I never struck my wife but when I was in liquor. When I flung the carving-knife at Bullingdon I was drunk, as everybody present can testify; but as for having any systematic scheme against the poor lad, I can solemnly say that, beyond merely hating him (and one's inclination are not in one's power), I am guilty of no evil towards him.

Given what I have just said, it seems clear that any analysis of these two examples will have to integrate the notions of *author*, of *creating fictions* (or *making it fictitious that*), and of *irony*. This would yield the following formulas:

- (43) Dickens makes it fictitious (ironically) that the doctor seemed especially troubled by the fact of the robbery having been unexpected, and attempted in the night-time as if it were the established custom of gentlemen in the housebreaking way to transact business at noon, and to make an appointment, by post, a day or two previous.
- (44) Thackeray makes it fictitious (ironically) that Barry Lindon says (seriously) that he is a man full of errors, certainly, but not the devil that these odious backbiters at Tiptoff represented him to be, that for the first three years he never struck his wife but when he was in liquor, that when he flung the carving-knife at Bullingdon he was drunk, as everybody present can testify and that as for having any systematic scheme against the poor lad, he can solemnly say that, beyond merely hating him (and one's inclination are not in one's power), he is guilty of no evil towards him.

I would now like to specify what I mean by *making it fictitious that*...

12. Making it fictitious that...

What does it mean to say that *Dickens or Thackeray have made it fictitious that*...? Let me begin by saying what it does **not** mean. It does not mean that Dickens or Thackeray have been pretending to describe a reality, nor does it mean that their readers are pretending to read the description of a reality. What it does mean, rather, is that Dickens or Thackeray are **specifying the content** of, respectively, *Oliver Twist* and *Barry Lindon* — and, as should be obvious, no narrator could do it, because, by definition, the narrator is not free to specify anything, being bound by the “reality” he is engaged in describing. Concerning the reader, it means that the reader is interpreting the utterances in the fiction, taking a propositional attitude of neutrality relative to their propositional content. In other words, my proposition is that we should stop considering fiction as a description of some kind of (rather ill-defined) virtual reality by a (virtual) narrator and consider it as stipulating its content through the creative activity of the author.

This may be worth some comment. It will be remembered that Lewis' theory of fiction (1983), based on possible worlds logic aimed to answer the question of what is true in fiction. Very roughly, his solution was to say that what is true in such and such a fiction is what was told as true in a possible world (or a set of possible worlds). In other words, his solution presupposed the existence of a narrator in a sense very close to that of Genette. What is more, Lewis' ontology includes possible worlds in the strong sense that he supposes that, side by side with our actual world, there are possible worlds²⁵. In other words, his position seems to be a logical version of Genette's conception of fiction.

²⁵ See Lewis (1986).

There are, however, other positions available in possible worlds theory: the most obvious is that of Kripke (1980) who considers possible worlds as “created” by stipulation. On this view, one could consider that when Dickens or Thackeray make fictitious the content of *Oliver Twist* or *Barry Lindon*, they are engaged in stipulating possible worlds. In a parallel way, their readers are engaged in discovering the possible worlds just stipulated. There is no necessity of supposing that such stipulated possible worlds would incorporate a narrator.

13. Back to represented speech and thought

I gave analyses of the examples of represented speech and thought according to Genette. I now want to give analyses of them in agreement with the above analysis:

(45) Il s’y montra gai. Mme Arnoux était maintenant près de sa mère, à Chartres. *Mais il la retrouverait bientôt, et finirait par être son amant.*

[He seemed in high spirits about it. Mme Arnoux was now with her mother in Chartres. But he would meet her again soon, and would end up by being her lover]

(46) Flaubert makes it fictitious that Frédéric thinks that he will meet Mme Arnoux again and will end up by being her lover.

(47) My dream was out; my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale.

(48) Dickens makes it fictitious that Pip_{present} says that Pip_{past} thought that his dream was out, that his wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality, that Miss Havisham was going to make his fortune on a grand scale.

Note that the analysis of (47) makes it clear not only that Pip is the narrator, but that he is not responsible for the **content** of the fiction; by contrast, the analysis of (45) makes it clear that there is no narrator in *L’éducation sentimentale*. This, I think, is just as it should be. What is more, it does not deter from the metarepresentational aspect of represented speech and thought: making it fictitious that something or other is producing a representation with just that content. In other words, when Flaubert makes it fictitious that Frédéric thinks that..., he is representing Frédéric thought, which is itself a representation, hence he is metarepresenting.

14. Conclusion

Metarepresentations are not necessarily ambiguous. However, they can give rise to a sort of “pragmatic” ambiguity in that the corresponding sentences may sometimes be understood as first-order — non-metarepresentational — utterances or as metarepresentational. This is frequently the case for represented speech and thought both in and out of fiction. It is worth noting, however, that auctorial irony, which generally is not ambiguous, is usually straightforwardly interpreted mainly because it is specific to fiction. In other words, the same sentences outside of fiction would not be interpreted as ironic: this certainly is the case for the *Barry Lindon* example. In the fiction, the sentences are funny because, though they may be serious for Barry Lindon, they certainly are not for Thackeray. Outside fiction, if they actually were pronounced by a brutal husband as a defense, they would merely be appalling.

This leads to my conclusion: together with the rejection of the author went the rejection of the author’s intentions. In other words, it was claimed that the author’s intentions were just irrelevant to the interpretation of his text. What auctorial irony shows however is that this is just incorrect: the author’s intentions, in as much as he has succeeded in realising them, are relevant to the interpretation of his fiction. This should not be surprising: a major tenet of contemporary pragmatics is that interpreting

utterances means recovering the speaker's intentions. Unless one thinks that literary fiction is not a case of non-natural meaning in Grice's sense (see Grice 1971), a weird position to say the least, there is no reason not to see the interpretation of fiction as the recovery of the author's intentions.

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