Introduction

Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon
Of olde stories long time agoon,
For lewed peple loven tales olde—
Swiche thinges can they wel reporte and holde.
CHAUCER, The Pardoner's Prologue

In this book I develop a broad interpretation of narrative as a discourse genre and a cognitive style, as well as a resource for literary writing. I also work toward an account of narrative understanding as a process of building and updating mental models of the worlds that are told about in stories. In other words, story recipients, whether readers, viewers, or listeners, work to interpret narratives by reconstructing the mental representations that have in turn guided their production. This amounts to claiming, rather unspectacularly, that people try to understand a narrative by figuring out what particular interpretation of characters, circumstances, actions, and events informs the design of the story. But though this last formulation may appear almost tautologically obvious, I believe that, in actual fact, a number of extremely complicated issues are concealed within its surface simplicity—issues that I can only begin to address in the present study.

Understanding long, detailed, and formally sophisticated literary narratives is for many people a natural, seemingly automatic process. Early on, however, artificial intelligence researchers showed that enormously complex linguistic and cognitive operations are required to generate or comprehend even the most minimal stories.[1] In consequence, creating a computer system with genuine narrative intelligence—for example, building an interface that would make users feel as though their interactions with the system were part of an emergent story—would be no mean feat.[2] Even apart from its synergistic relation with such technical work on narrative intelligence, narrative theory remains a vital, self-renewing area of research because of its knack for highlight-

ing in more and more refined ways the interpretive skills required to tell and make sense of stories. I have written this book in the hopes of contributing to the same ongoing effort: the effort to characterize, in ever more precise ways, what narrative is and how people go about understanding it.

In the first part of this introduction, I outline the overall approach of the book by reassessing the relations between narrative theory and two other fields of study, linguistics and cognitive science. Revisiting the way linguistic models have been used by narratologists since the beginnings of structuralist narrative theory, and comparing this cross-fertilization with narrative analysts' more recent borrowing of concepts and methods from cognitive science, I suggest the advantages of an alternative approach. To my mind, both narrative theory and language theory should instead be viewed as resources for—elements of—the broader endeavor of cognitive science. The result: a jointly narratological and linguistic approach to stories construed as strategies for building mental models of the world. The second part of my introduction shifts the focus from metatheory, that is, an exploration of what kind of theory a theory of narrative should be, to an investigation of the idea of "storyworlds," a concept that will be foundational for specific arguments developed over the course of my study. Comparing storyworlds with analogous constructs (e.g., "story," "deictic center," "discourse model," "contextual frame") drawn from a number of research traditions, I attempt to give a sense of the integrative profile of my approach, as well as an indication of its scope and aims.

Narratology and the Architecture of Inquiry

It would be hard to dispute that linguistic models have had a major impact on narrative theory over the past three or four decades—that is, from its very inception. In founding the discipline of narratology (or at least naming it), Tzvetan Todorov's 1969 study of Boccaccio's *Decameron* borrowed categories from traditional grammars to compare narrated entities and agents with nouns, actions and events with verbs, and properties with adjectives (Todorov 1969). Gérard Genette (1980) drew on the same grammatical paradigm in using tense, mood, and voice to characterize the relations between the narrated world, the narrative in terms of which it is presented, and the narrating that enables the presentation. Before Genette and Todorov, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1986) had patterned his concept of *mythemes*, however quixotically, on Troubetzkoy's, Saussure's, and Jakobson's understanding of the phoneme as a bundle of distinctive features. And whereas Claude Bremond (1973, 1980) thought of himself as working to build a logic rather than a grammar of narrative, Roland Barthes's 1966 "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1977) started from the premise that discourse is the object of a "second linguistics" (Barthes 1977: 83), a linguistics for units of language beyond the sentence, in the context of which "[t]he general language [*langue*] of narrative is one (and clearly only one) of the idioms apt for consideration" (84).

The broad influence of linguistic models on narrative theory, then, is undeniable. But the precise nature, extent, and consequences of this influence—some might say contagion—remain open to question. Indeed, almost as soon as the early narratologists followed other structuralists in conferring on linguistics the status of a "pilot-science" (Dosse 1997, 1:59–66), metatheoretical inquiry into the relations between linguistic and narratological models became a basic research activity, a gesture in part constitutive of the field. There was, it is true, a brief, heady period of what might be called methodological utopianism, a fervent if short-lived belief in the power of linguistic models to revolutionize the study of narrative and more broadly literary and cultural phenomena. Such utopianism can be found in Barthes's 1966 "Introduction," and it is even more palpably evident in his programmatic essay titled "The Structuralist Activity" (1971b), first published two years earlier (cf. Herman 2001b). Almost immediately, however, the goal of narrative theorists modulated from a more or less uncritical celebration of linguistic paradigms into an effort to adapt certain kinds of models for certain descriptive and explanatory tasks.

Remarking that Barthes and Todorov had failed to identify "with precision the basic structural units of a story" (11), Gerald Prince's 1973 *Grammar of Stories* argued that researchers could build a more explicit and more complete model of narrative by replacing traditional grammatical categories with transformational-generative paradigms. Similarly, in 1975, Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* comprehensively reexamined the "The Linguistic Foundation" (1975a: 3–31) of work by theorists such as Barthes, Genette, Greimas, and Jakobson. Culler also devoted a chapter to the role of "Linguistic *Metaphors* in Criticism" (97–

109, my emphasis), the title of his chapter suggesting not a knee-jerk assimilation of linguistic models and methods, but rather a reflexive adaptation of certain elements of linguistic theory for certain kinds of narratological and literary-theoretical problems. In 1979 Marie-Laure Ryan was drawing on developments in generative semantics to sketch a second-order critique of Prince's syntactically oriented story grammar, and she was already suggesting ways to refine strategies for refining what was itself a rethinking of structuralist narratology! During the 1980s and 1990s, this process of narratological autocritique (and auto-autocritique) accelerated, as exemplified by the diverse contributions of Lubomír Doležel (1998), Monika Fludernik (1996), Manfred Jahn (1997, 1999), Uri Margolin (1984, 1986, 1990b, 1999), Thomas Pavel (1985a, 1986, 1989), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 1989), and Ryan (1991), among others. All of these researchers, despite the diversity of their orientations, arguments, and examples, have addressed core narratological problems by trying to ascertain what sorts of linguistic models can most fruitfully be brought to bear on them.

