Blogs and the Narrativity of Experience

José Ángel García Landa

Universidad de Zaragoza

garciala@unizar.es

http://www.garcialanda.net

Blogs and the Narrativity of Experience

This paper undertakes an analysis of the narrativity of a form of discourse which has appeared recently (blogs) within the framework of an emergentist theory of narrativity and its discursive modes. The narrative/discursive characteristics of blogs emerge from a preexistent ground of more basic or less specific communicative practices; and narrative discursivity itself is an emergent phenomenon with respect to other cognitive and experiential phenomena. A number of formal and communicative characteristics of blog writing and of the blogosphere are discussed as emergent modes of experience within the pragmatic context of computer-mediated communication.

———————————

We shall undertake an analysis of the narrativity proper to a discursive form of recent appearance, weblogs or blogs, within the framework of an emergentist theory of narrativity and of its discursive modes. The narrative-discursive characteristics of blogs emerge from a prior basis of simpler or less specific communicative practices. And the narrativity of discourse is itself an emergent phenomenon with respect to other cognitive and experiential phenomena which necessarily underpin it, and are the basis on which its emergent nature must be defined. That is to say, there must be processes first, in order for processual representations to exist, and these representations must exist in simple forms before they give rise to complex narrative forms, associated to specific cultural and communicational contexts—for instance, the development of computer-mediated communicative interaction on the Web.

Processes - Representations - Narratives - Narratologies

Let us begin with absolute generality—with the narrativity of experience itself, situating narratives, and narratology, within an emergentist/evolutionary theory of reality. One might argue that narrative is already located there, to some extent: there would remain the labour of spelling out and describing in words that mode of location—make it emerge, in fact, causing the relationship between narrativity and reality to be more communicable, more understandable, and noting in passing the way in which narratives and narratologies are linked to other natural and cultural phenomena, and to the disciplines which study them.

Like almost anyone, I am ill equipped for this labour, which would require not just an encyclopedic extension of treatment, but also having at one's

disposal the head that wrote the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* or, at the very least, someone able to understand both that book and (say) Hawking's *Brief History of Time*—someone able to connect them to narrative humanities and spell out their significance for narratology. As to myself, I am working on the subject; I have translated George Herbert Mead's *The Philosophy of the Present,* a text half-way between those mentioned, and one which should be another piece of this philosophical puzzle or (to say it with Shakespeare) another *cipher of this great account.* Be as it may, we will have to make do with whatever we may be able to pull off in this little space—and forgive the bending author if the muse of fire is once again missing, so that the story is told by fits and starts, with missing parts and without sound effects.

There is some advantage on my side—the story waiting to be told is, in some intuitive ways, a well-known one. It is the story of narrative as a part of the history of communication and language, as part, therefore, of human history—a chapter, therefore, in the history of evolution, and more specifically in the history of *the evolution of the modes of temporal representation.* But, in order that there may be temporal representations, there must be, first, beings capable of constructing those representations, and to cut a long story short indeed, there must exist an ability to experience time, and before that, there must exist complex processes, such as life and consciousness, which allow the existence of "experience", and before these complex processes there must exist simple processes and their flow in time. Hopefully some of that time may be devoted to compress all of this into one paper—just in case there isn't, it's all here in one paragraph.

To summarize even more: one must consider narrative as a complex and emergent from of temporal experience—and conceive, or re-conceptualize

narratology as being itself an emergent phenomenon, in complex and dialectical interaction with narrative discourse and with other narrative forms of experience. I will use here some ideas I put forward in my notes and papers on emergent narrativity (2006, 2009, 2010). And other things which will emerge along the way.

A central point to organize the whole reasoning, so it won't get out of hand as far as possible, is the notion of *retrospection.* However narrative is defined, more or less inclusively, it is the case that the more central, natural, basic, archetypal etc. forms of narrative are retrospective. One of the definitions I use in my courses on narrative runs thus: *narrative is the sequential and retrospective representation of an interpreted and evaluated sequence of events.* This includes the typical fictional film, drama, the novel, history, conversational anecdotes, reports… Although there may be marginal or derivative forms of narrative which are not retrospective (or less obviously retrospective), or which lack to a greater or lesser extent a series of events, or interpretation, or evaluation, or which (again) present transformed modes of the same.

Retrospection (perhaps one should say *retrospectivity*) is interesting as a a reference point, precisely because it presupposes a return to a sequence of action which has already taken place. That is, because of the element of *re-presentation* it contains, in the most literal sense, presenting again and repeating what has already taken place. One might consider of course that a sequential scheme oriented towards the future, such as a plan (Note 1) is also a "representation" in a wider sense—although its referent is not yet "present". Indeed a plan does have narrative-sequential elements, especially when it is "narrated" or expounded in discursive form. Nontheless, it seems that a retrospective sequence of signs is a more central and basic mode of

representation, being a semiotic return to an already effected sequence of action. Perception itself is, in a certain sense, retrospective, or at any rate posterior with respect to the event, as is understanding.

Of course, not just any retrospective return to what has already happened qualifies as a narrative, at least in everyday parlance. There remains to specify the element of *communication*—a narrative is something which is communicated, a text or system of signs or signals which permits a dissociation of experience. An a narrative is all the more elaborate the more it gives rise to this dissociation of experience or "virtual reality". Although I would not want to suggest that immersive videogames are the most elaborate form of art just now.

The study of this emergent nature of narrativity, both in the conversational use of language and in literature, requires that many aspects should be taken into account. Let us note two two of them:

a) Goffman's (1981) notion according to which language rests on a submerged iceberg of presupposed action, pre-established schemes of social communication, which are not verbal but procedural. This is another sense in which narrative discourse can be conceived as resting on action organization processes preceding it.

b) The modes of *realistic motivation* (for instance, focalization limited to one character) which structure narrative representation on the basis of more elemental modes of representation, such as perception. Likewise, there also exist narrative-discursive conventions which justify "artificial", artistic or complex modes of narrative structuring, built on the motivation of a natural narrative. This is the case, for instance, of the epistolary novel, based on the non-fictional epistolary genre; and also of the fictive autobiography of first-

person novels, based on nonfictional narratives of personal experience). (Note 2).

What must be kept in mind is that this difference between *an initial sequence of perceptual processes* on one hand and *its representation* on the other, or between *the conceptualization of a sequence of events* on one hand and *the communication of that representation through a text* on the other, is not absolute but rather a matter of degree. Perception is in itself a semiotic phenomenon, a mode of representation, and that is why narrative has constant resource, for its structuring and development, to the reelaboration of perceptual processes (for instance, the already mentioned case of focalization). Memory is in itself a a second-degree semiotic elaboration, which involves the activation of signals in brain regions separated from those regions which process direct perception. (Note 1). Therefore, the difference between communication and internal experience is also a gradual, not an absolute one. Memorization is already a mode of self-communication, and the pragmatic-interactional notion of *self-interaction,* that is, of *signal that the organism directs to itself* (Blumer 1986) is a crucial one in order to gradually build bridges between external processes, perceptions, memory representations, metal re-elaboration of action models, and verbalized narratives (or narratives constructed using other media or technologies).

This is both an ascending and a descending scale, or a two-way street, given that the cybernetic principle of feedback applies on every step: linguistic modes of narration (or cinematic modes of narration) influence the way in which we elaborate mental representations of actions. And mental representations, memory representations, or more generally any

internal signals used in the mental processing of processes, are fed back on perception and influence the way we perceive the world.

More generally speaking, as Oscar Wilde said in "The Decay of Lying", *we animate nature with our perceptions.* Thus, this "Great Chain of Narrativity" is well joined from beginning to end, from the origin of the Universe and of time—of the necessary physical structuring of time— in the Big Bang, up until the narration of this and other stories, and up to the narrative theory which allows us to conceptualize or analyze these processes.

Technologies of Temporal Manipulation

Having some spare time, or nothing to talk about, we can speak about the weather or about the passing of time. Time, like the weather, affords an ample space to go over what has already been said, and to explore the ways in which it has been said—especially when it's raining. Sometimes we even manage to say something new about the weather, or about time, something which nobody has ever said. It may appear to be difficult, yet it happens all the time. We might take as a reference point, for starters, the mini-anthologies of papers on temporal representation from the point of view of biology which appear in *The Loom* ("Animal Time Travellers", Zimmer 2007) and *The Neurocritic* ("Mental Time Travel", 2007). These pass from the temporal experience of birds or rats to the more complex time of primates, culminating in the complicated and varied temporal experiences of humans. Although, as a matter of fact, the human experience of time encompasses the whole range of temporal modes which have accumulated in our evolutionary and cultural heritage, from the minimal biological time

of consciousness in the organization of present sensations, up to the lengthy and culturally complex time of a historian or of a primate of the Church.

If our time is complex, that is because our reality is more complex and inclusive than the reality of animals (plants do not seem to have time for themselves). And if our reality is more complex, that is because our brain is more complex, or perhaps versa-vice. The brain, when it is not a cold jelly or a fried local delicacy, is an extraordinary generator of representations, and a factory of realities—at this Cartesian level, reality equals representation. Among them, it generates a number of kinds of *temporal realities or representations*. Time, and I mean here experiential time, is not out there, previous to experience, or is ther only in a sense in which we cannot say much about it. Time as we know it is a complex relationship between representations, generated and orchestrated by the brain. Or, rather, a whole collection of such complex systems: as one can read in the sources cited, the blue jay's time is not the same as the baboon's or the human being's. These animals do not inhabit the same temporal environment (one might almost say that their presence "out there" in our own space-time is misleading), as they have no way of articulating complex experiences similar to ours. Although these studies seem to point out that there is much left to study and understand in the abilities proper to each species, since it can hardly be supposed that all inhabit a similar featureless and continuous present. Animals no doubt construct temporal representations of varying complexity according to their abilities and their alimentary, reproductive, and social needs… even though this complexity is far inferior to that of human temporal experiences.

Animals are less intensely semiotized than human beings. Perhaps because of this, they live in closer contact with the immediate present, and are more

closely involved with "real" time—in the sense that present experience has a real substantiality which is lacking in the past and in the future—which result from the mere play of representations. Be as it may, what we humans understand by "the present" (Note 4) has little to do with the present experience of animals; our present too is complex and multi-dimensional, since many of its aspects are structured with reference to the past and to the future: our present, too, is built with those other "less solid" materials. And the time of present experience is also crisscrossed by a variety of verbal aspects: iterative, durative, repetitive, inchoative… My point is that our time is not only structured as the experience of a complex brain, and of cerebral circuits specialising in the reelaboration of perception, and in the structuring of memories; in addition, it is structured by a series of complex technologies and systems of temporal manipulation, beginning with language (Note 5).

Narrative is one of these tools or technologies of temporal manipulation (Note 6). It is not merely a linguistic act (although it may be one) but a multimedia platform, a semiotic interface for the temporal manipulation of language, of remembered events and of action representations. Here, in this mediating and multimedial nature of memory, lies one of the original bases of the narratological contrast between *story* and *discourse,* or between the *action* (the fabula, nonverbal level) and the *narrative text* (the work, the verbal surface), with a number of variations in diverse narratological theories. Our very cognitive and communicative equipment makes us distinguish on the one hand the thing itself, and on the other its mental image or the memory of the thing. This is also why so many aspects of narrative escape those which approach its study from an narrowly disciplinary perspective, whether they start from literary theory, from film studies or from linguistics: many narrative phenomena are not specifically

artistic, not even linguistic, but rely on more basic perceptual and cognitive structures.

Narrative is also built, originally, on the expected and predictable rituals of social interaction—the nonverbal structures of action alluded to by Goffman (1981, see esp. "Replies and responses"). It relies, too, on more general modes of linguistic representation (Note 7). Voice and gesture, both at the origin of language and at the origin of narrative, are at the same time foundational elements and a dyad involved in a constant process of mutual re-structuring, a continual dialectic interaction which is constantly becoming more complex along its historical development. (Note 8).

The diverse modes of writing, and of written narrative, have enabled the elaboration of complex conceptualizations of time and of subtle modulations of temporal experience—as expounded by Paul Ricœur in his masterful *Time and Narrative.* An example: writing, with its permanence, emphasizes the sense of human life experience as something which has to pass but also to remain, both a flux and a transcendental value (Note 9). This is clearly appreciated in the Bible, a key narrative in Western culture. In Psalm 89 (or 90 in some editions) we find the concept of the human course of life imaged as a story which is told, emphasizing its brevity— some versions translate "a spider's web" instead of "a tale". The Bible also alludes a number of times to the Book of God, or the Book of Life, in which records the names of those who merit salvation, or which (perhaps) notes down all the actions of men. A Book which is, perhaps, a transcendental or ideal version of the Bible itself.

Once the development of culture allows to construct narratives in images, other narrative technologies have been added to spoken and written

language. The earliest examples may be found, perhaps, on the walls of Paleolithic caves, in interaction with ritual and words, but the narrative dimension or narrative use of these paintings can barely be discerned. It is not that a sequence of images is necessary in order to create a narrative in images, since many early (and late) narratives have resource to the iconographic synthesis of several events unified into a single significant image (Note 10). Still, the development of visual technologies involves the elaboration of complex sequences of representation, and, in the case of film, the pre-perceptual and mechanized adjustment of the represented action and the representational text. The experience of film emphasizes the narrative dimension of life experiences—it makes us more conscious of the multi-dimensionality of time and of its potential semiotic handling (Note 11).

Although many shades of meaning proper to written narratives fall outside the scope of cinematic aesthetics, film is, of course, one of our most elaborate time machines. Beyond the chemical and mechanic technologies of photography, reels, limelights and projectors, or their digital avatars, there is the technology of narrative structuring—the linkage of narration, point of view, present experiences, flashbacks, plot and intrigue… a semiotic dimension which film shares to a great extent with literary narratives. Developments in the technology of temporal manipulation take place in this area, rather than in the invention of a new model of camera lens or a a new digital technique for the generation of images: new modes of temporal representation in film are associated to new semiotic or narrative figures, the signals of a new conceptual relation between filmed sequences. An intertextual (visual or narrative) allusion or a novel use of images within images connects and enchases the temporal experiences contained in those previous images—sedimented moments of time, which

are used as the ingredientes or building materials for the construction of a new image. In this way new experiences of perception and of temporal representation are created, with their novel combination articulating a previously nonexistent complex experience. Sometimes the experiences are not wholly novel, but were peripheral in the experience of audiences or marginal in cultural consciousness, while a new successful articulation pushes them into the mainstream or makes them widespread and recognizable. That is to say, there is not a clear-cut border line between what is non-existent, what is ill-perceived or insufficiently articulated, and what is marginal, belonging to a minority audience or to an experimental phase). Film educates the eye and the brain, in order to make visible things previously disregarded, and in order to establish or bring to consciousness temporal relationships which did not exist or were not perceived beforehand. We might as well say that film makes us live in a temporal medium which did not exist before the invention of film: on this matter, as elsewhere, we see from the shoulders of giants.

