

Narrative

a critical linguistic introduction

second edition

Michael Toolan

Narrative

A critical linguistic introduction

Second Edition

Michael Toolan



London and New York

**In loving memory of
Margaret 'Mac' McAloren
who told such stories,
and never told on us.**



First published 1988
Reprinted 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997

Second edition first published 2001
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 1988, 2001 Michael Toolan

Typeset in Times by Wearset, Boldon, Tyne and Wear
Printed and bound in Great Britain by University Press, Cambridge

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from The British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Toolan, Michael J.

Narrative : a critical linguistic introduction / Michael Toolan. –
2nd ed.

p. cm. – (Interface)

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

1. Discourse analysis. Narrative. I. Title. II. Interface (London, England)

P302.7 .T66 2001

401'.41–dc21

2001019304

ISBN 0-415-23174-4 (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-23175-2 (pbk)

Preface

Narratives are everywhere, performing countless different functions in human interaction; therefore the area of inquiry of this book must be delimited rather strictly. As the subtitle indicates, it is intended as a critical introduction, and I hope to be genuinely critical and genuinely introductory. More narrowly still, this critical introduction is specifically concerned with language-oriented or linguistically-minded perspectives on narrative: ways of looking at narrative that attend systematically to the language of stories, and models of narrative-analysis that focus on the linguistic form of narratives or their linguistically-describable structure. The basic rationale for such an emphasis is the conviction that systematic analytical attention to the logic and dynamics of language behaviour can shed light on any sub-domain or mode of language behaviour. The mode spotlighted here is narrative.

What is it about narrative that makes it such a pervasive and fascinating phenomenon? And how can one begin to answer such a question without entering into a narrative of one's own? The fact is, as my opening sentence announces, narratives are everywhere. Or are potentially so. Everything we do, from making the bed to making breakfast to taking a shower (and notice how these combined – in any order – make a multi-episode narrative), can be seen, cast, and recounted as a narrative – a narrative with a middle and end, characters, setting, drama (difficulties resolved), suspense, enigma, 'human interest', and a moral. (The moral of the story of my making breakfast this morning could be stated as 'Don't try to clean the toaster while cooking porridge'.) From such narratives, major and minor, we learn more about ourselves and the world around us. Making, apprehending, and then not forgetting a narrative is making-sense of things which may also help make sense of other things.

Just how pervasive and important oral and written narratives are to our lives becomes startlingly clear if we stop to think of the forms of narrative we depend on as props and inspirations: biographies and autobiographies; historical texts; news stories and news features in many media; personal letters and diaries; novels, thrillers and romances; medical case histories; school records; curricula vitae; police reports of 'incidents'; annual performance reviews; and, often most crucially, the stories we tell about ourselves and others – stories of triumphs and disasters, pleasure and pain – in

the course of our everyday lives. These are only some of the materials shaping our lives that are palpably narrative in form and function.

But we might also consider many other preoccupations which, as a means of assisting comprehension, we 'narrativize'. Law students struggling to grasp and retain the ramifications of the law concerning theft may well, as a sense-making procedure, cast the law(s) as a developing story shaped by attendances to and departures from precedent, and by statutory revisions. And the criminal law in its entirety can be seen as a revisable story: the story is about socially impermissible conduct and the means of redress available when such conduct is exposed. This all-embracing 'story of the law' subsumes an infinite number of more specific episodes (actual and hypothetical), with probable but contestable outcomes: if you do this, in those circumstances, then you may be liable to such and such penalties.

Science, too, may at first glance look very different from narrative. We often think of it as an expanding storehouse of incontestable facts, the hallowed repository of objective knowledge of how things in the world work: a rich but static description, quite remote from 'storytelling'. But that turns out to be mistaken in both theory and practice. In theory, the emphasis on scientific enquiry as an ongoing revisable narrative (with revisions made on the rational grounds that the revised account brings enhanced descriptive or explanatory power, and greater generalizability) is now commonplace. And in practice, too, one has only to think of how science is taught in schools to see the centrality of narrative to understanding.

For instance, the concepts of fuel, energy and work might be taught in the primary school by telling stories about eating breakfast before running around, and putting fuel in the car before going on a long trip. If the child doesn't get the point of these stories, and see the logical connections between the stages within each story as well as the analogical parallels across the stories, they won't begin to understand the concepts involved. At secondary school the presentation may be less informal and more theorized, but narrative methods persist. Any laboratory exercise in physics, chemistry or biology, for example, is a planned and guided story in which the child is an essential participant. Testing for the hydrogen that is released when copper filings are added to sulphuric acid is, for teacher and lab assistant, an old, old story (ah, they don't make them like that any more!). But it's a new story, a narrative of enforced personal experience if you like, for the child, the moral of which is to be learned. And afterwards, in the passive voice style that tries to keep human interest out of the picture, they must 'write up' the experiment.

