Chapter One

1. Note that the intentionality of this model need not be reductive. An informative intention is an intention to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions; but “to have a representation of a set of assumptions [in mind, as a precondition of this intention] it is not necessary to have a representation of each assumption in the set. Any individuating description may do” (58). This comment leads directly on to Sperber and Wilson’s discussion of “vague” forms of communication, exemplified by sharing an impression: narrative display would fit well into this class.

2. This is not always the case. There is the possibility with some characters, for instance, of assimilation to an existing framework of knowledge (e.g., Napoleon, as mentioned below); there are also nonliteral forms of mediation (e.g., in a psychobiographical reading of Kafka), and partial resolutions (e.g., in a roman à clef).

Chapter Two

1. See chapters one and seven of Cohn (1999).

2. Barbara Foley (1996) addresses several kinds of argument arising from just such borderline cases. See also Cohn (1999 ch. 2).

3. This is best explained in Jonathan Culler’s synoptic account (1975 ch. 7).


5. Ricoeur does effectively reintroduce correspondence when he comes to discriminate between fiction and history himself, which he does with reference to truth-claim criteria, but under the heading of transfiguration, not configuration (2:3).
Chapter Three

2. See the attempts to tabulate the various schemes by Cohn (1990: 777); and O'Neill (1994: 21).
4. Compare Barbara Herrnstein Smith on the Cinderella story (1980: 211–18). Her argument, however, seems to imply that “story” is indeed plot summary.
5. See Bakhtin/Medvedev on “The formalists’ basic tendency to see creativity as the recombination of ready-made elements” (1978: 140).

Chapter Four

1. The ubiquity of the narrator is a fundamental assumption for Gérard Genette (1980; 1988), Frank Stanzel (1984), Gerald Prince (1982), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983), and, despite having entertained ideas of non-narration in Story and Discourse (1978), Seymour Chatman (1990). Notable dissenters, on linguistic grounds, have been Käte Hamburger (1973 [1957]), Ann Banfield (1982), and S.-Y. Kuroda (1976). My own objections to the narrator are based upon representational rather than linguistic criteria; hence, I shall be arguing that certain “narrators” are outside representation, not that certain narratives function outside communication.

2. For a far more systematic analysis of unreliable narration, see Tamar Yacobi (1981; 1987), who places it in the context of alternative means of resolving interpretative incongruities. I am in broad sympathy with Yacobi’s account, which I do not consider to be seriously undermined by my dissent from its declared premise: “Insofar as fictionality characterizes the discourse as well as the world of literature, literary communication is always mediated” (1987: 335). On the criteria for unreliability, see also Marie-Laure Ryan (1984: 127–28).

3. According to Yacobi, “To become unreliable, [the narrator] must be exposed as such by some definite norm of congruity and to some definite effect. . . . In the absence of concrete grounds—or what appears to be so on the surface—even if the distinction between author and narrator still holds in theory, then for all practical reading purposes it gets blurred, almost to the point of disappearance” (1987: 346–47). This hedged dichotomy between the practical and the theoretical (which exercises Yacobi again on page 357) is obviated once it is admitted that the mediation of a narrator is not inherent in fiction.

4. The debate about the implied author rumbles on. A valuable overview is provided by James Phelan’s recent defence of the term (2005: 38–49). Phelan’s position, however, is closer to Genette than Chatman, or even Booth, and the remaining distance between his stance and my own can perhaps be suffi-
ciently accounted for by the view I present of the authorial relation to narrative in chapter seven.

Chapter Five

1. In this respect I am taking up the possibility of a transmedia model of narrative raised by Manfred Jahn (2001: 675–76) and Brian Richardson (“Voice and Narration” 691), though emphatically not by postulating the agency of a dramatic (or filmic) narrator, for the reasons set out in chapter four.

2. Susan Lanser discussed the relation between ideological and formal senses of “voice” (“interpellation” and “instance” in my scheme) in the introduction to Fictions of Authority (1992: 3–5), and I shall return to her below in my discussion of interpellation. Note however that Lanser frames her approach in terms of the “fruitful counterpoints” between two approaches to voice that she sees as being of “antithetical tendency: the one general, mimetic and political, the other specific, semiotic, and technical” (4), whereas I am proposing a synthetic view in which instance and interpellation are complementary concepts within a representational semiotics of narrative.

3. Contrast the position adopted by Jahn, for whom drama requires an extension of the literary framework of narrative voice, even if this usually defaults to “just a bodiless and voiceless show–er or arranger function indistinguishable from the author” (2001: 676).