Doležel (1998), Pavel (1986), and Ryan (1991), for instance, have sought to overturn the structuralist moratorium on referential issues, using tools from model-theoretic or possible-worlds semantics to characterize the world-creating properties of narrative discourse. Meanwhile, Fludernik (1996) has drawn on methods for analyzing oral narrative to argue for a gradualist approach to the study of stories; for her a continuum stretches between the tales exchanged in face-to-face interaction and the most avant-garde literary narratives, with both conversational participants and readers of postmodern fiction using TELLING, VIEWING, ACTING, and EXPERIENCING parameters to organize their understanding of an unfolding narrative—that is, to process the spoken or written discourse as narrative in nature. The same emphasis on cognitively based frames and parameters informs Manfred Jahn's recent efforts to fashion a cognitive narratology. For Jahn (1997), higher-order knowledge representations or frames enable interpreters of stories to disambiguate pronominal references, decide whether a given sentence serves a descriptive or a thought-reporting function, and, more generally, adopt a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach to narrative processing. Readers attach emergent details about a character, situation, or event to a global interpretive frame (e.g., authorial narration, or figural narration) until such time as the details force a more or less

conscious reanalysis of the narrative from the perspective of a different or more expansive frame (Jahn 1999).

Approaches such as Jahn's and Fludernik's thus call for updating and enriching narratological theories by incorporating models and tools from discourse analysis, linguistic pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics. As I indicated earlier, this book sketches a different thesis, according to which both language theory and narrative theory can be viewed as resources for—or modular components of—cognitive science. From this perspective, the most pressing task becomes, not characterizing the role of linguistic or cognitive-linguistic models in narrative theory, but rather reorganizing the study of language and narrative in ways that allow for a new interlocking of methodologies, a new synthesis of research methods and aims. Both narratology and linguistics will contribute to rethinking narrative as a strategy for creating mental representations of the world. This sort of redrawing of the architecture of inquiry is, I contend, no trivial pursuit. For one thing, it suggests that narrative theorists should combine several methods of linguistic analysis to study aspects of narrative understanding. For another, it alters and enlargens the horizons of linguistic research itself, recasting language as a crucial interface between narrative and cognition.

In the approach outlined in the present book, the real target of narrative analysis is the process by which interpreters reconstruct the storyworlds encoded in narratives. To invoke terms and concepts that will be spelled out more fully later on in this introduction and in subsequent chapters: storyworlds are mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate—or make a deictic shift (Galbraith 1995; Segal 1995; Zubin and Hewitt 1995)—as they work to comprehend a narrative. As I discuss in more detail below, I here use the term *world* (and *storyworld*) in a manner more or less analogous with linguists' use of the term *discourse model*. A discourse model can be defined as a global mental representation enabling interlocutors to draw inferences about items and occurrences either explicitly or implicitly included in a discourse (Emmott 1997; Green 1989; Grosz and Sidner 1986; McKoon et al. 1993; Webber 1979). By the same token, and like Jahn's cognitive frames, storyworlds—or models for understanding narrative discourse—function in both a top-down and bottom-up way during narrative comprehension. They guide readers to assume that jets, cell phones, and plasma

guns do not exist in the world of *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert 1992). But they are also subject to being updated, revised, or even abandoned with the accretion of textual cues, as when the reader of John Lanchester's *The Debt to Pleasure* (1996) gradually realizes that the storyworld is not at all the way its narrator, a homicidal gourmand, says it is.[3]

Fundamentally, then, narrative comprehension is a process of (re)constructing storyworlds on the basis of textual cues and the inferences that they make possible. For heuristic purposes, my study treats this process as decomposable into two broad modeling tasks, each with its associated subtasks, and each requiring a synthesis of narratological and linguistic paradigms for its description and analysis. The first task is that of establishing, at a relatively local level, an inventory of what can be called principles for narrative microdesigns. Such principles bear on interpreters' sense of what is going on—what needs to be mentally modeled—during comparatively short stretches of the unfolding storyworld. These "small" design principles include coding strategies used to apportion particular facets of storyworlds into *states*, *events*, and *actions* (the subject of chapter 1); they also encompass the fashioning of action structures in terms of which individual behaviors can be identified as elements of somewhat larger sequences of occurrences (as discussed in chapter 2). In actuality, techniques for building representations of (sequences of) actions, like some of the other aspects of narrative divided between parts 1 and 2 of the book, straddle the border between local and global principles of storyworld design—between narrative microdesigns and narrative macrodesigns.

My first two chapters, in any event, draw on different theoretical resources to characterize the design principles at issue. Chapter 1 explores narratological ramifications of the way (English) verbs semantically encode states, events, and actions—with actions being interpretable as a subtype of events, consisting of events that are deliberate, executable, and more or less temporally bounded. The chapter suggests that differences between narrative genres—such as epic, news reports, psychological novels, and ghost stories—can be correlated with different preference rankings for states, events, and actions of various sorts. (I return to the concepts of *preference rankings* and *preference rules* below.) Meanwhile, chapter 2 reviews some narratological implications of the models of human behavior developed by theorists of action rather than by researchers in the field of linguistics semantics.

