

## Summary

### What Is the Story About

The book offers an analysis of the basic moves required by literary functions of texts of narrative fiction and of the ways in which language works in fictional discourse, in discourse about fiction, and on the border between them.

In Chapter I, the author argues that the invitation addressed to readers of narrative fiction is not: “Move (in your imagination) to the fictional world created by the author and take with you all real world facts compatible with the text” (the *re-centering* and *transportation* thesis, cf. Marie-Laure Ryan), but rather: “Stay (in your imagination) where you are and leave everything as it is, except for the changes prescribed by the text.” If we, in addition, take into account the narrator’s prominent role and the specific mode of the reader’s “fictional stance”, the initial thesis (labelled as *Principle N* in the book) can be stated as follows: “The literary functions of a text of narrative fiction require the reader to approach<sub>AI</sub> (= approach in the *as if* mode) its sentences as records of utterances of an inhabitant of the real world – the narrator, who tells us what happened in this world.” The term “fictional world” can be still preserved in a rather modest reading (inspired by Saul Kripke’s and Robert Stalnaker’s account of possible worlds), namely for that *state of the real world* which we are supposed to accept<sub>AI</sub> as actual, in order to allow the literary functions of the text to do their work for us. The author attempts to show how to account, within this approach, for various temporal modes of narration, various kinds of the narrator’s unreliability, various cases of “non-narrated stories” (Seymour Chatman), etc.

Chapter II examines crucial consequences of the *Principle N* (cf. above). Most importantly, it implies that linguistic expressions, as they occur in a text of narrative fiction, should be approached<sub>AI</sub> as functioning in the ways we are accustomed to from everyday conversation. For instance, the reader should assume<sub>AI</sub> that the occurrences of the word “Emma” in Flaubert’s text are used to refer to the woman who has been assigned that name at the beginning of the chain to which the relevant narrator’s utterances belong. This description (parasitic upon the assumed<sub>AI</sub> narrator’s utterances and general principle of the functioning of names) provides the reader with a simple tool of identifying<sub>AI</sub> the person whose existence she is supposed to accept<sub>AI</sub> and to whom she should ascribe<sub>AI</sub> the relevant non-parasitic descriptions she collects when reading the text. The fact that Flaubert’s text requires such moves

constitutes the *literary character* called “Emma”, as an element of the construction of the novel (and hence as abstract artefact), to be identified precisely by the set of requirements it imposes on the reader. Part of the discussion concerns confusions stemming from blurring the distinction between *literary characters* and the assumed<sub>AI</sub> flesh and blood *referents of fictional names*. The location<sub>AI</sub> of the latter in the real world (cf. Sect. I) commits the reader to take<sub>AI</sub> them as fully determinate with respect to all obligatory parameters of determination belonging to human beings, including those not mentioned in the text, in contrast to the widely shared thesis of the incompleteness of fictional entities. Another part of the debate is reserved for the non-fictional uses of fictional names in metafictional, parafictional and interfictional statements, in negative existential claims, and intentional transitive constructions. Special attention is paid to the discourse balancing on the border between the “serious” and fictional mode of speech, including re-evaluations of the status of previous utterances, serving to preserve the continuity of conversation or to restore it on a new basis. Besides fictional names, the functions of descriptions in texts of narrative fiction are thoroughly discussed.

Chapter III focuses on the role of beliefs in the *as if* mode (or: of pretence, imagining, make-believing) in the functioning of the texts of narrative fiction. The author rejects the widely shared assumption of the constitutive role of writer’s pretence. While the writer’s pretending that “what he does is truth-telling about matters whereof the teller has knowledge” (David Lewis) can prove to be highly inspiring for him, it has no impact on the status of the resulting text. It is a piece of narrative fiction if and only if its functions require and prompt certain moves in the mode of pretence on the part of the reader (cf. Ch. I and II above). To achieve this, the writer need not participate in these moves, precisely like the speaker can (deliberately) produce in his audiences beliefs which she does not share. The author’s position is compared with and distinguished from the “fictive utterance theory of fiction” (Gregory Currie, David Davies, Sten Lamarque, Stein Olsen et al.). In another part of the debate, the role of the moves in the *as if* mode in interpreting texts of narrative fiction is compared with the role of switching to the *as if* mode in confrontation with real-life situations or in reacting to critical situations arising within theoretical systems. While in the latter cases this manoeuvre may serve as an escape from unsolvable practical or theoretical problems (generated e.g. by hidden contradictions in the foundations of our theory), in the former case it provides us access to basic functions of a piece of narrative fiction. Accepting<sub>AI</sub> counterfactual scenarios (in

all cases just mentioned) is sharply distinguished from considering them in the hypothetical mode. Finally, the author argues that the role reserved for beliefs<sub>AI</sub> in interpreting narrative fiction cannot be played by “aliefs” (in Tamar Gendler’s sense).

