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39 Imagination in Discourse

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0 Introduction

Taking part in discourse often demands a vivid imagination. In the depths of World War I, Franz Kafka traveled from Prague to Munich to give a public reading of his yet to be published short story "The Penal Colony." Max Pulver (1953: 52) described hearing Kafka speak (our translation):

> With his first words, an indistinct smell of blood seemed to spread out, and an extraordinarily faint taste settled on my lips. His voice might have sounded apologetic, but it forced its pictures into me with razor sharpness, like icy needles of acute torment. It wasn't just that the torture and instruments of torture were described in the executioners' words of suppressed ecstasy. It was that the listener himself was dragged into this hellish torture. He lay as a victim on the gently rocking rack, and each new word, like a new thorn, tore slowly into his back.

Pulver was not alone in his experience. Soon one woman fainted and had to be carried out, and then so did two more. Many in the audience fled before they were overwhelmed by Kafka's words. By the end, there was almost no one left in the hall.

At the heart of Kafka's story is what he intended us to *experience* from it. But how is it possible for words – mere words – to get people to smell blood, feel pain, faint, and flee? Kafka's audience may seem old-fashioned in their reactions, but most of us have had similar experiences. At the cinema, we have felt fear, anger, elation, and tension, and found ourselves crying, hiding our eyes, or leaving the theater. With novels, we have seen the images sketched for us and felt fear, anger, excitement, suspense, and sexual arousal. How is it possible for us to experience such things about fictional objects?

A crucial part of the answer is imagination. But what is imagination, and how does it work? In this chapter, we will describe the challenges that imagination poses for accounts of discourse and then evaluate several answers to these challenges. One of the greatest challenges is to explain what happened to Kafka's audience.

1 Imagination in Narratives

When people tell stories, and when they listen to them, they think about what is going on in the worlds being described. We will consider six types of evidence that they do that.

1.1 Visual and spatial representations

People appear to create visual or spatial representations as they understand many utterances. In one classic demonstration (Bransford et al. 1972: 195), people read either (1) or (2), among other sentences, and were asked to remember it:

(1) Three turtles rested on a floating log and a fish swam beneath it.

(2) Three turtles rested beside a floating log and a fish swam beneath it.

If we change the word *it* to *them* in 1 and 2, we get 1′ and 2′:

(1′) Three turtles rested on a floating log and a fish swam beneath them.

(2′) Three turtles rested beside a floating log and a fish swam beneath them.

Note that the scenes described in (1) and (1′) are consistent with each other, for if a fish swam beneath the log it also swam beneath the turtles. The scenes described in (2) and (2′), however, are not consistent. In a test of memory for (1) or (2), people were given all four sentences (in a random order) and asked to say which one they had seen. People who had seen (1) often chose (1′) by mistake. But those who had seen (2) rarely chose (2′) by mistake. Conclusion: they must have represented not the sentence *per se*, but the scene described – possibly in the form of a visual or spatial image.

People need to create imaginal representations simply to interpret single words. Take *approach* in these three descriptions:

(3) I am standing on the porch of a farm house looking across the yard at a picket fence. A tractor [or: mouse] is just approaching it.

(4) I am standing across the street from a post office with a mailbox in front of it. A man crossing the street is just approaching the post office [or: mailbox].

(5) I am standing at the entrance to an exhibition hall looking at a slab of marble. A man is just approaching it with a camera [or: chisel].

In one experiment (Morrow and Clark 1988: 282–5), people were given one of the two alternatives of these and other descriptions and asked to estimate the distance of, say, the tractor, or mouse, from the picket fence. The average estimates were as follows:

(3′) tractor to fence, 39 feet; mouse to fence, 2 feet

(4′) man to post office, 28 feet; man to mailbox, 13 feet

(5′) man with camera to marble slab, 18 feet; man with chisel to marble slab, 5 feet

People arrived at a denotation for *approach* apparently by considering how near one object must be to a landmark in order to be in "interaction with it" for its assumed purpose. Tractors come into interaction with a fence at 39 feet, whereas mice do so only at 2 feet. These judgments depended on the size of the referent object (3), the size of the landmark (4), and the approachers' purpose (5).