The same thing happens with other technologies of temporal manipulation, in which time is modified through manipulation of images or through the manipulation of language. A written book is the voice of the dead striving to outlast them; writing and written narratives have, from their very origins, something funeral about them (Note 12). But it is thanks to written narratives that past history is still alive, or exists at all. History, far from having the ideal solidity we sometimes attribute to it, the solidity of a substance deposited in solid strata and stored in a safe place, is purely a play of communications—a highly elaborate one, of course—a gigantic system of disciplines of discourse regulating the representation of time, its images, its texts and the evaluations attached to them… It is a semiotic-narrative artifact allowing the existence of complex temporal experiences.

Of ever more complex tempooral experiences, as new modes, new technologies, new uses and new protocols of temporal representation and structuring are developed. Not so long ago, for instance, one could be nostalgic only about the past: nowadays we can also experience nostalgia for the future (Note 13)— for the (unrealized) future of the past, or for the *past of the future* which is, as yet, still unrealized for us. With the development of novel time technologies, or of a more elaborate consciousness of temporality, we can experience the pseudo-present or *effet de présence* of recorded live events (Note 14), or the retrospective distortion of the past due to hindsight bias (Note 15). These are so many experiences of complex temporality developed through practical semiotic manipulations and the theoretical elaboration which goes alongside with them.

As information and communications technologies, and mechanical reproductions of images and discourse, have penetrated every nook and cranny of daily life in recent years, we are in the midst of a technological frenzy in the treatment of images and words, and therefore we inhabit a temporal atmosphere which is non-coincident with itself, multiple, disseminated and somewhat unpredictable, a multi-mediated *time out of joint.* Telephones, for instance: they are highly unpredictable themselves as far as their presence and performance are concerned, and they transform our use of language, of immediacy and presence, of situatedness and planning, and in so doing they transform our way of inhabiting time (Note 16). This effect has been intensified with cellular phones, intensifying ubiquity and efectually providing an experience of potentially universal virtual coexistence: everyone is at last in potential immediate contact with everyone else—allowing for new effects of unpredictability.

Again, a similar phenomenon takes place in the case of permanent virtual networked presence, through personal websites, blogs and social networks. The relationship between time and language has been transformed thanks to a technological tool. For instance, writing has become immediately transmitted and publicly accessible at a universal scale, thanks to search engines and web syndication. But this new discourse, closely involved with the present, remain archived in the web, in a past-present whose dialogue with its present context becomes audible with additional new echoes once they are accessed some months or some years afterwards (Note 17). This new horizon of possible new experiences is awaiting new conceptual tools which may carry its possibilities further, and make us inhabit an ever more complex time. Take the case of blogs, every post a potential new conversation. ¿Has an immediate, public, live conversation, ever been so visible, and open for years? Not in this way, and not as much. ¿Can such conversations be followed? In order to make it possible, new tools are invented (RSS, friending, etc) and new protocols are developed. The global conversational space, no longer that of a small minority but public and collective, is becoming more complex with the expansion of the technologies of information and communication technologies, which reorganize the way we inhabit our space and our time.

Narrative anchoring

Before we focus on the textual and communicative specificity of blogs, we will introduce a concept more specifically related to the narrative and communicational background of experience, the backdrop of both new media and of more traditional discursive genres. It is the concept I will call

narrative anchoring—because of the way in which it locates a given narrative-temporal experience with reference to the more general narrativity of experience we have mentioned above. This notion of narrative anchoring is related in part to some other already existing concepts *(pauca nova sub sole)* such as interpretive theory, metanarrative or intertextuality, but we shall try to provide it with a character of its own.

And we shall also try to relate it to (and differentiate it from) another related concept, a first cousin as concepts go, which we might call *discursive anchoring—* the specific difference being, of course, that the former refers to specifically *narrative* modes of anchoring.

Discursive anchoring, which will require further development in a different future, would refer to the way in which a given text or discourse is situated with reference to global discursive production—nothing less. *The way a blog is situated in the blogosphere,* to use an example at hand which has communicational characteristics of its won. Discursive anchoring does not merely have a dimension as a "fact" or phenomenon of discourse; it is also a theoretical operation effected by a student of such anchorings, a theorist of discursive mappings or a discourse analyst. But some maneuvers of discursive anchoring can also be entrusted (explitly or implicitly) to the reader or hearer, and part of this anchoring may be explicitly effected by the discourse in question itself, with rhetorical moves and modes specific to a variety of genres…   These moves and modes will be left unspecified here, with a vague vow of returning to them and to the modes in which these anchorings have been dealt with, *avant la lettre,* in linguistics, literary theory, philology…   This vague allusion to a past and to a future may also serve as a pracical example of discursive anchoring effected by a given discourse.

A discursive (or narrative) anchoring explicitly proposed by the text itself in a reflexive move may be accepted, complemented, nuanced or countered by the discursive/narrative anchoring effected by a critical analyst, or (more spontaneously and in a less publicly communicative way) by the discursive/narrative anchoring effected by a reader or audience member, as a mental move, during the process of reading or reception.

The location of a word withing the context of Human Discourse, or the location of an utterance within the Galaxy of Enunciations, may appear to be a question which potentially at least may expand to colossal proportions: thus understood, discursive anchoring provides a theoretical framework in which narrative anchoring is a mere local section, something like a single road highlighted amid the tangle of roads crossing the different countries. But the issue of narrative specificity has, if attended to from a given angle, an entity of its own. Narrative anchoring appears therefore as bringing forward a complex tangle of relationships of its own, which are only partially coincident with discursive relationships, and not necessarily more limited in scope; it is not necessarily more limited in its scope or less ambitious as regards the ample horizons it opens to reflection.

The reason is that, if the discursive anchoring of words refers us from one discourse to another (as Bakhtin [1981]   made clear in his theory of textual polyphony and dialogism), in the case of narrative anchoring as I am trying to define it, a (verbal) narrative refers us to other (verbal) narratives and also to proto-narrative phenomena which may be verbal or nonverbal—thus transcending the limits of "discourse" in the strict sense of the word. In this sense, the notion of narrative anchoring upholds the

interdisciplinary vocation of narratology as part of interdisciplinary semiotics, not limited to literary theory, linguistics or discourse analysis.

We have begun by speaking of "processes, representations, narratives and narratologies" as four different phases or emergent levels of narrative complexity. It may be useful to demarcate these four phases, levels or frames of reference in order to discuss narrative anchoring.

Let us take, as a global unifying frame and as the background to any possible narrative, the greatest *master narrative* of them all, one which has not decayed at all, *pace* Lyotard (Note 18)—the global process of the passing of time, I mean of the only existing time, once we exclude the alternative timeworlds of fictional or theoretical universes—real time, linked to the existence of the universe, as the ultimate basis of any narrative anchoring. It might be argued that there are many versions of this "one and only" time, ranging from the traditional cosmogonies and theogonies to present-day "histories of time" like the one propounded by Stephen Hawking and, by extension, by contemporary scientific discourse (Note 19). In the face of this variety, one possible mode of narrative anchoring will consist in the intertextual projection of cosmic histories one against the other, mapping them, locating them with respect to one another, and (why not) choosing one of them as the main framework, the "true" history of time—at least as long as there is note a more convenient or convincing one. That history of time will provide a reference framework within which other histories appear as historical phenomena, approximations or ideological versions of the same. There is a measure of heuristic relativism here, of course, but within limits—a narratology which aspires to intellectual seriousness will not rely, of course, on mythical accounts of cosmic processes. It is natural science that will provide the framework for

discussion and the topics for debate: narratologists must engage natural scientists, and their accounts of time, in a methodological and philosophical dialogue. Science approaches a variety of aspects of time from a variety of perspectives: cosmological and astronomical time, physical time, biological, psychological and cognitive time. This dialogue with science must proceed with full awareness of the fact that there is a science of science itself, a scientifically and culturally relevant discourse of the functions and limits of science. It is in this sense that a narratology of processes must have a philosophical and scientific orientation.

A given narrative may provide anchoring points at this initial level—the cosmological level, so to speak—situating its small model or temporal representation of the world within the context of the nature of temporality itself, and with reference to the processual dimension of the Universe. And an analyst may complete or modulate this reflexive characterization provided by the narrative itself, for instance by demythologizing it, substituting a scientific perspective on cosmic history and development for the mythical or traditional account favoured by the narrative being analyzed.

We conceive of the "cosmic" time we have been referring to as a time quite independent of the way it is treated in the temporal representations that living beings in general, or humans in particular, may make of it. For a reflecting mind, the preceding phrase is of course just as paradoxical as the one which follows. I mean that of course it is impossible to conceive of any temporal process apart from our own potentialities, abilities or schemes of temporal perception. There is here a seed of reflection on the role of representations, and of reflections on representations, as regards the emergence of modes of time, time experiences, and temporal phenomena.

There are more basic, more animal experiences of time, as compared to others which are culturally complex or elaborate, and it makes sense to distinguish between them as though the former were more inherent to the cosmos itself, to the nature of things, and the latter were more mediated by specifically human abilities, cultures and conventions. But just as clearly, we must remain attentive to the way in which discoveries about the temporal experiences of animals, or about the structuring role of memory, are modifying in substantial ways our conceptions of the nature of that time which exists independently of the way it is perceived; they are modifying, too, our ideas about the (cultural) perception of time. Let us refer the reader, by way of example, to the reflections on the modes of existence of the present, the past, and the future carried out by George Herbert Mead in *The Philosophy of the Present*.

There is one process, specifically, which bears both on the first and the second levels (that is, both on cosmic history and on the development of the abilities to construct temporal representations): the evolution of living forms which are able to construct and experience such representations, or second-level temporalities. That is to say, the processes studied by the theory of (biological) evolution, and within it, the study of the evolution of consciousness culminating (and one must stress *culminating*) in the theory of the evolution of human intelligence.

With "time perceived" and "time conceived", therefore, we do not simply a new phase of consideration of temporal phenomena (building on firmer ground our narratology of time)—we are forced, in addition, to go back continually to the earlier phase, in order to reformulate it and reconsider it from a dialectical perspective. That ideal "time apart from our perception and culture" contains, always already, and it could not be otherwise, both

our perception and our culture; and that is the reason why we have to meet cosmological problems once and again at all levels of consideration: first as a fact and as the global framework which we inhabit, but later on also as a discursive phenomenon (the discourse of cosmology) within a given culture or intellectual context.

Let me remind that a narrative may refer explicitly (or implicitly) to this second moment of narrativity which we have called *the experience of temporality,* in order to anchor itself on it—or the anchoring may be left to take care of itself through well established cultural protocols of reception. Again, the explicit anchoring may be carried out by an analyst or critic, by relating those aspects of a narrative which are relative to the perception or unfolding of processes, to a general theory of the perception or unfolding of such processes. For instance, the *theory of point of view*, perspective or focalization might itself be rewritten from this perspective.

I have already mentioned the central role of cosmology and of the theory of the evolution (of life and consciousness) in order to provide a foundation for a theory of narrative anchorings (the ocean floor of such anchorings, so to speak). We may now move on to the second level of consideration: a theory of human history—the history of the species as a framework for the history of cultures and of specific modes of social relationship and communication which take place in them. Cultures are built, from this point of view, around a number of communicative, semiotic and reprentational processes and skills. The appearance of language, and its development and history, is a crucial frame of reference to take account of, since at this level narrative anchoring shades into the previously mentioned discursive anchoring. (Note 20) —(Let us note in passing that at this point the grand landscape we alluded to before, the *key to all enunciations,* appears from

this standpoint as a quite local and specific phenomenon, once it is set within longer narrative relative to the history of time and of life on Earth). The history of language, as every philologist knows (there are still a handful of them scattered among cultural critics) is inseparable from the history of writing and of literature. And every one of these histories (of culture, of literature, etc.) provides additional frameworks for the anchoring of narrative phenomena.

Meanwhile, we should keep in mind that besides the Theory of the History of Writing or the Theory of the History of Literature which an analyst adheres to when commenting on a narrative, the author himself, or other analysts, may also have alternative theories of the same (not to mention alternative theories of human cultural evolution). Therefore, the conflict of theories and critical confrontations are inherent to any discussion of the narrative anchoring of any given text within a discourse or within a wider narrative theory of reality.

Among such narrative theories which are relevant for narrative anchoring one might single out (and relate to it the histories of literature, of communication, etc.) the interpretation of human cultural history as a grand continuous narrative: either according to the idealist model provided by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* or according to materialist cultural evolutionism which explains the development of consciousness and of the modes of knowledge as emergent phenomena (Note 21). This is a narrative (a grand historical scheme, *pace* Lyotard, if there ever was one) which may suggest many possible links with theories of economic and social organization: reading History as the narrative of increasing globalization, or of the division of work, or of the specialization in production and in commercial distribution (which amounts to the same). And passing from

that to other, more specific, grand narratives: the development of capitalism/liberalism in opposition to feudal structures and relationships, colonialism/postcolonialism, the dissemination of Western, or Eastern, cultural models, languages and technologies… But we must leave all this aside in order to finish this section with a more specific mention of the cultural development *of narrative itself.* (And of narratology as its theoretical shadow).

Narrative anchorings assume more familiar forms in the context of a history of enunciations, and of literature: e.g. intertextuality, Frye's theory of myths, the models for textual structures analyzed by Formalist criticism, etc. One must remember, nonetheless, that these intertextualities and generic modes rest on a more fundamental basis of temporal phenomena and processes which, conceptualized in number of ways, are constantly feeding back on narratives, bringing to them previously untextualized elements, alien to literature or language but proper to natural processes, to human action and to other nonverbal communicative phenomena. Such processes and phenomena may of course achieve a conscious or textualized representation (and thereby continue the process of their emergence) in the work of a given author, or in the reading of the same provided by a given critic.

This section draws to an end with a closing paragraph: reminding the reader that any theory of processes, any theory of Time, of Life, of Evolution, of Mankind or of History, involves a discussion of beginnings, middles and endings (Note 22). Following Aristotle, we deal with endings last. Any specific ending can also find its narrative anchoring in a theory of closure or a Theory of Endings.

Narrativity as an emergent phenomenon

What is narrative about a narrative? What makes a narrative more or less intensely narrative? Which are the specifically narrative elements we can identify in the structure of a story? Which formal and communicative resources may be used in a narrative, or which wider textal resources may be developed in ways which are specifically narrative? Which ingredients or aspects may legitimately be termed "narrative" in a text which is *not* itself "a narrative"? Such questions serve to stake out the issue of narrative specificity or narrativity (Note 23).

