

# **Lucky's**

a novel

and an accompanying exegesis

## **Changing Voices: A Study of Narration and Arrangement**

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## Abstract

This thesis consists of a novel and a dissertation. The novel, “Lucky’s”, spans a period of 60 years. “Lucky’s” ties together subjects including immigration, the restaurant business, gameshows, classical scholarship, and journalism. Set in Sydney, “Lucky’s” is a novel about what some people do with failure and disappointment. One of two focal characters is Lucky Mallios, whose story begins in 1945, when he is a cook at a US base. People say he looks like Benny Goodman, which stings a little, because Lucky is a failed musician. On furlough, as a remedy for his frustration, he pretends to be Goodman on a USO tour. During this fraud he encounters another scam artist, Ian Asquith, who offers Lucky a large sum of money without strings, or so it seems. With this gift Lucky begins a restaurant franchise. The novel moves to 2002. Asquith’s daughter, Emily, faces her own disappointments: her marriage ends and she loses her newspaper job. But Emily’s luck changes when a friend (with an ulterior motive) commissions her to write for *The New Yorker* about the tragic history of Lucky’s empire. Now broke, Lucky is determined to revive his franchise in Sydney, and to keep a terrible secret from Emily.

The theoretical component uses the conceptual framework of narratology to examine the functions of various narrators and variable focalisation within multi-narrator novels. Of primary interest is the relation between narrators in Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, and David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*. Both are centrifugal novels—texts in which narrators and forms of narration proliferate throughout the narrative. Once this inquiry specifies the narrators and narrating positions in these novels, the question remains as to which agency we ascribe the connections between chapters and the overall arrangement of plot. David Hayman and later scholars of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* offer an answer: “the arranger” is a source of intervention in that novel. This thesis argues for an extension of Hayman’s concept: in centrifugal novels, the arranger is the binding agent between the various narrators. The narrator tells the chapter; the arranger tells the centrifugal novel. Using the analytical tools developed in the theoretical component, my thesis also examines the variable focalisation in “Lucky’s”.

# LUCKY'S

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## Changing Voices: A Study of Narration and Arrangement

### Introduction

A novelist can shift his viewpoint if it comes off, and it came off with Dickens and Tolstoy. Indeed this power to expand and contract perception (of which the shifting viewpoint is a symptom), this right to intermittent knowledge—I find it one of the great advantages of the novel form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at some times than others; we can enter into people's minds occasionally but not always.

E.M. Forster<sup>1</sup>

Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* begins with a brief account of Charles's first day at a new school. The new boy's shoes are dirty; his blazer is ill-fitting. The narrator is either a classmate of Charles, or the constitution of the class in the first person plural. The membership of this first person plural is never defined: the narrator may be the entire class, or a lesser number thereof. On that first day, the boys ridicule Charles with the scorn that children typically reserve for outsiders, but he satisfies the master's tests and earns a place in the upper class. Over the next three years, he will be regarded as a middling student. When his parents withdraw Bovary from school and press him into studying medicine, the position of first person plural is left behind and the narration changes into the third person. This perspective will be focalised through various characters. The narrator does what he needs to do in order to tell the full story of Charles and Emma Bovary.

In *Madame Bovary*, at the inception of 19<sup>th</sup> century literary realism, the narrator is allowed to be a changeable figure who can alter his point of view whenever necessary, taking up any position from which the subject can be better perceived. Realism, despite its commitment to naturalness, is still capable of unnatural forms of narration and makes its priority the demands of the richest possible narrative. More than half a century later, a propensity to shift between narrators will be the defining

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<sup>1</sup> EM Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927), 81.

feature of at least two significant modernist novels, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Multi-narrator texts also come into prominence during the waves of postmodernism: such novels include Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, Gilbert Sorrentino's *Aberration of Starlight*, and David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*.

Among storytelling art forms, the genre of the novel is unique in its capacity to draw together, within one work, different narrators and terms of focalisation. The length of the short story and its dramatic tasks, for example, in the case of Kafka's fables and Borges's metaphysical duels and rhapsodies, often present constraints on the number of narrators and focal characters. While the use of multiple narrators is not a recent strategy, there remains room in the field of narratology for a study that tracks the orchestration of different voices within contemporary novels. The theoretical component of this thesis is a series of formalist explorations of significant novels from the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study uses the analytical tools of narratology to theorise the narrative practices of Philip Roth, Jennifer Egan, and David Foster Wallace.

The first chapter, "The Disappearing Narrator", examines the transition from first person to third person narration in *American Pastoral*. For the most part, this study uses the terms homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, given my reliance on Gerard Genette's framework for narrative voice and mood. I include a brief inventory of antecedents, including Albert Camus's *The Plague* and Italo Calvino's *The Nonexistent Knight*, in which the seemingly heterodiegetic narrators turn out, after all, to be homodiegetic figures. *American Pastoral* enacts a rotation in the opposite direction, and there is no drama constructed around the unexpected identity of the narrator. Instead, the narrator Nathan Zuckerman assumes omniscient powers because the story he wishes to tell, about the life of Swede Levov, is otherwise beyond his reach. This swing into omniscience comes at the cost of narratorial authority, since Zuckerman is telling us about events he never witnessed. An assertive and vividly imagined version of the real story, and whatever truths about the Swede's life this fiction may capture, takes precedence. The first chapter also emphasises two unusual but related qualities in *American Pastoral*: the degree to which the novel is conscious of the transfer of narrators, as Zuckerman discusses the benefits of point of view; and the interesting mix of realism and metafiction that results from the use of two narrators.

The second chapter borrows the concept of “the arranger” from Joycean scholarship, and here I argue for an extension of the figure beyond the limits set by theorists of *Ulysses*. The arranger can be found in novels with more than one narrator: this study refers to such texts as centrifugal novels. I examine the debate surrounding the arranger, taking care to include those scholars who rejected the figure and others who sought to elaborate on the concept as devised by David Hayman. Previous studies gave the arranger enormous powers, but allowed it limited use of this agency. Instead, we might see the arranger as a macro-narrator, as the source of all conjunctions of plot between chapters told by different narrators, as being the manager of all narrative actions that are outside the remit of the narrator. By taking up the arranger, or an enhanced version of the concept, I am attempting to increase the analytical precision of literary criticism when it comes to understanding the fractured narration of centrifugal novels. While the heterodiegetic narrator is placed somewhere outside the storyworld—it is not a character, a direct participant in the action of the novel—it still does not correspond exactly to the author or the implied author. The same principle applies to the arranger. I distinguish and decouple the arranger from the implied author function, and situate the arranger closer to the figure of the narrator. This study is intended to rectify the absence of such a macro-narrator in the field of narratology: my remodeling of the arranger is the primary finding in this study.

In chapters three (“Network of Time”) and four (“Endnotes without End”), I explore in depth the way the arranger functions in Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit From The Goon Squad* and David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*. The *Goon Squad* chapter outlines the range of first, second, and third person forms of narration found in Egan’s novel, and I provide a theoretical overview of how these narrators interact within the text. The arranger offers a flexible model that situates the proliferating voices of any number of centrifugal texts. The third chapter also reflects on the concept of omniscience, its functions and nature, and I examine its usefulness within a conceptual framework such as Genette’s, in which the systems of heterodiegetic narration and degrees of focalisation have encroached upon and yet elucidated the notion of omniscience. In the discussion of *Infinite Jest*, I follow how the arranger sets up an interpretation of the missing parts of Wallace’s novel. Far from being a minor figure in narratology, the arranger is responsible for the network of narrative in



novels such as *Ulysses* and *Infinite Jest* and *A Visit From The Goon*. In a centrifugal text, the narrator tells the chapter, and the arranger tells the novel.

These analyses are followed by a chapter that discusses the creative component of my doctoral project—the novel “Lucky’s”. I begin (in the fifth chapter) with an examination of the milieu of the Greek-Australian cafe, which is the largely obsolete, lost world of sorts that provides us with the main setting of the book. The cafe was a mixture of Greek, Anglo-Celtic and American influences, and in the postwar period it was among the main vehicles for chain migration from southern Europe to Australia. “Lucky’s” personifies these influences in the figures of Achilles (Greek), Lucky (American), and Emily (English), who are all nevertheless in the process of becoming Australian. The main subject of the final chapter is variable focalisation: here we trace the development of focalised narration throughout the novel. The play of irony and mystery, the narrator’s knowledge of other minds, the impossibility of understanding between certain characters, the navigation of narrative time: these effects are among the reasons why I adopted a form of variable focalisation to tell the story. One thread that runs through these chapters is a concern with macro-structure: the order of events in “Lucky’s” will be discussed, in particular how the system of cause and effect is diffused in the novel’s scattered plot.

Creative doctorates invite exegetical discourses around intention and subject matter, and thus the final chapter extends beyond the strictly formalist approach in the previous chapters. I’ve allowed for this extra scope in order to best apprehend “Lucky’s”, to better construct a bridge between the creative work and the literary scholarship in previous chapters. It is hoped that this study will provide a new narratological model for the analysis of the arranger and, more generally, contribute to the study of transitions between narrators and focal points of narration.

## Chapter One

### **The Disappearing Narrator: From Zuckerman to the Swede in *American Pastoral***

The early chapters of *American Pastoral* install the character Nathan Zuckerman as narrator: he discusses a piece of writing he intends to compose about Seymour “the Swede” Levov, who had, when they were schoolboys, conjured in Zuckerman “the strongest fantasy I had of being someone else ... the boy we were all going to follow into America”.<sup>2</sup> For so many years, the Swede has been an idealised figure, a Jewish “household Apollo”.<sup>3</sup> The Swede is singular, to the narrator’s mind: throughout the novel his nickname is given the definite article. But Zuckerman, a novelist, knows little more than the outline of his protagonist’s adult life, and in order to fully understand his subject, Zuckerman must refocus and reinvent the narrative. In the third chapter, the novel shifts from first person to the third person perspective in which the remainder of the book will be told. Before making the transition, Zuckerman states, “I dreamed a realistic chronicle.”<sup>4</sup> Then *American Pastoral* shifts entirely into a third person (heterodiegetic) voice, and the Swede becomes the protagonist and main focal character. Zuckerman disappears from the novel. The homodiegesis of the early chapters is replaced by heterodiegesis, or perhaps the mode is more accurately described as pseudo-heterodiegetic narration, since the reader knows the third person voice is a disguise worn by Zuckerman. The narrator will de-idealise the Swede and imagine him as a more complex character: a flawed, Aristotelian hero rather than a schoolboy champion.

The first chapter of this study provides a theoretical conceptualisation of the shift from first to third person narration in *American Pastoral*. Zuckerman’s alteration in point of view is striking, and perhaps the novel’s most important structural feature, but it is hardly unique in contemporary fiction or the realist tradition. As mentioned in the introduction, *Madame Bovary* begins with homodiegetic narration from the point of view of a classmate (or classmates), before the narrator, whatever his number, disappears into the act of narration. Jonathan Culler, in *Flaubert: The Uses of*

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 89.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

*Uncertainty*, takes the view that the start of *Madame Bovary* presents us with a singular first person narrator, and the subsequent shift from first to third person is “a parody of the traditional narrative technique of the knowledgeable observer”.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, he argues, if not quite a parody then the narratorial transition is “certainly a flaunting of the artifice of narrative authority”.<sup>6</sup> The dialogue, the detail, the free indirect content are all invented by the narrator, who could not have known the intimate details of Emma or Charles’s lives. The finely detailed *Bovary* has the status of a dream, though it captures the sensations of reality.

*Pastoral*, in its own way, flaunts the artifice of the narrator’s authority. But what is “the narrator”, and what consists of his or her authority? In *Narrative Discourse*, Gerard Genette argues that the narrator speaks, while the characters see: “To my mind most of the theoretical works ... suffer from a regrettable confusion between what I call here *mood* and *voice*, a confusion between the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator?*—or, more simply, the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*”.<sup>7</sup> Zuckerman is the speaking narrator in both the homodiegetic and heterodiegetic sections, but the form of focalisation—the characters who see—in the heterodiegetic sections is variable. The Swede is the dominant focaliser, but other characters orient the perspective as well, including his wife, Dawn Levov. In the case of *American Pastoral*, the question also arises of whether the narrator can be a focaliser himself (the narrator throughout, again, is Zuckerman). James Phelan argues that if a passage is “marked by the narrator’s perspective”, the narrator can be a focaliser.<sup>8</sup> In Roth’s novel there is a subtle stylistic contamination that carries across from the homodiegetic to the heterodiegetic sections. Take, for example, the Zuckermanesque final lines of novel, which follow the rhetoric of the novel’s early pages: “And what is wrong with their life? What on earth is less

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty* (Aurora, Colorado: Davies Group, 1985), 102.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Culler, “The Realism of *Madame Bovary*”, *Modern Language Notes*, 122 (2007): 683.

<sup>7</sup> The italics are Genette’s. Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 186.

<sup>8</sup> James Phelan, “Why Narrators Can be Focalizers—and Why It Matters”, in *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, eds Willie van Peer and Seymour Chatman, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001) 57.

reprehensible that the life of the Levov's?"<sup>9</sup> I suggest that the heterodiegetic sections feature an unusual form of double focalisation: first, through the character of Zuckerman and, second, through a focal character in the Swede's tale.

*American Pastoral*, Roth's twentieth work of fiction, is the first book in what some critics call his "American Trilogy". Each novel of this trilogy is narrated by Zuckerman, who tells the story of another character from his past: in *Pastoral*, the protagonist is Swede Levov; *I Married a Communist* (1998) foregrounds the story of Ira Ringold; while Coleman Silk is the central figure in *The Human Stain* (2000). Zuckerman, a recurring character in Roth's fiction since the 1970s, by various means gathers information about his protagonists. He talks to friends and family, he does his research. He considers their lives and gives us their story, much of which, in the end, he has had to invent. Zuckerman presents us with an illusion of the lived reality of his protagonists. Each novel in the trilogy employs the same narrating technique: again, they shift from homodiegesis (Zuckerman) to an assumed heterodiegesis (with variable focalisation). We might see the American Trilogy as the point at which Zuckerman, the protagonist of four pre-*Pastoral* novels, tires of telling his own story, perhaps having exhausted autobiographical material, and driven by a powerful curiosity about the past, about what happened to the people and places he once knew well, Zuckerman turns his attention outwards.

Much has been made of Zuckerman's resemblance to Roth, and here little more needs to be said about the matter. This chapter is concerned with the narrative strategies in *Pastoral*, rather than a reading of the novel as autofiction or an examination of the concept of fictionality.<sup>10</sup> One feature of Zuckerman's narration, especially in its homodiegetic form, is what Elizabeth Hardwick describes as "tirades rather than action and counteraction, (his) tirades of perfervid brilliance".<sup>11</sup> In the trilogy, this tendency towards monologue as a presentation of oneself is necessarily mitigated after Zuckerman shifts into heterodiegesis, and he adopts certain traits we associate with an objective narrator. Suddenly there are no tirades, there is no central subjectivity of his own to express: in *Pastoral*, he attempts to apprehend the

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<sup>9</sup> Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 423.

<sup>10</sup> For a study of fictionality in *American Pastoral*, see Stefan Kjerkegaard's "Getting People Right. Getting Fiction Right: Self-Fashioning, Fictionality, and Ethics in the Roth Books" *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*, 46.1 (2016): 121–148.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Hardwick, "Paradise Lost: Philip Roth", in *Sight-Readings*, (New York: Random House, 1998), 133.

subjectivity of what is emphatically *not* Zuckerman. He is resolved to tell the story of the Swede, a man he doesn't know well, and likewise Ira Ringold and Coleman Silk are to substantial degrees unknowable to their narrator, and must be discovered in a novelistic act of the imagination. Debra Shostak observes that the Swede's central task in life—to pursue a series of hypotheses about the fate of his missing daughter—parallels Zuckerman's "unsatisfiable quest to explain the Swede's opaque life, developing a series of narrative hypotheses" about the man.<sup>12</sup> Shostak claims "Zuckerman's vanishing act is a structural metaphor for Roth's theme: the unreadable 'reality' of the visible world renders the perceiving subject as fleeting as his object of perception".<sup>13</sup> As we know from Roth's earlier novels, the authentic, the true self, the pure subject are not concepts that sit comfortably with Zuckerman. Knowing another person is like knowing oneself: a complex game in which the object is ultimately elusive and emerges only to later recede. In the *Counterlife*, Zuckerman declares, in a letter to his lover, Maria: "If there even *is* a natural being, an irreducible self, it is rather small, I think, and may have been the root of all impersonation, the innate capacity to impersonate."<sup>14</sup> Such a concept of knowing, of knowing ourselves and other people, is apparent 10 years later in *American Pastoral*. Zuckerman's idea of the pure subject obscures the difference between writing seriously about oneself and writing seriously about another person. Both are quixotic projects doomed to be incomplete and inaccurate, to be fictional narrative art. Zuckerman is a writer; in the trilogy he performs fully as a novelist.