These findings should not be surprising – and they are just a sample of a large literature on such effects. But they remind us that imagination is needed for even the simplest descriptions. We need to imagine the appearance or arrangement of turtles, logs, tractors, and fences to come to the right interpretations.

1.2 Deixis and point of view

Narratives are ordinarily told from particular points of view. Melville's *Moby-Dick* is a first person account of a sailor, Ishmael, who describes his experiences aboard a whaler. When Ishmael moves from one place to the next, his point of view changes too. We are to imagine the world as he sees it in passing through it. We need first a visual, spatial, and conceptual representation of that world. We must then track not only where he is in that world, but which way he is moving, what he is looking at, and what he is hearing. We must track his moment-by-moment perceptual experiences.

Tracking the narrator, or the protagonist, requires following a *deictic center* – the *I*, *here*, and *now* of the narrator's point of view. This is especially important for interpreting deictic expressions like *come* and *go*, *this* and *that*, and *here* and *there* (see Bühler 1982; Duchan et al. 1995; Fillmore 1975). In Hemingway's *The Killers*, the narrator opens his story this way:

(6) The door to Henry's lunchroom opened and two men came in.

As Fillmore (1981) noted, the narrator must be inside the lunchroom, because he describes the door as opening by unseen forces and the men as "coming" in, not "going" in. The deictic center is inside the room. Point of view is essential to many of the narrator's choices, and imagining the scene from the narrator's or protagonist's vantage point is crucial to getting that point of view right.

Abrupt changes in point of view require abrupt changes in the imagined representation, and these are sometimes difficult to perform. In a demonstration by Black et al. (1979: 190–1), people were asked to read simple descriptions such as these two:

(7) Bill was sitting in the living room reading the paper, when John came [or: went] into the living room.

(8) Alan hated to lose at tennis. Alan played a game of tennis with Liz. After winning, she came [or went] up and shook his hand.

As Black et al. suggested, we can think of point of view in (7) and (8) by setting up a camera to view the scenes. For the first clause in (7), we would set it up in the living room and leave it there when John "comes" in. Not so when John "goes" in, for the camera would need to be moved out of the living room. In (8), the camera would be near Alan for the first two sentences, so it would not need to be moved when Liz "comes" up to him. It *would* need to be moved when she "goes" up to him. Changing point of view (as with "went" in (7) and (8)) should be disruptive to understanding, and it was. People took reliably longer to read the passages with the changed points of view, and they were also more likely to misrecall them (see also Bruder 1995).

People are expected to follow the protagonists even when there are no deictic expressions. In a study by Glenberg et al. (1987: 78), people were given paragraphs to read, one sentence at a time. Some read one of the two versions of 9:

(9) Warren spent the afternoon shopping at the store.
He picked up [or: set down] his bag and went over to look at some scarves.
He had been shopping all day.
He thought it was getting too heavy to carry.

The pronoun *it* in the last sentence refers to the bag mentioned in the second sentence. When the verb in the second sentence is *picked up*, Warren keeps the bag with him when he looks at the scarves, but when the verb is *set down*, he leaves it behind. The bag's location was important to the interpretation of the pronoun. People read the final sentence a full 0.6 seconds faster when the verb was *picked up* than when it was *set down*. The assumption is that they could readily locate the referent for *it* when the bag was still with Warren, but not when it was not. They must therefore be consulting such a spatial model in determining the referent (see also Bower and Morrow 1990).

But how do people figure out where the protagonist is? In an experiment by Morrow (1985: 393), people were shown a small model house and asked to memorize its layout. They then read brief narratives that ended like this and answered the question at the end:

(10) She walked from the study into the bedroom.
She didn't find the glasses in the room.
Which room is referred to?

For different people, the first sentence had different prepositions (*from* vs. *through* vs. *past the study* and *into* vs. *to the bedroom*) and different verb modalities (*walked* vs. *was walking*). All these differences affected which room people took to be the referent of *the room* in the second sentence. Here are the results of just two of the variants (in percent of choices by the participants):

(11) She walked *from* the study *into* the bedroom
The room referred to: the bedroom, 77 percent; the study, 21 percent; other rooms, 2 percent

(12) She walked *past* the study *to* the bedroom
The room referred to: the bedroom 21 percent; the study 73 percent; other rooms, 6 percent

In (11), most people took the protagonist to be in the bedroom, but in (12), most of them took her to be near the study. Again, people were remarkably consistent in their judgments.

