



Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature

STRATEGIES OF AMBIGUITY

Edited by
Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker



Strategies of Ambiguity

There has been a growing awareness that ambiguity is not just a necessary evil of the language system resulting, for instance, from its need for economy or, by contrast, a blessing that allows writers to involve readers in endless games of assigning meaning to a literary text. The present volume contributes to overcoming this alternative by focusing on strategies of ambiguity (and the strategic avoidance of ambiguity) both at the production and at the reception end of communication. The authors examine ways in which speakers and hearers may use ambiguous words, structures, references, and situations to pursue communicative ends. For example, the question is asked what it actually means when a listener strategically perceives ambiguity, which may happen both synchronically (e.g. in conversations) as well as diachronically (e.g. when strategically ambiguating biblical texts in order to make them applicable to moral lessons). Another example is the question of whether ambiguity awareness increases the strategic use of ambiguity in prosody. Moreover, the authors enquire not only into the effects of ambiguous meanings but also into the strategic use of ambiguity as such, for example, as a response to censorship or as a means of provoking irritation. This volume brings together several contributions from linguistics, literary studies, rhetoric, psychology, and theology, and it aims to provide a systematic approach to the strategic production and perception of ambiguity in a variety of texts and contexts.

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and Angelika Zirker



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Introduction

Strategy Meets Ambiguity

Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker

This book is to show that strategy and ambiguity are in exciting relationships: sometimes funny, frequently complex, and never the same. Let us begin with three examples that help us to substantiate this claim and to understand the ways in which ambiguity may be strategic and in which the strategic use of language may involve ambiguity.

During the PMQ—Prime Minister’s Questions—on January 19, 2022, Keir Starmer, Leader of the Opposition, responded to noise breaking out in reaction to his stepping up to the dispatch box:

- (1) “Mr Speaker, I see the noise . . . I’m sure the chief whip has told them to bring their own boos.”

With an accompanying look at the prime minister, he made it clear that Boris Johnson was the butt of his joke, which related to the emerging scandal around Downing Street parties during lockdown and staff being asked to BYOB—“bring your own booze.” In his joke, Starmer brought together two different contexts and thus highlighted the homophony of [bu:z]. The statement in itself was not ambiguous, and yet his use of the sound-based ambiguity of the two words—booze and boos—was strategic, with the aim of perpetuating a particular image of the Tory Party under the leadership of Boris Johnson.

Our second example is very different because its ambiguity is obvious, but we are less certain of any strategy. It rather seems to show that ambiguity resolution is a central issue with regard to understanding: successful communication may, in fact, depend on it. In a sentence such as

- (2) Baldwin hands phone to *Rust* shooting investigators,

it is quite essential to distinguish who is doing what.¹ Depending on how one reads the headline, the sentence may yield various meanings:

- (2a) Baldwin hands phone to Rust [who shoots investigators]

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- (2b) Baldwin [shooting investigators] hands phone to Rust
- (2c) Baldwin hands phone to [investigators of the Rust shooting]
- (2d) Baldwin hands phone to investigators [who shoot Rust]

Each of the meanings in this case of syntactic or attachment ambiguity is logically possible, and it depends entirely on the reader to determine the intended one. The meaning the writer wished to express (most probably 2c) does not necessarily correspond to that perceived by the reader, who may, after all, be uncertain as to the meaning, particularly if he or she lacks context knowledge (in this case the fact that Alec Baldwin accidentally shot someone on the film set of *Rust*). A lack of ambiguity awareness, moreover, may lead to utter misunderstanding.

In our third example, we may wonder about both ambiguity and strategy. The reason for this is the nature of literary communication, in which fictional characters talk to each other while, at the same time, authors communicate with their readers and listeners. A difference between these levels of communication may be regarded as a form of ambiguity. Shakespeare, for instance, makes ample use of such cases of ambiguity of communicative levels:

- (3) OLIVER: Many will swoon when they do look on blood. . . . Be of good cheer, youth: you a man! you lack a man's heart.
(Shakespeare, *As You Like It* 4.2.185; TInCAP zia230001)

While Oliver, seeing the young man Ganymede swoon at the sight of blood, wishes to metaphorically express the latter's lack of courage, the audience knows that Ganymede is, in fact, the disguised Rosalind. This means that, on the external level of communication, the meaning of his utterance is to be understood literally: Rosalind does indeed lack the heart of a man, as she is female. The ambiguity of the literal vs. the metaphorical meaning of an expression is thus activated indirectly, as it depends on the distinction between fictional and actual speakers and hearers.

In each example, there is a different relationship between ambiguity and strategy. In order to make these differences conceptually fruitful, we will briefly define the two terms. Ambiguity can be defined as the "co-existence of two or more meanings" of an expression or utterance ("Conceptual Framework"; see also Winter-Froemel and Zirker, "Parameter-Based Model of Analysis" 285; Winkler 1) that are clearly distinct from each other but do not have to be mutually exclusive (Bauer et al. 27).² Especially with regard to strategy, it is relevant that there may be either a conjunction or a disjunction of the co-existent meanings, that is, whether they make sense together or alternatively. Furthermore, it makes a difference whether all of the meanings are perceived by the hearer or reader or only one of the meanings, and whether every hearer or reader will (or is meant to) perceive them or not.

We assume that ambiguity is not a linguistic accident (see Klein and Winkler 5) but a feature of languages in more general terms, which requires a certain economy of structure and expression.³ It may be used accidentally—as much as it may be used strategically—for instance, to achieve some comic effect (Winter-Froemel and Zirker, “Linguistic and Literary Perspectives” 76), as in Starmer’s quip in example (1). Strategy in communication can be defined as the speaker’s choice of appropriate means in order to overcome an anticipated resistance to the achievement of a communicative goal (Knape et al.). It makes sense to widen this definition a little and consider the “resistance” as any kind of problem (see Schole and Munderich, Chapter 10 in this volume) to be addressed by the utterance and to add the hearer to the picture: hearers may perceive an utterance strategically, making it serve their own communicative goals.

When strategy involves ambiguity, the latter may appear as a means, as a problem, and as an end. Example (1) shows that the situational, referential ambiguity of *boos/booze* is the means to bring about a communicative goal: the evocation of laughter, which goes together with ridiculing the government and perpetuating a particular image (in this case of the Tory Party under the leadership of Boris Johnson)—conservatives are partying, no matter where or when. At the same time, the speaker presents himself as witty and overcomes the resistance of the other party’s expression of discontent (the boos) by reinterpreting it as associated with the government’s rule-breaking. In the ambiguity matrix developed by the research group

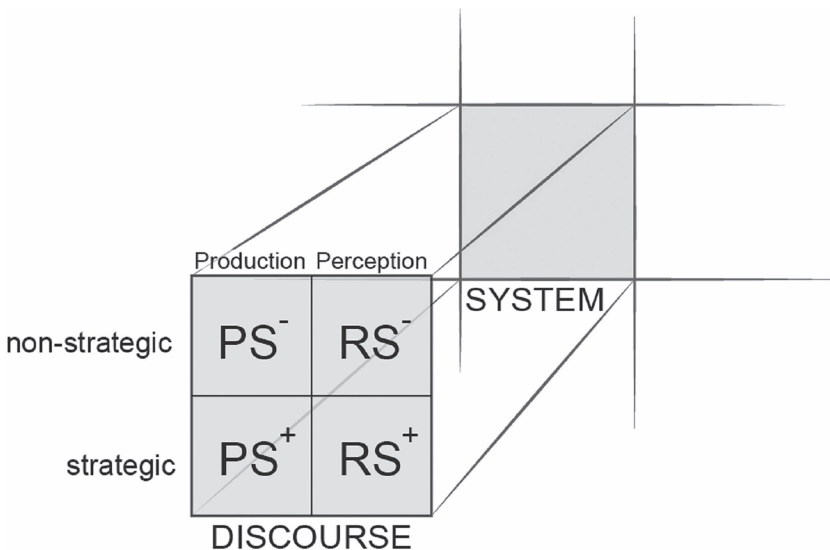


Figure 0.1 Ambiguity matrix (see Figure 1 in Winkler 6 and Figure 1 in Bauer 147)

whose work is presented in this volume, such cases are marked as “PS+” (for presence of strategy on the producer’s part).

Example (2) presents ambiguity as a problem. As pointed out previously, however, it is difficult to identify a speaker’s strategy behind the utterance. The economy demanded by the genre “headline” instigates its ambiguity. This is where the readers’ perspective comes in: they will have to apply a strategy of overcoming the obstacle of ambiguity to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the line; the means they will have to apply is their world knowledge of the referenced event. In our matrix, this would be designated “RS+,” for the presence of strategy on the receiving end of a communication. In this case, the strategy refers to the resolution of an ambiguous utterance; readers and listeners, however, may also strategically ambiguatize what they have perceived.⁴

In our third example (3), ambiguity is associated with the third component of strategy: the goal. Of course, it may also be regarded as a means to produce a certain effect, such as smiling or laughing at the discrepancy between Oliver’s knowledge and ours. But, in many ways, it is the ambiguity itself that is the purpose of Shakespeare letting Oliver make this very exclamation. We are to take in the curious fact that Oliver is right but for the wrong reason—or for not only the reason that agrees with his knowledge. Ganymede has not conformed to expectations of masculinity by fainting at the sight of blood, but then Ganymede is not (just) Ganymede but Rosalind, and his/her ambiguous identity is brought home by the dramatic irony of Oliver’s ambiguous statement. While it is logical to assume that the meanings of an ambiguous utterance are in either a conjunctive or disjunctive relationship, in this case it is difficult to decide: it may be true that Ganymede/Rosalind is both fainthearted and not a man, but it may also not be true that s/he is both, for Rosalind has already discarded a number of gender stereotypes by venturing into the forest without male company.

It is difficult to generalize, but our three examples can to some extent be aligned with the three disciplines that are combined in this volume, rhetoric, linguistics, and literary studies. Example (1) represents rhetorical strategies of persuasion in political discourse, as speakers strive to convince their audiences of certain images of their opponents and of themselves. Example (2) shows that the ambiguity inherent in the structure of a language will require processing strategies on the part of the hearer. And example (3) suggests that literary texts, while making us reflect on all sorts of topics and events (in this case, what it means to be a woman or a boy, a girl or a man),⁵ frequently do so by strategically drawing attention to their linguistic form. Our volume will also show, however, that these differences between strategy-ambiguity relationships cannot be strictly separated. The epistemic function of ambiguity as it strongly emerges in (3) is at least to some extent present in (1) as well, in which two different kinds

of behaviour by the speaker's opponents are to be regarded as linked, just as the emotional effect of (1) is not alien to (3). As for (2), even though there is no obvious rhetorical strategy, the very constraints of the headline demanding the clever exploitation of linguistic economy may give rise to a journalistic speaker-hearer interaction in which the ability of the writer to condense the message aptly (though ambiguously) is appreciated by a reader who feels taken seriously as an intelligent language user. Pleasure in the well-made construction of (1), (2), and (3) may be a shared experience.⁶ In both perspectives, production and perception, ambiguity may be strategic, and strategy may involve ambiguity as a means, a problem, and a goal.

This can also be seen when, as pointed out earlier, not every reader or hearer is meant to perceive all the meanings of an utterance. An example of this is the practice of insinuation or dog whistling,⁷ as well as that of deliberate obscurity,⁸ which is primarily discussed in political discourse but is not restricted to it. Thus, literary and political references are combined in the famous lines from Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*, first published in 1728, one year after the Hanoverian King George II had succeeded George I on the English throne: "Say from what cause, in vain decry'd and curst./ Still Dunce the second reigns like Dunce the first?" (1.5–6). In the 1729 edition, Pope hastened to add an annotation (53) in which he innocently declares that his lines are just a reference to a poem by Dryden in which he regards poetry being cursed by two other writers, just as Pope wishes to make it understood that he merely refers to poet colleagues in his lines. But, as Miriam Lahrson has recently pointed out, "the disambiguation becomes a mock-disambiguation" (11–12). This is something like counter-dog whistling: not a mighty man seeking to foster prejudice against a whole group of people by means of strategic ambiguity, but strategic ambiguity making fun of the mighty—ironic disambiguation rendering the ambiguity visible, while at the same time making it impossible for the authorities to officially perceive and sanction it because there has been an express disclaimer. The authorities would have had to spell out the libellous content themselves if they wanted to penalize Pope, which would have made *them* the ones to spread the ridicule of the king. Again, ambiguity appears as a means (a satirical device), an end (as a play of wit), and a problem—in this case for the censoring authorities.

The following chapters are divided into two main parts, with a final chapter that concludes with reflections on ambiguity in a truly interdisciplinary manner. The first part of this book is primarily concerned with **strategies of ambiguity in text production** (see previous discussion, PS+) from various disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Titles of literary works are particularly fruitful in this regard, as the opening chapters by Veronika Ehrich (Chapter 1) and by Matthias Bauer and Martina Bross (Chapter 2) elucidate: while Ehrich is concerned with three ambiguous

book titles from contemporary novels, including Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997) and *The Children Act* (2014) and Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), Bauer and Bross focus on poetry. Ehrich's approach is linguistic in following Grice's views on ambiguity, whereas Bauer and Bross take into account the context-dependency of titles that may reveal specific conditions under which polysemy and homonymy may be activated in order to trigger ambiguity. What links both chapters is the suggestion of the strategic use of ambiguous titles to flag the subject matter of literary texts in relation to economic language use: poets and literary authors more generally create ambiguous titles to generate meaningful links to the texts themselves. At the same time, the chapters are concerned with different relationships between strategy and ambiguity. Whereas the ambiguous novel titles discussed by Ehrich correspond to the ambiguity of the novels themselves and thus unambiguously draw attention to ambiguity as a central theme and a strategic end, the poem titles discussed by Bauer and Bross tend to be involved with the text in a game of discovery that foregrounds the epistemic function of ambiguity. Ambiguity in this case is a means to an end, as it reveals key features of the subjects and concerns raised by the poems.

Nicolas Potysch, in his contribution on multisemiotic textures (Chapter 3), argues that strategic ambiguity is frequent in textual combinations of written and pictorial elements, especially in appellative contexts. Potysch focuses on two historically distant combinations of written and pictorial elements and their respective strategies directed at the achievement of persuasive effects: a 1646 version of the *Dance of Death* and a 2014 advertising campaign by the Leo Burnett agency. In each case, the images involved are ambiguous and serve to achieve the communicative end. In this respect, they are examples of the rhetorical use of ambiguity indicated earlier. Remarkably, however, the appellative goal achieved by means of the ambiguous pictorial element is not ambiguous at all: in this respect, the relation between strategy and ambiguity is very different from what we see in the literary examples analyzed in the first two chapters.

An intersemiotic approach is pursued by Joachim Knappe (Chapter 4) with his introduction of a new theory of intersemiotic textuality which he bases on three hypotheses and an analysis of Dadaist anti-text strategies. The hypotheses serve to revise conventional views of textuality that are restricted to linguistic signs, model text on syntax, and adhere to specific notions of cohesion. The strategy of ambiguity analyzed by Knappe in the Dada artefacts is a metareflexive one: ambiguity is used to challenge established notions of what constitutes a text. In this reading, ambiguity is the means, the problem, and the end, as it provokes Knappe to define textuality in such a way that it may even account for intersemiotic artefacts whose meaning is almost impossible to (re)construct.

A case of epistemic ambiguity (not to be confused with the epistemic function of ambiguity mentioned previously) is presented in Chapter 5, which is authored by an interdisciplinary team and links psychology, literary studies, rhetoric, and linguistics: Florian Rohmann, Lisa Ebert, Elias-Jason Güthlein, and Carolin Munderich focus on the connections between texts and cognition in experiments that aim to understand the psychological processes which underlie judging and decision making. The analysis is directed at textual case scenarios called vignettes that serve as an information base for such judgements and decisions and that are intended to be unambiguous but frequently are not. Accordingly, ambiguity may be strategically produced (or avoided) in such vignettes in order to bring about (or avoid) a state of conflicting evidence. Textual ambiguity, from this perspective, is a means to test the influence of text construction in psychological test scenarios.

Sebastian Meixner concludes this section with his chapter on Bertolt Brecht's "Lehrstück" ("learning play") *Die Maßnahme* (1930/31): dramatic ambiguity, according to his argument, produces political ambivalence (Chapter 6). The chapter follows a systematics of ambiguity production that takes into account authorial strategies as much as anticipated and projected reactions. The ambiguity resulting from the interplay of different levels of representation is an example of the close proximity between means and ends in literary strategies, because the ambivalence triggered in the audience is cognate with the ambiguity from which it results.

The focus of the second part of the book is on **productive perception**, in which there may also be strategies of ambiguity or ambiguity avoidance (RS+). This can be seen in the oral production of (written) utterances that have more than one reading. In these cases, ambiguity is frequently a problem that may or may not be addressed strategically. The perception of ambiguity, or the lack of it, becomes discernible by the way in which ambiguous sentences are read. Thus, perception becomes production and may in turn influence the way in which an utterance is perceived. Two chapters, the one from a linguistic perspective and the other from a literary one, are concerned with this topic. The linguistic chapter on (non)strategic production planning by Bettina Remmele, Sophie Schopper, Robin Hörnig, and Susanne Winkler (Chapter 7) provides experimental evidence to show how speakers use prosody (non)strategically to disambiguate an utterance or to trigger ambiguities in the perception. Strategies in reading aloud poetic texts are the focus of David Fishelov's contribution (Chapter 8): again, how a phrase or group of lines is perceived by a hearer depends on the performance and oral representation of ambiguities. Fishelov presents two different kinds of examples: enjambment, with its creation of a discrepancy between syntax and verse structure, and pseudo-parallel structures that imply equivalence but are, in fact, expressive of difference; both affect the reading aloud.

As these chapters show, ambiguity and its strategic use can rarely be assigned to either production or perception alone. This can also be seen in the chapter by Ulrich Detges, who focuses on the relationship between reanalysis and ambiguity in language change and challenges the view that reanalysis is generally made possible by the potentially ambiguous character of surface output (Chapter 9). Instead, he shows that reanalysis may be the consequence as well as the trigger of ambiguity, and that it is necessary to specify the notion of ambiguity, as the change is sometimes motivated, for example, by pragmatic underdetermination. Accordingly, strategies may be involved on both sides, but hearers are decisive for turning a perceived implicature into a new literal meaning. Ambiguity, in this view, is not necessarily a problem, a means, or a result, but it may appear in all of these positions when reanalysis takes place.

In their co-authored chapter, Gesa Schole and Carolin Munderich (Chapter 10) combine the rhetorical approach to strategy that is speaker oriented with the central notions of Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory to also develop a pragmatic focus on strategy that includes both the production and processing of language as much as the various roles a speaker and a hearer may have in communication. Their case studies are based on everyday language use (synchronic) and on language change (diachronic), with the aim to outline a definition of speaker and hearer strategies that are intentionally or automatically employed when there is a communicative problem, that is, when a failure of understanding may ensue. Both disambiguation and ambiguity may be involved in these strategies. As in Detges's chapter, we see that even in related processes of speaker-hearer interaction, ambiguity may be either the trigger or the outcome of the strategies employed.

Ambiguation as a rhetorical strategy is addressed by Nikolai M. Kohler and Mirjam Sigmund in their analysis of a sermon by the twelfth-century Parisian bishop Maurice of Sully (Chapter 11). With the goal of achieving a change in his audience towards moral improvement, Sully interprets biblical texts through allegoresis and thus overcomes "textual resistance." For our inquiry into the relationship of strategy and ambiguity, this means that ambiguity is not the problem to be addressed; instead, a problem that lies in the intended pragmatic use of a particular text for a particular audience may be addressed by means of ambiguity. Thus, Sully ambiguates a biblical narrative, in this case the raising of the widow's son in Luke 7:11–17, in relation to the ambiguous Old French lexeme *mort* ("death"). Similar to the poem titles discussed by Bauer and Bross, an ambiguous expression becomes the source of knowledge and insight.

A referential ambiguity is the starting point for Leona Toker to reflect on intertextual ambiguity in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Chapter 12): in the final episode of Joyce's novel, Molly Bloom thinks of a priest's question "where?" to which she returned an answer not about a body part but about a geographical location—a case

of strategic ambiguation on the part of the hearer. The incident is reminiscent of the scene between the Widow Wadman and Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel and the question of "where" he received his wound. Toker reflects on positive valorizations of ambiguity on the narrator's part and on how, consequently, ambiguity emerges as a feature of the creative impulse as much as a challenge to the ethics of reading. In Toker's reasoning, ambiguity is the goal of a strategy of perception: not so much for the epistemic yield of the combined meanings but for inducing and sustaining an attitude that allows us to do justice to world and text, and to accept responsibility for constructing their meaning.

A similar ethical agenda is addressed by Jan-Melissa Schramm in Chapter 13 on sacred drama, the law, and ambiguities of form in nineteenth-century England. Her focus is on both the legal control of art and the creative work that was eventually encouraged by the conditions that aimed to restrain the public expression of religious impulses. Ambiguity as a response to censorship is thus a strategic means of overcoming external restrictions. In this way, it could be left open as to whether religious subjects were presented. Moreover, the cases discussed by Schramm point to a link between medium and message because the religious subject matter itself, the incarnation of Christ, is akin to the ambiguity of real vs. symbolic presence of the actor-character on stage. As in several other chapters in this volume, we see that ambiguity thus plays a double role in strategic communication. Works referenced by Schramm which deployed ambiguity in this manner include Laurence Housman's *Bethlehem* (1902), Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* (1908), and Alice Buckton's *Eager Heart* (?1909–10).

The volume concludes with an interdisciplinary chapter (Chapter 14) written jointly by Jutta M. Hartmann, Lisa Ebert, Gesa Schole, Wiltrud Wagner, and Susanne Winkler: they reflect on how ambiguity can be annotated across disciplines and present the Tübingen Interdisciplinary Corpus of Ambiguity Phenomena (TInCAP). In their contribution, the focus is, hence, on bringing together the strategic production and perception of ambiguity based on examples from various fields. Their approach is, however, also a methodological one, as it shows the extent to which strategy becomes a heuristic concept of understanding ambiguity in discourse (better). The array of cases collected in the corpus serves to reinforce our conviction that the manifold relations between strategy and ambiguity will never cease to amaze us.

Notes

- 1 An analogous but slightly less complicated case is one of the standard examples in the linguistics literature on syntactic ambiguity: "We saw the man with the telescope"; see Wasow (34), and Ehrich (Chapter 1, this volume).
- 2 In this respect, our approach differs from more restrictive ones which argue that the meanings have to be incompatible (see Rimmon 16).
- 3 See, e.g., Horn; Fox; Wurzel; Carlson et al.; Goldstein.

- 4 In her study *The Author as Annotator: Ambiguities of Self-Annotation in Pope and Byron*, Miriam Laursow gives an overview of examples in which such a strategic perception of ambiguity takes place.
- 5 The manner in which this question is raised by Rosalind/Ganymede in *As You Like It* has frequently been discussed. See, e.g., Belsey 29–31.
- 6 Knappe points out that participants in a language situation may frequently assume it “to be both aesthetic and rhetorical, i.e. both a mere textual game and the construction of a worldly message” (397).
- 7 See, e.g., Camp; Henderson and McCready; Lo Guercio and Caso.
- 8 See, e.g., Bauer and Zirker.

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I

Textual Strategies



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1 Enduring Ambiguity

Veronika Ehrich

Semantic Indeterminacy in Natural Language¹

Given that natural speech is interpreted in context, the appearance of ambiguous expressions is, as a rule, inconspicuous. Nonetheless, the resolution of *structural ambiguities* as illustrated in (1a) and (1b) was, from early on, a driving force in the development of Generative Grammar.

(1a) Flying planes can be dangerous.²

(1b) We saw a man with a telescope.³

Structural ambiguities of this kind are widely discussed in linguistics. Sentence (1a) is ambiguous between an adjectival analysis (derived from the progressive ‘planes that are flying’) and a gerundial analysis (derived from the VP ‘fly a plane’). The ambiguity in (1b), on the other hand, arises from two different ways of attaching the PP ‘with a telescope’ to either the N or V projection, yielding the interpretations ‘the man had a telescope’ (N) or ‘seeing the man involved using a telescope’ (V), respectively.

The ‘semantic turn’ in linguistics during the late 1960s to early 1970s went along with discussions of *scope ambiguities*. A well-known example is

(2) Everyone in the room speaks a foreign language.

The sentence has two interpretations: ‘everyone in the room speaks at least one (arbitrary) foreign language’ or ‘there is one specific language spoken by everybody in the room.’ The first reading is based on a wide-scope analysis for the universally quantifying *everyone* (‘for everyone *x*, there is some foreign language *y* such that *x* speaks *y*’); in the second reading, the indefinite ‘a foreign language’ is assigned a wide scope over the rest (‘there is a specific foreign language *y*, such that everyone *x* speaks *y*’).

The disambiguation of sentences like (1) and (2) is a central concern in theoretical linguistics. In formal approaches to syntax and sentence semantics, the readings of an *n*-place ambiguous expression are assigned

n distinct underlying structures/logical forms (LF), such that every ambiguity is eliminated on a deeper level of structure, regardless of whether it causes a problem to everyday communication.

Wasow, Perfors, and Beaver, who checked the Brown Corpus for structural ambiguities, found numerous occurrences of syntactically ambiguous V-NP-PP orderings like (1b); the avoidance of structural ambiguity, therefore, does not appear to be an important concern in everyday language use. A corpus study will not reveal, however, whether a given ambiguity results from a deliberate choice or ‘survives’ the production process just incidentally and is, thus, simply a failure (3).

- (3) Keine Antwort zählt als Absage.
No reply is considered a refusal.

Sentence (3) is the standard wording accompanying invitation cards issued by the University of Tübingen. Besides the intended reading, ‘If you don’t reply, this will be considered a refusal,’ there is another possible interpretation: ‘Whatever you reply, it will not be considered a refusal.’ Because the communicative intention of (3) is clear enough in the given context, the second reading easily goes unnoticed (even in the linguistics department we almost ignored it).

While structural ambiguities sometimes occur involuntarily and add to the entertainment sections of the press, lexical ambiguities seem to be rather more widespread. Even *homonyms* like those in (4) are not easily replaceable in ordinary speech, because their nonambiguous counterparts often involve more elaborate paraphrases, which lead to additional efforts in speech production.

- (4a)⁴ Gang: ‘corridor,’ ‘course of a meal,’ ‘gear,’ ‘walk,’ etc.
 (4b) Stift: ‘pen,’ ‘apprentice,’ etc.⁵
 (4c) Decke: ‘blanket,’ ‘ceiling,’ etc.
 (4d) Stich: ‘stitch,’ ‘sting,’ ‘etching,’ etc.
 (4e) Fassung: ‘version of a paper or book,’ ‘frame for a jewel,’ ‘socket of a lamp,’ etc.⁶

Whereas the mental lexicon does not include too many instances of homonymy, *polysemy* as in (5) appears to be quite frequent, if not even inevitable. Apart from clearly defined scientific concepts,⁷ most lexemes apply to a wider array of mutually related senses, centred on a shared basic concept.⁸

- (5a) Besuch: ‘visiting person’ or ‘event of a visit’ (see Rapp)
 (5b) Rechnung: ‘invoice’ or ‘calculation,’ etc.
 (5c) Bogen: ‘bow,’ ‘arch,’ ‘sheet of paper,’ etc.
 (5d) Schule: ‘educational institution,’ ‘a building housing this institution,’ ‘people working in the institution,’ etc. (see Bierwisch 183)

Research literature in linguistics is full of similar examples and offers different approaches for their analysis.⁹

Homonymy and *polysemy* are to be distinguished from *vagueness*. Vague expressions (like *old*, *love*, *good*) have no clearly delimited denotations separating them from related terms in the same semantic field (*young*, *like*, *bad*). Homonymous and polysemous expressions are subject to ‘precisification’ (Pinkal 54); the relevant notion goes back to Naess:

- (6) That an expression U is a *precization* [*sic*] of an expression T means here that all reasonable interpretations of U are reasonable interpretations of T, and that there is at least one reasonable interpretation of T which is *not* a reasonable interpretation of U.
(Naess 39; emphasis in original)

Vague items, on the other hand, cannot be made completely precise, as their denotations are blurred around the edges (or ‘fuzzy’ in a logical sense); they are, however, subject to specifications.

- (7) Specification:

A predicate *F* (in context *c*) is more specific than a predicate *G* if and only if the positive domain of *F* (in *c*) is included in the positive domain of *G* (in *c*).

(Pinkal 57)

While there are, in general, no clear limits as to what counts as *old* (8a), it is uncontroversial that ‘80 years old’ forms a subdomain of the positive domain of *old* (as opposed to ‘not old—young’). Similarly, the addenda, underlined in (8b’) and (8c’), specify the respective domains to which the simple predicates are applicable:

- (8a) He is old (8a’) He is 80 years old.
(8b) I love him (8b’) I love him as a pianist (but I never met him).
(8c) She is good (8c’) She is good as a violinist (but not a good mother; see Vendler).

Why would a language preserve ambiguous or vague expressions, given that the understanding of what a speaker intends to communicate needs to be secured? Several explanations have been suggested:

- (i) *Linguistic change*: Natural language is subject to permanent diachronic development, such that earlier syntactic rules or word meanings coexist with later ones for a certain period of time, before they will gradually be replaced in the speech of subsequent generations (see Kroch).

- (ii) *Language processing*: For communication to succeed, speakers and listeners must minimize their processing load. Hence, the speaker will prefer shorter expressions and tolerate ambiguity, given that he is familiar with the intended message anyway. The listener, on the other hand, who has to recognize the speaker's intended message from what was said, will prefer expressions that are as univocal as possible. Listeners would benefit from a language system in which every expression had exactly one clearly delimited meaning. The persistence of ambiguities in natural language is, thus, to be explained as reflecting the trade-off between the processing efforts of speakers and listeners. Piantadosi, Tily, and Gibson empirically support this view with evidence from a CELEX study on English (at the Dutch Centre for Lexical Information), Dutch, and German, which shows that more frequent words are not only shorter but also tend to be polysemous or vague.¹⁰
- (iii) *Contextual knowledge*: Linguistic communication is always embedded in a context that provides information about the situation and the ongoing discourse. Speakers continue to monitor contextual information accessible to their listeners (see Ferreira et al.), such that ambiguity only needs to be avoided where otherwise a misunderstanding would arise.

Avoidance of ambiguity in speech or written texts is, however, also dependent on the communicative goals, that is, ambiguity avoidance is based on a *linguistic strategy*. On the one hand, speakers who intend to facilitate comprehension in everyday communication (for example in room descriptions; see Schole and Munderich, Chapter 10 in this volume) will not bother to stick to rigidly nonambiguous ways of expressing themselves as long as this does not impair the listeners' comprehension at any given stage of an exchange. On the other hand, a speaker might also deliberately choose ambiguous or vague expressions in order to create certain communicative effects: book titles are a case in point.

Strategic Deployment of Ambiguity: Novel Titles

We speak of a discursive strategy, in a narrow sense of the term, when the producer of a text pursues additional goals (e.g. political or economic interests) beyond that of merely being understood. Discursive strategies of this kind are not planned within milliseconds but rather are prepared well in advance. Instead of speaking of DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES, one can speak of STRATEGIC DISCOURSE(S)/STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION. Jokes or advertising slogans (see Bürli-Storz), newspaper headlines (see Bucaria), or event announcements [(9a) and (9b)] all belong to this class.

- (9a) *unerhört* not yielded to—outrageous
 (9b) *zeitverrückt* displaced in time—in retrospect to (another) time
 (9c) *einfach erlesen* simply excellent—easily noticed via reading
 (9d) *total vermessen* utterly falsely measured—completely arrogant

(9a) was the title of an exhibition at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, Germany (January 29–31, 2015), about the deployment of music as a torture instrument; (9b) announced a concert by the Rock+Pop+Chorus for the elderly in Tübingen, Germany; (9c) is the motto of the daily newspaper *Main Post* (cited according to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) from February 27, 2015); and (9d) is the title of a commentary (SZ March 7, 2015) that challenged the tendency to acknowledge only measurable achievements. A deliberate use of ambiguity underlies these examples; the point they make is that different valid readings exist alongside each other and that no disambiguation favouring one of the readings over the others is intended.

In this section, I would like to turn towards a special type of strategically deployed ambiguity: the novel title as it appears on the cover of a book (for poem titles, see Bauer and Bross, Chapter 2 this volume). On the one hand, novel titles belong in the realm of advertising, for books are—among other things—a commodity, and a book title should arouse the interest of potential buyers. On the other hand, the title of a book (as paratext) is also a component of the entire text—functioning as a reference to a central aspect of its content.

In what follows, I will consider three novel titles from the realm of sophisticated literary fiction bestsellers: *Enduring Love* (1997) and *The Children Act* (2014) by Ian McEwan and *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) by Julian Barnes. The three titles are, each in its own way, ambiguous. Their ambiguity corresponds to an ambiguity of the narratives themselves. My hypothesis is that this involves not just the interpretive leeway common to literary fiction, nor is it solely a matter of the inextricability of a constellation of persons and actions (see Zirker), but rather that ambiguity itself becomes a central theme in the works considered and the ambiguous titles get to the heart of said ambiguity which lies at the centre of these stories.

Enduring Love (*Ian McEwan*)

The title's meaning is not only ambiguous in its construction but also vague in its wording. *Enduring* can be interpreted as an adjectival modifier of the noun *Love* (interpretation 10a), or as a verbal gerund with the noun *Love* as its THEME-argument (interpretation 10b).

- (10a) persisting/continuous/everlasting love
 (10b) bearing/withstanding love

Enduring in interpretation (10a) is vague: how long must a state last in order to be qualified as ‘enduring’? *Love* is, of course, also notoriously vague: the transition from affection to love and vice versa is blurry at the edges, quite apart from the fact that the term ‘love’ allows for many varieties. Both interpretations are referentially undetermined and leave open who endures love for whom, or by whom love is being endured.

The three protagonists at the centre of the novel are Clarissa and Joe, a middle-aged, happily married couple, and Jed Parry, a younger man described as extraordinarily good-looking. Clarissa and Joe encounter Jed for the first time as all three become witnesses to a hot air balloon’s emergency landing in which the pilot is able to save himself, while a child appears to helplessly remain behind in the basket. Five men, including Joe and Jed, hang onto the balloon with their body weight in order to keep it on the ground. But the balloon with the child is torn up into the air by a strong gust of wind. One of the men involved in the rescue attempt falls down from a great height and dies, while the others (including Joe and Jed) jump off before it is too late. Joe, who feels complicit in the accidental death, is beside himself (11a) but also glad that he has survived. His shock does not remain concealed from his wife Clarissa, who witnessed the event (11b).

(11a) [Joe, the narrator, immediately after the fall of the fifth man:] Like a self in a dream I was both first and third persons. I acted, and saw myself act.

(19)

(11b) [On the evening after the accident; Clarissa to Joe:] ‘I love you more now I’ve seen you go completely mad. . . . *The rationalist cracks at last!*’

(35, emphasis added)

Joe and Jed briefly meet at the corpse of the accidentally deceased and end up engaging in intense eye contact, which reflects Joe’s agitation in the face of the event.

On the night immediately following the accident, Joe receives a telephone call from Jed, who reveals his love for him:

(12) [First call at night from Jed to Joe; Jed:] ‘I just wanted you to know, I understand what you’re feeling. I feel it too. I love you.’

(37)

Joe is so embarrassed that he initially keeps the call from Clarissa. At the same time, the memory of the accident bothers him; his colleague Eric, to whom he tells the event the next day, is bewildered by his distraught state.

- (13) Eric listened patiently, making appropriate sounds and shakes of his head, but looking at me *as though I were contaminated, the bearer into his office of a freshly mutated virus of ill-fortune*. I could have broken off, or made an artificial ending. I pressed on because I couldn't stop. I was telling it for myself and a goldfish would have served me as well as a talks producer.

(40, emphasis added)

As Joe sits working in the reading room of a library the morning after the accident, he feels disturbed by another visitor's walking up and down, a visitor whom he does not get to see face to face, but whose trainers he believes to recognize as being Jed's. Joe subsequently finds himself increasingly harassed by Jed, who follows him everywhere and even repeatedly waits for him at his front door; Joe also receives telephone calls, letters, and emails from Jed:

- (14) [Jed forces Joe to meet him at his front door]

We [i.e. Jed and Joe] watched the taxi go past. I [i.e. Joe] said, 'You asked me to meet you because you had something to say.'

'You're very cruel,' he [Jed] said. 'But you've got all the power.' He inhaled deeply through his nose again, as though preparing himself for some difficult circus feat. He managed to look at me as he said simply, '*You love me. You love me, and there's nothing I can do but return your love.*'

(63, emphasis added)

- (15) [Letter from Jed to Joe]

Dear Joe, I feel happiness running through me like an electrical current. I close my eyes and see you as you were last night in the rain, across the road from me, with *the unspoken love between us* as strong as a steel cable. I close my eyes and thank God loud for letting you exist, for letting me exist in the same time and place as you, and for letting this strange adventure between us begin.

(93, emphasis added)

I can't help the feeling that every time I leave you I'm letting you down. I'll never forget that time at the bottom of the hill, the way you turned away from me, rejected, stunned by my refusal to recognize in that first instance our love. I'll never stop saying I'm sorry. Joe, will you ever forgive me? Jed

(98)

It is characteristic of these confessions of love, numerous others of which reach Joe, that Jed projects his feelings onto those of his beloved counterpart, as he pretends to recognize that it is Joe who is doing the wooing.

As the narrative proceeds, the reader begins to doubt whether Joe is actually being pursued by Jed or whether Joe, in the grip of an unexpected homoerotic attraction is only imagining Jed's stalking. Joe is the only one who ever sees Jed face to face. Every time Clarissa leaves the house, Jed has apparently just disappeared. His emails are deleted just when Clarissa is about to read them. Clarissa increasingly doubts Joe's perceptions. And the more she questions his reports [see (16)–(18)], the less reliable they appear in the eyes of the reader as well.

(16) [Clarissa asks Joe about the encounter in the library]

[Joe:] 'Listen. Yesterday he was following me.'

[Clarissa:] '*But you didn't actually see him in the library.*'

[Joe:] 'I saw his shoes as he went out of the door. White trainers, with red laces. It had to be him.'

[Clarissa:] '*But you didn't see his face.*'

[Joe:] 'Clarissa, it was him.'

[Clarissa:] 'Let me get this straight. You had this *idea* you were being followed even before you saw his shoe.'

[Joe:] 'It was just a feeling, a bad feeling. It wasn't until I was in the library with time to think about it that I realised how it was getting to me.'

[Clarissa:] 'And then you saw him.'

[Joe:] 'Yea, his shoe.'

(57, emphasis added)

(17) [Clarissa on Joe's idea that Jed follows him up to the front door]

'Do you think it's possible that you are making too much of this man Parry. That he's really not that much of a problem. I mean, ask him for a cup of tea and he'll probably never bother you again. *He's not the cause of your agitation, he's a symptom.*' As she says this she thinks of the thirty messages that got erased. *Perhaps Parry, or the Parry as described by Joe, does not exist.* She shivers, . . . keeping her gaze on him.

(84, emphasis added)

(18) [Joe has given Clarissa a letter from Jed to read]

At breakfast I had read Parry's letter, then passed it to [Clarissa]. She seemed to agree with me that he was mad and that I was right to feel harassed. 'Seemed' because she was not quite whole-hearted. . . . I sensed she was keeping her options open, though she denied it when I asked

her. She read the letter through the medium of a frown, pausing to look up at me at a certain point and say, '*His writing's rather like yours.*'
(100, emphasis added)

It becomes increasingly doubtful who is the lover and who the beloved. Thus, it is also unclear who is enduring the love of whom: is Jed the lover, who is stalking Joe with his declarations of love, or is it rather Joe, who is passionately day-dreaming of these declarations of love? At first, all attempts to clarify the ambiguous situation fail, as do the police's attempts to find out what is actually happening when Joe files a harassment complaint against Jed.

(19) [Policeman 1 questions Joe]

[Policeman 1:] 'Are you the person being harassed?'

[Joe:] 'Yes, I've been. . .'

[Policeman 1:] 'And is the person causing the nuisance with you now?'

[Joe:] 'He's standing outside my place this very minute.'

[Policeman 1:] 'Has he inflicted any physical harm on you?'

[Joe:] 'No, but he. . .'

[Policeman 1:] 'Has he threatened you with harm?'

[Joe:] 'No. . . .'

[Policeman 1:] 'Do you think you could prove that he intends to cause you distress? . . .'

[Policeman 1:] 'Are you aware of what he actually wants? . . .'

[Joe:] 'He wants to save me.'

(73-74)

(20) [Policeman 2 questions Joe]

[Policeman 2:] 'The harassment consists of. . . ?'

[Joe:] 'As I told you before, . . . he sends three or four letters a week.'

[Policeman 2:] 'Obscenities?'

[Joe:] 'No.'

[Policeman 2:] 'Lewd suggestions?'

[Joe:] 'No.'

[Policeman 2:] 'Insults?'

[Joe:] 'Not really.'

[Policeman 2:] 'Sexual sort of things then.'

[Joe:] 'It doesn't seem to be about sex. It's an obsession. He's completely fixated on me. He doesn't think about anything else. . . .'

[Policeman 2:] 'Any history of psychiatric illness, Mr. Rose?' ['Rose' is Joe's last name.]

[Joe:] 'None at all.'

- [*Policeman 2*]: ‘Stress at work, that sort of thing?’
 [*Joe*]: ‘Nothing like that.’
 [*Policeman 2*]: ‘Pretty tough business journalism, isn’t it?’
 (155–156)

The questioning by the police, which is supposed to clarify the semantically indeterminate concept of *harassment*, makes Joe, who answers all of these questions in the negative, appear as a manic grouser or burnt-out stress junkie. The impression that Joe finds himself in a mentally confused state solidifies when, during a restaurant shooting, Joe believes to recognize Jed behind the event and claims that the shots were aimed at him (Joe). Just when it seems to be confirmed that Joe has succumbed to a delusion, the author resolves the narrative’s ambiguity (in the form of a parody of an action thriller): obviously it was, in fact, Jed, who shot at Joe, and who later even took Clarissa hostage; Jed is committed to the psychiatric ward. Thus, it seems clear: it was Joe who had to endure Jed’s declarations of love. Towards the end of the narrative, however, the reading of the title of the novel as referring to everlasting love (10a) becomes increasingly prominent, too. When Clarissa, who finds the situation more and more unbearable, separates from Joe, both invoke once more the originally undoubtable longevity of their amorous relationship.

- (21) [Clarissa has revealed to Joe that she is moving out of their shared apartment]

I couldn’t quite take seriously her insistence that we were finished. It had always seemed to me that our love *was just the kind to endure*.
 (158, emphasis added)

- (22) [Letter to Joe from Clarissa]

I don’t know where this takes us. We’ve been so happy together. We’ve loved each other passionately and loyally. *I always thought our love was the kind that was meant to go on and on*. Perhaps it will. I just don’t know. Clarissa

(218–219, emphasis added)

The narration of these events precedes two addenda in the book. In the first, a scientific article on De Clérambault syndrome is quoted (a syndrome having to do with obsessive/deluded love, often religiously inflected) (233–243). The second addendum is an authentic case study about a patient J. P., who was gripped by a crazed love for a certain man named J. R. (the initials concur with those of the novel’s main characters, Jed Parry and Joe Rose). Readers of the book may begin to ask themselves whether the first-person narrator, a science journalist by profession, narratively disguises a case study, or whether McEwan, the author, provides only a novelistic

adaptation of a case study and then takes back the semblance of fiction in the appendix. This ambiguity is not resolved but supplemented by a further ironic turn in the second appendix, a letter written from Jed to Joe after his admittance to a psychiatric ward:

- (23) The thousandth day, my thousandth letter, and you telling me, what I'm doing is right! . . . I'm meant to be a prisoner. The bars are on the windows, the ward is locked at night, I spend my days and nights in the company of the shuffling, muttering, dribbling idiots, and the ones who aren't shuffling have to be restrained. . . . A thousand days—this is my birthday letter to you. You know it already, but I need to tell you again that I adore you. I live for you. I love you. Thank you for loving me, thank you for accepting me, thank you for recognising what I am doing for our love. Send me a new message soon, and remember—faith is joy. Jed
(244–245)

These are the very last words of the book. Love endures ('a thousand days') and has to be endured. But by whom? Doubts about a clear solution to this case return: has Jed really written to Joe, or is Joe dreaming up a letter from Jed? What appeared to be clear before is taken back again with each new turn.¹¹ The essence of this novel is not the resolving of ambiguity, but rather the dissolving of all explicitness.