4. Richardson mentions a number of canonical modern texts for which it is unhelpful to take this literalistic view of the extradiegetic narrative situation (“Inhuman Voices” 700–701); many more examples could be added.

5. These remarks on level and person may be too elliptical to carry conviction, but further elaboration of the matter would be a futile digression here. I can only note in passing that I think there are intractable logical inconsistencies between the two concepts, the full articulation of which must await another occasion.

6. Richardson’s discussion of memory plays (“Voice and Narration” 682–83) provides further support for this observation.

7. This is essentially David Bordwell’s point in Narration in the Fiction Film (1985), where he argues for a view of filmic narration as the set of cues from which the viewer constructs the fabula, but he denies that narration implies a narrator (62). His emphasis upon the viewer’s understanding of the representational product inevitably slights the communicative process, however, and arises from problems with the notion of fictionality that Bordwell does not explore, despite the prominence of “fiction” in his title. Edward Branigan does discuss communication in the context of fictionality, though preferring to “remain neutral” (1992: 107) on the merits of communication models he finds caught between, on the one hand, a sense of agency in narration—he himself speaks of “an implicit extra-fictional narration [. . . ] the ‘voice’ of an ‘implied author’” (91)—and, on the other hand, the “anthropomorphic fiction” of a narrator (108–10).

8. Monika Fludernik, discussing the relation between voice and focalization,
argues for the theoretical redundancy of the latter (2001: 633–35). I find it helpful to retain it, however, as an aid to discriminating between the different senses of voice, which are often in play at the same time.

9. Note that this is a special case of focalization. Not all represented perspective can be adequately described as discursive in its manifestations. See the further discussion under interpellation.

10. The basis for this remark can be inferred from the satirical description of the heroine in Austen’s “Plan of a Novel, According to Hints from Various Quarters”: “Heroine a faultless Character herself—, perfectly good, with much tenderness & sentiment, & not the least Wit” (1954: 428).

11. The possibility of analogies for FID in other media raises interesting questions. Consider the way in which Hitchcock represents the experience of vertigo in the film of that name, in the famous tower shot combining a zoom out and track in to maintain a constant image size, or frame range, in a view down a (model) stairwell. The device is clearly mimetic of James Stewart’s disturbed cognitive struggle to make sense of his perceptions, but at the same time it is an overtly filmic technique—a simultaneous track and zoom—which situates it as part of the representational rhetoric of the diegetic narrative itself.

12. The mechanism of presupposition underlying the interpellation of subjects has been explored by John Frow in relation to genre and Vološinov’s concept of the literary enthymeme, or argument with an implied premise (1986: 77–78).

13. The need to discriminate between senses of voice is apparent in the conclusion to which Aczel is led by a consideration of this specific Bakhtinian context: “Narrative voice, like any other voice, is a fundamentally composite entity, a specific configuration of voices” (483). If every voice is a configuration of voices, the term is being made to work too hard.


15. See the criticism of Lanser’s project by Nilli Diengott (1988), and the subsequent defense by Gerald Prince (1996).

16. Other theorists who have taken up the issue of feminist narratology include Robyn Warhol (1989), Sally Robinson (1991), Alison Case (1999), and Joan Peters (2002).

Chapter Six

1. I have already argued against the view that fabula is independent of discourse in chapter three. That discussion also takes account of arguments about different versions of the “same” story, and the transposition of the “same” story into different media.

2. Peirce’s sense of semiosis as process went hand in hand with an idea of internal reflection as social: “Your self of one instant appeals to your deeper self for his assent” (1935–58: 6:388).

3. My point here clearly relates to Monika Fludernik’s in Towards a “Natural” Narratology (1996: 12–13), though her definitional emphasis upon human experientiality is representational rather than semiotic.

4. There is scope for disagreement about who is who in this image. Positive
identification is inhibited by the fact that both Chantal and Zelda are almost always represented as veiled, but it is arguably possible to infer from some images that Chantal is slightly taller than Zelda, which would count against my interpretation here.

5. Life to those Shadows (1990: 243). A little later he comments “the term ‘illusion of reality’ is a malapropism masking the existence of a rationally selective system of symbolic exchange” (246).

6. Also known as The Countryman’s First Sight of the Animated Pictures.

7. It is arguable that such a double response to the image is as necessary to the combination of shots as it is within the single shot, as R. Arnheim argued: “Film gives us simultaneously the effect of an actual happening and of a picture. A result of the ‘picturing of film is, then, that a sequence of scenes that are diverse in time and space is not felt as arbitrary” (quoted in Heath 1976: 87).