If the above is a reminder that narrative is a mode that, directly or more indirectly, may inform almost every aspect of human activity, I must now stress that the following chapters are concerned almost entirely with narratives in a narrower sense: literary narratives, folktales, stories by and for children, conversationally-embedded spoken narratives, and news stories in the media. There are linguistic similarities between these types of

stories which I hope, rather than leading to a boring sameness, will be thought-provoking, and linguistic differences, too, which are yet not so great as to make for unmanageable heterogeneity.

For this second edition, I have made many minor revisions and rephrasings, some cuts and several additions or expansions. The expansions have been kept in check by the need to keep the book to a manageable length, and the requirement that something linguistic and introductory could be relevantly said about each topic. The substantially new sections include ones on narrativity (1.3), modes of narration (3.8), surprise and suspense (4.7), film narration (4.8), Labov applied to literature (6.11), systemic story genres (7.6), the structure and analysis of hard news stories in print and online (8.2–8.4, 8.6), and gender (8.7). All the Further Reading and Notes and Exercises sections, at the end of each chapter, have been radically revised and brought up to date.

On the other hand, I have sometimes retained from the first edition particular demonstration analyses even where these use approaches that may have developed further in very recent years. The more recent work often builds on the earlier work, so that the latter remains both important and truly introductory.

In the following chapters, particularly the earlier and more literary-minded ones, presentation and discussion of models and theories often involves detailed reference to one or more of a few celebrated literary texts which I have taken as exemplary. So the best way to read these chapters is with those narratives both firmly in memory and close to hand for direct consultation. This special collection comprises the following stories: James Joyce's 'Eveline' and 'The Dead', from *Dubliners*; William Faulkner's 'That Evening Sun' and 'Barn Burning'; Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss'; and Vladimir Nabokov's novel, *Pnin*. Many other narratives, short and long, oral and written, literary and non-literary, will be discussed in the course of the book. But those six are especially relevant to the first five chapters.

A linguistic introduction can hardly avoid the occasional use of more technical terms that may at first seem off-putting to those who have taken no linguistics courses. I have tried to keep specialist jargon to a minimum, explaining terms as the discussion proceeds.

Acknowledgements

Nearly all the work on the first edition of this book was done while I was a member of the Department of English Language and Literature of the National University of Singapore, while any better thoughts that have emerged in the second edition arose at my next academic home, the English department of the University of Washington, Seattle, or my present one, the Department of English of the University of Birmingham. Much of the material presented here has been used on courses in Stylistics or Narrative at all three institutions, and all kinds of small debts are owed to students on those courses. I still owe thanks to all those listed in the first edition, friends, colleagues and students, together with a goodly number of scholars who have one way or another influenced or unwittingly contributed to the second edition: Anneliese Kramer-Dahl, Betty Samraj, Brian Ridge, Carmen-Rosa Caldas-Coulthard, Carol Marley, Charles Owen, Chris Heffer, David Birch, David Butt, Gail Stygall, George Dillon, George Wolf, Hayley Davis, Heidi Riggenbach, Jim Martin, K. P. Mohanan, Malcolm Coulthard, Michael Halliday, Michael Hoey, Monika Fludernik, Nigel Love, Norman Macleod, Paul Hopper, Paul Simpson, Peter Verdonk, Peter White, Phil Gaines, Roy Harris, Ruth Page, Sandy Silberstein, Talbot Taylor, Thara Mohanan, Thiru Kandiah, Tony Hung, and Victor Li. Thanks also to Ms Gouri Uppal for permitting me to reproduce conversational data from her National University of Singapore MA thesis (1984).

Special thanks remain due to Rukmini Bhaya Nair, with whom I first co-taught courses on Narrative Structure.

Very special thanks to Ronald Carter, general editor of the *Interface* series, for entrusting this project to me in the first place and for being a powerful advocate for literary linguistics these twenty years and more; and to Louisa Semlyen at Routledge who was unfailingly supportive when the second edition turned out to be harder and longer work than I had expected.