The Children Act (*Ian McEwan*)¹²

This title is structurally ambiguous in terms of the part-of-speech classification of *Act*, analyzable as either a verb (24a) or a noun (24b):

- (24a) Act [Verb]: to act, take action, act theatrically, deceive someone, etc.
(24b) Act [Noun]: action, dramatic act, law, deed, juridical document, etc.

If analyzed as a verb, the title literally means 'the children take action.' The epigraph placed before the narrative appears, however, to exclude this interpretation:

- (25) When a court determines any question with respect to . . . the upbringing of a child . . . the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration.

Section I(a), The Children Act (1989) (n.p.)

The Children Act is a British collection of legal texts on children's welfare. McEwan actually strings together a narrative version of various authentic

judicial decisions on the matter of child law, which are loosely held together by a rather trivial story of a marriage. The central question is how the indeterminate legal concept of *the child's welfare* is to be understood.

In what follows, I will only take up one of the treated legal cases. It concerns Adam, a young man suffering from a deadly case of leukaemia, who is from a family of Jehovah's Witnesses. Fiona, the protagonist of the novel and a judge on London's High Court by profession, has to decide his case: Adam's physicians want to legally enforce a life-saving blood transfusion. This is rejected not only by Adam's parents but also by Adam himself, who, at 17 years of age, is only three months away from legal majority. Fiona meets Adam in the hospital and convinces herself that Adam is rational enough to recognize the implications of his decision against the transfusion. During her visit, she also discovers that Adam has a lively interest in poetry and music, which would enrich his life, if continued. They end up singing a song by Benjamin Britten, written for Yeats's poem 'Down by the Salley Gardens' (1889), which ends thus:

(26) But I was young and foolish, and now I'm full of tears.
(117)

In her court ruling, Fiona accedes to the petition of the physicians: the transfusion is approved. Decisive for her is the consideration that, ultimately, it is the child's welfare and well-being which are at stake:

(27) 'The welfare of the child therefore dominates my decision. . . . I take "well-fare" to encompass "well-being" and "interests".'
(121)

[Fiona furthermore argues that Adam's welfare is better served by:]
'his love of poetry [and] by his newly found passion for the violin. . ..'
(123)

After the blood transfusion, Adam turns into someone else: a vivacious and, as is appropriate for his age, rebellious young man, who turns his back on the Jehovah's Witnesses and even leaves his parental home. At the same time, he first attempts to enter into correspondence with Fiona (via letter) and later surprises her by following her to one of her work meetings outside of London and proposing to live with her in the future. Fiona rejects this. She gives no answer to a bitter ballad composed by Adam which he sends to her in response to her rejection, in which he once more alludes to the Yeats motif:

(28) I took my wooden cross and dragged it by the stream.
I was young and foolish and troubled by a dream.
(180)

After a few months, Fiona learns that Adam is suffering from a new bout of his illness. This time, Adam, not a minor anymore, has rejected the transfusion and has died. In this case, the ambiguity of the title is not maintained, and the different readings are evoked one after the other: The Children Act (legal document) and the action voluntarily taken by the child.

The Sense of an Ending (*Julian Barnes*)

This title, as opposed to the previous ones, is not syntactically but lexically equivocal in various ways. *Ending* is (as the indefinite article shows) used as a nominal gerund. The underlying verb can, however, be used intransitively in the sense of ‘something is coming to an end’ or transitively in the sense of ‘someone is bringing something to an end.’ Furthermore, for both variants, an egressive (in the sense of ‘achievement’) or a conclusive interpretation (in the sense of ‘accomplishment’) is possible: something ends all of a sudden or gradually. Where the ending begins or comes to an end itself is blurry at its edges for the second reading.

Sense is a polysemous lexeme with (at least) the following readings (according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Online*, ‘sense, *n.*’):

- (29a) A faculty by which the body perceives an external stimulus; one of the faculties of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch.
- (29b) A feeling that something is the case.
- (29c) A sane and realistic attitude to situations and problems.
- (29d) A way in which an expression or a situation can be interpreted; a meaning.
- (29e) *Mathematics Physics* A property (e.g. direction of motion) distinguishing a pair of objects, quantities, effects, etc. which differ only in that each is the reverse of the other.

The title of the book leaves open what is coming to an end at which time, or who is bringing what to an end. It also leaves open whether the book concerns itself with the feeling an ending is about to come, or with the explanation of an ending that has already occurred. Julian Barnes succeeds in maintaining this ambiguity until the ending of the narrative. The conclusion here is already drawn in the first pages. The first-person narrator, Tony, remembers a school lesson on Henry VIII. A schoolboy answers the teacher’s question about the historical circumstances as follows:

(30) ‘There was unrest, sir.’

(5)

And when the teacher demands clarification, he answers:

- (31) ‘I’d say that there was great unrest, sir.’
(5)

The irony of this reply lies in the fact that the specification does not add at all to the clarity of the original statement.

Vagueness of one’s own memory is the central theme of this story. In its first part, Tony brings to mind his first encounter with Adrian, who, from this moment onwards, is his best friend. In the same history lesson on Henry VIII, Adrian confronts the teacher with a determination that once more emphasizes the central motif of vagueness:

- (32) ‘[T]here is one line of thought according to which all you can say of any historical event—even the outbreak of the First World War, for example—is that “*something happened*”.’
(5, emphasis added)

After his school days, Adrian attends Cambridge for his university studies; Tony studies history in Bristol, where he gets to know his first girlfriend, Veronica. The relationship is excruciatingly painful: Veronica sexually entices him and—it is the early 1960s—keeps him at bay nonetheless. Tony spends a weekend at her parents’ house; the coarse father, the arrogant brother, and Veronica herself treat him derogatorily, even insultingly.

Only the mother meets him with friendliness in her own mysterious manner. At a meeting with Tony’s school friends, Veronica also gets to know Adrian. Shortly after this, Tony ends his relationship with her and only then do they—once—sleep with each other, and it becomes clear that Veronica is quite experienced sexually. Not much later, Tony receives a letter from Adrian, in which the latter confesses that he is now together with Veronica. Tony reacts with an offended, touchy answer, which he does not quite remember in retrospect. The formerly tight friendship comes to an abrupt end. After some time, Tony learns that Adrian has committed suicide. The first part of the book ends there, and it is an *ending*, the *sense* of which Tony does not comprehend:

- (33) I spent the next few days trying to think round all the angles and corners of Adrian’s death. . . . And how was I to think about Veronica now? Adrian loved her, yet he had killed himself: *how was that explicable?*
(52, emphasis added)

The second part of the narrative takes place 40 years later: one day, Tony, now a leisurely retiree, receives the message that Veronica’s recently deceased mother has bequeathed him £500 as well as Adrian’s diary. In

the letter accompanying the will, she lets Tony know that Adrian was very happy before his death. Veronica, however, refuses to surrender the diary. Finally, she sends a single page of it, a bequest, in which Adrian compares his life to betting on a horse race:

- (34) The question of accumulation. If life is a wager, what form does the bet take? At the racetrack, an accumulator is a bet which rolls on profits from the success of one horse to engross the stake of the next one.
- (85)

The letter closes with an enigmatic conditional:

- (35) So, for instance, if Tony
- (86)

Tony tries to understand the text passage in which he sees, 'Adrian's rational arguing towards his own suicide':

- (36) the writer was using light in an attempt to reach greater light. *But does that make sense?*
- (87, emphasis added)

The open conditional 'If Tony' appears to Tony in retrospect as a formula for his own former life:

- (37) These words had a local, textual *meaning*, specific to forty years ago. . . . And in this register the words were practically complete in themselves, and *didn't need an explanatory main clause to follow*.
- (88, emphasis added)

Some weeks later, Veronica leaves Tony a copy of the letter in which he once terminated his friendship with Adrian. Tony is horrified by the hatred he held for Adrian and Veronica at that time:

- (38) Well, you certainly deserve one another and I wish you much joy. I hope you get so involved that the mutual damage will be permanent. . . . Part of me hopes that you'll have a child, because I'm a great believer in time's revenge, yea unto the next generation and the next. . . . But revenge must be on the right people. . . . So I don't wish you that. It would be unjust to inflict on some innocent foetus the prospect of discovering that it was the fruit of your loins. . . . Compliments of the season to you, and may acid rain fall on your joint and anointed heads.
- (95-97)

Up to this point, Tony had thought Veronica to be the guilty party in ending his friendship with Adrian. Deeply ashamed, he must now admit that it was he himself who had betrayed his friendship. Memory inverts into its opposite.

(39) When you are in your twenties, even if you're confused and uncertain about your aims and purposes, you have a strong *sense* of what life is, and of what you in life are, and might become. Later . . . later there is more *uncertainty, more overlapping, more backtracking, more false memories*. Back then, you can remember your short life in its entirety. Later, the *memory becomes a thing of shreds and patches*.

(104–105, emphasis added)

There is objective time, but also subjective time. . . . And this personal time, which is the true time, is measured in your relationship to memory. So when this strange thing happened—when these new memories suddenly came upon me—it was as if, for that moment, time had been placed in reverse. As if, for that moment, the river ran upstream.

(122)¹³

This could be the ending of the story, but Tony meets Veronica once more. On this occasion, she arranges an encounter with a group of mentally disabled men, one of whom seems to know Veronica well. During a second encounter with the group, Tony comes to believe that he recognizes Adrian in him and is almost convinced that the man is Adrian and Veronica's son. He holds himself and his earlier curses guilty for the man's disability:

(40) I reread my words. They seemed like some ancient curse I had forgotten even uttering. Of course I don't—I didn't—believe in curses. That's to say, in words producing events. But the very action of naming something that subsequently happens—of wishing specific evil, and that evil coming to pass—this still has a shiver of the other-worldly about it.

(138)

As Tony meets the group for a last time, the caretaker asks him not to bother the man (Adrian's son?) any further—and communicates that Veronica is not, as Tony supposed, the man's mother, but rather his sister.

The author does not further clarify the situation; the ending of the story remains undetermined.¹⁴ What can be said about it is to be found in the last sentences of the book:

(41) There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond these, there is unrest. *There is great unrest*.

(150, emphasis added)

In other words, what holds for the story of Henry VIII's time also holds for one's own life: a clear conclusion appears impossible. Memory—this being the novel's message—is imprecise (vague) and, at the same time, ambiguous: the same events present themselves differently in retrospect and withdraw from a clear assignment of *sense*: ambiguity cannot be avoided and must be *endured*.

Summary

The resolution of ambiguity has always been a central concern in linguistics. Two opposed research strategies are pursued to tackle the problem: the different meanings of a given expression are based on distinct underlying forms or on a shared semantic base. Both approaches assume that every form of semantic indeterminacy is, in principle, resolvable in a minimal environment of a word, a phrase, or a clause.

While in everyday language, the given discourse context often rules out inadequate interpretations of a semantically indeterminate expression, the resolution of ambiguity or vagueness has no priority in poetry. Here, various variants of a meaning can coexist alongside one another and, together, constitute a complex spectrum of interpretations, which the reader can, indeed, interpretively untangle, but which need not and should not be reduced to exactly one reading (see Bauer et al. "Dimensionen der Ambiguität"). In literary prose, ambiguity is often a driving force; in detective stories and crime fiction, in particular, suspense sets in when protagonists and their actions remain unaccounted for as long as possible. The works discussed above belong neither in the realm of poetry nor in that of crime fiction. In *Enduring Love* and *The Sense of an Ending*, tension is generated by the fact that the first-person narrator's perceptions and memories are continuously changing and, on the whole, remain undetermined. In *The Children Act*, a legal concept like *welfare* can indeed be fixed to a determinate reading in a court decision, but it is up to the persons thereby affected to accept or thwart this reading through their actions. In all three narratives, ambiguity forms the central theme. McEwan and Barnes highlight this through their selection of non-univocal titles.¹⁵ The result is paradoxical: ambiguity in the title generates clarity in previewing the novel's theme.

The finding that ambiguity is widespread in natural speech as well as in literary prose (and naturally in poetry) is sometimes accompanied by the claim that Grice's Cooperative Principle and the third maxim of manner—'be perspicuous,' including its second submaxim 'avoid ambiguity' (27)—are inadequate or at least 'overrated' (Wasow). This is, as I would like to argue, a misunderstanding of Gricean thinking. The Cooperative Principle is neither a postulate in communicative ethics nor an empirical description of people's behaviour; rather, it is a rational principle:¹⁶

- (42) I would like to be able to think of the standard type of conversational practice not merely as something that all or most do *in fact* follow but as something that is *reasonable* for us to follow, that we *should not abandon*.

(29, original emphasis)

A speaker who clearly and deliberately flouts a maxim will be able to do so essentially because he and his listener can rely on the Cooperation Principle.

Grice explicitly restricts his discussion of ambiguity to the *deliberate* flouting of the maxim and recurs to poetry, quoting a line by Blake.¹⁷ If speakers, however, violate a maxim unintentionally, they are simply a victim of communicative failure. While, unfortunately, spontaneous failures (speech errors or forgetfulness, for instance) are quite common in our daily behaviour, this does not call into question the principles guiding communicative behaviour; rather, it validates them. This also holds true, in my view, for fictional texts: otherwise the (literary critical) interpretation of texts would be obsolete.

Notes

- 1 Part of this paper was originally written in German and presented at the annual meeting of the RTG “Ambiguity: Production and Perception” in February 2015. I owe valuable comments to the audience as well as to two anonymous reviewers. I am deeply indebted to Miriam Haas, who translated the major part of the text, as well as to the editors for brushing up the English version. All remaining errors and shortcomings are, of course, my own.
- 2 (1a) is often attributed to *Syntactic Structures* (Chomsky), which in fact contains a similar example: “*They are flying planes*” (87).
- 3 Variants of this example are widespread in generative literature. I took this example from Wasow (34).
- 4 The suggested readings are not meant to be exhaustive.
- 5 *Stift* (4b) has at least one additional meaning: ‘home of a foundation.’ There is, however, a difference in grammatical gender: *das* *Stift* vs. *der* *Stift*. Strict homonyms share all of their morphosyntactic features (Lyons); German *Bank* (as opposed to English *bank*) is, due to the distinct plural forms *Banken* (‘credit institute’) vs. *Bänke* (‘benches’), not strictly speaking a homonym.
- 6 In addition to their multiple literal meanings, (4d) and (4e) each has a metaphorical extension: *einen Stich haben* (‘being crazy’), *Fassung bewahren* (‘to maintain composure’).
- 7 These are often enough metaphors from ordinary language: *electrical field*, *semantic field*, *government*, or *blood vessel*. Conversely, an inflation of the metaphoric (ab)use of scientific concepts like RNA can be observed in public discourse.
- 8 Of course, I do not want to imply that homonymy and polysemy are always easily discriminated as far as individual expressions are concerned. Sometimes the different readings are diachronically related, but speakers are no longer aware of this; (4d) and (4e) are probably cases in point: an etching is produced by stitching into some material (*Stich*), while blankets and ceilings are both coverings (*Decke*) for something.

- 9 See Asher, Kennedy, or, in more traditional terms, Lyons for more detailed accounts.
- 10 Note, however, that German particle verbs like *abziehen* ('remove/subtract') and *aushalten* ['endure,' 'financially support (a lover)'] are not only longer than their respective verb bases *ziehen* ('to pull') and *halten* ('to hold') but also notoriously ambiguous.
- 11 This narrative strategy recalls the dialectical procedure of romantic irony (Kierkegaard)—a remark by which I do not wish to imply that *Enduring Love* is comparable with Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799), upon which Kierkegaard comments in detail.
- 12 The book cover of the first English edition shows the silhouette of a man and his reverted reflection, which illustrates the central motif of ambiguity. The Tübingen bookstore Osiander apparently had difficulties with the ambiguous title, in that it recorded the title as *The children's act* on its price tag. In the German version of the motto, the term *Children Act* is treated as a proper name and left untranslated.
- 13 Tony remembers the surging billow at the mouth of the Severn here, where he and Veronica had once seen how the river first gushes out into the sea and then, pushed by a wave, flows back into its bed in the inverse direction. The quoted passage can also be seen as an allusion to the (mathematical/physical) reading of *sense* (29e).
- 14 After the book's appearance, there were many discussions in the British blogger scene about how to understand the book's ending. Enlightenment is offered by *AndrewBlackman.net* who suggests that Arian had an affair with Veronica's mother.
- 15 The titles chosen for the German translations weaken the ambiguity to a certain degree: *Liebeswahn* does not preserve the structural ambiguity of *Enduring Love*; *Kindeswohl*, similarly, does not imply taking action as *The Children Act* does, and *Vom Ende einer Geschichte* neglects the notion(s) of *sense* that is essential for *The Sense of an Ending*.
- 16 Grice even alludes to Kant in presenting the maxims (26).
- 17 "I sought to tell my love, love that never told can be" (Grice 35).

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2 The (Strategic) Ambiguity of Poem Titles

Matthias Bauer and Martina Bross

When it comes to the exploration of strategic uses of ambiguity, there is hardly a better object of study than the titles of poems.¹ In the first place, we may safely assume that titles which originate with the poet and have not been added by editors or publishers are an integral part of the poem. Titles added by others serve a purpose, but they are less likely to be strategically ambiguous with regard to the poems themselves.² Moreover, the obvious context dependency of titles makes them a rewarding subject for the exploration of ambiguity: they reveal specific conditions under which polysemy and homonymy in particular may be activated so as to trigger ambiguity. We will show this by close readings of poems with ambiguous titles from different periods. In order to get an idea of title-text relationships and ambiguity, we will focus on a systematic rather than historical perspective, even though we are aware that the uses and functions of titles change over time. Our analysis will enable us to discern different functions of ambiguous titles and the strategic uses of ambiguity they reveal. In particular, we will suggest that ambiguous poem titles have been frequently used strategically to illustrate that language is a source of knowledge about the world and the *res*, the subject matter with which a poem is concerned and which is flagged by the title. The means by which this insight is brought about is ambiguity and—as we will show—an economic use of language. Because most titles of individual poems are short, economy is expedient: for the poet, it means to identify the word (or few words) which is most meaningful in conjunction with the poem itself. Our starting point is Langston Hughes's 1926 poem "Cross."

Langston Hughes, "Cross" (1926)

My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.

If ever I cursed my black old mother
 And wished she were in hell,
 I'm sorry for that evil wish
 And now I wish her well.

My old man died in a fine big house.
 My ma died in a shack.
 I wonder where I'm gonna die,
 Being neither white nor black?

The title of Hughes's poem is just that one word: "cross." The *Oxford English Dictionary* has six entries for "cross" as a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, and as part of combined forms. The first two lines of Hughes's poem connect with "cross" as a noun meaning "[a]n animal or plant, or a breed or race, due to crossing" (*n.*, IV.28.b): the speaker's father is "a white old man," and the speaker's mother is black. Even though it sounds crude, this meaning of a word which is mostly used to refer to breeding animals or plants is certainly evoked.³ The title word thus stands for a concept, that of being a descendant of parents of different colours, which is examined in the poem. It can also be read as introducing the speaker of the poem as a cross. This notion of being a cross runs through the poem: the skin colours of the parents come up in every stanza.

The parents are never referred to as parents; mother and father are always spoken of separately. The difference becomes particularly poignant in the final stanza when we learn that the speaker's white father died "in a fine big house" and the black mother "died in a shack." The choice of address throughout the poem suggests a greater distance between son and father than between son and mother: the father is only addressed as "my old man" or "my white old man"—choosing a common colloquial way of referring to a father. The mother is addressed as "my old mother," "my black old mother," and finally "my ma."

A sense of division rather than unity permeates the entire poem. This culminates in the final line, in which the speaker describes himself as "being neither white nor black." If we read this as an expression of the speaker's own perception of himself, we understand that this "cross" is not a union of two things which become one: the speaker is not "[a]n instance of the mixture of the characteristics of two different individuals; something intermediate in character between two things" (*OED* "cross, *n.*" IV.28.c.). The speaker is neither one nor the other, at least in terms of skin colour, and—following from this—his social status is not clearly defined. The speaker's thoughts about the place of his death would then not limit the possible locations to the two alternatives previously mentioned, either the big house or the shack; rather, they imply that this location could be a third, still unknown alternative.

If we read the statement about the speaker “being neither white nor black” as a reference to the perception of the speaker by others, meaning that he is “neither identifiably white nor black,” the speaker’s belonging to a certain community itself can be said to be ambiguous. Depending on the social context he is in—or dies in—he would be identified as either white or black.⁴

Both parents have been the object of the speaker’s anger in the past, as is suggested in lines three and four as well as in the second stanza. This is where another meaning of “cross” comes into play, this time as an adjective meaning “[i]ll-tempered, peevish, petulant; in an irritable frame of mind, out of humour, vexed (colloquial)” (“cross, *adj.*” 5.b.). The speaker admits he may have been cross with both parents in the past, may have cursed them both, may even have wished the mother in hell. The speaker chooses the conditional here, proposing that the cursing did not occur in a specific moment which is recalled, but might have occurred in moments which are not concretely named. Again, the speaker appears to be closer to the mother, characterizing the wish for her to be in hell as evil and wishing her well now instead, while merely taking back the curses which may have been directed at the father. The idea of the mother being in hell brings up the topic of death that is continued in the final stanza.

While the two meanings of “cross” identified so far stand side by side in the first two stanzas and their connection is hinted at but not explicitly stated, the final stanza strongly suggests that they are linked: the speaker’s being cross with the parents in the past stems from being or being perceived as a cross. More particularly, it stems from the fact that being a cross is not perceived as unifying but as excluding or being excluded from either community. This feeling is so profound to the speaker that it affects his thoughts even when it comes to death. The speaker’s wondering where he may die can be read in a metaphorical way: where in life will the speaker end up—in a mansion, in a shack, or somewhere completely different? Which social space will he “cross” into? The entire poem thus points to another, metaphorical meaning of “cross”: as a symbol, the cross stands for a burden to be carried and, ultimately, for the death of Christ on the cross. This Christian context is certainly evoked by the title from the start. The poem then seems to lead in an entirely different direction, but ultimately comes back to it when the death of the speaker is brought up. The *OED* notes this metaphorical meaning of “cross”: “[a] trial or affliction viewed in its Christian aspect, to be borne for Christ’s sake with Christian patience” (“cross, *n.*” I.10.a.). This links up with the speaker’s apparently changed attitude towards the parents: he is not raging anymore about his background and the burden put upon him by it. The speaker is merely left wondering where it will lead him at the end of his life. He has accepted his cross.⁵

In Hughes’s “Cross,” the polysemous title word does not feature in the poem itself. Nevertheless, the poem unfolds several meanings of the title

word and thus shows a connection between them. Hughes's poem suggests that the polysemy of the title is not merely a coincidence or a linguistic accident. Rather, lexical ambiguity links different notions and thus makes their connection obvious. It links the *verba*, but also the *res*, the things to which they refer. The various meanings implied in Hughes's title are not mutually exclusive when applied to the poem; they have a conjunctive rather than disjunctive relationship. Ambiguity as employed by Hughes does not lead to alternative or even conflicting interpretations of the poem; it contributes to an overall interpretation which shows the speaker's perception of the reality in which he finds himself. By using ambiguity in this manner, Hughes not only reveals something about the workings of language but also about the workings of the world.

This strategic use of ambiguity also shows a playfulness on the part of the poet, a display of wit. It has to be noted that Hughes is a representative of what is referred to in literary history as the "Harlem Renaissance," a term coined by Hughes himself and deliberately evocative of the European Renaissance. It is perhaps not surprising then that this use of language, the economy of the conceit, is also found in Renaissance poetry. One of the earliest examples we can identify in which the ambiguous title is not disambiguated but serves to link different meanings which are then unfolded in the poem is George Herbert's "The Collar" from his 1633 collection *The Temple*.⁶

George Herbert, "The Collar" (1633)

The title "The Collar" on its own is polysemous. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists nine meanings for the noun "collar" in the sense of "something worn about the neck" (*OED* "collar, *n.*" I.). As Hughes does in his poem, Herbert takes up several meanings of the polysemous title word, without repeating the word itself. We cannot go into detail here, but meanings that come up in the poem include "[t]he part of a garment which encircles the neck, or forms the upper border near the neck" (*OED* "collar, *n.*" I.1.), which could be described as a "neutral" meaning, carrying neither positive nor negative connotations. A further meaning is that of "[a] band of iron or other metal fixed round the neck of prisoners, worn as a badge of servitude, etc." (*OED* "collar, *n.*" I.5.a.), which does definitely have a negative connotation. And then there is also a pun on the homophone "choler," meaning "[a]nger, rage. . ." (*OED*, "choler, *n.*" A.3).⁷

At this point, we can state our first more general observation: in poetry, polysemous titles can serve to link different themes and motifs, which are taken up and related to one another in the poem. These titles are not disambiguated by the context, that is, by the poem. Rather, they integrate the context through their ambiguity. They produce textual coherence by means of ambiguity. The poem itself is not ambiguous in the sense that it

can be interpreted in either one way or another, but it prompts the reader to reflect on the ambiguous nature of words and the things to which they refer. With the reflection on ambiguity, the ambiguous title adds another level of meaning. In both examples we have given here, the title word is not repeated in the poem, yet its various meanings are foregrounded in different parts of the poem. This is a playful way of engaging the reader, who is challenged to discover and recognize the different meanings of the title word in the poem. The game only works because of the combination of poem and title.

Titles have often been considered as paratexts, as not being part of the text itself. This assessment goes back to Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*,⁸ in which the author describes paratexts as "accompanying productions" that "surround it [the text] and extend it . . . in order to *present* it, . . . to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form . . . of a book" (1). Titles of short poems are explicitly mentioned as paratexts in his chapter "Intertitles." Because we are concerned with strategically ambiguous titles in this chapter, we should point out that Genette also touches upon the strategic nature of paratexts and, thus, titles when he states that paratexts are a "place of a pragmatics and of a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that . . . is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (2). Genette's focus, however, is more on the relationship of paratexts with sender and addressee, their functions for these, and on what to do with a text to which they are extrinsic than on the textual strategies which bind a paratext to the text. What we want to explore and emphasize is something Genette touches upon when he states that "a good many internal titles [such as poem titles within a collection] make sense only to an addressee who is already involved in reading the text, for these internal titles presume familiarity with everything that has preceded" (294). He goes on to specify that intertitles or internal titles can be anaphoric as well as cataphoric and, thus, present a puzzle to readers (cf. 294n1). We want to stress that strategically ambiguous poem titles have a much closer and far more complex relationship to the poems they precede than can be grasped by Genette's framework of paratexts.

From our observations so far, we can draw a link to the notion of poetic economy. As an adaptation of means to an end, poetic economy entails that every part of a literary work is integral to the whole. If one part is missing, the work is altered.⁹ The ambiguous poem titles discussed so far poignantly illustrate this notion. With both Hughes's "Cross" and Herbert's "The Collar," the title is part of the world represented in the poem.¹⁰ If the title is left out, the represented world is a different one and the effects described previously are not created. Economy also comes into play in the sense of efficiency: the chosen examples show how several layers of meaning are integrated by one word only.

Robert Frost, “Design” (1922)

The Renaissance traditions we have seen resurfacing in the wordplay and wit of Hughes’s poem also appear in Robert Frost’s 1922 poem “Design.” In this case, they become manifest in the form of the poem. It begins as a Petrarchan sonnet with two quatrains and embracing rhymes. The following sestet continues the Petrarchan rhyme scheme but ends in a rhyming couplet, typical of the Shakespearean sonnet.

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
 On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
 Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
 Assorted characters of death and blight
 Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
 Like the ingredients of a witches’ broth—
 A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
 And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,
 The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
 What brought the kindred spider to that height,
 Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
 What but design of darkness to appall?—
 If design govern in a thing so small.

In the first quatrain, a “design” in the sense of “[t]he completed product or result of . . . [a] process [of drawing or sketching]; the arrangement of features in something planned or produced according to aesthetic or functional criteria” (*OED n.* II.7.b.) is described. The speaker recalls a “design” witnessed in nature: the arrangement consists of a white spider, sitting on a white flower, holding up a white moth. The more specific sense of “design” as a drawing is also evoked by the surface, the white flower, on which the elements are arranged as on a white sheet of paper. The scene is described in vivid terms: the spider is “dimpled,” “fat and white.”¹¹ It holds up the moth, which looks like “a white piece of rigid satin cloth.” The texture of the different elements is mentioned much like different textures coming together in a modernist piece of art:¹² the spider is compared to a snowdrop, the flower to a froth, and the moth to a paper kite.

A second meaning of the title word is also present in this description in the second quatrain, namely, that of “design” as the “[f]ulfilment of a pre-arranged plan; adaptation of means to an end” (*OED* I.5). The features of the scene are said to be “[m]ixed ready to begin the morning right/Like the

ingredients of a witches' broth." The shift after the second quatrain then brings this meaning of "design" to the foreground. The speaker asks how it came about that the flower—a heal-all which is usually blue—is white in this case and that the white spider has climbed up and the moth—also white—has ended up there. What can still be considered as coincidence in the first two quatrains is now described as the outcome of a plan of some force that brought the spider and steered the moth to where they ended up. The poem does not explicitly mention a divine agency, even though the *OED* notes that "design" in the sense of "[f]ulfilment of a prearranged plan; adaptation of means to an end" occurs "[c]hiefly in theological contexts, with reference to the belief that the universe manifests divine forethought and testifies to an intelligent creator, usually identified as God" (*OED* I.5.).

The speaker of the poem answers the question about the force whose "design" becomes manifest in the "design" with another question in the first line of the final couplet: "What but design of darkness to appall?" One difference between Hughes's "Cross" and Frost's "Design" lies in the fact that the ambiguous title word is used in the rhyming couplet in Frost's poem, whereas the title word never appears in Hughes's (or Herbert's) poem. Still, the meaning of the title word is not disambiguated by the context in Frost's final couplet. The notion of design as an "arrangement of features," which is dominant in the first two quatrains, is taken up with the words "darkness" and "appall." "Appall" is a spelling variant of the verb "appal" or "appale"—both similar in meaning. One obsolete meaning of "appal" as a transitive verb listed in the *OED* is that of "to make pale, to cause to lose or change colour" ("appal, *v.*" II.†5.). Similarly, "appale" means "to make pale, to dim" ("appale, *v.*" †4.). Some force displaying a design of darkness has made the moth and the flower colourless.¹³

The second meaning of "design," which is linked to the speaker's reflection on the nature of the force which has led to the arrangement, comes into play when we apply the verb "appall" to the speaker who beholds and reacts to the arrangement of moth, spider, and flower. Another meaning of "appall" is "[t]o cause the heart of (anyone) to sink; to dismay, shock, discomfit, terrify" ("appal, *v.*" II.8.a.). The *OED* lists examples up to the nineteenth century for this meaning of to "appal." The verb "appale" even combines both meanings: "to make pale with fear, to dismay" ("appale, *v.*" †6.). The arrangement dismays or even terrifies the speaker by making him reflect on the "design of darkness," which can be attributed to a force which brings about scenes like the one described here in nature.

Thus, another meaning of "design" is introduced through the use of the words "darkness" and "appall": that of "design" as a "stratagem or scheme involving cunning or hypocrisy" (*OED* I.2.b.). The stratagem or

scheme has brought moth, flower, and spider together, and the speaker, recognizing a scheme in the arrangement, is made to realize that a higher force with a “design of darkness” is at work. Together with the meaning mentioned previously, that of “design” as the “[f]ulfilment of a prearranged plan” which may be seen to manifest divine forethought and testify to an intelligent creator, this raises questions about the nature of this creator who “appales” the moth and the flower and thus creates a design which likewise “appalls” the viewer. Accordingly, the question “What but design of darkness to appall?” even though it is a rhetorical one in giving its own answer, does not offer an unambiguous explanation. Suggestions of a benevolently divine design are called into doubt by the supplement “of darkness,” which is reminiscent of Joseph Conrad’s notoriously ambiguous title *Heart of Darkness*.¹⁴ If anything, the design is paradoxical, as paleness is the outcome of darkness.

The final line is ambiguous, too: “If design govern in a thing so small.” One reading would be, “If we believe that a divine force governs in such a small arrangement found in nature, we have to reflect on the nature of this force, on its possibly dark nature.” “Govern” is used as an intransitive verb in the sense of “[t]o hold sway; to prevail” (*v.* 5.d.) here. Another reading would be that the final line does not reject the notion that there is a design in the sense of forethought or a prearranged plan in nature; instead, it questions whether this force becomes manifest in such a small scene as the one described in the poem. If we assume that the force does not manifest itself in this design, we cannot draw conclusions about the “dark” nature of the design from an observation of this scene.¹⁵

Frost’s poem underlines our observations about ambiguous titles and their function of integrating different meanings and prompting a reflection about possible links between various meanings of the same word. The difference is that the title word is repeated several times at the end of Frost’s poem. This does not resolve the ambiguity, because several meanings of the word are present in those final lines. Rather, the title and the final lines of the poem create a frame which highlights the ambiguity. Because the poem moves from one meaning of the title word to the next and then brings up all of the meanings at the end, the ambiguous title also plays with the expectation of the reader. The ambiguous title word very economically ensures that the reader will focus on its various meanings from the start and is still surprised at the end by the scale of the reflection triggered by it. Coming back to the notion of conjunction and disjunction, we find that Frost’s poem works with both categories. While “design” can be interpreted conjunctively as a pattern and as a plan, the polysemy of “design” as a thoughtful plan and an evil scheme leads to a disjunctive reading of the poem. Its final line leaves open whether the “design” observed by the

speaker can give us a glimpse of the “design” by a creative spirit and, if so, whether it is a benevolent or an evil one.

Carol Ann Duffy, “Last Post” (2009)

Our next examples belong to another category of poems for which the title-text relationship is crucial. In these examples, the ambiguous title makes the poem itself ambiguous. Our first example is Carol Ann Duffy’s 2009 poem “Last Post.”

*In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

If poetry could tell it backwards, true, begin
that moment shrapnel scythed you to the stinking mud . . .
but you get up, amazed, watch bled bad blood
run upwards from the slime into its wounds;
see lines and lines of British boys rewind
back to their trenches, kiss the photographs from home—
mothers, sweethearts, sisters, younger brothers
not entering the story now
to die and die and die.
Dulce—No—Decorum—No—Pro patria mori.
You walk away.

. . .

You lean against a wall,
your several million lives still possible
and crammed with love, work, children, talent, English beer, good food.
You see the poet tuck away his pocket-book and smile.

If poetry could truly tell it backwards,
then it would.

Duffy’s poem is the last item in her anthology *1914: Poetry Remembers*, which was published in 2014 to remember both World War I and the poetry to which it gave rise. In this collection, a selection of WWI poetry is paired with a response by a contemporary poet written expressly for this purpose. The title “Last Post” can therefore be read as a reference to the collection itself, which it concludes. “Last Post” is then a metaphorical use of the word for “[a] message displayed on a mailing list, newsgroup, or other

online forum” (*OED* “post, *n.*” 12.)—the prevalent 2014 meaning—or “[a] single collection or delivery of mail” (*OED* “post, *n.*” 5.)—the prevalent 1914 meaning. But, as Angelika Zirker has shown in her discussion of the poem and the collection, the title has several other meanings as well. In the context of war, the last post refers to “[t]he place where a soldier, guard, etc., is stationed when on duty” (*OED* “post, *n.*” 2.a.), as well as to “the second of two bugle calls giving notice of the hour for retiring at night, traditionally also sounded at military funerals and services of remembrance” (*OED* “last” compounds). The latter part of this definition points to the metaphorical sense of *last post* as “indicating that something which is already failing is about to cease to exist” (*OED* “last” compounds).

As in our first examples, there is a short, ambiguous title, which is related to the body of the poem itself. Still, the case is different. For whereas in “Cross,” “The Collar,” and “Design” the title binds together the different meanings of the word mentioned or evoked *in* the poem, the title of Duffy’s poem refers to the ambiguous meaning and status *of* the poem. Apart from being the last item in the anthology, the poem could be regarded as the last message of a soldier, or it could describe the last soldier on his post, the last time a soldier is on duty, the call to end the time of duty, or the signal for a service of remembrance. This last meaning comes close to the first, for the function of the collection as a whole can be seen as such a service: *Poetry Remembers*. If we consider the metaphorical sense of *last post* as “indicating that something which is already failing is about to cease to exist,” it may refer to the utopian vision the poem unfolds: soldiers rising up again from the earth, blood flowing back into their bodies, their returning home “[f]reshly alive” (20). In this rewinding of events, the poem reverts the conventional meaning of *last post* as the last station before destruction and shows the killing and dying of the soldiers to be the action and event that will cease to exist. If we thus read the poem as a visionary vituperation of death itself—in the tradition marked, for example, by John Donne’s “And death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!”—a specific interaction with the title takes place. It is not only the ambiguous title which, in each of its meanings, indicates a meaning of the poem as a whole; it is also the poem that gives at least one of the meanings of its title its specific nuance: it may indicate the end of something that deserves to fail more than anything else.

When we further compare this title to the others we have discussed, we notice that it is more clearly metapoetic than the others: while each of the other titles can be *used* to talk *about* the poem (e.g. in statements such as “‘Design’ is a poem by Robert Frost”), this title demands to be *read as talking about* the poem. For this very same reason, however, it is not entirely detached from the body of the poem (like titles such as “Sonnet

58” are). Its ambiguity demands that we regard the title not only as a paratextual label or identifier of the poem but also as part of the communication offered by the poem. It makes us reflect on what kind of utterance the poem presents and what it is about. Accordingly, the economy of the title is similar to what we have seen in our previous examples (in “Cross” in particular): the title is necessary in order to convey and confirm the range of meanings involved, and it is efficient in doing so by using only a couple of words. Duffy’s poem thus participates in both categories we proposed earlier (but in a way different from Frost’s “Design”): the poem is disjunctively ambiguous in that the reader can identify alternative communicative situations, depending on how the lexical ambiguity of the title is resolved. It is conjunctively ambiguous in that these communicative situations can all be integrated into a reading of the poem as imagining a past or future in which war ceases to exist.

Christina Rossetti, “Remember” (1849/1862)

Another example of poems which are made ambiguous by the title word is Christina Rossetti’s mid-nineteenth-century sonnet “Remember.” In this case, however, the ambiguity of the title is pragmatic rather than lexical.

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann’d:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

The title word is repeated several times throughout the poem. However, the ambiguity of the title and, thus, of the poem does not lie in the different meanings of the title word. Whether “Remember” means “[t]o retain in or recall to the memory; to keep in mind, recollect (a thing, person, fact, event, saying, etc.)” (*OED* I.4.a.) or “[t]o think of, recall the memory of (a person) with some kind of feeling or intention” (*OED* I.5.a.), there

are only slight nuances in meaning in the context provided by the poem. The ambiguity rather lies in the fact that the communicative situation of the title is ambiguous. Who is the addressee of the title, and who or what is the object of remembrance?

The first two quatrains both start with the imperative “Remember me.” The speaker of the poem asks the addressee of the poem to remember them after they have died. At least this is the reading we will get if we assume the addressee of the title to be the internal addressee, that is, the addressee within the world of the poem. If we follow this reading and link the imperative “Remember me” in the first two quatrains back to the title, the title can be read as an elliptical imperative, as a request from the speaker to the internal addressee to remember the speaker. Even while Rossetti’s title can thus be integrated into the communication within the poem, it also fulfils one of the main functions of a title as paratext: it announces the poem’s theme(s)—in this case remembrance of a person. If we follow this reading, we might even see Rossetti’s choice of title as merely following the convention of using the first word or words of a poem as a title to identify the poem in a collection—particularly in the table of contents.

There is, however, more to the poem and its title. With the sestet comes a shift in the speaker’s instructions to the addressee, and this also changes the way in which we can read the title and the communicative situation in which it occurs. The speaker now envisions a situation in which the addressee forgets them for a while, then remembers them and realizes they had forgotten them. The speaker tells the addressee not to grieve in this instance: “Better by far you should forget and smile/Than you should remember and be sad.” It is not clear whether remembering or forgetting is what is required of the addressee at the end of Rossetti’s poem, or whether forgetting the speaker rather than grieving for them *is* the remembrance that the speaker asks for. If “a vestige of the thoughts” the speaker had in life remains after death, the addressee should rather forget and smile. In this context, the title could also mean “Remember this,” that is, “Remember what I am telling you now in the following lines.” It could even be the poem speaking: “Remember me—the poem.” The addressee of the title is then an external addressee, someone who comes upon the poem as a poem. The object of remembrance is the poem, which instructs the addressee rather to forget and not grieve than to remember and be sad. This gives a metatextual meaning to the title similar to that of “Last Post.” And, as with Duffy’s poem, the title in this scenario refers to the poem as a whole. It is the key to understanding the poem, not because it announces a theme but because it prompts the reader to question who or what the object of remembrance is.

The fact that the title is “Remember” and not “Remember me” strongly suggests that Rossetti is playing on the convention of using the poem’s first word as a title, but at the same time is employing the pragmatic ambiguity created by this title to establish multiple possible communicative situations.

Of course, even the title “Remember me” would make all of the communicative situations described earlier possible, if we assume that it could be either the speaker or the poem itself speaking. But we would probably not be prompted to question whether there is more than convention to the title if it were not for the discrepancy between the title—“Remember”—and the beginning of the first line—“Remember me.”¹⁶ Rossetti’s poetry has been described as seemingly simple on the surface, with more complex layers underneath which can be uncovered when the reader pays attention to the poet’s textual strategies. Margaret Reynolds, for example, calls the fact that the title is “Remember” and not “Remember me” a “Rossetti trick” (32) that leaves the object of remembrance unclear and thus creates a “doubleness” (26–27), which can lead the reader to alternative and opposing interpretations of the poem. Reynolds proposes that in addition to the “nice version” (32) of the poem, in which a speaker asks an internal addressee to not remember them because it might make the reader sad, there is also the possibility of a reading in which the speaker addresses a “bullying” and “lecturing” listener (33) and advises them to not remember them when they are “gone away” because their relationship has left the speaker with anger and resentment (cf. 33). Reynolds thus locates the doubleness of Rossetti’s poem caused by the ambiguous title on the internal level of communication and does not consider the ambiguous pragmatic dimension of the title. She finds that the answer to the question “remember . . . what? . . . looks like ‘me’” (32). Following Reynolds’s reading of the poem, this answer would only be correct for the ‘nice’ version, in which the speaker asks the addressee to remember them. For the alternative, ‘resentful’ reading proposed by Reynolds, the title cannot be seen as elliptical unless we consider the pragmatic ambiguity and the possibility that it is the poem speaking—“Remember me”—and not the internal speaker. At any rate, the assumption that the “Rossetti trick” is even more complex than Reynolds proposes does not negate Reynolds’s “double” reading. Even if we assume that the object of remembrance is the poem, Reynolds’s alternative reading would still be possible. Coming back to the notion of conjunctive and disjunctive relationships between different meanings of ambiguous titles, we are again confronted with a combination of conjunctive and disjunctive readings. While the ‘nice’ and ‘resentful’ readings made possible by the pragmatic ambiguity of the title are mutually exclusive, we can still interpret “Remember” as being uttered by an internal speaker as well as by an external one (e.g. the poem itself).

Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Spring and Fall” (1880/1893)

In our last example, strategic ambiguity and economy play yet another role in the relationship between title and poem. In this case, the title is not obviously ambiguous as in our other examples. This may have to do with

the collocation: “Spring and Fall,” the title of the poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins we have chosen, primarily evokes the notion of the seasons. Both words alone are more clearly ambiguous than the combination. In “Design,” for example, the two most obvious meanings are equally balanced. But once we have read the poem, a reflection on the meaning of the title sets in.

To a young child

Margaret, are you grieving
 Over Goldengrove unleaving?
 Leaves like the things of man, you
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
 Ah! as the heart grows older
 It will come to such sights colder
 By and by, nor spare a sigh
 Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
 And yet you will weep and know why.
 Now no matter, child, the name:
 Sorrow’s springs are the same.
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
 What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
 It is the blight man was born for,
 It is Margaret you mourn for.

In spite of the fact that, instead of “autumn,” Hopkins chooses the more ambiguous term “fall,”¹⁷ we begin reading the poem with a clear sense of what the title means. The reference to “Goldengrove unleaving” or losing its leaves in line two is an obvious reference to the season. The child Margaret is asked whether she grieves over the falling of the leaves. After the second line, however, the poem moves away from the image of autumn; a literal spring season is never evoked—only the young child with her “fresh thoughts” in the metaphorical spring of her life. The reference to the season of the year thus gives way to a reflection on life progressing to its autumn “as the heart grows older” (5). While we started by regarding the title as unambiguously referring to the seasons, the reading of the poem makes us go back to it and consider its metaphorical meaning as well. This may, but need not, be considered ambiguous, especially because the names for the two seasons are metonymical anyway (the springing and falling of leaves). At any rate, however, there is an extension of the meaning of the title triggered by the body of the poem. It provides a context in which the metaphorical meaning concerning the phases of human life is activated. By what is said in line ten, the meaning of the title moves even further beyond the names of the two seasons: “Sorrow’s springs are the

same.” The meaning of spring here is *source*, and it is used in such a way as to turn around the positive connotations of spring as a source of water (going well with the image of the child and her “fresh thoughts”). *Spring* in this non-seasonal meaning is introduced as “Sorrow’s springs”; thus, it is not really opposed to *fall* and the image of decay, in which “worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie” (8).