I move now to the question of antecedents. When novels and short stories rotate through turns of perspective in which two narrators, one seemingly homodiegetic and the other heterodiegetic, are revealed to be the same character, perhaps the majority of such examples tend to move in the opposite direction: from third person to first person. At the end of Albert Camus's *The Plague*, the narrator announces himself as Doctor Rieux, who all along has been the novel's main character. At the end of Peter Carey's *Bliss*, the heterodiegetic narrator is revealed to have been a first person plural narrator, and that collective voice comprises the protagonist's children. A brief list of other texts that move from third person to first

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<sup>12</sup> Debra Shostak, "Philip Roth's Fictions of Self-Exposure", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 19 (2000): 37.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Roth, *Counterlife*, (New York: Random House, 1987), 324.

person might include *The Golden Notebook*, by Doris Lessing; *The Nonexistent Knight*, by Italo Calvino; *The Blind Assassin*, by Margaret Atwood; and Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. In these novels, the narrator's true identity is withheld and comes as a surprise, as one revelation among others in the story: the point of view itself becomes entangled in the plot. The position of the narrator is a seemingly stable story component that can yet be overturned like the fortunes of a character.

What happens, however, when the change in perspective runs the opposite way, that is, when the homodiegetic narration assumes a heterodiegetic position? Such redirections in point of view are relatively uncommon in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. There are point of view slippages within *In Search of Lost Time*, most notably in the scenes that concern the death of Bergotte, in which the narrator reports the thoughts of his dying friend. Proust's narrator Marcel, in granting himself access to Bergotte's mind, breaks the rules of narration. But in Proust there are only occasional transgressions in perspective, not sustained heterodiegetic narration from a character who had previously narrated in a homodiegetic, first person position—like the performance we encounter in *American Pastoral*. A recent example of a homodiegetic narrator who later adopts sustained heterodiegetic narration can be found in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. There are other similarities between Roth and Diaz's novels. Both *Wao* and *American Pastoral* tell the story of a family, and through these families the novels tell the story of larger communities, cities and regions. The narrative time covered in *American Pastoral* is about 50 years; *Oscar Wao* is closer to 60. The narrators of both texts are novelists, and both use non-chronological structures to sort back and forth over narrative time. In certain scenes the novelist-narrator is present as a character, and at times he is absent. Whenever the narrator is not present at an event, he invents what he supposes would have occurred. In *Pastoral* and *Wao*, both narrators are acutely aware of how their stories transgress on the conventions of realism.

To use Mieke Bal's distinctions, in the fabula the "real" Swede/Oscar might not act quite the same way, and might not have the same thoughts, as the characters we encounter in the text.<sup>15</sup> This is a flaw in the narrative only if we impose a strict mimetic framework on the novel: in the case of Roth and Diaz's narrators, the narratives they tell have been in some way fictionalised; there is only so much they

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<sup>15</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, trans Christine van Boheemen, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 1-14.

know about the Swede and Oscar, only so much they can verify, and beyond that point is invention. Even in *Bovary*, even in early realism, novels are already breaking the mimetic contract that demands reliable and logically possible narration. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, readers of literary novels should no longer assume that homodiegetic narration is modelled on storytelling situations we encounter, for example, between friends in real life.

Brian Richardson defends logically impossible narration as a form of anti-realism. In the case of first person plural narration, he argues: “Even within a realistic framework, it is not clear to me that the presumed knowledge of other minds is always some kind of embarrassment.”<sup>16</sup> Here he is discussing “we” narration, but I see no reason why his assertion cannot extend to homodiegetic narrators who adopt heterodiegesis. Roth’s narrator appears to be in sympathy with this notion about presumed knowledge, and to take it one step further: to presume, to be “wrong” about people (including your characters) is no embarrassment and indeed is unavoidable. About other people, Zuckerman says:

You get them wrong before you meet them, while you’re anticipating meeting them; you get them wrong while you’re with them; and then you go home to tell somebody else about the meeting and you get them all wrong again. Since the same generally goes for them with you, the whole thing is really a dazzling illusion empty of all perception, an astonishing farce of misperception. And yet what are we to do about this terribly significant business of “other people,” which gets bled of the significance we think it has and takes on instead a significance that is ludicrous, so ill-equipped are we all to envision one another’s interior workings and invisible aims? ... The fact remains that getting people right is not what living is all about anyway. It’s getting them wrong that is living, getting them wrong and wrong and wrong and then, on careful reconsideration, getting them wrong again. That’s how we know we’re alive: we’re wrong. Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride. But if you can do that—well, lucky you.<sup>17</sup>

Writers, when working from a real-life subject, are bound to get it wrong, according to Zuckerman. The work of a fiction writer begins where knowledge ends; ignorance and confusion is a fine starting point for the heterodiegetic section of *American Pastoral*. Andrew Bennett argues that Zuckerman’s declaration of the fallibility of the

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<sup>16</sup> Brian Richardson, *Unnatural Voices*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 57.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 35.

narrator stands in opposition to the concept of omniscience, to the fiction that a narrator can be all-knowing.<sup>18</sup> Omniscience is a superhuman capability, while the novel (and narration) is a product of human intelligence: this incompatibility, again, exposes the artifice of narrative authority. Bennett claims:

For Roth, I suggest, the point of literature, the ethical and political force of the literary—of storytelling—is to make us know not *what*, but *that* we don't know. It is the nature of the human, what it means to be human, each of these novels asserts, to live in error and ignorance...<sup>19</sup>

This error is enacted in Zuckerman's violations of the parameters of realistic representation; the knowingness of realism, its purchase on reality, is undermined in Zuckerman's "realistic chronicle". There is something anti-realist, too, about texts that move from heterodiegetic to homodiegetic narration, in which a character finally reveals herself to be the teller of the tale: those narrators have already told us what they cannot possibly know. Where, in novels such as *The Nonexistent Knight* and *Atonement*, the true identity of the narrator functions as a plot twist, the point of view transformation in *American Pastoral* is foreshadowed and ruminated over.

Zuckerman describes the goal of inhabiting the Swede, of making him "the most important figure of my life."<sup>20</sup> Through Zuckerman, Roth addresses and celebrates the quixotic problems of being a novelist, and links the metafictionist's honesty about artifice to the concerns of the literary realist. In Roth, the fact of ignorance is constitutive, Bennett argues, it is the mechanism through which stories are told.<sup>21</sup>

In the early chapters of *American Pastoral*, it becomes increasingly clear that Zuckerman will not have adequate access to the details of the (late) Swede's life, and this lack necessitates invention. The early homodiegetic narration, which comprises a string of memories, explains why the idealised Swede comes to represent what he does to Zuckerman, and *American Pastoral* makes a case for itself in these early chapters: the narrator tells us why his protagonist is important, a worthy hero of a novel, even if the Swede's true nature is occluded. Zuckerman realises that his early

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Bennett, *Ignorance: Literature and Agnology*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 217.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Roth, Philip, *American Pastoral*, Random House, 1997, p.23

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Bennett, *Ignorance: Literature and Agnology*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 212.



vision of the Swede is naive, “the residuum of adolescent imagination”, and he begins to wonder about the reality beneath that surface: “Only ... what did he do for subjectivity? What was the Swede’s subjectivity? There had to be a substratum, but its composition was unimaginable”.<sup>22</sup> In the heterodiegetic chapters, Zuckerman can drive this elusive subjectivity into the narrative. He abandons the simple and rigid version of the Swede for someone permanently wounded and delicately balanced, even as the narrator’s position undermines any true mimetic status.

I now return to an earlier comparison between *American Pastoral* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Diaz’s novel also enacts a transition from homodiegesis to heterodiegesis, and is broadly purposed to similar ends, in the sense that the third person sections offer a post-mortem, corrective story. Whereas *American Pastoral* corrects the idealised version of the Swede, Diaz’s novelist-narrator, Yunior de Las Casas, crafts the tale for a particular narratee—Oscar’s infant niece—who, Yunior hopes, will one day read the story and use the knowledge gleaned to undo a *fuku*, a curse said to afflict Dominican people. In the Wao family’s case, the *fuku* dates back to the Trujillo regime.<sup>23</sup> The present-day narrator, Yunior, has no first-hand experience of the Trujillo era and thus he narrates in heterodiegesis those chapters set in 1940s and 1950s Dominican Republic, inventing dialogue and detail and action. *Oscar Wao* is designed as a kind of counterspell to connect a “cursed” family’s tragic history with the narratee’s future identity. Zuckerman corrects a simple, childish fiction (the Swede as high school hero) by replacing it with a more complex story (the Swede as tragic hero).

Both books are attempts to repair a wound in the past, and such a project is not unusual in novels that shift from first to third person, or those enacting the reverse. The narrative of McEwan’s *Atonement* is revealed at the end to have been a fabrication, for the most part, a fantasy about what *should* have happened. The character Briony, whose identity as the narrator is disclosed only at the novel’s conclusion, has all along told us a story about a number of people, now dead, whom she wronged in her youth. She cannot ask for their forgiveness, and instead she appeals to the reader (Briony is a novelist-narrator, too). James Phelan argues, “the

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<sup>22</sup> Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Junot Diaz’s prologue introduces the concept of the *zafa*, a counterspell to a *fuku*: “Even now as I write these words I wonder if this book ain’t a *zafa* of sorts.” *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, (New York: Penguin, 2008), 7.

best we can say about Briony's efforts to atone through her novel are much like her efforts during the transgression: her intentions are good but her execution leaves a lot to be desired. It is also possible to judge her even more harshly, as seeking the pleasure of having atoned without having done so."<sup>24</sup> There are significant differences between the ways *Atonement* and *American Pastoral* act on the past. To Briony, fiction is a vehicle for self-redemptive fantasy; to Zuckerman, it's a way to test our understanding of other people.

### Advance notice

This chapter will describe one final aspect of the narration in *American Pastoral*: the narrator's use of advance notice, a narrative strategy first theorised by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse*. Rolf Lunden's definition is the most concise: "(Advance notice) refers briefly to an event that will later be told in full".<sup>25</sup> As an example, Genette cites the advance notice that appears at the end of certain chapters in *Madame Bovary*, before the next chapter fully dramatises these events (the wedding chapter, and the chapter in which Emma takes music lessons in Rouen, are both given notice in a previous chapter).<sup>26</sup> The purpose of advance notice is manifold: the strategy guides the reader through the text, offering signposts and allowing for breaks between chapters; notice may build suspense in the reader by raising a plot development or intrigue but leaving the matter temporarily unresolved or underexplained; and further, advance notice may prepare the readers for events that, if unheralded, might seem incongruous or sudden or contrived.<sup>27</sup> Roth, in his mature period, is expert in the technique of notice: *American Pastoral*, *Sabbath's Theater*, and *The Human Stain* all feature complex orders of events, all navigable by the deployment of notice. In the opening pages of *Sabbath's Theater*, we hear briefly about the end of Mickey

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<sup>24</sup> James Phelan, "Narrative Judgments and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*" in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 332.

<sup>25</sup> I've used Lunden's definition, rather than Genette's, for the sake of brevity. Rolf Lunden, *The United Stories of America: Studies in the Short Story Composite*, (Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1990), 62.

<sup>26</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 75.

<sup>27</sup> Advance notice is a prominent device in the serialized novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which a chapter-ending notice offers a preview of the next installment.

Sabbath's marriage, his second wife's alcoholism, and the disappearance of his first wife, Nicky. These events are fully dramatised later in the book, but their early mention serves important purposes: they inform the reader of the contents of the forthcoming narrative (a technique as old as Homer), and they tell us about the contents of Sabbath's thoughts as he travels from New Hampshire to New Jersey, where he intends to buy a cemetery plot and end his life.

It is not my intention to offer a full account of advance notice in *American Pastoral*: the discussion in this chapter is restricted to Roth's use of the technique in the homodiegetic chapters, and how these notices play out in the later sections. There are three important instances of notice: (1) Zuckerman's childhood memories of the Swede as a schoolboy, which are expanded upon in the heterodiegetic chronicle; (2) a meeting between Zuckerman and the Swede's younger brother, Jerry, who tells him the Swede's daughter, Merry Levov, planted a bomb in the Old Rimrock post office, the central event in the novel; (3) and then, in the first person chapters, there is a meeting between Zuckerman and the Swede himself, the focus of which is the Swede's recently deceased father Lou Levov, a glove manufacturer. Later, Lou will be fully realised as a character. The notice functions as a series of bearings for the chronicle that follows. The reader knows a few details about the Levov family business; we know its importance to the Swede and Lou. We know of the tragedy in the family, but we know little about Merry. We gather that these gaps or mysteries will be addressed by the narrative to come. The technique of notice allows the narrator to set out his stall, to establish the parameters of the novel, to promise the reader a certain story. The use of advance notice, or foreshadowing, ties up narrative strands between the bifurcated sections of *American Pastoral*. Notice is the plot's connective tissue between Zuckerman's narration and his heterodiegetic narration.

The bifurcated *American Pastoral* fuses together metafiction and contemporary realism. Two literary traditions are resolved in the novel, which presents the reader with a puzzle: where does Zuckerman go, and how does he know what he claims? These questions can be answered by the narrator's acknowledgement of error, of "getting people wrong", and yet his faith in the imperfect "realistic chronicle". Zuckerman disappears in order to perform as a novelist. What at first appears to be a trick in Roth's narrative method—a resorting to invention—is a rendering of how Zuckerman creates fiction, how he confronts the unknowable.

## Chapter Two

### The Arranger

This chapter discusses a narrative process that we encounter in centrifugal novels, which we will define as novels that feature more than one narrator.<sup>28</sup> The theorist Brian Richardson, in his study of unusual forms of narration, *Unnatural Voices*, elaborates on the category:

Centrifugal [novels produce] ever more possibilities of narration, and juxtapose storytelling from first person, third person, and still other perspectives, as additional viewpoints and positionalities are included in the act of narration. These may be presented by the inclusion of more voices and more kinds of voice, or they may take the form of more perspectives that narrate the world of a single figure ...<sup>29</sup>

Some examples of centrifugal texts include *Ulysses*, *Infinite Jest*, and *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, all of which will be discussed in this study. There are, I argue, problems with the way narrative theory understands how centrifugal novels function, particularly with regard to how different narrators interact. In order to theorise how various narrators operate within centrifugal novels, I borrow and extend a concept from Joycean scholarship—here I introduce the figure of “the Arranger”. By taking up the arranger, or an enhanced version of the concept, I intend to improve the analytical precision of literary criticism and increase our understanding of the formal properties of the centrifugal novel.

Among the questions facing any analysis of a centrifugal novel is how we might describe the agency that unites, from chapter to chapter, the various narrators. Joyce scholar David Hayman, in *Ulysses: Mechanics of Meaning*, introduces the concept of “the arranger” to describe this agency, which he understands as a presence behind the text. The arranger is “something between a persona and a function, somewhere between the narrator and the implied author”.<sup>30</sup> The arranger of *Ulysses* is:

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<sup>28</sup> The primary text in the previous chapter, *American Pastoral*, is not a true centrifugal novel because we encounter the same narrator throughout.