These initial questions overlap to some extent, but they also point out different dimensions of the problem and different directions for a discussion of the same. We might therefore distinguish (following Gerald Prince) *narrativehood* (the question whether something is or is not a narrative) from *narrativeness* (a matter of to which extent or in which ways it is narrative). These would be different dimensions of narrativity. Or we might differentiate *diegetic* from *mimetic* narrativity (with Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer). We may study the narrativity of the lyric, or the elements of diegetic narrativity in drama, or else analyze the narrative specificity of interactive online computer games.

Two of the main orientations given to the issue of narrativity might be termed as "structuralist" and "poststructuralist". Structuralist approaches tend to focus on formal aspects of narrativity, and on the narrativity of "narratives". Poststructuralism, on the other hand, has privileged the diffuse

elements arising out of readers' responses, and the narrative components of nonnarrative phenomena.

A typical structuralist approach to narrativity might begin with the analytic delimitation of a number of levels of analysis for the study of narrative texts: for instance, story and discourse, or *fabula* and *siuzhet,* or (in three-level models) *fabula, story and narrative text,* or action, story and narrative text (Note 24). Analysis may proceed from there to the narrative specificity of each level: for instance, which kind of actions evince a higher degree of narrativity, or which discursive strategies are specific to narratives, or which ones are favoured by narrative representation. One may study, for instance, the diverse modes and aspects of diegetic narrativity, or those of mimetic narrativity; the narrative logic of event sequences, or the varying significance and modes of narrative endings or closure—at the level of action, of plot structure, and of the rhetoric of narrative discourse. Many phenomena constitutive of narrativity are still insufficiently explored from the standpoint of classical narratology, which remains therefore a fruitful line of research.

Following a poststructuralist orientation, on the other hand, we might emphasize the fact that "some narratives are born as narratives, others become narratives, and some have narrativity thrown upon them" (Note 25). The (inter)active role of the receiver, and the multiple contexts and uses of narrative would be emphasized thereby. We may recall how in the heyday of formalism literary theorists tried to provide formal or structural definitions of *literature*. These have been largely discredited, and functional definitions are now preferred. Few theorists would question today that "some literary works are born as literature, others become literature, and still others have literariness thrown upon them". It is true that

arguing the same about narrative is a much bolder step, possibly a questionable one. Is not narrative by definition, after all, a structure—for instance "a structure of events"?

Taken to an extreme, this relativization of narrativity may appear to be questionable, but still it remains a fruitful line of inquiry for poststructuralist narratology. Far from being dependent on universal and context-free structures and traits, narrativity is linked to a great extent to pragmatic, functional, contextual, generic and cultural circumstances. Classical narratology provided "grammatical" or structural definitions of narrativity, but this phase of narratology has been succeeded (without being wholly displaced) by postructuralist or postclassical narratolgoy. A useful characterization of both phases may be found in Prince (2006). Postclassical narratology provides definitions which are more interdisciplinary and more closely linked to cultural contexts and debates. Definitions—or perhaps problematizations, as is the case when (as noted above) the very concept of narrativity is problematized, once it is no longer taken to be a neutral textual dimension, but one which is defined with respect to issues of genre, of standard versus nonstandard linguistic usage, and more generally speaking as an question of social semiotics (as is the case in Penas 2008).

According to the glossary of the *Blackwell Companion to Narrative Theory,* narrativity consists in "the formal and contextual qualities distinguishing narrative from non-narrative, or marking the degree of 'narrativeness' in a discourse; the rhetorical principles underpinning the production or interpretation of narrative; the specific kinds of artifice inherent in the process of narrative representation" (Phelan and Rabinowitz 2005: 548).

This definition is sufficiently broad to admit that the narrativity of a text (or of another phenomenon) is not necessarily pre-determined, but may instead be subject to reintepretation, or may be collaboratively constructed through the interaction of the narrator and the receiver or the interpreter.

The question of narrativization must therefore be addressed simultaneously with that of narrativity. Narrativization implies a structuring, narrativizing activity, exerted on nonnarrative materials. Or, alternatively, the reorganization of previous narrative structures in order to produce a new narrative (García Landa 2008). In Hayden White's historiographic narratology, narrativization is a task carried out by the histoiran in order to impose a plot-like structure on pre-narrative historical events: it is the author who does the narrativizing here. Monika Fludernik, on the other hand, has emphasized the readers' use of narrativizing structures in order to naturalize difficult texts—for instance, interpreting them as the representation of a sequence of events, or as the focalization resulting from the experience of a given mind.

In distinguishing within narrativity the aforementioned dimensions of *narrativehood* and *narrativeness*, Gerald Prince has drawn attention to the narrativity of texts that we would not wish to call "narrative texts": such texts may show different modes and degrees of narrativeness (for instance, the representation of experientiality, varying proportions of action as opposed to commentary, or of virtuality as opposed to the actual reality of represented events, etc.) while having a low degree of *narrativehood*. A number of relevant parameters to measure such degrees of narrativeness are listed by Didier Coste in *Narrative and Communication.* The main constitutive elements of narrativity according to Coste are *transactionality*

vs. nontransactionality, transitivity vs. non-transitivity, causality vs. non-causality, singularity vs. banality, and *the presence of alternative courses of action vs. their absence.*

In addition to these scalar categories, Marie-Laure Ryan has observed the importance in plots of the dimension *virtuality vs. reality,* as well as the different ways it is deployed through the contrast between an "actual" narrative world and the private worlds known or imagined by the characters. She has also emphasized the relevance of different modes of narrativity: the simple narrativity of folk tales; the figurative narrativity of such genres as the lyric, philosophy and history; the complex narrativity of canonical novels, the instrumental or subordinate narrativity of *exempla,* sermons, etc.

The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory,* a major work of reference in this area, contains entries on narrativity (Prince) and on narrativisation (Jan Alber) which deal with these issues. But there are other entries on narrative in this volume might be considered equally relevant for an approach to the question of narrativity—those dealing with issues of genre or text types. An approach to narrativity from the perspective of text types leads us immediately to the definition of narrative, and (in Alexandra Georgakopoulou's entry in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*) points towards definitions like the one given by Chatman: narrative requires, in order to exist, a double chronology, the chronology of the rerpresentational discourse, and the chronology of the events represented in the action (—an issue we shall return to presently).

The study of narrativity from the standpoint of textual typology may deal with the specific differences arising in the narrativity of narrative genres

proper (for instance, kinds of plot structures in the drama as opposed to those of the novel; the Aristotelian contast between tragedy and epic poetry; the narrative specificity of the literary short story, etc.)—that is to say, different modes and kinds of *narrativehood.* Issues of *narrativeness* have also been prominent: delimiting the frontiers of narrative as against other major text types, such as expositional texts, explications, instructions, or nonnarrative conversation. Linguistic theories of discourse modes or Speech Act Theory are also highly relevant to this inquiry.

As noted by Georgakopoulou, some theorists (Bruner, Swales, Virtanen; one might also add Ricœur, Dennett, Turner, Fisher, etc.) have located narrative at an even higher structural level, beyond these textual types. Narrative would be a wider cognitive operation, or a textual macrotype. These perspectives tend to emphasize the presence of narrativity (the narrative ingredient) in each of the major text types we mentioned. Georgakopoulou observes that contemplating narrative at such level of generality tends to blur the perspective on the specific differences existing between concrete narratives. Contemporary analytic tendencies tend to concentrate less on formal abstract elements, and emphasize instead the specific details of usage in specific forms and individualized situations, in local generic or social contexts. "One possibility would be—she argues—to explore narrative as a dynamic conglomeration of more or less prototypical textual, functional, and contextual parameters" (2005: 596). Georgakopoulou emphasizes the variable uses of narrative resources which appear in different contexts, and the diverse degrees of attention that users grant to these resources, as well as the appearance of local hybrid modes in specific context and communicative communities.

It is clear that what is "a good story" in one community or according to one set of conventions may nonetheless exhibit serious lacks in narrativity from a different standopoing (Rudrum 2008). Any discussion of narrativity needs to take into account the eye of the beholder, and not lose sight of the issue of deliberate parodies or anti-narratives, which deconstruct narrative conventions and show something like a negative narrativity, a narrativity by contrast. (See, for instance, the case of Samuel Beckett's narrative, which I analyze in *Samuel Beckett y la narración reflexiva*).

A longer entry by Michael Kearns, "Genre theory in narrative studies", in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory,* also covers part of this ground, by necessity. We find here once again a conception of genre (of narrative genre, in this case) as a set of conventions "activated" by the reader:

> "To approach a text as *narrative isto implement expectations about point, *narrative progression or transformation, *actants, and *narrator (*see* NARRATIVITY; TELLABILITY); in fact, any text containing a sequence of *events invites these expectations." (2005: 201)

Kearns traces back to Aristotle the classical or taxonomical conceptions of the genre, and observes that in the twentieth century these were displaced by funcionalist conceptions which integrate literary genres within a wider linguistic framework. Thus, Genette redefines narrative as a "linguistic mode", beyond the limits of specific literary genres—a mode which can be used by any genre. And according to Derrida's "law of genre", texts *participate* in genres without *belonging* to them. This law also bears on the act of reading: the narratologist must therefore examine the way in which

readers use narrative conventions in processing a text, together with those belonging to other kinds of discourse.

The influence of hermeneutics, Kearns notes, has also qualified the essentialist and absolutist conceptions of the genre, given that the hermeneutic circle requires a coming and going between the text and the reader, and a a negotiation between the diverse elements and components of a discourse. Nevertheless, none of these reservations raised against the concept of "genre" puts any limits to the need to study narrative as a cognitive, linguistic and cultural phenomenon, with modes and a status of its own, requiring a specific approach. Nowadays theorists do prefer to approach genres and discursive modes from the standpoint of a multi-dimensional network of scalar parameters, rather than with binary, absolute or exclusive categorizations. It is a fuzzier approach to the question of specificity, both at the level of genre and at the level of the individual text.

Questions of genre are relevant to the textual production, to the textual processing by the individual receiver, and to the cultural reception of narratives. On the pole of production, generic schemata act as guidelines, from the most general level of narrative configuration (understood here as a basic cognitive process), through the models of master narratives which are dominant in a given culture, archetypes, or myths, up to the specific ideologies located in a specific period or community. The processing, reading or interpretation of narratives equally require such arch-textual and ideological schemata, which enable communicative interaction. Cultural institutions and ideological processes then recycle the specific acts of reception (and further condition them) so that certain narrative schemata, certain genres, or some specific individual narratives acquire a privileged cultural status (they become for instance "literature" or "history") or

become otherwise associated to specific communities, or specific communicative functions or contexts. The social uses of narrative schemata at the levels of production, of processing and of cultural reception interact dialectically, so that (for instance) producers of narratives do not work in a void but in a cultural context which receives certain kinds of narratives in ways which are to some extent pre-established or which follow certain patterns (although all of this is subject to revision or transformation to a greater or lesser extent, through a given narrative or individual action).

As observed above, many recent theorists have emphasized the role of narrative as a natural linguistic mode, and as an ingredient present in a great number of genres. This "wider" conception of narrative as a general discourse modality dissociable from specifically narrative texts has also been subject to criticism in recent years. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan raises objections to the genralized use of the term "narrative" in psychoanalysis, in critical discourse analysis and in other humanistic disciplines. Although she recognizes the presence of narrative elements in many of the phenomena which are labeled as "stories" or "narratives" in such disciplines, Rimmon-Kenan insists on the need of a double temporal sequence (that of the action and that of its representation) and on the necessity of a mediating subject (a narrator, etc.) in order for a given phenomenon to be referred to as "narrative" (Note 26).

We shall discuss this objection of Rimmon-Kenan's in order to delve further into the peculiar narrativity of the humanities and the social sciences. Although many (literary) narratologists may have found irritating this use of the term "narrative" on the part of social analysts or psychologists, and may share Rimmon-Kenan's objections, the following observations should be taken into consideration.

When an analyst (whether social, psychological, political, etc.) calls something a "story" or a "narrative", and proceeds to its analysis, s/he is not necessarily presupposing thereby that the *narrative* in question has already been articulated or "told" by someone. Quite often, the analyst plays a double role, first constructing the narrative, articulating it on the basis of various dispersed or partially connected elements in the discursive space being subject to analysis; *and immediately (or simultaneously)* articulating a counternarrative which puts forward an alternative version or account of the events, one which helps configure a more inclusive emplotment—showing thereby that the narrative which had been identified or brought to light in the discursive space in the first place was one-sided, limited or ideologically biased.

It is understandable that, in doing thus, analysts sometimes fashion straw targets in order to demolish them, or silently close open doors in order to crash through them. This depends, in part, a third party's standpoint on the door in question.

Nonetheless, it is quite possible that there is no other way in which this analytic work can be carried out. For instance, if we speak about "the Left's narrative on the Spanish Civil War", we create to some extent a fiction, which will need to be much more extensively argued, articulated in detail, documented, etc., if we want to avoid a simplistic perspective on this supposed "narrative", or if our discourse aspires to some analytic relevance. Be as it may, the argument involves carrying out a selection, a structuring, interpretation, evaluation, etc., both of culturally relevant discourses on the Civil War (in order to extract from them a narrative) *and* of the narrative subject to which we ascribe this narrative ("the Spanish Left", for instance).

And this work of narrative structuring will be carried out, quite possibly, in order to articulate a critique of the narrative we have just articulated, or concretized.

Therefore, from an interactional perspective on narrativity—a postclassical, or sociosemiotic one—the analyst is not a neutral analyst. It is not just that the analytic process is ideologically articulated: *the very object of analysis* is constituted in part by the analyst himself. It is the analyst who must bring to light the object of study, precisely in order to deconstruct its narrativity.

To be sure, good analysts do not produce that narrativity out of a top hat. Instead, they provide a clear, well structured, well reasoned account of phenomena which are socially active, already perceivable or detectable before the analyst's intervention. And they make us see clearly for the first time (and never so well expressed) the mutual relationships between phenomena, relationships whose existence, we feel now, was on the tip of our tongue, or of our mind. To pursue our example further: the analyst will offer a perspective on "the Left's narrative on the Spanish Civil War" which is better articulated (or more articulate) than that of the "Left" itself—who is, admittedly, a fuzzy narrator. Or better than those of the unofficial spokesmen for "the Left". Thereafter, the analyst will undertake a critical analysis or deconstruction of that narrative, which now has for us an identifiable or characteristic shape, thanks in part to the analytic work effected by the critical analyst or historian himself.

The main point here is that both the narrative extracted from the cloud of discourses *and* the critique it is subject to must be narrativizing acts with a hermeneutic value, and must help to interpret the phenomenon under study (the Civil War, in our example), first through the social attitudes expressed

through a number of discourses, and then through the critique they undergo. Both steps must evince the interpretive and emergent value of narrative, helping to constitute objects of knowledge where, previously, there were only disparate phenomena.