Applied to the title, “Spring” now adopts the additional meaning *source*, and because the poem asks about the origins of the decay for which Margaret will weep, “Spring” and “Fall” are no longer opposites but are closely linked. The reinterpretation of the title is enhanced by the penultimate line, “It is the blight man was born for” (14). The origin of grief lies in humankind itself, its fallen state. As Catherine Philips puts it, children like Margaret “will understand that the source of this sorrow is their own mortality, which since the Fall all men must experience (Genesis 3:19)” (365). The “fall” of the title is not only autumn then but the fall of humankind, which is the spring of its sorrow. Spring and fall are now neither opposites nor just closely linked; they become identical. The title is thus increasingly ambiguated by the poem and achieves in retrospect the quality of the titles outlined in our first examples: binding together the different meanings of “spring” and “fall” unfolding in the poem itself.

The relation between the different meanings of the title revealed in the course of the poem is again both conjunctive and disjunctive: the seasonal meaning of *spring* and *fall* can well be combined with the meaning of freshness and decay, but it cannot be combined with the meaning of “Spring and Fall” that marks identity rather than contrast. This coexistence of a conjunctive and a disjunctive reading of the meanings of the title contributes to the overall meaning of the poem. On the one hand, there is the integration of the human course of life with nature, a course from original wholeness to decomposition. On the other hand, there is the emphasis on the growing insight that the sorrow has already been there, in a fall that is the source of human sorrow.

Let us briefly sum up our observations concerning the ambiguity and economy of titles or, rather, of title-text relationships in poetry. We have restricted ourselves to titles that are strategically ambiguous, which means that they are not exclusively paratextual. In this respect, they are similar to an author’s self-annotations which, as Miriam Lahrson has recently shown, also transcend a purely paratextual status by means of ambiguity. Any ambiguous poem title therefore tends to be twice ambiguous: on the one hand, there is the ambiguity of the expression itself (mostly some form of lexical ambiguity), and, on the other hand, there is the pragmatic ambiguity of a title’s status and function (paratextual and textual).

As to the first, the ambiguous expression that serves as a title can make a contribution to ambiguity research, for we have noticed a curious phenomenon. The standard case that an expression is made ambiguous by context

is by no means the only or (as we assume) the most prevalent one when it comes to poem titles. Hopkins's "Spring and Fall" is the example we have presented, and we had to look for a while to find it. This is relevant to the economy of language in general, in which expressions may economically have several meanings without, as a rule, creating major problems in communication because context disambiguates them or, as frequently in literature, clearly triggers ambiguity. What we have noticed with ambiguous poem titles and their context, that is, the poems themselves, is that the opposite case is at least as frequent: an expression may ambiguatize its context. This is what we have seen especially in "Cross" and in "Last Post": either what is said in the poem or the poem itself may become ambiguous by means of the polysemy and homonymy of its title.

As to the second, pragmatic kind of ambiguity of the poem title, its ambiguous status, and its function, there is not just the question of whether the title exclusively serves as a paratextual identifier or is part of the discourse of the poem itself. Innocent-looking paratextual labels such as "Sonnet 60" may turn out to participate in the latter when we start reading and realize (in Shakespeare's "Sonnet 60") that it is about "[h]our minutes." But even when we realize that an ambiguous title influences and is influenced by the body of the poem, and is therefore not purely paratextual, its status may be ambiguous in a further way: the title may be part of the utterance of the poem, or it may stand outside the poem but still be part of a fictional discourse to which the poem belongs. Rossetti's "Remember" is such a case: the title may just be a reduplication of the first word of the poem and therefore reinforce the speaker's wish to be remembered ("Remember me"), or it may refer to what the speaker says in the poem as a whole, a message that its addressee is to remember. The title then forms a sort of frame narrative that is still part of the fiction. Of course, we may also read this as an exhortation to remember what the poem says, or to learn the poem by heart, which is the external, non-fictional level of communication. Moreover, the purely paratextual practice of labelling a poem by its first word also works here.

Finally, what have we observed about economy? As we have just seen, Rossetti very economically establishes a frame narrative by means of one word only. This evokes the second notion of poetic economy mentioned earlier, and we can see great efficiency (or *Verdichtung*) in all of our examples: several meanings *and* functions *and* levels of communication are expressed and addressed by one word or a couple of words. It may irritate us that this poetic economy is quite different from the economy of language just mentioned, in which multiple meanings of an expression are economical because they are made irrelevant by context. Language can "save" on expressions because there are other ways of preventing misunderstanding. We may say that this very economy of language can be used by poetry to do the exact opposite: to say many things at once when misunderstanding

would consist in realizing one meaning only. It is only in very particular forms of utterances—for instance in user manuals, where communication works best when it is unambiguous. Between human beings it is otherwise, and poetry is communication between human beings (as Wordsworth and others never tired of reminding us). But the poem titles also tell us something about economy in the first sense mentioned earlier: the title must not be missed if the poem is to be what it is. The title is required for its identity and wholeness. As we have seen, the ambiguous title of a poem frequently creates its coherence. This should trigger further reflections on textual coherence, which need not be just linear, as established by a series of questions under discussion. The ambiguous title is an example of (poetic) economy also because it is not dependent on linearity: it indicates all at once which issues raised by the poem belong together. This non-linearity (as an aspect of economy), we propose, also depends on the ambiguity of the title, showing once more that ambiguity and economy form a close alliance.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426).
- 2 Several studies on the history of the title of the English short poem show that the appearance of titles is closely linked to commercial circulation of manuscripts and printed collections. John Mulvihill cites examples of manuscripts as early as the first part of the fourteenth century and the fifteenth century in which titles were apparently added to short poems for commercial publication (cf. 192, 193–195). These titles were strategically added by publishers and scribes to “attract . . . consumption” and did not originate with the poets (193). This practice of adding titles continued with the increase in the number of anthologies published after the printing press had been invented. In *The Title to the Poem*, Anne Ferry argues that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was generally assumed that titles for short poems did not originate with the poets themselves (cf. 11–17). The phrasing of titles often made it clear that someone else had added them to present the poems to the public (cf. 11–12). Ferry points out that giving a poem a title would imply that it was meant to be presented to the public—something “social position forbade” for “courtly and gentlemanly amateurs” (14). These poets thus did not give titles to their poems as the surviving manuscripts show (cf. 14). Poets who did have a hand in publishing their poems even copied the phrasing of editorial titles to make it look like someone else was presenting their work to the public (cf. 15–17). This suggests that even poets who gave titles to their poems frequently did so with a view to their function for publication rather than their function for the textual coherence of the poem. An exception to this is George Herbert, see endnotes to follow; also see Bauer, “Herbert’s Titles, Commonplace Books, and the Poetics of Use” and “‘A Title Strange, Yet True,’” as well as Ferry, “Titles in George Herbert’s ‘little book.’” As poets start to take over the practice of titling their poems, the expectation that a title originates with the poet begins to take hold at the beginning of the eighteenth century, even though this was, and still is of course, not always a correct assumption (cf. Ferry, *The Title to the Poem* 17–18).

- 3 The *OED* cites several usages of the word “cross” in the context of breeding animals or plants, and it cites one example in which “a cross” refers to people with more than one ethnic background from the late nineteenth century.
- 4 Hughes enquires into the link between race, home, and class not only in his poetry. As Eric King Watts points out, these themes and their influence on a new black aesthetic are also at the centre of Hughes’s non-fiction writing (cf. Watts 97–98, 100–101, 111–112). In his 1926 essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes criticizes black middle-class attempts to imitate a white middle-class lifestyle (cf. Hughes, “The Negro Artist” 55–56) and contends that black poets and artists emerging from these homes and social spaces could not and did not aspire to contribute to a black culture and aesthetic. In order to do so, an artist would have to embrace black culture like “the low-down folks, the so-called common element” Hughes praises for not caring “whether they are like white folks or anybody else” (56). For Hughes’s speaker in “Cross,” the issue is not that of wanting to be part of a community he does not belong to but that of not knowing to which race, class, or type of home he is meant to belong.
- 5 There is surely also a play on the near-homophones “cross” and “curse,” which is also found in metaphysical poetry, for example, in George Herbert’s “A Dialogue-Antheme.” For an analysis of the poem and a discussion of Herbert’s use of the words “cross” and “curse,” see Leimberg.
- 6 A direct parallel is George Herbert’s “The Crosse,” which evokes not only the crucifixion but also the “crosse actions” (l. 32) experienced by the speaker; see Bauer, “A Title Strange, Yet True” 106–107.
- 7 On the title of this poem, see, e.g., Ferry, *The Title to the Poem* 198 and Roberts, who stresses that “Herbert is one of the first poets to use the titles of his poems as an integral part of their meaning” (197).
- 8 The original French version was published in 1987; the English translation was published ten years later in 1997. A first translation of Genette’s introduction appeared in *New Literary History* in 1991. In *Paratexts*, Genette includes two chapters on titles. While he neither explicitly excludes poem titles nor includes any examples for titles of short poems in his chapter on “Titles,” i.e., “general titles” (103) found on the title pages of books, he explicitly discusses poem titles in his chapter “Intertitles” (cf. 312–315) or on “internal titles” (294). Genette explains at the beginning of his chapter “Intertitles” that “intertitles . . . are titles, and as such they invite the same kinds of remarks I made earlier [on general titles]” (294). Among the characteristics of general titles as paratexts which also apply to poem titles are the fact that they may have been added by different types of senders (e.g. authors, publishers, or translators) and the fact that they may be addressed to the public (e.g. someone who sees the title in a table of contents but does not read the poem) or to a reader, who reads not only the title but also the text (cf. 73–75). Our focus in this chapter is on titles for which the sender can be identified as the poet and the addressee as the reader.
- 9 On the notion of poetic economy, see Bross, *Versions of Hamlet: Poetic Economy on Page and Stage*, and Bauer, “Poetic Economy: Ellipsis and Redundancy in Literature.”
- 10 This also supports our view that strategically ambiguous poem titles cannot be adequately characterized by the notion of paratext, because paratexts have been considered to “not [be] part of the represented world of fiction” (Maclean 274).
- 11 Timmerman notes that the adjectives used by Frost “evoke an altogether pleasant image . . . until the adjectives collide into the noun ‘spider,’ an object that most people react to with a fair degree of scorn, if not abhorrence” (31).

- 12 See, e.g., Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematist Composition: White on White*, 1918. www.moma.org/collection/works/80385
- 13 Yet another obsolete meaning of both “appal” and “appale” may refer to the moth—that of “to dim, weaken, enfeeble, impair” (“appal,” *v.* II.†6.; also see † “appale,” *v.* 5.).
- 14 For an explanation of the meanings involved, see Zhao, especially 159–160.
- 15 Timmerman sees in “Design” “[a]n example of Frost’s teasingly deliberate ambiguity” (30). For him, Frost’s penultimate line can be paraphrased as, “If a design is revealed in this event, is it only a design of darkness to appall or horrify us?” (32). “The consequence then,” Timmerman continues, “is that life is completely random, and we too are thrown at the mercy of freakish events . . . that horrify us with their pure randomness” (32). What Timmerman ignores with this reading is that it is only the next line, the final line of the poem, which asks the question of whether a design becomes apparent in the scene described at all. As we have argued previously, the prevalent meaning of “design” in the sestet before the final line is clearly that of “[f]ulfillment of a prearranged plan; adaptation of means to an end” (*OED* I.5). The poem indicates that the “design” which has created the “design” is one of “darkness to appall,” before the ambiguous final line calls into question whether such a design becomes manifest in the scene described. Furthermore, the title word “design” and its meanings that unfold in the poem suggest anything but the notion of “pure randomness.” Timmerman acknowledges the ambiguous final line of the poem and also comes to the conclusion that the poem leaves open whether a “design inheres in these apparently minor events” and that this has implications for how we see “both human and cosmic events” (33). Timmerman proposes that Frost may actually provide an answer to the question of the final line: “Ironically, the reader has just observed how powerfully design can govern in a thing so small as a sonnet” (33).
- 16 The title “Remember” could also prompt a contemporary reader to assume that what is to follow—i.e., the poem and the information conveyed in it—and not the speaker of the poem is to be remembered as memorization and learning by repetition, so-called rote learning, was still a widespread teaching method in nineteenth-century England, especially in primary schools. In her study *Education in Nineteenth-Century British Literature: Exclusion as Innovation*, Sheila Cordner shows that critical and satirical depictions of rote learning and its results can be found in literary works by Jane Austen, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, and others.
- 17 Hopkins’s choice is somewhat unusual in that it points to American usage (see *OED* “fall, *n.*” 40.):

Although common in British English in the 16th century, by the end of the 17th century *fall* had been overtaken by *autumn* as the primary term for this season. In early North American use both terms were in use, but *fall* had become established as the more usual term by the early 19th century.

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3 The Strategic Use of Ambiguous Images in Multisemiotic Textures

Nicolas Potysch

Introduction

The following reflections centre on two exemplary textures in which ambiguous images are deployed strategically within the framework of multisemiotic, communicative processes.¹ We are dealing with appellative textures that include written (linguistic) as well as pictorial elements, that is, social instruments that aim for a certain effect by using a combination of such elements. Objects belonging to this group can always be called strategic, as writing and image do not meet coincidentally but have been intentionally moulded into this (shared) form by an agent (independent of whether this agent is an individual or a collective) aiming at a particular appellative function. The ambiguous image structures incorporated in both textures entail a special form of semantic indeterminacy which seems to intuitively collide with the communicative function of multisemiotic textures. For this reason, such textures enable us to learn more about the communicative phenomenon of ambiguity or, rather, the goal-oriented creation of ambiguous or equivocal manifestations of meaning. Ambiguity here is understood as a form of semantic indeterminacy in which at least two distinctive, that is, clearly distinguishable, meanings can be assigned to an expression, resulting in at least two readings for the expression or expression complexes (texts), regardless of whether we are dealing with a word, a sentence, a gesture, or an image (see Pinkal).² Finally, the two examples are well suited to point out relationships between historical differences and continuities in diachronic synopsis.

Monosemiotic ambiguity alone, for example, of a single sentence or image containing two distinct meanings, will not be at the centre of this study; rather, we will examine the manifestations of meaning that result from the multisemiotic intertwining of semiotic resources. Put differently: the question this chapter pursues is how exactly ambiguity is applied strategically when sentences and images are combined in appellative textures, in order to generate particular and persuasive effects.

Two exemplary objects of investigation, which could not be more different as to period and topic but are nevertheless similar in the way in which they connect ambiguity and strategy, are examined to make this issue clear. The first example is taken from *Todten-Tanz/Wie derselbe in der loeblichen und weitberuehmten Statt Basel/Als ein Spiegel Menschlicher Beschaffentheit/gantz kuenstlich gemahlet zu sehen ist* (Dance of Death/As the same can be seen in the laudable and widely famous city of Basel/As a mirror of human nature/to be seen all artfully painted), which was published in 1649 by the printer's office of Johann Theodor de Bry of Frankfurt, Germany. We are dealing with a reworking of the 1621 documentation of the *Basel Dance of Death* or *Death of Basel* published by Johann Jakob Merian.³ This reference to the *memento mori* concept makes the observer aware of his/her own mortality and the consequences of his/her actions in this world (for the one to come). The example discussed constitutes the final panel of the book, including written as well as pictorial elements—a closing vignette on the right side of the final printed double-page spread. The second example is taken from the field of print advertisement: the prize-winning 2014 advertising campaign for the off-road vehicle manufacturer Jeep®, which was designed in 2013 by the Leo Burnett advertising agency as a full-page advertisement for print formats and which was featured in magazines and newspapers worldwide.⁴

In both cases, the central element of the object of investigation is an ambiguous or bivalent image which belongs to the general group of 'puzzle pictures' (*Vexierbilder*). This term (also known as reversible figures) generally describes images which enable the mental construction of two mutually distinct pictorial objects due to a certain semiotic configuration. With regard to production, the particular challenge lies in fabricating a configuration in which—in an ideal case—a double ascription of meaning is possible for each component in relation to, and consistent with, its surrounding components.

Following some theoretical reflections on the terms 'texture' and 'text' (see "*Texture/Text: Object and Concept*") and the relationship between 'ambiguity' and 'strategy' ("*Ambiguity and Strategy*"), the sample textures are contrasted and analysed especially with regard to their strategic use of visual ambiguity ("*Memento Mori—Remember That You Will Die*" and "*Jeep®—See Whatever You Want to See*"). As a last step, the results from the analysis are collated with regard to the central research question and reformulated as to their basic relevance for the strategic use of visual ambiguity in multisemiotic texts ("*Summary*").

Texture/Text: *Object and Concept*

When *texture* and *text* are mentioned here, the former refers to a material quality in the sense of semiotic facts and the latter to the cognitive processing into corresponding concepts. To a certain extent, a cultural-semiotic

concept of text is especially suited for objects of investigation that make use of resources from different semiotic systems.⁵ In such a concept, texts are characterised by the fact that they are the result of an intentional action (artefacts). Additionally, at least one function can be assigned to them within the framework of a specific social environment (instrument). Finally, a text user must be able—in reference to socially established conventions or via drawing inferences—to assign at least one meaning to a text, that is, create a globally valid macrostructure.

This definition of the term ‘text’ has the advantage of describing texts—and hence also their multivariant offer of meaning—as not exclusively generated within the semiotic system of writing. Mental contents can be *textualised* using a number of semiotic resources (language, writing, sound, image, gesture, etc.) and are thus—independent of their mediality and materiality—aggregated for a certain period of time. The ephemerality or durability of a text can therefore vary from the fraction of a second (e.g., sounds) to up to many thousands of years (e.g., cave paintings), ultimately depending on the lifespan of the chosen material substrate or the chosen storage technology. With regard to the concept of *code* used by Posner, however, a qualifying remark is in order. The process of textualisation should by no means be understood as fixing a mental content by means of a rigid relation between code and meaning. Instead, the meaning of a text depends on what the text user, in a specific culture and situation, is able to ascribe to it; text meaning is not, in the final analysis, controlled by the producer but appraised by the text user as established and *understood*. Texts and the semiotic resources that underlie them

have no set meaning in communicative processes, but merely create potential meaning that may be activated in different ways according to the context. Such a concept opens the way from the mere static concept of code to the dynamics of understanding.

(Liebert and Metten 4115)

The producer, having different groups of text users in mind, can intentionally vary the form of a text, but these interventions are based on (more or less well-grounded) speculation. Even the assumption of specific social, individual, and situational framing conditions—of contexts—and, further, the inclusion of text-accompanying texts—of co-texts—does not ensure the desired ascription of meaning by a text user (cf. Knape, *Rhetorik* 108–114). For multisemiotic texts, this problem is intensified by the fact that the combination of different semiotic resources strengthens the principle of superaddition.⁶ For multisemiotic texts, the *co-occurrence*—that is, the simultaneous, reciprocally conditioned appearance (cf. Schoonjans; Zima)—of elements from different semiotic systems is constitutive. Within the framework of communicative action (with or through texts), the

context sensitivity fundamental to all participating sign systems leads to an inextricable entanglement of semiotic resources. A change of individual elements thus always leads to a change of the text itself.⁷

As a result, the examples discussed are bisemiotic *artefacts* that, qua *instruments*, fulfil the (primary) social function of bringing about a change in or consolidation of conviction by the viewer and reader.⁸ Advertisers and producers of other kinds of appellative texts⁹ thereby configure semiotic resources with recourse to patterns they regard as socially established in order to make likely the desired change in or consolidation of attitude.¹⁰ Hence, a detailed analysis of context and co-text is required both at the production stage and when interpreting the result. This includes, moreover, a consideration of the relevant “period style” (Fix 98–99) as well as the specific circumstances of advertising or, more generally, communication.

Ambiguity and Strategy

Regarding appellative texts, the concepts ‘ambiguity’ and ‘strategy’ seem to stand in an unambiguous relation to one another: if you want to reach your communicative aim, for example, a change of attitude or a specific response, use a strategy that prevents ambiguity.¹¹ But is it so simple? And what is the relation between ‘communication’ and ‘strategy’?

Not every *communication* is strategic, nor is every *strategy* communicative. In order to clarify these relations, a conceptual differentiation is necessary, although the concept of strategy will be addressed first. The following working definition will be used:

A s[trategy] is a deliberate, more or less abstract, hierarchically and sequentially organised plan that comprises all of those mental regulators (maxims, norms, values, principles, etc.) by which an agent finds orientation when carrying out a specific sequence of actions in order to best achieve a goal despite expected resistances.

(Knappe et al. 162)¹²

The goal—that is, what is to be achieved by means of the plan—may be, for example, economic, political, or communicative. Appellative goals are a special case of the final category. Communication can hence be embedded within a strategy as a *means*. Appellative texts—understood in Brinker’s sense as “complex speech acts” (“komplexe sprachliche Handlung”; 117)—always aim for communicative goals. These can be summarised as follows:

[T]he sender lets the receiver know that s/he wants to impel her/him to adopt a certain attitude towards something (manipulation of opinion) and/or to take a certain action (influencing of behaviour).

(Brinker 117)¹³

Furthermore, two fundamental properties belong to the strategy qua plan according to Knape et al.: “S[trategies] are determined *prior to* the actions for which they are valid (projective calculation) and are *consciously* developed (intentionality)” (159).¹⁴ As part of a communicative process, printed appellative texts are in this sense to be understood as instruments for the realization of a strategy, bringing about an intended effect or exerting a planned influence on predetermined target groups (see Merten 118). For the concept of strategy, then, the following properties can be outlined:

A s[trategy] is (1) a mental construction; (2) is oriented toward a goal (or many goals), i.e. toward a desired state in the future; (3) regulates concrete action (internal perspective) or behaviour (external perspective); (4) is necessary in problematic situations of selection and decision-making and (5) is subjectively considered optimal.

(Knape et al. 162)¹⁵

Some of these defining traits—as indicated previously—also apply to ‘communication,’ for strategy and communication have in common that they *work with mental constructs*, which *regulate a concrete behaviour or action* and do so within a *process of selection*.

Intentionality is thus a necessary criterion for the concept of communication as well as for that of strategy. In the case of communication, intentionality implies a certain directionality towards the actions or products of actions of another human. Within a strategy, however, intentionality implies that a goal is consciously (intentionally) posited and that a plan for its achievement is just as consciously developed. In this sense, every strategy is indeed intentional, but not every intentionality is strategic. Even when both communicative partners are intentionally oriented toward one another, they need not pursue a conscious goal nor develop a plan in this communicative process, as, for example, the case of small talk makes clear. Plans and goals hence are necessary for every strategy, but not for intentionality. Seen from this perspective, the question of why communication is always intentional, but not always strategic, becomes answerable. Goals and plans as necessary criteria for the concept of strategy are always *consciously* conceived and not retroactively ascribed. If they were not, then they would be empty and unusable as conceptual criteria, for one would take the point of view that the goal could also be *unconscious* and *indeterminate*. In other words, one would claim, for example, that the goal of small talk is simply to pass the time, but that the participants in this communication are not conscious of that goal. Every strategy is hence *necessarily* intentionally oriented toward a *completely determinate goal*. This necessity cannot be rendered generally valid for communication, for the

intentional orientation of expressive acts toward another can take place in a vague, unconscious, or non-goal-oriented manner. The advantage of these assumptions lies in the possibility of differentiating concepts more clearly, which, in turn, has a positive impact on the analysis as one can distinguish more precisely between *intentional* and *strategic* communication. What, however, is meant here by 'communication'?

Communication is the process by which another observer is implicated, via the use of expressions, in the construction of meanings and hence in the genesis of semiotic functions in order to orient her/him toward *something* within her/his own experience. This 'something' can be a *physical* (e.g., objects or states of affairs) or *mental* object (e.g., representations or thoughts). Communication thus means the compatible use of expressions by an *ego*, which, when it is perceived by an *alter*,¹⁶ will lead to the processing of meanings and thereby to the genesis of semiotic functions. In each case, there is an orientation towards and influence on the behaviour and actions of *alter*.

The production of images always represents an act of intentional expression, for which a strategy can be supposed by the viewer, that is, wanting to draw attention to the pictorial object as such or orient the viewer towards this expression, regardless of when or under what circumstances. As soon as the image is perceived, a communicative process has been carried out in which a producer has steered an addressee towards an artefact that evokes the construction of meaning and thereby the inference of communicative sense, that is, the question of the producer's intentions and goals (cf. Blanke 131–137). The use of images—the indirect showing *with* as well as the direct showing *of* images—is always an intentional and thereby communicative act.

It can be part of the strategy underlying this communicative act to use ambiguous textures in order to achieve the communicative goal and not—as sweepingly asserted at the beginning of this chapter—to avoid them categorically. The objects of investigation which are to be analysed in the following are exemplary of such a strategic application of *visual ambiguity* in multisemiotic, appellative texts. *Ambiguous* here means that a single texture is allocated several concepts simultaneously via inference—that is, the semiotic structures in question are thus assigned more than one meaning. The visual configuration is identical, even though we are concerned with two different expressions of meaning. Though they do not differ according to their discernible characteristics, they do have different meanings. When 'puzzle pictures,' that is, pictures in which a structure *shows* more than one visual object or, rather, is *identified* and *understood* as more than one visual object, are used within the scope of appellative texts, then their ambiguity must be part of the communicative strategy.

The embedding of ambiguous text elements (no matter whether they are written or visual) can, where applicable, result in an overall ambiguous text, that is, a text that, in turn, has two distinct, exclusive meanings. The assumption that such a text is of little use in the context of appellative communication, however, will not be confirmed where the confusion of the addressee due to the undecidability inherent to ambiguity is the communicative goal and, hence, the aim of the strategy. Furthermore, there are also texts which connect ambiguous and non-ambiguous elements in such a way that they result in an overall non-ambiguous text, for which the ambiguity of the individual elements is constitutive. An analysis of the two objects of investigation briefly mentioned at the beginning shall now serve to show that the integration of an ambiguous element into a multisemiotic texture is neither a time-specific moment nor restricted to a specific text genre. In order to support this thesis, a closer look at the details is now in order.

Memento Mori—Remember That You Will Die

Merian's *Todten-Tanz* (*Dance of Death*) depicts 40 scenes in as many copper engravings in which Death invites stereotypical persons (belonging to professions such as doctor, lawyer, and merchant, but also pope, cripple, and maiden) to dance with him, that is, he fetches them. The compositions made up of written and visual elements are always set up in such a way that the speech of Death to the respective person is placed above the image, marked by an *inquit* (*Lat.* 'he said') formula—for example, "Tod zum Doctor" ("Death addressing the Doctor"; 77)—and underneath the picture is the answer of the person who is introduced via an analogous formula—"Der Doctor" ("Doctor"). There are more texts in the book, from the "Widmung an Onophrius Merian" ("Dedication to Onophrius Merian"), the "Vorrede an den Christlichen Leser" ("Preface to the Christian Reader"), and a "Beschreibung der Stadt Basel" ("Description of the Town of Basel") via a "Betrachtung der Sterblichkeit" ("Contemplations on Mortality") and "Erinnerungen von der Menschlichen Sterblichkeit" ("Mementos of Human Mortality"), to Cyprian's sermon "Daß ein Christ willig und gern leyden und sterben soll" ("That a Christian Should Suffer and Die Willingly and Readily") and a sermon of John Chrysostom, "Von Gedult und dem End dieser Welt" ("Of Patience and the Ending of this World"). The latter ends on the left half of the double page and is completed by a brief poem and the cited copperplate. Thus, Merian's *Todten-Tanz* presents itself not only as a documentation of the Basel model but as an autonomous work of art within the scope of the struggle with human vanitas.

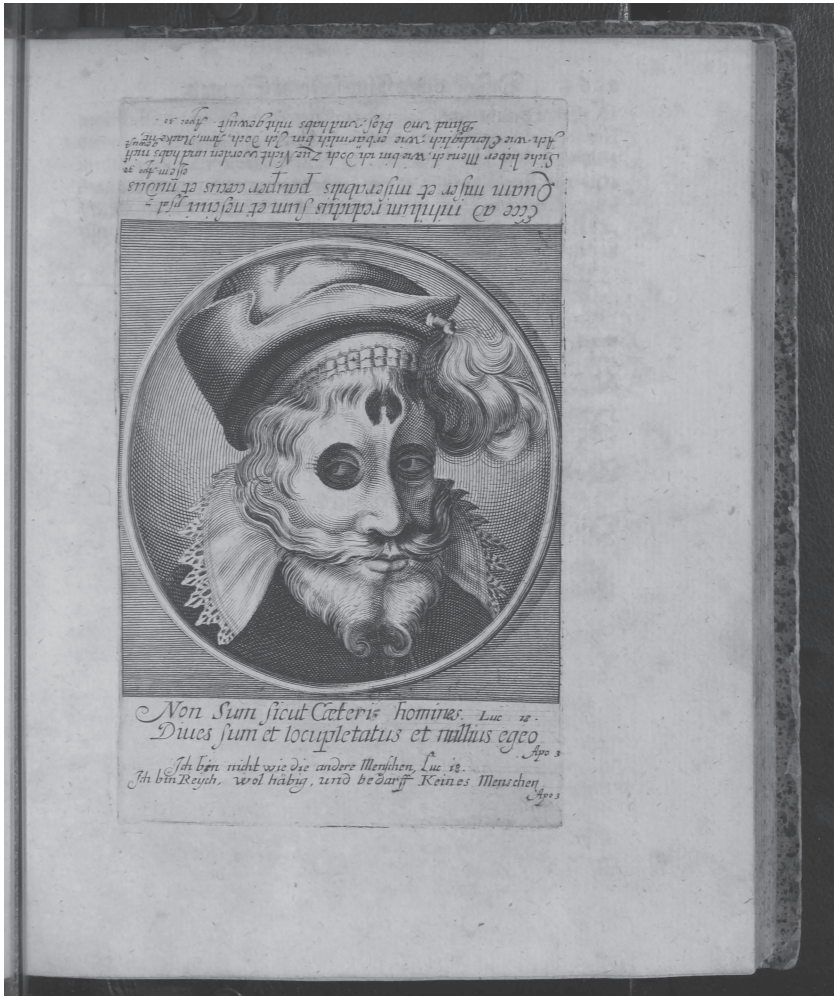


Figure 3.1 Todten-Tanz 'puzzle picture'

Source: Merian (207)

The copperplate engraving—the graphic elements are engraved, too, as the imprint of the copperplate that was created during the printing process clearly shows—consists of three elements (see Figure 3.1): in the top margin there is an inscription which, however, is initially upside down for the reader/viewer of the book and thus immediately points to the necessity

of turning it. A square pictorial texture follows, preceding another short, written texture finally completing the composition. If we hold the book in the manner established by the preceding pages of the book, the image shows the head of a wealthy man characterised by an elaborate moustache and full beard, a white ruff, and an opulent headgear with a tassel. The Latin-German written texture placed underneath it reads as follows:

Non sum sicut Caeteri homines. Luc 18.

Diues sum et locupletatus et nullius egeo. Apo 3

Ich bin nicht wie die andere Menschen. Luc 18.

Ich bin Reych, wol häbig, und bedarff Keines Menschen. Apo 3.

I am not like other people. Luke 18.

I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. Rev 3.

(Merian 207)

Compiled from quotations taken from the Gospel of Luke and the Revelation to John, this inscription reveals the self-confident and simultaneously ignorant attitude of the rich speaker, who distances himself from other people and is self-sufficient in his prosperous carelessness.

If we now want to read the writing at the top of the page, we have to rotate the book 180 degrees, through which action another image reveals itself (see Figure 3.2): a grinning skull with vestiges of hair on the naked bone which earlier constituted the beard of the rich man. The skull's row of teeth was previously perceived to be the border of the headgear, and the white ruff is now sticking out like two ghostly wings from the head. The text reads as follows:

Ecce ad nihilum redactus sum et nesciui. psal 7[2]

Quam miser et miserabilis pauper caecus et nudus essem. Apo 30.

Siche lieber Mensch, wie bin ich doch zue Nicht worden und habs nicht gewust.

Ach wie Elendiglich, wie erbärmlich bin ich doch, Arm, Nackent, Blind und blos, und habs nicht gewust. Apoc 30.

See, dear man, how I am brought to nothing and I knew it not.

Oh, how wretched, how miserable I am, poor and naked,

Blind and bare, and I knew it not. Rev 30

(Merian 207)

The merchant speaks once again, probably from the afterlife, but nothing now reminds us of his earlier boastful speech. Instead of his existence being

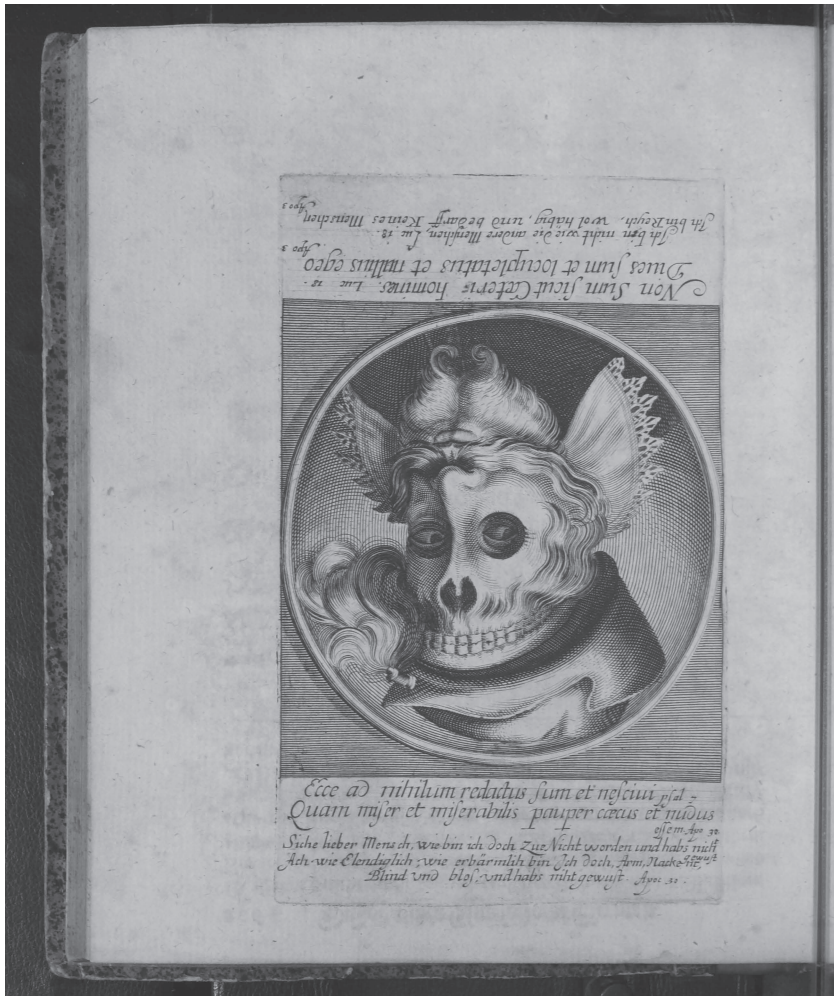


Figure 3.2 Todten-Tanz ‘puzzle picture’

Source: Merian (207)

of sole relevance to the speaker, it has now become meaningless to him. He is not “Reych, wol häbig” (“rich, and increased with goods”) anymore, but “Arm, Nackent,/Blind und blos” (“poor, naked,/Blind and bare”; Merian 207). But that is not all: what the repetition especially emphasises is his lack of knowledge or rather his ignorance: “und habts nicht gewust” (“and I knew it not”; Merian 207). Very much in the spirit of the *memento mori*,

it is neither the evanescence of the mundane that is denounced nor the loss of worldly goods, but the lack of awareness by the mortal of his own mortality. The reader/viewer of the texture that combines written and pictorial elements is supposed to act differently, as this cautionary example demonstrates to him/her how closely death and life are associated.

Next to the written elements commenting on it, the ambiguous image texture is especially connected to the preceding texts via the poem mentioned previously:

Der Pfaw stoltziert und prangt zur Stund /
 So er außbreyt sein Gfidder rund.
 Herwiderumb mit Gschrey erschrickt /
 So er sein blasse Fueß erblickt.
 Also der Mensch thaet wol und recht /
 Wann er sein Sterblichkeit bedaecht.
 Dann all sein Pracht und Stoltz verschwindt /
 Gleich wie ein Fedder von dem Windt.

The peacock struts and shows off at this hour /
 As he spreads his plumage in a circle all around.
 But then he is startled and screams /
 When he espies his bare feet.
 Likewise, man would do well and right /
 If he considered his mortality.
 Because all of his pomp and pride vanishes /
 Like a feather in the wind.

(Merian 206)

In the same way that the peacock realises his own mortality within the blink of an eye, the viewer of the double page, through rotating the book like the peacock fanning his tail, turns from the worldly endowed merchant—the *homo locupletatus*—to the grinning skull of Death—*miser et miserabilis*. The circular picture frame of the ‘puzzle picture’ portrait further emphasises the reversibility of the image in direct connection to the fan of the peacock.

“Jeep®—See Whatever You Want to See”¹⁷

In December 2013, the French advertising agency Leo Burnett published an ad campaign consisting of three texts composed of an image and writing for the American automobile brand Jeep®. The success of these advertisements, in which written and visual components are textualised in an innovative manner, is out of the question, at least with regard to the agency

responsible for them: at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival of 2014, it received the golden lion in the category ‘cars,’ silver in the category ‘illustration,’ and bronze in the category ‘art direction.’¹⁸

It is no surprise that these advertisements and their campaign experienced such a positive critical reception, as they present an innovative and successful strategic combination of image and writing. The positive appraisal relates to the pictorial texts used, the phrasing, and the typographic layout of the written texts, as well as the fusion of semiotic resources into a complete text. The central element of the advertisement is again an image that belongs to the general group of ‘puzzle pictures’ (*Vexierbilder*). The images from the “see whatever you want to see” campaign share yet another peculiarity with the example from the *Todten-Tanz*: the pictorial object is different when rotated 180 degrees. Thus, in the case of Figure 3.3, an upright seal and an inverted doe’s head or a correctly oriented head of an doe and an upside down seal can be identified (see Figure 3.4).

By itself, the written text that goes with this image strongly recalls an aphorism and, as it is quite underdetermined, calls for considerable supplementation on the part of the reader: one might think, for example, that the appellative and striking “see whatever you want to see”—analogous to ‘do whatever you want [to do]’—aims at an ideal of self-determination and self-fulfilment often represented in aphorisms. This ideal concerns the recognition and realisation of one’s own wishes and ideas. In combination with the visual representation of exotic animals and the brand name Jeep®, which stands for a particularly reliable, off-road vehicle, the slogan “see whatever you want to see” becomes an exhortation that might be paraphrased as follows: purchasing a Jeep® off-road car allows you to reach any region on earth, for instance, one in which these extraordinary animals live.

Such a message and its concomitant incentive to buy are, taken by themselves, only moderately innovative, but they correspond precisely to the general sales promise of the Jeep® company. This advertising campaign becomes original, however, by means of its composition of pictorial and written elements. To this end, the exact positioning and orientation of individual elements must be considered more closely. Centred, in the top one-third of the page, is the brand name Jeep®. Immediately below it, the written line “see whatever you want to see” is arranged in a circular segment. At the centre of the page, in the frontal view, is the image of an animal (seal; penguin and swan in other ads of the series) or rather the upside-down head of an animal (doe, giraffe, and elephant) in dark brown and white contrast. Corresponding to the top one-third of the page, the written line is again centred, but this time is upside down at the bottom of the page. Several aspects of the visual arrangement challenge the viewer and reader to turn the magazine page around in order to orient the lower



Figure 3.3 “Jeep®—See Whatever You Want to See”: seal ‘puzzle picture’

Source: Leo Burnett Paris

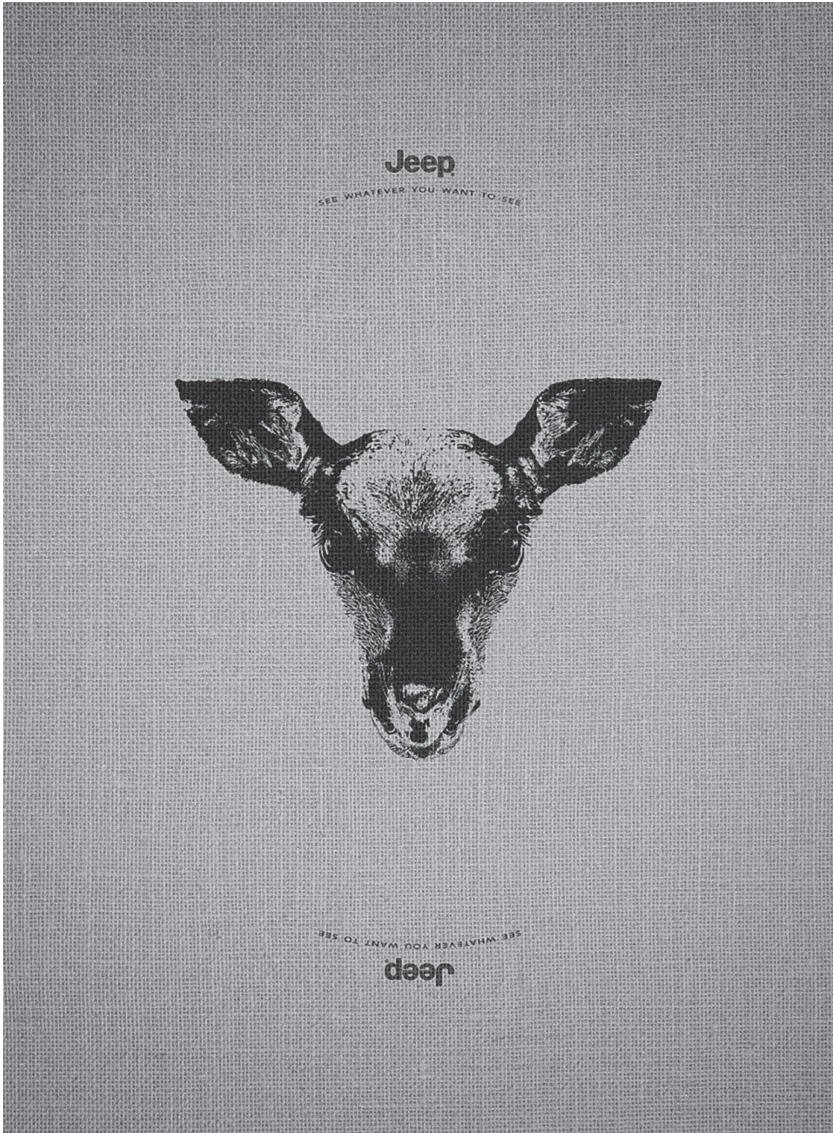


Figure 3.4 “Jeep®—See Whatever You Want to See”: seal ‘puzzle picture’

Source: Leo Burnett Paris

written line according to established standards of reading: the symmetry of both written elements on the page; the positioning of the ad slogan on a circle meant to be mentally supplemented, with the image in the middle; and in particular the fact that these written elements are printed on inverted axes horizontally and vertically.

In this manner the—strategically set-up—necessity of turning the page of the print medium like a steering wheel in order to more easily decode the lower script is bound up with the ambiguity of the image. The ad readers and viewers here transition, through their own actions and with minimal effort, from the seal to the doe's head (or from the doe's head to the seal), that is, from one animal to another. In this regard, they can repeat this process by turning the page anew and with just as little effort return to the upright standing animal. The advertisement's promise is connected to a product, the off-road vehicle of the Jeep® company, by means of this skilful arrangement of image and writing. That promise emphasises the addressee's autonomy of action: the reader/viewer is here staged as a self-determining actor. Besides the self-affirmation that comes with the recognition and understanding of the ambiguous configuration, the intertwining of this text arrangement with such an ideal of life may also lead to a strengthening of mnemonic achievement or the viral dissemination of the advertisements.

Summary

Both objects of investigation strategically combine visual ambiguity with the positioning of written elements. Whereas the written elements of the *memento mori* show both intended alignments of the book page (regular and rotated 180 degrees), the typography of the Jeep® advertisement even picks up on the rotation itself through its positioning on a broken circle. In both cases, the perception of the ambiguity is thus an integral part of the intended effect—"see whatever you want to see" and "Siche lieber Mensch" ("See, dear man"; Merian 207) emphasise this especially.