It is difficult to overstate Glenberg's and Morrow's challenge for how people deploy imagination in discourse. To make these judgments, people must create a spatial representation of the protagonist's environment and keep track of where he or she is. And to create these representations, they must rely not just on the descriptions given, but on their practical knowledge of houses, department stores, acts of walking, and other common items and events. They must combine information from many sources in the descriptions themselves – e.g. the verb (*walked*), the prepositional phrases (*from the study* and *into the bedroom*), and other items (*the bag*).

1.3 Gestures

Narrators often produce gestures that refer to the world they are talking about (Goodwin 1981; Kendon 1980; McNeill 1992; Schegloff 1984). Some of the gestures are *iconic* and depict things, and others are *deictic* and locate things. Many do both. But all of these gestures require imagination and, in turn, aid imagination of the story world.

Iconic gestures are common in spontaneous narratives. In an example analyzed by Kendon (1980: 219), Fran is telling a joke based on the film *Some Like it Hot*. Her speech is on the left, divided into four so-called intonation units, and her gestures are on the right:

(13)

	Speech	**Gestures**
1.	they wheel a big *table* in	Fran sweeps her left arm inward in a horizontal motion.
2.	with a big with a big [1.08 sec] *cake* on it	During pause Fran makes series of circular motions with forearm pointing downward and index finger extended.
3.	and the *girl*	Fran raises her arm until it is fully extended vertically above her.
4.	jumps *up*	

While describing the scene in words, Fran uses her hands and arms to portray selective pieces of it.

Iconic gestures make heavy demands on imagination, as Fran's story illustrates. In intonation unit 2, she depicts a large birthday cake by drawing its circular outline in the air. She intends her audience to put the gesture together with what she is saying ("with a big with a big cake on it") and *visualize* a cake that is the size and shape of her outline. Fran moves immediately from that gesture into a depiction of the "girl" jumping up out of the cake. In unit 2, the vantage point of Fran's gesture is outside

the cake, and in unit 3, it is inside the cake on the table. Fran changes her point of view in a trice, and she expects her audience to follow.

Deictic gestures are equally demanding. Consider an example from a Tzetal narrative recorded by Haviland (1996: 305–6), presented here in translation:

(14) There were indeed people living there [pointing to a fence in the imaginary space of the narrative]. Beside the path [vertical hand moving up and down, representing an imaginary gate]. (That house) was the same size at this house here [pointing at *actual* house nearby].

The narrator first points at an *imaginary* fence in the space in which he has situated the story around him, and with an iconic gesture, he adds an *imaginary* gate. But then he points at an actual house nearby, saying, in effect, "That house [whose gate I can point to in the imaginary narrative space] is the same size as this house [which I can point to here]." As Haviland noted, narrators and their audience must keep track of the imaginary and the actual spaces separately and in relation to each other.

Narrators must represent the appearances and locations of objects and events to produce iconic and deictic gestures. With each gesture, they make reference to locations, shapes, and events in imaginary or actual spaces around them. Although they may use some of these gestures to help themselves keep track, they use at least some of them as part of what they are telling their addressees, who could not interpret the gestures without creating the corresponding imaginary locations, shapes, and events.

1.4 Voices

Most narratives require us to imagine more than one voice. Take the first lines of a joke told by Sam to Reynard (Svartvik and Quirk 1980: 42–3):

(15) let me tell you a story, - - -
a girl went into a chemist's shop, and asked for, . contraceptive tablets, - -
so he said "well I've got . all kinds, and . all prices, what do you want,"
she said "well what have you got,"

Here we find four voices. The first is Sam's announcing the story to Reynard. The second belongs to the fictional narrator as he describes the girl and chemist's conversation. With the quotation in 1. 3, we move to the chemist's voice, and in l. 4, to the "girl's" voice. Some of these voices are introduced by "he said" or "she said," but others later in the joke are not. As David Lodge (1990: 144) noted, "[The] alternation of authorial description and characters' verbal interaction remains the woof and warp of literary narration to this day."