In Chapter IV, the analysis of basic functions of fictional names from Ch. II is exploited in defending the ability of sentences including these names to express complete singular propositions. The next question concerns the ability of these propositions to generate their imaginative fulfilments (in the sense of Félix Martínez-Bonati’s adaptation of the concept of “Erfüllung” from Husserl’s theory of judgement). In confrontation with Bonati, the author extends the notion of “fulfilment” so as to include, besides visual images of situations and events specified in propositions expressed, also emotional and moral responses to them, spontaneous simulations of motoric and other bodily experiences, the experience of a continuous flow of narration, or of its stuckings and collapses (cf. Ch. V below), the experience of the text’s compatibility with or resistance to our interpretive routine, conceptual equipment, schemes of imagination, moral intuitions, etc. Clearly, the source of these experiences are not just the expressed propositions, but all parameters of the narrative devices used. As for the reader’s emotional responses, like anxious anticipation of the story’s tragic outcome, the author insists (in polemics with Gregory Currie) that they are not to be approached as experiences in the *as if* mode (e.g. as “make-anxiety” or “anxiety-like imagining”). Their special status and limited behavioural effects stem just from the fact that they are generated by a series of beliefs<sub>AI</sub>, required and prompted by literary functions of the text. Discussion on this issue is a supplementary contribution to the debate about the role and scope of the *as if* mode in Ch. III.

Chapter V focuses on works of narrative fiction requiring from their readers acceptance<sub>AI</sub> of a highly non-standard picture of the world or at least of highly non-standard entities (labelled as “extreme objects” in the book). Both cases can result in disruptive interventions into the habitual ways of applying our conceptual equipment, imagination, perceptual schemes, moral intuitions, etc. and hence also into our interpretive habits. Such works of narrative fiction and, in general, all works of art exhibiting such a subversive effect are classified as “radically conceptual” (to distinguish them from examples of “conceptualism”, as defined in fine art). Those among them which do not serve just as representations of extreme objects but are themselves construed as such objects are referred to as “strictly conceptual”. In the field of narrative fiction, this is exemplified by “radical narration”, which does not

describe in a standard way objects or states of the world pushed to the extreme, but pushes to the extreme the text itself by placing the narrator, his narrative equipment, and his performance in the state of the world narrated about. Prominent examples can be found in the late texts of Samuel Beckett in which permanent revocations, contradictions, and collapses of attempts at continuous narration serve as (performative) tools of representation of our world as universal chaos. In contrast to this, J. L. Borges' famous descriptions of extreme phenomena (like "Alef" or the "infinite book" or language and culture of the inhabitants of Tlön) are described in an uninvolved manner, unaffected by what is described (this kind of narration is labelled "immune"). Hence the relevant stories can serve as examples of radical, but not strict, conceptualism.

In Chapter VI, the analysis is extended to cases of radical or strict conceptualism in philosophy, in confrontation with structurally analogical cases in narrative fiction. Hegel's radical revision of subject-predicate structure of sentences, based on his processual account of being, finds analogy in Beckett's subversive treatment of language, reflecting his picture of the world as universal chaos. The externalist construction of the content of our thought and communicative acts is confronted with a no less radical externalist revision of the notion of literary work and of the text-work relation in Borges' story *Pierre Menard, the Author of the Quixote*. Grice's and Schiffer's analyses of the communicative attitude in the series of their definitions of "utterer's meaning", resulting in an ineliminable infinite regress, has a straightforward parallel in the regress paralysing the Beckett narrator's attempts to identify the actual subject of "his" utterances and thoughts. Wittgenstein's rejection of the "engineering" approach to language and resulting a-theoretical form of *Philosophical Investigations* corresponds with Beckett's programmatic statement "I am not master of my material" and the form of his late "anti-novels".

Chapter VII situates the realist position presented in Ch. I, approaching narrative fiction as irrevocably anchored in and related to the real world of our life, within the philosophical dispute between straightforward realism and linguistic constructivism, thoroughly discussed in the author's earlier work. Neither the structure of the world as a whole nor social reality can be coherently interpreted as linguistic constructs, and the same concerns the story worlds to which texts of narrative fiction direct our attention, as even the most subversive examples of radical narration show (cf. Ch. V).

The attachments include two case studies (Samuel Beckett: Search for the Right Sentence; The Incomprehensibility of the World and the Inextri-

cability of the Guilt: Kafkaesque Remarks), “parental notes” about children’s perception of fiction, including awareness of its instrumental side, and the author’s speech originally written for the congress of Czech writers, presenting (hopefully in a more vivid manner) some of the topics of the book.