Chapter 3 then turns to cognitive-scientific notions such as *scripts*, *plans*, and *schemata* to extend the approach initiated in my first two chapters. Specifically, chapter 3 examines how interpreters of stories draw on prestored knowledge representations, especially those involving stereotyped sequences of actions and events, to interpret action structures as narratively organized. This chapter also argues that the amount of narrativity a story has—the degree to which it is amenable to being processed as a narrative—can be correlated with how richly it blends what Jerome Bruner (1991) calls "canonicity and breach," or stereotypic and nonstereotypic knowledge. Narrative microdesigns include, as well, *participant roles* by virtue of which individuals and entities more or less centrally and obligatorily involved in what goes on can be distinguished from various sorts of *circumstances* also populating storyworlds. Chapter 4 draws on ideas developed by workers in the fields of functional grammar and linguistic semantics to characterize how readers, listeners, and viewers make inferences about participant roles and relations during narrative comprehension. Interpreters parse storyworlds into participants and circumstances, and then match participants with an inventory of potential roles, as part of the process of building up the subclass of mental representations that I call *action structures*. What is more, participants in storyworlds themselves use *dialogues* and *styles* to accomplish communicative actions that are embedded within the overarching act of narrative communication. Using recent developments in the fields of discourse analysis, linguistic pragmatics, and sociolinguistics, chapter 5 focuses on these metacommunicative dimensions of stories.

The second set of modeling tasks studied in this book encompasses principles for narrative macrodesigns. Relevant here are "large" design principles determining not so much the individual constituents or localized features as the overall contours, the dominant "feel," of the storyworld being mentally modeled. Narrative macrodesigns determine, for example, whether narrated events can be located definitely in time, or whether their temporalization is left strategically inexact, thanks to fuzzy or indeterminate temporal ordering. Drawing on linguistic and philosophical approaches to the problem of time, as well as concepts growing out of research on "fuzzy logic" (Zadeh 1965), chapter 6 discusses these issues under the heading of temporalities, with chapter 7 turning to complementary processes of *spatialization* in narrative com-

prehension. Although many theorists of narrative have accentuated its temporal properties—such that a story, for Seymour Chatman (1990), can defined as a sequentially organized representation of a sequence of events—chapter 7 argues that understanding a narrative also requires spatializing or "cognitively mapping" the storyworld it conveys. Building on A. J. Greimas's prescient remarks concerning spatial programming in narrative (Greimas 1988; Greimas and Courtés 1983), this chapter incorporates recent linguistic research on spatial reference to argue that making sense of a story entails situating participants and other entities in emergent networks of foreground-background relationships. Story comprehension also entails mapping the trajectories of individuals and objects as they move or are moved along narratively salient paths.

Intimately related to such processes of spatialization are those of perspective taking, discussed in chapter 8. One of the principal means of adopting vantage points on people, places, things, actions, and events, stories index modes of perspective taking by way of personal pronouns, definite and indefinite articles, verbs of perception, cognition, and emotion, tenses and verbal moods, and evaluative lexical items and marked syntax. Focusing on verbal moods in particular as a resource for perspective taking in narrative, chapter 8 shows how some narratives crucially involve "hypothetical focalization," or the use of hypotheses, framed by a narrator or a character, about what might have been seen or perceived in the storyworld.

My last chapter, chapter 9, examines another principle bearing on the macrodesign of storyworlds. I call this principle *contextual anchoring*, or the process by which cues in narrative discourse trigger recipients to establish a more or less direct or oblique relationship between the stories they are interpreting and the contexts in which they are interpreting them. Contextual anchoring, enabled by mechanisms of address, deictic references, and other textual prompts, is thus a way of characterizing the interface between stories and their interpreters. Previous narrative theorists have developed concepts such as "the narratee" (G. Prince 1980b, 1982, 1985, 1987) and "the narrative audience" (Rabinowitz 1996) to help describe this same interface. Using Edna O'Brien's 1970 novel *A Pagan Place* as a case study in second-person narration, chapter 9 argues that earlier narratological concepts can be rethought in productive ways if they are construed as capturing particular dimensions of contextual anchoring. Again, bringing narrative theory into closer contact with linguistic research on the text-context interface, my discussion of contextual anchoring calls not just for a new synthesis of narrative-theoretical approaches but also for a new interlinking of narratological and linguistic models under the auspices of cognitive science.

As should already be apparent, in order to begin conducting this inventory of local and global principles for storyworld design (an inventory that does not purport to be exhaustive), narrative analysts must address a whole cluster of problems, each quite formidable in its own right. What distinguishes an event from a state? What, exactly, constitutes an action? How do narratives at once depend on and enable interpretation of events as goal-directed actions? On the basis of what cognitive mechanisms do readers or listeners of narratives form inferences about sequential relationships *between* actions, and in what textual features are those inferences anchored? Does narrative itself (operating in a feedback loop of some sort) help shape people's ability to emplot their experiences, to mold their worlds into storyworlds? How do inferences about participant roles bear on the process of narrative comprehension; conversely, how do speech representations in narrative bear on inferences about participant roles? What sorts of textual prompts cue interpreters to draw inferences about the spatiotemporal profile of storyworlds, and how are those inferences additionally constrained by modes of perspective taking also indexed by cues in the discourse? Why does contextual anchoring operate differently in (certain styles of) second-person narration than in first- or third-person narratives featuring a fully characterized intradiegetic narratee? The chapters that follow address these (and related) questions in turn. In the remainder of this introduction, I focus more narrowly on the notion of *storyworld*. My aim is to provide a better sense of my overall approach and how it relates to—adapts, enriches, reconfigures—other frameworks for studying stories.

Storyworlds: A Sketch

I return to my initial definition of storyworlds as mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate—or make a deictic shift—as they work to comprehend a narrative. As a special type of mental or dis-

course model (the latter term borrowed from research on linguistic pragmatics and natural language processing), storyworlds, again, can be viewed as global mental representations enabling interpreters to draw inferences about items and occurrences either explicitly or implicitly included in a narrative. But this initial formulation leaves much underspecified. What, exactly, is a mental model, a world, a deictic shift, or, for that matter, a narrative? Further, in what ways can the models supporting narrative comprehension, that is, storyworlds, be distinguished from the mental representations on which interpreters draw in trying to understand a word problem on a calculus exam, a six-step recipe for miso soup, a vociferous argument between colleagues at work, or the paragraph of which these very words form a part? And how precisely do textual, visual, auditory, or other cues anchor themselves in—evoke—storyworlds?