Ambiguity is hence, in this case, a functional component of a greater strategy and proof of the creative, technical achievement of the responsible agents, either an achievement projected onto the marketed product and its brand or the distillation of a baroque maxim. Such skilfully formed artefacts cannot be just labelled a solicitation to purchase or an appeal to change your way of life. The realisation of these functions cannot be separated from the hermeneutic play of switching between two distinct meanings, a vacillation that admits of no solution or fixation, but for this very reason enhances the clear appellative function of the multisemiotic text.

The hypothesis proposed at the beginning of this chapter, that is, that ambiguity is apparently to be avoided in the types of texts that have a clear intentional effect, has shown itself to be much too sweeping and can now be

refined: the inclusion of ambiguous structures into bigger textures allows for strategic leeway as long as a connection between the competing meanings is possible on a higher text level. A feature—ambiguity—that seems to make the ascription of meaning by the text user unpredictable may serve to trigger and steer that very ascription. Precisely in those moments when the abrupt change from one concept to another (life—death, seal—penguin, etc.) is part of the meaning of the text, ambiguous elements suggest themselves. Thus, we notice similarity and (historical) difference: while both appellative textures strategically include an ambiguous pictorial element, the early modern *memento mori* example uses the ambiguous image to remind us of the inevitable change from one state to the other, from life to death, whereas the contemporary advertisement uses the ambiguous image to make the desire for doing what we like appear compatible with the diversity of natural life.

Nevertheless, a number of follow-up questions emerge that should give rise to further research: is this embedding of ambiguous elements of text especially characteristic for bi- and multisemiotic textures? In our examples, the ambiguity belongs to the pictorial elements. Does the embedding work in the same way with ambiguous written elements? What further support measures (analogous to the 180-degree rotation of the page) can be observed that make it easier for the reader to ‘activate’ the respective meanings of the ambiguous structure? How are these connected with the mediality of the texture?

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426). A first version of this chapter was translated by Daniel Carranza (Chicago), which was then edited by Matthias Bauer and Mirjam Haas.
- 2 Pinkal’s model, which was developed for symbolic language, can be generalized here so as to be applicable to the other two forms of sign use, i.e., to indexical (e.g., gestures) and iconic (e.g., images) signs (or sign complexes).
- 3 For further information regarding the four restorations and the demolition of Basel’s *Dance of Death*, cf. Egger; Wehrens. For further information regarding Merian’s *Todten-Tanz*, cf. Wüthrich. A copy of the mural can be seen at the Basel Historical Museum: Johann Rudolf Feyerabend’s watercolour painting “Basler Totentanz oder Tod von Basel” (1806), see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Historisches_Museum_Basel_Totentanz.jpg.
- 4 See <https://leoburnett.fr/work/upside-down/> (accessed on 5 October 2020).
- 5 For the term and its history, see Posner 46. Cf. also Stöckl, “Bilder.” “Werbekommunikation semiotisch” 244–245; Liebert and Metten; Potysch 71–76, 119–121.
- 6 Various models exist for the concrete combination of specific meaning potentials via various semiotic systems. Examples are the distinction between “combination and confrontation” proposed by Fix, Assmann’s concept of “wild

- semiosis,” the “multiplication of meaning” according to Lemke, and the thought of “intersemiosis” according to Royce; O’Halloran and Liu.
- 7 For a more precise discussion of the relationship between texture and text, see Potysch 157–172.
- 8 The rhetorical doctrine of persuasion distinguishes here between the concepts of ‘metabasis’ and ‘systasis.’ While the first consists in bringing about a change in opinion, behaviour, or attitude, the second relates to the social bond and confirmation of an existent stance. Cf. Knappe, “Zwang” 54–69.
- 9 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to do justice to the plurality of the classification models of different text types. Rolf summarises the problem of the varying approaches. The assertive-directive structure of what is termed ‘appellative’ in this chapter would have to be determined by the specific object of investigation. The link between the objects of investigation lies in (a) the application of ambiguous image structures and (b) the direct address of the viewer/reader, which is expected to trigger a certain behaviour.
- 10 Stine Lomborg addresses the use of such generic templates with recourse to “socio-cognitive devices for sense making in everyday life” (45).
- 11 See Gustafson 278–279 or Lausberg 466 (§1070).
- 12 Original:
- Als Resultat bewußter Planung ist eine S[trategie] eine mehr oder weniger abstrakt ausgearbeiteter, hierarchisch und sequenziell organisierter Plan, der all jene mentalen Regulative (Maximen, Normen, Werte, Leitgedanken, etc.) enthält, an denen sich ein Handelnder bei der Durchführung einer konkreten Handlungssequenz in der Absicht orientiert, ein Ziel trotz erwartbarer Wid-erstände auf bestmögliche Weise zu erreichen.
- 13 Original: “[D]er Emittent gibt dem Rezipienten zu verstehen, daß er ihn dazu bewegen will, eine bestimmte Einstellung einer Sache gegenüber einzunehmen (Meinungsbeeinflussung) und/oder eine bestimmte Handlung zu vollziehen (Verhaltensbeeinflussung).” Cf. also Hardenbicker 133–134.
- 14 Original: “[S]trategien] werden *vor* den Handlungen, für die sie gelten, festgelegt (projektives Kalkül) und *bewußt* entwickelt (Intentionalität).”
- 15 Original:
- Eine S[trategie] (1) ist eine mentale Konstruktion; (2) ist ausgerichtet auf ein Ziel (oder mehrere Ziele), also einen erwünschten Zustand in der Zukunft; (3) reguliert konkretes Handeln (Innenperspektive) bzw. Verhalten (Außenperspektive); (4) ist nötig in problematischen Auswahl- bzw. Entscheidungssituationen und wird (5) subjektiv für optimal gehalten.
- 16 See Ungeheuer 300–301.
- 17 The advertisements are reproduced courtesy of Leo Burnett France.
- 18 It was furthermore honoured with the Gold Kinsale Shark Award and the Silver Kinsale Shark award in the category of Print/Ambient/Outdoor. The Kinsdale Shark Awards (<http://kinsalesharks.com/>) are granted as part of the Kinsdale Shark Advertising Festival. In addition, the organisation The One Club awarded it The One Show Automobile Advertising of the Year Award for best single advertisement and advertising campaign of 2014. The One Show Advertising of the Year Awards (<http://automobile.oneclub.org/>) are granted by The One Club organisation in order to distinguish individual advertisements that are excellent and creative.

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4 Radical Text Theory and Textual Ambiguity

With Two Analyses of Dadaist Anti-Text Strategies

Joachim Knappe

*To disorder meanings—
To disorder notions*

Tristan Tzara: “Dada Manifesto On Feeble Love and Bitter Love”

This chapter deals with a revised conception of the text linguistic theory à la Alain De Beaugrande and Wolfgang Ulrich Dressler, which has become obsolete in certain aspects. In the course of my considerations, I will argue that the commonly used text model itself needs to be revised. In doing so, I assume that there is no theoretical analogy between the text and other linguistic or semiotic levels and that *text* is not identical with *discourse*. Discourse is understood here as a supertext configuration in social life, which represents the “pragmatic process of meaning negotiation. Text is its product” (Widdowson 8).¹ In other words: texts emerge in discourses, and texts then, in turn, constitute discourses. I combine my theoretical considerations with two analyses of concrete “text” cases. They belong to the departure of the Dadaists at the beginning of the twentieth century from the traditional textual paradigm. Dadaists want to strategically and deliberately create something like “text chaos” where others expect traditional textual structures. Therefore, text destruction must be addressed in these two cases. The Dadaist attempt to destroy the traditional text model led to irritation and also rejection among contemporaries experiencing the artefact. For us later, second-order observers, however, Dadaist works foreground what the core structures of text as text are.² And Dadaism also shows us the transition to the intersemiotic concept of text, which will also be discussed in what follows.

This means that the ultimate aim of my reflections is to radically advance the intersemiotically extended theory and definition of *text* with all its specifics. I would like to introduce a minimalist theory of *text* which can also be called radical (in the sense of Lat. *radix* = root), because it is concerned with the root characteristics of semiotic objects whose status we classify as “texts” and whose structure can be classified as “textures”

(Lat. *textus* = connection, weave). This theory is not focused solely on texts that are notated using writing (and thus activate the informational code of language). Instead, my reflections attempt to find the intersemiotic universals of *texts* “in the broad sense” (Bakhtin 103), regardless of the code in which they are notated. This concept of text as the empirically observable element of communication has yet to be theoretically discovered by many disciplines. The philosophy of language, analytical philosophy, sociology, and many of the cultural sciences still use the sweeping term *language* to refer to humankind’s central instrument of communication. But language (*langue*) as such does not exist outside of the human body (in terms of theories of “embodiment”)—it is a construct. Empirically speaking, the only thing that exists in human communication is brief utterances and texts,³ and individual languages can only be derived from the sum of these artefacts. By talking about *language*, many disciplines overlook the crucial empirical fact that communication with linguistic elements normally takes the form of *texts*. In other words: language is only activated through the text, and the texts represent language’s link to reality because texts create meaning (Bakhtin 103).

In what follows, I would like to discuss the concept of text using the historical example of Dadaism, which emerged in 1916 and sought to programmatically and experimentally dismantle the old model of “text” as well as the structural model of “texture.” Dadaism developed principles of textual organization that teach us to understand the phenomenon of textual ambiguity in an extreme way, even taking us to the limits of textuality as such (that is, as a meaningful compound of signs). What does this mean? Dadaist texts often dispense with homogeneity in the repertoire of signs (script, image, other graphic components, colours, etc.), and they regularly dispense with thematic consistency or semantic coherence. In this way, they fundamentally disrupt the familiar processes of information through text. In other words, Dadaist texts no longer provide the addressee with any fixed semantic points that could give a clear, immanent semantic orientation or offer firm clues for interpreting the co-text in the sense of the usual expectation of coherence, not to mention central semantic perspectives.

Ultimately, this chapter seeks to crystallize the root elements of textuality in a radical or minimal theory of texts that posits four basic properties of textuality: (1) semioticity, (2) organization, (3) informativity, and (4) transnotability.

Dada

The entire ambition of the 2,000-year-old European doctrine of the arts has been to give order to art and to drive artists to outdo each other in the production of artefacts in a way that both fulfils and develops these systems of organization. Accordingly, chaos—which has usually been associated with

the wild forces of nature—should always be banished in the artificial. In literature, the rule was let there be text and not non-text. I will examine what this means later on, but first I would like to focus on a “textual” group that drove this principle into absurdity. Their works represent an appropriate corpus for an examination of the principles of order in text by drawing conclusions from the opposite produced by the Dadaists, which we can call non-order or chaos. The word *chaos*, which we also use to refer metaphorically to *textual non-order* here, was emphasized and philosophically charged by the Dadaists, and it even became a key word that neatly encapsulates the way in which this generation of Dadaists viewed life. In their view, the old European orders of all kinds finally collapsed in the catastrophe of World War I.

The doors of Cabaret Voltaire opened in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1916 in the middle of the First World War, and what had long been in development was given a home: Dada. “Long live the chaos” reads the headline of an article published on January 29, 2016, by SPIEGEL-Online to mark the 100th anniversary of the artistic movement. And for a few precious years, Dadaism took root in Western metropolises. The first generation of Dadaism’s leading theorists and literary practitioners were all born around the same time; among them were Hans Arp (1886–1966), Hugo Ball (1886–1927), Richard Huelsenbeck (1892–1974), and Tristan Tzara (whose real name was Samuel Rosenstock, 1896–1963), as well as Walter Mehring (1896–1981), George Grosz (1893–1959), and John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfeld, 1896–1988) in Berlin, Germany.⁴

The many immigrants and exiles who came together during the war perceived Zurich as a mirror of the ambivalent, and by no means purely negative, feeling of chaos. “Zurich of the prewar and war years was a brilliant chaos” (Brupbacher quoted in Behrens 211), a contemporary witness wrote, which was similar to how Huelsenbeck described it in 1964: “I loved the chaos of time” (Huelsenbeck, “Dada oder der Sinn im Chaos” 21). Huelsenbeck echoed the Dada Club’s manifesto as early as 1920: “Dada is chaos from which a thousand orders arise, which again devour each other back into Dada chaos.” The Dadaists of 1916 were people “experiencing chaos in a state of anomic insecurity” (9). This dichotomy of order and chaos was repeatedly invoked in Dada’s early programmatic writings, and order itself was called into question as the *old* order (Huelsenbeck, “Introduction” 13). It will be necessary to examine the consequences that this had for their new understanding of “text,” and indeed whether texts in the strict sense could still exist at all, based on their conceptions. For Dadaists, the gaze goes from order to chaos. This is the act of the modern redemption of art: an outlook on life that grew out of catastrophe was reformulated as a principle for the production of artefacts (Rocchio 138–145). From a programmatic point of view, the Dadaists were concerned with a new

way of “experience” that overcomes “the need” for “peace and order” (Huelsenbeck, “Introduction” 13).

But what does it mean to programmatically create chaos instead of order in texts? Raoul Hausmann provides us with one clue when he claims to have observed that Germany “reeled . . . from western formulae to eastern formlessness” (Hausmann 152). And when it comes to the production of texts, this idea of formlessness can take us far. In his “Dada Manifesto 1918,” Tzara challenges the logical law of consistency and postulates a fundamental ambiguity of art built on paradoxes, namely, “that people can perform contrary actions together while taking one fresh gulp of air; I am against action; for continuous contradiction, for affirmation too, I am neither for nor against.” “DADA MEANS NOTHING,” and Dada is created by a renunciation of the conventional and “a distrust toward unity” (Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918” 76–77). This had consequences for the use of language (*la langue*) as the ultimate foundational, conventional system in cultures. Common systems of understanding become suspect, and “the most acceptable system is on principle to have none” (79). As a result, social conventions of all kinds begin to falter: “Logic is always wrong. It draws the threads of notions, words, in their formal exterior, toward illusory ends and centers. Its chains kill, it is an enormous centipede stifling independence. Married to logic, art would live in incest” (80). This rejection of logical structures would emerge again in the programs of postmodern theorists such as Derrida and Johnston.⁵ In this sense, the program that the post-structuralists at the end of the twentieth century carried in their baggage with them was placed there at the beginning of the twentieth century in Zurich.

Such sentiments show how the Dadaists vehemently asserted their counter program to traditional structural aesthetics and authorial aesthetics. Who produces innovative, creative, and revolutionary (or simply just not previously existent) “bounded ordered complexes of signs with communicative intent” (i.e. texts in the intersemiotic sense) (cf. Knappe, *Modern Rhetoric* 198)? It is an interactive human actor emerging as a text creator and communicator, who invests the energy necessary to generate an improbable state that is the result of negentropy, and which takes the form of an ordered, antichaotic artificial object (see Meijer’s comment on Schmid in Schmid 106).⁶ Dadaism reverses these conditions of textuality by creating chaos with energy, though not entirely. This had practical consequences.

The world had been turned upside down by the terrors of World War I, and now it was time to do the same with old artistic doctrines. Priorities were shifted, and the classicist aesthetic ideals of strict loyalty to forms were thrown out. The new Dadaist collage technique used in paintings, object-image compositions, and photo collages was also revolutionary in that it dissolved old genres and tore down the barriers between different semiotic

systems. Not only did this technique chop up and recombine graphic symbols, linguistic characters, traditional textual structures, and the cultural symbols available; it also destroyed established layouts and formats (such as the clearly bordered square or rectangle of the image). Above it all stood one deliberately chosen word: “chaos.” It was not just the reconstruction of meanings in the linguistic sense that led to chaos; the search for aesthetic models of organization did so as well. Everything was dissolved.

More than 100 years after Dada, we now know that this letting go of conventional rules continued to spread throughout the visual arts, whereas there was really only a brief period of Dada in literature. In painting, it opened the door to pure abstraction; while this had long been suggested by Impressionism, there was no holding back after Dada. As a result, the transition from strict aesthetic order to chaos—and inversely the shift back from the allegedly chaotic factor of artistic material to a new system of artistic order—became a new symbol of modernity.

The Attack on the Text Paradigm: The Dissolution of Conventions of Organization

*How can one expect to put order into the chaos
that constitutes that infinite-shapeless variation:
man?*

Tristan Tzara: “Dada Manifesto 1918”

Let us begin with an interpretation of two Dadaist objects that I am hesitant to immediately call texts. Contemporary *textual theory* works with a range of different approaches in order to define the concept of *text* (see Wagner, “Linguistische Grundlagen”).⁷ As philologists tend to do, Heiko Hausendorf has approached the question from the perspective of the recipient and emphasizes the “readability” as a central criterion of an object which he calls “*a readable thing*” within the context of “written communication” (Hausendorf 44–47; emphasis added). His concept is deliberately intended to replace the criteria of “textuality” described by De Beaugrande and Dressler. I would like to take his concept even further and introduce an object that goes beyond “written” notation. And because the object integrates both digital and analog forms of notation by integrating graphic symbols, we will have to methodologically go beyond the writing-focused concept of “reading” and will instead speak of an intersemiotically constituted “*interpretable thing*.” It is clear that there are objects in the world that can have meaning for us but are not texts (such as objects that are the focus of a fetish). Texts are more highly organized compositions made

of identifiable semantic elements in which the composition itself creates a higher order meaning (e.g. the biography of a person).

I would first like to look at Mehring's poem "DADAyama Song 1919," which has only survived as a manuscript (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Is this object "readable" in Hausendorf's sense? Does it contain recognizable structures of written notation that make it possible for its meaning "to be constituted and construed in the mind of the reader," and only at the moment that a person reads it (Hausendorf 28)? The fact is that Mehring interferes with reading even at the purely performative-medial level; the conventional linear structure of texts of the era is cut into pieces and dispersed.

Still, we can attempt to read and interpret an object like this as long as acts of *anagnorisis*, or *recognition*, are possible. And we have multiple cognitive reserves or resources that help us with such interpretations. We might refer to

- (1) our world knowledge,⁸ which forms the common ground for understanding within a culture;
- (2) our communicative knowledge of frames or embeddings in discourses;
- (3) our knowledge about medialization (layout, NotationCodes);
- (4) our systemic code knowledge (including the VisualCodes) and the language (*la langue* in the sense of De Saussure) and, finally—and particularly important in our context—
- (5) our intertextual and textual knowledge (on the systematic level of *la parole*).

On the basis of the knowledge reserves described in (1)–(3), an *informed interpreter* will know what Dada (as a historical phenomenon) was about—that it consisted of "*licensed or specialized communication*" (Knape, *Modern Rhetoric* 14–15; see Knape, "Seven Perspectives" 386), for example, art and its specific shift in expectations with regard to the Gricean maxims (see Knape, "Rhetorik der Künste")—and will also know how the conventions of lyrical layout normally work (with a special form of collocation and offset lines on the page).

Reserve (4) allows us to recognize whether the English sentences that have been formulated make any sense. In Mehring's poem, the inventory of words used consists mainly of verbs and nouns, and their syntactic connections have been hacked apart. Everything is reminiscent of an experimental cloze text in which participants are asked to fill in the textual voids. Ellipses are dominant, and there are only a few complete sentences.

If a reader gets the feeling that the normal standards of coherency are disrupted—such as in our Mehring example—then resource (5) can be of assistance. Because the layout of Mehring's poem provides us with certain interpretive clues, *anagnorisis* here would refer to lyrical conventions. The first anchor point is the title, with a conventional naming of the author. The

DADAYama song 1919
 by
 Walter Mehring

DADAYama
 . non stop
 Here we go
 [The salto mortale!]
 Hypocrisy - bourgeoisie
 The Ego s.o.b.
 through the looking glass
 malice in
 I Wonderland/
 the melting pot
 What's cooking?
 Lots of own country -
 HEIL! Hail! Hell!
 dadaYAMA!
 *
 Calling DADAYAMA
 1 2 3 o!o!
WHO is WHO
as TZARRO where from?
 Sodom Lourdis Potsdam
 Moscow/
 Praise the Landlord! glory!
 Welcome to
 DADAYama - napoli
e mari!

Figure 4.1 “DADAYama Song 1919” (manuscript version)

Source: Mehring

second anchor point is the poetic license of abbreviating statements. And the third anchor point is the use of aesthetic or rhetorical OverCodes:⁹ we expect figures (e.g. ellipses, tropes such as metaphors and metonymy) and non-linguistic structures (e.g. a verse with an offset line, rhymes, verses). Our world knowledge reminds us that the extreme games the Dadaists after 1916 played with these possibilities made them bogeys of the bourgeoisie: as informed readers, the educated bourgeois recognized the textual conventions, but they also immediately recognized that these had been hacked to pieces.

DADAYama song 1919
 by
 Walter Mehring

DADAYama
 non stop
 Here we go
 [Hic
 salto mortale!]
 Hypocrisy – bourgeoisie
 The Ego
 s.o.b.
 through the looking glass
 malice in
 I Wonderland/
 the melting pot
 What’s cooking?
 Lots of own country –
 HEIL! Hail! Hell:
 dadaYAMA!
 *

calling
 DADAYAMA
 1 2 3
 o! o!
WHO is WHO
arp TZARAO where from?
 Sodom Lourdes Potsdam
 Moscow/
 Praise the Landlord!
 glory!
 welcome to
 DADAYama - napoli
e mori!

Figure 4.2 Transcript of “DADAYama Song 1919”

Language knowledge and intertextual knowledge help us to recognize Mehring’s limited complex of signs as a text (and as a genre, more specifically a “poem”), but also to recognize its uncertain interpretive offering. A reader in 1919 would likely have expected well-formulated, complete sentences, even though poetry has always been allowed a high degree of license. In this case, however, an even higher degree of semantic vagueness comes to the fore, which requires a significant amount of work to (re)construct meaning. This arises from the disruption of both conventions of organization and expectations of coherency, both of which are parts of the definition of texts. With respect to the expectations of textual conventions, both De Beaugrande and Dressler have spoken of “*contextual probability*,” with the key aspect being “not how often things occur together in any

absolute frequency, but rather what classes of occurrences are more or less likely under the influence of systematic constellations of current factors” (De Beaugrande and Dressler 140–141; emphasis in original).

I want to begin a close reading based on these considerations, and our interpretive method must necessarily involve the associative semantic bridging of textual voids.¹⁰ In this context, association means that an addressee must infer meaning “from everything that is available to him” (Heringer 56). The discourse theorist or, more precisely, the textual theorist Teun A. van Dijk has suggested that textual semantics could normally be reconstituted as a hierarchical assembly of macrostructures; by building a pyramid of content condensates, addressees can establish a hierarchy of partial meanings from individual parts of the text and thereby create an interpretation of the text as a whole (see *Textwissenschaft* 128–159).

This normally coherently organized semantic hierarchy postulated by Van Dijk is not found in our Mehring poem. This is for aesthetic reasons. In our case, we can isolate six semantic clusters from the linguistic material offered by Mehring’s poem, which simply stand next to each other:

- (1) It begins with the movement verbs “stop” and “go” and the Italian “salto.” Where does this movement go? Evidently towards the mysterious “DADAYama.” If we consult the more extensive German version of the poem as an intertextual sister of our text, then this direction becomes even clearer. The first few lines read, “DADAYama is only reachable from train stations with a double somersault/Hic salto mortale/Now or nowhere” (Mehring, “DADAYama” 199).
- (2) The second verse group names social groups: first in the ironic pun “Hypocracy” and then “bourgeoisie,” which is juxtaposed by the individual, “The Ego,” followed by “s.o.b.” (which could stand for “son of a bitch”) and “I Wonderland.”
- (3) Then there is a brief scene that plays with the presumption of nonsense based on a literary allusion: we look through an Alice-type “looking glass” towards an imaginary evil place, where we see “malice in/I Wonderland/the melting pot.” “What’s cooking” there? “Lots of own country.”
- (4) Echoing against these lines is the associated “HEIL! Hail! Hell.”
- (5) Then comes a telephone call to DADAYama introduced by an asterisk: “Calling/dadaYAMA / 123 / o! o!”
- (6) The poem then turns to personnel: “WHO is WHO”? Two Dadaists are referenced by name: Hans Arp and Tristan Tzara.
- (7) In turn, their places of origin and their destinations are named with ironic allusions: is it “Sodom,” the metonymical city of depravity, or “ Lourdes,” the metonymical city of Marian miracles? Or is it simply the banal “Potsdam”? After sarcastic praise of not the Lord, but the

“Landlord,” only the vacation town “napoli” remains for “DADAYama” to die in.

So much for a read-through of the text using *associations* (Heringer 56–62). Is there any final, aggregate semantic macro of this text in the sense of Van Dijk? As is common for lyric texts, in this case we can look to the title (see Bauer and Bross), which provides a clue about the overarching theme of the poem: it is a “song” (and thus a specific type of text) about “DADAYama.” This raises questions about the compositional meaning of “DADAYama” itself. At a formal level it is a composite, but it is also a semantic riddle. The reader in 1919 would have associated certain ideas with the name *Dada*, even though the ‘Dada Manifesto 1918’ asserted that “DADA MEANS NOTHING” (Tzara 77). But what is “yama”? The lexicalized phonetic sequence “yama” appears in multiple Eastern languages, each with a different meaning. In Sanskrit, the word stands for the principle of abstinence and human self-control; Yama is also the name of the Hindu god of death. In Japanese, “yama” means something like “mountain” or “important place.” And in Turkish, the word means “to patch.”

A further hint might indicate the organization of the text. After the title, the expression “DADAYama” is repeated four times, but not according to any kind of clearly definable principle of order. There is reason, however, to suspect that this repetition is intended as the repetition of a coherency-creating leitmotif. The expression “DADAYama” would thus be a linguistic *junctor* that “connects two sentences to one another,” as the linguist Harald Weinrich put it (“Zusammenhalt der Sprache” 27). As the founder of instructional semantics, Weinrich described concrete grammatical connectors (prepositions, conjunctions, etc.) as such junctors. But in our case, we are dealing with an *associative junctor* (“DADAYama”) that establishes thematic connections between different parts of the text. Because it is repeated so many times, it has a dominant proportional reference value and could semantically determine (or at least direct) the rest of the text if we only knew what “yama” meant.¹¹ To use Weinrich’s terminology, in that case, “DADAYama” would be an associative junctor that connects the seven isolated semantic clusters to one another to give them a common propositional meaning, or at least to allow for their interpretation as a common macro entity. Weinrich writes the following:

All linguistic symbols in a text have a coherency. But this coherency is different from case to case. A particular type of this textual coherency is the junction. A junction is a determinative framework in which a (junctive) basis is determined by the explicit instructions provided by the junctor of an adjunct. The basis is thus the part of a junction that is to

be determined, while the adjunct (which also belongs to the junctor) is the part that has the determinative force.

(Weinrich, *Textgrammatik* 609)¹²

One of the unique semantic features of Mehring's poem is that the likely junctor/adjunct "DADAYama" remains unclear, and with it the thematic coherency of the seven textual clusters. Because Mehring explicitly refers to the work as a "song" in the title, we have a good reason to look for an overarching theme. But what is the theme? Is it about the determination of a location, about the central location or the highest mountain of Dada (in the sense of the Japanese word), or is it about a "patch" from the world of Dada and the patchwork nature of the text? Or is it about the death of Dada? Thanks to the weak semantic determination, we as readers have a choice when it comes to interpretation. Ultimately, the meaning of "yama" remains open, and we are unsure about the imaginary referents to which the individual parts of the text refer. We are thus confronted with fundamental textual ambiguity. If, however, we were to assume "yama" to mean "central location" (there are multiple elements that point in that direction), then we could speak of a clear case of "lexical priming," as Michael Hoey calls it (*Lexical Priming* 7–9). It would be possible to draw specific conclusions from the text, and we could interpret Mehring's poem as a collage of expressions about the absurd center of Dada in the world. But this interpretation is not unequivocally possible.

The more strictly a text-maker utilizes semiotic (e.g. linguistic) and culturally anchored formal and aesthetic conventions (Codes and Over-Codes), the more they are able to determine the range of possible meanings for individual sentences and the text as a whole. Mehring wanted to do the exact opposite: he intentionally created a textual torso, a textual body with indeterminate textual semantics. The result is a fundamental challenge to reliable propositions and, thus, the generation of global *textual ambiguity*.

Epitexts can help the later second-order observer here, that is, us as today's interpreters.¹³ Our intertextual knowledge reveals that Mehring's text contains a referential link to Huelsenbeck's allusion to a programmatic location for Dada when he also made an allusion to the Gulf of Naples. Perhaps the text is about Dada's central location after all. In the 1920 "Dada Almanac" released in Berlin, Huelsenbeck described Dada's location similarly to John Heartfield, who named it the "Universal City." I will come back to this later. Huelsenbeck begins the "Dada Almanac" with the following words:

One has to be enough of a Dadaist to be able to adopt a Dadaist stance toward one's own Dadaism. There are mountains and seas, houses,

water mains and railway lines. In the pampas, cowboys let fly with their open lassoes and, in the Gulf of Naples, against a backdrop a million times painted, praised in song and stereoscopic photographs, there rocks the romantic canal barque that lulls the German bridal pair into their ponderous dreams. Dada has grasped that all too well. Dada has exploited all the possibilities of physical movement *à outrance*.

(Huelsenbeck, "Introduction" 9)

Huelsenbeck, Dada's most important theorist, indicates the way here: "possibilities" should be "*à outrance*"—they should be taken to their limits and expanded as far as possible. Mehring did not quite get that far, because the last step would be the complete elimination of communication. They were not there yet in Zurich in 1916; the limits of lyricism were not reached until Ball's 1917 "Zug der Elefanten" ("Caravan" in English; facsimile reproduced in Bezzola 142). But Huelsenbeck was also referring to breaking other barriers, above all the boundaries between semiotic systems. It was in this area that Dada began to systematically experiment with crossing the boundary (see Knape, "Grenzen des Sprachspiels").

A Close Reading as Ekphrasis: Textual Self-Organization?

*Lines, crooked circles, figures—there it is!
there! Who could read it!*

Georg Büchner: *Woyzeck*

This crossing of semantic boundaries involved establishing *new connections* between the following:

- (a) *Written notation* (linear, with reference to our language knowledge, e.g., that the digital-acoustic InformationCode of English = the Language of English) and
- (b) *Image notation* (two-dimensional, with reference to our visual knowledge, e.g., the analog InformationCode of individual image elements that exclusively reference optically perceivable objects in the physical world = Western ImageCode).

But Dada's crossing of boundaries also applied to the conditions of artefact production. The human-as-creator maxim—of "man as omnipotent text-maker" who shaped chaos into the ordered realm of texts—that a poet could plausibly assume in the Renaissance was called into question. Instead, Dada called for the experimental investigation of the physical principle of self-organization (even when subject to culturalist conditions),

and self-organization was even postulated to be a valid principle of production. In other words, the humanist distinction between the world of artefacts and the physical world was to be set aside, and Aristotle's dialectic of "Techne loves Tyche, Tyche loves Techne"¹⁴ was set aside in Zurich in 1916 to make way for contingency. It was no longer about negentropy, contingency control, or the ordering of artefacts by humans; rather, it was about humans being controlled by contingency and factors of chaos. Thus, although the maxim that art follows its own laws remained, at first glance those laws seemed to be lawlessness, and even the free play of the self-organization of form became permissible. In the visual arts, this would later lead to artistic phenomena such as Jackson Pollock's *drip painting* or K.R.H. Sonderborg's *impulse painting*.

What does this form of chaos theory mean for the theory of texts, and what does it mean for the generation of meaning in texts? With such questions in mind, Tzara postulated a randomness generator as the most decisive factor of production in one of his programmatic poems:

To make a dadaist poem
Take a newspaper.
Take a pair of scissors.
Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
Cut out the article.
Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
Shake it gently.
Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
Copy conscientiously.
The poem will be like you.
And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.
(Tzara, "Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love" 92)

In accordance with modern semiotics and linguistic theory, Tzara focuses on the sign/word as the root element of meaning, as the smallest meaningful paradigmatic unit. By cutting the words apart, they are to be isolated from one another and collected into a lexical pool. From a text-theoretical perspective, this new instruction has a pivotal effect on the syntagma by disconnecting the familiar cultural, grammatical, and intertextually anchored models of organization. In this sense, Tyche and her randomness generator take over production. Tzara justifies this approach from an anthropological perspective; texts would thus mirror the chaos in ourselves: "The poem will be like you." He also turns to aesthetics. The new poem should destroy all conventions and, in doing so, paradoxically realize the artistic period's

ideal of original genius. And this desired effect will be achieved by sacrificing human control over the artefact and physical contingency:

And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

It is noteworthy that, in the last words of his programmatic poem, Tzara accepts hermetism as an effect of “à outrance.” Dada’s renunciation of artefactual order and contingency control has a socially critical, political, and philosophical dimension. At its final stage, and taken to its extreme, the principle of chaos would lead to atextuality. Tzara uses the example of his conceptual poem, for instance, to show that following the chaotic principle would lead to nothing more than a word salad. But most Dadaists shied away from this extreme. From the perspective of the history of strong creativity and aesthetics, this semiotic crossing of boundaries was especially important because it opened the door to modern intersemiotics, multiconcodality (mixture of signs), and multimodality (appeals to different human sensory organs) for the textual world. A prominent example are the Dadaist collage techniques developed by George Grosz and John Heartfield, who attempted to integrate human experience—and the fact that we always perceive information multimodally—into single multiconodal artefacts.¹⁵

Sadly, the original copy of an important Dadaist collage composed by the two men in 1920 has been lost to history (Figure 4.3). It was the cover image for a 1920 catalog for a Dada exhibition held by the Berlin gallery owner Dr. Otto Burchard. Looking back on the work, Heartfield’s brother recalled: “The exhibition was opened in June. We called it the ‘First International Dada Fair.’ The four-page catalog, published in large format listed . . . 174 exhibits” (Herzfelde 27). The artists sought to deliberately distance their montages from traditional painting with the way in which the signatures were displayed. “The syllable ‘mont.’ meant: installed, instead of the time-honored ‘pinx.’ Because John wore a blue mechanic’s outfit, we called him the Installer” (27).

What kind of an installation is Grosz and Heartfield’s work? How can we describe it as a semiotic artefact, classify it within the European tradition, or even analyze it as a text or a texture? In the scholarly literature, the work has become known as a “Dada photo montage” (Richter 130). But even this genre classification is problematic because the work also contains writing, and the primary inspiration for the work is not the photograph, but rather film. The object itself is obviously not a film, a motion picture, or a movie; it is a still image. But it would be more appropriate to call it a “collage” (Gaughan 310) or, even more specifically, a “montage made of photographic and written signs, with a pen drawing by George Grosz (missing)” (Zervigón 49).

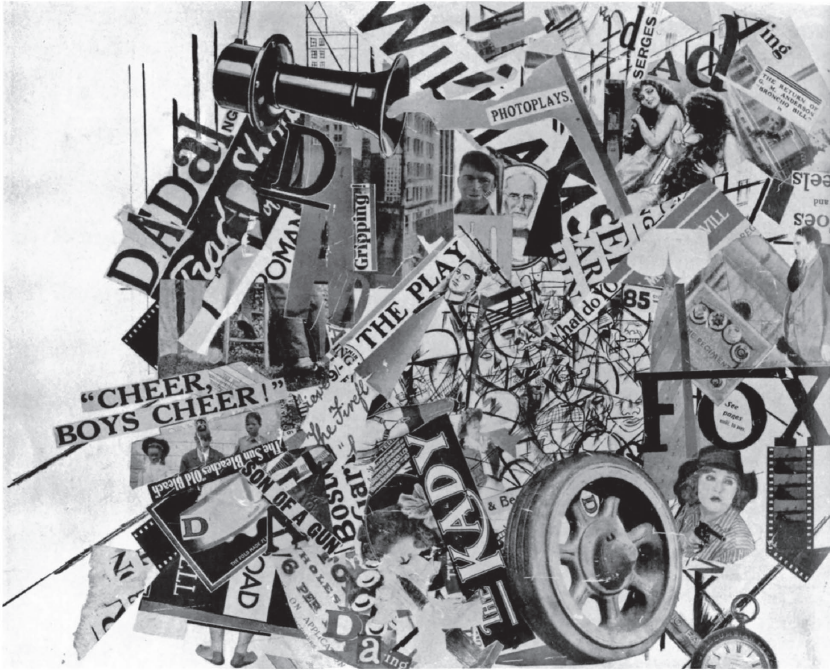


Figure 4.3 “Leben und Treiben in Universal-City, 12 Uhr 5 mittags”

Source: Grosz and Heartfield (reprinted in Gaughan 310)

Ekphrasis Test

When it comes to the object at hand, however, we can no longer speak of reading a digital sequence of script. Instead, it is more appropriate to talk about a *close description* (which we call *ekphrasis*) in which we attempt to compare structures in the object with our own reservoirs of knowledge.¹⁶ The ekphrasis test is a metadescription of visual impressions using human PhonoLanguage that can be employed for the semantic analysis of objects that contain a mixture of codes. Ekphrasis helps us to evaluate the semantics of visual objects (at least as denotative condensates) using transnotation into a verbal text. In other words, ekphrasis attempts to transpose and reotate (in our case in writing) all of the optically observable textual elements in an object. In the case at hand, our focus is naturally on the question of textuality: can we find a possible interpretation of the object that allows us to call it a text? The original catalog cover did not include a title, which meant that there was no associative paratextual junctor to influence interpretations (if we assume that a title is paratext and not a part

of the main text) (Genette 55–103). As a result, initial interpretations in the year 1920 could only be based on the overall composition of the texture.

Because the collage dissolves the traditional boundaries of medialization (boundary markings of the square frame for images, the linearity of written texts laid out in columns), there is no immediately clear way to read or interpret the image. In this respect, the object is inspired by the European tradition of panel painting (as non-sequential *stills*). As an interpreter attempting to provide a close description of the object, I thus have to select some place to begin my analysis. I have arbitrarily decided to begin in the middle and then continue clockwise from the top left of the image. I can make use of two meaning-carrying components: (1) the meaning-carrying individual signs (notated either in writing or graphically, i.e. either digital or analog notation) and (2) the collocation of these elements in two-dimensional space, which allows us to identify associative connections. We could also add (3) semantically ambiguous visual components (e.g. lines, dots) that may act as partitions. For pragmatic reasons, I will not deal with the latter elements systematically here, and I will only be focusing on the main features of the collage as well. An exacting and thorough analysis would have to be significantly more nuanced, but such precision is unnecessary for our purposes here.

Close Description

In the middle of the collage, I can identify a collection of men's heads in a circular arrangement. Some of them are "notated" as photographic images, others as hand drawings with different levels of detail. In the very middle, we see a striking number of heads (and a jumble of lines that belong to the third component listed in the previous paragraph). Bands of writing intrude into this "nest" with inscriptions such as "WILi[LIAMS]," "What do YO," "85," and "THE KADY," a signboard with "Brixton Road" in the middle line, and the sentence fragment "The Firefl." Next to that we see a naked man's leg wearing a garter pointing towards the middle and then "THE PLAY." Now I will describe my observations starting from the top left and continuing clockwise through the image. I can identify a comparatively oversized telephone receiver (with cord) from a 1920s wall telephone, into which a pennant with the inscription "PHOTOPLAYS" points. I interpret this to be an ironic paradox because the telephone is structurally limited to the acoustic realm, while here it is confronted by the optical channel using purely optical signals.

In the sense of visual junctor theory, the fact that the tip of the pennant is pointing to the mouthpiece of the telephone can be interpreted as a vector connection.¹⁷ Junctors are expressions or signs that establish connections between other signs. Each semiotic system has specific junctors. Visual junctor theory expands Weinrich's junction theory discussed earlier so that

it can be applied intersemiotically to all visual texts, including our collage. In 2011, Werner Holly formulated the expansion of Weinrich's theory with regard to compositions of writing and images as follows:

The overlapping montage connects the linguistic and image text at a propositional level; it signals that the images have something to do with the propositions that precede them. . . . In this sense, the images themselves obtain a propositional structure, and they have diverse semantic relationships with the linguistic text that can be explained using junctors.

(Holly 242)

Let us continue the process of interpretation and transposition. Behind the telephone receiver we can see buildings, then comes the inscription "WILi[LIAMS]" mentioned earlier, followed by a series of letters that spell "dAdAing." The series is interrupted by a vertically placed "SERGES." Below that are images of two women combing their hair. Then comes a label:

THE RETURN OF
G. M. ANDERSON
"BRONCHO BILL"
IN

On the right edge, we see a photograph of a man standing straight up; in front of him are documents that look like records and certificates—I can make out the word "REGIMENT." Below that we see the fragmented name of a Hollywood studio ("FO[X]"), with the words "See pages" from an advertisement. There is an image of a woman with a pistol next to a celluloid strip. This makes me think of film, and for me this part of the collage represents a sort of small semantic cluster around the topic of "film."

If I continue around the image, I see the wheel of a car and a pocket watch at the bottom right. They associatively remind me of cultural symbols like the wheel of fortune (*rota fortunae*) or the wheel of time. Moving clockwise, I come across men's hats viewed from above, and in the left corner another "DADaing" and "WHOLEs / 6 PER/ON APPLICATION." To the left of that comes "SON OF A GUN," followed by the upside-down inscription "The Sun Bleaches 'Old Bleach'" placed underneath a photograph of three African-American boys. Above them is the inscription "CHEER, BOYS CHEER"; I wonder whether this constellation is meant as an ironic commentary on racism. Above that comes another, vertically placed "DADaING" in the upper left corner, to the right of which are the words "Trade Show of" and "[R]OMA[N]," followed by another "DADA" and then "Gripping." In the background are photographs of men's legs. And this brings my gaze back to the telephone receiver.

Semiotic Observations

With respect to the semiotic inventory of the object, we immediately notice the code switching that takes place at the level of NotationCode. We see elements of the alphanumeric NotationCode, that is, the Latin alphabet and Arabic numerals. We can see individual but meaningless graphemes and connected grapheme groups. We see decodable image signs, but also meaningless graphical elements. If we look at the script—that is, the graphemically performed components of the artefact—we recognize the InformationCode *English*: we see the notation of individual English words and sentences, but a meaningless (acodal) jumble of letters as well. Individual letters are strewn across the surface of the texture like a net, and if we look closely, we can see that by drawing lines through the sequences of letters we get the word “dadaing” in multiple places. This iterative “dadaing” becomes the basis for a certain metacoherency. All of the other units of meaning present in the image are fragmentary and can only be interpreted by extrapolation. What are the relationships between these units with respect to expectations regarding the category of text? Are they connected at all? Do they even form a text?

In the visual arts, communicative or medial frames often act as the basis for cohesion by signaling that everything within the frame belongs to a semantically connected complex, that is, it constitutes a text. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that, at this point, we are in danger of leaving the theory of texts behind and moving to a different analytical level, namely, that of medialization. The creators of our object disrupt these conventions. They also dissolve the customary standard frame of the traditionally square image by letting the edges become frayed in some places and overgrown in others. The normal coherency-generating medial frame is thus programmatically called into question—the only real limits are the very edges of the page.

In both linguistics and our everyday use of language, we can distinguish words and sentences as the elementary building blocks of texts. But what about visual semiotic artefacts such as images? Are there sentences in an image? Confronted with the challenges posed by the multicodal pages of the Internet, in 2006 Baldry and Thibault proposed using the concept of a *cluster* to describe groups of signs that represent units of meaning at the micro or meso level of a text:

Our use of the term cluster refers to a local grouping of items, in particular, on a printed or web page (but also other texts such as manuscripts, paintings and films [here the authors become terminologically vague by mixing types of media with textual forms]). The items in a particular cluster may be visual, verbal and so on and are spatially proximate, thereby defining a specific region or sub-region of the page as a whole.

The items in a cluster are functionally related both to each other and to the whole to which they belong as parts. . . . Cluster analysis helps us to see how larger-scale items and the relationships in the visual field contain smaller-scale ones just as smaller-scale ones such as clusters are contained within larger ones. A cluster is a *locus of inclusion* for a small-scale functional arrangement of items included in some larger-scale arrangement (including super clusters).

(Baldry and Thibault 31; emphasis in original)

The proposal to define clusters as shaped groups of meaning in visual textures has the advantage of allowing us to do away with concepts such as *sentence* or *syntax* when it comes to two-dimensional, multicode textures; such linguistic terms only lead us to make false associations anyway.¹⁸ And we certainly cannot talk about anything approaching strict grammar in such situations. With respect to Heartfield's collage, we were able to identify a few vague semantic clusters: for example, a cluster of buildings (upper left), a film cluster (lower right corner), a cheer-boys cluster (lower left corner), and a cluster of men (in the middle). Connections between these clusters could be established according to the law of proximity as found in gestalt theory (see Schmid 80–86). But taken as a whole, the collage remains a chaotic web. The order of the world constitutes the visual syntagma, and our knowledge of visual order from the world helps us to interpret the compositional organization of images. Dadaists, however, sought to create non-order in their images, that is, chaos.