<sup>29</sup> Brian Richardson, *Unnatural Voices*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 71

<sup>30</sup> David Hayman, *Ulysses: Mechanics of Meaning*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 122.

behind...the style shifts that mark each of the early chapters...  
 Furthermore, the arranger controls the suppression of information and  
 action...Indeed, just about any intrusive or arbitrary phenomenon  
 should be attributed to the arranging persona.<sup>31</sup>

Readers of *Ulysses* encounter the arranger, for example, in the subheadings interposed throughout the Aeolus chapter. Hayman states, of Joyce's novel, "a given chapter will invariably be related to several others by subject matter, complexity, imagery and even length," and among these relations we might find "a figure or presence that can be identified neither with the author nor with his narrators, but that exercises an increasing degree of overt control over increasingly challenging materials."<sup>32</sup>

Since the publication of *Mechanics of Meaning* in 1970, the concept of the arranger has generated a great deal of discussion among scholars of Joyce, and in particular among narratologists: some critics have sought to extend and further elaborate on the arranging presence, others have rejected the figure. Following Hayman's prescription, Hazard Adams identifies the arranger as the source of the stage directions in the Circe episode.<sup>33</sup> Hugh Kenner describes the arranger as a "difficult personality", which "manifests itself in snares scattered for the reader".<sup>34</sup> The arranger, Kenner claims, is behind a sudden reference to "Mr Bloom's dental windows" in the tenth episode, known as Wandering Rocks: this reference is explained two chapters later during a passage of dialogue in the Cyclops episode, in which it turns out that Bloom the dentist is (after all) no relation to Leopold. In this way Kenner envisages the arranger as a source of textual memory; it is the figure behind hundreds of minor textual crossings between the chapters of *Ulysses*. The arranger knows what earlier narrators have told us, and the arrangement can be designed to set off all kinds of effects, including little snares and the repetition of lines, the appearance of motifs, the completion of a narrative strand. We cannot provide an exhaustive list of these smaller effects, these snares, but to take one function of the arranger, we might offer the reiteration of the line "A cloud began to

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Hazard Adams, *Antithetical Essays in Literary Criticism and Liberal Education*, (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), 90–110.

<sup>34</sup> Hugh Kenner, *Ulysses*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1971), 65.

cover the sun slowly”,<sup>35</sup> which appears in the first chapter, Telemachus (in which Stephen sees the cloud), and the fourth, Calypso (as seen by Bloom).

Other Joyce scholars find no use for the concept of the arranger. Shari and Bernard Benstock argue that the term “narrator” is insufficient in the case of *Ulysses*, and therefore the arranger, too, has no place in the text.<sup>36</sup> Their effort to erase the narrator is founded on the idea that narration must issue from someone, some figure, and this is not the case in sections of *Ulysses* (take, for example, the format of the Circe episode). Rather, the Benstocks argue that *Ulysses* generates itself, and we better apprehend the text if we see it as “intrinsically determined rather than extrinsically imposed”.<sup>37</sup> If we view the novel from the Benstocks’ position, there can be no role for an arranging presence. Shari Benstock claims: “The technical devices that collectively become the means of rendering plot and establishing tone and point of view are generated from subject matter and context rather than imposed from above (or behind) by an authorial presence hovering close to the narrative product.”<sup>38</sup>

Patrick McGee, as well, does not accept the arranger: “I suspect we are being led off the track by the personification of what is in fact a principle and a power, a principle of arrangement and a power to arrange that which does not originate from a subject—author or narrator—but rather situates the subject.”<sup>39</sup> McGee takes the position that we should not speak of an arranging presence as we might a narrator, as a figure to whom we can attribute narrative strategies, yet there is, he states, an arrangement to be perceived in the text. Instead of a new persona residing in the macro-structure of *Ulysses*, we have an effect. In an updated edition of *Mechanics of Meaning*, (1982) Hayman claims it was “gratifying that much discussion has been generated by the concept”.<sup>40</sup> Hayman proposes that we should not make too much of the arranger figure, whom he sees as a mischievous but minor figure who intervenes here and there in the text. He backs away from the importance of the concept:

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<sup>35</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses*, (London: Penguin, 1968), first cloud reference on 9, second on 73.

<sup>36</sup> Shari and Bernard Benstock, “The Benstock Principle”, in *The Seventh of Joyce*, ed. Bernard Benstock, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 18.

<sup>37</sup> Shari Benstock, “Who Killed Cock Robin?” *Style*, 14 (1980): 261.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Patrick McGee, *Paperspace: Style and Ideology in Joyce’s Ulysses*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 72.

<sup>40</sup> David Hayman, *Ulysses: Mechanics of Meaning*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 122.

...the attempts to generalise further the arranged component of the text weaken the concept of arranger. The latter becomes the sum of the narrative process rather than a component of it: the distinction between narrator and arranger is virtually eliminated. Instead of going that far, we should probably think of the arranging presence as subtly penetrating the fabric of the narrative at a variety of points and in a variety of ways.<sup>41</sup>

Hayman presents us with a limited role for the arranger, and such a role is suitable within his sophisticated schema for *Ulysses*.

I argue, however, for an extension of the arranger's powers. If the arranger possesses the level of textual memory attributed to it above, it follows, or at least is highly likely, that the arranger is aware of the narrative process in *every* episode in *Ulysses*, regardless of the type of narration. The arranger is either omniscient, or not. Hayman himself, while enforcing limits on the arranger's importance, describes it as a "felt absence in the text, an unstated but inescapable source of control".<sup>42</sup> He defines the presence further as "a single impulse, a larger version of his characters, with a larger field of vision and many more perceptions to control".<sup>43</sup> Thus he gives the arranger enormous powers, but allows it only limited use of this agency.

Instead, we might see the arranger as the source of all conjunctions of plot between the differently narrated chapters, as the manager of all narrative actions that are outside the remit of the narrator. The bridges between the chapters through which the reader passes—these are designed by the arranger. Far from being a minor figure in narratology, the arranger is responsible for the network of narrative in *Ulysses* and in other centrifugal texts.

The narrator is the figure *who speaks*, after Genette's formulation (who speaks directly to the reader). The narrator, whoever it is, cannot be responsible for the entirety of the centrifugal narrative: the narrator's story may begin and end in the span of chapter. Then another narrator or narrating position takes over in the next chapter, and another, and so on. All these narrators, in most centrifugal texts, operate independently of each other, which is to say, they are generally not aware of each other's narration. An exception to this independence may be a case in which a homodiegetic narrator, such as Yuniior in *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, who is explicitly aware of the chapter narrated by another character, Lola. In Diaz's

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 93.

novel, Yuniors has asked Lola to write her story, and she does so, and he includes the story as a chapter in his book. Still, there is no arranger: the arranging has all been done by the narrator. In a novel narrated by a single figure, homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, the narrator is also responsible for the arrangement. We invoke the arranger when different narrators appear in the one novel. *Oscar Wao* is not a true centrifugal text. My point is that the arranger is not simply equivalent to any narrator's ordering agency: rather, it knows the content of different acts of narration by discrete narrators, and it orchestrates the novel accordingly. It has omniscient powers, but it uses these differently from third person omniscient narrators. The narrator can speak directly to the reader; the arranger speaks through the design of the narrative.

On the whole, discrete narrators in a centrifugal text do not suddenly interrupt or influence another's narration. Where such interruptions have been identified in *Ulysses*, such as the subheadings in Aeolus, these have usually been attributed to the arranging presence. If we accept Hayman's argument for the arranger's presence, the Aeolus section upsets the neat idea that the narrator is the figure who speaks and the arranger always remains silent. Perhaps I can propose a modification—the arranger is typically silent, and the exceptions are rare. Where Genette argues that the narrator can never be absent from the narrative, I argue that narrators are absent from those narratives they do not control, which they do not narrate, but which nevertheless remain part of the novel. There is no space for narrators between their narratives: that space belongs to the arranger. The Benstocks state that all narrative must comprise two essential elements: a story and a storyteller.<sup>44</sup> If we accept, too, the notion of McGee's principle of arrangement, to find an arranger we need only personify the figure behind this narrative process, to name a presence with storytelling functions, just as critics have always done with the storytelling figure of the narrator. Instead of "an arranging function", I propose a human-like persona because readers are used to narrator figures telling us a story. The arranger is telling us a story too; it is telling us the whole novel. By navigating the storyworld via multiple narrators, the arranger betrays a self-reflexive nature, and each transition between narrators cuts short the mimetic illusion, as a new form of narration begins. The reader is reminded they are

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<sup>44</sup> Shari and Bernard Benstock, "The Benstock Principle", in *The Seventh of Joyce*, ed. Bernard Benstock, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 10.



reading a narrative in episodes, told from different angles, using a range of literary techniques.

Once we propose the arranger as the source of textual memory, aware of every instance of narration, we find its presence then in larger schemes within *Ulysses*: for example, balancing the male monologue of Proteus with the female monologue of Penelope. If plot is the cause and effect between representations of events or actions as manifest in chapters or scenes, we can locate the arranger behind the scattered plot of a centrifugal text, in every linkage of plot between narrators. If, instead, we deny the existence of the arranging presence and insist on the narrator as the novel's governing storyteller, that would mean proposing a system in which every narrator, homodiegetic, heterodiegetic, extradiegetic and otherwise, is each aware of the other's texts as they continue another's narrative—such a system is too convoluted and imprecise for our purposes.

My extension of the arranger concept goes beyond the limits that Hayman (and perhaps Kenner) proposed. But this promotion of the arranger, from Hayman's subtle figure to the binding agent between narrators, offers a way for critics to better discuss the macro-structure of centrifugal novels: in such texts, we piece together a whole story, a whole novel, offered to us by multiple voices. To talk of "Bloomsday" is perhaps to generalise about the work of the arranger. Although these narrative strands (for example, Molly's affairs) issue from multiple narrators, the degree of cooperation between narrators is unusual: Molly's infidelity is memorable because we understand the effects of her actions from different narrators, all given to us by the arrangement of the novel. This thesis establishes such conjunctions between narrators as among the most important strategies in multi-narrator texts: analytical precision about the arranger function is critical to any full model of the centrifugal novel.

### **The implied author**

Where are the author and the implied author in this schema? In particular, it is worth discussing the latter in further depth, because some scholars have credited the implied author with the macro-structure of novels, including those narratives presented by multiple narrators. Wayne Booth proposed the notion of an implied author in his *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), and he continued to defend the concept in work published

as late as 2005, the same year of his death. In the intervening period (and the time since) the concept has led to a great deal of debate among narratologists: much of this critical discourse has focused on what exactly is meant by the term “implied author”, and whether the concept is useful to narrative theory. Here I briefly summarise the debate and within its context I situate my claims for the arranger.

In *Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth claims:

As he writes, (the real author) creates not simply an ideal, impersonal “man in general”, but an implied version of “himself” that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men’s works ... the picture the reader gets of his presence is one of the author’s most important effects. However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the (author) who writes in this manner.<sup>45</sup>

The implied author is a sense of the creator evoked by the work. There may be some discussion about who exactly bears responsibility for its construction, since it is a product of the author’s effects, yet the picture of the implied author is completed by the reader. In general usage, the implied author is usually understood as a figure/picture to be inferred, a presence encoded by the real, flesh-and-blood author and decoded by the reader. Another initial point to make about the implied author is that it is usually positioned somewhere between the real author and the narrator in the narrative communication model used by Booth, Chatman, and other narratologists.

According to Booth, the implied author is responsible for the overall design of the novel. Gerald Prince, in *The Dictionary of Narratology*, refers to Booth when he defines the concept as: “The author’s second self, mask, or persona as reconstructed from the text; the implicit image of an author in the text, taken to be standing behind the scenes and to be responsible for its design and for the values and cultural norms it adheres to.”<sup>46</sup> Already in this discussion there emerges two different functions for the implied author (although it has been credited with several more): it is a masked figure of the author, a persona constructed from textual elements; and it is an ordering agency that possesses the same powers I have already credited to the arranger figure. As we will see, there are questions to be asked about whether the implied author better serves narrative theory as a presence inside or outside the fictive storyworld.

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<sup>45</sup> Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 70.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 42

Below I explicate some of the individual components of the implied author, and distinguish and decouple the arranging function from them.

Seymour Chatman views the implied author as an intermediate figure, one who may differ significantly from the real author, but who cannot differ greatly from the substance of the novel: “To confound the ‘implied author,’ a structural principle, with a certain historical figure (a real author) whom we may or may not admire morally, politically, or personally would seriously undermine our theoretical enterprise.”<sup>47</sup> He argues, “positing an implied author inhibits the overhasty assumption that the reader has direct access through the fictional text to the real author’s intentions and ideology.”<sup>48</sup> The picture that emerges, then, is of an author-like figure who can be addressed in a critical context (thus, an author who is not “dead”), and one who can be discussed without reference to a real person who may, in everyday life, be unlike the norms we associate with his or her work. The implied author is a figure who does not exist, but who nevertheless may be ascribed, for example, an ethnicity, a nationality, a gender, and who possesses certain bodies of knowledge. Chatman continues:

He is implied, that is, reconstructed by the reader from the narrative. He is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative, that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happen to these characters, in these words or images. Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, it has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn. We can grasp the notion of the implied author most clearly by comparing different narratives written by the same real author but presupposing different implied authors... Henry Fielding created three clearly different implied authors (in three of his novels).<sup>49</sup>

Between Chatman and Booth, the concept represents a human-like entity, a structural principle and agent in the communication of narrative, a set of values and norms, and the meaning of the text as a whole. In an attempt to narrow down the implied author’s functions, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan first asserts that the figure is a

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<sup>47</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 149.

<sup>48</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms. The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 76.

<sup>49</sup> Chatman, 1978, 149.

reader-created construct assembled “from all the components of the text”.<sup>50</sup> She finds difficulty with Chatman’s proposition that the implied author can play a role as the addresser in a narrative communication model:

My claim is that if it is to be consistently distinguished from the real author and the narrator, the notion of the implied author must be de-personified, and is best considered as a set of implicit norms rather than as a speaker or a voice. It follows, therefore, that the implied author cannot literally be a participant in the narrative communication situation.<sup>51</sup>

Rimmon-Kenan introduces a valuable concept, for my purposes, when she takes issue with Chatman’s claim that there are instances of narrative communication in which there is no narrator, and only an implied author present. There must always be a teller of the tale: “Even when a narrative text presents passages of pure dialogue, a manuscript found in a bottle, or forgotten letters and diaries, there is in addition to the speakers or writers of this discourse a ‘higher narratorial authority’ responsible for ‘quoting’ the dialogue or ‘transcribing’ the written records.”<sup>52</sup>

This higher narratorial authority, in the case of pure dialogue stories, has much in common with the functions of the arranger—neither speak directly to the reader but, within the fictive world, both are responsible for the narrative before us, both are macro-narrators. Rimmon-Kenan may see the arranger and the higher narrator as different names for the same figure. But I understand this higher narratorial authority as an adjacent figure in the narrative communication situation, a presence that operates between the traditional narrator and the implied author in a position similar but not identical to the arranger’s. I attribute the arrangement of a novel told entirely in the heterodiegetic or homodiegetic mode to the heterodiegetic/homodiegetic narrator who speaks to the reader throughout the novel; in the case of a narrative of pure dialogue, a higher narratorial authority can be credited with the order of events; and the arrangement of a centrifugal text is the work of an arranger. Important distinctions can be made between the higher narratorial authority and the arranger. There are differences in how they operate, and in what they know of the fictive world: the arranger moves between different narrators, and conspires to build

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<sup>50</sup> Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, (London: Routledge, 2002,) 87.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

a larger picture, whereas the higher narrator resembles a recording machine. The arranger also knows the minds and tales of multiple narrators, whereas the higher narratorial authority tends to have a lesser degree of access to the storyworld.