To take the last question first, it is worth pointing out that Robert Wilensky (1982) critiqued the entire "story grammar enterprise" (429) as deriving from a basic category mistake, an erroneous identification of narrative with a particular format that can be used to express narrative. For Wilensky, "the notion story refers to actions, events, goals, or other mental objects" and not to words, sentences, or other linguistic objects (425; cf. Emmott 1994, 1997). Since "the notion of storiness can be separated from the notion of a text" (428), Wilensky proposed analyzing narrative structures not in terms of grammatical relations but rather by way of story schemata, "in the sense of mental frame-like structures that define storiness, but which are related to story texts in complex ways. . . . such schemata would not characterize texts, but could only be related to them in very complex ways" (429).[4] Wilensky's critique hinged on a narrow interpretation of grammar as an explanatory (and predictive) apparatus concerned with linguistic patterns only. In a study published around the same time, Jean Matter Mandler (1984) argued for a broader interpretation of grammar as "merely a rule system, describing materials in terms of a set of units and the ways in which the units are sequenced" (19).[5] The units in question need not be linguistic, and story grammars could conceivably be transmedial, or applicable to all semiotic formats supporting narrative. Thus, "[t]he contention of all story grammars is that stories have an underlying, or base, structure that remains relatively invariant in spite of gross differences in content from story to story. This structure consists of a number of ordered constituents," which in the case of traditional stories include a setting and an episode, which is in turn decomposable into a BEGINNING that causes a DEVELOPMENT that causes an ENDING (Mandler 1984: 22, 24; cf. Rumelhart 1975).

In his own critique of story grammars, however, P. N. Johnson-Laird (1983: 361–70) restates Wilensky's objection in different terms. Commenting on the problem of categorizing narrative units, Johnson-Laird remarks:

> A real difficulty . . . is to know what counts as an instance of such categories as SETTING, EVENT, REACTION. No story grammarian has ever formulated an effective procedure for determining the membership of such categories. . . . The very fact that one is not certain about [whether a given sentence falls under, say, the category of EVENT or REACTION] illustrates the problem. In a grammar for a language, the categories NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, and so on, can be defined by enumerating the sets of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on. . . . If, however, there is no way of specifying the lowest categories in the trees generated by story grammars, then these grammars have little explanatory value. (362–63)

This same problem resurfaces, in another context, in chapter 4; the issue there is how interpreters of stories match individuals and entities with inventories of participant roles (e.g., Agent, Patient, Experiencer). Structuralist theories of narrative actants, such as the one proposed by A. J. Greimas (1983, 1987), acknowledged that relations between roles and entities are both one-many and many-one. One storyworld participant can play any number of roles over the course of a narrative, and conversely many different participants can play a given role. But, in consequence, the theory of actants does not seem to afford a basis for establishing principled, nonrandom relations between textual cues and inferences about participants—or, in Wilensky's terms, between linguistic objects and mental objects. Rather than explaining how interpreters match participants with roles, the theory posits such matches, in an ad hoc way, on the basis of a prior (unstated) gloss of the particular story being analyzed (see chapter 4 and also Hendricks 1967). Likewise, according to Johnson-Laird, workers in the field of story grammar could propose the analyses they did "only because they [assumed an understanding] of the story; such analyses cannot be derived without the exercise of intuition based on such an understanding" (1983: 363).

Yet, as I go on to argue in chapter 4, admitting a one-many and

many-one relation between linguistic objects and mental objects is not tantamount to giving up on the effort to map textual cues onto storyworld components. As William Frawley (1992) points out, languages tend probablistically to code things, or more precisely phenomena taking on the role of things in mentally projected worlds, by way of nouns, whereas events tend to surface linguistically as verbs. In other words, the world's languages show (a more or less pronounced) preference for this distributional pattern, although the preferred pattern does not dictate that events or event-like phenomena can never surface in any language in the form of nouns, nor that things or thing-like phenomena can never be coded by way of verbs. Analogously, in stories there are probablistic, preference-based correlations between mental objects and linguistic (or, more broadly, semiotic) objects, not a simple, transparent link between textual cues and narrative micro- and macrodesigns. As discussed in chapter 6, for example, there is more than one way for a narrative to code events as temporally indeterminate or "fuzzy," just as the functions of fuzzy temporality will vary across different kinds of stories. Hence there are multiple, and variable, links between markers of temporal indeterminacy and the states, events, and actions that a narrative may cue recipients to interpret as only partially ordered (or perhaps not ordered at all) in the storyworld. But the complexity of the link between linguistic and mental objects does not negate its existence; nor should complexity be equated with randomness, difficult-to-detect patterning with mere patternlessness. Narrative interpretation does unfold, after all, within certain parameters and does obey certain norms. I would be wrong to construe Claudius as Hamlet's close ally, or read Kafka's *The Trial* as externally focalized, that is, not refracted through the perspective of Josef K. Similarly, some textual cues (e.g., markers associated with dialogues or styles, or prompts enabling interpreters to spatialize storyworlds) will not evoke fuzzy temporality. And different kinds of stories—or stories presented in different media—may show a preference for different subsets of the cues that do mark temporal indeterminacy. Thus the real task for narrative analysts—a task only begun in the present study—is to *chart constraints on the variable patterning of textual cues with the mental representations that make up storyworlds.*[6]

Characterizing the relations between textual cues and storyworlds as multiple, variable, and probabilistic or preference based, however, leaves unanswered a number of the questions with which I began this section. The subsections that follow seek to address those questions by situating the concept of *storyworlds* in the very rich research traditions that have already grown up around narrative.[7]