The collage by Grosz and Heartfield did not receive a title until it was included in a catalog by the Burchard Gallery. This established an epitext as a junctor. The title selected was “Life and times in Universal City at 12:05 noon.” As Hartmut Stöckl has suggested in another context, if we know this title, the “overall text” is endowed with a specific macro proposition with a nomination (a “reference to an object”) as well as a predication (the “assignment of characteristics to the object”) (“Sprache—Bild—Texte lesen” 54). Knowledge of the title “Universal City” is a hermeneutical key. The commentary in the Burchard catalog describes the collage as Heartfield “portraying by means of film the life and bustle of Universal City. . . . Then it is clear that the Dadaist John Heartfield is the enemy of the picture. He also destroyed it for himself” (*Erste internationale Dada-Messe*). Today, the 1920 collage is seen as “an impulsively torn up montage of the city” (Zervigón 47). Berlin's Dadaists sought to transition to a new urban culture, with a new morality and new institutions. This dissolution of cities was also reflected in the dissolution of *text* as a model of order.

If we do not know the title, however, then the object remains extremely textually ambiguous, both with regard to the global semantics of the text and with regard to its textual status.

A Radical Theory of *Text*

The analysis of Dadaist objects clearly confronts us with two questions: (1) is there really an independent theoretical level of textuality in the world of signs, and (2) what are the distinctive methodological characteristics of an analytical approach that is focused on this level? From a historical perspective, modern *textology* first emerged alongside structuralism, with narratologists such as Tzvetan Todorov and textual linguists such as Roman Jakobson, Van Dijk, Peter Hartmann, De Beaugrande, and Dressler, to name just a few. And most importantly was Ferdinand de Saussure, the great renewer of the *humanities*.

Few people today recall the challenges and provocations that De Saussure's radical shift in the observation of cultural phenomena implied at the beginning of the twentieth century. His call for the humanities to follow the sciences and focus on synchronous structures instead of diachronic developments—as in the former tradition of historicism—was long misunderstood and long fought against by critics. Today, that debate is history, and we have learned that under the heading of the *linguistic analogy* we should test all cultural phenomena for whether they reference, borrow, or draw inspiration from De Saussure's methodological linguistic approach. At the same time, the field of linguistics itself has long had to deal with its own problems of expansion; even the establishment of discourse linguistics, or better textual linguistics, as a separate sub-discipline focusing on the text as a linguistic level of study was not without controversy, despite the fact that De Saussure's dichotomous distinction between the abstract system of language (*la langue*) and the concrete occurrences of linguistic material in discourse (*la parole*—manifested in the aggregate texts that exist in the world) lays the appropriate theoretical groundwork for textual linguistics. Even today, many linguists prefer to focus on linguistic systems as structural objects of investigation and not on the use of these systems in the real world, notwithstanding the fact that, as Hartmann put it in 1971, “insofar as speaking occurs, it occurs as texts,” and “the only form of communication between people is through text-like and text-equivalent language” (Hartmann 12). In other words: real-world communication does not consist of languages or codes; it only consists of texts. And our language knowledge is a systematic construct derived from texts (see Harris 3; Bakhtin 103).

By now people have recognized the importance of textology, which focuses on the ubiquitous phenomenon *text* in general (not only as literature) using its own independent research methods. Still, historically speaking, the tight interweaving between the *system of language* and its use in the *production of texts* has often led to both areas being dealt with as one and the same. Only rarely did early textologists ask questions about the actual necessity for an independent approach to problems of textuality.

The theory of *text* requires us to take different perspectives. The extrinsic pragmatic perspective—which emphasizes communicative interactions based on strategies and the connection between communicative goal-resistances-structure of text—is one critical way of approaching texts. A second, intrinsic, perspective is only focused on textual structures. It is common for traditionalist linguists to reduce this second perspective to the connection between a system and its application. But such a systemic perspective alone can be misleading; at least it did not lead to the realization, for quite some time, that textology needed to be theoretically independent. Accordingly, text linguistics had to struggle with the common burden of believing it possible to apply known models and categories to new areas. The epistemologist Donald A. Schön has called such cases a “displacement of concepts” (*Invention* 53; see also Schön, *Displacement of Concepts*). This process, common in scientific realms, primarily consists of metaphorically transferring accepted terminology to new circumstances because one believes their explicative or systematic power is unparalleled. But when such transfer (Gr. *metaphora*) takes place, or when simple analogies are drawn, there is always the danger that observers will miss exactly those characteristics that make the new object special (Schön, *Invention* 35).

This is what happened in the early days of textual linguistics when the *sentence* metaphor was applied to the phenomenon of *text* in the hopes of establishing a structural model for texts that was analogous to the existing model of sentences. According to the dominant view of the time, texts were conceived as structurally similar to sentences, with stringent and formal rules of construction (Hoey, *Patterns* 27–28). By contrast, a radical theory of texts needs to do away with such grammatical analogies. One pioneer in this area is Hoey, who in 1991 countered the term *structure*, which was still common in linguistics—namely, focused on linguistic ideas of grammar in the sense of a strict grammar of texts—with a concept regarding the *organization* of texts. This laid the foundation for a proprietary perspective on *texts*.

The organized *network* (Lat. *textus*) of units in texts (words, sentences as “packages of information”) (Hoey 33, 78) cannot be described as a structure in the grammatical syntactic sense. Text organization happens beyond the single sentence. According to Hoey, only the non-linguistic characteristics of certain genres or types of text can be considered “structural” (33, 78): “Structural statements claim to say what is possible; organizational statements claim to describe what is done” (193). In this sense, we can certainly speak of concrete patterns of organization in linguistic texts, but not of a systemically limited, formal reservoir of structures based on strict grammatical rules (such as can be found in sentences). Halliday describes this as a distinction between “closed system patterns and open set patterns” (Halliday 41). At the same time, Hoey also recognizes that, when it comes to texts, “although there is no limit to the number of possible patterns of organization, the relations of which they are made up are strictly finite” (Hoey, *Patterns* 29).¹⁹

In addition to these patterns of organization, Hoey also emphasizes the importance of a further central *element* of texts: the word (cf. Ullmann on “The Word and Its Autonomy” 43–65). At first glance, this seems un spectacular, but the way he focuses on this point makes it clear that he has a different perspective. Hoey poses the question of what holds texts together at a semantic level, and his answer is that there are ultimately two components that define texts as spaces of meaning. Yuri Lotman, a representative of the Russian semiotic school, speaks in terms of production theory of “two types of text generator: one is founded on discreteness, the other is continuous.” In our context,

the text is the primary, being the bearer of the basic meaning. This text is not discrete but continuous. Its meaning is organized neither in a linear nor in a temporal sequence, but is “washed over” the n-dimensional semantic space of the given text (the canvas of a picture, the space of a stage, of a screen, a ritual, of social behaviour or of a dream).

(Lotman 36)

Hence, we can speak of two dimensions or levels of textual analysis: the level of building blocks and the level of organization. This can be summarized as follows.

First, the *lexical elements*, as well as semantically and grammatically closely related word combinations (morphemes or words—we also call them *signs*—including their phrasematic extensions and their configurational connections in sentences), are the smallest semantic and cohesively acting(!) building blocks (Fuss and Geipel). Second, the *texture* is the transphrastic, semantically organized macro network, in which complex meanings can be generated by complex arrangements. Each case must be evaluated independently, in order to determine what kind of *systems of order* these arrangements represent. At the textual level, in any case, we can always assume that they originate from a postulate of communicative appropriateness.²⁰

In light of this concept of organization, Hoey outlines a model of a “map of language” with noteworthy points of emphasis (Hoey, *Patterns* 218). For one, Hoey places *situation* and *substance*—two critical components of communicative and material frameworks—at the very top and very bottom of his linguistic map, respectively. These are “*extra-textual features*” of interaction, that is, of communication. But another element of such frameworks is also the fact that texts are notated in acoustic or visual processes of medialization. In the case of linguistic texts, this *notation*²¹ appears in the form of “phonetic substance” that is correlated with theoretical phonology.

To begin with, just as sentences find their expression in sounds via phonological structure, so they find their value in the situation via structure of interaction. They need to be interpreted phonologically to be expressible

and understood as part of an interaction to be useful. . . .[And] both phonology and interaction operate on the margins of linguistics, as one would expect of mediating interlevels.

(Hoey, *Patterns* 200)

At the center of his map, Hoey places two large circles. These mark the decisive factors that constitute the semantic universe: (1) the meaning-carrying units and (2) the meaning-creating textual network. Also notable is the narrow, all-connecting bridge of *form* in the middle between the circles, which includes the *syntax/grammar*. This is a formal set of rules that acts internally but that does not contribute anything to the organization of the text per se; it only provides formal rules for sentences. Thus, Hoey's model only addresses the formal perspective of grammar, and he downplays the fact that, in linguistic texts, sentences and connections between words of all sorts play an important role in semantic organization at the analytical level below the *text*. In principle, Hoey agrees that sentences are "packages of information" (Hoey, *Patterns* 33, 78). But he emphasizes that grammar and syntax do not contribute to the organization of the text as text and that, with their system constraints, they only work at the lower theoretical level of the *sentence* (or the level of phraseological units).²² The analytic level of the text (as co-text)²³ here constitutes the framework that has a semantic top-down impact on the sentence. Like words, sentences serve a purpose in texts, but they do not organize them. From a textological perspective, however, this organization is what is relevant. As early as 1983 in his book about textual surfaces, Hoey argues that, in terms of production, the organization of texts is primarily a top-down process (see Hoey, *On the Surface* 18–19). He uses the example of a common children's game in which one child receives a single sentence from the child before them, then they formulate a second single sentence, and so on around a circle. The result is a nonsense series of sentences that are usually internally grammatically coherent and are semantically harmonized with the sentences on either side of them, but that make no sense together as a normal text and are unable to produce any more highly organized textual meaning.²⁴

Accordingly, we can say: there is no such thing as a general grammar of texts, despite the fact that the term "text grammar" is still in use among linguists (Gansel and Jürgens 113–136). As early as 1980, however, Kallmeyer and Meyer-Hermann warned against such concepts:

the descriptive capacity of the trans-phrasal approach reaches its limits precisely where the properties of the whole are considered that are not also properties of its parts. Like the communicative function of the text as a whole, there appears to be a whole series of characteristics of texts or subtexts that cannot be traced back to characteristics of the parts that constitute them.

(Kallmeyer and Meyer-Hermann 244)

In textual theory, the best we can do is to talk about something like genre grammars. Within certain narrative genres (e.g. detective novels), there are certain traditional patterns of order that can be played around with or undermined but that must be taken into account as preexisting genre knowledge (Krause). And there is also something like a “logical” grammar in certain “superstructures” (such as argumentative structures, which according to Van Dijk can be used in various genres) (*Textwissenschaft* 135–39) and in the laws of gestalt psychology for pictorial texts (similarity, proximity, familiarity, etc.) (Metzger) that anticipates certain syllogistic structures or iconic patterns. This also applies to aesthetic Over-Codes (such as schemes of stanzas, verses, rhythm, and rhyme that are placed over the grammatical ortho structures).²⁵

We can derive the following from Hoey’s work and similar considerations by others: texts create a semantic universe whose cognitive or emotive processing takes place within a communicative frame of interaction. “Autosemantics and synsemantics” (Heringer 31) are crucial for the construction of meaning in text, and the selection and application of such elements are regulated by pragmatic communicative calculi. Most words have their own semantics (autosemantics), but in text they gain further semantic valences (synsemantics) in combination with other words and, thus, help to build a global text semantics. Once again, here is our division, now phrased in terms of the famous structuralist, two-axis theorem by Hjelmslev and Jakobson:

- (1) The paradigmatic axis or axis of selection: If one follows the two-axis model, one can first assign the elementary linguistic components to the vertical axis. They form “paradigms”²⁶ of the smallest or small semantically charged building blocks below the text level, which we call semantically embossed units or “elementary discourse units” (Riester et al. 404). These building blocks (intersemiotic, for example: sign/word, phrase, or visual cluster) and their inner structure (e.g. grammar) belong to a separate analytical level. They are elements of the codes or they are the result of partly independent elaboration processes that take place (systematically seen) below the text level.
- (2) Axis of extension, syntagmatic axis, or axis of combination at the text level: This horizontal model axis is assigned to the syntheses constructed from the elementary sign units at the text level, be they linguistic-linear or pictorial-surface-extensional. Here, “non-grammatical” structural models (according to pragmatics, rhetoric, aesthetics, etc.) regulate the complex text organization.²⁷ The shaped semantic elements or building blocks enter into the overall structure of the text and become synsemantically enriched components of a higher, super-summative semantics of the overall text.

When it comes to the shaped semantic units, we are always dealing with *individual signs*. Within linguistic contexts we talk about lexemes: the *lexicalized expression/word* that a person stores in their mental lexicon. Let us also consider the sign as an element of text composition. Linguists call such elements *syntactic words*; this refers to the word forms and meaning variants occurring in a concrete sentence or text as tokens, which can be traced back to a lexeme as a schematic type (Fuss and Geipel 13–33). According to Karl Bühler, “two-class sign systems” must include in their definition of the sign that a sign can be an element within a deictic field (85–87, 93–95). In human language, words are the elements that can be combined into a linguistic text, and for the image code, image signs are the elements that can be combined into an image text.

It is very instructive for image theory to see that linguistics by no means sees fixed structures when it comes to the word as the smallest meaning-carrying unit of the system.²⁸ And even in the Indo-European languages, more complex morphological structures can also be attributed the status of discrete lexicalized units. This is why the question, “What is a linguistic unit?” in linguistic theory cannot be answered by referring to a single simple structure. This is an indication that there may also be multiple types of structure that can be considered the “smallest” meaning-carrying units when it comes to a theory of the ImageCode. In general (and regardless of their structure), such units should be called *semantic elements* or the elementary parts of a text.

Within this context, the linguist Leonard Bloomfield, in 1935, proposed a linguistic definition of signs in which the individual word was considered the “minimal free form” (Bloomfield quoted in Booij 284). What he meant was that a word (considered semiotically as a sign) can, in principle, also convey information as a single unit without a co-text (autosemantics). This perspective can be profitably transferred to the theory of ImageCodes, by establishing that an image sign can convey information on its own (e.g. the ambiguous tilting figures, which are mostly single characters) but also as a part of an image co-text. Morphologically speaking, however, such single-character expressions can be much more complex in the ImageCode than in the LanguageCode. When it comes to human language, compounds (words such as “Zeichensprache” in German, “roadmap” in English, or “pomme de terre” and “machine à écrire” = “typewriter” in French) and even entire phrases (e.g. idioms) can be learned as distinct lexicalized expressions.²⁹ When it comes to the visual code, we can analogously presume that people learn to interpret individual visual elements (each with its own individual meaning) placed together as assembled gestures, entire scenes, and groups as separate semantic units—and thus as signs—and can also learn to decode them accordingly when they see them in images. We call an image complex that can be understood to have a single meaning within an image text a *diathesis*.

A further group of building blocks are semantically and grammatically shaped groups of signs; in the case of human language, that is, in PhonoLanguage contexts, we speak of *clauses* or of *sentences*. Linguistics has often included not only syntax but also lexical areas of research under the rubric of *grammar*, because there is always some sort of connection between all linguistic phenomena.³⁰ Hoey, by contrast, has sought to establish a different systematic approach. He suggests deliberately separating the analytical level of the lexicon (the set of signs in the narrower sense) from the theoretical level of grammar, particularly given the fact that traditional linguistics has—with good reason—designated morphology (as the theory of word formation) as a separate field:

The arguments for separating lexis from grammar are several. Morphemes combine into words very much more idiosyncratically than do words into groups or groups into clauses, and the organization of the lexicon has no analogy in syntax. Indeed, grammar has been traditionally divided into syntax and morphology, a reflection of the different methods necessary to describe these aspects of language.

(Hoey, *Patterns* 207)³¹

When it comes to human language, grammar in the narrower sense is thus limited to the level of the sentence. And at this level, semantics and syntax work closely with one another. The strict grammatical principles of form that govern the correct formulation of sentences emerge from the constraint of linearity in human languages. Linguistic expressions take place linearly in time. Conversely, images (= still images on the systemic basis of the ImagoLanguage) are performatively timeless and two-dimensional. In standard communication using human PhonoLanguage, it must be possible to structure the individual characters such that they are relatively unmistakable and predictable according to a linear process of sentence production that is calibrated to fleeting moments of listening. Grammars include formal rules for the combinatorics of meaningful sentences. One could say that the ultimate purpose of (formally conceived) grammars is to define the possible *relationships* between meaningful building blocks for the production of sentences. Traditional grammar thus organizes our understanding of sentences under the conditions of linearity.

Accordingly, the recognition of meaning in linguistic communication succeeds, on the one hand, because every single word on the paradigmatic axis has its own relatively recognizable meaning as an element of a (mentally anchored) lexicon or set of signs for a group of speakers and, on the other hand, because every sentence that is constructed on the combinatorial axis in a communicative setting can develop its own meaning for the competent language user, even if they have no pattern in their mental pool of sentences that matches the formulation exactly (as is usually the case).

But how do things behave at the analytical level of *text*? From a theoretical perspective, this level must be viewed radically independently. First, it is important to establish that the grammar of sentences discussed earlier has no bearing at this level. Texts obviously contain embossed or shaped semantic units (signs, e.g. words, sign groups, sign clusters); words and sentences are always floating around in texts. But what is it that holds them together? Why can they convey more meaning together than the atomistic meanings of the individual words and sentences? The answer lies in the fact that they are organized in the text according to extra-linguistic, overriding pragmatic, rhetorical, or aesthetic construction decisions. The lyrical genre of the distich provides illustrative evidence for this. Distichs are transphrastic and are constructed according to a non-linguistically motivated and strict metric model of textual order: they consist of a first verse in hexameter and a second verse in pentameter. As Friedrich Schiller described it in his famous distich “The Distich,” it is made up of two component sentences:

In hexameter climbs the fountain’s affluent column,
In pentameter then it falls melodically down.

Twentieth-century Dadaism explored the phenomena that arose in the face of such problems. Dadaist works atomize and fragment the constituent elements of texts and, thus, point to the problems of generating higher order meaning in texts using structures of order beyond the elementary semantic units (including sentences and clusters). They seek to reveal (pre) determined textual meaning as a construction. The motivation behind such work came from the First World War, which shook the old empires of the world and with them the conventional systems of order that governed meaning-generating sign systems. But without such models of order and construction beyond purely grammatical necessities, communication cannot occur, or it can only occur with significant interference. Dada artefacts thus point directly to the fundamental problems of textuality, and this is where Dadaist deconstruction takes its effect.

Chaos Strategies and Textual Ambiguity in Dada

A poet turns solutions into puzzles

Karl Kraus

An orator turns puzzles into solutions

JK

In order to drive our reflections further at this point, it is important to return to our definition of a text: an artefact that is intended to function

as a communicative tool is called a *text* if it is a *limited, ordered complex of signs of any kind in a communication process* that allows an addressee to interpret the signs and to decode complex semantics. Of course, such characteristics can be present to varying degrees. According to Bakhtin, a text is limited as an utterance, leaving open the question of whether the boundary within the text is drawn semantically or externally pragmatically (Bakhtin 104–105; Knape, *Modern Rhetoric* 198). What does “ordered” mean here? Texts are different from single symbols, which can also have semiotic meaning or can reference another thing in the world (in which case we perhaps would assign them only indexical meaning). One standard expectation of texts in normal communicative situations is that they are structured in the service of coherency. Each text must have interfaces with our language knowledge, image knowledge, intertextual knowledge, and world knowledge. We expect individual parts of the textual architecture to be assembled together into a broader functional context that is governed by the communicative goal of the author. A text strategy is thus a concept of production regarding the complex and higher organization of signs and the transphrasal or transclustered tectonics that are sedimented in the bound complex of signs in service of these communicative goals. The signs and their connective organization constitute the overall semantic potential of the text.

If, accordingly, the text is viewed as a strategically conceived work, then all semiotic-analytical levels come into play, perhaps even the medial ones, to which the smallest sound on the phoneme level belongs, as well as the organization on the text level, to which the phonemes do not belong.

Our analysis of two compositions from the Dadaist movement has revealed a series of strategies for the Dadaist subversion of this expectation of coherency and, thus, strategies for the dissolution of the category *text*. Dadaism had a political-strategic program that also dominated work on texts: to focus attention on the philosophy and, so to speak, anthropology of chaos and, thus, to “infinite-shapeless variation” (Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918” 78). In this way, Dada worked against the basic psychological tendency towards negentropy and against our desire for order (Stadler et al.). This political strategy was thus transformed into a rhetorical strategy of text production. In two books on the subject, Stefanie Luppold has dealt with the question of how such textual strategies can be investigated in depth (Luppold, *Textstrategien* and *Textrhetorik*).

Exploration of the limits of textuality was Dada’s political and experimental goal and its rhetorical message. “A rhetorical strategy consists of the calculation of success and effectiveness that an orator makes in light of a complex communicative situation, which focuses primarily on the analysis of relevant goal-resistance-means-relations” (Knape, *Modern Rhetoric* 107; Knape et al., “Strategie” 153). The *goal* of the Dadaists was to challenge the conventions of understanding and cultural orders that had led

Europe into disaster. The *resistance* was embodied by the exponents of the cultural formal traditions that were summarized by the term *bourgeoise*. Accordingly, Dada became a nightmare for such exponents. Dada's communicative *means* or instruments were the aesthetic objects that were activated within the framework of Dadaist performances. They convey unstable semantics that is intended to evoke the mental *experience* of chaos.

Still, the addressees of the time ascribed *meaning* to these works due to their being embedded in artistic discourse. This framework means that they are not meaningless, even if their meaning is entirely uncertain because propositional clarity is avoided. This specific type of incomprehensibility should not be confused with *nonsense* in the literary tradition (Petzold; Köhler; Malcolm). In the nonsense tradition, texts are constructed that contain a recognizable game of logical and physical contradictions and anomalies, and they ultimately work with a concept of irony that expects readers to methodically repair the systems of order that have been disturbed in the textual world. This game is staged as a game and is appreciated by readers as such. Ball's "Caravan" represents its final stage: this "object" still has certain linguistic expressive elements with their aesthetic appeal structures, but there is no way to condense a proposition in the usual way (Knappe, "Grenzen des Sprachspiels").³²

In the meantime, we have noted that the concept of chaos is ambiguous, but at its core of meaning always amounts to an opposition to supposedly fixed orders. Mathematicians today say that chaos is the name we give to mechanisms that lead to a rapid increase in uncertainty in mathematical models (Smith 2). "Chaos can look random but it is not random" (Smith 35), and "chaos is a property of dynamical systems. And a dynamical system is nothing more than a source of changing observations" (Smith 33). In this respect, we may say that chaos *strategies* seek to "create global textual ambiguity" in order to facilitate a continuous shift in perspective, even if there is relative semantic clarity at the local level (e.g. at the level of the individual sentence). Ambiguity here is meant in the broad sense and includes a wide spectrum that ranges from double meanings to vagueness and even complete obscurity. Dada sought to tear apart the global network of meaning. In the case of Heartfield's work, this network can only be reconstructed (and even then only in a makeshift manner) if we know the title is "Universal City." In that case, we can integrate the title as a junctor in order to connect the texture to our real-world knowledge about "urban chaos." According to this reading, the productive idea behind the object would be to performatively and mimetically depict the confusion of the big city in the formal design of the text and, thus, to enable us to experience it directly. This would also require us to accept such an immersive experience. One thing that we can say at this point is that the most important means of generating textual ambiguity is the dissolution of junctor structures; in such cases, the title of the text is the only anchor of meaning that remains.

In order to generate global semantic confusion, Dadaists dissolved many conventions regarding the production and structure of texts. Randomness was given a significant role in production, but not complete control. The fact remains: even Dada objects are artefacts. They are thus still subject to Niklas Luhmann's observation

that arbitrariness as such does not exist. If we conceive of arbitrariness as the determination of events (decisions) by decisions free of any structures or context, arbitrariness would equal entropy. Accordingly, all that can exist is what is denoted by concepts such as isolation, uncoupling, nondifference; this in turn generates a transitory open space for "arbitrariness" that immediately seeks other limitations.

(Luhmann 54)

When it comes to the extreme forms of Dada, the question is merely whether the objects can still be unconditionally counted as texts.

At the very least, Dadaists deliberately allowed for dissolution in the production of their artefacts, and this took place in the following ways:

- (1) Mixing NotationCodes dissolves the normal and expected code homogeneity of the work (not historically new). This confronts addressees with a particularly difficult task of interpretation, which is addressed by Wolfgang Schnotz's integrated model of text and picture comprehension.
- (2) Mixing the direction of extension for signs within the texture. The linearity of writing, for instance, is mixed with the two-dimensional extension of images. As a result, the forms of syntagmatic order are no longer clearly recognizable.
- (3) The degree of informational precision is minimized by a reduction of semantic elements (which are themselves sometimes ambiguous) and the avoidance of junctors. The most important means of doing so is the use of junctor ambiguity (poly-deixis). Connections between sentences and clusters are disrupted as much as possible or are left out completely.

In other words: part of the chaos strategy of text production involves making the texture ambiguous (a) through the polysemy of the junctor (e.g. "yama") or (b) through contradictory connections or multi-deixis that no longer allows clear links to be made (e.g. when Ball combines the single semantic word "caravan" as a title with a text consisting only of non-semantic pseudo-words). In his 2005 chapter "Lexical priming and polysemy," Hoey points out that, when it comes to the lexicon of a given language, 40 per cent of words have no clear, predetermined patterns of embedding: "40 per cent of cases which fell into neither set of characteristic

patterns” (Hoey, *Lexical Priming* 80). By their very nature, these words thus open a wide field of ambiguity, of which Dadaists could take advantage. If junctors are also systematically left undefined, it leads to a high degree of semantic uncertainty that can be described as coherency irritation or general ambiguity.

Textuality

A modern theory of texts that radically poses the question of textuality is still being developed, even though the first clear guidelines regarding textuality that go beyond the field of literary criticism emerged decades ago. As a result, the question of “what is a text?” is often dealt with under the rubric of “aspects of an interdisciplinary theory of texts” (Wagner, *Was ist Text?*), and only rarely according to aspects of intersemiotic textuality. The pioneering field for the latter has been the theory of images. As early as 1993, the specialist for textual genres Eckard Rolf wrote that there are rules of texts that deal with the “configuration (constellation) of signs and sign complexes.” One “such rule applies semiotically to pictures, diagrams, or musical scores.” Should we, hence, “as sometimes proposed, also consider pictures, etc. as texts?” Rolf’s answer is “yes”: he sees images as “comparable objects” to linguistic texts and insists that a “reference to sign (complexes) in the attempt to define the concept of ‘text’” should, as far as human PhonoLanguage texts are concerned, “be subject to the restriction that they are—at least partially, if not primarily—made up of linguistic sign (complexes)” (Rolf 19–20). In 1996, Martin Stegu wrote the following:

Sometimes we are confronted by the question of whether images are texts. If we assume there to be an image *language*, then we are not surprised by the concept of text, which is primarily used in linguistic contexts, being applied to images.”

(Stegu 307)

By 2001, Stöckl took these suggestions as a starting point and presented a sketch of a concept of textuality for images based on De Beaugrande and Dressler’s criteria of textuality (“Texts with a View”).

Against this backdrop, it is time to continue our consideration of a general intersemiotic theory of *text*, that is, a specific theory of textuality that is not limited to lingual texts.³³ A comprehensive theory of text processing would have to consider three perspectives and, accordingly, address three separate systematic levels: (1) artefact-object theory (textuality on the semiotic level); (2) theory of text perception and mental processing (reception of the text); and (3) theory of communicative embedding. In theory building, these levels unfortunately are not always seen as independent areas.

Each of the perspectives challenges complex considerations. For pragmatic reasons, I will conclude by focusing on the question of textuality in the narrower terminological sense.

Artefact-Object Theory

This brings us to another, completely independent analytical and theoretical level: the level of scholarly object analysis. Many types of artefacts can perform communicative tasks, and, as has been pointed out, this includes *communicative objects* that do not consist of signs but have been designed with communicative intent (Knape, “Persuasion by Design?”). In scholarly discourse, however, it only makes sense to speak of *texts* if they refer to something specific.

After all, what are the theoretical criteria of the text under neo-structuralist premises? I will first repeat the text definition I established earlier, which I consider appropriate for the upcoming theoretical discussion: a text is a *limited ordered complex of signs in a communication process* (Knape, *Modern Rhetoric* 198).³⁴ Such artefacts have the following four characteristics.

Semioticity

It is necessary to speak first of all about the sign character of the text, because there are some misleading theoretical positions with regard to the definition of the text. I mean the decoupling of the concept of text from the world of signs, which leads to difficulties in theory consistency. The first problem arises from the “culture-as-text” postulate (Schneider; see Bassler et al.). It goes back to the medieval idea of the “book of nature” in which people could supposedly read God’s messages. Modern anthropologists have reinterpreted this idea and now claim that one can “read” the phenomena of culture (objects and interactions) as text. Here, the word “text” can at most be meant metaphorically, because, among other things, the question of the problem of limitation immediately arises: where are the limitations in the postulated cultural “text” (see Knape, *Die Dinge* 13–18)? Related to the culture-as-text question are further problems resulting from the non-communication question, the tool question, the index question, and the media question, for not all objects, tools, and actions in culture serve communicative purposes (ibid. 8–12). There are artefacts (also tools) and interactions that only serve to secure people’s subsistence. Theoretically, the tools produced exclusively for communication are to be separated from these. We call them symbols, signs, artificial objects, and texts. The index question is important in this context because many objects in the world can be interpreted by humans, but they are still not part of a communicative process (e.g. smoke over a forest, which merely indicates fire). Here we must

speak of indices.³⁵ Communication in the strict sense, however, presupposes human intentionality and the use of communication tools that have the specific character of signs and are accordingly conventionalized in codes.³⁶

And this brings us to the question of media. As touched on earlier, when dealing with the category of text, there is often a problematic mixing with media theory, which in turn leads to theoretical inconsistency (Wagner, “Linguistische Grundlagen” 101–108).³⁷ This problem arises because of an important interface between media theory and text theory: the essential necessity of a notation of text. In other words: there is no text without its medium.³⁸ Texts must be notated outside of the human body in some modal way (geared towards the human senses) so that they can be fed interactively into the process of communication.

In the production of texts, text-makers always refer to semiotic knowledge, that is, systemic knowledge about InformationCodes (language knowledge, image knowledge) that has nothing to do with the conditions of the text’s medialization. Media theory deals with a text’s performance and its materialization/medialization (e.g. with writing something down on paper). This includes questions of layout, which has now developed into a field of its own. The main focus of layout theory is the performance of the text with the help of a print medium, with research focusing on specific paramedial effects and the importance of elements such as typography or layout in general and how they influence the understanding of a text (Antos and Spitzmüller; Bucher; Hagemann).

Here it must be stressed that *text* is theoretically abstracted as a purely semiotic phenomenon and is only secondarily related to such paramedial phenomena. In theoretical terms, texts exist solely at the abstracted level of signs. Texts consist of signs and refer to semiotic InformationCodes. There are different kinds of codes, including the separate (acoustic) human PhonoLanguages and visual InformationCodes, such as the ImageCode. When we think of the previously discussed problem of mixing the levels of mediality and semioticity, then the criterion of semioticity is less self-evident than it seems at first glance.

We thus deal with two levels that we need to distinguish from one another: (1) the level of the cognitively anchored InformationCode, such as the code of the English language, military signals, etc., and (2) the level of learned NotationCode, such as the Latin script or the Sign Language code, in which English language texts can likewise be represented. The fact of writing or the notation of text belongs to the theory of medialization of text. The linguist H.J. Uldall used the terms “form” and “substance” to refer to the distinction between NotationCode and InformationCode. In 1938, Uldall (11) wrote the following (also see Derrida 58–59):

For it is only through the concept of a difference between form and substance that we can explain the possibility of speech and writing existing

at the same time as expressions of one and the same language. If either of these two substances, the stream of air or the stream of ink, were an integral part of the language itself, it would not be possible to go from one to the other without changing the language.

It is important to emphasize that this is not about “derived ‘notation’ (*‘notation’ dérivée*),” as Derrida put it (63), but rather about two correlated conventions that are related to one another, but cannot be derived from one another. In this sense, the English Sign Language notational code cannot be derived from the English language, but, because it is an acquired code, English language texts can be performed in it.

In a nutshell, texts must be materially manifested outside a body as communicative instruments, and this takes place through medialization (usually acoustically or optically, for example, when texts are put on paper by means of writing). This is also the premise of inscription theory within the context of the theory of documentality (Kress and Leeuwen, *Reading Images* 230–241; Ferraris). The mode of medialization necessarily creates the status of an object. Texts are performed medially in two ways: they are either (1) *situatively ephemeral* (e.g. orality) or (2) *dimissively persistent* (e.g. scripturality). Texts are notated using material, intersubjectively perceptible NotationCodes that are external to the body and that are recognized by a given group of sign users. NotationCodes (such as a ScriptCode or an ImageCode) refer to InformationCodes (such as a PhonoLanguage or the Western ImageCode). The elements of both types of codes are correlated with one another in the sense of type-token relationships. I will add at this point that there is a categorical difference between writtleness and pictoriality. Writings as notations may be visual, but they are not related to the ImageCode (the ImagoLanguage) as an InformationCode as the word signs of languages are in places like China.³⁹

Organization

When texts are notated (regardless of the semiotic form they take), different sets of rules work together at different structural levels (double- or multi-coding) (Knape, “Figurenlehre” 297–299). Such rules range from grammar rules to aesthetic rules and generic rules of textual architecture. If we strictly delimit our focus to the level of the text, texts are thus also *tectonically* organized in the sense that they obey certain blueprints (to remain in our architectural metaphor) that configure several semantic elements trans-phrasally or trans-clusterally. The tectonics of a text lay the groundwork for informativity. We call this phenomenon *organizational structure*, which connects the representational and interactive meanings of the text through three interrelated systems. In terms of production theory, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen, three criteria regulate the textual

calculi in the emergence of such structures: information value (attached to the various parts of the texture), salience (to draw the addressee's attention to significant structures), and internal framing (to disconnect or connect elements of the texture) (see Kress and Leeuwen, *Reading Images* 183).

At the lower structural levels, we find the smallest building blocks, the elements or semantic chunks of a text. These *semantic units* can regularly be configured on a slightly higher and more complex level—we then call them sentences or clusters. The level of textuality does not begin until the next higher level of organizational complexity. The traditional model of linguistic levels assumes that each theoretically abstract level (*word, sentence, text, and discourse*)⁴⁰ can be studied academically as its own independent area of analysis. This theoretical model specifies that each of these levels can be practically and functionally embedded in communication, and that each lower level can be integrated into the next higher level according to the principle of nesting (the word in the sentence, the sentence in the text, the text in discourse).

Problems arise as soon as we try to extend or apply this nesting model intersemiotically. In the case of a generalized theory of texts, for instance, the question emerges of how to model the concept of text for cases outside of human language. Even in the realm of disciplines that deal with PhonoLanguages there is much that has not yet been settled. Are there *necessary* principles or rules of order for texts, or even something like a “grammar of texts”? To put it differently: it is clear that the shaped semiotic units of meaning (words, signs, etc.) need to be arranged in the textual field in such a way that their harmony together generates more meaning than they contain separately. Texts are always more than the sum of their parts. What kind of rules can we identify with regard to such structures of order?

The question of text becomes even more complicated from the perspective of intersemiotics. What about sign systems that do not contain any “words” or word combinations in a linguistic sense? The linguistic concepts of *grammar* and *sentence* cannot help us with Heartfield's object because they were developed on the basis of human languages (and the linear structures with which they work).

One solution can be found in Hoey's suggestion to speak of *textual organization* to refer to the textual level above single elements. We call this the *texture* of a text. Textual linguistics deals with a new analytical level because its “communicative-pragmatic approach” views the text as an independent holistic entity made up of individual semantic parts, and not simply as a collection of smaller parts, a group of sentences that make up a text. But intersemiotics must deal with a diverse range of spatial extensions outside of linearly arranged signs, which means that we need to identify overarching concepts of order for the tectonics of intersemiotic objects that we call *texts*.

The thing to focus on here is the establishment of global meaning, which we designate with the central text-analytical category of *coherence*

(De Beaugrande and Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* 84–112). What factors are relevant for building coherence? First and foremost is the question of genre. We call certain artefacts *texts* if they contain transphrasal structures that are communicatively determined by our genre knowledge or discourse knowledge. A theory of text production is thus concerned with the construction of patterns of order in a network of signs that generate *higher order* meanings or deal with a quaestio (Klein and von Stutterheim) as a complex ensemble. In the sense of gestalt theory, a text is semantically something more than the sum of its individual parts.

The genre text model determines the communicative status of the text with regard to informational value, informational authenticity, and the associated strategies that addressees can use to orient themselves: is the text a part of licensed communication (e.g. art) or is it standard communication in the *life world* (in Husserl's terminology)?⁴¹ The genre also determines the organization of the text in the basic structures: is it a police protocol, a court ruling, a doctor's prescription, a play, a poem, or even a mixed composition or crossover product?

To genre orders, we must add the superstructures as Van Dijk has described them (*Textwissenschaft* 128–159; "Discourse Analysis"; "Episodic Models"). Examples are aesthetic structural models, logical-argumentative structures, and narrativity, which can occur in all genres of text and which organize the text at a higher level than other structures (hence, *superstructures*). The narrative "triple A" refers to the basic structural components of narrativity that the addressee can connect back to their world knowledge: actor, action, and action time.

For texts that are embedded in standard or normal communication, a strong degree of semantic determination is desirable. Genre patterns are adhered to, and ambiguities are avoided. In such situations, rhetoric applies the ideal of *perspicuitas*, of clarity and accuracy. In text genres such as user manuals (e.g. for a refrigerator), rhetoric calls for this ideal to be applied to all levels of textual organization: strongly determined texts of this kind are designed to achieve a maximum of semantic precision. But a certain degree of textual uncertainty remains even in such cases.

When it comes to Dada literature, by contrast (i.e. in licensed or the special communication of aesthetics), everything is geared towards expanding this textual uncertainty; it is no longer just about weak semantic determination, but rather about the dissolution of semantic certainty in every respect.

Complex Informativity

Informativity and semanticity refer to all of the elements that an addressee receives from a text in a given communicative situation, processes to enrich

their body of knowledge or experience, and when necessary stores in their mental apparatus. By creating texts, text-makers seek to create a semantic offer that is geared towards this receptive behavior. As highly organized complexes of signs, texts are also highly organized complexes of information. The cyberneticist Norbert Wiener summarized what the semantic text offers with the term “message.” Messages are recognizable as formations, which, according to Wiener, can be judged by the degree of their negentropy (amount of creativity required). Wiener (106–107; also see Meijer’s comment on Schmid in Schmid 106) expresses this in his jargon as follows:

Just as entropy is a measure of organization, the information carried by a set of messages is a measure of organization. In fact, it is possible to interpret the information carried by a message as essentially the negative of its entropy, and the negative logarithm of its probability.

We call the smallest unit of information a *datum*, which is also stated by signs. Ultimately, this method of providing information is the purpose of texts; otherwise, people could make do with the simpler expression of sounds, words, or sentences.

According to De Beaugrande and Dressler, there are different levels of “informativity” (139–162). The third and highest level is found in texts that work with rare structures and content, as is the case in Dada texts, for example:

These are comparatively infrequent occurrences which demand attention and processing resources, but which are, in return, more interesting. Discontinuities, where material seems to be missing from a configuration, and discrepancies, where text-presented patterns don’t match patterns of stored knowledge, would be the usual kinds of third-order occurrences.

(Ibid. 144)

The most important function of texts is the communication of complex information, which requires complex semantic structures that in turn are governed by the text-maker’s communicative goal.

The *coherence* of the individual parts is a central characteristic of texts: if there is a lack of coherency, then informativity is impaired (Wagner, “Linguistische Grundlagen” 94). The text organization discussed previously usually follows certain coherence calculations of the authors. This was precisely the aim of the Dadaists’ postulate of smashing. According to De Beaugrande and Dressler, *cohesion* is also an essential criterion of textuality (De Beaugrande and Dressler 48–83). It is important to point out, however, that cohesive phenomena are only markers of coherence and are

thus subordinate structures. Following a suggestion by Susanne Winkler, I would classify *coherence* and *cohesion* as subcategories of informativity.

In a generalized theory of texts, cohesion is expressed by the concept of junctors. Textual components that generate cohesion include connectors and discourse markers of all kinds, isotopes, and “grammatically” acting junctors. When it comes to narrative superstructures, such junctors include attributions of causality in the plot; for argumentative superstructures they include elements such as logical connections. As has been shown here, when it comes to aesthetically structured texts or image texts, there are hardly any binding or quasi-“grammatical” junctors to be found. The weak junctors that do exist in such cases have only limited instructional value and are primarily ambiguous. But they are still necessary.

Transnotability

The attempts to dissolve the concept of textuality found in Dada texts as products of modern poetry deal also with *transnotability* as a further characteristic of textuality. Transnotation refers to the capacity for information contained in a given text to be transferred (to a certain extent) into completely new texts with the help of other sign systems, although doing so inevitably results in the loss of some information.⁴² The ability to be transnotated provides proof that a given text can be perceived as making sense. What do I mean by that? When an addressee processes a text, they create a second version of it in the form of their own mental representation. Mental processing establishes whether the source text contains meaningful information or a meaningful message. In text production, the text-maker must consider this fact as part of their anticipatory calculations and must pose the question of whether addressees will really be able to find meaning in the text produced. Dada sought to undermine exactly this process.

This principle of transnotability is not about the intertextual universe in which every text exists. Rather, it relates to the fact that the core informational components of a text can be identified, to a certain extent, as semiotic segments and can be isolated, condensed, and then further inter-semiotically processed. Such intersemiotically processed segments must be traceable back to the source text, even if only (depending on the frame) at lower degrees of accuracy (segmentation condition). The underlying principle at work there has been called “cascading inscription” in reference to Bruno Latour (Nohr 83). As Latour noted in the case of laboratory results, “[E]verything, no matter where it comes from, can be converted into diagrams and numbers” (Latour 25). Similarly, in the process of describing his theory of transcription, Ludwig Jäger notes, “If semantics is basically the result of transcriptive processes, it is necessarily fragile, i.e. it is open to subsequent transcriptions” (Jäger 313).⁴³ Of course, the concepts of

“inscription” and “transcription” are counter-intuitive in the intersemiotic context because they come from the realm of writing (*scriptura*). But systems of notation can take advantage of all of the senses (e.g. also acoustics) and all kinds of sign systems (not just writing). For that reason, it is better to use the more general term “transnotation” to refer to the phenomenon in question. Transnotation is a sort of “translation”—or, better yet, a “transposition”—in the sense that such a transformation involves the creation of a referential intertextual and intersemiotic relationship between the source text and the new one.

If an artefact is to be considered a text, then at the very least the higher, transphrastic semantic segments (sequences, paragraphs, chapters, etc.) must be (analogously, via condensation processes) transformable into texts that consist of other sign systems. This property distinguishes *texts* from other objects that also have object appeal or symbolic values and can be used in communication. Their meaning can only be transnotated globally and not in segments. As such, the transnotability requirement also implies that the semantic segments form an organized network. The shape of this network must be ascertained for each individual text.

For their part, the Dadaists sought to systematically disrupt the possibility for transnotation and undermined the capacity for their textures to be transferred to other NotationCodes. They did so by using strategies of semantic disruption. They established global textual ambiguity in which (1) all of the textual components allow for infinite recourse to one another because they avoid the use of processes of semantic restraint (e.g. definitions), and (2) the associative junctors establish semantic determinations that are much too weak and that ultimately do not allow for reliable semantic determinations. In this respect, Dada contains almost no explicit (i.e. easily identifiable) components of “cohesion” on the surface of its texts. In such cases, the method of close reading represents an attempt to create a reconstructive, associative, and not always perfect transnotation.

Finally, just a brief comment on communicative embedding: by definition, texts are communicative instruments that are created as occasional artefacts (in contrast to the codes, which only contain the conventional sign elements) at a specific moment in history because people need them to carry out their communicative activities (see Bakhtin 104). In this respect, we can see a confluence between theories of text production, text medialization, textual effects, and textual rhetoric. Texts have pragmatic frames or contexts that we can describe using the categories of *setting reference*,⁴⁴ *author reference*,⁴⁵ and *addressee reference*.⁴⁶ From a pragmatic perspective, *words* and *sentences* with their own structures can serve as independent instruments (greetings, commands, exclamations, quick information) within their “deictic field” (Bühler 91–166). The same also applies to communicative objects that have a more complex structure with a higher level of order, namely, texts.