For Gerard Genette, “the implied author is everything the text lets us know about the author”.<sup>53</sup> He claims that a fiction narrative is produced fictively by its narrator and actually by its (real) author. Genette also states that the implied presence, an “idea of the author”, cannot be a narrative agent: “every type of textual performance can be attributed only to (the narrator or the real author), depending on the level chosen.”<sup>54</sup> In a 2011 issue of *Style* devoted to the implied author concept, Marie-Laure Ryan argues the opposite: “The implied author is a design principle, responsible for the narrative techniques and the plot of the text.”<sup>55</sup> The guest editor of that issue, Brian Richardson, stated his own position on the concept in his 2006 study of unusual narration, *Unnatural Voices*. Richardson sees the implied author as a “useful concept”, and one to be retained and further explored, but he is not closely concerned with its function as a structural principle or arranger of plot. The implied author “is not an indispensable aspect of the narrative transaction”.<sup>56</sup> Rather, he sees the implied presence as mainly a second self, a mask, and gives the example of two modernist authors locating a version of the concept in their own writing practice:

In *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, Proust clearly articulates the modernist concept of the author: “A book is the product of a different self from the one we manifest in our habits, in society, in our vices.” In a late diary entry, Virginia Woolf would similarly muse on how each book of hers “accumulates a little of the fictitious V.W. whom I carry like a mask about the world”.<sup>57</sup>

Richardson, offering another example, cites the composition of Joseph Conrad’s *Nostromo*. When Conrad fell ill, his friend Ford Madox Ford continued work on the *Nostromo* manuscript, faithfully reproducing Conrad’s style, “so it seems a single author wrote it”.<sup>58</sup> Richardson states the two authors collaborated “to produce a single

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<sup>53</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 148.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, “Meaning, Intent, and the Implied Author”, *Style* 45 (2011): 34.

<sup>56</sup> Richardson, Brian, *Unnatural Voices*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 132.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

implied author whose calm Olympian detachment and imperturbable pessimism are quite different from the harried, strained, and often exhausted Conrad or the reckless and improvident Ford.”<sup>59</sup> As well, Richardson supports Booth’s notion of the “career implied author”. The career implied author serves to designate distinctive markers of an author’s characteristic style and subject matters and themes and settings, as revealed over an entire body of work. Such a figure is portable into other art forms: “We may correctly identify a piece of music we have never heard before as a work of Beethoven, and we know what kinds of things to expect when we are about to view a previously unseen Monet.”<sup>60</sup>

The idea of the implied author as an arranging figure is not, to my understanding, important to Richardson’s schema, which otherwise draws heavily on Booth’s original exposition of his concept. In Booth’s final essay on the subject, he considers how the creation of implied author “relates to the universality of our daily, hourly, dependence on constructive and destructive role playing”.<sup>61</sup> Booth focuses not on the figure inferred by the reader in a decoding process, nor on the design of plot, as Ryan and others have emphasised, but on the authorial creation of the implied author (a figure created through a form of encoding process). He states: “In every corner of our lives, whenever we speak or write, we imply a version of our character that we know is quite different from many other selves that are exhibited in our flesh-and-blood world.”<sup>62</sup> Booth gives an example from an interview he conducted with Saul Bellow, decades earlier, during a period when Bellow was working on revisions of *Herzog*.

Saul Bellow dramatized wonderfully the importance of authorial masking when I asked him: “What does that amount to, spending four hours every day revising a novel?” Bellow said: “I’m just wiping out those parts of my self I don’t like.”<sup>63</sup>

According to Booth, every writer is engaged in the task of creating of an implied version that is superior to the everyday self. In order to create meaningful work, the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Wayne Booth, “Resurrection of the Implied Author: Why Bother?” in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, (Malden: Blackwell, 2005) 75.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 75.

author aspires to be better, and they create “a more genuine version of their selves.”<sup>64</sup> He also gives the examples of Robert Frost and Sylvia Plath and comments on the contrasting personas in their life and work.

The created implied author is not—as some biographers have suggested and others have often implied—someone whose very creation should lead us to condemn the creator as a deplorable phony. The implied authors are not only as genuine versions of Frosts and Plaths as are the flesh and blood sinners. They are in one sense more genuine, and of course far more admirable and influential: in wiping out the selves they do not like, the poets have created versions that elevate both their worlds and ours. Just think how impoverished our lives would be without such acting out of superior versions.<sup>65</sup>

In summary, when Genette and Richardson address the concept of implied author, and this is finally the case with Booth, the overwhelming stress in their statements is on the creation of an author image—the making of a second self, a self-image. This second self is implied by the author and inferred by the reader. The implied author does not figure prominently in the rest of this study: I’m interested in the concept insofar as I can decouple the arranger from the implied author’s functions. I agree with Genette and Rimmon-Kenan’s restrictions on the concept: the implied author is not a narrative agent; s/he does not tell us the story; s/he is a persona. The arranger describes a vital function in centrifugal novels, but there is no benefit to the creation of an arranger who is also a second self of the author, an emanation that resembles the real author. The implied author is a figure with real world references and it might be confusing, and perhaps a category error, to credit s/he with arranging interactions between narrators, given that the arranger is fictive, an agency in the storyworld, much like a silent heterodiegetic narrator (the heterodiegetic narrator is not a participant-character in the storyworld, but it is not entirely outside the storyworld: it is *of* that storyworld). The implied author is not entirely real either, but s/he possesses a different order of fictiveness to that of the arranger or narrator. There may be narratological schemas that allow the author or the implied author to straddle the space between reality and storyworld, but my argument is that instead of using this overloaded, conflated figure of the implied author, we can better track the orchestration of centrifugal novels by invoking the arranger, and decoupling this

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

figure from the implied author function. It is altogether easier and more precise to state: in centrifugal novels, the narrator tells the episode and the arranger tells the novel.



## Chapter Three

### **Network of Time: the narration and the arranger in *A Visit from the Goon Squad***

On publication in 2010, one of the questions that greeted *A Visit from the Goon Squad* concerned its status in genre: is it a novel, or a collection of linked stories?

Transgeneric works are common enough in contemporary literature and questions of taxonomy can be valuable, insofar as the answers illustrate the effects of the mixing of genres, and perhaps point to the inception of new genres or other significant developments in the art form. This chapter, however, pays more attention to *Goon Squad*'s program of narration, rather than the novel's mingling of genres. Here I present a formalist case study that describes and theorises, with regard to Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, some of the more significant features of modernist and postmodern narrative—the creation of new narrators, and the conjunctions between different narrating voices. In turn, after examining the network between the book's chapters and establishing a model of how the narrators interact with each other, this study does offer an answer to the question of genre: *Goon Squad* is at once a novel and a collection of stories. The book is fractured and yet integrated to an unusual degree. Each narrator has a different story, a different angle of presentation. The orchestration of all these narrators, a function of the arranger, is what unites *Goon Squad*.

In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette claims, “The novelist's choice, unlike the narrator's, is not between two grammatical forms, but between two narrative postures (whose grammatical forms are simply an automatic consequence): to have the story told by one of its ‘characters,’ or to have it told by a narrator outside of the story”.<sup>66</sup> To Genette's statement we might add that centrifugal novels make an exception and changes these postures from chapter to chapter. This study has already introduced the concept of the centrifugal novel, and the figure of the arranger, and I have argued that narrative theory requires new studies that take into account the conjunctions of different narrators. As multi-narrator novels continue to proliferate, it becomes all the

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<sup>66</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 244.

more urgent to specify and theorise the functions of such novels, especially the way in which such texts form a coherent whole.<sup>67</sup>

The genre of the novel displays a unique capacity, among literary forms, to integrate different narrators and forms of narration, including letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and unusual texts (in the case of *Goon Squad*, a PowerPoint chapter), and marginal texts (prefaces, conclusions, footnotes). In *Goon Squad*, multiple characters emerge in the role of narrator, or as the character through which the narration is focalised. The novel's chapters are alternately delivered in first person (homodiegesis), second person, and omniscient and limited third person (heterodiegesis). While each chapter is self-contained and may be read as a short story, nonetheless, in many cases, shadows are cast into the future, or some important part of the characters' ultimate trajectory is missing and later provided in subsequent chapters. There are at least two levels of discourse at work in *Goon Squad*: the narrated, which occurs at the level of the chapter, and the arranged, which we will discuss later, and which takes place over multiple chapters. In different ways both discourses engage with the novel's themes: that is, the passing of time, and the way in which the characters are alienated, even temporarily, from the friendships and careers that once defined them. *Goon Squad* follows an ensemble cast over a period of about 50 years, thus allowing for a range of fortunes to play out.

An inherent quality of the centrifugal text is the potential for significant temporal shifts between chapters and narrators. The transfer in narration presents an opportunity for a disruption in chronological sequence (it would be a mistake, however, to declare the centrifugal text as always incompatible with close chronology, and *Ulysses* refutes such a thesis.). In *Goon Squad* the transitions between chapters mark not only an abrupt change in narrator or focalisation, but also a movement forward or backward in time, and at certain points we move decades into the past or future. These temporal shifts become a part of *Goon Squad*'s cadence: the reader expects an imminent and radical shift in voice and setting, even though we cannot see what is next in the sequence, as the novel ranges through time, picking up various strands of narrative. In vital ways the chapters come into dialogue with each

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<sup>67</sup> Some of the more significant centrifugal novels from the past 20 years include: *Infinite Jest*, David Foster Wallace; *Underworld*, Don DeLillo; *The Autobiography of Red*, Anne Carson; and *Freedom*, Jonathan Franzen.

other. Typically, the narrator comes to a terminus or resolution at the end of his or her chapter, only for a later narrator to expand or antedate that terminus.

Multiperson narration, as Richardson argues, “allows the free play of multiple voices and can be seen as a practice that generates a greater degree of dialogism than more conventional techniques typically allow”.<sup>68</sup> Richardson does not, however, delve deeply into how these voices interact in novels that shift from third person to first person and to other forms of narration. Later in this chapter we discuss the interactions between Egan’s narrators. For now, I want to make one more observation about the polyphony (or cacophony) of narrators in *Goon Squad*: the novel is largely set in the milieu of the New York music scene, and the centrifugal narration neatly embodies the primary emblem of contemporary music, the rock band—a group of friends who share common ground and a common purpose, temporarily, in their youth.

Before examining the conjunctions between these narrators, and the mechanism by which this network is established, I describe the range of narrators that the reader encounters in Egan’s novel. The schema of narrators in *Goon Squad* may be represented follows:

*Table 1: A Visit From the Goon Squad, POV outline:*

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>internal focalisation (Sasha)</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>internal focalisation (Bennie)</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Homodiegetic</b>	<b>Rhea</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>zero focalisation</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Homodiegetic</b>	<b>Jocelyn</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Homodiegetic</b>	<b>Scotty</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>internal focalisation (Stephanie)</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>internal focalisation (Dolly)</b>
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Homodiegetic</b>	<b>Jules (magazine article)</b>
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>Homodiegetic</b>	<b>Bobby (second person)</b>
<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>internal focalisation (Ted)</b>
<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>Homodiegetic</b>	<b>Alison (PowerPoint presentation)</b>
<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	<b>internal focalisation (Alex)</b>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 68.

## Homodiegetic narration: From Scotty to PowerPoint

To restate the table above, the sections in conventional homodiegetic narration are chapters three, five, and six. Chapters nine and 12 are nominally homodiegetic but feature unusual formal properties. The first three cases are conventional homodiegetic (first person) fiction: chapters three and five are given in present tense, and chapter six in past tense; in terms of story time, these three homodiegetic chapters range from a few hours to several days; tonally, the language shifts from Rhea's naïve, teenager-speak (for example, the word "go" is used to attribute dialogue, instead of "say"), to Scotty's acidic, weary narration. We meet all three of the homodiegetic narrators (Rhea, Jocelyn, Scotty) in Rhea's chapter, when they're still in their teens. Jocelyn narrates a chapter when they are in their late 30s, while Scotty's chapter takes place a few years later. Their narration dramatises how the characters have changed through the passing of time. In each case they remain conventional narrators, that is, they do not break the mimetic contract that governs realist fiction: each narrator conveys their story in a conventional autobiographical mode that resembles, in Richardson's terms, "a normal human being, with all its abilities and limitations (excepting, of course, a never-remarked-upon ability to produce a highly narratable story that reads just like a novel)."<sup>69</sup>

This conventionality is somewhat discarded in chapter nine, which is presented as a magazine article written from jail. The article goes unpublished, in the fictive world of *Goon Squad*, but is generously footnoted. The footnotes call to mind the nonfiction of David Foster Wallace, and may be viewed as a parody of Wallace, or a parody of his imitators in the essay genre, while the narration in the body of the article more closely resembles the plain prose of a news feature, rather than the cascading images and rhetorical contortions we find in Wallace's nonfiction. Chapter 12 is presented as a series of PowerPoint slides that have been prepared by a heretofore (in the novel), unseen character named Alison. Formally speaking, Alison's narration can be clearly differentiated from the kind of homodiegetic narration found elsewhere in the book, but its novelty within the genre should not be overstated. The PowerPoint chapter belongs to a long tradition of unusual, formally

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 15.

innovative homodiegetic narration in prose fiction: we move from Vladimir Nabokov's character of Kinbote, to V.S. Naipaul's night watchman, and so forth. In Alison's case, PowerPoint is the form in which she is best able to express herself (she is about 11 years old). The same principle of expression applies to Jules, the jailed (and failed) journalist, whose natural discourse is the celebrity profile. His article performs two main narrative tasks: it functions as an audacious profile of an actress and explains also why Jules himself has ended up in prison. His narration is pointed, comic, elegiac, even ironic. The article is probably the last piece of journalism he will write. While it functions as the vehicle for his subjectivity, it is also a self-effacing text, and finally self-erasing, since it shuts down his identity as a writer. Thus, in *Goon Squad*, the homodiegesis moves from conventional autobiographical modes to modes in which genre (the magazine profile; PowerPoint presentation) are used to embody the narrators themselves.

## Second Person: The Reader Implicated

This chapter now examines the use of second person in a single chapter of *Goon Squad*. Brian Richardson makes a distinction between three types of second person narration: what he calls (1) the "standard," (2) the "hypothetical," and (3) the "autotelic."<sup>70</sup> The standard form, which we find in chapter 10 of *Goon Squad*, can be identified by its designation of the protagonist as "you," rather than "I," "he" or "she". The hypothetical form, found in Lorrie Moore's collection *Self-Help* and in non-literary texts such as instruction manuals, displays several features not found in standard second person narration: "the consistent use of the imperative, the frequent employment of the future tense, and the unambiguous distinction between the narrator and the narratee."<sup>71</sup> The autotelic form is explicitly addressed to the actual reader of the text, and examples include Lautreamont's *Maldoror*, and Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*: "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveller*."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>72</sup> Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveller*, trans. William Weaver, (New York: Harcourt, 1982), 1.

In *Goon Squad*, the second person protagonist, Bobby, is the “you” figure and the sole focaliser, and he may also be construed as the principal narratee. The chapter is told in present tense, like a significant number of stories and novels narrated in second person. There is some discussion in narrative theory about the relation between first person (or homodiegetic) and second. Franz Stanzel considers second person as a variant of the first person, homodiegetic form: “(in) the novel in the second person ... the ‘you’ is really a self-dramatisation of the ‘I,’ and the form of the monologue prevails here, too”.<sup>73</sup> Matt DelConte likewise suggests that nearly “all second person narration is actually homodiegesis considering that a narrator must be on the same diegetic plane as his/her narratee-protagonist ... in order to communicate with that narratee-protagonist.”<sup>74</sup> In a feint that exemplifies this close relationship between conventional homodiegetic narration and second person, the final sentence of chapter 10 in *Goon Squad* switches to the “I” pronoun. Until that point the “you” of second person has seemed, at times, to be addressing the reader as well as Bobby, so closely does the narrative mode place the reader within the character’s point of view. This ambiguous frame of address has been an illusion all along: the protagonist/narratee is distinct from the reader; nevertheless, the second person mode of narration often threatens such distinctions, and this porous boundary provides the grounds for a sometimes unsettling process of identification and distancing between reader and narratee, as the reader is alternately drawn closer to and further away from the protagonist.

### **Heterodiegesis and omniscience: selective communication**

More than half of the chapters in *Goon Squad* are presented by a heterodiegetic narrator. All but one of these chapters use internal focalisation, and chapter four is the only example of zero focalisation. In what follows I briefly discuss the concept of omniscience and whether it contributes to the system of heterodiegetic/focalised narration, and what these findings mean for my study of narration. Nicolas Royle argues the term “omniscience” is imprecise, and he claims the narrator’s access to

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<sup>73</sup> Franz K Stanzel, *A Theory of Narrative*, trans. Charlotte Goedsche, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 225.