The social analyst, therefore, does not face the situation that Rimmon Kenan's critique might make us assume—the task of analyzing well articulated narratives, with an identifiable narrator, and a double temporal sequence, ready for analysis. Before they deconstruct a narrative, social analysts must construct it. This activity may of course involve much self-congratulatory argumentation, navel-gazing, selective blindness, foregone conclusions. Still, it cannot be done otherwise. Ideological debate consists of narratives and counter-narratives.

Yet another question must be mentioned, crucial for the analyisis of "perceived" or emergent narrativity, one which opens up a metatheoretical dimension in narrative analysis. One may conceive of the different theories of anrrative (and the different theories of narrativity), and the practice of different modes of narrative analysis, as perceptual instruments which capture narrative "wavelengths" which escape other theories, or as Kenneth Burke would say, other "terministic screens". Thus, both theoretical research in narratology and the practice of narrative analysis help develop, in an emergent way, new dimensions of narrativity. We find here an interaction between the narrative text and the narratological metatext which, in turn, feeds back dialectically with the development of new genres and modes of narrative which exhibit new dimensions of narrativity. Thus, for instance, a book of narrative theory such as *Theorizing narrativity* contributes to a clearer conceptualization of the narrativity of phenomena which are not obviously narrative—as happens for instance in Meir

Sternberg's chapter on the narrativity of legal texts, or Marie-Laure Ryan's analysis of the peculiar narrativity of online videogames.

To take another example: recent cognitivist analyses emphasize the psychological narrativity of action sequences, plans, etc., in subjective experience. One might consider that, according to classical definitions, there is no narrativity here, given that there is no communication from one subject to another, no identifiable text, no representation… Although, perhaps, one might trace a line here and admit that, in fact, there does exist a representational process. And why not admit, too, that there is also a process of self-communication. As a matter of fact, consciousness, once it is conceived in an emergentist fashion as happens in the work of George Herbert Mead, is a process of self-communication. The symbolic-interactional notion of "self-indications" directed by an organism to itself is crucial here. (Note 27).

A narratology capable of including this narrativity of consciousness among its objects of analysis is the kind of theory which contributes to the perception of narrativity where none was perceived before—which amounts almost (though not quite) to say, where there was no narrativity before—before the intervention of theoretical work, whose job it is to bring emergent narrativity to the surface. (Note 28).

Let us proceed now to the study of a specific instance of an emergent mode of narrative: the study of some aspects of narrativity in the Internet, specifically in weblogs or blogs. This is an especially interesting case due to their recent appearance and their social impact, but also because of the technical circumstances of their development (a new technological functionality opens up, in this area, a new possibility for interaction or a

new communicational dimension)—and also because of their specific involvement with the general narrativity of experience and of subjectivity that we have been referring to.

Blogs: Some basic formal and narrative issues

Let us start from a provisional definition: "a weblog, or blog, is a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first" (Walker 2005). A *web log* suggests originally "a diary or record of navigation through the web". Blogs share some general characteristics with other types of electronic texts (web pages, text archives, e-mail messages…) and other features are proper to the different kinds of blogs.

We shall not pause over the features blogs share with other types of electronic texts. Let us merely mention the peculiarity of what, using an analogy from linguistics, one might call the "triple articulation" of online texts: an electronic text is (like other computerized processes) a sequence of binary signals, but this sequence is informationally treated so as to appear to the user in the shape of the semiotic object which has been previously codified: an icon, a sound file, a hypertextual file. Different kinds of semiotic objects are thus combined or embedded in ordered sequences which constitute the multimedia environment of the computer. Thus, a hypertextual file may include instructions for the embedding of a sound file (mp3 for instance), or a graphics file (.jpg, .gif…). Each one of them is activated by a different program or application, but when the proper equipment is available and all the plugins are in working order, the

computer creates a global unified experience, characteristic of this multimedia environment—for instance, some paragraphs of text with an embedded musical video, which in turn includes the subtitles for the song. The "third articulation" we referred to, in the case of the World Wide Web, consists in the automatized relationship between the computer languages for the design of instructions— html, php, xml, etc.— and the active interface available for the user, in the form of written, visual or audio text. It is the use of such automatized or "WYSIWYG" programs (the acronym for "what you see is what you get"), allowing users to design web pages without any knowledge of computer languages, which has enabled the launching of the blogosphere as an interactive medium of mass communication. And it is the Internet protocols, as an organized system for the establishment of automatic connections between computers, and for the instant transfer and downloading of files, which lay down the foundations for the experiential and communicational environment we are referring to (multimedia computer-mediated communication in a world wide network of users and machines). It is all of this that blogs have in common with earlier and more basic communicative phenomena on the web, such as interactive websites.

As to the specific differences of blogs, one could present this issue as a model case study in the fuzzy nature of categories. Even concepts which are apparently clear and well-defined such as "rabbit" or "zebra" turn out to be problematic from the taxonomic viewpoint (Gould 1990)—but, admittedly, blogs constitute a particularly fuzzy set of informational technologies and communicational practices. This is due, in part, to their versatility, and in part to the fast development of technology in this field. However, the fluid set of practices involving blogs is sufficiently unified to allow a discussion of "the blogosphere" as a particular section of the Web

(and as another fuzzy set with questionable limits, of course). We shall mention here some basic characteristics, with the proviso that some individual blogs might well be lacking one or several of them—however central they seem—but not all of them.

- Blogs are, in principle, those websites generated by the million by online publishing platforms devised to that effect (Blogger: http://www.blogger.com, WordPress: http://www.wordpress.com, Blogia: http://www.blogia.com, etc.). While there is a relative formal uniformity in the products they geneate, these platforms offer a number of editing options and a toolkit from which individual users/bloggers may choose. Not all platformas offer the same services and features, although most of the basic tools or options are quite similar. This similarity is found to a lesser extent in the case of blogs generated with non-standard, individual, personal, improvised or customized editing systems, for instance webpage editors. For instance, the "same" blog (mine) can be compared in two versions, one hosted by a automated blog platform (*Vanity Fea,* in Blogia http://garciala.blogia.com and another at a personal website (*Blog de notas*, http://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia_inglesa/garciala/blog.html).

- A blog is changing. While a traditional website was not defined by its variability, although it might be occasionally updated, a blog is a website which is continually being updated, more or less continuously, regularly or sporadically. A whole gamut of situtations is suggested here, from a website including a small section of "news" or "updates" withing a generally static presentation, up to the whosale re-design of the website with each update. Most blogs, of course, fall exactly in-between.

- In a blog, contrary to the chapters of a book, the sequence of articles or posts is reversed, resulting from the practice of writing the new material, or

the new post, on the top of the web page/screen, pushing previous materials material down to the bottom of the page/screen or to an archive of older pages. Usually the new text or post is dated, automatically so in the case of blogging platforms. There exists, nevertheless, the (less common) option of including changes or "editing" the same article with modifications—maybe even opening up a second-degree blog inside the blog. These later modifications, after the initial creation of an article, are not publicly dated in such an accessible way. There exists, then, the possibility that readers may take the automated dating of entries as a register of the "true" editorial sequence of the text, coinciding with their creation.

- There is a possibility, then (not the only one) that the sequential structure of the blog may be fictionalized or tampered with—for instance, by retroactively modifying old articles so that they may prophesy "future" news or later events, etc. The form lends itself well to such illusionism, due to the apparent inevitablility and objectivity of the automated functions for the dating and archiving of entries. One might speak of a manipulability which is inherent to this technological mirage. This is a possibility which it is interesting to mention here, as it lends itself to curious communicational effects regarding the main subject of our concern here, blogging and the narrativity of experience. One should keep in mind, though, that the temporal sequence of the written text is only the most obvious one among the "technologically determined" aspects of the blog which lend themselves to manipulation (whether artistic-fictional or merely pragmatic-manipulative).

- A blog is interactive, while a website is one-directional. The blog is collectively written, with one or more authors/editors who can add entries or "posts" (the major category of contributions, getting first-rank visibility

and prominence) and visitors (either registered users or anonymous commenters, ranging from a small group to large crowds), who can add comments to those entries. Comments are second-rank in visibility and prominnece, often visible for the blog's reader only if s/he chooses to read them by clicking on a link. There are, though, alternative layouts, which place comments on the margins, next to the post, or —a frequent favorite— run them through a "quick" miniblog in an embedded window… etc.

- Levels of interactivity may be adjusted in a number of ways. Besides the more common options, such as allowing readers to post comments, whether previously checked or not by the author/editor, there are many other less common options, such as not allowing any comments, allowing them selectively to registered users, or allowing any occasional reader not merely to write comments but also posts, or even redesign the website's layout and structure.

- The system or platform used for the blog may provide the authors/editors or the readers/commenters with a varying number of tools for the management of interactivity, and place them on a similar or quite a different footing. For instance, it has been a common development in blog platforms to add tools which enable readers to receive an e-mail warning that a new comment has been posted. More recently, readers have also been given more options to receive update notices, which favours the development of conversations without risking any waste of time, as happens when readers check back for an answer on a blog which may not have been updated.

Interactivity may be ensured, moreover, through other ways not accessible to the rest of readers, such as e-mail, telephone or SMS. The blog can also

be subordinated as an auxiliary tool for another medium: a newspaper, an online magazine, a radio station or tv programme… —and this issue also has consequences bearing on the blog's interactivity or its public projection.

- There is, moreover, a variety of subscription (or "syndication") options, mainly through the "feed" signal systems RSS or Atom (or through "friending" in social networks). Thus, readers are warned about the blog's updating without having to check in regularly, and there is a greater communicative fluidity and greater involvement on the part of the followers. Readers can also read not the blog itself, but a copy or version (perhaps abbreviated) generated by a system for the management of these signals—a system which in turn may be a program installed in the user's own computer, or a website where the user administer their readings, feeds and subscriptions.

- Blogs usually archive past articles (together with their comments) in an archive, accesible through a search system or a directory. Recent entries appear first, a number of increasingly older entries down under, and, in different pages, but still accessible to the reader, the blog's entire sequence ir archived—another major difference when compared to printed periodical publications. A blog, therefore, carries its history along with it, making it easily accessible. (In my case, when I read a new blog, beginning with the front matter, it is not uncommon for me to check back to the very first entry and watch the way it began).

- Another important tool is the classification of articles by subject, or their accessibility through tags. Sometimes the blog's own internal links establish reading trajectories or associate posts with a related topic. In this sense, a blog is a collection of web pages combinable as a moving mosaic

in a number of ways, both automated and manual—according to the date of their creation (in the archives) or thematically (in the subjects lists or tags). Moreover, external links from the blog to other blogs, posts, or websites draw an additional network of hypertextual paths. Quite characteristic in this sense is the use of trackbacks or automated registers of links to a given article, a tool present in many platfroms. There are also blog tracking websites, such as Google Blog Search (http://blogsearch.google.com/) o Technorati (http://technorati.com/), which interact dynamically with the blogs they list or track down as regards the dissemination of information and the follow-up of visitors and links.

- Still other elements may be included in blogs, usually organized around the margins or the header, often in sidebars flanking the articles: besides the title in the header, a fixed section presenting the blog or declaring its author or purpose, links to other blogs by the same author or by the collaborators, or to websites related to the blog (documents, texts, photoblogs, videoblogs by the same author), a list of recommended or favourite blogs, blogs with a similar topic or blogs by friends, an embedded scroll with the blogger's comments on other blogs, etc. To this may be added the advertisements introduced by the blogger or the hosting platform, as a source of revenue for either; testimonial links or banners (usually with associated logos or icons) of an ideological or social nature, events, pressure groups, institutions, campaigns, etc.

- Moreover, each blog or each post may make a more or less extensive use of multimedia resources. Besides the text of the entries, a post may use, alone or in combination, hypertextual links, graphics and photographs, sound files or podcasts, and embedded videos. There are blogs which are predominantly photographic (although one may write lots of text on a

photoblog at Flickr), others are conceived as videoblogs; many are strictly textual. And most of them combine to a varying extent all of these semiotic resources.

- And we have not even mentioned matters of "content" or subject matter: blogs may be thematic or miscellaneous, with or without a personal ingredient bringing them close to a diary; they may be more or less specialised or strict as regards their editorial line. And the subjects are, of course, potentially infinite (What are books about? What are blogs about?). In order to cut a long argument short, we will not deal any further with this issue, except as it bears on the *personal* and *experiential* thematic dimension dealt with in the following section.

- In sum, given that there are a multiplicity of systems, platforms, options, automated templates, layouts and skins, and many optional tools and applications to choose from, given that their combinations are innumerable, and that the subject-matter is infinitely varied, every blog is an individual text with quite singular formal characteristics and a dynamic of its own— even though there may be more or less similar "neighbours" on the same platform, or on the same circle of interests. Part of this dynamic comes from the way in which the blog is kept alive, updated, visited, commented, promoted by other blogs and other media… a whole collection of interactional dynamics quite independent from one another. Some blogs are quite lively as regards their number of visitors, but comparatively static as regards updates and commentaries, or viceversa; a blog may become an original and enriching event for a small number of readers, or a repetitive but still worthwhile activity for a greater number; it may be primitive and simple-minded but quite active and lively, or complex, intelligent and ignored. Or vice-versa—there is a lot or everything in the blogosphere.

Blogs and personal experience

A blog may specialize on any subject, just like a magazine or a book. Or it may avoid any specialization—and thus a new scale is suggested, on which blogs may be placed or through which they may move. Among the parameters to consider in this respect are not ony the thematic coherence of the editorial line, but also the relative uniformity as to the blog's *impersonality* (personal/impersonal axis): for instance, among strictly technological blogs, a blog which examines new technologies as they appear on the market will tend to be more impersonal, as compared to a blog which examines them as they attract the blogger's attention, apart from their novelty.

A non-thematic blog, on the other hand, spontaneously tends to approach the personal pole: any post becomes an index of the blogger's present interests, without a coherent principle of selection to set limits on them. And more generally, the blog as a form tends to foster an degree of subjectivity and personal experience which differentiates it from other thematically oriented publications. Gadgets, news, or books… anything which is reviewed in the blog tends to be given, to a varying degree, a personal evaluation, an individualized assessment. It is not for nothing that the blog is a *personal publication,* different from books or journals in the degree of independence available to an individual, or a group of individuals, in disseminating their materials and opinions without any further editorial filters. There are, of course, blogs with editorial filters and established guidelines for contributors—but in that direction we begin to

move towards another genre with characteristics of its own, the electronic magazine, whose borderlines with the blog are of course a fuzzy grey area.