Due to their structural characteristics, texts make special “achievements” possible (Knape, “Textleistung”; Knape and Winkler) and make it possible to execute very specific communicative “functions” (Brinker et al. 105–6).

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426). I use the term “super-text” to refer to recent text-linguistic theories, according to which discourse is a supertext (i.e. a very specific kind of “hypertext”) that emerges in social interactions, constituted (1) semantically through thematic coherency, that is, a thematic connection of single texts, and (2) pragmatically by a certain group of communicators that come together to form an interest group, that is, a group that is interested in contributing texts to the discourse (see Spitzmüller and Warnke).
- 2 On the academic “second-order observer,” see Knape, “Seven Perspectives” 393–397.
- 3 See Harris’s claim that “[l]anguage does not occur in stray words or sentences, but in connected discourse” (3) and Bakhtin’s assertion that “[t]he text (written and oral) is the primary given” of all “disciplines and of all thought in the human sciences and philosophy in general,” and that “where there is no text, there is no object of study, and no object of thought either” (103).
- 4 For biographies and a geographical localization of Dada, see Puff-Trojan and Compagnon.
- 5 For a discussion of the aforesaid postmodern theories from a rhetorical perspective, see Knape, “Inversive Persuasion.”
- 6 On the relationship between cultural energy supply and negentropy, see Knape, “Inversive Persuasion” 10–13, 50.
- 7 For a general introduction to text linguistics, see Coseriu.
- 8 On the difference between world knowledge and language knowledge, see Lang and Maienborn (pro) and Hobbs (contra).
- 9 On “OverCode” see Eco, *Theory of Semiotics* 133–135.
- 10 Or “narrative voids” according to Iser 182–183.
- 11 This is similar to the technique employed by Carroll in “Jabberwocky” (in *Alice in Wonderland*). In Carroll’s case, the words are morphologically familiar and the syntactic structure makes sense, even though we do not know what they mean. I would like to thank Matthias Bauer for this and other suggestions.
- 12 This point of view has become dominant in textual linguistics today using different terminology: now theorists speak of “deixis and phorics” in texts (Heringer 31–50).
- 13 For the category “epitext” (further texts in relation to the central text, e.g. letters), see Genette 344–394.
- 14 “Skill does chance embrace, and chance her love returns” (Aristotle 1140a 20).
- 15 “Meaning is made in many different ways, always, in the many different modes and media which are co-present in a communicational ensemble” (Kress and Leuwen, *Multimodal Discourse* 111).
- 16 For “ekphrasis,” see Knape, *Was ist ein Bild?* 92.
- 17 For junctors see Kamlah and Lorenzen, *Logische Propädeutik* 151–160; for “visual junctors,” see Wetzchewald 335–372.
- 18 The more neutral term “syntagma,” derived from the field of semiotics, is more appropriate as it refers to orders constituted within the connection of components.

- 19 For relations within a text, see Hoey, *On the Surface*.
- 20 Even the Russian formalists have distinguished the “motives” of a text (as the smallest indivisible units of the “theme” of a work) from the “process” of the text, which “organizes” the linguistic material “into artistic units.” See Schmid 23.
- 21 On “notation,” see Knappe, *Die Dinge* 19–20, 43–45, 93.
- 22 Are there any required structures at the textual level that mirror the conditions of grammaticality? The answer is no, or at least only partially, at the level of microstructure, that is, the building blocks. To a certain extent, texts represent a realm of freedom that is only bound by communicative goals and the idea of “acceptance.” In this context, rhetoric speaks of *aptum* (the postulate of appropriateness) as the highest regulator of pragmatic text construction.
- 23 For “co-text,” see Widdowson 58–73.
- 24 Bottom-up processes in text production only serve local(!) refinement or correction in formulation.
- 25 See Eco, *Theory of Semiotics* 133–135 on “OverCode.” Kenneth Burke suggested that literary texts in particular are often organized according to four figures of thought that he called “master tropes.” He drew these tropes from the rhetorical tradition and thus laid the foundation for Paul de Man’s postmodern literary analysis. See Burke 503–517; Man; Knappe, “New Rhetoric” 490.
- 26 Jakobson’s model uses the familiar combination of a vertical *y*-axis with a horizontal *x*-axis. All linguistic units and grammatical phenomena of a language can be arranged using this model according to commonalities or similarities (equivalences, also feature oppositions) among each other in vertical columns, that is, “paradigms,” which are assigned to the vertical axis.
- 27 In non-artificial texts, this text organization arises in processes of “weak creativity” (Knappe, “Kreativität” 31–32).
- 28 The more specific case of the *morpheme* shall not be discussed at this point.
- 29 “For example, since we can say ‘John looked the information up,’ we should consider ‘look up’ as one word in the sentence ‘John looked up the information,’ although semantically ‘look up’ does form a unit” (Booi 284).
- 30 The systems of grammatical cases, for instance, can be analyzed both morphologically as well as syntactically.
- 31 “*Clause*: a grammatical construction consisting of subject and predicate with optional adjuncts” (Hoey, *On the Surface* 15).
- 32 For a discussion of the problem of *proposition* in literary aesthetics, see Knappe, “Ästhetische Relativitätstheorie”; Schmid 9–38.
- 33 For a theoretical approach of “picture = text,” see Knappe, “Bildrhetorik”; Fix; Susanka 138. Also, a brief summary of the corresponding research and of the “holistic understanding of text” can be found in Żebrowska 67–72.
- 34 According to Bakhtin, a text is limited as an utterance, leaving open the question of whether the boundary within the text is drawn semantically or externally pragmatically (104–105).
- 35 On “index,” see Eco, *Zeichen*.
- 36 On “intentionality,” see Knappe, “Seven Perspectives” 393–397.
- 37 For a general approach, see Knappe, *Modern Rhetoric* 251–269.
- 38 For “media,” see Knappe, *Modern Rhetoric* 262–263; Knappe, *Die Dinge* 91–94.
- 39 Thus, an alphanumeric, grapheme-based NotationCode has nothing to do with imagery. However, such a connection has frequently been suggested, for example, by Wetzchewald 238; Metten 118.
- 40 See Widdowson 8 and footnote 1. For a further theoretical definition of *discourse*, see also Knappe, “Rhetorik der Künste” 896, *Modern Rhetoric* 86–87.

- 41 For the term “communicative status,” see Knappe, *Modern Rhetoric* 14–15; for “status of speech,” see Goffman.
- 42 “The text (as distinct from the language as a system of means) can never be completely translated, for there is no potential single text of texts” (Bakhtin 106).
- 43 For a brief summary on this topic, see Żebrowska 219–220.
- 44 “Situationality” in De Beaugrande and Dressler 163–181; see Wagner, “Linguistische Grundlagen” 93–94.
- 45 “Intentionality” in De Beaugrande and Dressler 113–132; Knappe, “Seven Perspectives” 393–397.
- 46 “Acceptability” in De Beaugrande and Dressler 132–137.

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5 The Case of Epistemic Ambiguity and Its Strategic Production

Connecting Text and Cognition

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Judgements and decisions are ubiquitous in our lives. They may have to be made quickly or there may be more or less time pressure; they may be based on a small or large amount of knowledge, and they may refer to trivial or important issues, to mention only a few determining factors. In this chapter, we turn our attention to characteristics of the information underlying a decision and its mental representation.¹ More precisely, we address the phenomenon of epistemic ambiguity, which we locate in a hypothesis-testing process: none of two or more existing hypotheses can be rejected altogether because of equally convincing evidence, which results in a decision conflict.

In the first section, we will conceptualise this type of ambiguity in detail. The subsequent section contains some examples that show how ambiguity is connected with various psychological processes and effects. In this regard, we aim to both underpin our framework of ambiguity and show that ambiguity is a crucial concept for a range of (psychological) research. To illustrate the possible interplay between text and cognition in relation to ambiguity, the third section consists of a case study in which we will analyse a written scenario used in a number of legal judgement and decision-making experiments. Bringing together psychology with text- and language-based disciplines, namely, literary studies, linguistics, and rhetoric, we will exemplify how epistemic ambiguity and its underlying factors can be strategically produced (or avoided) when constructing such vignettes. In the last section, we will provide some suggestions concerning the production of epistemic ambiguity for judgement and decision-making research.

While texts are frequently used for psychological research, text characteristics are rarely addressed in a systematic manner; we believe that our interdisciplinary perspective can offer helpful insights into this problem. At the same time, psychological research on how individuals deal with certain text characteristics may be beneficial for text- and language-based disciplines.

Framework of Epistemic Ambiguity

The term ambiguity is used in many different disciplines, as the contributions to this volume show. The underlying concepts, however, vary considerably both between and within these, and psychology is no exception (see the review by Ziegler). Accordingly, Eylon and Allison complain, with good cause, that “[i]n many [psychological] studies, ambiguity is not carefully defined” (173). Due to this lack of terminological clarity, it is important to provide a clear-cut definition of what is meant by ambiguity. To this end, we will firstly introduce the framework of epistemic ambiguity.²

We define epistemic ambiguity as the state in which at least two hypotheses coexist in the process of making sense of a given information base. These hypotheses refer to the same totality of evidence, are mutually exclusive, and cannot be resolved on a more abstract level, and none of them can be completely rejected. This conceptualisation of the properties of an information base is derived from the work of literary scholar Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. While Rimmon’s narrative ambiguity is “a fact in the text” (12), however, we regard epistemic ambiguity as a subjective mental representation of an information base.

We locate epistemic ambiguity in the context of sense making. According to Weick, sense making can be generally understood as “placing stimuli into some kind of framework” (4) and “include[s] the construction and bracketing of the textlike cues that are interpreted, as well as the revision of those interpretations” (8). This notion accommodates the active process of forming and testing hypotheses. Following Hager and Weißmann, such a hypothesis can be thought of as “any assumption, conjecture or assertion about relationships or connections between constructs, variables or issues” (8; authors’ translation). We refer to a “given information base” in order to expand ambiguity to all constellations in which information exists in a predetermined form, which means that the totality of evidence has to be specified.

The term “epistemic ambiguity” connects our approach to existing concepts, particularly the “epistemic need” (e.g. Echterhoff et al.; Kruglanski; Kruglanski et al.), which can be summarised as the human desire “to achieve a valid and reliable understanding of the world” and “to establish what is real”; when this desire is fulfilled, uncertainty can be diminished (Pierucci et al. 301).

Ambiguity and Psychology

From a psychological perspective, at least two general questions arise with regard to ambiguity. Firstly, one may enquire about the consequences of being confronted with ambiguity (as tested in comparison with situations in which ambiguity is absent). Secondly, and related to the previous issue,

one may take an interest in strategies for resolving ambiguity or for coping with it. The relationship between ambiguity and psychology will be addressed by presenting some exemplary findings from various domains of research, namely, audience tuning, motivated reasoning, and coherence shifts.

Audience Tuning

An experiment by Pierucci et al. on audience tuning, that is, tailoring a message to one's audience based on its particular knowledge, attitudes, and other characteristics (e.g. Higgins), elucidates the relationship between ambiguity and the epistemic need as described previously: Pierucci et al. investigated how impressions are formed on the basis of another person's workplace records. They presented participants with one of two reports of an employee's workplace experience, which featured aspects that could be interpreted as sexual harassment on the part of a supervisor. In both cases, the material comprised the same pretested mix of clues in favour of and against the suspicion of sexual harassment; moreover, some unrelated information was included. Different levels of ambiguity were implemented by either explicitly mentioning a promotion offer in exchange for sexual favours at the end of the report (unambiguous version, i.e. there is disambiguation) or not mentioning such a statement (ambiguous version, i.e. there is *no* disambiguation).

Within the experimental setting, a student of psychology was introduced personally to all subjects. At the beginning of the session, they came to know that this student did an internship at the same institution where the employee worked, and that she wrote down her own impressions about former colleagues. They were told, moreover, that one of these short descriptions was added to the participants' materials, whereas, in fact, everyone received a description of the supervisor in question—either a positive or a negative one. The subjects' main task consisted of depicting the supervisor, with the ostensible purpose that the psychology student would have to identify this person afterwards. One week later, a second experimental session was performed in which the participants were requested to list all aspects about the target person (i.e. the supervisor) that they could remember from the employee's report. They were then asked to answer several questions connected to sexual harassment, the uncertainty of their assessments, and the student's attitude toward the target person as a control measurement.

The subjects' depictions of the supervisor differed in their evaluative tone as a function of ambiguity and audience attitude. That is, participants only tailored their messages toward the psychology student's attitude when *not* confronted with the explicit revelation of sexual harassment

(i.e. no mention of a promotion offer in exchange for sexual favours), a situation accompanied by higher perceived uncertainty. Additionally, given the ambiguous constellation, these more positive or negative depictions, depending on the psychology student's attitude, biased the recall after one week in a corresponding way. Furthermore, subjects' distortions increased with higher trust in the psychology student's attitude.

Pierucci et al. interpret their results in the light of creating a shared reality, that is, "the product of the motivated process of experiencing a commonality of inner states about the world" (Echterhoff et al. 498). According to this approach, an ambiguous situation triggers an epistemic need, and the epistemic need initiates the creation of shared reality. If the creation of shared reality succeeds, the audience-tuning effect on the communicator's memory occurs.

Motivated Reasoning

Another phenomenon connected to ambiguity is motivated reasoning. As Kunda states, reasoning can be guided by the motive to be accurate (accuracy goal) as well as by the motive to reach a specific conclusion (directional goal). With regard to the latter, Tannenbaum, Ditto, and Pizarro (experiment 3 in their publication) conducted a study in which they presented students from a US university with one of two scenarios depicting military "collateral damage." On the one hand, there was a version describing the decision by US military leaders to attack Iraqi insurgent leaders, with the aim to prevent future attacks by Iraqi insurgents. The second version, on the other hand, dealt with the inverse constellation: Iraqi insurgent leaders decided to attack US military leaders in order to protect themselves from the consequences of a US attack. In both versions, it was stated that, while the attackers accepted the possibility of harming civilians, they clearly did not intend to do so, but indeed the attack entailed such collateral damage. After reading the scenario, subjects first had to answer some questions concerning the military leaders' intention to hurt innocent people and the leaders' morality, and they were then asked about their political orientation using a scale ranging from "very liberal" to "very conservative."

Overall, participants not only assessed the collateral damage of the Iraqi insurgents' attack to be more intentional than that of the US military, but they also evaluated the Iraqi insurgents' military actions to be less moral. Moreover, there was an interaction between those dimensions of judgement and participants' political orientation: the US attack was rated to be less moral and the resultant collateral damage to be more intentional with increasing liberality. By contrast, the Iraqi insurgents' attack was rated to be less moral and the resulting collateral damage to be more intentional with increasing conservatism.

Motivated directional reasoning is, however, restricted to certain conditions. People

draw the desired conclusion only if they can muster up the evidence necessary to support it. . . . To this end, they search memory for those beliefs and rules that could support their desired conclusion. They may also creatively combine accessed knowledge to construct new beliefs that could logically support the desired conclusion.

(Kunda 483)

This also underlines the role that gaps, which are caused by either a lack of information or indeterminacy, play in ambiguous decision-making situations. When people weigh mutually exclusive hypotheses against the background of considerable evidence for all of them, gaps may be regarded as the crucial component that promotes a final decision, especially if one hypothesis is preferred for some reason. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the information a decision maker wishes to—but is well aware she or her should not—consider is likely still taken into account whenever co-occurring legitimate information leaves room for interpretation (see Hsee).

Coherence Shifts

Simon, Snow, and Read (study 1 in their article) executed a study with the intent to examine the mental processes behind decision making on multiple and complex pieces of information. Their experiment consisted of two parts separated by an unconnected task in order to conceal the purpose of their research. In phase one, participants were presented with short descriptions of several social situations, accompanied by assessments of related factual issues and general beliefs. In phase two, subjects first had to read a controversial legal case scenario dealing with an alleged theft (a similar version of this vignette is described in the case study to follow); additionally, half of the participants were presented with incriminating DNA proof, while the other half was presented with exonerating proof. Subjects then had to render a verdict and respond to a questionnaire. It is relevant that this questionnaire comprised all of the topics which were previously examined when evaluating social situations (e.g. an example of a belief that was to be rated on a scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was “[i]n general, when people identify someone whom they’ve already seen once or twice before the identifications are accurate”). Within the legal scenario, the previously mentioned item, for instance, referred to an eyewitness report that the suspect was present at the scene of the alleged theft and at the time of its perpetration. In phase one, the corresponding item referred to a man anonymously leaving flowers at a woman’s workspace, which was observed by a colleague. Thus, there was

a pretest and a posttest measurement of conceptually very similar evidence but in different contexts.

First of all, results show a considerable impact of DNA proof variation, with significantly more convictions in the case of the incriminating one. However, there was no difference between conditions in the evaluations of other pieces of evidence. Both “convictors” and “acquitters” nevertheless processed this information in a biased fashion. Based on a pretest-posttest comparison, convictors rated evidence in favour of guilt as more incriminating and evidence against guilt as more exonerating, whereas a converse pattern emerged for acquitters. Hence, “decisions follow[ed] from evidence, and evaluations of the evidence shift[ed] toward coherence with the emerging decision,” as Simon et al. (814) summarise their main finding. Moreover, decision makers’ confidence in their verdicts increased with higher coherence shifts.

With regard to ambiguity, it is important to note that the degree to which a coherence shift may occur depends on the characteristics of the underlying information. As Simon (“A Third View”) emphasises, evidence has to be malleable; otherwise, such reorganisation processes are less likely.

The Strategic Production of Epistemic Ambiguity: A Case Study

In principle, epistemic ambiguity is relevant to all situations in which an individual is confronted with multiple pieces of information, although the conditions that contain the potential for triggering epistemic ambiguity can best be illustrated by choosing a special type of situation. It is characterised by the existence of both a controversial issue and evidence that can be questioned as to its reliability and validity. This indeed holds true for many of the situations with which legal decision makers are confronted (e.g. Glöckner and Engel; Schweizer; Simon, “Pedantic Eclecticism”). We thus base the following case study on a legal scenario that was used in several experiments (Engel and Glöckner; Glöckner and Engel; Schweizer; Simon, Snow, and Read; Simon and Scurich, “Lay Judgments”, “Legal Expert Commentary”; Simon, Stenstrom, and Read). Some information was varied from study to study, but the core remained the same; the version we will refer to is the one used by Glöckner and Engel (see the Appendix for the complete vignette).

While some of the questions which legal judgement and decision-making research deals with can be investigated in the field and by the utilisation of official records, others require controlled conditions that only a laboratory experiment is able to provide. One reason for this is that many study arrangements cannot be created in real-world settings, whether for legal or ethical reasons or both. For instance, researchers cannot incite men and women to commit a rare crime in order to test how an offender’s sex affects sentencing. Secondly, to be able to conclude that there is a causal

relationship between two variables, one has to control other factors of influence. A crucial technique of control is to assign the experimental units randomly to the different levels of the variable that is hypothesised to have an impact on the other one (see Shadish, Cook, and Campbell). To get back to the example, even if inciting persons to commit a crime would be legally and ethically appropriate, assigning them randomly to one of those groups would be unfeasible.³

Therefore, and, of course, also due to resource management, experimental simulation studies are very popular (cf. Bieneck). In these experiments, participants are usually introduced to case scenarios, which may be based on real or fictitious events, presented in written form, as a video, or via an audiotape.

The vignette used by Glöckner and Engel provides the basis for epistemic ambiguity in our sense of the term as it allows for the coexistence of two mutually exclusive hypotheses on the highest level, in this case the innocence or guilt of Hans H., neither of which can be entirely rejected on the basis of the information provided. A close reading of the text in the following aims to render some of the structures and features visible which allow for this overall effect of epistemic ambiguity.

The vignette is divided into three units, the first of which (“Background: Hans H.”) provides general information on the case: €5,200 in cash has been stolen from a construction company’s administrative office, resulting in criminal proceedings against their employee Hans H. After this introduction, a “Synopsis of Evidence” is followed by two sections containing arguments from the perspectives of the opposing parties: “Arguments Made by the Company” and “Arguments Made by the Defence.” An equal number of contrasting arguments regarding the same aspects are presented in the exact same order in the two sections.

If we apply Van Dijk’s text model, the surface structure of the vignette’s text can be divided into two superstructures: the first and second parts of the vignette both fulfil the characteristics of a narrative superstructure, whereas the third part of the text (the arguments sections) has an argumentative superstructure.⁴ These global structures contain certain categories or slots which are filled by facts through semantic propositions⁵ that are complemented by pragmatic inferences.⁶ The reader has to connect these facts by deletion, selection, generalisation, or integration/construction to transfer them into larger semantic and pragmatic macrostructures.

The narrative superstructure in the vignette allows the facts to be presented in the form of coherent action sequences with a linear temporal structure. Thus, Hans H.’s biographical background is introduced first, and, subsequently, his role in the incident is explained. Some of these facts are then connected to arguments in the argumentative superstructure in the third part of the vignette. They are not presented as coherent narratives, but rather as a list of hypotheses about certain aspects in the synopsis (e.g. alibi, motive).

Both superstructures fulfil a specific role with regard to epistemic ambiguity in the vignette. In the “Synopsis of Evidence” (i.e. the narrative superstructure), five major aspects are raised that contribute to the question of Hans H.’s guilt: the car seen at the crime scene, the bank loan, the alibi, earlier problems Hans H. had with the company, and eye-witness evidence of a man seen close to the crime scene. Each of these aspects is presented in the vignette in a way that has an inherent degree of indeterminacy, which allows for specific implicit questions regarding the larger question of Hans H.’s guilt (e.g. did Hans H. have the opportunity to commit the crime?) to remain unanswered. Accordingly, two corresponding but contrasting hypotheses are raised in the argument sections, neither of which can be dismissed altogether on the basis of the given evidence, even if one may seem more likely. This indeterminacy is thus a prerequisite for ambiguity in the vignette.

A case in point is the CCTV evidence mentioned at the beginning of the “Synopsis” showing a “white XY car,” which is “rapidly leaving” the company’s parking lot at the same time when the culprit’s car must have left. The picture is, however, “out of focus,” and the licence plate cannot be read. This information leads to a certain degree of indeterminacy: only the type of car can be discerned, but not the specific car or the driver. Additional information is then provided: Hans H. owns this type of car, but, generally, “6% of all cars in the area are white XY cars.” The information regarding this aspect accordingly makes it probable, at least to some degree,⁷ that it was the car of Hans H., but at the same time it is not specific enough to exclude other possibilities, both of which are made explicit in the argumentative sections. Ambiguity on a lower level is thus created in the vignette regarding the question of whether the car on the CCTV tape is indeed Hans H.’s car. This lack of information results in indeterminacy and, in combination with the explicit arguments raised in the third structural unit, in salient ambiguity on the higher level, that is, the question of guilt. The aspects which are subsequently presented in the vignette follow a similar pattern.

It should be noted that the effect of ambiguity in the vignette does not depend on every hypothesis being counterbalanced by a corresponding one. It is mentioned in the “Synopsis” that, following a reproof from his boss for “claiming expenses without justification,” by which Hans H. was “deeply hurt,” he was “frequently seen working late at the office.” This last aspect is only referred to by the defence, claiming that Hans H. did not develop a wish for revenge, but, “instead, he tried to work even harder to prove himself to his boss.” It would have been easy to find a counterargument (e.g. Hans H. used the time alone in his office to prepare for his theft), but, even without finding one, the structural conditions for higher level ambiguity are established.

The overall structure of the vignette may indicate that the arguments in this third part are designed to be the foundation of the decision-making

process. The strict division between the two superstructures in the vignette and the internal pattern of the last part (i.e. the listing of an equal number of arguments in favour of and against Hans H. in the exact same order) point to the likeliness that these factors are particularly crucial for the strategic production of ambiguity.

From our point of view, this strict division is not a necessary condition for the strategic production of epistemic ambiguity in a vignette. If this textual strategy is chosen, however, one additional factor should be taken into account. The process of selecting some relevant facts that are referred to in the last part and the simultaneous omission of others may lead to the assumption that these latter facts do not affect the process of decision making.

This assumption may be problematic. Besides inductive and deductive reasoning, which are usually connected with argumentative structures, people also form judgements which are based on “speculation.” This type of creative inferencing, called abduction (see Reichertz), is obviously different from other forms of logical reasoning and can also be related to narrative superstructures. Even facts that are merely evoked in the “Synopsis” (and thus the narrative superstructure) and are entirely ignored in the last part may trigger abduction and, thus, increase or diminish ambiguity. Textual attributes that trigger abduction are, in particular, facts based on implicit assumptions that may be complemented by the reader, which is given in the vignette.

Apart from Hans H., 17 other people have access to the safe, one of whom must have committed the crime because the safe does not seem to have been opened violently (implicit assumption). Furthermore, within the limited pool of suspects, Hans H. is the only one against whom criminal proceedings are instituted. This implicit assumption is based on the omission of any information regarding other possible suspects, for example, the accountant.⁸ These aspects only appear in the narrative superstructure and are not referred to in the last part of the vignette. They could lead to the abductive conclusion that Hans H. must be guilty because there seems to be no suspicion or evidence against any other potential culprit in the very limited pool of suspects (i.e. all those who had access to the safe). An imbalance could be the result of these abductions, which could reduce the vignette’s potential for ambiguity.

As explicated earlier, the “Synopsis of Evidence” consists of five general pieces of evidence with respect to Hans H.’s alleged guilt (in order of presentation): the car, the bank loan, the alibi, Hans H.’s earlier problems with the company, and the eyewitness report. Regardless of their questionable reliability due to the inherent indeterminacy, these pieces of information can be grouped by their underlying incriminating (I) or exonerating (E) character. On the one hand, the bank loan and the eyewitness report can be employed as indicators of Hans H.’s guilt but not his innocence. On the

other hand, the alibi can be used to emphasise Hans H.'s innocence but not his guilt. The remaining two aspects seem amenable to both sides (B).

Hence, there is an imbalance in the direction of evidence potentially supporting guilt. Over and above this quantitative factor, there is also a qualitative issue one should consider, namely, the sequence in which the information is introduced. Drawing on the notions in the preceding paragraph, the order is as follows: B, I, E, B, I. At least two implications arise from this in relation to conceivable, connected, information-processing phenomena.

According to Kruglanski and Webster, individuals differ systematically in their "desire for definite knowledge on some issue" (263): the need for cognitive closure. "Because of the tendency to seize on early information and immediately freeze, people under a heightened need for closure may process less information before committing to a judgment and generate fewer competing hypotheses to account for the available data" (Kruglanski and Webster 265). Persons with a high need for cognitive closure, therefore, may be especially affected by the first piece of clearly relatable evidence (the bank loan), which possesses an incriminating potential. The likelihood that a person may do this could even be increased because the initial information in the "Synopsis of Evidence" (the car) leaves room for interpretation in both directions and, consequently, hardly allows for a specific answer regarding Hans H.'s innocence or guilt.

Apart from those individual differences, it is well established that, in general, information that is presented early or late is of great significance for processing (primacy and recency effects; e.g. Bruine de Bruin and Keren; Hogarth and Einhorn; Kerstholt and Jackson). As the last piece of evidence has an inherent incriminating potential, an assessment of guilt is likely to be further substantiated. And, as a series of experiments by Costabile and Klein show, incriminating evidence is particularly susceptible to recency effects. Moreover, the fact that the final information consists of an eyewitness report is crucial insofar as this kind of evidence usually has a high impact on verdicts (for a review, see Devine, Clayton, Dunford, Seying, and Pryce).

Linguistic instruments to manipulate ambiguity are a further crucial factor which should not be neglected when constructing vignettes, because the level of a text's potential for ambiguity can also be increased or decreased through the insertion (or deletion) of particular linguistic forms. For instance, the imbalance noted earlier that the vignette may lead to the implicit conclusion that Hans H. is the only suspect can be significantly affected by introducing the linguistic element "allegedly" into an appropriate position in the first part of the vignette.⁹ We will now show in more detail how the insertion of particular sentence adverbs can serve to manipulate epistemic ambiguity.

According to Ramat and Ricca, sentence adverbs "represent a class of syntactically dispensable lexemes¹⁰ which affect (/modify) in various ways

the content of the sentence in which they occur” (189). One subgroup of sentence adverbs is the so-called epistemic adverbs¹¹ that express “epistemic modality, where it is a matter of the speaker’s assessment of the truth of the proposition expressed in the residue or the nature of the speaker’s commitment to its truth” (Huddleston and Pullum 767). The group of these adverbs includes (among others) “certainly,” “probably,” “maybe,” “apparently,” and “allegedly.”¹² Huddleston and Pullum further divide these adverbs into four “levels of strength according to the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition” (768).

The strong items, such as “certainly,” “definitely,” and “clearly,” “commit the speaker to the truth of the modalised proposition” (Huddleston and Pullum 768). The insertion of such elements into the “Synopsis of Evidence” of the vignette at hand can cause a certain disambiguation of the text because a less ambiguous assessment of particular events is presented, hence weakening the formation of diverging hypotheses.¹³ An example that illustrates the inherent possibilities of strong, epistemic sentence adverbs to decrease a vignette’s potential for ambiguity is given in (1b):¹⁴

- (1a) Hans explained that he could not prove this cash transfer with receipts because larger financial transactions in the floral business are sometimes conducted in cash.
- (1b) *Clearly*, Hans could not prove this cash transfer with receipts because larger financial transactions in the floral business are sometimes conducted in cash.

The second subgroup contains quasi-strong epistemic adverbs, including “apparently,” “seemingly,” and “presumably.” These elements “indicate that [the speaker does not] know, cannot be certain, that the proposition is true: [he is] merely judging by appearances or making a presumption” (Huddleston and Pullum 769).

By contrast, the insertion of these adverbs can increase the vignette’s potential for ambiguity: the fact that something is clearly marked as a mere presumption by some entity increases the level of potential unreliability of the given information as in (2b):

- (2a) Hans was deeply hurt by this incident.
- (2b) *Apparently*, Hans was deeply hurt by this incident.

Thirdly, according to Huddleston and Pullum, there are medium-strong epistemic adverbs (e.g. “probably”) that “explicitly allow . . . for the possibility that the proposition is not true, but rate . . . the chances of its being true as greater than even” (769). And last, there is a weak category of epistemic adverbs (with its main members “maybe,” “perhaps,” and

“possibly”) that “indicate that the proposition is not known to be false, with the chances of its being true falling in the range from slight to more or less fifty-fifty” (Huddleston and Pullum 769).

The insertion of elements that belong to these two categories can also increase the vignette’s potential for ambiguity. The possibility of the proposition not being true is explicitly mentioned in the text, hence favouring the formation of diverging hypotheses about what has happened [cf. (3b)]:¹⁵

(3a) Hans was deeply hurt by this incident.

(3b) Probably/*possibly*, Hans was deeply hurt by this incident.

Finally, according to Huddleston and Pullum, elements like “allegedly”¹⁶ have a special status, because they “absolve . . . [the speaker] from the responsibility for the residual proposition: the latter has the status of an allegation, and [he] cannot say whether it is true” (769).

Similar to quasi-strong epistemic adverbs, the insertion of these elements could increase the vignette’s potential for ambiguity because the truth of a proposition is linked to a certain entity that could possibly give unreliable (or even false) information [cf. (4b)]:

(4a) A technician who had been called to repair the photocopier testified that he had seen someone leave the accounts office in great haste at about 7:15 pm.

(4b) *Allegedly/supposedly*, a technician who had been called to repair the photocopier saw someone leave the accounts office in great haste at about 7:15 pm.

Concluding Remarks

We have conceptualised epistemic ambiguity as the coexistence of two (or more) hypotheses on a given issue. Because there is evidence for each of them, none can be rejected altogether; this leads to a conflict because they are mutually exclusive. However, individuals seek consistency, as was already established approximately 100 years ago by gestalt psychologists with respect to fundamental processes of perception (e.g. Koffka). The exemplary findings we have presented in the second section of this chapter similarly support this tendency with regard to situations in the complex social world in which we live. Apart from examining the psychological processes involved in disambiguation, one also has to consider the input level as both interact with each other. With regard to epistemic ambiguity, indeterminacy can be seen to play a major role, not only as a constitutive factor for it but also as a solution for the recipients by allowing them to nevertheless arrive at consistency. At first glance, this notion seems somewhat paradoxical, but there is good reason to assume that human

information processing operates in a bidirectional manner (e.g. Glöckner and Betsch; Read et al.; Simon and Holyoak; see also the earlier section “Coherence Shifts”); that is, a piece of evidence can prompt competing hypotheses on the issue in question, but in the course of making a (first) overall decision this evidence may be reinterpreted or re-evaluated toward the hypothesis (tentatively) accepted.

On the basis of our concept of epistemic ambiguity and the results of our analysis in the case study, we propose the following considerations when producing vignettes:

- In order to strategically generate epistemic ambiguity, it may be useful to first choose a central question at a text’s superordinate level which allows for contrasting hypotheses as answers (e.g. “Is Hans H. guilty?”).
- Different aspects can then be defined which contribute to the higher level issue. Each of these aspects may be connected to a question (e.g. “Does Hans H. have an alibi?” “Is the car seen at the crime scene Hans H.’s car?”). It should be ensured that the vignette allows for contrasting hypotheses regarding these questions through either indeterminacy or lack of information in the text. Formulation of hypotheses based on the information in the text can subsequently be used as a first “test” for ambiguity. If the information provided in the vignette leads to the rejection of one of these hypotheses, epistemic ambiguity may be absent.
- Regarding the aspects which contribute to ambiguity, both quantitative and qualitative points should be considered. Not only is the number of aspects crucial, but their reliability and validity and the order in which they are presented are as well.
- The role of linguistic micro elements such as epistemic sentence adverbs should be considered. The insertion (or deletion) of particular micro elements in appropriate positions of a text can systematically increase (or decrease) a text’s potential for ambiguity on a micro level and thereby also on a higher level.
- Finally, it has to be emphasised that not all inferences that recipients may draw can be foreseen, because everyone has their own individual base of knowledge, experience, and values. Whether a potential for ambiguity is realised may be crucially influenced by these factors, and psychological phenomena like motivated reasoning may not be noticed because they often “operate well within the confines of what people perceive as the dictates of objectivity” (Ditto et al. 312). This holds true for the recipients as well as for the producers of a vignette. Textual analysis like the one we have provided here is thus only the first step. In any case, the existence of epistemic ambiguity has to be examined empirically via pretesting before the material can be used for experimental purposes.

Appendix: The Case Scenario Used by Glöckner and Engel (2013)

Background: Hans H

Hans H. is 34 years old. He lives in Frankfurt/Main with his wife Katrin and two children. Hans works for the large construction firm Hausbau GmbH (Hausbau Ltd.). After having worked as a foreman for more than two years, he complained to his superior that the job was contributing to his back trouble. His boss then assigned Hans to a position as a construction manager in the company's administrative offices. Hans' task was to supervise the progress made on the various building projects and to coordinate the different groups. Hans is generally considered to be a hard-working employee. His colleagues say that he often appears reserved and at times even a little grumpy.

At the end of each day, the company's accountant places all of the company cash in the safe. This safe is located at the rear of the accounts office. The safe is also used to store other sensitive documents, including bids and project reports.

Apart from the accountant and her assistant, the construction managers, sales managers, and managers also have access to the safe. In all, 18 people, including Hans, can use the safe. The safe has a time mechanism that records when it is opened and closed. One morning, the accountant noticed that €5,200 in cash was missing. The time mechanism showed that the safe had last been opened at 7:14 pm the previous evening. After an investigation by a private detective, the firm instituted criminal proceedings against Hans H.

Synopsis of the Evidence

A CCTV camera, installed at the entrance to the office building, showed a car rapidly leaving a parking space in front of the building at 7:17 pm on the evening in question. However, the picture was out of focus and the detective was unable to read the licence plate. The video shows a white XY car. The make of Hans H.'s car is XY, it is white, and he was seen driving it to work that morning. According to the detective, 6% of all cars in the area are white XY cars. The detective also found that Hans paid off a bank loan of €4,870 one day after the money had disappeared. His debts had accumulated in the last three months, and the bank had already threatened to take legal action. Hans testified that he took out the loan to help his sister-in-law, who runs a flower shop in Aachen. She returned the money in cash, and he used it to pay back the loan. Hans explained that he could not prove this cash transfer with receipts because larger financial transactions in the floral business are sometimes conducted in cash.

Silvia, a manager at Hausbau GmbH, testified that she saw Hans at 8:00 pm on the evening in question when they both picked up their children from an event at school. Hans was wearing elegant trousers and a jacket he had not worn at work. Silvia testified that it takes between 45 and 50 minutes at that time of day to get from the office to the school at the other end of town.

Hans testified that he has had a clean criminal record for the past 16 years. At the age of 18, he was arrested for attempting to break into an apartment. He was convicted for this offence. Since then, he has not been in conflict with the law.

A few months before the incident, Hans had been summoned by his boss to discuss the payment of certain expenses claimed by Hans. The boss reprimanded Hans for claiming expenses without justification. Hans argued that other construction managers had been claiming the same expenses and that the boss was therefore challenging him unjustly. His boss disagreed and refused to reimburse the costs. He also made clear to Hans that a promotion he had already been promised would fall through due to these events. Hans was deeply hurt by this incident. In the following weeks, he was frequently seen working late at the office.

A technician who had been called to repair the photocopier testified that he had seen someone leave the accounts office in great haste at about 7:15 pm. When questioned by the detective a day after the incident, the technician identified Hans as the person he had seen. When asked how sure he was about this, the technician said he was “at least 80%” certain. He explained that he had seen Hans once or twice before in the office.

Arguments Made by the Company

That only 6% of cars in the area are white XY cars makes it likely that it was Hans who was filmed leaving the parking lot.

It is no coincidence that Hans paid back his loan exactly one day after the burglary. He paid off his debts with the money he had stolen from the company safe.

It is doubtful that larger financial transactions in the floral business are conducted in cash.

Hans could have driven fast in order to be at the school by 8:00 pm.

No matter how heavy the traffic, if one drives aggressively enough, it is possible to shorten the journey time by a significant margin.

In general, people who have once committed a crime are likely to do so again at a later time.

Hans was angry about the sanctions imposed on him by his boss. Stealing the money from the safe was a way to take revenge on the company.

In general, one can assume that people who feel they have been unjustly treated have the motive to do mean things.

That the technician was at least 80% certain in his identification of Hans as the man who left the accounts office proves that Hans stole the money.

One can generally assume that people correctly identify other people, particularly when they have seen them before.

Arguments Made by the Defence

Because a high 6% of cars in the area are white XY cars, it is less likely that it was Hans who was filmed leaving the parking lot.

Hans paid back his debts with the money he received from his sister-in-law.

In the floral business, larger financial transactions are indeed sometimes conducted in cash.

It was virtually impossible for Hans to drive from the office to the school, change his clothes on the way, and still be there by 8:00 pm.

In evening rush hour traffic, it is extremely difficult to shorten one's journey time even if one drives aggressively.

It is wrong to assume that people who have once committed a crime will commit another.

Hans did not want to take revenge on the company for his unfair treatment; instead, he tried to work even harder to prove himself to his boss.

In general, one can assume that people who feel unjustly criticized in their work tend to work harder in order to prove themselves.

That the technician was not entirely certain in his identification of Hans as the man who took the money means that it could have been someone else.

One can assume that people often make mistakes when identifying other people especially if they have seen them only once or twice before.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426).
- 2 The term "epistemic ambiguity" has been used by a number of authors from various domains, for example, Carel; Hempel; Livi et al.; Luhrmann; and Sytma and Livengood. While some of these applications are entirely different from our understanding of the term, others are comparatively close to it; yet, the manner in which we conceptualise epistemic ambiguity is new. It should be further noted that there is an overlap with "epistemic uncertainty," defined by Tannenbaum, Fox, and Ülkümen as "uncertainty in assessments of what is or will be true" (2). Uncertainty is, however, a mental state a percipient can experience when confronted with ambiguity, that is, uncertainty is a potential *result* of ambiguity (cf. Ziegler).
- 3 There is a large amount of literature broaching the issue of the costs and benefits of various research approaches to legal judgement and decision making in

- detail. For instance, Vidmar examines critical aspects of analyses on the basis of verdict statistics; Bornstein; Diamond; and Konečni and Ebbesen consider many aspects of jury simulation research and generalisability of results, and Simon (“Pedantic Eclecticism”) discusses tensions between basic and applied psychological perspectives.
- 4 Van Dijk employs the term “narrative” in a different way than Rimmon-Kenan, who focuses on the connection between narrative mediation and ambiguity. All parts of the vignette discussed in our chapter, not only that with the characteristics of a narrative superstructure according to Van Dijk, can be analysed with regard to speaker intentions and attitudes (i.e. narrative mediation), which can contribute to ambiguity. Review the section on epistemic adverbs for an example of how speaker attitudes can be conveyed in the text and how they can influence a text’s potential for epistemic ambiguity.
 - 5 Löbner defines the term “proposition” as “[t]he descriptive meaning of a sentence, . . . a concept that provides a mental description of the kind of situations it potentially refers to” (23).
 - 6 Following Detges (“Implikaturen”) in a simplified fashion, we wish to define the term “inference” as a hypothesis made by the recipient about what could probably be meant by the producer of an utterance/a sentence. For an analysis that describes the crucial role inferences can play in certain processes of language use and language change, see Detges, Chapter 9 in this volume.
 - 7 It should be noted that the degree of this probability depends on the absolute number of the population to which this percentage refers. There is a considerable difference in regard to significance, for instance, depending on whether 6% of 100 people or 6% of 1 million people drive the same car. In the given vignette, no such information is provided.
 - 8 The formation of these particular implicit assumptions can also be linked to one of Levinson’s pragmatic principles, the Q-heuristic (“What isn’t said, isn’t,” cf. Levinson).
 - 9 For example, as in: One morning, the accountant *allegedly* noticed that €5,200 in cash was missing (emphasis added).
 - 10 Lexemes are “linguistic units which carry lexical meanings” (Löbner 41). A syntactically dispensable lexeme is an optional element of a sentence that can be omitted without leaving the remaining sentence grammatically incorrect.
 - 11 The designation of this subgroup of sentence adverbs varies among authors. Huddleston and Pullum speak of “modal adjuncts” or “modal adverbs”; Biber, Conrad, and Leech speak of “epistemic stance adverbs.” Following Wierzbicka, we will call these elements epistemic adverbs.
 - 12 Some authors additionally distinguish between epistemic adverbs (in a narrow sense) and evidential adverbs. For the reasons for this distinction and a more detailed analysis, see Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer.
 - 13 Conversely, the insertion of these elements can also increase a vignette’s potential for ambiguity if they are added to the contradictory testimonies of two opposing parties, hence favouring the formation of two diverging hypotheses.
 - 14 Hereafter, you will find the original version of the vignette in (a) and the modified version in (b).
 - 15 Of course, the insertion of “weak” epistemic adverbs increases the level of ambiguity more prominently than the insertion of medium-strong elements.
 - 16 The same holds true for other reportative adverbs (such as *reportedly* and *supposedly*), which form a subgroup of epistemic adverbs. For an analysis on reportative adverbs in German and Polish, see Socka.

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6 Political Ambivalence and Dramatic Ambiguity

Bertolt Brecht's Lehrstück *Die Maßnahme* (1930/31)

Sebastian Meixner

As a genre, the 'Lehrstück' or 'learning play'¹ does not exactly enjoy the best reputation: it is both aesthetically and politically discredited. As a supposed instrument of political agitation, the Lehrstück and its literary value have frequently been contested,² and even associated with the National Socialist *Thingspiele* (see Pan; Reichl). I would like to cautiously rehabilitate this genre by means of one of its generic prototypes: Bertolt Brecht's *Die Maßnahme* (1930/1931).³ The paratext to Brecht's *Versuche* edition from 1931 insists that the genre is based on the attempt to train a specific intervening behavior through a 'learning play.'⁴ Rather than aiming at political clarity, however, the Lehrstück stages the process of political decision making as one that relies on ambiguous structures and provokes fundamentally ambivalent attitudes by producing conflicting evaluations (see Krabiell, "Die Maßnahme" 257–258).⁵ This political ambivalence⁶ is generated by means of an irresolvable dramatic ambiguity, one that no longer allows for the elucidation of a clear doctrine (or *Lehre*) by multiplying and confusing dramatic levels, conceptualization of characters, and rhetorical genres. Dramatic ambiguity with its conflicting meanings leads to ambivalence with its respective conflicting evaluations (see Berndt and Kammer 7–23).

Contrary to Brecht's paratext, the Lehrstück, hence, does not facilitate the exercise of a definite, ideologically secure behavior; instead, it operates independently on a formal level set apart from ideological content. To endeavor to disambiguate the dramatic structure of the Lehrstück and dissolve the conflicts of ambivalence in interpretive analysis means nothing less than to ignore the aesthetic operators which are primarily to be found in the *Maßnahme*'s text. But I would not attribute this ineluctable ambivalence to Brecht himself and—as Helmuth Kiesel does—describe the ambivalence as trigger for the dramatic ambiguity on the level of the empirical author and the dramatic characters (see Kiesel 307–308, 312, 319). Instead, I will argue that the dramatic structure of ambiguity on all levels of the dramatic system of representation—dramatic levels, conceptualization

of characters, and rhetorical genres—triggers ambivalence on a structural level as well.