Mega special thanks to Julianne Statham, who has again gone above and beyond the proverbial in reading through chunks of this in draft, helping me absent the most turgid bits. And a verbal hug, too, for Roisin, Patrick, and Miriam, teenagers with attitude; Chapter 7 was first written

xii *Acknowledgements*

when only Roisin was old enough to enjoy *Burglar Bill*, and Miriam's story had not even begun. Now all three are old enough and smart enough to explain the new narratives to me.

The author and the publisher also wish to thank the copyright holders for their permission to reproduce the following material in this book:

'Hague links Labour with murder rise', by Philip Webster and Tom Baldwin, © Times Newspapers Limited, 19 December 2000.

'Race and Policing: Hague's defiance inflames the anger', by Paul Waugh and Andrew Grice, 19 December 2000, © The *Independent*/Syndication.

'Hague race jibe angers ministers', by Nicholas White and Nick Hopkins, 19 December 2000, © The *Guardian*.

'Tory Leader "won't be gagged on crime"', by George Jones, 19 December 2000, © The *Telegraph*.

'Crazy Hague defies Dami dad's plea', 19 December 2000, © The *Mirror*.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
1 Preliminary orientations	1
1.1 <i>Teller, tale, addressee</i>	1
1.2 <i>Typical characteristics of narratives</i>	4
1.3 <i>Narratives and non-narratives</i>	8
1.4 <i>Story – text – narration</i>	10
<i>Further reading</i>	12
<i>Notes and exercises</i>	13
2 Basic story structure	15
2.1 <i>Story/fabula/histoire</i>	15
2.2 <i>Propp's morphology of the Russian fairytale</i>	17
2.3 <i>Barthes on narrative</i>	22
2.4 <i>Plot-summarizing: modelling intuitions</i>	29
2.5 <i>In search of the grammaticization of plot structure</i>	31
<i>Further reading</i>	37
<i>Notes and exercises</i>	37
3 The articulation of narrative text I: time, focalization, narration	41
3.1 <i>Narrative text: a single level of analysis</i>	41
3.2 <i>Text and time</i>	42
3.3 <i>Temporal refractions in text: Nabokov's Pnin</i>	54
3.4 <i>Focalization</i>	59
3.5 <i>Perceptual focalization as primary</i>	63
3.6 <i>Narrators and narration</i>	64
3.7 <i>Simpson's typology of narratorial modes</i>	68
<i>Further reading</i>	77
<i>Notes and exercises</i>	77

4	The articulation of narrative text II: character, setting, suspense, film	80
4.1	<i>Character</i>	80
4.2	<i>Greimas' actant model</i>	82
4.3	<i>Character traits and attributes</i>	86
4.4	<i>Distinctive feature characterology</i>	88
4.5	<i>Setting</i>	91
4.6	<i>Character and setting in 'The Dead'</i>	94
4.7	<i>Creating surprise and suspense in narratives</i>	99
4.8	<i>From prose to film: radical translation</i>	103
4.9	<i>The grammaticization of character and situation</i>	107
	<i>Further reading</i>	112
	<i>Notes and exercises</i>	112
5	The articulation of narrative text III: representing character discourse	116
5.1	<i>Achieving immediacy in the narration of thoughts</i>	116
5.2	<i>Modes of speech and thought presentation</i>	119
5.3	<i>Differences between Direct and Indirect Discourse</i>	125
5.4	<i>Different again: free Indirect Discourse</i>	130
5.5	<i>Who speaks, who thinks?</i>	133
5.6	<i>FID: functions and effects</i>	134
	<i>Further reading</i>	140
	<i>Notes and exercises</i>	140
6	Narrative as socially situated: the sociolinguistic approach	143
6.1	<i>Labov and narrative structure</i>	143
6.2	<i>Fixed narrative clauses, free evaluative clauses</i>	145
6.3	<i>Abstracts and orientations</i>	149
6.4	<i>Evaluation</i>	151
6.5	<i>Doing and saying</i>	153
6.6	<i>Internal evaluation</i>	155
6.7	<i>Coda</i>	157
6.8	<i>Stories in societies</i>	159
6.9	<i>Narrative performance</i>	160
6.10	<i>Dispersed, embedded, and group oral narratives</i>	162
6.11	<i>From Labov to literature</i>	167
	<i>Further reading</i>	172
	<i>Notes and exercises</i>	173