Storyworld versus Story

The term *storyworld* can be compared, first, with *story*, a term of art used by narratologists to designate *what* happened as opposed to the *way* in which what happened is recounted; the word *discourse* is reserved, in this context, for the *manner* rather than the *matter* of narrative presentation (Chatman 1978). As Gerald Prince (1987) puts it, drawing on many cognate terms that have been proposed over the years by theorists of narrative, story can be defined as

> The content plane of narrative as opposed to its expression plane or discourse [cf. Hjelmslev 1954, 1967]; the "what" of a narrative as opposed to its "how"; the narrated as opposed to the narrating; the fiction as opposed to the narration (in Ricardou's sense of the terms); the existents and events represented in a narrative. . . . [The story consists of the] fabula (or basic materials arranged into a plot) as opposed to the sjuzhet or plot. (91)

As I go on to discuss in chapter 6, in what can be called the classical, structuralist tradition of narratology—a research tradition that had its beginnings in Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968) and Victor Shklovsky's (1990) analyses of plot structure before being systematized by French, Dutch, German, Israeli, and North American theorists in the 1960s to 1980s—the distinction between story and discourse has proven to be an important and much-used resource for analysts of narrative. Chapter 6 discusses aspects of narrative temporality that require a rethinking of classical approaches to the problem of order, that is, the ordering of events in the discourse vis-à-vis the order in which those events can be inferred to have occurred in the story. Here I mean to suggest, in more general terms, the advantages of talking about the storyworld instead of the story.

For one thing, the term *storyworld* better captures what might be called the ecology of narrative interpretation. In trying to make sense of a narrative, interpreters attempt to reconstruct not just what happened—who did what to or with whom, for how long, how often and in what order—but also the surrounding context or environment embed-

ding existents, their attributes, and the actions and events in which they are more or less centrally involved. As I emphasize in chapter 7, this surrounding environment, which is always perspectivally filtered (chapter 8), is not just temporally but spatiotemporally structured, although classical treatments of story tend to emphasize sequence over space. Further, as discussed in chapter 2, to make sense of actions performed by narrative participants, interpreters embed those actions in what Georg Henrik von Wright (1966) called the larger acting situation that forms an essential component of the description of any action. An action becomes perceptible and salient only because of the acting situation, or "opportunity for action," in which it unfolds, and that consists of the state in which the world would have been had it not been for the action at issue (von Wright 1966: 123–24). Hamlet's stabbing of Polonius takes on significance when it is contrasted with the way the world would have been had he not slain the officious adviser. More generally, *storyworld* points to the way interpreters of narrative reconstruct a sequence of states, events, and actions not just additively or incrementally but integratively or "ecologically"; recipients do not just attempt to piece together bits of action into a linear timeline but furthermore try to measure the significance of the timeline that emerges against other possible courses of development in the world in which narrated occurrences take place (cf. Ryan 1991: 109–74). Narrative understanding requires determining how the actions and events recounted relate to what might have happened in the past, what could be happening (alternatively) in the present, and what may yet happen as a result of what already has come about. The importance of such processing strategies in narrative contexts is part of what motivates my shift from story to story*world*.

Storyworlds, Deictic Centers, and Possible Worlds

Also motivating my terminological shift is the very productive use that narrative theorists have made of the idea of *worlds* in recent years. In this respect, I use *storyworld* to suggest something of the world-creating power of narrative, its ability to transport interpreters from the here and now of face-to-face interaction, or the space-time coordinates of an encounter with a printed text or a cinematic narrative, to the here and now that constitute the deictic center of the world being told about. As Erwin M. Segal (1995) puts it,

> when one reads [or views, or hears] a narrative as it is meant to be read [seen, heard], he or she is often required to take a cognitive stance within the world of the narrative. A location within the world of the narrative serves as the center from which the sentences are interpreted. In particular, deictic terms such as here and now refer to this conceptual location. It is thus the deictic center. DST [Deictic Shift Theory] is a theory that states that the deictic center often shifts from the environmental situation in which the text is encountered to a locus within a mental model representing the world of the discourse.[8] (15; cf. Galbraith 1995; Zubin and Hewitt 1995)

To rephrase this point using a parallel theoretical vocabulary, making sense of narrative requires relocating to the space-time coordinates organizing perception and interpretation of possible worlds more or less distinct from the world that tellers and interpreters of stories treat as actual (Doležel 1998; Pavel 1986; Ryan 1991; see also chapter 8). As Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) has shown, when interpreting fictional narratives, recipients relocate to an alternative possible world, with a number of factors determining the accessibility relations between the fictional and the actual world (31–47).[9] For example, the fictional world may or may not contain the same objects as the world deemed actual, and those objects may or may not have the same sorts of properties. There may or may not be chairs in the fictional world, and those chairs may or may not be larger than forks and governed by the laws of gravity. Hence, in Ryan's terms, "Fiction is characterized by the open gesture of recentering, through which an APW [alternative possible world] is placed at the center of the conceptual universe" (26). Or, as Segal (1995) puts it, "[I]n fictional narrative, readers and authors shift their deictic center from the real-world situation to an image of themselves at a location within the story world. This location is represented as a cognitive structure often containing the elements of a particular time and place within the fictional world, or even within the subjective space of a fictional character" (15).