In the first stage of my argument, I will examine the general structure of the Lehrstück and delimit my scope to the dramatic text. In the second stage, I will call on Jacques Rancière's political aesthetics in order to investigate how exactly the Lehrstück produces ambivalence through its dramaturgy of absence. In the third stage, I will eventually analyze how *Die Maßnahme*, as a prototype of the genre in question, calls attention to the irresolvability of political ambivalences by means of dramatic ambiguity.

The Lesson of the 'Learning Play'

As is well-known, the Lehrstück has its roots in Brecht's thought—not so much in his theoretical reflections on the theater as in the development of New Music in the 1920s (see Calico 16–42). In the name of communal music (*Gemeinschaftsmusik*) and utility music (*Gebrauchsmusik*), a new form of aesthetic praxis meant to represent art as a collective activity was sought beyond established forms of the concert business. In this sense, Lehrstücke emerged in tight coordination with directors such as Sláton Dudow and composers such as Kurt Weill or Paul Hindemith, who each decidedly influenced this intermedial kind of play. The first two Lehrstücke accordingly premiered in 1929 as part of a chamber music festival in Baden-Baden: the 'radio cantata' "Lindberghflug," set to music by Weill and Hindemith, and another simply titled "Lehrstück," set to music by Hindemith alone (see Krabiell, "Die Lehrstücke" 28–35).

In this chapter, I will focus on the text—which is, in a strict sense, a libretto—of Brecht's *Maßnahme* and, therefore, largely neglect its musical elements. The Lehrstück does not attempt to convey clear, univocal expertise in its textual structure (see Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück* 77–78; Krabiell, "Das Lehrstück"; Vaßen 121–122); rather, as a form of what Brecht called "open drama" ("offene Dramatik"), it is concerned above all with the performative practice of various attitudes, which can, in turn, be understood as political positions (see Horn 333–334). Accordingly, the dramatic performance does indeed train a kind of political behavior, but it conveys no clear behavioral directives. The Lehrstück, hence, aims not at passive imitation but at active performance. In its most radical guise, and in pseudo-liturgical fashion, the Lehrstück may even dispense with the audience altogether (see Brecht, *Die Maßnahme* 262), for the play's actors themselves form its target group, which need not consist of professional thespians (see Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück* 87–96). As a result, a dichotomous division of the actors is characteristic for the Lehrstück. On the one hand, the chorus brings a collective, authoritative source of assertion on stage, which truly merits the attribute 'collective.' The control chorus in the 1930 premier of

Die Maßnahme accordingly consisted of 300 actors, who were recruited from three workers' choirs (see Nössig 440). On the other hand, the Lehrstück also brings onto the stage a smaller number of de-individualized characters who oppose the chorus. These characters are de-individualized because they possess no names in the stage directions; instead, they are denoted solely by their function. As a consequence, in the play itself, they are capable of taking on various roles. In this variability of roles lies an element of distantiation, which characterizes the Lehrstück on the whole and is mirrored in its extensive dramatic instructions and program texts.⁷ In Brecht's notes on the genre of the Lehrstück from the 1920s, one encounters a passage in which the actors are compelled to recite their lines as if they were a citation ("wie ein Zitat"; Brecht, "Kurze Beschreibung" 643): "The character must be narrated, not embodied" (Müller 470; translation by DC, see endnote 1).⁸ As the maxim suggests, scenic representation is continually subject to interruption. These interruptions are hints at the dramatic ambiguity that produces political ambivalence by textual means. In light of the analysis of these breaking points in the text, the Lehrstück becomes visible as a dramatic genre that reflects on its own status as a drama at the limits of musical theater and 'epic theater,' as well as on the general relation between theater and politics.

Ambivalence and Ambiguity of the Lehrstück

Before analyzing *Die Maßnahme* as a prototype of its genre, one must ask what is actually at stake in the Lehrstück. As the Lehrstücke that precede *Die Maßnahme*, *Jasager (He Who Says Yes; 1929–1930)* and *Neinsager (He Who Says No; 1929–1930)* make clear, these plays bring a dilemma that necessitates some decision onto the stage. No matter how the characters may eventually decide, they always decide incorrectly. The Lehrstück itself, hence, decidedly avoids negotiating univocal political positions with clear dramatic means, and the aim for clarity in communication by following the Gricean maxims of cooperation and manner ('avoid ambiguity') is not at stake in Brecht's Lehrstück. Instead, the ambiguities on the different levels of the dramatic text lead to political ambivalence when it comes to assessing the skandalon of killing the *homo politicus*. Since the turn of the millennium, this imbrication of art and politics is again at the center of theoretical interest, for example, in Alain Badiou's political hermeneutics (see Schöning), Giorgio Agamben's political theology, and in Rancière's political aesthetics.

While Agamben's concept of *homo sacer* may be able to shed some light on the ethical dilemma of the Lehrstück (see Horn), Rancière's political aesthetics demonstrate how politics and literature come to intertwine in the first place. Rancière thereby allows us to get a grip on the question of how the Lehrstück represents a political dilemma with literary means. Politics and aesthetics are, in short, fundamentally interconnected, for they both

represent “categories of the distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* 31). Rancière’s model of the relation between aesthetics and politics is particularly apt for an analysis of the Lehrstück, as it does not conceive of the politics of literature in terms of the personal engagement of literary authors. Rather, he is concerned above all with the “connection between politics as a specific form of collective practice and literature as a well-defined practice of the art of writing” (Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* 3). Rancière defines politics as

the construction of a specific sphere of experience in which certain objects are posited as shared and certain subjects regarded as capable of designating these objects and of arguing about them. But such a construction is not a fixed given resting on an anthropological invariable. The given on which politics rests is always litigious.

(3)

The Lehrstück brings this dispute onto the stage and thereby becomes a political laboratory. Rancière, as a “philosopher of equality” (Davis 7; translation by DC) in literature, generally accepts this characterization. Analogous to the disputed foundation of politics, literature, too, is based on the misunderstanding of its signs. Rancière, hence, resolutely rejects the dream of “communication that would be devoid of misunderstandings,” not only because a language that “defined what it was talking about unequivocally” (Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* 31) is, in principle, impossible. Rather, the misunderstanding of literature should be sought not in an incorrectly understood message but in its staging of an “excess in the relationship of bodies to words” (40). As Rancière explains in his analysis of Proust and in recourse to Barthes’s reality effect, the literary function of bodies and things lies in their apparent lack of functionality, for they attack the politically posited proportions of correspondence between words and things.

The concept of strategy, however, remains highly problematic at this juncture of Rancière’s argument, particularly the question of that strategy’s executor. Rancière, in other words, distances himself from any recourse to the author or the paradigm of rhetoric. In his view, literary meaning, based on misunderstanding, is not a “relationship of will to will” but a “relationship of sign to sign” (15). Within this framework, strategy is not a key factor at the stage of the author’s textual production but, instead, is always an ascription to the text itself. Literature stands in resolute opposition to the “noisy stage of the orators” (20) of rhetoric; the strategies of a literary text take on a life of their own in contradistinction to those of its author or speaker.

In the course of his literary analyses, Rancière also makes a prominent reference to Brecht. Unlike his more elaborate analyses of texts by Proust

and Flaubert (33–46), however, the texts of Brecht can, in this context, hardly be said to allow functionless bodies and things to circulate. According to Rancière, Brecht “thinks everything—and its opposite. He doesn’t commit slips, he winks” (100). In this view, his texts constitute a series of misunderstandings which thwart Brecht’s own presupposed strategies:

From the *Threepenny Opera*, which delighted those it hoped to trash, to *Mother Courage and Her Children*, which moved those it was supposed to outrage, via *The Decision*, which was rejected by the Party it exalted, Brecht never stopped missing his mark.

(102)

Wherein lies the cause of this series of misunderstandings? In relation to the Lehrstück, I claim that dramatic ambiguity *generates* these political ambivalences as dramatic ambiguity remains fundamentally irresolvable. The strategy of the Lehrstück consequently consists in the planned generation of ambivalence by means of ambiguity. The concept of strategy here presupposes a methodological decision: an entity may only be called ‘strategic’ if it is characterized by planned, goal-oriented action of median duration (see Knape et al. 152–154).⁹ In dramatic texts, characters are conceptualized in a manner that allows them to be identified as strategic units of this kind. In this regard, Fotis Jannidis has justifiably called attention to the difference between characters and real persons, given that anthropological and psychological concepts specific to periods or authors are essential to the constitution of characters (9).¹⁰ Strategic action in the Lehrstück should, hence, be localized not in individual characters but in the drama’s immanent system of communication, within which characters speak to each other. Within that communicative system, strategically deployed ambiguity generates ambivalence of a political kind. The Lehrstück thus renders observable characters engaged in the strategic generation of ambiguities, caught up in the consequent emergence of political ambivalences. In distinction from ambiguity, the psychological concept of ambivalence designates the phenomenon of competing valuations (see Meixner, “Ambivalenz” 9–10). Given that such ambivalences are conditioned by competing values, their ultimate cause lies in ambiguities in turn conditioned by competing interpretations. In other words, such ambivalences systematically depend on dramatic ambiguities, because an ambivalent assessment of value in communicative contexts assumes competing ascriptions of meaning. Walter Benjamin hence called the Lehrstück an “experimental set-up” (“Versuchsanordnung”; Benjamin 698) for the exploration of human behavior. This experimental design must now be elucidated for the generic prototype in question. The hypothesis of this analysis will be that *Die Maßnahme* uses dramatic ambiguity to produce political ambivalence. This ambiguity

can be concretely observed in the duplication and confusion of the textual levels of representation. A political dilemma is retrospectively negotiated on the first level, while it is scenically illustrated on the second. The first level not only facilitates a reflection on the second but instead develops its own independent dramaturgy. By means of this duplication, the characters' strategies not only become observable but are furthermore overlaid with a strategy on the first level. This strategy is not bound to specific characters but depends on the interplay between structural levels of representation; its goal is not the communication of clear political guidelines for action but the production of political ambivalence.

Structural Levels of the Lehrstück: Bertolt Brecht's *Die Maßnahme*

Brecht's *Maßnahme* stages a prototypical political dilemma, as it asks the question of whether *homo politicus* may be killed. While *Jasager* and *Neinsager* similarly negotiate the killing of a man, the killing is politicized and distanced in *Die Maßnahme*. Four communist agitators return from their mission to drive forward the revolution in China. Before a party tribunal, embodied by the control chorus, the men report that they have killed a comrade and ask for the court's judgment. The play's point of departure is thus the rhetorical setting of judicial speech with its appropriate genre of forensic rhetoric (see Horsman 93–96). The staged court proceedings, however, move between two levels of meaning as they explicitly make recourse to dramatic elements and thereby generate ambiguity. In other words, the four agitators enact a play within a play: they perform four scenes in which they attempt to justify the killing of the young comrade that has already taken place. *Die Maßnahme* thereby resorts to a genuinely dramatic form of mediation. As part of the established inventory of dramatic devices, the so-called 'play within a play' always calls attention to itself, delineating its own frame. In Brecht's play this occurs from the beginning, for there are too few actors for the reproduction of scenes, given that one of the four men must represent the dead comrade originally killed by the four others.¹¹ Of the five original actors, only four remain (see Brecht, *Die Maßnahme* 78–79), and as soon as the young comrade speaks, the four agitators on the first level become three on the second (see 75). Rancière's notion of "excess in the relationship of bodies to words" (Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* 40) finds its test case in the structural absence between the dramatic levels.

In a second structural step, the ambiguity generated by the play within a play calls for an assessment of value. The control chorus evaluates the scenes through partisan questions, answers, and commentaries, insinuating the necessity of the comrade's death. In other words, the control chorus interprets the killing as an adequate measure taken, as a *Maßnahme*. With

the invocation of measures taken, a jurisprudential concept elaborated by Carl Schmitt is at stake, one that characterizes the state of exception which consists in the temporary suspension of the reigning legal order. This suspension legitimates itself solely through the situation of emergency and must be fundamentally distinguished from the concept of judgment meant to achieve justice (see Balke; Sander 145–150; Horn 327–328; Simons; Lehmann 168–169). In the print template for the Moscow edition of 1935/36, the four agitators explicitly justify their comrade’s death by juxtaposing these concepts:

THE CONTROL CHORUS: It was no verdict, then?

THE FOUR AGITATORS *in loud voices*: No! A measure taken!

(translation by DC)¹²

One cannot judge measures taken. In a decisionistic manner, the success of the measures taken remains the sole normative criterion for assessing their appropriateness—the end justifies the means. Brecht already conceded that success at the beginning of the drama when the control chorus, in the play’s second sentence, praises the agitators’ work: “For your work has been successful” (Brecht, *The Decision* 63). A conviction of the agitators—this the paradox of the Lehrstück—is, from the beginning, out of the question.

This paradox renders the control chorus’s evaluation precarious: the setting of forensic speech meant to produce univocal assessments of value—or verdicts—becomes, in a third step, ambiguous because the assessment is suspended by the concepts employed. The Lehrstück hence presents two distinct forms of decision making, which are in turn located on different structural levels of representation: on the first level, the control chorus retrospectively reaches a decision about the necessity of killing a comrade; on the second level, the four agitators decide to kill their comrade and additionally demand his consent. By means of this duplication, a dramatic ambiguity generates political ambivalence insofar as the play structurally puts into question the control chorus’ interpretation.

As early as in the prologue, syntactic inversions highlight the artificiality of the rhetorical setting on the first structural level: “ihr werdet hören unser Urteil” (Brecht, *Werke* 75; “we shall inform you of our verdict”; *The Decision* 63), the control chorus requests, and the agitators reply accordingly, “[w]ir werden anerkennen euer Urteil” (Brecht, *Werke* 75; “We shall accept your verdict”; *The Decision* 63). In terms of their syntax, the inversions in the German original (lost in the English translation) pull the middle field of the sentence to the sentence’s end and thereby emphasize the object—here the “verdict”—which the Lehrstück is said to bring about. These inversions that strengthen the lines’ formulaic impression were deleted after the so-called *Versuche* version from 1931 (which may be a reason

for the changed syntax in the translation). Up to this point, that formulaic character has been ascribed in particular to Christian references, as can be found in worship services or in oratorios (see Lazarowicz; Pornschlegel 47–48). Above all, I find it important, however, that just this kind of maximally ritualized language facilitates the process of mutual understanding and agreement which the Lehrstück apparently establishes on its first level. At the end, not only has the young comrade agreed to his own death, but the control chorus has also agreed to the measures taken by the agitators. I now wish to show how the play arrives at this doubled agreement via the solution of an ethical dilemma and which moments in the text run against the grain of this agreement.

The opening scene, superscribed with “THE TEACHINGS OF THE CLASSICS” (Brecht, *The Decision* 63), points to the fundamental structure of the next scenes. On the first level, it starts with the late narration of the four agitators, who introduce the events to be represented on the second level. After the four agitators have announced that they will “repeat the discussion” (63), the stage directions clarify the switch between levels and the temporal jump: “*One of them plays the Young Comrade, and they group themselves as three confronting one*” (63; original emphasis). This characterization of the actors on the second level takes place consistently, but through the speech of the characters themselves rather than the stage directions. The young comrade, much like the entire cast of characters on the second level, hence, introduces the leader of the Communist Party house, the two underlings, the supervisor, the two textile workers, the policeman, and the trader as a character in the play:

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I am the secretary of the last Party house before the frontier. My heart beats for the Revolution. The sight of injustice made me join the ranks of the militants. [Man must help man.] I am for freedom. I believe in the humane race. And I support the decisions [Maßnahmen] of the Communist Party, which is fighting for the classless society against exploitation and ignorance.

(63–64)¹³

From the beginning, the young comrade establishes his agreement with the measures taken by the party and thereby, indirectly, with his own later killing. Moreover, with his explicit repetition of the Communist credo, he is depicted as a character who shows no ambivalence towards the Communist cause. The young comrade’s belief system is—in other words—free from conceptual ambiguities and political ambivalences. After the dialogue between the three agitators and the young comrade, the control chorus sings a “PRAISE OF THE USSR” (65) to affirm the introduced set of beliefs; with this, it also switches back again to the first level of the court

trial. A song of praise thus facilitates this toggle between structural levels that—put rhetorically—breaks with the *genus iudicale* of the court proceedings and installs the *genus demonstrativum*. After the song, the four agitators summarize the plot—again in a later narrative—and segue to the second scene. That scene deals with the erasure of identities. The characters are now “empty pages upon which the Revolution writes what it has to say” (66). Mueller has “instruction” (“*Anweisung*”) in his translation of the play (Brecht, *The Measures Taken* 12), which is an important concept here, for directive speech acts govern the entirety of *Die Maßnahme*. The “empty pages” are turned into masks which the two agitators put on to ‘obliterate’ their identity. This highly self-reflexive passage emphasizes the dramaturgy of absence by explicitly confusing the textual arithmetic in its conceptualization of the characters,¹⁴ because the leader of the party house particularly addresses two agitators in this scene but lists three names. Together with the young comrade, the four agitators speak of five persons going to Mukden—the numbers just do not add up. This results in dramatic ambiguity: the play within a play does not represent the depicted events. Here, too, the young comrade’s “agree[ment]” (67) is central and explicitly emphasized. The erasure of faces also has consequences for the ethical disposition of the characters. The control chorus thus comments:

All those who fight for Communism must know how to fight and how not to fight; to tell the truth and not to tell the truth; to be servile and also how not to be servile; to keep one’s promises and also not to keep them; how to confront a danger, how to avoid danger; to be known by sight and unknown. All those who fight for Communism have just this to be said in their favour: that they are fighting for Communism. (67)¹⁵

The scene closes once more with a song of praise sung by the control chorus and with a narrative summary articulated by the four agitators. The control chorus’ paradoxical catalogue of virtues is especially illuminating with regard to the question of the *Lehrstück*’s strategy. The young comrade simply cannot satisfy these mutually incompatible demands: he fails in three tests, precisely because he cannot act strategically; he lacks the requisite dissociation from his own speech and therefore endangers the revolution, which is—as the ultimate goal—above all paradoxical.¹⁶ Thus, the young comrade’s central conflict lies in his absent tolerance for ambiguity, whereas the dramatic structure is grounded in ambiguity and evokes ambivalence in evaluating the young comrade’s decisions.

In order to exemplify this, the four agitators enact four scenes, in which the young comrade evinces sympathy, justice, and honor concerning the

success of the revolution. These scenes structurally distinguish themselves from the previous ones as the control chorus does not bring them to a close with a song but becomes part of the second level. The chorus now participates in the second structural level by striking up the song of the rice boat carriers (69–70) and the song of the textile workers (73–74). These songs introduce the problematic situation that the revolution is meant to ultimately overcome. In place of encomiastic songs, a discussion between the control chorus and the four agitators takes place in these scenes. During that discussion, the behavior of the young comrade is evaluated *ex post*:

DISCUSSION

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

But is it not correct to take the side of the weaker
To help him wherever he may be—
The exploited one—in his daily sufferings?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: He was no help to the weaker, but hindered us
from making propaganda in the lower part of the town.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

We are in agreement.

(72)¹⁷

The exclamation mark (following “Unterdrückung” in the original but lost in translation) unmistakably indexes the fact that the control chorus opens up a discussion not to negotiate a genuine question but to express a proclamation. In this regard, the four agitators argue on the basis of their own actions, not on that of young comrade’s intention. His impulse may have been correct but his strategy, measured by its goal, was false. The control chorus promptly reaches agreement. The fourth scene with the textile workers varies this scheme and brings it to a crisis point by relativizing justice. Rather than redressing “big justice,” the young comrade’s action has only led to a situation in which “he stopped a small injustice” (76). Here, too, the control chorus has immediately reached a consensus. The third scene subsequently asks (not only in its title): “BY THE WAY, WHAT IS A MAN?” (76). It outdoes the former scenes, as is already apparent in the series of the young comrade’s adversaries: from the flogging foreman to the policeman pulling out his revolver, *Die Maßnahme* has now reached its ultimate capitalist opponent with the merchant who measures a man’s value with his price in the “SONG OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND” (77–78). This, too, violates the young comrade’s principles. He is incapable of dissimulation; he cannot grin and bear it and eat with the merchant in order to reach

his goal for the revolution. In other words, he cannot act strategically. The subsequent discussion can barely be designated as such:

DISCUSSION

THE CONTROL CHORUS: But is it not correct to
put honour above everything else?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: No.

[THE CONTROL CHORUS: We are in agreement.]
(*The Decision* 79)¹⁸

This “DISCUSSION” neither weighs different opinions against each other nor tests them. This atrophied exchange of views cannot be designated as dialectical interlocution.¹⁹ The agitators’ “No” suffices to bring the control chorus into agreement and thereafter to call them into a song on changing the world—at any price (see 79). With this variation, the discussion becomes formulaic, an empty template; *Die Maßnahme* hence produces consent and mutual agreement not by means of a dispute about the better argument, nor via discursive rhetoric, but solely through a figurative rhetoric of repetition, escalation, and transgression.

The young comrade has already failed three times. The situation intensifies as he tears up his propaganda writings and his mask in the fourth scene in order to kick off the revolution on his own. The agitators, meanwhile, want to prevent him from doing so, for the party has decided “to wait with the armed action until the delegates of the farmers’ associations have arrived in the city” (translation by DC).²⁰ In the process, the agitators attempt to convince the young comrade with a song, in which they explicate a programmatic de-individualization:

[THE THREE AGITATORS

Do not only look through your own eyes]
One single man may have two eyes
But the Party has a thousand.
One single man may see a town
But the Party sees [seven] countries.
The individual a single city.
One single man can spare a moment
The Party has many moments.
One single man can be annihilated
But the Party can’t be annihilated
For its techniques are those of its philosophers
Which are derived from awareness of reality
And are destined to transform it
As soon as the masses make them their own.
(*The Decision* 83)²¹

The party's song does not have its desired effect on the comrade; he tears up the classical authors' writings. At this moment, the play's system of structural levels begins to show its first fissures. The control chorus then repeats its song, which cannot change the young comrade's mind, and titles it "PRAISE OF THE PARTY" (83); it thereby takes on the function that the four agitators had on the second level of representation and expresses agreement solely in this repetition across the dramatic levels. This iterative structure, which allows the two structural levels of *Die Maßnahme* to merge into one another, cannot be reversed. As the young comrade tears off his mask and thereby announces a consensus of 'erasure,' the agitators act. In this regard, the young comrade has already vanished from the text at this point: the mask is, at this juncture, also a metadramatic sign pointing to the fact that the young comrade has no place anymore within the play taking place on the second structural level (see Horn 333–334). The four agitators fall into the later narrative after having torn off their own masks, which only consolidates the comrade's placelessness:

And we struck him down
Picked him up and hurriedly departed that place.

7

EXTREME PERSECUTION AND ANALYSIS

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

They departed that place!
Unrest was growing in the town
And yet the leaders were making their getaway.
What is your decision?

THE FOUR AGITATORS:

Wait for it!
. . . When we had got away as far as the lime pits outside
the town we could [see] our pursuers behind us.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

[They run like race horses!
The work council representatives seek advice in the
headquarters
But the homeless sleep on the papers of propaganda.
Your decision!]

*(The Decision 85)*²²

What manifests itself here, in the space between scenes, is the collapse of the system of representational levels that has thus far structured *Die*

Maßnahme. The control chorus accordingly repeats the events narrated by the four agitators and calls for measures taken itself. At this point, the chorus switches into the present tense, while the four agitators continue to narrate in the past tense. This switch into the scenic present develops its own dramaturgy and updates the urgency of the situation, which was, of course, not produced by the four agitators, but by the control chorus on the first structural level in the present. Hence, the control chorus demands more violently, “Your measure [decision] taken! Your measure [decision] taken!” (Brecht, *Werke* 94; translation by DC).

At this point, the *Lehrstück* takes on a clear focus as it supersedes the summary mode of representation (made up by the narrative passages of the four agitators) with a temporal expansion. The four agitators once again trigger this temporal expansion when they counter the increasingly intense demands of the control chorus for measures taken with the exclamation, “Wait for it!” (Brecht, *The Decision* 85). The scene culminates in an analysis of the situation accompanied by a toggle between structural levels. Although the previous alternations between levels were clearly indicated by the four agitators, such indication is, at this juncture in the play, no longer possible:

THE SECOND AGITATOR:	[T]he masses are out on the streets now [(we said)].
THE THIRD AGITATOR:	And it's our job to see that they come to the meetings.
[THE THIRD AGITATOR:	Else they won't know what they are supposed to do and will get lost before the delegates of the farmers' associations have arrived in the city.]

(85–86)²³

The three agitators here make an entrance as if the young comrade were still present; even when granted no lines of speech, he still has a voice in the analysis. A song again brings the scene to a close. The four agitators sing the first two of four stanzas, while the last two are taken over by the control chorus and so appropriate the voice of the “exploited” (86).

In the last scene, tellingly titled “THE BURIAL” (Brecht, *Werke* 96; translation by DC),²⁴ the confusion of structural levels from the previous scenes comes to a head. Unlike any other scene in *Die Maßnahme*, the ultimate scene begins with the three agitators, who retrospectively report their resolution to kill the young comrade and throw him into the lime pit. The temporal levels only appear to remain intact, for the three agitators announce the last toggle between levels: “We will repeat our last talk [and ask for your verdict]” (Brecht, *The Decision* 88). Before the agitators

shoot the young comrade, they ask for his consent. At this moment, it becomes altogether clear that this is a ritual question, for “even if he does not agree he must vanish, and vanish entirely” (88). After his agreement, the control chorus immediately begins its commentary and anticipates its own judgment—“He replied truthfully” (Brecht, *Werke* 96; translation by DC)—only in order to ask nevertheless whether there was any alternative. The four agitators answer:

With so little time we could think of no other [possibility]. . . .
For five minutes, in the teeth of our pursuers, we
Considered if there was any
Better possibility.
[Now, it’s your turn to think
Of a better course of action.] *Pause.*
(Brecht, *The Decision* 87)²⁵

These sentences, reinforced by renewed syntactic inversions, present not a description but rather a request, a directive speech act: instead of a descriptive construction, which would have positioned the temporal adverb “jetzt” after the finite verb (as in “ihr denkt jetzt nach”), a request displaces the adverb before the finite verb (“ihr—jetzt—denkt nach”)—the English translation picks up on this instructive tone as it places “now” (“Now—it’s your turn to think”) at the beginning of the sentence rather than its end (it’s your turn to think now). At this moment, the function executed by the confusion of structural levels becomes apparent: the dilemma represented on the second level is not retrospectively judged on the first but, instead, metaleptically jumps from the second to the first level and is thereby updated. This structural displacement of the dilemma manifests itself in the representation of the shooting, as the young comrade speaks on the first level, once the three agitators have themselves become narrators. As narrators, they are armed with *inquit* formulae signaled earlier by brackets (see Brecht, *Werke* 95) that map both levels within a single line:

THE THREE AGITATORS:	Where would you like us to take you? we asked.
THE YOUNG COMRADE:	To the lime pit, he said.
THE THREE AGITATORS:	We asked: Do you want to do it on your own?
THE YOUNG COMRADE:	Help me.
THE THREE AGITATORS:	[We said:] Lean your head on your arm Shut your eyes. [We will carry you.]

THE YOUNG COMRADE *out of sight*: And he said: For the
 sake of Communism
 Agreeing with the advances of
 the proletarian masses of
 All countries
 Saying yes to the revolutionising
 of the world.
 (Brecht, *The Decision* 88)²⁶

Right at the climax of the Lehrstück, *Die Maßnahme* holds the action by means of a pause and the alienating effect of the *inquit* formulae. The play within a play becomes a citation and withdraws itself from representation on the first level, just as the killing of the comrade is not represented. The comrade disappears first from the stage and then from the plot: his killing is only narrated once he has become ‘invisible.’ Together with the temporal pause, this alienation destabilizes the following evaluation in the form of a judgment, which consequently does not dissolve the structural ambivalences but emphasizes them.

The control chorus has the last word in the Lehrstück and recalls the first sentences of the play. These sentences praise the happy outcome of the political agitation and, therefore, rather than reaching an explicit judgment, state, “Wir sind einverstanden mit euch” (98; “We are in agreement with you”; *The Decision* 63; in the later scene, the agitators ask, “[A]re you in agreement?” and the young comrade answers “yes”; 88). From the 1931 version onwards, this conclusion is supplemented to continue:

*At the same time your report shows how much
 Is needed if our world is to be altered:
 Rage and stubbornness, knowledge and rebellion
 Quick reactions, profound meditation
 Icy patience, endless repetition
 Awareness of little things and awareness of big ones:
 Only studying reality’s going to
 Help us alter reality.*

(89; original emphasis)²⁷

Remarkably, scholarship has maintained a consensus about these supplemental lines: it assesses them as a disambiguation of the Lehrstück, as summarizing its lesson or Lehre (see Krabiel, *Brechts Lehrstücke* 195). This is remarkable as the control chorus here explicitly revisits the antitheses from the second scene, which established contradiction as the necessary program of the Communist project to change the world (see Brecht, *Werke* 78). This program by no means necessarily leads to the measures taken that resulted in the young comrade’s death. If the four agitators’ play within a

play aimed to demonstrate that the measures taken had no alternative, as the only and univocal solution to the political dilemma, then the control chorus' conclusion can be read as a defense of ambivalence recalcitrant to all forms of mediation. The catalyst of this ambivalence is dramatic ambiguity, which the Lehrstück stages by means of structural leaps and fissures between distinct levels of representation.

The textual supplement at the end of the Lehrstück is but one of many changes undertaken by Brecht in the course of his revisions. Even though Brecht—as has been thoroughly described²⁸—reacted to criticism in his revisions, this led to changes that clarified the text. *Die Maßnahme* exemplifies the genre of the Lehrstück, not in it calling for a certain political attitude, but rather in its reflecting on the emergence of such an attitude. It thus by no means legitimates its titular measures taken but aims to provoke by staging the killing of a political man as a political act (see Pornschlegel 38–45).

Conclusion

Provocation rather than legitimation, hence, characterizes the Lehrstück. It conveys no clear doctrine but instead negotiates political ambivalence. In order for this ambivalence to remain unresolved, dramatic ambiguity is necessary, which *Die Maßnahme* creates by distinguishing and comingling two structural levels of representation. On the first level, *Die Maßnahme* stages a judgment of the young comrade's killing, which is, in turn, represented on the second level. Several scenes, then, are meant to justify the killing, although the form this justification takes runs contrary to plan. The discussions and songs on the first level, which increasingly interrupt the scenes, anticipate the judgment before it is officially reached. Furthermore, such discussions and songs ever more clearly exemplify that they represent no genuine exchange of opinions or mutual understanding of values; rather, the judgment of the measures taken is determined from the beginning. The agreement explicitly produced at the end of scenes with the sentence, "Wir sind einverstanden" (*Werke* 83, 89, 98; "We are in agreement"; *The Decision* 72, 76, 88), has—analogueous to the structure of the Lehrstück—two sides to it and is ambiguous. This becomes apparent in the last scenes in particular, when the structural levels finally collaborate and prevent a clear decision as to who actually demanded the measures taken and who speaks in judgment. The young comrade, who is merely allowed to exist on the second representational level, thus does not only disrupt the level structure of *Die Maßnahme*; the control chorus' agreement with the measures taken, too, becomes precarious through the ritual questioning of the young comrade's agreement to his own death. As Rancière points out, for Brecht nothing is superfluous; the political character of *Die Maßnahme* does not lie in its excess of signs and bodies, but rather in its radically tight concision, almost condensed to a lack of signs, best expressed by the

absence of the young comrade. The Lehrstück mobilizes dramatic ambiguity in order to question this strict logic of semiotic scarcity and thereby questions the measures taken to regulate signs and bodies.

Notes

- 1 Steinweg assumes that Brecht himself translated the German term in his and Steffin's essay "The German Drama: Pre-Hitler" when he introduces 'learning play' as "the nearest English equivalent" (Brecht and Steffin qtd. in Steinweg, *Brechts Modell der Lehrstücke* 150). Sincere thanks are due to Frauke Berndt; without her initiative and helpful advice, this chapter would not have been written. Together with her and Corinna Sauter, I presented earlier versions of this chapter at the GRK-Tag 2015 of the Graduiertenkolleg 1808 "Ambiguität: Produktion und Rezeption" (RTG 1808 Ambiguity—Production and Perception) in Blaubeuren and at the DFG-Workshop run by Frauke Berndt and Lutz Koepnick, "Zones of Ambiguity," also in 2015. This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426); it was written in 2017 and is based, with few exceptions, on the state of research at that time; for a different focus on 'Die Maßnahme' see Meixner 2020; the chapter was translated by Daniel Carranza (DC) (Chicago, IL).
- 2 See Tatlow; for an overview, see Krabiel, "Die Lehrstücke"; Gellert et al. esp. 280–287.
- 3 The two versions of the play from 1930 and 1931 form the basis for this chapter: Bertolt Brecht, *Werke*. Unless otherwise noted, I cite from this edition for the German text; all English translations, unless otherwise indicated, are from Willett's edition. Other textual versions invoked can be found in the Suhrkamp edition of *Die Maßnahme: Kritische Ausgabe mit einer Spielanleitung von Reiner Steinweg*.
- 4 Original: "[D]er Versuch, durch ein Lehrstück ein bestimmtes eingreifendes Verhalten einzuüben" (100). See also the program notes in which Brecht defines the purpose of the Lehrstück as "politisch unrichtiges Verhalten zu zeigen und dadurch richtiges Verhalten zu lehren" (*Die Maßnahme* 237; "showing politically incorrect behavior in order to teach correct behavior"; translation by DC).
- 5 See also Krabiel, *Brechts Lehrstücke*; Vaßen, Koch, and Ruping; Steinweg, "Re-Konstruktion." In this sense, ambiguity is constitutive of the Lehrstück in a particular way; see Berndt and Sachs-Hombach 274–275.
- 6 Pornschlegel describes this political ambivalence as one between two distinct logics: "zwischen einer religiösen, idealistischen Opferlogik und -rhetorik einerseits und einer schmutzig-zynischen Macht- und Liquidationspolitik andererseits" ("between a religious, idealistic sacrificial logic and rhetoric, on the one hand, and a sullied, cynical power politics of liquidation, on the other"; 49–50; translation by DC).
- 7 For an overview, see Brecht, *Die Maßnahme*.
- 8 Original: "Die Figur soll erzählt, nicht verkörpert werden."
- 9 See also Baßler for a summary on the issue of intention, broached here as a strategy of naturalizing textual findings.
- 10 Jannidis writes, "daß für die Figurenkonstitution epochen- oder auch autoren-spezifische anthropologische und psychologische Konzepte wichtig sind."
- 11 More generally, a "Dramaturgie der Abwesenheit" ("dramaturgy of absence") characterizes the play as a whole; see Winnacker.
- 12 German original: "DER KONTROLLCHOR So war es kein Urteil? DIE VIER AGITATOREN sehr laut: Nein! Eine Maßnahme!" (Brecht, *Die Maßnahme* 100).

13 German original:

DER JUNGE GENOSSE Ich bin der Sekretär des Parteihauses, welches das letzte nach der Grenze zu ist. Mein Herz schlägt für die Revolution. Der Anblick des Unrechts trieb mich in die Reihen der Kämpfer. Ich bin für die Freiheit. Ich glaube an die Menschheit. Und ich bin für die Maßnahmen der kommunistischen Partei, welche gegen Ausbeutung und Unkenntnis für die klassenlose Gesellschaft kämpft. (Brecht, *Werke* 75) The square brackets in the translation indicate an addition from the 1931 version of the play that the translation is based on. The sentence can, however, not be found in the 1930 version of the text.

14 Francesco Fiorentino argues that representation fills the structural gap of the play within a play: “Der Junge Genosse fehlt, und die Darstellung der Agitatoren nimmt den Platz seiner *Abwesenheit* ein” (“The young comrade is missing, and the representation of the agitators occupies the gap his *absence* leaves behind”; Fiorentino 298; translation by DC). Yet, this representation follows its own logic, which prevents the gap from being filled by emphasizing the absence.

15 German original:

Wer für den Kommunismus kämpft, der muß kämpfen können und nicht kämpfen; die Wahrheit sagen und die Wahrheit nicht sagen; Dienste erweisen und Dienste verweigern; Versprechen halten und Versprechen nicht halten. Sich in Gefahr begeben und die Gefahr vermeiden; kenntlich sein und unkenntlich sein. Wer für den Kommunismus kämpft, hat von allen Tugenden nur eine: daß er für den Kommunismus kämpft. (Brecht, *Werke* 78)

16 Sander has also pointed out these weaknesses in the plot’s logic (138–139).

17 German original:

DISKUSSION / DER KONTROLLCHOR / Aber ist es nicht richtig, zu unterstützen den Schwachen / Wo immer er vorkommt, ihm zu helfen / Dem Ausgebeuteten, in seiner täglichen Mühsal / Und der Unterdrückung! / DIE VIER AGITATOREN / Er hat ihm nicht geholfen, aber uns hat / er gehindert, Propaganda zu treiben im unteren Stadtteil. / DER KONTROLLCHOR / Wir sind einverstanden. (Brecht, *Werke* 82–83)

18 German original: “DISKUSSION / DER KONTROLLCHOR Aber ist es nicht richtig, die Ehre zu stellen über alles? / DIE VIER AGITATOREN / Nein. / DER KONTROLLCHOR / Wir sind einverstanden” (89). The latter part of the translation has been added as it was left out by the translator in his edition of the text; this is indicated by the square brackets.

19 Nägele has emphasized that the opposition between rational and irrational theater is subtled here, bringing Brecht in proximity to his putative antipode, Antonin Artaud.

20 German original: “mit der bewaffneten Aktion zu warten, bis die Delegierten der Bauernverbände in der Stadt eingetroffen sind” (91).

21 German original:

DIE DREI AGITATOREN / Sieh nicht nur mit deinen Augen / Der einzelne hat zwei Augen / Die Partei hat tausend Augen. / Die Partei sieht sieben Staaten / Der einzelne sieht eine Stadt / Der einzelne hat seine Stunde / Aber die Partei hat viele Stunden. / Der einzelne kann vernichtet werden / Aber die Partei kann nicht vernichtet werden. / Denn sie beruht auf der Lehre der Klassiker / Welche geschöpft ist aus der Kenntnis der Wirklichkeit / Und bestimmt ist, sie zu verändern, indem sie, die Lehre / Die Massen ergreift. (91–92)

22 German original:

Und wir schlugen ihn nieder / Hoben ihn auf und verließen in Eile die Stadt. / 7 /
 ÄUSSERSTE VERFOLGUNG UND ANALYSE / DER KONTROLLCHOR / Sie verließen
 die Stadt! / Die Unruhen wachsen in der Stadt / Aber die Führung flieht über
 die Stadtgrenze. / Eure Maßnahme! / DIE VIER AGITATOREN / Wartet ab! Als
 wir auf der Flucht in die Nähe der Kalkgruben vor der Stadt kamen, sahen wir
 hinter uns unsere Verfolger. / DER KONTROLLCHOR / Sie laufen wie Rennpferde! /
 Die Betriebsräte kommen um Rat in die Zentrale / Aber auf den Propagan-
 daschriften schlafen die Obdachlosen. / Eure Maßnahme! (Brecht, *Werke* 94)

23 German original:

DIE ANALYSE / ERSTER AGITATOR / Die Massen sind auf der Straße (sagten
 wir). / ZWEITER AGITATOR / Aber wir müssen sie in die Versammlungen brin-
 gen. / DRITTER AGITATOR / Denn sonst wissen sie nicht, was sie tun sollen,
 und verlaufen sich, bevor die Delegierten der Bauernverbände in der Stadt
 eingetroffen sind. (Brecht, *Werke* 95)

24 Willett has *The Decision* (86).

25 German original: “Bei der Kürze der Zeit fanden wir keinen Ausweg / Fünf
 Minuten im Angesicht der Verfolger / Dachten wir nach über eine / Bessere
 Möglichkeit. / Auch ihr jetzt denkt nach über / Eine bessere Möglichkeit. /
 Pause” (Brecht, *Werke* 96–97).

26 German original:

DIE DREI AGITATOREN / Wohin sollen wir dich tun, fragten wir ihn. / DER
 JUNGE GENOSSE / In die Kalkgrube, sagte er. / DIE DREI AGITATOREN / Wir
 fragten: Willst du es allein machen? / DER JUNGE GENOSSE / Helft mir. / DIE
 DREI AGITATOREN / Wir sagten: Lehne deinen Kopf an unsern Arm / Schließ
 die Augen / Wir tragen dich. DER JUNGE GENOSSE unsichtbar / Er sagte noch:
 Im Interesse des Kommunismus / Einverstanden mit dem Vormarsch der pro-
 letarischen Massen / Aller Länder / Ja sagend zur Revolutionierung der Welt.
 (Brecht, *Werke* 97)

27 German original:

*Aber auch euer Bericht zeigt uns, wieviel / Nötig ist, die Welt zu verändern: /
 Zorn und Zähigkeit, Wissen und Empörung / Schnelles Eingreifen, tiefes
 Bedenken / Kaltes Dulden, endloses Beharren Begreifen des Einzelnen und
 Begreifen des Ganzen: / Nur belehrt von der Wirklichkeit, können wir / Die
 Wirklichkeit ändern.* (Brecht, *Werke* 125, original emphasis)

28 See the comprehensive appendix of criticism added to Steinweg’s edition of
 Brecht’s *Die Maßnahme*.

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II

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7 (Non)Strategic Production Planning and Ambiguity

Experimental Evidence

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Introduction

This chapter investigates the effect of strategic production planning on the encoding of prosodic phrasing as a grammatically driven means to disambiguate a syntactically ambiguous word sequence.¹ We conducted a production study in German involving two groups of participants. One group was informed about the ambiguity of the target sentence and the prosodic disambiguation possibilities. The other group was not informed. The main question was whether the two groups would produce different intensities of a specific prosodic disambiguation method: prosodic phrasing. We focused on the strength of the prosodic boundary, measured in terms of the *duration of the pause* between two intonational phrases (IPhs). The underlying idea is that production planning (here: phonological planning) can be nonstrategic or strategic. The term *strategic production planning* is closely connected to its use in rhetoric, where *strategy* is defined as an “analysis of a relevant goal-resistance-medium relation” (Knape et al. 153; translated by the authors). We hypothesize that the uninformed participant group (UnInf-Group) will plan production without a strategy, whereas the informed participant group (Inf-Group) will plan production under the control of a strategy. The measure is the intensity of the prosodic boundary that each group produces in their utterances after a disambiguating context. The question of how a strategy does or does not control the production process will be addressed to follow (“Theoretical Considerations, Research Questions, and Hypotheses”).

The main research question is whether informed speakers more readily emphasize prosodic cues in comparison to uninformed speakers. We conducted a production experiment in German that investigated the prosodic phrasing of ambiguous word sequences like “CHRISTOPH MALT PAUL NICHT” (Christoph paints Paul not), as illustrated in (1) (see Féry 100).



Verbs such as *malen* “to paint” can be used transitively or intransitively in German. The word sequence in (1) without punctuation or disambiguating context is thus ambiguous between a fragmentary *stripping* construction² (cf. Hankamer and Sag) and a regular subject-verb-object (SVO) structure, which is the preferred interpretation (cf. Winkler, “Ellipsis and Prosody”). In (2a), which represents the stripping structure, the verb *malen* is used intransitively and allows the DP following the verb (DP2) to be understood as the subject of the following clause. In (2b), *malen* is transitive, thus taking DP2 as its direct object, which results in a regular SVO structure.

(2a) [_{CP1} Christoph_{DP1} malt]. [_{CP2} Paul_{DP2} nicht].
 Christoph paints. Paul not.
Christoph is painting. Paul isn't.

(2b) [_{CP} Christoph_{DP1} malt Paul_{DP2} nicht].
 Christoph paints Paul not.
Christoph is not painting Paul.

The two readings of example (1) differ not only in their syntactic structure but also in their prosodic phrasing. The readings are distinguished prosodically by whether or not there is a prosodic boundary, which is signaled by the presence or absence of a pause after the verb *malt* (“paint.3sg”). The example either means (2a), with a pause, or (2b), without a pause. We follow Steedman in the assumption that the clausal structure is mapped onto prosodic structure (see also Fernanda Ferreira on the relationship between syntactic and phonological representations). Therefore, the two clauses of (2a) are mapped onto two separate IPhs in the stripping construction, with a prosodic boundary audible as a pause between the intransitive verb and the fragmentary nominal *Paul*, as shown in (3a). The single SVO clause in (2b) is mapped onto a single IPh and contains no pause after the verb, as shown in (3b).