7 Children's narratives**178**

- 7.1 *Stories for, by, and with children* 178
- 7.2 *Storytelling and emergent literacy* 180
- 7.3 *Differing styles, differing orientations* 182
- 7.4 *Children's narrative development* 185
- 7.5 *Children's narratives and the development of registers and genres: the systemic-linguistic approach* 189
- 7.6 *The systemic-linguistic account of story genres* 193
- 7.7 *Stories for and with children* 197
- Further reading* 203
- Notes and exercises* 204

8 Narrative as political action**206**

- 8.1 *The contexts of narratives* 206
- 8.2 *Hard news stories in the newspaper* 206
- 8.3 *Political narratives in the news* 208
- 8.4 *The unfolding news story: a contemporary example* 212
- 8.5 *The linguistic apparatus of political construal: notes on key resources* 221
- 8.6 *News stories online* 230
- 8.7 *Stories of class and gender* 233
- 8.8 *Prejudice in ethnic narratives* 234
- 8.9 *Stories in court* 235
- Further reading* 239
- Notes and exercises* 239

Bibliography

242

Index

255

1 Preliminary orientations

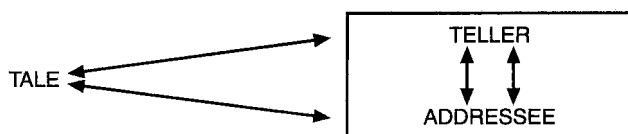
1.1 Teller, tale, addressee

What is narrative? What do we mean by ‘narrative structure’? Where does a linguistic approach come in, and how helpful can it really be? The following are introductory notes on these and other basic issues, which should at least indicate the terrain to be covered, and why it is significant.

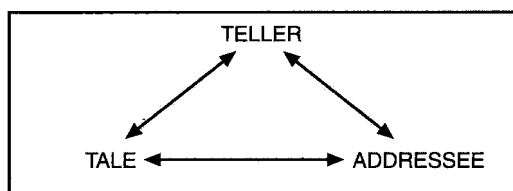
Commentators sometimes begin by stating the truism that any tale involves a teller, and that, therefore, narrative study must analyse two basic components: the tale and the teller. But as much could be said of every speech event: there is always inherently a speaker, separable from what is spoken. What makes narratives different, especially literary or extended spoken ones, is that the teller is often *particularly* noticeable. Tellers of long narratives can be surprisingly present and perceptible even as they unfold a tale that ostensibly draws all our attention, as readers or listeners, to other individuals who are within the tale. As a result we may feel that we are dividing our attention between two objects of interest: the individuals and events in the story itself, and the individual telling us about these. Thus when we read Coleridge’s ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ or Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* or listen to the rambling anecdote of a friend, part of the experience is the activity of ‘reading’ or scrutinizing the character of the teller: the returned mariner, Lockwood, the friend. Already the two literary examples cited involve an enriching complication. In both texts mentioned, there is more than one teller: besides the mariner, for instance, is a ‘higher’ teller who writes, ‘It is an ancient Mariner/And he stoppeth one of three’. But we can address such complications later, and should concentrate here on narrative’s dual essential foci, teller and tale.

The possibility of achieving this effect of divided attention exploits a basic characteristic of narrative. Narrative typically is a recounting of things spatiotemporally distant: here’s the present teller, seemingly close to the addressee (reader or listener), and there at a distance is the tale and its topic. This selection of effects of closeness and distance can be represented graphically:

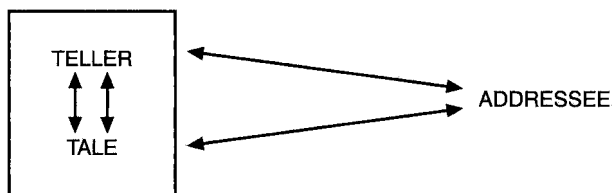
2 Preliminary orientations



But since the present teller is the sole access to the distant topic, there is a sense, too, in which narrative entails making what is distant and absent uncommonly present: a three-way merging rather than a division. Diagrammatically this merging-and-immediacy can be represented as:



However, since tellers can become intensely absorbed in their self-generated sense of the distant topic they are relating, addressees sometimes have the impression that the teller has withdrawn from them, has taken leave, so as to be more fully involved in the removed scene. This third type of relation between tale, teller, and addressee (a withdrawing and merging) might be cast thus:



(In short, narratives always involve a Tale, a Teller, and an Addressee,) and these can be 'placed', notionally, at different degrees of mutual proximity or distance. Hawthorn (1985) broaches these same issues, taking a painting by Millais, *The Boyhood of Raleigh*, as capturing something central to narrative. In that painting an old seaman, with his back to the viewer, appears to be addressing two young boys who are evidently fascinated and absorbed by what he tells them. The old man is using his whole arm to point out to the sea, visible in the distance. But the boys' eyes are on the man and his gesturing arm, not any distant scene he may be designating.