Quotations, like gestures, are clear aids to imagination. Narrators use them to help us imagine specific individuals, what they say, how they speak. Narrators often dramatize the voices for gender, emotion, dialect, and much more (Clark and Gerrig 1990; Tannen 1989; Wade and Clark 1993). For one recorded story, Tannen (1989: 121)

observed, "There are at least five different voices animated in this narrative, and each of these voices is realized in a paralinguistically distinct acoustic representation: literally, a different voice." She described the various voices as sobbing, innocent, upset, hysterically pleading, and bored. Still other quotations are accompanied by the quoted person's gestures, as in this example about a woman in a hospital (Polanyi 1989: 89):

(16) I went out of my mind and I just screamed I said "Take that out! that's not for me!" . . . And I shook this I-V and I said "I'm on an I-V, I can't eat. Take it out of here!"

As part of her two quotations, the woman "shakes her arm as if shaking the I-V and shouts in the conversational setting as she shouts in the story" (1989: 92), and this helps us imagine her physical actions together with her voice.

Narrators may also use what is called free indirect speech – a curious mixture of quotation and description. Here are examples from spontaneous and literary narratives in which the direct quotations are with quotation marks and the free indirect quotations with cross-hatches:

(17) and I said. #did she mean for lunch or dinner,# - - and she said "oh either" (Svartvik and Quirk 1980: 98)

(18) #The picture! How eager he had been about the picture! And the charade! And a hundred other circumstances; how clearly they had seemed to point at Harriet! . . . # (Jane Austen, *Emma*)

In (17) Nancy quotes herself, but instead of saying "Do you mean for lunch or dinner?" she puts the quotation in the third person and past tense, "Did she mean for lunch or dinner?" Likewise, in (18) the narrator in Jane Austen's *Emma* depicts Emma's first person thoughts, but only halfway, leaving them in the third person and past tense. Free indirect quotation is also an aid to imagination, and as in (18), it can be used to vivify the protagonist's private thoughts (Cohn 1978).

Quotation is for showing, or what Plato called *mimesis*, whereas authorial description is for telling, or Plato's *diegesis*. As Lodge (1990: 144) put it, "Roughly speaking, mimesis gives us the sense of reality in fiction, the illusion of access to the reality of personal experience, and diegesis conveys the contextualising information and framework of values which provide thematic unity and coherence." Both telling and showing require imagination, but showing is the more direct aid as it helps us see and hear the characters in pictures and sounds.

1.5 Mimetic props

Narratives are often equated with conversational or written stories, but they take other forms as well: theatrical plays, radio plays, operas, operettas, puppet shows, films, television comedies, soap operas, film cartoons, comic books, songs, and pantomimes.

Table 39.1

Medium	*Mimetic props*
Printed novels	Direct speech, free indirect speech
Audiotaped novels	Expressive direct speech, free indirect speech
Spontaneous stories	Expressive direct speech, free indirect speech, iconic and deictic gestures
Operas	Actors, sung speech, sound effects, limited visible enactments, limited scenery, expressive music
Stage plays	Actors, "stage" speaking, sound effects, limited visible enactments, limited scenery
Films	Actors, naturalistic speaking, sound effects, visible enactments close up, rich scenery, expressive music

These forms range widely in how much they show and tell, and in how effectively they engage our imagination.

Many narratives have appeared in several media. Take Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. We can read it in the original, read it in a comic book version, hear it performed as a radio play, see it performed on stage, or see it as a film. Or there's *Emma*. We can read it, hear it read on audiorecording, or see the film. Shaw's *Pygmalion* is better yet. We can read the play, hear it read, or see it performed on stage, or we can take in a performance of the musical *My Fair Lady* as an audiorecording, stage version, or film. The several forms of these narratives are not equivalent. They induce different thoughts, experiences, and emotions. But how?

Every medium relies on *mimetic props* – devices that aid directly in imagining the story world. Table 39.1 shows six media with some of their props.