8. The same perspectival confusion is evident in a newspaper report from 1896, which corrects a previous exaggerated account of two fainting ladies who were seated in a box to the left of the screen, but goes on to suggest, nonetheless, that “the right-hand boxes are better for nervous folk” (see Bottomore 1999: 181, 194).

Chapter Seven

1. A valuable overview of the concept can be gained from the introduction to, and articles collected in, Seán Burke’s Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern (1995).

2. This passage comes from Charlotte’s preface to the 1850 edition (1981: 368).


4. See, for example, the legitimation of “the most romantic parts of this narrative” in the “Postscript” to Waverley (1978: 4–5).

5. The nature and extent of Trollope’s involvement with his characters is usefully discussed by Stephen Wall in Trollope and Character (1988).

6. The idea of fiction as an exercise in the tautological definition of its own truths has been explored to its limits by Michael Riffaterre in Fictional Truth (1990).

7. Indeed, a comment from James’s preface to The Princess Casamassima could have supplied the epigraph to this chapter: “the teller of the story is primarily, nonetheless, the listener to it, the reader of it, too” (1962: 63).

Chapter Eight

1. Apart from Horne, Macready, and Jeffrey, her supporters included Ward (1882: 41–45); Bulwer-Lytton (Flower 1973: 82); Hood (Collins 1971: 94–98); Landor (Forster 1969: 1:458–59); and Gissing, who even at the turn of the century found distaste for Nell “unintelligent” (1898: 176).
2. See Damman (1992). A more nuanced position, from a narratological point of view, is provided by Peter Rabinowitz’s concept of “narrative audience” in *Before Reading*, though this still keeps one foot in the “belief” camp I am opposing: “The pretense [involved in joining the narrative audience] is closer to Coleridge’s ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ except that I would argue not that disbelief is suspended but rather that it is both suspended and not suspended at the same time” (1987: 95).

3. These are the parameters which emerge from a special number of *Poetics* in volume 23 (1994), on “Emotions and Cultural Products.”

4. Several more recent approaches to character have sought to negotiate between mimetic and structuralist perspectives: Martin Price’s *Forms of Life* (1983) and Baruch Hochman’s *Character in Literature* (1985) both reassert the priority of the mimetic; Robert Higbie’s *Character and Structure in the English Novel* (1984) elaborates a syncretic model founded upon (early) structuralist premises; and James Phelan’s *Reading People, Reading Plots* (1989) advances an inclusive view which recognizes three components to character—the mimetic (as person), the thematic (as idea or value), and the synthetic (as construct). See also the special issue on fictional character in *Style* volume 24 (1990), which includes cognitive psychological and textual approaches.

5. An account by Mrs. Jane Greene of her uncle’s reaction, in a letter sent to Forster after the publication of the first volume of the *Life* (House et al. 1965–2002: 2:x). Forster endorsed the letter, “Kept for its comicality!”; but the humor must have lain more in its manner than its substance, if we are to judge by his own comment on the evolution of the novel: “I was responsible for its tragic ending. He had not thought of killing her . . .” (1969: 1: 123).

6. (Ward 1882: 215); the *OED*, rather unhelpfully for the present argument, cites this under the relevant meaning (17a.) of “character.”

7. See Kaplan (1987). I would want to insist upon the ambivalence of Dickens’s relation to this tradition: a too simple categorization of his fiction leaves no place for the powerful and disconcerting appeal of Quilp, to take an obvious example.

8. (House et al. 1965–2002: 2:153). The editors of the Pilgrim letters mistakenly attribute this response to the appearance of chapters 54 and 55 (*Master Humphrey’s Clock* number 35), thus unfairly reinforcing posterity’s low opinion of the literary competence of Dickens’s contemporaries: the crucial note (on p. 144) draws the moral that Dickens’s readers were too superficial to notice his foreshadowings in chapter 53. Hood, writing about three weeks earlier, may be excused his misplaced optimism; but the generality of Dickens’s readership clearly understood what he was about from the moment number 34 of *Master Humphrey’s Clock* appeared on the 21st of November, and their response (if he himself is to be believed) was prompt and vociferous.

9. An implication of my argument is that it ought to be possible for a clearly antirealist fiction to generate emotional engagement. I think it is, and I offer Donald Barthelme’s *The Dead Father* as a candidate. This is a playful and innovative exploration of the manifold cultural meaning of fatherhood, and despite being thoroughly antirealist and extremely funny (a quality that militates against emotional involvement in any context), it does indeed accumulate emotional resonance. See my discussion of the novel in *Novel Arguments* (1995).