The personal bias blogs tend to show is a direct function of the publishing medium: universal accessibility through the Internet, the easy generation of contents, the platform's limited responsibility for content published in each blog, the author/editor's personal control on what is published, and perhaps above all the low production cost (and the advantageous relationship between cost and potential distribution), which makes considerations of economic benefit either disappear or become far less relevant. Blogs are less subject to the control of the marketplace than journals are, which helps give wings to personal expression and to subjectivism.

Steve Himmer observes that blogs, as a genre or form, tend to resist commercial reification—although one should exclude in this respect the "splogs", advertising in the form of pseudo-blogs generated automatically by spamming programs.

> In general . . . the content of weblogs actively collapses many of the distinctions that traditional commodity journalism (or, for that matter, fiction and memoir) relies on, mixing the deeply personal with the factual and the interpretive. While this collapse serves, over time, to allow authors to develop and deepen the public persona presented through their work, incorporating more and more of the personality traits and quirks which would not, typically, emerge in public writing. (Himmer 2004)

Blogs proliferated particularly in their beginnings as personal online diaries. And this is still, to some extent, the natural form around which the genre gravitates, with increasingly fuzzy outskirts in the direction of academic publishing, of fanzines, of specialised bulletins, or the online

curiosity journal. If blogs are thematic, it is largely because people are thematic—because the ensemble of interests and activities an individual engages in and communicates about, eventually give a weight and bias to the blog in the direction of those subjects of special interest, be they professional or amateur.

A blog in the most shapeless sense of the term—a blog managed in the random direction which makes it similar to cutout albums, occasional notes, quotation books, collections of anecdotes or curiosities—is unified, in the last analysis, by the very act of collecting or of attracting attention to a subject in writing a blog note: the blogs, one might put it thus, are their own history, and carried by this weight of personal history, they tend to gravitate in the direction of the authors' emotional, intellectual or personal history, and to show in their development the development of the bloggers' attitudes not just towards a number of aspects of the reality surrounding them, but also (and quite prominently) towards the blog itself, and towards the blogger's own activity as a communicator of that reality and a structuring subject in the blog. This genre acquires, therefore, a prominent reflexive dimension, and all the more so in its more personal and spontaneous modes.

Both the reflexivity and the narrativity of the self are emphasized by the communicative modes favoured by blogs. It must be kept in mind, moreover, that an important dimension of the blog is its interactivity, its integration within a virtual community of communicators, mutual commenters, imaginary friends, and the creation of an audience of readers, observers, lurkers and participants around the blog itself. This very process of socialization has its own history and vicissitudes ("the development of a number of prominent commentators", "the battle against the troll", "a post

with mediatic relevance", etc.) which confer to the process of writing an additional narrative dimension.

Narrativity and literariness of the blog

In order to examine the issue of the narrativity proper to blogs, we must take into consideration a number of different dimensions of narrativity. Temporal sequencing itself, the chronological dating inherent to blogs, provides them with an important narrative potential of a special kind: what Genette calls interpolated narration (typical of diaries). But there exist many other dimensions of narrativity, apart from mere sequentiality.

Let us take, for instance, retrospectivity or hindsight. The typically interpolated narration of blogs ensures that, at the moment of a post's composition, hindsight extends to what has already been written or commented, not to what is yet to be told or commented (or, as a matter of fact, yet to happen). The blogger is innocent of the future of his own text, which is not designed in advance, just like the life we are to live is not designed in advance. (And yet, one must emphasize that this effect, just like any other textual effect, may be fictionalized, reused as an expressive element in an aesthetic structure which utilizes the primary structure of the blog as an imitated form or as a compositional material).

The blog may contain temporal references (to the past or to the future) which emphasize narrativity, by signalling or underlining sequences of action, causality, expectations… Thus, there may exist references and links to previous posts, emphasizing a narrative development, or the blogger may draw attention to a number of hypothetical developments, plans, and

unresolved unknown quantities, which must be resolved by time. And, although we are taking particular notice here of the narrativity emphasized by the text's self-reference, it goes without saying that there may also be references to the past and to the future which are not at the same time references to the text which is to portray that past or that future—both at the level of the personal life and doings of the blogger, and at the level of the blog's specific subject matter—technological developments, political events, etc. By generating a uniform and sequential text, in dealing with any given process, the blog emphasizes the narrative dimension of the process in question.

Blogs tend to favour one type of retrospection which is closely linked to texts in process—texts which are published not as the result of a global prior design, but as a gradual work in progress; it is the revaluation of prior data, events, circumstances, entries, etc., in the light of unforeseen or supervenient events. Quite often it is readers who point out the potential ironies brought about by time, as they comment on an entry some months or yeas after it was written. This relationship of blogs or diaries—and of life—with the unforeseen dimensions and the contingencies of temporality also helps to make them vital narratives, texts which emphasize the narrative nature of the course of life, and which, as a matter or fact, acquire something like a life of their own, subject in their progress to the happenings and unforeseeability of the life of their author. Note, too, that this narrativity of the self becomes especially intense by virtue of being watched and communicated to a "live" audience. A similar narrative with similar event, contemplated retrospectively in a diary written in the past, does not involve in the same way the present of the writer with that of the reader.

At this point we must refer the reader, as Viviane Serfaty does in her book on online diaries (2003) to the narrative of the self in the diary tradition. (Note 29). Theorists such as Philippe Lejeune and Georges Gusdorf point out three main traditions underlying this personal writing: catholicism (Saint Theresa of Avila, J. H. Newman), English puritanism (e.g. Bunyan) and the libertine tradition (from Pepys to Rousseau). Writing for oneself articulates a space of freedom where thought can move apart from dogma (Serfaty 2003: 6); this becomes in Rousseau a rule of desire as the prime mover of the modern individual. The experience of modern subjectivity finds its space of expression and of development in diaries. Diaries constitute truth as a space of interpretation and transformation: according to Serfaty, the dating of the entries and their chronological ascription are essential to their significance, but there is always a place for revision and reinterpretation, so that the claim that the individuals' reality is faithfully transcribed is also open to question. Individuals represent themselves, justify themselves and recreate themselves through life writing, and the very process of writing feeds back on the experience of life, becomes an essential part of it, a prime element in the subject's self-fashioning and self-understanding. Serfaty notes that blogs as online diaries favour a diachronic view of the self (2003: 28). All this is done in a dispersed and multiperspectival mode, through monologues, dialogues with the audience, photographs, videos, constituting a considerably innovative and unprecedented phenomenon of personal self-representation and social interaction—although precedents do exist in part, they are only fragmentary and limited. (Note 30).

The emergence of the Web was unforeseen, as was the sudden appearance of blogs and other forms of improvised public writing within it. An art theorist might expect, perhaps, that once a powerful multimedia

environment has appeared which, like the computer screen, is able to combine color and image, typography, sound, creative writing, narrative and poetry, music and video, some kind of amazing *Gesamtkunstwerk* should be bound to appear, a powerful artistic genre rising to the challenge of the new age and the new technology... but in fact any ordinary blog already provides this complex combination of media, in the form of a hypermedial work in progress, joined simultaneously to an art of personal expression and of social interaction, and a feast of intertextuality—the polymorph narrative of a virtualized subject's intermedial online experience.

Blogs may appear to be too living, colloquial and fluid to qualify as art in any usual sense of the term—even if it can be readily granted that some are more artistic or more valuable than others from a literary viewpoint. Steve Himmer (2004) writes on blogs as a new literary genre, a typically modern genre, of work in process, after the death of traditional art, but with a Benjaminian aura they acquire thanks to their incidence on real time. Himmer observes that a blog, contrary to a traditional literary work, has multiple entrance points for the reader:

> Those entrance points are determined not by the author, but rather by the engagement of others with the text(s) the author has produced. It is only possible for a reader to arrive at a posting of mine via another site if that other site (or its author) has chosen to offer a link to my work. The multiple entry points, then, are not only dynamic, but entirely beyond the constraint or control of the original author and the original text. (Himmer 2004)

One privileged entry point must be recognized, though: the blog's present state or URL, the destination of most links, aggregators, browser favorites, etc. For the blog's followers, in fact, most other entry points are in fact

invisible, and each post is a day's wonder, lasting at most the few days a discussion goes on, assuming one is started, until it stops or peters out. It is different for those finding the blog for the first time. Search engines may take a visitor to any past post which has not been erased, and the visitor tracking tools may reveal to the blogger that, surprisingly, most of the visitors to the blog were looking for something else. Many visitors reach the blog through links placed by other blogs—not to the blog's main URL, but to that of a specific post (it is essential for the blog's canonical form that every post should have a URL of its own, so that the blog turns out to be a gigantic collection of web pages crisscrossed by a multiplicity of intertextual paths). Therefore, a blog is a kaleidoscope of posts, or a labyrinth with multiple entrance points, even though it does happen to have a front gate. And even when the front gate is used, we do not get to *the beginning,* as we do in a book, but at any rate *to the end so far,* a provisional and variable open ending, a gateway joined (as in newspapers) to the evanescence of the present. (Note 31).

A blog may be reread, but its main interest is joined to the unforeseeabilty of the new.

> Much like Ulrich Beck defined risk, bloggers deal with hazards and insecurities induced by never-ending waves of modernization. What is blogged is the relentless uncertainty of the everyday. Whereas entrepreneurs colonize the future, energized by collective hallucinations, bloggers expose the present they find themselves caught in. (Lovink 2007)

Although, according to Himmer,

> That the weblog is always in process, never completed, can be read as both its greatest strength and, in another way, its weakness as a form. (Himmer 2004)

One should point out that a blog *is* completed, at least in a certain sense, once it stops being written—like *Tristram Shandy* was completed by Sterne's death. Many blog are born complete, as a matter of fact, or die as abandoned babies; others are given a formal ending. But the ending most in keeping, perhaps, with the narrativity proper to this form is that which is reached in cases like Steve Vincent's, a blogger murdered in Irak as a consequence of his reports (Note 32)—or that of other bloggers whose live broadcast diary is interrupted at the same time as their lives. Usually, the commentary section keeps on growing for some time, until the blog itself dies. There is a handful of posthumous possible destinies—see Ferri Benedetti's post on dead blogs (2003).

Now, how does one know that a blog is alive? They could all be recent casualties—just like one might say that men are growing a beard whenever they are not having a shave. One will have to conclude that many of the m appear to be alive, some more than others. Above all when lively discussions in commentaries bring them to life, and we are expecting an answer in a given exchange. That is the advantage of live writing: the blog becomes a living drama, a conversation which leaves a public record and is being written in the air, a literary work which is getting written at the same time as it is being lived. But *literary* is not of course the right word. Blogs are a place where literature, and diary writing, and journalism, lose their name and shape and acquire a different one—*blog,* a kind of crossover between *bog* and *blob,* a growing and shapeless textual fog floating at the edge of town, an indistinct, swamp-like and changing semiotic mass… the

term *blog* is much more suggestive than *web log,* which seems to suggest a purposeful movement, a course under control.

Axel Bruns notes, in the final chapter of *Used of Blogs,* that among definitions of blog vary, some defining it as a kind of genre, others as a kind of technology, although of course there exists some connections between the technologies and the genres they enable or favour:

> Clearly the technological features of publishing technologies also help determine what genres may be possible within their confines; but at the same time technologies are also shaped by the social needs that are present in contemporary culture and may drive the rise and fall of particular genres of expression." (2006: 250)

In the case of blogs, an important factor is the rise of *produsage,* a combination of use and production, something enabled at the same time by the technology and demanded by the users, who will favour the adoption of technolgoies which satisfy these social needs of communication. There are many technologies available, but the crucial issue is not whether they exist, but whether they are adopted and become widespread (otherwise they are practically nonexistent). If blogs are an excellent medium, but people prefer Twitter because it is closer to the SMS format, then Twitter will it be (let's hope something else happens instead) and blogs will remain as a marginal medium for specialised and limited circles, like Esperantists, philatelists and ham radio bums.

Thus, for instance, videoblogs and podcasts have not had the same success for personal blogging as plain written text, perhaps not so much because of the difficulty of the technology, but rather because users prefer the quickness of a visual overview, enabled by text but not so well by video or

audio (Note 33). Bruns concludes that perhaps "the greater impetus for the continuing development of blogs in all their forms is driven by the evolution of genres rather than technologies" (2006: 251). Still, genres also invite to enclose oneself in the genre's conventions, which are a limitation, not just an orientation. Even within the limits of the personal blog, supposedly less "thematic" than other kinds, there are general practices about what is acceptable or not acceptable, at least for mainstream consumption. In this way, the blogosphere gradually finds its majority practices, and its minority ones. No doubt every blogger will stick to those which are most convenient or satisfactory at a given moment, whether majority or minority ones—at the risk of ending up in a solitary community, or a technological islet.

Fictionality and uselessness of the personal blog

When is a blog fictional? There is no easy answer to the question. There is no clear line dividing fictional from non-fictional blogs. One should study instead the various ways in which elements of fictionality may appear in a blog. Or in any other text, as many of these issues are a matter of textual communication in general, and only a few specific forms are proper to blogs because of their medium or structure.

Let us begin with the difference between narrative and fiction, or narrativity and fictionality, as it would apply to blogs. Definitional rigour is not always kept. For instance, Angela Thomas defines the "fictional blog" as "any form of narrative that is written and published through a blog, Livejournal, or other similar online Web journal" (2006: 199)—a clearly deficient conceptualization.

One should differentiate, first, spontaneous from deliberate (and, more generally, explicit) fictionality. The former may be identified in principle, as far as narratives are concerned, with their narrativity and the other dimensions of the semiiotic articulation of a message. That is, because of the mere fact that it has received a narrative form, an informational distribution based on presuppositions, a point of view, etc., any text presented as "factual" must be critically understood a version of the supposedly factual reality it represents. To be sure, speakers or writers will argue that their discourse is a faithful transcription of the events, and that is why we may speak here of unintentional fictionality: it a third party's viewpoint which points out the discrepancy between the facts and their representation. Let us be granted the provisional use of the term *spontaneous fictionality* in order to refer to this aspect of textuality— although some will find that the use of the term 'fictionality' in this context is not very accurate, especially after our plead for conceptual rigour.

The second type of fictionality, deliberate fictionality (usually explicit as well) is at any rate a different kind of language game: it entails the generation of characters and situations which are non-existent but significant, and the invitation to the receiver to enter this alternative universe. The fictional universe may establish a number of relationships vis à vis the actual one, depending on the genres invoked and the specific maneuvers in each text—but, in principle, we find here a poetic, imaginative activity, which refers the sender and the receiver to a world of reference which, by common agreement, is distinct from communicative interaction about factual events.

Therefore, there may be in principle, in narrative blogs as in any other narrative, a *spontaneous fictionality* (usually unintended) and a *deliberate fictionality* (usually explicit). Some blogs fictionalize or narrativize the blogger's own life story or experience, and others tell a completely fictional story. There may also be blogs (experimental borderline cases, complex "second-degree blogs") in which the very structure of the blog is fictionalized (for instance with fake archives of old posts, pseudo-serious links to other fictional blogs which are part of an aesthetic project designed by the author, etc.).