Narrative focusses our attention on to a story, a sequence of events, through the direct mediation of a 'telling' which we both stare at and

through, which is at once central and peripheral to the experience of the story, both absent and present in the consciousness of those being told the story. Like the two young boys we stare at the 'telling' while our minds are fixed upon what that telling points towards. We look at the pointing arm but our minds are fixed upon what is pointed at.

(Hawthorn, 1985: vii)

One of the distinctive characteristics of narrative concerns its necessary source, the narrator. We stare at the narrator rather than interacting with him as we would if we were in conversation; at the same time, in literary narratives especially, that narrator is often 'impersonalized', and attended to as a disembodied voice.

Thus there is a teller in every tale to a far greater degree than there is a speaker *in* any ordinary turn at talk. Because narratives are, relative to ordinary turns of talk, long texts and personalized or evaluated texts, there is a way in which, while your conversational remarks *reflect* who you are (your identity and values), in the course of any narrative the narrator's text *describes* that narrator. In brief snatches of conversation, a person may be able, through accent-mimicry for example, to 'pass' for someone of a different class or gender or ethnic identity; but to take on another's identity in a sustained fashion, across a number of personal narratives, is ordinarily very difficult, and may even imply disabling confusion or a personality disorder. The reflection/description contrast may be chiefly a matter of degree, but it is arguably an important contrast with far-reaching consequences – e.g. even for assessments of mental health or illness.

This brings us to another important asset of narrators: narrators are typically trusted by their addressees. In at least implicitly seeking and being granted rights to a lengthy verbal contribution, narrators assert their authority to tell, to take up the role of knower, or entertainer, or producer, in relation to the addressees' adopted role of learner or consumer. To narrate is to bid for a kind of power. Sometimes the narratives told crucially affect our lives: those told by journalists, politicians, colleagues, employers assessing our performance in annual reviews, as well as those of friends, acquaintances, enemies, parents, siblings, children – in short, all those which originate from those who have power, authority or influence over us. Any narrator then is ordinarily granted, as a rebuttable presumption, a level of trust and authority which is also a granting or asserting of power. But this trust, power and authority can be exploited or abused, as is reflected in literary critical discussion of 'unreliable narration'. Narrative misrepresentation is a complex process, difficult to unravel. One exemplification of it arises far from literature: in criminal cases of serious fraud. Where, after having pleaded not guilty, a defendant is found guilty, the sentencing judge often refers to the obfuscating detailed deception that has been uncovered as 'a complex tissue of systematic distortion and fabrication', or uses a similar revealing description.

Even before we attempt a working definition of narratives, it is clear

4 Preliminary orientations

that these are typically ‘cut off’ in some respects from surrounding co-text and context (their verbal and non-verbal environment, respectively: the former comprises any language that precedes or follows the narrative, the latter includes anything non-verbal of relevance, including the situation and the identities of teller and addressee). Narratives often appear to stand alone, not embedded in a larger frame, without any accompanying information about the author or the intended audience: they’re just ‘there’, it seems, like pots or paintings, and you can take them or leave them. They differ, at least in degree, from more transactional uses of language, as when someone asks you a question, or makes a request or a promise or warning: in such cases there is strong expectation that the addressee will respond or act in predictable ways. So some of the normal constraints on how we make sense of discourse seem to be suspended. And it seems we do not always have to relate narratives directly and immediately to their authors, or socio-historical backgrounds.

1.2 Typical characteristics of narratives

We can begin to define narrative by noting and inspecting some of its typical characteristics:

- 1 A degree of artificial fabrication or constructedness not usually apparent in spontaneous conversation. Narrative is ‘worked upon’. Sequence, emphasis and pace are usually planned (even in oral narrative, when there has been some rehearsal – previous performance – of it). But then as much could be said of, for example, elaborate descriptions of things, prayers, scholarly articles.
- 2 A degree of *prefabrication*. In other words, narratives often seem to have bits we have seen or heard, or think we have seen or heard, before (recurrent chunks far larger than the recurrent chunks we call words). One Mills and Boon heroine or hero seems much like another – and some degree of typicality seems to apply to heroes and heroines in more elevated fictions too, such as nineteenth-century British novels. Major characters in the novels of Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, etc., seem to be thwarted (for a time at least) in roughly comparable ways. And the kinds of things people do in narratives seem to repeat themselves over and over again – with important variations, of course. Again, prefabrication seems common in various types of writing and visual spectacle besides narrative, although the kinds of things mentioned above seem particularly to be prefabricated units of narrative.
- 3 Narratives typically seem to have a ‘trajectory’. They usually go somewhere, and are expected to go somewhere, with some sort of development and even a resolution or conclusion provided. We expect them to have beginnings, middles, and ends (as Aristotle stipulated in his *Poetics*). Consider the concluding words of children’s stories:

And they all lived happily ever after;
since then, the dragon has never been seen again.

and notice the finality and permanence conveyed by the *ever/never* pair. Or consider the common story-reader's exit-line:

And that is the end of the story.

which has near-identical counterparts in the closing sequences of radio and television news bulletins. All these examples mark this attention to the expectation of closure and finality, itself just one aspect of the broader underlying expectation of narrative trajectory. Relatedly, the addressee is usually given to understand, and does so assume, that even embarking on their story the teller knows how it ends up (not the precise wording, but the event-based or situational gist). Exceptions to this might include Dickens's serialized novels, and the bedtime story that a parent makes up for a child, *impromptu*. Even these, along with more planned-outcome narratives, can be distinguished from both diaries and live commentaries, in that in the latter new intervening acts, beyond the control of the witness/reporter, can dictate the shape and content of the report. In true narratives, arguably, the teller is always in full control although, like Dickens and the bedtime storyteller, they may not fully foresee at the outset that material which they will control.

- 4 Narratives have to have a teller, and that teller, no matter how backgrounded or 'invisible', is always important. In this respect, despite its special characteristics, narrative is language communication like any other, requiring a speaker and some sort of addressee.
- 5 Narratives are richly exploitative of that design feature of language called displacement (the ability of human language to be used to refer to things or events that are removed, in space or time, from either speaker or addressee). In this respect they contrast sharply with such modes as commentary or description. Arguably there has to be *some* removal or absence, in space or time, for a discourse to count as a narrative. Thus if I listen in my car to a radio running commentary on a simultaneously-occurring football match or funeral, this approaches the status of narrative by virtue of spatial displacement (it is not a narrative at all if I am at the football match directly witnessing, and listening to the radio commentary). But live commentaries, like real diaries, breach characteristic 3 above, and are arguably not narratives at all. More borderline are edited TV highlights of sports and other events (interestingly, one rarely finds edited highlights of matches and events on radio).
- 6 Narratives involve the recall of happenings that may be not merely spatially, but, more crucially, temporally remote from the teller and his audience. Compare our practices with those of the honeybee,

6 Preliminary orientations

whose tail-wagging dance overcomes spatial displacement, in that it communicates about distant sources of nectar, but cannot encompass temporal displacement. Thus it can only signal to its chums back in the hive immediately upon its return from the nectar-source. Accordingly, the honeybee's tail-wagging is no proper narrative in our sense, but merely a kind of reflex observation. As Roy Harris has remarked:

Bees do not regale one another with reminiscences of the nectar they found last week, nor discuss together the nectar they might find tomorrow.

(Harris, 1981: 158)

This is a lovely image (or narrative), partly because in fact it is something that (as far as we know) we humans alone do, and no other animals – even those with simple language systems.

A first attempt at a minimalist definition of narrative might be:

a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events

This definition recognizes that a narrative is a sequence of events. But 'event' itself is really a complex term, presupposing that there is some recognized state or set of conditions, and that something happens, causing a change to that state. The emphasis on 'non-random connectedness' means that a pure collage of described events, even given in sequence, does not count as a narrative. For example, if each member of a group in turn supplies a one-paragraph description of something or other, and these paragraphs are then pasted together, they will not count as a narrative unless someone comes to perceive a non-random connection. And by 'non-random connection' is meant a connectedness that is taken to be motivated and significant. This curious transitional area between sequential description and consequential description is one of the bases for the fun of a familiar party game in which people around a table take turns to write a line of a 'story', the other lines of which are supplied, in secret, by the other participants.

The important role of 'change of state' has been celebrated in the more linguistic term *transformation* by the structuralist Tzvetan Todorov (1977: 233):

The simple relation of successive facts does not constitute a narrative: these facts must be organized, which is to say, ultimately, that they must have elements in common. But if all the elements are in common, there is no longer a narrative, for there is no longer anything to recount. Now, transformation represents precisely a synthesis of