<sup>74</sup> Matt DelConte, “Why You Can’t Speak: Second Person Narration, Voice, and a New Model for Understanding Narrative”, *Style* 37 (2003): 204–19.

characters' thoughts, especially in varieties of internal focalisation, is rather a kind of telepathy: "Telepathy' opens possibilities of a humbler, more precise, less religiously freighted conceptuality than does omniscience for thinking about the uncanniness of what is going on in narrative fiction."<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Culler, who supports Royle's idea, regards omniscience as too broad a category to prove useful. Culler identifies four separate narrative effects that critics describe as omniscient functions:

... my claim is that four rather different phenomena—the conventional establishment of narrative authority, the imaginative or telepathic translation of inner thoughts, the playful and self-reflexive foregrounding of creative actions, and the production of wisdom through the multiplication of perspectives and the teasing out of intricacies in human affairs — are what have provoked the ascription of omniscience, the postulation of omniscient narrators, and have thereby not only obscured the distinctiveness or salience of these practices but have repeatedly obfuscated them so that we fail to see what is going on.<sup>76</sup>

Culler's essay concludes with an appeal for alternative vocabularies. Richard Walsh, in his article "Who Is the Narrator?", accepts that omniscience is a flawed category: "Omniscience, I would suggest, is not a faculty possessed by certain class of narrators but, precisely, a quality of authorial imagination."<sup>77</sup> With regard to the claims of Royle and Culler, this study suggests that where a strong enough need is felt for new terminology, such a vocabulary will be created and accepted by other scholars. With regard to what is sometimes described as "limited omniscience" (what might also be called internal focalisation), Meir Sternberg argues that you cannot have selective omniscience—that is, selective access to a character's thoughts—only a selective communicativeness. A so-called limited form of omniscience "fail(s) to take into account that omniscience, being a superhuman privilege, is logically not a quantitative but a qualitative and indivisible attribute; if a narrator authoritatively shows himself to be able to penetrate the mind of one of his characters and report all his secret activities—something none of us can do in daily life—then he has thus decisively established his ability to do so as regards the others as well."<sup>78</sup> In agreement with this

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<sup>75</sup> Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 261.

<sup>76</sup> Jonathan Culler, "Omniscience," *Narrative* 12 (2004): 32

<sup>77</sup> Richard Walsh, "Who Is the Narrator?" *Poetics Today* 18, (1997), 499.

<sup>78</sup> Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 282.

proposition, Culler comments: “An author or narrator who reports the thoughts of one character must by definition be treated as knowing those of the others.”<sup>79</sup>

Omniscience, then, is indivisible as a form of knowledge. In cases in which the narration is misleading, or misdirects the reader in order to heighten drama, the critic, argues Culler, “finds herself obliged to explain why the omniscient narrator declines to tell us all the relevant things he must know”.<sup>80</sup> My purpose here is not to extend a theory of telepathic narration, or to further examine Culler’s four phenomena, and to do so would be a diversion from the task at hand, which is to describe the narrators of *Goon Squad* and examine how they interrelate. This study rarely uses the term omniscience, having adopted Genette’s system of focalisation, in which omniscience is equivalent to zero focalisation. Yet the foregoing discussion of omniscience helps to clarify how narratorial knowledge operates within the system of focalisation as well: all heterodiegetic narrators possess omniscient powers (as Culler and others suggest), but they focalise the story in different ways. Heterodiegesis and focalisation may change from one novel to another, as Culler argues, “not in knowledge but in (the narrator’s) readiness to share their unlimited knowledge with the reader”.<sup>81</sup>

I want to mention the use of anachrony in *Goon Squad* in order to illustrate what the heterodiegetic narrator shares with the reader. The examples of internal focalisation in *Goon Squad* are, by and large, fixated on a first narrative being told, which is to say, there are few analeptic or proleptic movements in these chapters. In general, the novel does not divert much from the unfolding narration, and this allows for a number of narrative surprises. For example, the character of Sasha appears in four chapters—she is the focal character of the first chapter—but it is only in chapter 11 that the readers learn that she, an Anglo-Celtic American, spent many of her teenage years in Naples, unenrolled in school and living in squats. This revelation fundamentally alters our understanding of Sasha’s trajectory in life. Had these details been mentioned as an aside in an earlier chapter, or via analepsis (flashback), had it not been dramatised as completely as it is in chapter 11, her life in Naples might have seemed implausible and incongruous.

The one instance of zero focalisation is the Kenya-set Safari chapter, which does not feature either Sasha or Bennie, the two central figures in *Goon Squad*. There

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<sup>79</sup> Culler, Jonathan, 2004, “Omniscience”, *Narrative* 12, p.24

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.25



are several instances of prolepsis in *Safari*, including a moment in which the narrator interrupts a conversation between an American family to briefly gaze into the future of a young Kenyan man standing nearby:

Thirty-five years from now, in 2008, this warrior will be caught in the tribal violence between the Kikuyu and the Luo and will die in a fire. He'll have had four wives and sixty-three grandchildren by then, one of whom, a boy named Joe, will inherit his lalema: the iron hunting dagger in a leather scabbard now hanging at his side. Joe will go to college at Columbia and study engineering, becoming an expert in visual robotic technology that detects the slightest hint of irregular movement (the legacy of a childhood spent scanning the grass for lions). He'll marry an American named Lulu and remain in New York, where he'll invent a scanning device that becomes standard issue for crowd security. He and Lulu will buy a loft in Tribeca, where his grandfather's hunting dagger will be displayed inside a cube of Plexiglas, directly under a skylight.<sup>82</sup>

In the *Safari* chapter, the narrator's process of communicating his or her characters' thoughts and pasts and futures—even those of marginal characters, such as Joe and his grandfather—achieves several effects we associate with zero focalisation: we are given a sense of how many characters' lives have changed, and how they will change in the future; when we learn the thoughts of several figures in the one chapter, when the narration moves in and out of various minds, we better understand their subjectivity, and how these characters relate to each other; and the themes both local (the fractures in a family) and novel-wide (the effects of time) can be addressed with reference to more characters, than they can in homodiegesis or internal focalisation. In several instances, as with other forms of narration described above, the narrator prepares the ground for ironies and surprises and other literary effects that are conveyed in later chapters, by other narrators, and the effect of such arrangements will be interrogated in the next section of this chapter.

## **The Arranger**

Having described the variety of narrators in Egan's novel, this study turns to the presence of the arranger in *Goon Squad*, and continues my development of the arranger concept. Some narrative theorists, however, have explained the agency that

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<sup>82</sup> Jennifer Egan, *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, (New York: Random House, 2010), 61-62.

governs multi-narrator novels without invoking the arranger concept. Wayne Booth describes the roving visitation into the minds of sixteen characters in *As I Lay Dying* as “omniscience with teeth in it”.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, Culler does not see the hand of an omniscient narrator in the meta-structure of Faulkner’s novel but rather “a recorder, a presenter of signs, a transmission device”.<sup>84</sup> To accept Booth’s suggestion—that Faulkner’s meta-structure has been constructed by an omniscient narrator—is to further complicate the term “omniscience”, which is already the subject of an ongoing debate in which it is widely regarded as too broad and imprecise a notion for narrative theory. While Culler likens the oral history structure of *As I Lay Dying* to the work of a transmission device, such a comparison cannot as easily apply to the polyphonic *Goon Squad*, because of the latter novel’s inclusion of heterodiegetic narrators.

The complete picture, the tableau of *Goon Squad*, is unknown to narrators at the chapter level, but known entirely to the arranger. The arranger connects the diverse narrative practices contained in Egan’s novel and this unifying agency, which forms a network across the full span of the book-length narrative, is one of the most vital features of Egan’s novel. Despite the chapters’ generic resemblances to the short story, the reader of *Goon Squad* apprehends the book in its entirety: the reader understands that the character of Bennie was *like this* at one stage in the novel, and then *like that* at another time in life, as described in a later chapter. Readers capture the arc pronounced by the network between those chapters that dramatise Bennie’s life at various stages. In narrative theory we ought to extend our explanation for this important narrative effect, and here we describe it as the function of the arranger.

In chapter six, which is narrated in homodiegesis, the near-destitute character of Scotty makes an unannounced visit to the office of a former friend, Bennie, now a music producer. When receiving this guest, Bennie sits behind his desk in a pose that “appears to be very relaxed but is actually very tense”<sup>85</sup>. After a difficult conversation, he then bundles Scotty out of his office, giving him a business card, saying “don’t be a stranger”, and “if you have any music you’d like me to hear, send it on”<sup>86</sup>. Scotty, who no longer makes music, recognises the offer as being

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<sup>83</sup> Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 161.

<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Culler, “Omniscience”, *Narrative* 12, (2004): 30

<sup>85</sup> Jennifer Egan, *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, (New York: Random House, 2010), 99.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

disingenuous, and on the street he gives the card to a stranger, a young musician, who might succeed where he had failed. The chapter ends. There is no mention of Scotty in the following chapter. But his story does not end there. The focal character in the final chapter is a man named Alex, who is a minor figure in the first chapter and has no role in the intervening sections of the book. Through his point of view we meet Bennie and Scotty, now 20 years older, and learn that the latter has indeed become a popular musician, although he believes this success has arrived too late in life. Why are these two episodes set together in the same text if not to create some effect (pathos, surprise at the reversal of fortune)? Neither of the narrators of chapter six and chapter 13 can be aware of the other's act of narration. When the reader thinks of Scotty's trajectory, delivered by different narrators, we are connecting parts of a network: we are tracing over the arrangement. Elsewhere in that final chapter, Alex sees someone who he thinks might be Sasha, the focal character in first chapter, whom he hasn't seen in many years. Alex wonders what happened to Sasha—the reader knows the answer, which has been delivered to us in the penultimate chapter. The source of this conjunction, this dramatic irony, is the arranger, who sets off implications between chapters as well as producing larger narrative surprises (such as Scotty's reversal of fortune). *Goon Squad* is a book that dramatises how its characters change over a period of decades: it achieves this crucial dramatic effect only through the presence of an arranger.

When we see, in the final lines of *Goon Squad*, an unnamed young woman enter her apartment in New York, we may recall its antecedent in Sasha's scenes in the first chapter. This final mirror scene suggests the variety of human stories the arranger and narrators might follow, of which Sasha's is but one. The end of the novel is in communication with the beginning. Another sly strategy of arrangement concerns the title of chapter seven: "A to B", which is focalised through Stephanie, Bennie's wife. In the previous chapter, titled "Xs and Os", a desperate Scotty asks Bennie what happened "between A and B", and by this he means to ask his old friend how they've had such different fortunes, which invites Bennie's assertion that, between the pair of them, he has worked harder. The following chapter, "A to B", is set a few years later and tells the story of how Bennie's marriage begins to end; how his own fortunes change for the worse. The arranger knows the previous chapter and has been present all along.

There are other incursions of the arranger in *Goon Squad*, and these are characterised by their diversity, since the arranger does not stick to a formula of arrangement: a complex network is constructed between chapters, and it consists of narrative surprises, mirror scenes, the elaboration of earlier instances of prolepsis and analepsis, and even the repeating of phrases and motifs—the kind of games we associate with *Ulysses*. The concept of an arranger is useful enough to be revived for the analysis of contemporary centrifugal novels. We recognise its work in the connection of storylines, in the insistence of theme, in all the coherence of what exists within the frame of a multi-narrator novel. Here we have examined the variety of narrative modes in Egan's novel and described the agency that binds them. The cumulative force of the novel, that is, all the conjunctions between the chapters, is so prominent we ought to name and continue to theorise the textual stance behind such an effect. *Goon Squad* is at once a novel, from the perspective of the arranger, and a collection of stories told by its narrators.

## Chapter Four

### Endnotes Without End: The Arrangement of *Infinite Jest*

There comes a point towards the end of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, and this point is different for every reader, when you recognise that the novel will not end in a conventional sense. The principal strands of narrative remain discrete and their cast of characters are so large that only a sudden convergence and an abrupt conclusion could offer a normal resolution. Instead, the final chapter ends with an account of a drug-related crisis for Don Gately, a recovering addict whose life has been punctuated by similar crises. Just as *Infinite Jest* denies plot closure, the complex interconnections between its threads of narrative resist easy or full description. The author described his own novel as "a pane of glass that had been dropped off the twentieth story of a building", and piecing together these shards, for the purpose of uniting plot, theme, and chronology, can be a difficult task.<sup>87</sup> Some critics have focused on the novel's key themes, such as addiction, technology, art vs entertainment, and the contingency of the self on the other. Other critics, such as Stephen J Burn, who concedes the tangled narrative lines of *Infinite Jest* "elude total mapping", nevertheless provide the reader with a guide to the formal properties of Wallace's novel.<sup>88</sup> This chapter belongs to the latter group of studies, and it exemplifies the set of claims I have already made about the arranger.

*Infinite Jest* can be reduced to three main plot strands: one involving the Enfield Tennis academy; one about the Ennet House recovery centre (which is not introduced until 200 pages have passed); and what might be termed the geo-political strand, which follows the trajectory of the lethal film that lends the book its title. In this chapter I will limit myself to the description of a number of significant junctions in the network that fuse together the three strands. The point of view shifts from chapter to chapter, and the network of narrators and narrating positions operates as a

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<sup>87</sup> David Foster Wallace as quoted by Mark Caro, *Chicago Tribune*, Tempo, (1996): February 23.

<sup>88</sup> Here Burn cites Jorge Luis Borges's parable of map-making, "Of Exactitude in Science", and states "a sufficiently detailed of (*Infinite Jest*) would probably be even larger than the intimidating 1079-page terrain that already makes up the work." Stephen J Burn, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide*, (New York: Continuum Press, 2012), 34.

sequence of conjunctions between episodes. This network can be viewed as the sum of *Infinite Jest*'s narrative process. As I have argued in the previous chapter, such networks are an essential feature in centrifugal novels. This chapter continues to argue for an extension of the arranger concept: in centrifugal novels, the arranger is the binding agent between the various narrators.

## Other Fictions

Given the shortness of Wallace's life (1962–2008), it is somewhat crude to view his body of work in terms of early, middle, and late periods. Nevertheless, his fiction can be sorted into three pairs of books, each of which comprises one novel and one collection of stories. By and large, the components of these pairs are published close together: two years separate *The Broom of the System* (1987) and the collection *Girl with Curious Hair* (1989); three years pass between *Infinite Jest* (1996) and *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men* (1999); while his final collection of short fiction, *Oblivion* (2004), is followed by *The Pale King* (2011), which was published posthumously. Without redirecting this chapter into a book-by-book overview of Wallace's career, I would like to briefly discuss a few of his works that share certain formal properties with *Infinite Jest*, including the arranger.

The influence of Wallace's precursors is naturally more pronounced in the early novels. The premise of *The Broom of the System*, in which Lenore Stonecipher Beadsman Jr. searches for her missing grandmother, owes a debt to Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49*. Like *Finnegans Wake* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, among other novels, *Broom* ends in midsentence, announcing Wallace's career-long tendency to frustrate narrative closure (*Infinite Jest* also concludes abruptly, yet it specifies a certain continuation of events outside the frame of the book). David Hering argues that the collection *Curious Hair* can be read as "Wallace's parroting of the register of several preceding and contemporary writers... Bret Easton Ellis ('Girl with Curious Hair'), Robert Coover ('Lyndon'), William Gass ('John Billy'), Philip Roth ('Say Never') and finally John Barth ('Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way')." <sup>89</sup> In one of the first book-length studies of Wallace, Marshall Boswell describes the opening

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<sup>89</sup> David Hering, *David Foster Wallace: Fiction and Form*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 21.

story, “Little Expressionless Animals”, as an “incisive parody of the minimalist style of the 1980s—with its short declarative sentences and its air of cold objectivity”.<sup>90</sup>

Turning to the subject of macro-structure, a key concern of this study, the story “Expressionless Animals”, whatever its relation to minimalist syntax, is maximalist in its approach to narrative time, given that Wallace’s short fiction typically follows a classical concentration of time and place. The story begins in the 1970s and then moves to the 1980s, with most of the action occurring in 1985-1988, during which time the protagonist Julie Smith appears in a 700-episode sweep of the television game show *Jeopardy*. Newspaper headlines and excerpts from news stories appear in the text, if infrequently, as do indecipherable and obscure diagrams/jottings that represent Julie’s interiority. The diagrams, while they work to insert Julie’s consciousness into the text, remain esoteric and communicate obliquely with the reader—at once they reveal her mind and preserve her privacy—yet they serve another purpose by signalling shifts of setting and temporality, much as the annular shapes do in *Infinite Jest*. The variable focalisation within heterodiegetic narration in “Little Expressionless Animals” will feature prominently in *Infinite Jest* (later in this chapter we discuss how that novel’s various forms of narration are connected by an arranging function).