Once these two poles are established, unconscious/unintended fictionality, and deliberate/explicit fictionality... one must realize that the whole intermediate area is also populated.

Angela Thomas (2006) presents the following typology of "blog fiction", a basic opposition between

- *the blog used as a mere instrument of publication*
and
- *the blog used as an instrument of writing, using the features proper to the medium,* which in turn subdivides into:
   - *a story contained in the blog itself* or
   - *a story only partly contained in the blog itself.*

—and here she distinguishes, a division which perhaps does not exhaust the conceptual area, between blogs deriving from interactive role-playing games, and characters' diaries, either based on a fictional or a real source. (Thus, for instance, Julius Caesar's blog, *Bloggus Caesari,* http://www.sankey.ca/caesar/, has a real source but is fictional as a blog.

There are many other examples of blogging based on classical diaries: Pepys' diary, Swift's *Journal to Stella,* Josep Pla's *Quadern Gris,* etc.).

A separate section in Thomas's paper is devoted to fictional blogs used with commercial purposes.

As an instrument of writing, the blog will use its characteristics of hypertextuality, seriality, multimedia, and interactivity in order to create artistic effects of its own. It is argued that the idealized reader (or "mock reader", Gibson 1950), created by any writer of a text, acquires in blogs a different character, since *actual readers* get to interact with the writer. This should be qualified, since no actual reader coincides with the implied or ideal reader of a text. Whoever has read a text, moreover, is only an unrepresentative sample of those readers who *may* read it in the future.

Now, perhaps one may think at this point of another characteristic of blogs: their *evanescence.* Not because they may eventually disappear from the web, and many have done so, but because there is in blogs a living end, the head which keeps growing, and a long tail of half-dead text which it trails behind ("like a wounded snake")—dead time from the past, former posts which are only living insofar as the head is still living—if it is living at all (Note 35). Commentaries to older posts decrease exponentially when compared to commentaries to recent articles, although this may vary depending on the tools available on the blog (for instance, the vitality of older posts is enhanced by the use of a front-page embedded frame allowing the public follow-up of recent comments).

The blog Thomas uses as an instance of all these possibilities of blogging is *The Glass House*—which has already disappeared from the web, with its

place taken by advertisements of fast loans and ringtones… Evanescence is the worst enemy of blogs, and of humans. Be as it may, *The Glass House* used, for instance, the commentary section in order to introduce commentaries by the fictional friends of the fictional protagonist, "James the Invisible Man". And the supposed blogger inserted, too, multimedia elements which were themselves fictitious.

More common are blogs deriving from a previously existing fiction, such as those in fan communities (of fictions such as *Harry Potter* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). The case of so-called *fan fiction* written by teenagers is especially striking: according to Angela Thomas, referring to a study done on a fan fiction community,

> in addition to getting inside a character's head and creating a back story for fan fiction writing, these particular online journals are also a means of exploring and constructing the self, and the girls (…) were authoring versions of themselves as they write in role. It was found that the narrative and fiction served as a safe distancing mechanism to explore feelings and experiences of adolescence that were either difficult or unexplored through their real selves. (Thomas 2006: 204)

Thus, the teenage authors of fan fiction create hybrid identities mixing their own with that of the fictional characters, ascribing to them the memories, taste or desires of the author herself:

> Their characters are a rehearsal of who they want to become, and in role-playing that ideal self, they can grow closer to becoming that ideal. It is the imaginative possibilities of their fictional characters that empower the girls' ability to imagine these same possibility for their real selves. (2006: 206)

This does not sound radically different from the projections established by adult authors with their own characters: quite often, these come from alternative sides of the authors' personality. But in the case of adults, personality and its possibilities are more settled, so these are often possibilities which have been rejected by the author or which have disappeared, rather than projects for the development of the self. There is a much more indirect relationship between character and author.

At any rate, there exists under the fictional coat a heavy dose of reality— one of the reasons why it is not easy to trace the dividing line between fiction and reality, in blogs or anywhere else. The same happens no doubt the other way round: in blogs which present themselves as factual (and believe themselves to be factual) there may be a heavy dose of invention or falsity. One might question whether one should speak of fiction in this case, fiction being quite a fuzzy concept. It is usually assumed that it refers to a *consensual* game between sender and receiver, the game of fiction. But still, one never knows the precise limits of the fictional consensus.

As noted by Steve Himmer, the mere projection of a networked identity already entails the construction of a character or the selective filtering of the self in order to turn it into a character:

> The weblogger, in that sense, can be read as fictional, as a character, in precisely the same ways that Andy Rooney or James Joyce can be—furthering the collapse between factual and fictional, public and private, and distinct genres in general. (Himmer 2004).

This is no doubt often the case. But, as Orwell's Napoleon might say, even though we are all fictional characters, online or offline, some of us are

more fictional than others. There exist infinite gradations between the blogger who signs with a real, personal identity which can be geographically located, the blogger who uses a more or less stable alias for his networked identity, and the evanescent identity created on the spot by someone who writes anonymously with multiple personalities and many signatures in a variety of sites. (Note 36)

Thomas devotes a special section to commercial blogs, in which fictional characters also acquire the "real" dimension of interaction with real life situations, for instance through the use of humour—which gives us more mixed or fuzzy cases, within a generally fictional framework. Here as elsewhere, the difference between fiction and reality is more complex, permeable and dialectical than it might look at first sight.

According to David Gauntlett, "to interpret the choices we have made, individuals construct a narrative of the self, which gives some order to our complex lives" (Note 37). This narrative order imposed through selection or omission is certainly a dimension of fictionality, but also of that fictionality and narrativity that applies outside fictional texts, in order to construct the social space in which we interact, in which we maintain the fiction that we are always the same person—what we called above *unintentional fictionality.*

Tim Wright forecasts that "as more and more people start blogging, the lines will inevitably blur between author and reader, and between fact and fiction" (quoted in Thomas 2006: 208). Thomas sees much artistic, interactional and communicative potential in fictional blogs, and more generally speaking in this indefinite ground between fiction and reality which, it must be insisted, has not appeared at all with blogs.

And what may one say about the "uselessness" of fiction? In principle, what we read as fiction lacks any other practical usefulness, insofar as it is fiction, than being readable and interesting, to engross the reader in the very process of reading. It is a different matter that a fictional narrative, such as for instance *Manolo's Shoe Blog* (an example commented by Thomas) may also serve additional purposes—that fiction should be here instrumental, or subordinated, to the selling of shoes. If it is fiction at all, it will have to be sustainable as fiction, as a useless pleasure.

"Useless" means here "not instrumental for immediate aims", or dissociated from reality because of the use of unreal characters and situations as a vehicle. It is true that fiction, like other useless arts, may perform many cultural or cognitive fictions. (This much is admitted by Oscar Wilde in "The Decay of Lying", which begins by declaring the uselessness of art to go on to admit that art generates, or helps generate, the perceptual and social world we inhabit). But art, insofar as it is a semiotic game, lacks any practical reference: therefore, fiction is its natural territory. If the history of Gibbon's *The Decay and Fall of the Roman Empire* is art in this sense, it is not because of its historical value (although there does exist an art of history as history) but because of the compositional, narrative, rhetorical, characterological, imaginative values it shares with fictional texts.

What does this mean? In sum, that fiction is not opposed to the factual… precisely because its proper space is where the factuality or nonfactuality of an event or datum becomes irrelevant. It is this lack of determinacy, or this opposition on a different plane, which often confuses theoretical discussions on factuality and fictionality. We can conceive of fictional communication as a language game different from the game of factual

reference. In a sense, one game never meets the other… except when one person is playing one game, and another is playing a different one, and they try to understand each other, or a conflict arises. In that case they will probably never meet, either.

How are we to determine whether a text is fictional or not? The decisive fact is that there is no decisive fact. There are only communicative contexts in which an attribution of fictionality is ascribed, or fictional use is made of the text. And it is quite possible that another context will favour another use of the same. For instance, a book might be classified as fiction or nonfiction according to convenience (as happened with Thomas Kenneally's *Schindler's List*— see Vice 2000). In the practice of discourse there are no courts of last appeal (excepting those cases which are effectively taken to court) and any new context involves a reelaboration and recycling of the text in order to give it a new use.

There are of course many blogs which present themselves as offering specialized, factual information, and insofar as they are informative publications they should not be any more problematic or counterfactual than a printed journal or magazine. Although the electronic medium lends itself, as argued above, to the blurring of contours in the direction of the personal blog, because of the ease of publication, gratuitousness (which gives rise to virtuality) and the tendency to pseudonymy.

In the case of personal blogs, the blogger's acquaintances may read his diary or reflections as factual information leading to other kinds of interaction; they may also provide the keys for private or secret meanings. But most readers are reading the blog for pleasure or entertainment, an activity in which the factuality of what is said becomes suspended, gets

mixed with invention or lies in ways which cannot be checked, and the whole is even more fictionalized because of the frequent use of pseudonyms, which help separate what happens in the blog from other "factual" contexts in which the blogger interacts. The pseudonym or avatar is one of the main guarantees for the virtualization of online experience, since the use of one's own name lends itself to undesirable interferences of diverse aspects of identity, given the Net's informational power.

But it can easily be seen that under such circumstances (variability of contexts, variability of usages, greater or lesser contrastable referentiality of the narrated events…) a great number of personal blogs move freely in an elastic space of indeterminacy, between a virtual fictional world, and the real world into which they crash sometimes without prior warning, or where they create interferences and waves of unreality—as though beings coming from another coexisting but immaterial world intruded into our own world through an inter-dimensional portal.

Inscribed history

The above discussion refers mostly to personal blogs or amateur thematic blogs. A different perspective might emerge if we consider corporate blogs. There is of course some common ground as regards personal emphasis. Some time ago I attended a convention on corporate blogs (*First Meeting on Aragonese and Corporate Blogs)* where business people were encouraged to show an identifiable, personal and direct image of themselves or their business through the blog: "include a photograph, do not anonymize, show your face to the audience". These cybertheorists were not in the least afraid of opening up public commentaries in the blog—a

blog without commentaries may not be a blog in some sense, although it may still be an excellent advertising tool. Contrary to this optimism among advocates of the corporate blog, many business people seem to think, and not without cause, that the influence of negative and/or malignant commentaries is not to be underestimated in the business world. The same thing happens in public institutions. As far as my experience is concerned, the University does not intend to promote the creation of institutional blogs for its schools, departments, degrees or products, and all the less so if they are to be open to the comments of a general audience.

A danger inherent in the blogging politics of "giving your face to your business" is that one's own face becomes one's own business—that is, the publicly identifiable face of the blogging subject must acquire a given editorial line, something not quite in keeping with European customs, but quite American instead—and there the future lies no doubt. The corporate blogger will have to use his real identity for the corporate blog, and subordinate to that corporate identity all kinds of online expression. Those opinions which are diverse, varied, political, politically incorrect, problematic, contradictory, if they are to find an expression, will have to do so in anonymous forums or in a pseudonymous blog, as if that personal expression were the unconscious of the corporate blogger. The photograph shown to the audience must be smiling and unproblematic—otherwise it is not a good marketing strategy.

Some of the speakers in the meeting on corporate blogs spoke of their blog's history—what led them to blog in the first place, how their blog developed, deriving into new functions, interacting with the activities it was created to support, finding its audience, etc. Such moments of reflection and revaluation on hindsight are also frequent on other occasions

such as posts written on the blog's anniversaries or birthday celebrations. Blogs tell then a story which is already recorded in the substance of the blog itself, an already inscribed history.

A blog is the record of a trajectory through the web, and through the media or products commented in it: a series of encounters and events which have taken place and have left a unified textual imprint, developing in public view. The result oscillates between narrative and living drama, showing that inherent narrativity which consists in constantly looking back to evaluate the result of one's own expectations and actions. That is, while moving forward, the blogger reviews a history which is already told in part, but which needs to be constantly retold, thus enhancing the blog's narrative dimension. *Retelling what is told.* Which is what we always do part of the time at least, both within and without blogs—the interesting thing about this dimension of blogs is that precisely the same thing happens with people's ordinary experience. We carry our history inscribed, in part at least, on our (non-corporate) bodies, and we move through the public domain's knowledge about us. But that does not prevent us to tell our story once again as it keeps changing—adapting it and transforming it through the very telling. This is an additional dimension of blogs as a virtual or alternative body, the semiotic corpus of beings shaped by time and marked by the visible and legible inscriptions it leaves on us, and those we leave on it.

Coda: precarious literature: *Peri Bloghous* and Collected Writhings

The emergence of a new age of the written word on the Internet, and especially on the web generated by users or Web 2.0 has meant a paradigm

break in writing. A new technology leads to new modes of communication and disrupts the established dynamics of edition, printing and distribution.

The shock of the new technologies of the word may be compared to the impact produced by the proliferation of books in the first age of mass printing, as described by Marshall McLuhan. At the end of the 17th century, there was much alarm and revulsion at the increasing numbers of printed books. Early hopes about a great reformation of mankind by means of the book had become frustrated, and in 1680 Leibniz believed that disorder would eventually become insuperable (McLuhan 1998: 382). It was the age of Swift's *Battle of the Books,* and of the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns. Soon Pope will follow suit with *Peri Bathous* and *The Dunciad,* satires against the novel proliferation of public scribblers. The text McLuhan refers to, a preface to a minor work by Leibniz, might be modified to apply it by analogy to the present-day proliferation of evanescent, despicable and despised electronic publications:

> I am afraid we are going to continue for a long time in our present state of confusion and misery, and the fault is ours. I fear, moreover, that once we have vainly exhausted our curiosity without obtaining from our research any appreciable advancement in our happiness, people may come to experience disgust toward the sciences, and that a fatal despair may cause the return of barbarity. To this result, the terrible mass of blogs, which keeps growing, may well contribute: because, in the end, disorder will become almost unberable; the infinite multitude of writers will soon expose them to the danger of universal oblivion; the thirst for glory that drives many towards study will suddenly cease; perhaps being a writer will become something as dishonourable as it used to be honourable. At best, we may be able to entertain ourselves with small fashionable blogs, which may last a few years, and which may save readers from boredom for some minutes, but which will have been written without any

purpose of enriching our knowledge or of deserving the appreaciation of posterity. I may be answered that, since those who write are so many, it is impossible for all their works to be preserved. I freely admit this, and I do not wholly disapprove of these small fashionable blogs, which are like the flowers of a spring, or the fruits of an autumn, barely lasting for one year. If they are well done, they give the impression of a useful conversation, not merely pleasant, one which keeps idle minds away from blameful doings, improving their spirit and their language. Often enough, their purpose is to induce men of our times to some good, and that is the aim I pursue in publishing this little work. (Note 38)

A similar but more acute fear is diagnosed by McLuhan in Pope's *Dunciad,* with its apocalyptic conclusion.