Suppose we want to imagine people talking. With indirect quotation in a novel, we have to imagine what the participants might have said and how they might have sounded. With direct quotation, we get the words uttered, but we have to imagine the voice, its accent, its emotional tone. If we hear the novel read, we get help from the reader's dramatization of each quotation, which may include voice, accent, and emotional tone. In spontaneous stories, we may get the accompanying gestures. In operas, we get highly stylized versions of speech in a musical idiom that we are to interpret as happy, sad, angry, or surprised. In stage plays, we get help from actors delivering their lines in expressive, though conventionalized dramatizations of their lines. In films, we get more naturalistic speech, along with close-ups of the actors' faces and gestures. As we go down the list, the mimetic props take on greater variety and verisimilitude.

Mimetic props are engineered to aid imagination. In reading *Emma*, we work hard to imagine what Emma looks like – her hair, clothing, and mannerisms. Without a background in nineteenth-century English style, we may get many of these features wrong. In seeing the film *Emma*, we are *shown* what she looks like – her hair, clothing, mannerisms – so all we must imagine is that this particular actress (say, Gwyneth Paltrow) is in fact Emma. It may seem that the greater the verisimilitude of the

mimetic props, the better the aid to imagination, but that is not always true. Background music in films is hardly realistic, and yet it too is an effective prop.

1.6 Emotion

Imagining a story usually includes experiencing emotions. Take what Walton (1978) called **quasi-fear**. When we see a horror film, we are afraid of what the monster will do to the heroine. Our hearts beat faster, our muscles tighten, and our knuckles turn white as the monster approaches her. But do we warn her as we would if all this were happening in front of us? Or take what Gerrig (1989a, 1989b, 1993) called **anomalous suspense**. Ordinarily, suspense is a state in which we "lack knowledge about some sufficiently important target outcome" (Gerrig 1993: 79). Yet, as Gerrig documented, when we read suspense stories, we often feel suspense even when we know how they turn out. As with Walton's quasi-fear, we compartmentalize our emotional experience as part of the story world and not the actual world.

Most narratives are designed to elicit emotion. Novels are classified into genres largely by the emotions they evoke. Mysteries lead to suspense and fear; adventures to excitement, fear, and elation; horror stories to horror, loathing, and fear; light romances to sexual excitement; heavier romances to erotic arousal; satires to amusement; and so on. Films evoke many of the same emotions. Here we come full circle to Kafka's "The Penal Colony" and the reactions it evoked. We imagine story worlds as if we were now experiencing them before our very eyes. At the same time, we recognize that we are still in the actual world.

2 Participating in Narratives

Over the years cognitive scientists have proposed many models of discourse. Some were intended to be comprehensive, but most were aimed at limited aspects of discourse. The arguments we have reviewed suggest that these theories must account for at least four phenomena:

1 *Experience:* People experience selective features of the narrative world as if they were actual, current experiences. These include visual appearances, spatial relations, points of view, movement and processes, voices, and emotions.
2 *Mimetic props:* People's imaginings appear to be aided by well-engineered mimetic props – direct quotation, gestures, stage sets, sound effects, background music.
3 *Participation:* Speakers and writers design what they say to encourage certain forms of imagination, but listeners and readers must willingly cooperate with them to succeed.
4 *Compartmentalization:* In participating in narratives, people distinguish their experiences in the story world from their experiences in the real world.

The models of discourse proposed can be classified roughly into four categories: schema theories; mental models; mental simulations; and joint pretense. We will evaluate these theories against the four phenomena.

2.1 Schema theories

In the early 1990s, psychologists developed the notion of **schema** to account for how people understand and remember stories. A schema is a set of cultural preconceptions about causal or other types of relationships. In the classic experiments by Bartlett (1932), people were told a Native American folk story, "The War of the Ghosts," which included many elements unfamiliar to western norms. In retelling that story, people often distorted it to fit their cultural expectations. For example, many changed "hunting seals" into "fishing," a more likely pastime in their schema.