The obvious starting point when offering a gloss of *The Pale King* is to acknowledge that the novel was unfinished when Wallace died, and the state in which he left the manuscript meant it had no clear order of events. The novel was assembled by his editor, Michael Pietsch, who “followed internal clues from the chapters themselves and from David’s notes.”<sup>91</sup> Wallace’s final novel is a collection of loosely associated narrative strands, set in the 1980s, and for the most part concerned with employees at an Internal Revenue Service office in Peoria, Illinois. Instead of a protagonist, Hayes-Brady sees the locus of *The Pale King* as “a place or a period of time and a collection of individual stories that orbit that silent center.”<sup>92</sup> The milieu of the IRS of the 1980s provides Wallace with the opportunity to dramatise the rise of corporate language and structures in government. The narrator describes, in a

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<sup>90</sup> Marshall Boswell, *Understanding David Foster Wallace*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 70.

<sup>91</sup> From Michael Pietsch’s “Editor’s Note”, in David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King*, (New York: Little Brown, 2011), vii.

<sup>92</sup> Clare Hayes-Brady, *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, Hayes-Brady), 29.

footnote, the IRS's embrace of a corporate model as "like watching an enormous machine come to consciousness".<sup>93</sup> In *The Pale King*, Wallace again pays close attention to the psychology of his characters, in particular how they grapple with boredom and disappointment. Like *Infinite Jest*, the novel is centrifugal: some of the chapter narrators are heterodiegetic, while in other chapters we encounter a homodiegetic voice. A character and (occasional) narrator by the name of David Foster Wallace introduces himself with an assurance to the reader that he is "not some abstract narrating persona".<sup>94</sup> Despite these declarations, he cannot be the real Wallace: the details of his life do not match. And it isn't the first time a Wallace-character appears in his fiction: perhaps the most well known of such author doubles is found in the story "Good Old Neon" from *Oblivion*. Hering argues, "none of these personae (the Wallaces) should be taken as exactly commensurate with the author himself".<sup>95</sup> The falsification of the author figure reasserts the novel as fiction, even as the Wallace narrator begins a chapter thus, "Author here. Meaning the real author, the living human holding the pencil", and serves to further distance the real author, to situate him outside of the text.<sup>96</sup> There is no real Wallace in the fiction, and every appearance of his doppelganger emphasises that fact.

### **The Arranger of Infinite Jest**

My analysis of the arranger function begins with a brief description of the novel's structural components. The beginnings of *Infinite Jest*'s 28 chapters are all marked with a shadowed circle in the centre of the page. These circles are likely annular shapes and call to mind the sprocket holes that divide the sections of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity Rainbow*. Wallace's annular shapes might be construed as the kind we find on pads of paper, and like the film perforations, the rings may represent the physical features by which images and parts of a narrative can be assembled according to any order. Then there are subsections within each chapter: in total, across the novel's 1079 pages, there are 192 subsections, including those chapters

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<sup>93</sup> Wallace, David Foster, *The Pale King*, 2011, Little Brown, New York, p.80n

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.66

<sup>95</sup> Hering David, 2016, *David Foster Wallace: Fiction and Form*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York, p.38

<sup>96</sup> Wallace, David Foster, *The Pale King*, 2011, Little Brown, New York, p.66



comprising only one subsection.<sup>97</sup> The final part of the novel is “Notes and Errata”, which runs to almost 100 pages. Like the vast majority of chapters and sections in the novel proper, the endnotes are narrated, as such, in the third person, which I will nominate as heterodiegetic narration. There are also several homodiegetic narrators in the novel, and these include: Hal Incandenza, the most frequent homodiegetic narrator; Clenette (whose last name is never given); yrstruly (real name never given); and James Incandenza. With each transition between narrators, centrifugal fictions present new possibilities to advance the narrative or elaborate on thematic material; a shift in narratorial mode also provides the tools to define more sharply the distinctions between different consciousnesses.

The action in *Infinite Jest* ranges across five decades, and includes a period in which the years are subsidised by brands. Stephen J Burn has established that subsidised time in North America begins in 2002.<sup>98</sup> The earliest narrated event occurs in 1960 and the final point is the Year of Glad, which would otherwise be known as 2010, and which is the temporal setting of the first chapter. The novel begins at the latest date in the text, and from the second chapter we move backwards in time. Crucially, there is a year missing from the novel: the final chapter is set in November 2009 (in normal time), and the first in November 2010. To ask, *what happens at the end of Infinite Jest?* is to enquire into the events of these 12 months and, it turns out, quite a lot happens.

The narration throughout moves between narrators and third person narrating positions, finally handing over storytelling duties, in some sense, to the reader. Perhaps the chief characteristic of the novel is how it interrupts or forecloses scenes of action before these reach a dramatic climax. This narrative strategy speaks to two related themes in the book: the desire for entertainment (or conventional narrative); and the characters’ need for drug intoxication, for an artificial climax. Shutting down the novel before its most dramatic point, and before the main Ennet House and Enfield academy storylines fully converge, is wholly of a piece with this dramatic task. Having come to the end of the novel, the reader must go on to make a substantial contribution towards the narrative process: the novel has given us the story we need in

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<sup>97</sup> Greg Carlisle, in his study *Elegant Complexity*, divides the novel into six units of roughly 180 pages each.

<sup>98</sup> Stephen J Burn, *A Reader’s Guide to Infinite Jest*, (New York: Continuum Books, 2012), 52.

order to create the story that is missing. Wallace's novel, Hayes-Brady argues, "positions entertainment (passive, unidirectional, fundamentally absent) in opposition to communication (active, transactional, grounded in but transcending absence)".<sup>99</sup> *Infinite Jest* involves the reader, perhaps arduously, in the task of creating narrative: in order to complete the narrative we are obliged to participate in the kind of communication that Hayes-Brady describes.

Long before the novel ends, the reader may already be attuned to subtle connections between the Ennet/Enfield plots. Burn states "*Infinite Jest*'s three narratives are designed to suggestively interact, illustrating how individual action effects and is shaped by a larger community."<sup>100</sup> Among all such suggestive interactions in the novel, Gately's recovery from drug dependence and Hal's simultaneous route into dependence might be among the most thematically important, but for now, however, I want to focus on a more direct interaction between Gately and Hal—a reference in chapter one to a night in which they exhume James Incandenza's body. This crucial scene is never fully dramatised in the novel, and takes place several months after the final chapter.

In order to understand what occurs after the novel's conclusion, readers are obliged to recall certain passages in chapter one: it's likely that piecing together the missing parts of the narrative entirely depends on a second reading of the opening 17 pages. In that first chapter, during an interview for a university scholarship, Hal Incandenza's speech and thoughts are rendered coherently in homodiegetic narration. Those listening to him, however, perceive only noises so disturbing they restrain Hal, assuming he is having some kind of fit. In the middle of a cascading series of memories and observations, Hal tells us:

I think of John N. R. Wayne, who would have won this year's Whataburger, standing watch in a mask as Donald Gately and I dig up my father's head. There's very little doubt that Wayne would have won.<sup>101</sup>

John "No Relation" Wayne is an Enfield Academy classmate of Hal's, and the Whataburger is a tennis tournament, but of primary interest here is the mention of

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<sup>99</sup> Clare Hayes-Brady, *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, Hayes-Brady), 3.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*, (New York: Little Brown, 1996), 17.

Gately, the chief protagonist of the Ennet House storyline. Gately and Hal don't interact in any of the chapters that follow, and the scene in which they exhume the body of Hal's father takes place outside the frame of the book. After the first chapter, then, the reader is left asking: Who is Donald Gately? Then: Why are they digging up a body? The first question will be answered relatively soon in the Ennet House chapters, but the other question is never clearly resolved in the novel, which has led to numerous theories by scholars and readers about what happens at the end of the *Infinite Jest*. I will not add to those theories, but it is clear that the first chapter—arguably more than any other chapter—offers several vital clues that support any coherent interpretation. Hal's first instance of narration connects all three plot strands, but this conjunction is apparent only after deducing the missing parts of the novel.

Burn notes that resolving *Infinite Jest's* interrelated lines of cause and effect hinges entirely on the missing 12 months between November YDAU (2009) and November YD (2010): “Because it is the chronologically most advanced section the novel's opening is clearly critical to unravelling this mystery, but it offers suggestive hints, rather than solutions to the novel's puzzle.”<sup>102</sup> This intersection between chapter one and the three major plot strands—noting still all the ambiguity in the novel, its lack of resolution—is evidence of the arranger function. The most frequent narrator of *Infinite Jest* is a conventional heterodiegetic narrator: he (to give it the author's gender) is absent from the story that he tells and, given this omniscient quality, we can assume the heterodiegetic narrator of *Infinite Jest* must possess full knowledge, too, of the missing parts of the novel, including the race for the master copy of “Infinite Jest” and the continental emergency that leads to the collapse of the Organization of North American Nations and the end of subsidised time, among much else that *Infinite Jest* leaves unnarrated. For his part, Hal, along with other homodiegetic narrators, cannot know what the heterodiegetic narrator knows: how do these narrators, then, all work in concert? (Chapter one of *Infinite Jest* is the most important intersection between the narrators, but there are other crossings.) As I have argued, narratology needs a way to describe such collaboration between narrators, and this study invokes the arranger function. The arranger offers an explanation as to how a homodiegetic narrator can finish a story begun by a heterodiegetic kind, or vice versa.

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<sup>102</sup> Stephen J Burn, *A Reader's Guide to Infinite Jest*, (New York: Continuum Books, 2012), 38.

The arranger is not a narrator, but it (to render the figure/function genderless) influences the narrative of *Infinite Jest* by setting one narrator next to another, by arranging for each discrete narrator to collaborate in the convergence of multiple narrative strands. David Hayman claims “the arranger controls the suppression of information and action”, and that, “a given chapter will invariably be related to several others by subject matter, complexity, imagery and even length,” and among these relations we might find “a figure or presence that can be identified neither with the author nor with his narrators, but that exercises an increasing degree of overt control over increasingly challenging materials.”<sup>103</sup> The functions described above by Hayman can be found in the arranger of *Infinite Jest*. With perfect memory of the narrative, but without narrating functions, the arranger places Hal’s crucial chapter at the start of the text, where it functions as the first node in the network of the novel: from the outset we know that Hal and Gately’s stories will somehow converge, even when, as we near the novel’s end, it becomes apparent this convergence occurs outside the frame of the novel proper. All collaboration between narrators in a centrifugal novel is evidence of the arranger.

Having established the arranger’s interest in macro-structure, it is worth enquiring into the limits of its function: does the arranger influence the content of narration? Hayman argues, “just about any intrusive or arbitrary phenomenon should be attributed to the arranging persona.”<sup>104</sup> To extrapolate from this claim, we might suggest that the arranger, at certain points, guides the act of narration, and prods Hal, for example, to offer the reader his crucial memories of Gately and Wayne in the first chapter of *Infinite Jest*. This notion of the guiding hand is another extension of the arranger’s capacity, but it fits with its functions and the purpose of uniting centrifugal novels: at the macro-level, the arranging function moves the narrators into place; at the chapter level, it influences occasional instances of narration, such as the offering of a detail that much later proves crucial. And *as* arranger, it refrains from taking control of the narration entirely, leaving the narrator to tell his story, for the most part.

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<sup>103</sup> David Hayman, *Ulysses: Mechanics of Meaning*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 84.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

## The Notes and Errata

*Infinite Jest* is set in the near future, or the near future from the point of its publication in 1996. Johnny Gentle, a popular singer, is elected President and signs treaties with Mexico and Canada that coerce them into becoming partners in the Organisation of North American Nations. ONAN, however, faces a rebellion from a separatist group that has unleashed on American citizens the lethal film “Infinite Jest”. Created by James Incandenza (Hal’s father), “Infinite Jest” is so entertaining that once someone has seen it, everything else in life ceases to matter.

Tom LeClair, in an early essay on *Infinite Jest*, views the film “Infinite Jest” as destructive and “repetitive and single-voiced, seductive”, while the novel “is more like an AA meeting, multifarious and multifocal”<sup>105</sup> (*Infinite Jest* was originally titled “A Failed Entertainment”). If part of the novel’s project is to explore the fascination with entertainment and offer alternatives to it, what then of the text’s own status as a work of literary art, and one that might still possess the possibility to delight? *Infinite Jest*’s length, and its unusual narrative structure, which together frustrate many of the conventional pleasures of reading narrative fiction, both seem to establish the text as anti-entertainment. The arranger loads a great deal of information into the start of the novel, long before we understand its importance. Then, as some frustrated readers cite, there is the frequent action of flipping to the endnotes. I now briefly discuss the role of the endnotes, describing how and to what effect the arranger moves between the endnotes and the different narrators of the novel proper.

On occasion the endnotes are used for narrative postponement. Entire passages are diverted from the main text to the notes, such as the scene depicting Michael Pemulis’s expulsion, which is shunted to note 332.<sup>106</sup> In this case the endnote number in the main text does not appear next to any word or sentence but is suspended in the white space between paragraphs, as if the passage had been deleted during the revision process. Some of the notes offer concise and essential information: we learn from a short note that subsidised time ends in the Year of Glad, from which the readers can deduce that the ONAN federation collapses just outside the frame of the novel. Critics have commented on the redundancy of many endnotes, which offer the

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<sup>105</sup> Tom LeClair, “The prodigious fiction of Richard Powers, William Vollmann, and David Foster Wallace”, *Critique* 38, (1996): 34.

<sup>106</sup> David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*, (New York: Little Brown, 1996), 1073-1076.

reader either very little information, or too much. David Letzler argues that these experiences of being over- and under-whelmed by textual data may appear to be opposed, but they are alike in the way they “terminate focused attention”.<sup>107</sup> He gives a name to the redundant endnotes: “cruft”. The critic Marshall Boswell has acknowledged the problems with *Infinite Jest*’s notes:

Readers of the book quickly learn that the notes can provide useless information, essential information, extra but nonessential narrative, or even, at times, narrative that is more important to the ongoing novel than the passage to which the note is attached. Readers can, and even must, devise some way to read through the book that allows them to keep their focus on the story while also mining the notes for all their information, comedy, and readerly pleasure.<sup>108</sup>

While this study offers some support for Boswell and Letzler’s views, the “Notes and Errata” remain of vital interest because within them we find further workings of the arranger, at least as it operates within Wallace’s novel. First, who is the narrator of the endnotes? Stylistically, the endnote narrator strongly resembles the heterodiegetic narrator we encounter in the novel proper. A clause from n382, for example, which describes Hal’s experiences playing tennis with a classmate, “...he always gets the creepy feeling that Wayne has control out there not just of his voluntary CNS but also his heartrate and blood pressure...” is very similar to the voice we associate with the heterodiegetic sections of the ongoing novel, particularly in the way it mixes colloquialisms (“creepy”) with medical handbook-style terms such as “voluntary CNS”.<sup>109</sup>

If we accept the narrator of the endnotes as being heterodiegetic, any interaction between “Notes and Errata” and the first-person, homodiegetic sections of the book demonstrate two different narrators in concert with each other. Whenever such a nexus occurs in a novel, when narrators are brought into relation, or each provides parts to form a network, we find the arranger. Among the chapters narrated by Hal, there are nine endnotes. Most of these endnotes briefly elaborate on a reference he makes, for example, to a drug. In the case of n382, the reader is provided

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<sup>107</sup> David Letzler, “Encyclopedic Novels and the Cruft of Fiction: *Infinite Jest*’s Endnotes”, *Studies in the Novel* 44, (2012): 304-324.