By means of the agglomerate action of many such victims of applied knowledge—that is, self-opinionated authors endowed with Industry and Plodding—there is now the restoration of the reign of Chaos and old Night and the removal of the imperial seat of Dulness their daughter from the City to the polite world. (McLuhan 1998: 385)

Such is the alarm raised by the proliferation of Text in the age of Mechanical Reproduction, now or three hundred years ago.

As a matter of fact, the texts of the first wave of electronic "writing" (the radio, film and television) were even more evanescent than blogs, and has only partly been rescued by film and sound archives, and by YouTube. As to the printing presses, they are more active than ever before and bestsellers keep pouring out of them. The audience for this flood of books and blogs follows the aforementioned logic of the Long Tail: almost everyone will have read some of the items at the head of the graph, but on the other hand the infinite long tail of less-requested items has only one reader and visitor: the author himself. (Some well-meaning people will argue that the items in

the long tail are "just as dignified and valuable as those at the head"—if so, one must admit it is proportionally).

In sum, the Web, and specifically blogs and other tools of self-publication, seem to enhance the effects of the printing press, which in turn enhanced those of literacy, as described by McLuhan. (Note 39). The blogosphere is the Gutenberg Galaxy going nova—not at all its disappeance—and the dynamics of the Dark Side of the printing press, exponentially developed, also applies to it. McLuhan argues that print, due to its uniformity, its repetitive abilities, and its unlimited extension, managed to give a new life and fame to anything—a kind of langorous life that stupid minds infuse to stupid subjects, and which eventually shapes all existence from the inside. Readers imitate authors in their vanity, and demand still greater efforts and exercises in stupidity—McLuhan saw journals with a "human interest" as the latest development in this trend (1998: 389), but then he did not live to see the heyday of trash TV, or teenage social networking, or the onset of personal blogs as *human interest periodicals,* self-edited by the audience itself (*hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère).*

A more favourable perspective may also be taken, of course. In literature we enjoy well-finished and well-executed works, conceived in advance and planned beforehand (for instance with a complex plot), but we always enjoy, sometimes even more so, unpretentious texts written in an improvised way, in which the writer's obsessions and spontaneous tendencies are clearly manifest and return again and again. Quite often, such writings are not meant to be published—they are private diaries, notebooks— or have been written as disposable pieces, not meant to be bound in a volume—newspaper columns and reviews, for instance. It is true that many personal diaries, most of the literary ones at any rate, are

like blogs, born to be published avant la lettre. But some generic spontaneity is still attached to them, and, conversely, ephemeral genres may enjoy some persistence if ony because of the fact that written words may remain. Sometimes.

On the enjoyable side, I read *Bardadrac,* by Gérard Genette, a book which although it is organized as a supposed dictionary, is actually a jumble of ideas, memories, digressions, random thoughts, notes and anecdotes—a heterogenous accumulation, which is more or less the meaning of the title. And I have also been reading what I almost take to be Carmen Martín Gaite's blog, *Tirando del hilo (artículos 1949-2000)*—reviews of the author's current reading, written in an improvided way, "a vuelapluma" as one used to say in Spanish—today I guess one should say "a vuelateclado".

Thus, many writers keep their own blog or their own uncollected and disposable writings which have nonetheless been preserved: Coleridge's notebook commented in detail by John Livingston Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu,* Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book*, Montaigne's *Essays…* One may write a paper, or a blog post, on the new life afforded to essay-writing on the web and on blogs (Note 40), or on the essay as the model for this precarious form of writing, open and somewhat "gypsy-style"—"a lo gitano" as Martín Gaite says. Commenting on a book by Fernando Savater, she argues that there are two kinds of essays, *"a lo payo"* and *"a lo gitano":*

> The former, although they do teach us things, put them forth as results; every teaching is neatly packed with its label; they do not invite us to join the conversation, because of their very frame. The others, in contrast, are their own becoming, they pull us into the journey they are engaged in, they surprise and provoke us. Well, then, *La infancia recuperada (Childhood Recovered)* is an

excellent instance of *gypsy-like* essay. It is also a memoir. And a tale. And a riddle. And a travel book. All of this and none of this. (2006: 91, my translation).

A more exuberant and more precarious kind of unstable essay is commented by Martín Gaite in "La impotencia como pesquisa. Notas a *El testamento* de Rilke"—a commentary on the fragmentary, digressive or tentative forms that emerge as a response to a crisis, the crisis which comes from realizing that one's work, or one's life, cannot be encompassed:

When the intensity of life is at the same time a deadline which impedes work and an incentive which multiplies our eagerness to engage with it. The challenge of what cannot be encompassed increases the tension the more it reveals the obstacle, and thus, the conflict derives into the exasperation to find a formula able to express it.

Such is the origin of those notebooks (which are sometimes destroyed and sometimes are not) in which the writer, unable to accomplish anything else, bears witness to this inability and thus turns it into a subplot of his labour. Marginal rough drafts which oscillate between order and chaos, between being and pretending to be, babbling texts, restless texts. (…)

This text of Rilke's is contradictory and truncated, the pure ferment of its own elaboration, alternating incoherence with lucidity.

Without meaning now to answer the question whether this "literature of restlessness" is sufficiently significant to be edited as a book, I do contend that one must face it with a reading attitude different from the ordinary one, and not demand from it any rootedness, conclusions and least of all consolation. To my mind they are absolutely minority texts. And they will only be able to sting those who have been stumbling though similar wastelands of uncertainty, where there nothing to be done but grab one's impotence—a precarious last hope—and turn it into the material for investigation. (2006: 101-2, my translation)

Because of the interest, the liminality and the exploratory nature of these investigations, such unpublishable textual writhings often become the last volume, W/Z—Writhings to Zymosis—of the author's Collected Words.

Yet another perspective on the textualization of everyday anxieties is provided by Martín Gaite in "Cosa por cosa", where she compares the labour of weaving a text to that of unraveling what has become entangled, and patiently stitching together the chaos of memory and affections, this time with a design in mind; as a matter of fact, the very activity of unraveling the thread in order to weave it into a text (even if it is one of those previously mentioned *texts for nothing*) is itself a way of creating some kind of order, simply through the linguistic untangling of a mental tangle:

> Sewing is going one after stitch, be they hemstitches or memories, and the solidity of the text (and it is not for nothing that 'texto' and 'tejido', text and cloth, have the same root) depends on our not leaving unstitched whatever it is that we gradually keep and archive in that garret where everything tends to heap up without any rhyme or reason, things seen, imagined or learned. Just like the threads in a sewing basket into which all things are carelessly thrown, the threads tangle up and then we despair when we try to find something.
>
> As a matter of fact, as we grow older and as Cervantes would say "anxiety grows and hope diminishes", there is a lesser incentive to fight that tangle in which things lie lessens, pulling carefully the various threads of the needlework, each leading to its own ball, so that they will not break or get mixed up. Sifting earlier things from later things means, finally, to recover the thread of memory. And that of the discourse which investigates it. The thread which keeps us alive, because it stitches our origins to our fluid and variable identity, prodding us to overcome the ephemeral nature of the piece of time which has been allotted to us. Day after day. One thing after another. (2006: 482).

These labours associated to everyday writing are intensified by the real-time communicative interaction provided by blogs. One might point out, though, that when we write we do not merely untangle, classify and isolate; we also combine in an organized way, we create patterns and shapes, we associate, organize. We link. To organize more, or less, that is the question: highly organized works add many things and suppress many others; other works are happenstance, perhaps more respetful with the randomness of the experience which has associated things, or the random course of life, or the strange combinations which are suggested by improvisation and intuition.

There are many possible patterns and combinations. Admittedly, some encourage inane chatter, or *worse, worse worse…* Of much writing there is no end, and life is shorter than that. It is advisable, therefore, to choose the company we keep, in life and books, and perhaps all the more so in the case of these new speaking, living, growing and conversant books—blogs, where the author is sometimes strikingly near, the text becomes a person, and the person becomes an ongoing story which often gets entangled with our own, sometimes disturbingly so. Public writing and its readership have never been more involved with personal experience and with the present vicissitudes of the self.

Notes

Note 1. On the interplay of plans and narrativity, see my note "La historia del fracaso del plan".

Note 2. The notion of realistic motivation comes from Russian formalism. See Tomashevsky's discussion (1982).

Note 3. On brain activity as it relates to different kinds of memory, see Tulving (2002) or Peigneux et al. (2006). Memory is arguably more narrative than perception—to begin with, it is already retrospective, or perhaps it is more accurate to say, *more intensely retrospective.* On perception as it feeds back with memory systems, see also my 2006 paper "Especulaciones neuronales".

Note 4. A consideration of this issue must necessarily take into account the work of G. H. Mead (2002).

Note 5. This conception of language as technology can be held to derive as a logical conclusion from McLuhan's and Ong's reflections on writing as technology. See my note "El lenguaje como tecnología interiorizada" (2005).

Note 6. A panormic view of narrative theory, with special attention to literary analysis, can be found in my book *Acción, Relato, Discurso* (1998).

Note 7. Let us mention only two, by means of example: 1) narrative sequentiality rests spontaneously or iconically on the sequentiality of the spoken chain (but stops short of identifying with it); 2) we may recall the analogies established by structuralist narratologist between narrative and the sententence structure, or between narrative and the verb (see for instance Culler 1975).

Note 8. On the interpenetration of orality and gesture at the origin of langauge, see Arbib (1999). See also my commentary in García Landa (2007) "Interacción internalizada".

Note 9. We simplify here in alluding to "the permanence of writing", referring to some uses of writing which are so central as to make us believe that they are inhererent to it. See my note "Scripta nonnumquam manent". The study of a medium's symbolic characteristics cannot be limited to its representational potential; it must be specified with precise descriptions of its effective use in concrete communicative situations.

Note 10. See my note on iconographic synthesis (2007).

Note 11. On the perception of motion in the cinema, see Anderson & Anderson (1980). The narrativization of experience by means of visual technology is quite graphically exemplified in the humourous clip in *Vanity Fea* 2006, "We're at Now-Now".

Note 12. See my paper on the funereal and monumental nature of writing in the *Poem of Gilgamesh* (*"Gilgamesh* y la escritura").

Note 13. See my note "Nostalgia por el futuro".

Note 14. See an instance in my note "El efecto directo".

Note 15. I have been devoting much attention to phenomena related to hindsight bias, particularly in the field of literary criticism. Some papers dealing with this issue may be accessed through the note "En el retrovisor" (2005).

Note 16. See more on the interactional impact of the telephone in my note "Las Vírgenes Vigilantes."

Note 17. Consider, for instance, the changing echo of different ways of blogging perceptible in my 2005 note "The Cutting Edge of the Present."

Note 18. I am referring to Lyotard's critique (1979) of "grand narratives" which supposedly no longer underpin discourse in the West. It is my contention that some great narratives may well lose power, but others are reinforced by such phenomena as globalization and scientific progress.

Note 19. On Hawking's *Brief History of Time,* see my note in *Vanity Fea.*

Note 20. This is the approach taken by works such as Terrence Deacon's (1997).

Note 21. Thus the critical current (itself emergent) of so-called cultural evolutionism, exemplified by the works of Barkow, Cosmides and Tooby (1992), Carroll (1995), or Gottschall and Wilson (2005); perhaps the best know is Pinker (2007).
But it is Hegel who, in spite of his idealistic approach, expounded the basic principles of human culture as an emergent process in whose transmission and reproduction ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis, so to speak:

> The single individual must also pass through the formative stages of universal Spirit so far as their content is concerned, but as shapes which spirit has already left behind, as stages on a way that has been made level with toil. Thus, as far as factual information is concerned, we find that what in former ages engaged the attention of men of mature mind, has been reduced to the level of facts, exercises, and even games for children; and, in the child's progress through school, we shall recognize the history of the cultural development of the world traced, as it were, in a silhouette. (1977: 16)

Note 22. And thus we find narratological theories which focus on beginnings, developments or endings, beyond the initial observations by Aristotle in the *Poetics.* See for instance Herrnstein Smith (1968) or Nuttall (1991).

Note 23. On narrativity, see above all Sturgess (1992) and Pier and García Landa (2008). On the emergent aspect of narrativity my paper "Emergent Narrativity" (2006) provided the basis for a section of this paper.

Note 24. On these models see for instance Genette (1972), Tomashevski (1982), Bal (1985), García Landa (1998).

Note 25. Shakespeare, in *Twelfth Night* (II.5): "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them".

Note 26. Rimmon-Kenan (2006).

We may suggest in passing that a three-tier analytic level, based on (1) action, (2) story and (3) narrative discourse (García Landa 1998) is more clarifying, since it clearly shows the chronological peculiarities of each level:

- The chronology of action, that is, the narrated events, not as they are narrated, but as they are supposed to have occurred.

- The chronology of story, that is, the narrated events presented with the order, perspective, modal selectivity, etc., articulated by the narrative.

- The chronology of narrative discourse as discourse: including not just the story but the narrating of the story, or the production of narrative discourse as a speech act, including digressions, discursive interaction with the receiver, etc.

(Note 27). Mead (2002); Blumer (1986). Further reflections on the role of self-communication and reflexivity in the generation of consciousness are to be found in my paper "Más consciencia".

(Note 28). This narrativizing function of interpretation can be found in other literary contexts. See for instance my note "Indicios", or my paper "Retroactive Thematization, Interaction, and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Spiral from Schleiermacher to Goffman" (2004).

(Note 29). See my review of Serfaty's book in *Atlantis* (2005).

(Note 30). On several aspects of the alluded novelty in self-representation, see my note "El obsceno blog", as well as Serfaty's book (2003) and the papers by van Dijck (2005) and Vershbow (2007). Paz Soldán (2008) sees in blogs the literary genre proper to the 21st century.

(Note 31). See also Neri (2007).

(Note 32). See my note "Steve Vincent: The End" (2005).

(Note 33). We leave aside other massively successful phenomena such as multimedia social networks like Facebook (http://www.facebook.com) or sites which share some characteristics with them, such as the online video platform or "personal TV" *YouTube* (http://youtube.com) —although it is clear that there is a transition and intersection between these communicative practices and text-based blogging.

(Note 35). On the "long tail" as it bears on reading, see my note "The Long Tale".

(Note 36). They may be, too, the same person. See also my note "Anonimato, veronimia y pseudonimia" (2007).

(Note 37). Gauntlett, 2002: 113 quoted in Thomas 2006: 208.

(Note 38). A variation on the text McLuhan quotes from *Selections from Leibniz,* ed. Philip P. Wiener (Nueva York: Scribners, 1951), 29-30; McLuhan (1998: 382).