Schemas of a different type were proposed for the structure of stories themselves. According to one account (Rumelhart 1975), stories consist of setting followed by an episode; an episode consists of an event plus a reaction to it; a reaction consists of an internal response plus an external response; and so on. Listeners are assumed to parse stories into these functional sections in much the way they parse sentences into constituents. In a rather different account (Labov 1972), narratives of personal experience consist of six parts: (1) an abstract, briefly summarizing the story; (2) an orientation, a stage setting about the who, when, what, and where of the story; (3) a complicating action; (4) an evaluation of these actions; (5) the result or resolution of the complicating action; and (6) a coda, a signal of completion. Narrators and their audience presumably refer to such schemas in producing and understanding stories.

A third class of schemas, called **scripts**, was proposed as representations for events (Schank and Abelson 1977). The argument was that scripts guide our expectations about the presence and order of everyday events. When we go to a restaurant, our "restaurant script" informs us that we need to order from a menu, wait for our food, and pay at the end. When we hear a description about going to a restaurant, we appeal to the same script. Even if not explicitly told, we assume that the protagonist ordered food and paid the bill in the proper order (Bower et al. 1979). If we are told that the events occurred in an unusual order, e.g. the protagonist paid before ordering food, we may recall the events in their usual order because that fits our "restaurant script."

Schemas have also been proposed for categories and concepts. When a narrator uses the word *house*, so it is argued, listeners interpret it according to a "house" schema. They may infer that it is a building, that people live in it, that it is made of wood, bricks, or stone (Anderson 1990). Unfortunately, what might count as valid inference in one situation may not be valid in another. In a study by Labov (1973), people were inconsistent in using "cup" to describe drawings of various cup-like objects. They were more likely to call the same object a "bowl" than a "cup" when they imagined it filled with mashed potatoes than when they imagined it empty.

Schemas were designed, then, to explain how people can have a mental representation of a narrative that is more detailed than the original narrative. People can take the limited input and, by applying schemas, elaborate on it in various ways. By themselves, however, schemas are of little help in accounting for our four criteria. They do not account for the *experience* of imagining a story world, the use of mimetic props, the willing participation in narratives, or the compartmentalization of experience.

2.2 *Mental models*

Whereas schemas are cultural preconceptions that people bring to a narrative, mental models are mental constructions in which people represent specific objects, events, and relationships in utterances or narratives (Johnson-Laird 1983). They are mental instantiations of the world being described. People create mental models based upon the discourse, the situation, and the purposes they have to serve. So, people trying to understand (1) and (2) create mental models of ponds, logs, fish, and turtles so that they can estimate where they are in relation to each other. People trying to interpret *approach* in (3), (4), and (5) create mental models of the scenes described in order to judge where the various objects must be. According to one proposal (Just and Carpenter 1980, 1987), readers create mental models for each utterance they read in order to help them parse and understand it. They can change the model if the next word is not what was expected in the model so far. Mental models begin, in effect, with the generic information represented in schemas, and add visual and spatial relationships to represent instantiations of a scene or event.

Mental models can also represent dynamic events. If you are asked how many windows there are in your house, you are likely to imagine yourself walking around the house counting the windows – a dynamic process (Shepard and Cooper 1982). According to Hegarty (1992; Hegarty et al. 1988), people understand diagrams of pulleys in much the same way – through dynamic mental models (see also Gentner and Stevens 1983). These seem eminently suited for representing the dynamic course of events people consult in telling and understanding narratives.

Despite their advantages, mental models fail to account for several features of imagination in discourse. They do not really say what it is to imagine the events in a story – to see things from particular vantage points or to experience fear or suspense. They do not say how mimetic props such as gestures, films, and voices aid in these experiences. They do not account for the different roles speakers and listeners play in creating these experiences. Nor do they deal with the compartmentalization of our experiences of the real and narrative worlds.

2.3 *Mental simulations*

Mental simulations, as proposed by Kahneman and Tversky (1982), are a type of dynamic mental model in which people can modify the initial settings of the model and compare the outcomes. People might simulate a process for many purposes: (1) to predict its outcome; (2) to assess its probability; (3) to assess counterfactual alternatives ("if only . . ."); and (4) to project the effects of causality. When people simulate alternative endings to a story, for example, they tend to make "downhill" changes to scenarios – they remove unusual or unexpected aspects of the situation. They rarely make "uphill" changes, which introduce unusual aspects, and never make "horizontal" changes, which alter arbitrary aspects (Kahneman and Tversky 1982). Mental simulations, therefore, represent the process of *pretending* to work through an event.