<sup>108</sup> Marshall Boswell, *Understanding David Foster Wallace*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 120.

<sup>109</sup> David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*, (New York: Little Brown, 1996), 1079.

with an anecdote about Hal's relationship with Wayne: the reader flips forward from a homodiegetic narrator to a heterodiegetic narrator who refers to the first-person narrator as "Hal". Without the arranger, we have no way to connect the endnotes and the homodiegetic narrators. The heterodiegetic narrator cannot be credited with this link because such a view sets up a hierarchy in which heterodiegetic narrators review all material in the novel supplied by homodiegetic narrators, and any such hierarchy would run counter to the model of the centrifugal text, which, according to Richardson, "continue(s) to proliferate an irreducible galaxy of different, heterogeneous or antithetical, perspectives"<sup>110</sup> and "produces ever more possibilities of narration, and juxtaposes storytelling from first person, third person, and still other perspectives, as additional viewpoints and positionalities are included in the act of narration."<sup>111</sup> In a centrifugal text, narrators are not supervising their adjacent counterparts. Rather, the arranger operates above them.

The experience of reading a centrifugal novel is one of variation and instability: the various narrators, the multiple sets of characters who may or may not know each other; the multiple settings and disparate time frames: this variation helps hold the reader's attention. Such works of fictions are indeed better captured by the model of the spinning centrifuge, rather than a hierarchy in which heterodiegetic narrators oversee the work of their homodiegetic colleagues. Thus, all that is missing from a full account of the centrifugal novel is the arranger, whose functions I have detailed here in both general terms and in the orchestration of *Infinite Jest*.

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<sup>110</sup> Richardson, Brian, *Unnatural Voices*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 62.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

## Chapter Five

### Lucky's: reflections on a novel

My final chapter is, by and large, concerned with the formal properties of “Lucky’s”, especially the use of variable focalisation. With that said, I will relax the conceptual framework: the following discussion includes subject matter as various as character, temporality, authorial intention, and the novel’s system of cause and effect. Creative doctorates invite exegetical discourses around intention and subject matter, and I’ve allowed for this extra latitude in order to best discuss “Lucky’s”, to better construct a bridge between the creative work and the literary scholarship in previous chapters. So far, the trajectory of the theoretical component is as follows: in the first chapter I discuss the shift from homodiegetic to heterodiegetic narration in *American Pastoral*; in the second chapter I discuss and develop the arranger concept; and in the third and fourth chapters I describe the centrifugal systems of narration in *A Visit from the Goon Squad* and *Infinite Jest*. All along the focus has been on narratorial transitions within a novel—changes of narrator in particular.

The plot of “Lucky’s” latches onto a number of different milieus, but the most important setting is what might be termed the Greek-Australian cafe. The cafe business, a once-removed relation of the Greek-American diners of New York, was a mixture of Greek, Anglo-Celtic and American influences, and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century such businesses were among the main vehicles for chain migration from Greece to Australia. Until 1890, Greeks were migrating in larger numbers to Australia than to the US, and many of these early migrants came from the islands of Ithaka, Kythera, and Kastellorizo.<sup>112</sup> By 1916, by the time my character Achilles arrived in Sydney, there were 600 shops run by Greek migrants in Australia, and 14 of these were cafes.<sup>113</sup> In the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century cafes, sandwiches and steak and mixed grills were the specialities, and hot drinks were a minor item, unlike in the small, urban cafes of today.

In “Lucky’s” we see the cafe institution, once ubiquitous on high streets and now near extinct, in a number of contexts: first through the Cafe Achillion, and later

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<sup>112</sup> Anastasios Myrodis Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 33.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 37.



through the Lucky's franchise, which reproduces the menu and art deco style of the Achillion. There was never a large franchise of Greek-owned cafes in Australia, although there were several families running several cafes in different towns, typically under different cafe names (my grandfather, Giorgios Pippas, owned cafes in Brewarrina and Bourke). The idea of a fictional franchise began as an in-joke: the Greek-Australian cafes all tended to look the same and offer similar food. At many other points the novel departs from historically accurate or realistic representation. The long list of mass shootings in Australia, which ends with the 1996 Port Arthur massacre, does not include a mass murder inside a cafe. In terms of the novel's relation to contemporary social realism, the novel might be seen as a form of exaggerated realism, and at times we move towards myth—a signpost in this direction is the name of Lucky's father-in-law, Achilles.

Despite these inventions and inflations, one of my aims in writing "Lucky's" is to reveal what these businesses were like, broadly speaking, and what they offered to Australian culture. The cafe was among the earliest examples of cultural mixing in Australia: the staff was predominately Greek, and in country areas of NSW these businesses were staffed with Indigenous men and women. The customer base, in western and central-western NSW, was predominately Anglo-Celtic and Aboriginal. The cafe was blend of Anglo-Celtic, American, and Greek styles, and "Lucky's" personifies these influences in the figures of Achilles (Greek), Lucky (American), and Emily (English). One of the core subjects of this novel, although it is never addressed in dialogue by my characters, is the making of a polyglot Australian culture. "Lucky's" is a book about the post-war project of multiculturalism; it's a novel about how newness is created.

## **Cause and Effect**

The novel tracks how its characters experience and manage failure and disappointment. My intention is to dramatise these moments in such a way that the proliferation of failures will not feel miserable and result in a deadening effect on the narrative. I didn't want the book to be unremittingly bleak and for failure to be a endpoint in the narrative: the "heat" in the novel, to use an imprecise term that I nevertheless thought about while working on the manuscript, came from what

happened to the character after the setback, how he or she coped with disappointment. One way of looking at “Lucky’s” is to see the novel as ranging through time and capturing, in each chapter and scene, across decades, the most significant failures in the lives of Lucky, Emily, Achilles, Thalia, Asquith and Sophia, and dramatising also their response to failure. Such a system unifies the book in terms of theme, and serves an elementary dramatic purpose: in “Lucky’s”, the characters are always kept wanting for something or someone, always facing some obstacle, or assimilating the loss of some longed-for object or objective. If the characters don’t fail, if they don’t experience disappointment, they will instead become content, and their storyline ends as far as my novel is concerned. Thalia, for example, exits the narrative after she leaves Lucky and finds happiness elsewhere. Decades later, Thalia re-enters the novel when she is ill.

Two key features of “Lucky’s” are its scattered chronology and its system of cause and effect. While the novel is non-chronological, the causal relationship between episodes is necessarily chronological; it could be argued that the order of the novel has to some degree obscured the line of causation. But before discussing both the distribution of the plot and the system of causation, I will here offer a chronological summary of the novel. My intention is to emphasise the causative sequence of events:

(1) Lucky’s failure as a musician inspires him to pose as Benny Goodman (2) on “tour” he meets Asquith and Thalia. Asquith later commits a similar fraud (3) Lucky marries Thalia and goes into business with her family but Thalia’s father, Achilles, becomes increasingly dangerous and must be maneuvered out of the Achillion, the family business (4) Asquith re-enters the picture, after seeing a newspaper article about the Achillion. Asquith has recently been exposed as a fabricator of classical scholarship, and as a result loses his diplomatic job. He locates Lucky and, believing the American should not get away with fraud — just as Asquith could not — he pays a casual criminal to vandalise the Achillion (5) The unnamed thug, who dislikes migrants, burns down the cafe, killing Thalia’s sister, Penelope (6) Asquith, now feeling responsible for Penelope’s death, gives his inheritance to Lucky. Asquith pretends to be much wealthier than he is, and he offers the money with no strings attached (7) Lucky and Thalia use this money to start a restaurant franchise. To staff the franchise they sponsor the immigration of Greeks (8) the business is a success and Lucky enters new social circles and begins several sexual affairs, which

he believes, like the gift from Asquith, can be conducted with no strings attached (9) Thalia discovers these affairs and leaves Lucky. She will remarry, and Lucky will remain in love with Thalia for the rest of his life (10) Asquith returns to England and eventually marries and has a child, but he cannot find happiness. Before ending his own life, he writes to both Thalia and Lucky, finally confessing to the murder of Penelope, and explaining that the gift was an attempt at atonement. He does not confess the crime to his family. To his daughter, Emily, he leaves a painting of a Lucky's restaurant — the purpose of the gift is unclear to Emily, but the subtext is that he believes the franchise and his daughter are good things that came of his life (11) Lucky and Thalia meet and decide to do nothing about Asquith's confession (12) the franchise expands to the point that Lucky finds the business difficult to run. For several reasons he cannot take pride in his success. A pair of investors, who own a newspaper, discover the true origins of Lucky's and offer him a paltry sum for the entire business. If he doesn't sell, they promise to wage a newspaper campaign against the franchise; they describe Asquith's gift as a "blood debt" (13) Lucky sells, but keeps one restaurant for himself (14) by the early 1990s, Lucky is still running a single cafe, and when Thalia dies, he hires her daughter, Sophia. He thinks of Sophia as the child he didn't have.

(15) In 1994 there occurs an event that has no strong link to previous events. A man enters the restaurant, on Lucky's day off, and he shoots the customers and staff, with the exception of Sophia, who hides during the shooting (16) Lucky sells his cafe. He develops a gambling problem as a way of coping with the tragedy. Sophia, too, enters a period of depression (17) The novel moves forward to 2002. Asquith's daughter, Emily, is commissioned to write an essay for *The New Yorker* about the tragic history of the Lucky's franchise. On her wall at home hangs her late father's painting. The story of the franchise is a substitute narrative for her father, about whom she knows little (18) Lucky, now broke, is determined to revive the franchise and one day hand over a successful business to Sophia. But no one will lend him money to start a restaurant. Lucky is chosen as a contestant on *Wheel of Fortune*, where he intends to win the necessary capital (19) Emily interviews Lucky and other important figures in the franchise, many of whom lie to her about the past (20) The editor who commissioned the story, an old friend, confesses his love for Emily, but she rejects him (21) Lucky loses *Wheel of Fortune*, but not before the host interviews him, in sensationalist style, about the shooting in the cafe (22) the day after the gameshow,

Emily and Lucky visit Sophia and her son, Jamie. Lucky takes custody of Jamie's treacherous pet snake (23) The novel moves forward four years. Lucky is terminally ill and occupies the spare room at Sophia's home. Emily has moved to Sydney, where she is employed at a bookstore. At night she works on a book about the shootings at Lucky's cafe. Her *New Yorker* commission was spiked. By now she knows that her father funded the franchise, and she suspects that Asquith was responsible for the death of Lucky's sister-in-law. But she cannot confirm the truth; Lucky holds on to his secret.

If "Lucky's" were ordered in this way, it would be a substantially different book. One of the most important characters, Emily, would not appear until the midpoint. If we begin in 1945 and move constantly forwards in time, readers may think the novel is largely concerned with World War II and its aftermath. By shifting back and forth between 2002 and 1945 in the opening four chapters, however, we encounter another risk: readers may suppose "Lucky's" is a bifurcated novel with dual storylines, when that is not the case either. The present structure of "Lucky's" is intended to give readers an accurate sense, early on, of what kind of book they are reading. Emily and Lucky are the lead characters. Emily is the focal character in chapter one, and Lucky in chapter two. From the outset, both characters are responding energetically to their failures: having lost her marriage and newspaper job, Emily pursues her story, and Lucky plays Benny Goodman, the musician he couldn't be.

By shifting about in time, as "Lucky's" does in its present form, by allowing the past to tumble through the chronologically latest strand of narrative (the 2002 chapters), the novel attempts to set up a question in the reader's mind: how are all these episodes related? What may appear to be subplots are really parts of the line of causation. Full knowledge of causation is delayed, but the intention is that this delay is pleasant for the reader. The changes in setting and time frames, the multiple characters, create a sense of variation that is intended to help keep the reader's attention (further, the novels I've previously discussed in this thesis all bounce around in time.)

Chatman proposes the idea that there are two kinds of narratives: the narrative of resolution, and revealed plots. In the traditional narrative of resolution, "there is a

sense of problem-solving ... a ratiocinative or emotional teleology".<sup>114</sup> The resolution plot poses a question: "What will happen next?" is the most basic of these questions. In the plot of revelation, which tend to be character-oriented, he argues the emphasis is elsewhere, "it is not that events are resolved (happily or tragically), but rather that a state of affairs is revealed."<sup>115</sup> Chatman states a "strong sense of temporal order is more significant in resolved than in revealed plots. Development in the first instance is an unraveling; in the second, a displaying."<sup>116</sup> As examples, Chatman offers the following: "Whether Elizabeth Bennet marries is a crucial matter, but not whether Clarissa Dalloway spends her time shopping or writing letters or daydreaming, since any one of these or other actions would correctly reveal her character and plight."<sup>117</sup>

Given these two alternatives, "Lucky's" bends towards the resolution plot. It becomes a crucial matter whether Emily learns about her birth father's involvement in the franchise, whether she makes something of the *New Yorker* commission, whether Lucky gets the money he needs to start a restaurant, whether Asquith gets away with the Bion fraud, whether Sophia can find a new job. There is, however, a revealed quality to the plot of "Lucky's", though I argue it is most evident in the way the novel treats the primary milieu—that of the Greek-Australian cafe. One of the core subjects of this novel, although it is never addressed in dialogue by my characters, is the making of a polyglot culture by way of the cafe. The two main characters, Lucky and Emily, and many secondary characters, such as Achilles and Thalia, are all in the process of becoming Australian. The process of becoming habituated to a new country, of an ill-defined nationality somehow taking up space in a character's identity—these are the revealed plots underpinning the resolution narratives that propel "Lucky's".

To continue with the subject of order: the novel begins with an example of anachrony, what Genette terms "one of the traditional resources of literary narration".<sup>118</sup> In the first instance, Emily arrives in Sydney and enters her hotel room, after which we move backwards in time, and learn the reasons why she has come to

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<sup>114</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 48.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 36.

Sydney, and why her marriage has ended. Here, anachrony is purposed to wrap up the character in all her unfolding dramas and complications. From there, until the fourth chapter, the novel displays a tendency to shift temporal positions within each chapter, always in analepsis. Where the temporal positions change, I have tended to introduce a new narrative section, and these subsections are numbered (Nabokov uses the same device in many novels). This back and forth (which itself owes much to novels such as *Glory* and *Laughter in the Dark*) then eases in the fourth chapter with a largely chronological telling of Lucky's first and only performance as Benny Goodman. Yet there is a change in focalisation (what Genette might describe as an alteration) in the fourth chapter, when I introduce Thalia, and one analeptic movement, when we find her in conversation with Achilles. In these early chapters, the frequent shifts in time serve two purposes: they set up the characters' back stories, and they signal the novel's relationship to the past of its storyworld: "Lucky's" is acutely concerned with how the past interacts with the characters' present.

### Variable Focalisation

There is one narrator in "Lucky's" and the form of narration, if we insist on its full name, is heterodiegetic variable internal focalisation. Genette describes the focaliser as "the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective".<sup>119</sup> In *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Gerald Prince defines internal focalisation:

When such a position is locatable (in one character or another) and entails conceptual or perceptual restrictions (with what is presented being governed by one character's or another's perspective), the narrative is said to have internal focalisation ... Should what is presented be limited to the characters' external behavior (words and actions but not thoughts or feelings), their appearance, and the setting against which they come to the fore, external focalisation is said to obtain ("The Killers").<sup>120</sup>

Variable focalisation, according to Prince, is a "type of internal focalisation or point of view whereby different focalisers are used in turn to present different situations and

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<sup>119</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 186.