Meanwhile, interpreting nonfictional (retrospective) narratives entails relocating not to an alternative possible world but to a possible world that is an earlier—and perhaps competing—version of the world deemed actual. More than one story can be told about the discovery of antibiotics or the fall of Rome or what happened in Dublin, Ireland, during the Easter Uprising of 1916. Like interpreters of fiction, interpreters of any of these narratives must relocate from "the environmental

situation in which the text is encountered" to a possible world, a story-world, a deictic center. But fictions encode "stand-alone" storyworlds, which cannot be falsified by virtue of their relation to other storyworlds (cf. Cohn 1999; Ryan 1997, forthcoming). Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1993), for example, does not falsify Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1960) but rather supplements it; in this process, which Lubomír Doležel (1998: 199–226) has called "literary transduction," one fictional world extends the scope of another by sketching a "successor world" that may precede the "protoworld" in time, feature a different constellation of participants, and fill in otherwise irrecoverable gaps in the protoworld. By contrast, nonfictional narratives about medical breakthroughs or the rise and fall of an ancient civilization can be compared with and falsified by other, competing accounts of these events. An invidious distinction can be drawn between a narrative about the Easter Uprising that pits the Irish against the Spartans or the Turks and one that portrays English colonialism as the target of the uprising. The storyworlds of historical narratives, in short, stand in a different relation to one another than do the storyworlds of fictional narratives—even when those fictional narratives, through transduction, parallel, complement, or polemicize against other, earlier fictions.[10]

The broader point that I wish to emphasize here is that, as I use the term in this study, *storyworld* applies both to fictional and nonfictional narratives. All narratives have world-creating power, even though, depending on the kind of narrative involved, interpreters bring to bear on those storyworlds different evaluative criteria. Worth stressing, too, is that the power of narrative to create worlds goes a long way toward explaining its immersiveness, its ability to transport interpreters into places and times they must occupy for the purposes of narrative comprehension (Gerrig 1993; Ryan 2000; K. Young 1987). Again, it would be difficult to account for the immersive potential of stories by appeal to structuralist notions of *story*, that is, strictly in terms of events and existents arranged into a plot by the narrative presentation. Interpreters of narrative do not merely reconstruct a sequence of events and a set of existents but imaginatively (emotionally, viscerally) inhabit a world in which, besides happening and existing, things matter, agitate, exalt, repulse, provide grounds for laughter and grief, and so on—both for narrative participants and for interpreters of the story. More than reconstructed timelines and inventories of existents, storyworlds are mentally

and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response, encompassing sympathy, the drawing of causal inferences, identification, evaluation, suspense, and so on.

Mental Models, Discourse Models, and Contextual Frames

Most broadly, then, this book construes storyworlds as mental models of a special sort.[11] It will require the whole of this study to outline the nature and scope of the mental models supporting narrative understanding, but a few preliminary comments may help contextualize the account I develop over the course of subsequent chapters.

In his groundbreaking work, Johnson-Laird (1983) describes how mental models emerged as theoretical constructs designed to make sense of inferences, both explicit and implicit (397). Starting from the deceptively simple notion that thinking is the manipulation of internal representations of the world (x; cf. Craik 1943), Johnson-Laird argues that mental models can better account for processes of inference than can the formal rules of a "mental logic" postulated by other researchers (24–34). Indeed,

> It is now plausible to suppose that mental models play a central and unifying role in representing objects, states of affairs, sequences of events, the way the world is, and the social and psychological actions of daily life. They enable individuals to make inferences and predictions, to understand phenomena, to decide what action to take and to control its execution, and above all to experience events by proxy; they allow language to be used to create representations comparable to those deriving from direct acquaintance with the world; and they relate words to the world by way of conception and perception. (1983: 397)

Reviewing constraints on the sorts of mental representations that can be included in the set of possible mental models (e.g., computational tractability, finiteness of size, and parsimony in the mapping of mental models into states of affairs), Johnson-Laird (422–30) proposes a typology that divides mental models into six major types of physical models (relational, spatial, temporal, kinematic, dynamic, and image) and four major types of conceptual models (monadic, relational, metalinguistic, and set-theoretic). Examining the merits of this typology, not to mention its relation to subsequent research in the domain of cognitive psy-

chology, would take me too far afield. Instead, I focus in what follows on some of the implications of a mental-models approach to language comprehension in particular. More specifically still, my concern is how mental models bear on the processing of texts or discourses, including texts or discourses that are narratively organized.

Like possible worlds, which "can be understood as abstract collections of states of affairs, distinct from the statements describing those states" (Pavel 1986: 50), mental models can be characterized in general terms as nonlinguistic representations of the situation(s) described by a sentence or a set of sentences, that is, a discourse (R. Stevenson 1996: 56).[12] In Rosemary J. Stevenson's (1996) account, which is based on Johnson-Laird's work, a mental model

> is structurally similar to part of the world rather than to any linguistic structure, as it represents the state of affairs described by the discourse, not the discourse itself. Information that is not explicitly mentioned in a discourse can be included in a mental model by means of inferences from general knowledge arising in conjunction with the propositional representation [of the discourse]. . . . This abstract conceptual representation can be thought of as a mental model of the described situation. (56)

Alan Garnham and Jane Oakhill (1996) insist, similarly, on the difference between the mental representation of a text and its linguistic representations; they also agree with Stevenson in arguing that text understanding is a constructive process, in which "information that is explicit in the text (almost always) has to be combined with relevant knowledge about the world" (316; cf. Speelman and Kirsner 1990; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983: 336–51).[13] What is more, in a mental-models theory of language comprehension, understanding a text can be viewed as an integrative process rather than a concatenation of sentence representations: "The mental model of a text constructed to a particular point forms (part of) the context for the interpretation of the next clause of the text. This process of interpretation changes the context by incrementing the model, and the new model forms (part of) the context for the interpretation of the next clause" (316). As Garnham and Oakhill (1996) see it, the most important aspect of this process of integration is "the establishment of referential links. In the mental models framework, establishing a referential link means identifying something in the world that one of the tokens in the model-so-far stands for as the referent of a linguistic expression in the current clause" (320). Hence the mental-

models theory of text understanding claims that the inferences given priority during comprehension are those needed to establish the referents of the referring expressions in the current clause (Garnham and Oakhill 1996: 322). (Below I return to the question of whether additional types of inference need to be prioritized during the processing of a narrative text.)