(Note 39). A detailed review of McLuhan can be found in my paper "Por la Galaxia Gutenberg" (2007). There are other self-publishing tools we will not consider here, such as wikis (also managed from such online sites as *Wikilearning* http://www.wikilearning.com) and websites where users can host articles or files for public view following certain protocols of use, such as the *Social Science Research Network* (http://ssrn.com/)

(Note 40). See my paper "Essaying the Blog - Your Post's Contribution / Ensayando el Blog - Qué aporta tu post" (2007).

References

Arbib, M. A. (2001): "Co-Evolution of Human Consciousness and Language." In *Cajal and Consciousness: Scientific Approaches to Consciousness on the Centennial of Ramón y Cajal's TEXTURA*. Ed. Pedro C. Marijuán. New York: New York Academy of Sciences. 195-220.

Anderson, J., and B. Anderson. (1980): "Motion Perception in Motion Pictures." In *The Cinematic Apparatus*. Ed. Teresa de Lauretis y Stephen Heath. Nueva York: St Martin's.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1981): *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas P, 1981.

Bal, Mieke (1985): *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Trans. Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Barkow, J. H., L. Cosmides and J. Tooby, eds. (1992): *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

Blumer, H. (1986): *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bruner, J. (1986): *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1986.

Bruns, A. (2006): "What's Next for Blogging?" In *Uses of Blogs*. Ed. Axel Bruns y Joanne Jacobs. New York: Peter Lang. 249-54.

Carroll, J. (1995): *Evolution and Literary Theory*. Columbia: U of Missouri P.

Culler, J. (1975): *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*. London: Routledge.

Deacon, T. (1997): *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain.* New York: Norton.

Dennett, D. C. (1992): *Consciousness Explained*. London: Allen Lane.

Ferri Benedetti, F. (2003): "Ciber-muerte." *La Cosa Húmeda* 8 Jun.
  http://fbenedetti.blogalia.com/historias/8740
   2008

Fludernik, M. (1996): *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Gauntlett, David. (2002). *Media, Gender and Identity*. London: Routledge.

García Landa, J. A. (1992): *Samuel Beckett y la narración reflexiva.* (Humanidades, 19). Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza.
———. (1998): *Acción, Relato, Discurso: Estructura de la ficción narrativa.* (Acta Salmanticensia, Estudios Filológicos, 269). Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.
http://www3.usal.es/~eus/cat/col/ef/ef-269.htm
2004-11-20
———. (2004): "Retroactive Thematization, Interaction, and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Spiral from Schleiermacher to Goffman." *BELL (Belgian English Language and Literature)* ns 2: 155-66. (Special issue, "The Language/Literature Interface).
http://www.baahe.be/BELL2004.html
———. (2005): "The Cutting Edge of the Present." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 14 April.
http://garciala.blogia.com/2005/041403-the-cutting-edge-of-the-present.php
2008
_____. (2005): Rev. of *The Mirror and the Veil: An Overview of American Online Diaries and Blogs,* by Viviane Serfaty. *Atlantis* 27.1 (June): 117-22.
http://www.atlantisjournal.org/HTML%20Files/Tables%20of%20contents/27.1%20(20
05).htm

———. (2005): "El lenguaje como tecnología interiorizada." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 5 July 2005.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2005/070502-el-lenguaje-como-tecnologia-interiorizada.php
2008

———. (2005): "Steve Vincent: The End." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 4 Aug.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2005/080402-steve-vincent-the-end.php

———. (2005): "En el retrovisor." Introd. to *Objects in the Rear View Mirror May Appear Firmer Than They Are.* In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 22 oct.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2005/102201-en-el-retrovisor.php
2005-10-31

———. (2005): "Time Out of Joint." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 24 Oct.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2005/102401-time-out-of-joint.php
2005-10-31

———. (2006): "Indicios." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 18 Jan.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/011801-indicios.php
2006-01-30

———. (2006): "El obsceno blog." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 27 May.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/052702-el-obsceno-blog.php
2006-05-31

———. (2006): "Scripta nonnunquam manent." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 15 June.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/061501-scripta-nonnunquam-manent.php
2006-07-02

———. (2006): "Las Vírgenes Vigilantes." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 16 July.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/071602-las-virgenes-vigilantes.php
2006-07-28

———. (2006): "Emergent narrativity." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 15 Oct. 2006.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/101501-emergent-narrativity.php
2006-11-01

———. (2006): "Especulaciones neuronales." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 2 Nov.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/110201-especulaciones-neuronales.php
2006-11-29

———. (2006): "La historia del fracaso del plan." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 10 Jan.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/011002-la-historia-del-fracaso-del-plan.php
2008

———. (2006): "Nostalgia por el futuro." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 15 March.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/031504-nostalgia-por-el-futuro.php

2006-04-07

———. (2006): "El efecto directo." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 16 Dec.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/121601-el-efecto-directo.php

2007-01-05

———. (2007): "Más consciencia." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 1 Jan.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2007/010101-mas-consciencia.php

2007-01-31

———. (2007): "Anonimato, veronimia y pseudonimia." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 17 Feb.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2007/021701-anonimato-veronimia-y-pseudonimia.php

2008

———. (2007): "Síntesis iconográfica." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 18 March.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2007/031801-sintesis-iconografica.php

2007-04-01

———. (2007): "The Long Tale." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 31 Aug.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2007/083101-the-long-tale.php

2007

———. (2007): "Por la Galaxia Gutenberg." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 10 Sept. 2007. Rev. of Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2007/091001-por-la-galaxia-gutenberg.php

2007

———. (2007): "Historia del tiempo." In García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 14 Oct. Rev. of Stephen Hawking's book.

http://garciala.blogia.com/2007/101401-historia-del-tiempo.php

2007

———. (2007): "Internalized Interaction: The Specular Development of Language and the Symbolic Order / Interacción internalizada: el desarrollo especular del lenguaje y el orden simbólico." *Social Science Research Network* (Dic.):

http://ssrn.com/abstract=1073782

2007

———. (2008): "Essaying the Blog - Your Post's Contribution / Ensayando el blog – Qué aporta tu post." *Social Science Research Network* (Jan.):

http://ssrn.com/abstract=1080599

2008

———. (2008): "Narrating Narrating: Twisting the Twice-Told Tale." In *Theorizing Narrativity.* Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. (Narratologia, 12). Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. 419-51.*

http://www.degruyter.com/cont/fb/li/detailEn.cfm?id=IS-9783110202441-1

2007

———. (2008): "Gilgamesh y la escritura." *Narrativas* 9.

http://www.narrativas.com

2008

Genette, G. (1992): *The Architext: An Introduction.* Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Introd. Robert Scholes. Berkeley: U of California P.

———. (2006): *Bardadrac.* (Fiction & Cie). Paris: Seuil.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2005): "Text-Type Approach to Narrative." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* Ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. Abingdon and Nueva York: Routledge. 594-96.

Gibson, W. (1980): "Authors, Speakers, Readers, and Mock Readers." 1950. In *Reader-Response Criticism.* Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1-6.

Goffman, E. (1981): *Forms of Talk.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gottschall, J, y D. S. Wilson, eds. (2005): *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative.* Evanston: Northwestern UP.

Gould, Stephen J. (1990). "What, If Anything, Is a Zebra?" In Gould, In Gould, *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990. 355-65.

Gusdorf, G. (1991): *Lignes de vie: 1. Les écritures du moi. 2. Auto-bio-graphie.* 2 vols. Paris: Odile Jacob.

Hawking, S. W. (2005): *Historia del tiempo: Del big bang a los agujeros negros.* Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2004): *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Trans. A. V. Miller. Ed. J. N. Findlay. New York: Oxford UP; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Herman, David, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds. (2005): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Himmer, S. (2004): "The Labyrinth Unbound: Weblogs as Literature." In *Into the Blogosphere.* Ed. L. Gurak, S. Antonijevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff and J. Reyman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/labyrinth_unbound.html

Kearns, M. (2005): "Genre Theory in Narrative Studies." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* Ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. Abingdon and Nueva York: Routledge. 201-5.

Lejeune, P. (2000): *'Cher écran': Journal personnel, ordinateur, Internet.* Paris: Seuil.

Lovink, G. (2007): "Blogging: The Nihilist Impulse." *Eurozine* 2 Jan. 2007.
http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-01-02-lovink-en.html
2007

Lowes, J. L. (1978): *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination.* 1927. London: Pan Books-Picador.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1979): *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir.* París: Minuit.

Martín Gaite, C. (2006): *Tirando del hilo (artículos 1949-2000).* Ed. José Teruel. (Libros del Tiempo, 225). Madrid: Siruela.

McLuhan, Marshall. (1998): *La galaxia Gutenberg.* 1962. Trans. Juan Novella. Introd. Javier Echeverría. Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores.

Mead, G. H. (2002): *The Philosophy of the Present.* Amherst (NY): Prometheus Books.

———. (2006): "George Herbert Mead: La filosofía del presente." Trans. of José Ángel García Landa. In José Ángel García Landa, *Vanity Fea* 21 Aug. 2006.
http://garciala.blogia.com/2006/082103-george-herbert-mead-la-filosofia-del-presente.php
2006-09-02

Neri, C. (2007): "Apuntes sobre la estructura narrativa de los blogs (para conversar)." In Neri, *Moebius* 2 Dec. 2007.
http://lodigital.com.ar/moebius/?p=905
2008-01-15

"Neurocritic" (2007): "Mental Time Travel." *The Neurocritic* 7 Feb. 2007.
http://neurocritic.blogspot.com/2007/02/mental-time-travel.html
2007-04-12

Nünning, A., y R. Sommer. (2008): "Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity: Some Further Steps towards a Narratology of Drama." In *Theorizing Narrativity.* Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter. 331-54.

Nuttall, A. D. (1991): *Openings.* Oxford: Oxford UP.

Paz Soldán, E. (2008): "El 'blog' y la literatura del siglo XXI." *El País*.com (Babelia) 15 March.
http://www.elpais.com/articulo/semana/blog/literatura/siglo/XXI/elpepuculbab/20080315elpbabese_4/Tes/
2008

Peigneux, P., P. Orban, E. Balteau, C. Degueldre, A. Luxen, S. Laureys, and P. Maquet. (2006): "Offline Persistence of Memory-related Cerebral Activity during Active Wakefulness." *PLoS Biology* 4: e100.
http://biology.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371/journal.pbio.0040100&ct=1

84

2008

Penas, B. (2008): "A Pragma-stylistic Contribution to the Study of Narrativity: Standard and Non-standard Narrativities." In *Theorizing Narrativity*. Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. Berlín and Nueva York: Walter de Gruyter. 211-51.

Phelan, J., y P. J. Rabinowitz, eds. (2005): *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. (Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture). Oxford: Blackwell.

Pier, J., y J. A. García Landa, eds. (2008): *Theorizing Narrativity*. (Narratologia, 12). Berlin and Nueva York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
http://www.degruyter.com/cont/fb/li/detailEn.cfm?id=IS-9783110202441-1
2008

Pinker, S. (2007): *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*. Nueva York: Viking.

Prince, G. (2006): "Narratologie classique et narratologie post-classique." In *Vox Poetica* 6 March 2006.
http://www.vox-poetica.com/t/prince06.html
2006-09-16
———. (2008): "Narrativehood, Narrativeness, Narrativity, Narratability." In *Theorizing Narrativity*. Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. Berlin and Nueva York: Walter de Gruyter. 19-27.

Ricœur, P. (1991): *Temps et récit Tome I: L'intrigue et le récit historique. Tome II: La configuration dans le récit de fiction. Tome III: Le temps raconté*. (Points; Essais, 227, 228, 229). Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Rimmon-Kenan, S. (2006): "Concepts of Narrative." In *The Travelling Concept of Narrative*. Ed. Matti Hyvärinen, Anu Korhonen, and Juri Mykkänen. *Collegium* (2006).
http://www.helsinki.fi/collegium/e-series/volumes/index.htm

Rudrum, D. (2008): "Narrativity and Performativity: From Cervantes to Star Trek." In *Theorizing Narrativity*. Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. Berlin and Nueva York: Walter de Gruyter. 253-76.

Ryan, M.-L. (2008): "Transfictionality Across Media." In *Theorizing Narrativity*. Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter. 385-417.

Savater, F. (1994): *La infancia recuperada.* 1983. Madrid: Alianza / Ediciones del Prado.

Sei Shônagon. (1999). *Makura no Shôshi.* ("El cuaderno de almohada", s. XI). Select. in *Antología de la literatura japonesa.* Ed. Michel Revon. Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores. 256-90.

Serfaty, V. (2003): *The Mirror and the Veil: An Overview of American Online Diaries and Blogs.* (Amsterdam Monographs in American Studies, 11). Amsterdam and Nueva York: Rodopi.

Smith, B. H. (1968): *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sternberg, M. (2008): "If-Plots: Narrativity and the Law-Code." In *Theorizing Narrativity.* Ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa. Berlin and Nueva York: Walter de Gruyter. 29-107.

Sturgess, P. J. M. (1992): *Narrativity: Theory and Practice.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Swales, J. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings.* (Cambridge Applied Linguistics). Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Thomas, A. (2006): "Fictional Blogs." In *Uses of Blogs.* Ed. Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs. New York: Peter Lang. 199-210.

Tomashevski, B. (1982): *Teoría de la literatura*. Madrid: Akal.

Tulving, E. (2002): "Episodic Memory: From Mind to Brain." *Annual Review of Psychology* 53 (Feb.): 1-25.

http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146%2Fannurev.psych.53.100901.1351 14

2007-04-12

Turner, Victor. (1974): *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

van Dijck, J. (2005): "From Shoebox to Performative Agent: The Computer as Personal Memory Machine." *New Media and Society* 7.3 (2005).

http://www.new-media-and-society.com/NM&S%20website/Contents/2005%20-%203.htm

2006-02-11

Vershbow, B. (2007): "Blogging Restructures Consciousness?" *IfBook* 8 enero

http://www.futureofthebook.org/blog/archives/2007/01/blogging_restructures_consciou.html

2007-01-19

Vice, S. (2000): *Holocaust Fiction.* Londres: Routledge.

Virtanen, T. (1992): "Issues of Text-Typology: Narrative—a 'Basic' Type of Text?" *Text* 12: 293-310.

Walker, J. (2005): "Blog (Weblog)." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* Ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. Abingdon y Nueva York: Routledge. 45.

White, H. (1987): *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1-25.

Wilde, O. (1971): "The Decay of Lying." 1889. In *Critical Theory since Plato.* Ed. Hazard Adams. San Diego: Harcourt. 673-686.

Zimmer, C. (2007): "Animal Time Travelers." *The Loom* 2 April. http://scienceblogs.com/loom/2007/04/02/animal_time_travelers.php 2007-04-12