<sup>120</sup> Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 32.

events.”<sup>121</sup> In “Lucky’s”, the dominant focal characters are Emily and Lucky. There are other focalisers: Asquith, for example, and Achilles, and Thalia. The purpose of focalising the 2002 sections through Emily is that we do not have access, from her viewpoint, to the information that Lucky is determined to keep to himself, and in this way we ultimately preserve the mystery around the fact that Asquith was a murderer and the seed money was a form of atonement, and that Lucky was blackmailed out of the franchise. The use of Emily as internal focaliser allows the novel to dramatise one of its secondary themes: the difference between narrative non-fiction and fiction. In fiction we (the writer) have complete access to the fabula, to as much of the storyworld as we wish, whereas in narrative non-fiction the writer begins with an incomplete picture and to a greater extent depends on other people, on what they tell us in interviews, and on what the archive retains for our use. Such constraints are among the main obstacles that Emily faces; at almost every turn people lie to her. Where she recognises or suspects Lucky’s statements to be false, she is still unable to discover what she considers the whole truth, which is available in full only to the reader.

Lucky, who knows the origins of the franchise and guards this truth, is nevertheless unaware of the reason why Asquith fabricated the Bion play. Asquith’s fraud is a fundamental part of the narrative in that it leads him to strongly identify with Lucky, because the latter once posed as an artist, once pretended to be the person he could not become. When Asquith and Lucky’s fortunes diverge, this identification turns to resentment, which turns to revenge. Asquith’s fabrication of the Bion play is born out of a wound he carries from his education. Asquith expects to be transformed at university, to become the successful classical scholar he wants to be. Instead he is injured. He carries this injury into his 20s, and as a remedy he fabricates a work of classical scholarship. While it is not uncommon for people to harbor resentments over their education, the trajectory of Asquith’s emotions risk appearing too obscure, when they are intended only to appear as moderately exaggerated, and of a piece with the exaggerated realism of the novel. In any case, Asquith’s decisions (the arson, the gift, his suicide) have enormous effect on other characters, and in order to clearly dramatise the crucial points of his trajectory it has been necessary to use him as a focal character, first in a chapter about the Ziegler notebook and the Bion of Smyrna

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 101.

fabrication; and later, in part two of “Lucky’s”, in a subsection that describes why and how he expresses his frustrations in an act of violence against Lucky. Another protagonist, Achilles, is a focal character in part two, and again this is done in order to better convey why he behaves as wildly as he does. Achilles’ approach to life is clannish and provincial. He spends most of his life in a city but the place of his birth, the island he carries around with him, is Ithaka, one of the few regions in Europe where dueling and vendetta killings were still common well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>122</sup> Achilles is motivated by what he believes are offences to his honour. His violent actions propel the second part of the novel, and one of the purposes of using Achilles as an occasional focaliser is to communicate how some of his seemingly unthinking and impulsive behavior is in fact deep-rooted and essential to his character and heritage. “Lucky’s” tries to find a balance in its use of focal characters: the novel’s two protagonist-heroes (Emily and Lucky) and its two antagonist-villains (Achilles and Asquith) are all focalisers at one point or another. The balance, in the number of pages, falls in favour of the protagonists.

Genette describes three types of focalisation: zero, external, and internal. In my discussion of “Lucky’s”, I am mainly concerned with internal focalisation, although the novel does not strictly employ this form of focalisation. In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette states that internal focalisation is “rarely applied in a totally rigorous way”.<sup>123</sup> Even if perfect internal focalisation were possible in heterodiegetic discourse, it may well be an undesirable narrative mode:

... the very principle of this narrative mode implies in all strictness that the focal character never be described or even referred to from the outside, and that his thoughts or perceptions never be analysed objectively by the narrator.<sup>124</sup>

As an example of this discontinuity, Genette cites two passages from *Charterhouse of Parma*, one in which we see the scene from Fabrizio del Dongo’s eyes, and one in which we witness him, almost from above, as he mounts a horse. The opening

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<sup>122</sup> For an excellent overview of ritual violence in Ithaka and the Ionian islands, see Thomas W Gallant’s article, “Honor, Masculinity and Ritual Knife-fighting in Nineteenth Century Greece”, *The American Historical Review* 105, (2000): 359-382.

<sup>123</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 192.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*



paragraph of “Lucky’s” is internally focalised, and we view the streets of Sydney through Emily’s eyes, we see the light the way she perceives it, and the far-off bushfire smoke, but after she checks into her hotel we then slip from her point of view. The narrator relates a brief history of her marriage. Generally, whenever analepsis occurs, the focalisation moves closer to the zero position. Thus, “Lucky’s” is a novel told in variable focalisation, and large share of this focalisation is internal. But the focalisation is subject to frequent shifts, which Genette calls alterations in mood: like turns of a zoom ring, we move in and out of the focaliser’s perspective. Perhaps the clearest example of an alteration is the beginning of part two, titled “The Cafe Achillion”, in which the first section introduces the character of Achilles as a bogeyman figure for children. Here the narration is in zero focalisation. In the second section we find him on a boat leaving Greece, and we’re told of a conversation between his parents, but by the middle of that second section, which describes his growing bitterness towards Nectarios, we have moved to internal focalisation.

The different narrative modes, the variable narrators, are all designed to navigate a broad span of time (more than 60 years), and to manage a large cast. One way of managing and differentiating a large cast—and *Goon Squad* is a good model in this respect—is to give the reader a strong sense of each character’s interior life. One of the novel genre’s great strengths is its ability to grant the reader access to a character’s thoughts, and to what a character sees in the scene. Other narrative art forms and genres of writing may also be preoccupied with character psychology: feature film, for example, shows us character in action; the essay genre, especially in its Montaignian leaps of association, presents us with the author’s mind in action. But the novel can offer readers the psychology of a panoply of characters, as well as dramatising their actions, as well as showing us how their psychological processes change over time. Compared with a narrative art form such as feature film, the novel is arguably more adept at covering a large span of story time. The average discourse time of a novel might be 12 hours, while the average running time of a film might be 90 minutes. The relation between story time and discourse time naturally allows for one to broaden in relation to the other (of course there are exceptions, such as *Ulysses*, again), which is to say, in general, when we compare film and the novel, the long discourse time of the novel means that the form is more likely to present us with longer story times. (It would require another study to finally prove this claim that novels, in general, tend to cover longer narrative times than film). In any case, this

chapter has established two crucial features of “Lucky’s”, both of which are common characteristics of the novel genre, and both explain why I chose to write a novel and not a piece of writing in another genre: the novel allows for a large cast of characters and a far-reaching story time. These features of “Lucky’s” have determined the mood of the narration, which needs the capacity to move in and give the reader a sense of the characters’ thoughts, and then to move out, to a perspective close to zero focalisation, to analyse the actions of these characters, to provide detail of their lives, and then, in some instances, to summarise later events, eventually landing the reader in a scene some weeks or months or years hence. In moving through so much narrative time, “Lucky’s” has tried to show how the characters have changed over the course of decades. The reader sees what has been important in the characters’ lives; we see how they carry their wounds and victories.

Since Genette, scholars have sought to revise focalisation theory. Mieke Bal offers the most significant of these revisions: she argues that there we ought to see focalisation as requiring both a focaliser (an extradiegetic narrator or character) and an object of focalisation (the character’s actions or thoughts). Current focalisation theory has sought to understand exactly what kind of phenomena can be considered focalisation. Uri Margolin states:

Focalisation in narrative involves the textual representation of specific (pre)existing sensory elements of the text’s storyworld as perceived and registered (recorded, represented, encoded, modeled and stored) by some mind or recording device which is a member of this world.<sup>125</sup>

Margolin goes on to claim: “All focalisation is a mental activity, but not all mental activity is focalisation.”<sup>126</sup> By this Margolin means that the reporting of a character’s thoughts by the narrator does not *always* mean that character is a focaliser. It is a matter of gradation: the narration must dive to a sufficient depth of the character’s point of view in order for that character to qualify as a focaliser. My use of the term focalisation has been consistent with how Margolin and Genette employ the concept. One of the benefits of using a sliding scale of focalisation (particularly given my novel’s preoccupation with the act of storytelling) is that we can establish an

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<sup>125</sup> Uri Margolin, “Focalization: Where Do We Go from Here?” in *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization. Modeling Mediation in Narrative*, ed P. Hühn, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009) 42.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

objective, heterodiegetic narrative voice, and trust that he knows everything about the storyworld, and we can balance this voice and its truths with the subjective experience of its characters.

### **The Arranger**

According to my schema, there is no place for an arranger in a novel told entirely in heterodiegetic variable focalisation. Any inclusion of the arranger in the narratological framework of “Lucky’s” is problematic because, in the novel, all of the arranging functions are carried out by a single narrator, who is in control of all narrating functions, macro and micro, all the time. The focalisation may change, but narrator does not. The arranger is only present when there is more than one narrator, and when the narrators are not essentially the same figure, as they are in *American Pastoral*. There is no arranger present, for example, in *American Pastoral*: Zuckerman both narrates and orders his novel. (The first chapter didn’t discuss this question, because the study hadn’t yet introduced the arranger concept.) The arranger is not present in any kind of arrangement or ordering of narrative. Where one narrator is present throughout a text, all credit for the novel’s order should be given to that figure. In a short story or novel of pure dialogue, as discussed in chapter two, we might credit Rimmon-Kenan’s “higher narratorial authority” with the arrangement. The purpose of my conceptualisation of the arranger is to give a name to a function that we already perceive when we find various narrators interacting with each other, all conspiring to tell a story—whether in *Ulysses*, in *A Visit From The Goon Squad*, or *Infinite Jest*. The enhanced version of the arranger, as presented in this study, offer a precise description of a narrative strategy in which Narrator A begins a story that Narrator B will finish. Hayman downplayed the arranging function. Other scholars have sought to bundle the arranger in with the implied author function. But the arranger has a particular purpose that does not align well with other author functions as defined in narratology. The arranger, it is hoped, fills a gap in the narratological schema of centrifugal novels.

By allowing for a broad discussion, and not strictly a formalist approach, this chapter draws together some of the main themes of both “Lucky’s” and the theoretical component of my doctoral thesis. Again, my preoccupation is with the chemistry

between the part and the whole of literary texts. The fractured chronology of “Lucky’s” has been designed to close the space between the 60-odd years of time covered, and offers a narrative that from the outset makes clear where the novel’s main interests reside (that is, in both Emily and Lucky’s lives). The result is a novel that is less like a saga, and more like the networks of scattered plot that I’ve studied in previous chapters. “Lucky’s” attempts to render the individual experience of its main characters over long periods of time, especially their systems of decision-making—in situ, in action, and as they see their decisions in retrospect—and the systems of focalisation and the order of narrative time have been designed with these goals in mind. “Lucky’s” is also a novel that touches on how the zeitgeist affects our perception. It may be immediately apparent which contents of the novel address the present-day zeitgeist: mass shooting plays a role in the plot, as does the blurring of personal and professional relationships in the media. But the real locus of the novel addresses the past, the lost world of the Greek-Australian cafe. The obsolescence of the cafe corresponds with the movement, over generations, of the Greek immigrant working class into the middle class. I hope the story of Lucky’s will take its place alongside the other books written about the island Greeks who worked in the long-disappeared cafes and milk bars and fish-and-chip shops.

## Conclusion

### **Changing voices: a study of narration and arrangement**

This study has focused on significant variations that occur in the narration of novels: in the case of *American Pastoral*, I examined the transition from one narrating mode to another; next, the central part of my thesis theorised the orchestration of multiple narrators by an arranger; finally, I explored the shifting of focalisation throughout my novel. Throughout I have been preoccupied with the interplay between the parts and the whole of a novel. These parts may be chapters, or another unit of narrative. How does the part relate to the whole, and what does the whole make of the part? The mystery of how the parts are related can become a textual drama in itself, when divergent plot strands withhold the mystery of their connection, when they suggestively interact, and as they finally join: much of this study enquires into the orchestration of novels that work through these very dramas.

Another key concern of this thesis is the relationship between different narrators within the same novel. In *American Pastoral*, the shift in pronominal form reverses the tactic we find in novels such as the *Nonexistent Knight*, *Bliss*, and *Atonement*, all of which end with a homodiegetic figure who declares themselves the narrator, and whose identity might be a surprise. All along, in *American Pastoral*, we know that Zuckerman is the narrator: at the same time he claims to offer the reader a “realistic chronicle”, he sidesteps the illusions of realist fiction, with its impossible project of “getting people right”. What we have instead, in the story of the Swede, is an anti-illusionistic fiction, a novel with one foot grounded in realistic codes of representation and the other in metafiction. Zuckerman exposes the space between author and narrator: the heterodiegetic narrator may function as an avatar of Zuckerman, but there is extreme divergence in their knowledge. Zuckerman knows too little about the Swede, but his avatar understands everything. There is only so far we can see into another life: the fiction begins where the facts end.

The space between author and narrator is highly charged and contentious and worthy of the attention it has been given in the field of narratology. The models of narrative transaction and the divisions between homo- and heterodiegesis, and the categories of focalisation, are all foundational to narrative theory, but as some of my

case studies have indicated, these oppositions can be problematised or even eluded by various novels. As diagnostic tools, however, such categories and hierarchies are useful, especially if handled with flexibility and even suspicion. In renovating the concept of the arranger, I have taken care not to apply the function to all forms of narrative ordering, nor do I propose that it exists in every possible centrifugal text. There will always be new texts that defy old conventions of narration. Literature is an ancient art form but it has always found innovative angles of presentation: this is one reason, among others, why the study of narration remains an intriguing field.

Some theorists, including Patrick McGee and Shari and Bernard Benstock, have found ways of describing narration that don't always refer to a human-like narrator. By taking up the arranger, I allow that a human-like, pseudo-natural figure or persona may not be adequate to describe every kind of narration or arrangement. Still, I admit to some attachment to human narrators. Only humanlike figures do speak to us, do tell stories. There are facts and truths about our lives that are best expressed in the form of stories, and best expressed by a narrator or avatar that resembles the human. The narrator may be a theoretical construct, but its way of seeing, its consciousness, and its poetry, do not remind me of a narrating machine or some spectre of language.

My investigation of the centrifugal novel has focused on *Infinite Jest* and *A Visit From the Goon Squad*. Wallace and Egan's novels are both fractured structures: *Goon Squad* is a true discontinuous narrative, divided to the point in which the work blurs genre distinctions between the short story and the novel, while the divergent narrative strands in *Infinite Jest* do at last converge, and do so dramatically, if outside the frame of the novel. Both novels draw on the US postmodern tradition, and both writers might be seen as contemporaries. If readers of this study ultimately reject how I've conceptualised the arranger, they might find worth in how I've examined the network of plot in Egan and Wallace's novels.

The technique of scattering plot and chronology, discussed in earlier chapters, forms the basis of the final chapter. My treatment of variable focalisation is designed to support the splicing of "Lucky's", which in turn plays with the system of causation. Perhaps there are a limited number of plots available to the writer—as early narratology contends—but the scattering of plot can offer us new structures, and these structures have their own inherent drama, as parts of the novel become a whole, as narrative strands intersect.

“Lucky’s” is bound together by a system of cause and effect and a sense of unity around a theme. The theme of “Lucky’s” is failure. The narrative, by and large, comprises scenes that dramatise what the characters have done with their disappointments and failures. The two main characters, Emily and Lucky, are each attempting to change their fortunes in the 2002 chapters of the novel. Both have much at stake. For Emily, the *New Yorker* assignment is a way to repair her career; it’s an opportunity that comes along as her marriage ends and her heart breaks; and through the story of the Lucky’s empire she hopes to understand her birth father, to resolve the earliest mystery of her life. Lucky wants his franchise back. Having squandered so much, he wants to rescue his legacy, to alter how people perceive him, to change how he understands himself.

At the centre of these interlocking narratives is a near-obsolescent milieu: the Greek-Australian cafe. I am, as a writer, naturally drawn to worlds that are sliding off the map, not to document their loss, but to energise them late in the day, at their point of disappearance, when we can at last apprehend the fullness of their story. The cafe was an early fixture of every-day multiculturalism, a temporary triumph of the polyglot ideal. The social background of the novel is also a part of my life: during my childhood, during a most impressionable time, I inhabited the world of cafes. My father and uncles and aunts and grandparents, cooks and servers, were the first people to tell me about Greek myths and literature. They retold the myths as if gossiping about people we all knew, or people they’d left behind in Ithaka. These childhood conversations are among the great gifts of my life: this good fortune is where my love of literature begins.

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