Mental simulations are well suited for imaginary experiences (see Davies and Stone 1995). These include emotional experiences. When people go back over fatal

accidents of loved ones, they often experience guilt, anger, or regret as they mentally simulate alternatives for those accidents – as they think "if only she hadn't driven down that street" or "what if he had left two minutes earlier" (Kahneman and Tversky 1982). Mental simulations require the active participation of the participants, and they introduce a boundary between reality and the simulation (taking the system "off-line" and feeding it pretend inputs). Still, there is no account for how they are aided by mimetic props, and many of their specifics have yet to be tested experimentally.

2.4 Joint pretense

A joint pretense is an activity in which two or more people jointly act as if they were doing something that they are not actually, really, or seriously doing at that moment (Clark 1996; Goffman 1974; Walton 1978, 1983, 1990). The prototype is the game of make-believe. Suppose Sam and Rogers, both aged five, are jointly pretending to be lion and lion-tamer. To succeed, they must coordinate their imaginings. They must simulate the way a lion and lion-tamer would behave toward each other. They must also imagine the back yard as a circus ring, the back porch as a lion cage, and much, much more. The crucial point is that Sam and Rogers are simultaneously engaged in two layers of joint action. At layer 1, they are Sam and Rogers playing a game of make-believe. At layer 2, they are a lion and lion-tamer performing in a circus (Clark 1996).

Participating in narratives can be viewed as a type of joint pretense (Bruce 1981; Clark 1996; Currie 1990; Walton 1979, 1983, 1990). Take (15), in which Sam is telling Reynard a joke. When Sam says "A girl went into a chemist's shop and asked for contraceptive tablets," he is asking Reynard to join with him in pretending that he is a reporter, that Reynard is a reportee, and that he is telling Reynard about an actual girl going into an actual chemist's shop. Or take *Moby-Dick*, which begins "Call me Ishmael." Melville is asking his readers to join him in the pretense that these are the words of an actual sailor telling his contemporaries about his actual adventures in pursuing a great white whale. Or take Clark Gable in *Gone with the Wind*. When he says to Vivien Leigh, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn," we viewers are invited to pretend with him, producer David Selznick, and MGM that he is actually Rhett Butler, and that he is telling Scarlett O'Hara that he doesn't give a damn.

Joint pretense addresses all four phenomena that are characteristic of imagining in narratives – at least in principle. When people engage in a pretense, they simulate selective aspects of the narrative world as if it were the actual world. These require mental simulations, as in reading *Moby-Dick* or seeing *Gone with the Wind*, but may also require physical simulations, as in playing lion and lion-tamer in the back yard. People are aided in these simulations by mimetic props, which help them step into the characters' shoes and do what the characters do. Joint pretense brings out the roles of narrator and listener: the two must coordinate their imaginings in just the right way. And, finally, the layering of joint pretense enables the participants to compartmentalize their as-if experiences from their actual experiences, as they should (Clark 1996; Gerrig 1993).

3 Conclusion

Narratives would be dull if they did not transport us into exciting new worlds. People do not tell stories just to get us to understand what they mean. They do it to get us to experience those worlds. As the novelist John Gardner put it, "The writer's intent is that the reader fall through the printed page into the scene represented" (1983: 132). That, in turn, takes imagination – not unfettered imagination, but imagination coordinated by the narrator and audience, or what Gardner called "controlled dreaming." Only then will we experience the penal colony the way Kafka meant us to – seeing the dreadful visions, feeling sick to our stomachs, wanting to escape.

In imagining story worlds, people represent at least these features: visual and spatial relations, point of view, pointing and iconic gestures, voices, mimetic props, and emotion. For a theory of narratives to be complete, it must account for the experience of imagining, the role of mimetic props, the coordination of imagining between narrators and their audience, and the compartmentalization of imagination from reality. Most theories fail on these criteria, but theories of joint pretense show promise. On this view, narrators and their audience join in the pretense that what the narrators are telling and showing the audience is true then and there, and that allows the audience to simulate the narrative world – to fall through the printed page into the scene represented.

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