Ideas associated with the mental-models approach also inform the notion of *discourse models* propounded by linguists adopting a broadly cognitive-scientific approach to language understanding. *Discourse models* can be defined as emergent, dynamic interpretive frames that interlocutors collaboratively construct in order to make sense of an ongoing stretch of talk. At the basis of theories about discourse models is a rejection of what Michael J. Reddy (1979) termed "the conduit metaphor," according to which linguistic expressions and other semiotic formats can be viewed as mere vessels for channeling back and forth thoughts, ideas, meanings (cf. Green 1989: 10–13). Reddy suggested, instead, that sentences are like blueprints, planned artifacts whose design is tailored to the goal of enabling an interlocutor to reconstruct the sets of discourse entities after which the blueprints are patterned. In contrast with the conduit metaphor, which blames miscommunication on a poorly chosen linguistic vessel, the blueprint analogy predicts that wholly successful interpretation of linguistic designs will be rare—given the complexity of the processes involved in planning, executing, and making sense of the blueprints. Just interpreting the blueprints, for example, requires making "inferences about what the utterer believes about what the addressee believes, and about what effect the utterer intends the utterance to have" (Green 1989: 11). But the upshot of substituting blueprints for conduits is a rethinking of what goes on when people use language to communicate. The objective of discourse is not to send ideas back and forth like so many packages, more or less carefully wrapped. Rather, in Bonnie Lynn Webber's (1979) influential account, the "objective of discourse is to communicate a model: the speaker has a model of some situation which, for one reason or another, s/he wishes to communicate to a listener. Thus the ensuing discourse is, at one level, an attempt by the speaker to direct the listener in synthesizing a similar model" (21). More recently, but in the same spirit, Gail McKoon, Gregory Ward, Roger Ratcliff, and Richard Sproat (1993) have characterized

> A discourse model [as] the representation of information that is built during comprehension of a text or discourse. As comprehension proceeds through a text, the discourse model is continually updated to reflect the impact of new input on earlier information. . . . [T]he model is made up of the [conceptual] entities evoked by linguistic and contextual information, the relations among the entities, and their accessibilities relative to potential referential cues.[14] (72)

One of the guiding questions of this book is whether *storyworlds*, my term for models built up on the basis of cues contained in narrative discourse, have special properties that distinguish them from other sorts of discourse models.[15] For one thing, storytellers must communicate a model for understanding not only how referents stand in particular relation to one another in the narrated world but also how some of these referents can be construed as participants more or less centrally involved in states of affairs, processes, events. Thus, as Gillian Brown (1995: 142–51) notes, tracking participants in narratives requires more than just incorporating change-of-state predicates into an emergent discourse interpretation; it also requires managing "prototypical expectations" about participant roles encoded in the telling of the story:

> As [people engaged in narrative communication] consider [an] imagined or remembered scene, they scan between the . . . major participants, recalling what they have seen or been told that each of them does. It is these actions which they have seen or been told about which most crucially identify and characterise the individual actors in their continually updated memory of the events. The linguistic identification here is regularly achieved not by distinctive noun phrases . . . but by the sequence of actions which each undertakes, which constitute crucial distinguishing characteristics. (149; cf. G. Brown and Yule 1983: 214–22; Emmott 1997: 37–38; Ryan 1991: 124–47)

Along the same lines, and starting from the premise that any adequate theory of reference in discourse must incorporate the notion of mental representations, Catherine Emmott (1997) has developed powerful new tools for the study of third-person pronouns denoting participants in narratives.[16] Emmott's particular concern is how what she calls *contexts*, or spatiotemporal nodes inhabited by configurations of individuals and entities, constrain pronoun interpretation. Shifts in context—such as shifts from a flashback to the main narrative—alter the pool of potential referents for a pronoun and may enable a pronoun to be interpreted

without an antecedent. Information about contexts attaches itself to mental representations that Emmott terms *contextual frames*. An action performed by (or on) a given configuration of participants is necessarily indexed to a particular context and must be viewed within that context, even if the context is never fully reactivated (after its initial mention) linguistically. A participant is said to be *bound* to a contextual frame, and when one particular contextual frame becomes the main focus of attention for the reader, it is said to be *primed*. In the case of *frame modification*, the same contextual frame remains primed, but the frame has to be altered to reflect a change in the participant group. In *frame switch*, one contextual frame replaces another, while in *frame recall* a previously primed frame is reinstated. In turn, frame switch and recall can be either *instantaneous* or *progressive*. Finally, Emmott uses the term *enactors* to name the different versions of participants encountered in narrative flashbacks. Contextual monitoring is necessary to keep track of the current enactor because flashback time is not always signaled by verb aspect, for example. Indeed, there can be frame participant ambiguity (i.e., uncertainty about who is present in a context); another challenge is the monitoring of covert participants in the action (i.e., participants whose presence can be inferred but is not explicitly marked by textual cues).

Emmott's approach suggests, then, that special or distinctive interpretive processes are required to construct discourse models in narrative contexts—to build storyworlds. In essence, the purpose of the present study is to advance the hypothesis that there are, besides the processes that Emmott associates with contextual monitoring, further distinctive processes involved in the creation of storyworlds. My purpose, as well, is to inventory and describe some of these additional requirements for narrative understanding—requirements that impinge, in the form of cognitive preferences, on both narrative microdesigns and narrative macrodesigns. From one perspective, the requirements can be viewed as *problems* of narrative interpretation; from another, as sets of preferences that make it *possible* to make sense of the world in narrative terms.

Drawing on a variety of narratives as my tutor texts, I explore how interpreters of stories use preference-rule systems not only to monitor the roles and relations of participants across shifts in context but also to determine how their attributes and doings (including how and with

whom they speak) pertain to larger sequences of states, actions, and events. Further, different kinds of stories display different preferences with respect to the temporal ordering of states, actions, and events. Some narratives seek to minimize temporal indeterminacy (or "fuzzy temporality") of the sort explored in chapter 6; but others, affiliating themselves with avant-garde, experimental narrative genres, openly and productively exploit what I characterize as modes of polychrony. Thus, understanding a narrative requires, in part, using relevant cues to reconstruct the temporal profile of the emergent storyworld—a profile of which definite sequence is only more or less, not absolutely, constitutive.

Other distinctive processes supporting narrative comprehension include those required to spatialize storyworlds; at issue is the use of linguistic or more broadly semiotic cues to map the trajectories (or network of trajectories) emerging over time as entities and individuals trace paths through the narrated world. Again, different kinds of narrative prompt different modes of spatialization. Certain avant-garde narratives, such as Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* (1967), inhibit readers' efforts to locate things in space, relying on, even as they disrupt, default preferences for spatialization. Equally crucial for storyworld reconstruction are interpretive processes associated with perspective taking and contextual anchoring, as described in chapters 8 and 9. To comprehend a story, interpreters must be able to grasp the mode or modes of perspectival filtering that predominate within it. In other words, to understand a narrative, readers, listeners, and viewers must scan for the cues that index the storyworld as seen (or cognized) from a particular vantage-point, or range of vantage-points. Interpreters must also scan for cues that index the storyworld as more or less firmly anchored in the (spatiotemporal) contexts in which it is being interpreted.

A few final remarks about the title of this study. In characterizing the requirements for narrative understanding as both problems of interpretation and possibilities for narrative imagining, I have already tried to explain why I chose the second part of my title.[17] In using the phrase *story logic* in the first part, I mean to suggest that stories both have a logic and are a logic in their own right. The logic that narratives have is the more explicit focus of the chapters that follow; this logic is, as I go on to argue, preference based, with different kinds of narrative preferring different blends of states, actions, and events, different proportions of

stereotypic and nonstereotypic knowledge, different strategies for distributing participant roles among individuals and entities in the storyworld, and so on. Like other preference-based logics, story logic involves gradient and prototypical situations, properties, and relations, as opposed to absolute, "either-or" situations, properties, and relations. The rules of story logic are preference rules in the sense specified by William Frawley (1992): "a statement in probabilistic form of the relative strength of two or more items for interpretation relative to some property or properties" (57; cf. chapter 1, note 3).

Subtending my claims about the kind of logic that stories have, however, is my claim that stories also constitute a logic of their own. That logic is an unreplaceable resource for structuring and comprehending experience, a distinctive way of coming to terms with time, process, change.[18] Relevant here are ethnomethodological theories about the logic of everyday practices—theories that, in Harold Garfinkel's (1967) original formulation, construe "practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life" (11). From an ethnomethodological perspective, the best way to study story logic is to examine how people use stories as contextually situated practices—that is, to investigate how members of story-using groups, which include all human cultures and subcultures, design and interpret narratives in response to the exigencies of their everyday lives. As Garfinkel puts it,

> In exactly the ways that a setting is organized, it *consists* of members' methods for making evident that setting's ways as clear, coherent, planful, consistent, chosen, knowable, uniform, reproducible connections,—i.e., rational connections. In exactly the way that persons are members to organized affairs, they are engaged in serious and practical work of detecting, demonstrating, persuading through displays in the ordinary occasions of their interactions the appearances of consistent, coherent, clear, chosen, planful arrangements. In exactly the ways in which a setting is organized, it *consists* of methods whereby its members are provided with accounts of the setting as countable, storyable, proverbial, comparable, picturable, representable—i.e., accountable events. (1967: 34)

Although this book focuses chiefly on written, literary narratives, I start from the premise that these narratives, too, need to be studied as part of situated practice, in a broad sense. The narratives considered here can

be seen as "indexical," in Garfinkel's usage of that term, insofar as they reveal something crucial about the way people use stories as an (organized and artful) everyday activity. True, most of the narratives examined here did not issue from contexts of face-to-face interaction, the usual province of ethnomethodological research. Yet the narratives under study did emerge from humans' shared attempts to make sense of and manage the complexities of experience. It is therefore legitimate, as I see it, to explore ways in which the narratives involve "displays" of members' understandings of the world as "storyable," or subject to narrative imagining. Story logic, in this sense, is the logic by virtue of which people (including writers) know when, how, and why to use stories to enable themselves and others to find their way in the world.[19]

Paired with the foregoing remarks, my epigram from Chaucer suggests that the Pardoner knew what he was doing in making stories—or, more precisely, exempla—the foundation of his hypocritical enterprise. Story logic is a powerful tool for rendering the world cognizable, manageable, and rememberable. But where the Pardoner goes wrong is in his assumption that only "lewed [= ignorant] peple loven tales olde." Narrative is not a cognitive crutch for those who cannot manage to think in more rigorous ways, but rather a basic and general strategy for making sense of experience. Without this strategy, arguably, none of us could "wel reporte and holde" our assumptions, beliefs, values, and hopes. Indeed, Chaucer's *Tales* themselves provide the best proof that the Pardoner errs in thinking himself beyond and above narrative. The Pardoner himself is known and remembered because of the storyworld he inhabits; denigrating narrative, he is a creature of story. And it is with characteristic blindness that the Pardoner uses a narrative in his attempt to stigmatize narrative. It is not going too far, I think, to say that the Pardoner's moral failure consists in his misunderstanding of narrative as (only) an instrument of deception. Stories can certainly be used to mislead and confuse; the Pardoner's *modus operandi* highlights some very real problems of narrative interpretation. At the same time, however, Chaucer's narrative *about* the Pardoner suggests the rich cognitive possibilities that stories afford. What the Pardoner does not grasp, but what his own situation within a narrative underscores, is that stories provide an optimal context in which to dispel confusion about human beings' motivations and aims. Story logic also helps illuminate, and is illuminated by, the wider world in which such motivations and aims take shape.

PART ONE

Narrative Microdesigns

Contents