(3a) [_{IPh1} Christoph malt]. [_{IPh2} Paul nicht]. [2IPhs]
 (3b) [_{IPh1} Christoph malt Paul nicht]. [1IPh]

There are different potential prosodic disambiguation methods to distinguish (3a) from (3b). The predominant method is to produce (3a) as two IPhs with a prosodic boundary between them, and (3b) as one IPh without such a prosodic boundary. As a measure of the prosodic boundaries, we analyzed the length of the duration between the verb and the subsequent

DP2. In the ToBI³ system, the end of an intonational phrase is generally signaled by a prosodic boundary, which is annotated with *break index 4* (cf. Beckman and Elam). We follow Lehiste, who studied acoustic correlates of prosodic boundaries in syntactic ambiguities and showed that duration is the most reliable cue of prosodic disambiguation: “The means [the speakers] use for disambiguation is mainly manipulation of the time dimension” (Lehiste 119). Duration is also the main prosodic cue to distinguish the two meanings in (1), as suggested by Féry. We selected this particular kind of syntactic ambiguity in German. Other possibilities to indicate the location of a prosodic boundary in (3a) are preboundary lengthening and domain-initial strengthening. All of these cues may serve as perceptual signals for a prosodic boundary between two IPhs.

We base our expectations about the different types of production planning (here: phonological planning) in the Inf-Group and the UnInf-Group on these observations. The critical prosodic cue for the stripping analysis is the pause between the two IPhs in (3a) and the lack thereof in the single IPh reading in (3b). We assume that the strategic phonological planning of informed speakers results in stronger prosodic boundaries and, thus, more pronounced pauses in (3a) than the nonstrategic phonological planning of uninformed speakers.

The chapter is structured as follows: in the following section (“Theoretical Considerations, Research Questions, and Hypotheses”), we will provide the theoretical background on the issues of production planning and phonological encoding, discuss previous experimental studies on disambiguation, and present our research questions and hypotheses. In the next section, “Experimental Evidence,” we will first present the method of our experiment, followed by a presentation of the results and a discussion of our findings. We conclude with a general discussion.

Theoretical Considerations, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

The Place of Strategy in Phonological Encoding

Our core claim in this subsection is that nonstrategic and strategic phonological encoding differ in that the former is an automatic process, whereas the latter is a controlled process, that is, a process under executive control. As Bock puts it, “*Controlled processing is strategic*. It is therefore constrained in a number of ways that automatic processing is not, but it is at the same time less rigid in its application” (9; emphasis added).

A language production model like that of Levelt (see also Bock) subdivides the process of utterance planning into subprocesses and identifies subcomponents, that is, modules, responsible for the execution of the subprocesses. Language production starts with the intention of the speaker to

convey a particular thought to one or more interlocutors. Levelt's corresponding first model component is the *conceptualizer*, which is responsible for message generation and which delivers a preverbal message as output. The preverbal message is fed into the *formulator*, which is responsible for linguistic encoding. The formulator starts by executing the grammatical encoding, which consists of lexical access, functional assignment, and serialization of constituents. The resulting surface structure is then phonologically encoded. The formulator's output is a phonetic plan or inner speech that is submitted to the *articulator*, which transforms the inner speech into overt speech. In addition to this sequential stream of processing, the production system is connected to the speech comprehension system to enable the speaker to monitor her own speech. Monitoring and message generation in the conceptualizer are under executive control; therefore, monitoring is conceived of as part of the conceptualizer in Levelt's model. Grammatical and phonological encoding as well as articulation are automatic processes.

Participants in our experiment do not fully plan their utterances before producing them. When comprehending a written sequence of words like "CHRISTOPH MALT PAUL NICHT," they assign a syntactic structure and a semantic interpretation to it. Once this is done, they know what they intend to utter. Word sequences in our experiment are preceded by biasing contexts, which strongly suggest either the transitive or the intransitive verb interpretation. Someone who understands that Christoph is not painting Paul will intend to utter this message; someone who understands that Christoph is painting whereas Paul is not painting at all will intend to utter that message instead. There is no need for the production system to carry out any further grammatical encoding. What remains to be done for the language production system is the phonological encoding, followed by the articulation of the inner speech. As noted previously, phonological encoding proceeds automatically in the normal case, that is, if speakers are uninformed. We expect uninformed speakers to not even notice the ambiguity of the word sequences they utter, because *the intended message* is not ambiguous. For speakers who are informed about the ambiguity and about the means to avoid it, the circumstances of speaking are not normal. We expect them to intend to avoid the impending ambiguity—as long as they are able to do so.

The distinction between automatic and controlled processing is a common one in cognitive psychology (cf. Shiffrin and Schneider). Automatic processes are fast but rigid, whereas controlled processes are flexible but slow. Controlled processes tap into central working memory capacities and interfere with one another if running in parallel, whereas independent automatic processes can run simultaneously and demand no attention. Automatic processes are usually unavailable to consciousness. Controlled processes may be available to conscious perception, but they still may not

be susceptible to manipulations by verbal instruction. Shiffrin and Schneider emphasize the benefits of these two processing modes for a cognitive system. On the one hand, the ability to automatize cognitive processing relieves the central executive control considerably and thus enhances the flexibility of the system as a whole. Automatization by learning equips the organism with highly adaptive, fast, and efficient processing. On the other hand, Shiffrin and Schneider address the value of control for making adjustments to automatized processing due to environmental changes, because “[i]t allows the organism to adjust to changes in the environment that make previously learned activity patterns useless or harmful” (161).

Is the scene thus set for our claim that speakers can switch the mode from automatic to controlled phonological encoding? According to Levelt (22) it is not: “Formulating and articulating are . . . probably largely impenetrable to executive control even when one wishes otherwise.” Phonological encoding is part of formulating, and if formulating is impenetrable to executive control, then the central system cannot influence phonological encoding. Whether an automatic process is impenetrable may depend, however, on how the process is initiated. If an automatic process is initiated automatically, it responds to a particular input pattern, and the process as a whole is impenetrable if, in response to the particular input pattern, it mandatorily delivers a particular output. However, an automatic process might gain flexibility once initiation is controlled, a possibility envisaged by Shiffrin and Schneider (151). Because Levelt (20) characterizes automatic processes as “reflex-like,” he seems to reject such an option as reflexes are initiated automatically.

We are inclined to object that Levelt underestimates the capability of speakers to take control over phonological encoding. As noted earlier, control over automatized processes seems necessary when the organism faces the need to adjust otherwise adaptive automatic processing. For instance, speakers with a fully developed competence of their mother tongue, like would-be actors or newscasters, undergo speech training with the goal of improving control over their articulation while doing their job—although not necessarily also at home. In our view, speech training intervenes at the stage of phonological encoding. Similarly, singers, of any music genre, articulate word sequences (i.e. lyrics) differently whether speaking or singing. We nevertheless assume that spoken and vocalized word sequences are encoded within the same subsystem, the formulator. Hence, we imply some systematic flexibility of phonological encoding. Moreover, control over phonological encoding may also be a crucial ability for speakers who master more than one language.

Besides these more general considerations, we wonder how self-monitoring of speech production fits with a complete lack of executive control over encoding processes. In his analysis of how the production system is able to

avoid linguistic ambiguity, Victor S. Ferreira takes seriously the idea that executive control cannot be exerted anywhere but in the conceptualizer. Basically, linguistic ambiguity can be avoided either automatically during encoding in the formulator or in a controlled way, be it during message generation in the conceptualizer or via monitoring. The addressee of the monitor's output must again be the conceptualizer. The only option left for the production system to respond to the monitor's feedback is, thus, to modify the preverbal message because only this representation is subject to controlled processing. Given such a conception, informed speakers in our experiment should be unable to respond to the verbal instruction regarding ambiguity avoidance, because message generation is not their business. This means that informed speakers should not behave any differently from uninformed speakers, who are expected to automatically avoid ambiguity.

Hartsuiker distinguishes three components of self-monitoring: trouble detection, interruption, and repair.⁴ He states that speakers repair lexical, phonological, prosodic, or morphosyntactic errors. According to our view, what Victor S. Ferreira sketches as the response of the production system to the monitor's output should not be considered a repair in this narrow sense. The monitor's feedback, according to Ferreira, seems to lead inevitably to a modification in message generation. Hartsuiker and Kolk (129) propose a variant of Levelt's monitoring model, for which they assume

that the conceptualizing and grammatical encoding parts of the restart take only a little time, especially for repairs of phonological errors, in which case the conceptualization and grammatical encoding processes will in general have the same, correct representations still available.

The authors obviously envisage the possibility of a shortcut to repair specifically at the level of linguistic encoding at which the trouble arises. Here we recognize an instance in which executive control may direct linguistic encoding via initiation of the process without penetrating its execution. Whereas the automatically triggered automatic process can only mandatorily map a particular input to a particular output, a controlled initiation contributes to the input and can thus impart flexibility to the input-output mapping that is lacking in the usual case. This much control is needed to actively intervene in the encoding process and to initiate a repair.

As we do not see how a verbal instruction like the one employed in our experiment can exert an effect on phonological encoding other than via executive control, the question becomes an empirical one. If we find that informed speakers systematically differ in their phonological encoding from uninformed speakers, we will take this as evidence that phonological encoding is not completely impenetrable.

Previous Experimental Studies on Prosodic Disambiguation

There has been a great deal of research on prosodic disambiguation, especially with respect to the role of prosodic phrasing. The literature can be divided into two main groups: (1) research investigating how informed and mostly professional speakers use prosody to resolve ambiguous structures and (2) research investigating whether naïve and untrained speakers use prosody to disambiguate scripted as well as natural speech.

The most important studies which address the question of whether speakers are able to prosodically distinguish ambiguous structures have been carried out by Lehiste, as well as by Price, Ostendorf, Shattuck-Hufnagel, and Fong for English and by Féry for German. These studies predominantly tested partially informed and professional speakers.

Lehiste comes the closest to an investigation of speaker strategies; actually, she speaks explicitly of “strategies of disambiguation.” She compared the different productions of speakers who were first left naïve and were only later informed about the ambiguity of the test items. Her focus was on different types of surface and deep structure ambiguities, like “The hostess greeted the girl with a smile” (surface structure ambiguity with different bracketings for the two readings) or “Visiting relatives can be a nuisance” (deep structure ambiguity with identical bracketing for both readings). In the experiment, four speakers (two linguists and two nonlinguists) were asked to read 15 sentences aloud without being given a context or any further information. Afterwards, the same speakers were informed about the ambiguity of the 15 sentences in the form of paraphrases and were asked to produce each sentence again, once for each meaning, “making a conscious effort to convey one or the other meaning” (Lehiste 107). The productions were then played to 30 listeners (again, half were linguists and half nonlinguists) in a perception study, in which the task was to decide which paraphrase each recording represents. It turned out that the eight surface structure ambiguities were much more successfully resolved by speakers and listeners than the seven deep structure ambiguities, in agreement with an earlier suggestion of Lieberman. Lehiste identified timing as the most reliable means for teasing apart the different structures of surface structure ambiguities: a pause coinciding with a phrase boundary lengthened the articulation of a word sequence in comparison to the same word sequence without a pause and phrase boundary. Professional and untrained speakers or listeners performed about equally well, but Lehiste found that making the speakers aware of the ambiguities led to better performance of speakers and listeners for five of the surface structure ambiguities.

Price et al. conducted a similar study for English with surface structure ambiguities and professional speakers. They found that naïve listeners are able to correctly disambiguate a variety of syntactic ambiguities produced

by four speakers. They also found that syntactic boundaries coincide with prosodic boundaries.

In a production experiment, Féry investigated prosodic disambiguation possibilities in German. Speakers had to prosodically distinguish a series of 20 syntactic ambiguities which were presented to them with different syntactic bracketings. Of the five speakers, only three were able to prosodically disambiguate the sentences. Féry analyzed the prosodic cues used in the successful productions to distinguish the two readings. She concluded that German syntactic ambiguities are mostly resolved by durational differences such as pauses, preboundary lengthening, and different types of boundary tones.

In more recent research, the focus has shifted toward the question of whether untrained naïve speakers also make such prosodic distinctions in scripted conversation as well as in natural language production. Allbritton, McKoon, and Ratcliff compared the recordings of professional and untrained speakers who were informed or uninformed with respect to the syntactic ambiguity of the sentences. They found that neither of the uninformed groups produced enough prosodic cues to distinguish the sentences and, accordingly, they argued that the conclusions of previous studies (e.g., Lehiste; Scott; Price et al.) do not hold, in general.

Schafer, Speer, Warren, and White criticized the unnatural settings of previous experiments and introduced a cooperative game task to elicit spontaneous rather than scripted speech. The naïve participants interacted naturally with each other during the game, thereby producing potentially ambiguous structures such as, "I want to change the position of the square with the triangle." The verbal interaction was recorded. Contrary to Allbritton et al.'s findings, Schafer et al. observed that participants consistently produced prosodic cues to disambiguate between the high- and the low-attachment readings of the sentences. They suggested that these different results might be due to the speakers' awareness that they had a communicative task to fulfill.

Snedeker and Trueswell offered an alternative explanation for the disagreement between the findings of Schafer et al. and those of Allbritton et al. They claimed that a speaker's use of prosodic cues depends on how strongly a given context disambiguates a sentence. To show this, they compared the productions of informed and uninformed speakers in a referential game task with an ambiguous and an unambiguous setting. Participants were prompted to naturally produce sentences like "Tap the frog with the flower" for an explicit listener. They found that participants used strong prosodic cues in the form of durational differences only if the situational context did not already disambiguate the sentence toward a high- or low-attachment reading. The results thus provide evidence for Snedeker and Trueswell's claim that speakers only use prosody to disambiguate if the context does not provide enough disambiguating information.

We can thus conclude that the probability that a speaker will successfully use prosody for disambiguation depends on the following factors: first, the type of ambiguity, for example, deep structure vs. surface structure ambiguities (Lehiste); second, the (un)informedness of the speakers (Lehiste; Allbritton et al.); third, a speaker's consciousness of the communicative goal (Schafer et al.); and fourth, the type of context, that is, whether it disambiguates an utterance and triggers only one reading (Snedeker and Trueswell).

Although extensive research has been done on the questions of when and why speakers make use of prosodic cues to disambiguate a sentence, not much is known about whether speakers make use of certain prosodic strategies. We argue that speakers do deliberately use prosodic cues in read speech if the following factors are considered: first, the type of ambiguity must be a surface structure ambiguity (as suggested by Lehiste). Second, participants should be placed in a communicative situation wherein they plan their utterance for a real or an imaginary listener (as suggested by Schafer et al.). With regard to informedness, Lehiste showed that informed speakers perform better than uninformed speakers at disambiguating surface structure ambiguities. However, Allbritton et al. found that naïve speakers do not produce strong enough prosodic cues to disambiguate a variety of syntactically ambiguous sentences embedded in 2- to 6-sentence-long contexts in read speech. Snedeker and Trueswell argued that the reason could be too much disambiguating information in the context sequences, which makes further disambiguation through prosodic cues redundant. Remmele, however, found that native speakers of English use pitch accents in order to emphasize the antecedent of a globally or temporarily ambiguous sluicing structure, despite the presence of disambiguating information in the form of a preceding context or morphology.

In contrast to these findings, we argue that informed as well as uninformed speakers do in fact use prosodic cues to distinguish the two readings of the word sequence illustrated in (1), even if enough disambiguating information is provided by the context. We base this prediction on the assumption that the clausal structure is mapped onto the prosodic structure of a sentence. Therefore, the two clauses of the stripping construction [cf. (2a)] are mapped onto two separate intonational phrases with a prosodic boundary between the verb and DP2. The prosodic boundary is realized by a pause of variable duration. Note that Lehiste did not compare durational differences between the productions of informed and uninformed speakers.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Two research questions arise regarding prosodic disambiguation and how it relates to nonstrategic vs. strategic phonological encoding. The first question is whether uninformed speakers automatically disambiguate the word

sequences in question by means of prosodic phrasing, even if a strongly biasing context may leave the impending ambiguity unnoticed. If so, the second question is whether informed speakers show strategic control of prosodic encoding in response to being informed by taking considerably more effort to encode the prosodic boundary in 2IPh utterances in comparison to 1IPh utterances without a pause. We formulate hypothesis H1 to address the first research question and H2 to address the second research question.

(4) Hypotheses

H1 (UnInf-Group): Uninformed speakers automatically disambiguate word sequences by prosodic phrasing, in that they produce one intonation phrase for 1IPh utterances and two intonation phrases for 2IPh utterances:

The time from the offset of the verb to the onset of DP2 is longer for 2IPh utterances than for 1IPh utterances (*nonstrategic phonological encoding*).

H2 (Inf-Group): Informed speakers make more of an effort to mark the prosodic boundary between the two intonation phrases of a 2IPh utterance, that is, informed speakers produce more pronounced prosodic boundaries than uninformed speakers:

The difference in time from the offset of the verb to the onset of DP2 between 1IPh and 2IPh utterances is larger for informed than for uninformed speakers (*strategic phonological encoding*).

Experimental Evidence: Production Study

To test our hypotheses H1 and H2, we designed a production experiment in which native speakers of German vocalized ambiguous sequences of words. Two groups were tested: an informed group of participants who were made aware of the ambiguities (Inf-Group) and an uninformed group of participants who were not made aware of them (UnInf-Group). The goal was to investigate (1) whether there is a prosodic difference between the two alternative readings of the ambiguous word sequences and (2) whether this prosodic difference is more pronounced in the Inf-Group than in the UnInf-Group.

Method

Design

The experiment implemented a 2×2 factorial design in which the within subjects factor *IPh-Number* (1IPh vs. 2IPh) was crossed with the between subjects factor *Group*⁵ (UnInf-Group vs. Inf-Group).

Participants

Twenty-one native speakers of German took part in the experiment, all of whom were BA, MA, or PhD students at the University of Tübingen. One participant was excluded because s/he misunderstood the experimental task. Ten participants each were randomly assigned to the UnInf-Group and to the Inf-Group. Of the participants in the UnInf-Group, one was male and nine were female; they were between 20 and 27 years old, with a mean age of 23 years. Of the participants in the Inf-Group, two were male and eight were female; they were between 22 and 42 years old, with a mean age of 28 years. Participants in the UnInf-Group were rewarded with €10, and those in the Inf-Group were given €15.

Material

The material consisted of 12 experimental items and 14 filler items, all of which were ambiguous between two readings. The list of experimental items is provided in the Appendix. An example of an experimental item as presented on single cards to the participants is illustrated in (5). (5) can have the two meanings in (5a) and (5b), in which punctuation is used to disambiguate the sequences.⁶



(5a) [_{CP1} Janina_{DP1} badet]. [_{CP2} Nadine_{DP2} nicht]. 2IPh condition
Janina bathes. Nadine not.

Janina is bathing. Nadine isn't [bathing].

(5b) [_{CP} Janina_{DP1} badet Nadine_{DP2} nicht]. 1IPh condition
Janina bathes Nadine not.

Janina is not bathing Nadine.

Each item was preceded by a short explanation of context that disambiguated the word sequence toward the 1IPh or the 2IPh reading. The contexts consisted of three sentences. The first sentence, S1, introduced the scene setting; the second sentence, S2, introduced the referents mentioned in the target word sequence; and the third sentence, S3, set a strong bias toward the intended reading. The two contexts for (5) are given in (6). (6a) sets the bias for condition 1IPh, and (6b) sets the bias for condition 2IPh.

- (6a) S1 *Set Scene:* Kleinkinder brauchen noch viel Hilfestellung bei
Small children need still much help with
alltäglichen Dingen.
daily things.
Small children need a lot of help with daily activities.

S2 *Introduce*
Referents:

So ist die kleine Nadine beim Baden noch auf die
So is the little Nadine when bathing still on the
Unterstützung ihrer Mutter angewiesen.
support of her mother dependent.
That's why little Nadine is dependent on help from her
mother when she is taking a bath.

S3 *Create*
Contrast:

Aber Janina hat heute leider kaum Zeit und
But Janina has today unfortunately hardly time and
überlegt, wo sie Abstriche machen kann.
thinks, where she deductions make can.
Unfortunately, Janina is in a hurry today and is
thinking about where she can save time.

Target:

(5) JANINA BADET NADINE NICHT

- (6b) S1 *Scene*
Setting:

Am Strand von Mallorca ist immer viel los.
At the beach of Mallorca is always much going on.
There is always a lot going on on the beach of Mallorca.

S2 *Introduce*
Referents:

Janina und Nadine liegen in der Sonne und genießen
Janina and Nadine lie in the sun and enjoy
ihren Sommerurlaub.
their summer vacation.

Janina and Nadine are basking in the sun and enjoying
their summer vacation.

S3 *Create*
Contrast:

Während Janina ab und zu ins Meer springt,
While Janina now and then into the sea jumps,
hat Nadine Angst vor Haien.
has Nadine fear of sharks.
While Janina jumps into the water now and then,
Nadine is afraid of sharks.

Target:

(5) JANINA BADET NADINE NICHT

The two versions of the items, 1IPh vs. 2IPh, were assigned to two different lists according to a Latin square design; both lists were tested by an equal number of the participants in each group. Hence, each participant produced every item in only one of the two conditions of IPh-Number, but every item was tested equally often in either condition.

The 12 experimental items were subjected to a written pretest to ensure that the contexts are strong enough to trigger only one of the two readings. Four independent, naïve participants read all context-target pairs in the same randomized order and added punctuation marks to the target word sequences, which were presented to them in capital letters. The punctuation added by the four participants agreed with the intended readings without exception. When asked about the difficulty of the task, they all indicated that they encountered no problems whatsoever and that they considered the contexts to be unambiguous.

The 14 filler items consisted of different types of ambiguities, some of which can be distinguished prosodically, such as *secondary predicates* (7), *homographs* (8), *attachment ambiguities* (9), and *focus ambiguities* (10). The filler items served to keep participants from getting used to the specific structure of our experimental items, which might have resulted in less informative productions. Although some of the ambiguities of the filler items suggest prosodic disambiguation, we focus on one specific structure in this chapter, namely, the stripping vs. SVO ambiguity exemplified in (6).

- (7) Max kaufte den Laden leer.
Max bought the store empty.
Max bought everything that the store offered for sale. vs. Max bought the store in an empty condition.
- (8) Der Kapitän muss übersetzen.
The captain has to translate/cross over.
The captain has to translate. vs. The captain has to cross over.
- (9) Der Polizist verfolgte den Dieb mit dem Fahrrad.
The police officer chased the thief with the bicycle.
The police officer chased the thief who was on the bicycle. vs. The police officer, who was on the bicycle, chased the thief.
- (10) Anna mag nur grüne Tomaten.
Anna likes only green tomatoes.
Anna only likes green tomatoes (not red ones). vs. Anna only likes green tomatoes (not other green fruits).

Procedure

Participants were tested individually in a quiet study room equipped with a stereo microphone with 96-kHz/24-bit recording; the full experimental

sessions were recorded. Instructions and materials were presented to participants by means of Power Point slides. Each presentation started with a set of instructions that was dependent on the group, followed by an exemplary item that showed the context and the target word sequence, as well as when to vocalize the target word sequence.

UnInf-Group: The instructions presented to participants of the UnInf-Group explained the task step by step without telling them anything about the stimuli. On each trial, participants were presented with one of the two disambiguating contexts and were asked to vocalize the target sequence as a continuation of the context.

Inf-Group: The instructions presented to participants of the Inf-Group provided them with further information in addition to the task description. Firstly, they saw both context versions, with the version for subsequent vocalization visually highlighted.⁷ Secondly, the instructions pointed out that the target word sequences are ambiguous and that the two different contexts disambiguate the sequences toward the two different readings. Thirdly, they listened to a sample recording and were shown some general possibilities of how to prosodically distinguish different readings of a sequence of words; the sample sequences did not, however, correspond to the ambiguities used in the experiment. Fourthly, the instructions emphasized the communicative character of the task: participants should aim for a distinct prosodic differentiation to enable hearers in a subsequent perception study to identify the corresponding context.

The instructions were followed by a short practice session with three items, and then the experimental session started. Up until the end of the practice session, the experimenter was present to answer any questions the participant might have. With the beginning of the actual experiment, the participant was left alone to ensure that s/he felt comfortable while reading aloud and was not influenced by the experimenter's presence. The communicative goal was pointed out by mentioning a subsequent perception task (Inf-Group) as well as by having the participants produce their sentences as an answer to the question, "What happened?" (Inf-Group and UnInf-Group). The broad focus question "What happened?" was chosen to keep the articulations as unaffected by information structure as possible (cf. Wagner; Remmele).

Experimental and filler items were intermixed with one another and presented to participants in a single randomized order. Participants clicked through the slides at their own pace, that is, they took as much time as they needed to complete the experiment. Trials were handled one after another and without jumping back to an earlier trial. On average, participants of the UnInf-Group and the Inf-Group took about 30 and 45

minutes, respectively. On each trial, participants first saw one of the two (UnInf-Group) or both (Inf-Group) contexts together with the target word sequence in capital letters and were asked to read through the material carefully (slide 1 for both groups). One of the two contexts presented to the Inf-Group was then visually highlighted, indicating the context to be considered for subsequent vocalization (slide 1b for the Inf-Group). Finally, participants were prompted to read aloud the target word sequence, keeping the respective context in mind (slide 2 for both groups).

Results

Data Preparation

The 10 participants in each group vocalized 12 target word sequences: six in condition 1IPh and six in condition 2IPh. There were, thus, five vocalizations per experimental item per context per group and 240 vocalizations altogether. After having manually extracted these 240 vocalizations from the recordings, we analyzed them with the acoustic analysis software *Praat* (Boersma and Weenink). We conducted time measurements at specific points in time with the help of a *Praat* script, as illustrated in (11).

(11) /Stef/fi//gra/tu/liert//Mar/ti/na//nicht/

For our present purposes, we were interested in the duration of the interval from the offset of the last syllable of the verb (*liert*) to the onset of the first syllable of the DP2 (*Mar*), henceforth called the *critical duration*. We analyzed whether these critical durations differ between the 1IPh and the 2IPh condition.

Analysis of Prosodic Phrasing

We computed ANOVAs with participants (F_1) and items (F_2) as random factors. *IPh-Number* (1IPh vs. 2IPh) and *Group* (UnInf-Group vs. Inf-Group) were used as fixed factors. Figure 7.1 shows the mean values of the critical duration in the four conditions.

The analyses yielded a significant effect of *IPh-Number* on the critical duration [$F_1(1,18) = 67.7, p < 0.001$; $F_2(1,11) = 183.7, p < 0.001$]: critical durations were, on average, longer in the 2IPh condition than in the 1IPh condition. Moreover, *IPh-Number* interacted with *Group* [$F_1(1,18) = 7.2, p < 0.05$; $F_2(1,11) = 16.3, p < 0.01$]. The difference in the critical duration between the 2IPh and the 1IPh condition is larger in the Inf-Group compared to the UnInf-Group, in agreement with hypothesis H2. We computed a paired *t*-test for the UnInf-Group to confirm that this smaller difference is

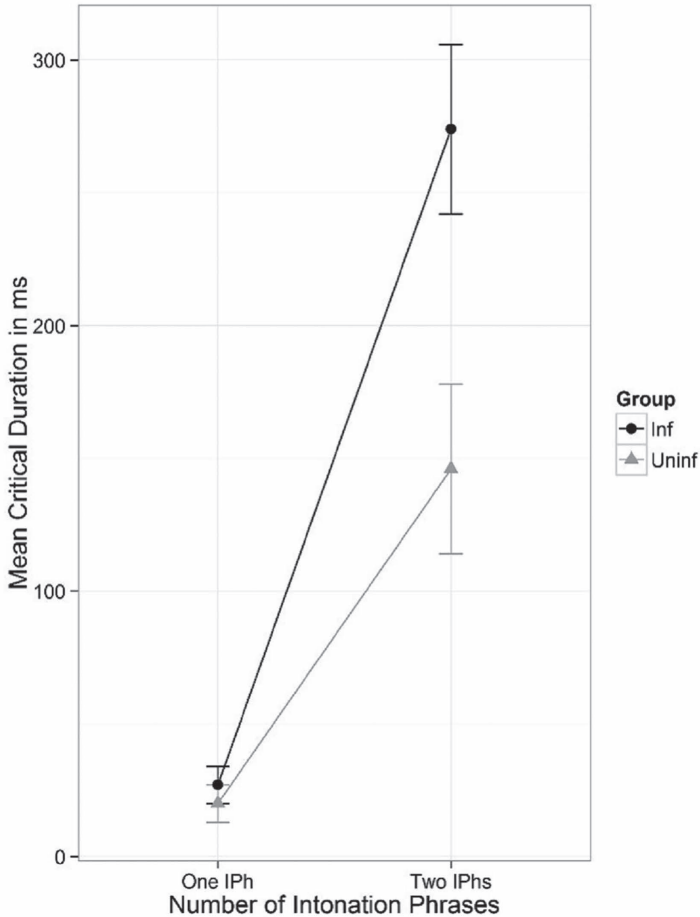


Figure 7.1 Mean critical duration as a function of IPh-Number and Group

significant, as predicted by hypothesis H1. This smaller difference turned out to be reliable [UnInf-Group: $t_1(9) = 3.90, p < 0.01$; $t_2(11) = 6.48, p < 0.001$].

To summarize, both hypotheses were supported by the analyses. Stripping constructions were prosodically distinguished from SVO structures with the help of prosodic phrasing, that is, an intonational phrase boundary between the verb and DP2 (a 4 on the break index tier). As is evident from the interaction, the Inf-Group made an extra effort to increase the prosodic differences in the form of a more pronounced pause in condition 2IPh. Whereas the mean difference between the critical duration in condition 2IPh vs. 1IPh was 126 ms in the UnInf-Group (2IPh = 146 ms minus

1IPh = 20 ms), it was about twice as large, 247 ms, in the Inf-Group (2IPh = 274 ms minus 1IPh = 27 ms).

Analysis of Intonation Contours

An analysis of two exemplary pitch extraction contours of the Inf-Group further illustrates the results of the production experiment. A vocalization of the stripping construction reading (2IPh) by an informed speaker is visualized in Figure 7.2 [(cf. (2a)]. The prosodic realization contains a break index 4 after the verb and thereby signals the division into two IPhs, where the second IPh is an instance of stripping in German. The prosodic realization follows from the *parallelism condition* (cf. Carlson), which predicts that parallel analyses of conjoined structures are preferred over nonparallel ones (here *parallel* means that similar constituents end up in similar syntactic roles): the subjects *Steffi* and *Martina* are realized with rising pitch accents (L+H*) and are therefore interpreted as contrastive topics. The verb *gratuliert* “congratulate.3sg” in the first conjunct is assigned a focus accent (H*), as is the negative particle *nicht* (not) in the second conjunct. The parallel prosody supports the interpretation of the two IPhs as two coordinate clauses, where the intransitive verb *gratulieren* (to congratulate) is reconstructed in the second conjunct. The recovery of the ellipsis site in (2a) is dependent on the *givenness marking hypothesis* and the *contrastive remnant condition*.⁸ In addition, it conforms to the prosodic requirement of the parallelism condition (cf. Carlson). A vocalization of the SVO reading

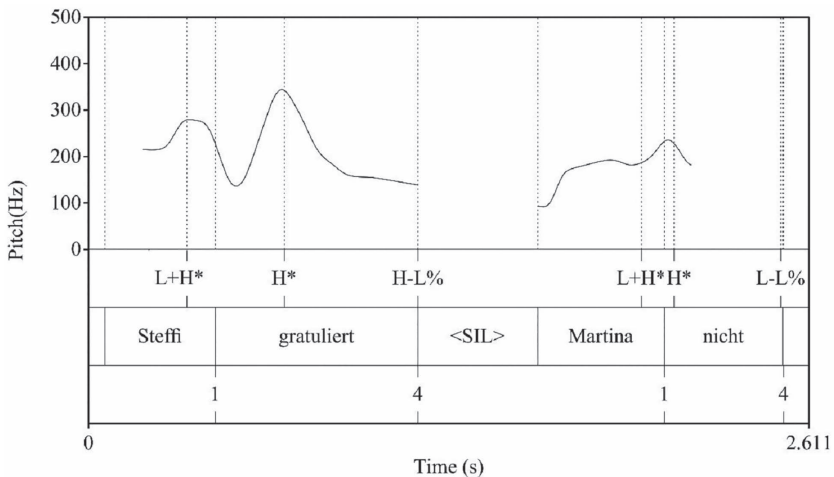


Figure 7.2 Intonation contour of condition 2IPh (Inf-Group)

(1IPh) by an informed speaker is visualized in Figure 7.3 [cf. (2b)]. Here, we have neither parallel pitch assignment with contrastive pitch accents on the DPs nor a break index 4 between the verb and DP2. The parallel prosodic realization of the two IPs in (2a) supports the recovery of the ellipsis site. From a psycholinguistic perspective, one could argue that there is a temporary ambiguity at the point where the verb *gratulieren* is parsed.

A vocalization of the stripping construction reading (2IPh) by an uninformed speaker is visualized in Figure 7.4. A comparison of Figures 7.2 and 7.4 illustrates the differences in critical duration between the Inf-Group and the UnInf-Group in condition 2IPh. In Figure 7.2 (Inf-Group), we see that the pause between *gratuliert* “congratulate.3SG” and *Martina* is much longer than that in Figure 7.4 (UnInf-Group). In contrast to Figure 7.2, the DPs *Steffi* and *Martina* do not carry contrastive pitch accents in Figure 7.4.

Discussion

The results of this experiment corroborate that informed and uninformed speakers disambiguate word sequences of the type “STEFFI GRATULIERT MARTINA NICHT” by prosodic phrasing. Both the uninformed participants of the UnInf-Group and the informed participants of the Inf-Group prosodically distinguished the two readings of “STEFFI GRATULIERT MARTINA NICHT” by producing a longer duration between the offset of the verb and the onset of DP2 in the 2IPh condition as compared to the 1IPh condition. The longer duration in condition 2IPh signals a pause and thus a phrase boundary, while the very short duration of condition 1IPh

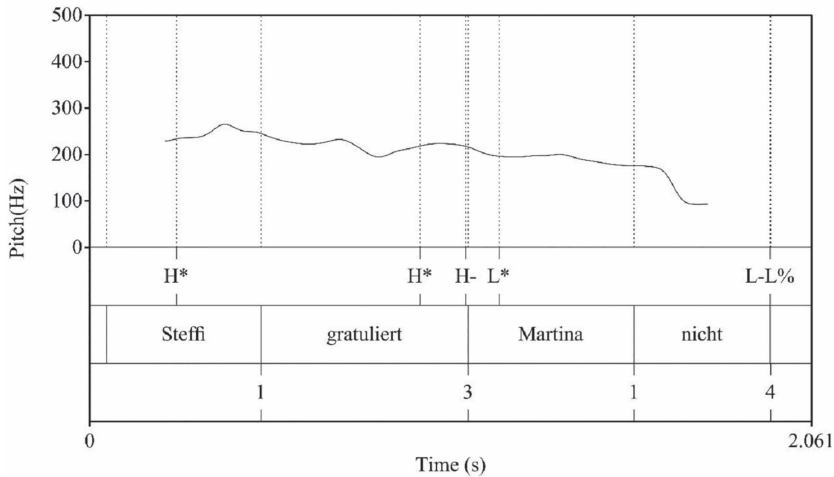


Figure 7.3 Intonation contour of condition 1IPh (Inf-Group)

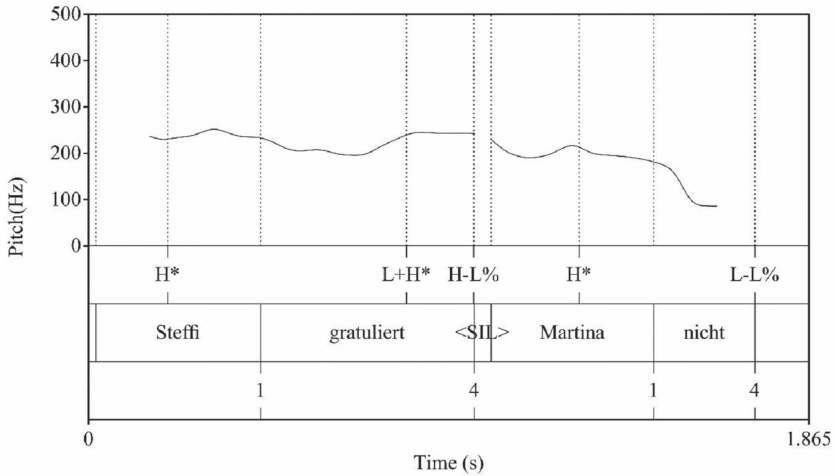


Figure 7.4 Intonation contour of 2IPh condition (UnInf-Group)

signals the absence of a pause and no phrase boundary. This difference between the two IPh conditions is illustrated in Figure 7.1. It indicates that uninformed speakers automatically disambiguate the word sequence by means of prosodic phrasing despite the presence of a strongly disambiguating context. This is the first main result, which confirms hypothesis H1. Secondly, informed speakers distinguish the two readings with extra effort, that is, a 247-ms difference between 1IPh and 2IPh compared to a difference of 126 ms by uninformed speakers, thus confirming hypothesis H2. As the absence of a phrase boundary is evidenced by a very short critical duration in both groups (20 and 27 ms), the difference in prosodic phrasing between the groups is to be attributed to the difference in the length of the pause signaling the phrase boundary present in the 2IPh condition: 274 vs. 146 ms. We take this as clear evidence that the additional instructions given to participants in the Inf-Group are responsible for the substantial group difference. If speakers are made aware of the ambiguous character of the items as well as the fact that the two readings can be prosodically disambiguated, they pay closer attention to their prosodic cues than if they are not informed. Moreover, the Inf-Group was told to imagine that there will be a follow-up group whose task it will be to match their productions back to the respective contexts. With this setting in mind, participants of the Inf-Group paid even more attention to using specific prosodic cues in order to disambiguate the word sequences as clearly as possible. They made use of certain prosodic cues in order to convey a specific meaning and to trigger a specific interpretation by their (implied) hearer. The highly significant effect of the interaction between *IPh-Number* and *Group*, as illustrated in

Figure 7.1, shows that the difference between the UnInf-Group and the Inf-Group is systematic and indicates that the Inf-Group made use of a specific production planning strategy (in this case, a longer duration of the interval between the verb and DP2) in order to set the 2IPh readings apart from the 1IPh readings.

General Discussion and Conclusion

Two central questions have been discussed in this chapter. First, do naïve native speakers differentiate the syntactic ambiguity between SVO vs. stripping by prosodic phrasing? More precisely, do uninformed speakers produce one intonational phrase for SVO structures, but two intonational phrases for the fragmentary stripping construction? We found clear evidence that naïve speakers do exactly this, which supports hypothesis H1. Naïve speakers encoded the stripping construction with a pause of about 150 ms to mark a prosodic boundary between the end of the first intonation phrase, the offset of the verb, and the beginning of the second intonation phrase, the onset of the DP2. As expected, they produced no such pause within the expected single intonational phrase, which corresponds to the SVO structure. In agreement with assumptions by, for instance, Levelt and Bock, we posit that phonological encoding by naïve speakers takes place automatically.

Second, do native speakers who are told to expect ambiguities encode prosodic phrasing differently from naïve native speakers? To put this more precisely: do informed speakers in our experiment make more of an effort to signal the prosodic boundary to their imaginary interlocutors? Again, the answer is yes, which supports hypothesis H2. Informed speakers produced a considerably longer pause to mark the prosodic boundary in the stripping construction than uninformed speakers. We conceive of this lengthening of the pause as an attempt by informed speakers to maximize the probability that the hearer will perceive the prosodic boundary and assign meaning to it. With this conception, we imply that informed speakers pursue a secondary communicative goal besides the primary goal of conveying the intended message to the hearer, namely, the goal of encoding the prosodic boundary in such a way that it cannot be left unnoticed by the hearer. To achieve this goal, the informed speakers in our experiment implemented the strategy of lengthening the pause between the verb and the DP2.

In our section “The Place of Strategy in Phonological Encoding,” we argued that prosodic phrasing proceeds automatically when speakers are uninformed, but is controlled when speakers are informed. The question that occurs is whether we should also assume that informed speakers disambiguate the target word sequences by means of prosodic phrasing in an automatic fashion, because we imply that uninformed speakers do exactly

this. An automatic process is fast but rigid. It maps a particular input onto a particular output without leaving much room for flexibility in the output. However, in our view, the significantly lengthened pause produced by informed speakers shows such a high degree of systematic flexibility that it seems improbable to assume the same automatic process for uninformed and informed speakers. We do not want to assume two different automatic processes either, with one marking a strong phrase boundary and another one marking a less strong phrase boundary. We argued earlier that automatic phonological encoding is not as impenetrable to executive control as envisaged, for instance, by Levelt, and we have tagged this question as an empirical one. With this in mind, we conclude that the phonological encoding of prosodic phrasing was automatic if speakers were uninformed but controlled if speakers were informed. The most natural place for executive control to intervene in phonological encoding is at the input side: it is the initiation of phonological encoding which is set under executive control and thus enables a systematic modification of the resulting output.

Informed speakers differed from uninformed speakers by the instructions with which they were presented. The additional information given to informed speakers as instructions concerned two issues known to be able to affect phonological encoding in production (cf. previous section, "Previous Experimental Studies on Prosodic Disambiguation"): (1) awareness of an ambiguity and knowledge about prosodic means to differentiate the corresponding readings and (2) susceptibility to the primary communicative goal, that is, the requirement to transmit a message to an interlocutor. We attribute the informed speakers' lengthening of prosodic boundaries first and foremost to the information about the ambiguities and about how to avoid them by prosody. We cannot rule out, however, that the lengthening applied by informed speakers is in part attributable to the emphasis put on the primary communicative goal. More importantly, we cannot assess whether an emphasis on the primary communicative goal would have pushed otherwise uninformed speakers to lengthen the boundary between the two intonational phrases. A teasing apart of the two kinds of information could be easily achieved by providing participants with only one kind of information in a follow-up experiment. In the current experiment, we aimed primarily for a strong effect of the difference in instructions.

According to our interpretation, informed speakers pursue a secondary communicative goal of accentuating the prosodic boundary so that it will not be left unnoticed by hearers. On the basis of our measurements, we clearly see that the pauses between the first and the second intonation phrase are much longer when produced by informed than by uninformed speakers. What we do not see in our measurements is whether the shorter pauses encoded by uninformed speakers run the risk of being missed by hearers or, rather, whether informed speakers unnecessarily exaggerate

phrase boundaries. In our view, it would be especially interesting to run an auditory perception study in which hearers interpret the 1IPh and 2IPh vocalizations recorded in the present study to assess the additional value of the lengthened pauses produced by informed speakers compared to uninformed speakers. Because we assume that the vocalizations of informed and uninformed speakers differ in more respects than just pause length, such a study could also deliver some initial indications of which further prosodic cues help hearers to arrive at the intended reading.

We have repeatedly hinted at the rather narrow focus of the current study. We not only concentrated on prosodic phrasing as one possibility of prosodic disambiguation but also paid primary attention to a durational parameter of marking prosodic boundaries. It is therefore desirable to extend the current work to other prosodic means of disambiguation and, not unrelated to this, to investigate additional types of ambiguity. An ambiguity that appears especially attractive to us is a focus ambiguity as was used in the fillers in the present experiment, like *Anna mag nur grüne Tomaten* (Anna likes only green tomatoes). The word sequence can either mean that Anna likes green tomatoes but no tomatoes of a different color, or it can mean that Anna likes green tomatoes but no other green fruits. Depending on the context, either the adjective *grüne* (green) or the noun *Tomaten* (tomatoes) is contrastively focused upon. We expect naïve native speakers to disambiguate the written word sequence by assigning a pitch accent to the contrastively focused expression: the adjective or the noun. It would be interesting to determine whether informed speakers produce heavier accents than uninformed speakers. If so, our current finding would generalize beyond the ambiguity and the prosodic disambiguation cue used here. In particular, a focus ambiguity is not a structural surface ambiguity.

With these future enterprises in mind, we are again committed to the flexibility of speakers in encoding the disambiguation of phonological cues. This flexibility is meant to indicate that phonological encoding does not completely evade executive control; hence, speakers can apply strategies if the circumstances call for more than just fulfilling the primary communicative goal.

Appendix: Experimental Items

(1) CHRISTOPH MALT PAUL NICHT

Christoph paint Paul not

- (a) Im Kindergarten ist heute Aktionstag. Betreuerin Susi will zusammen mit den Kindern Bilder malen. Christoph ist gerne kreativ, aber Paul spielt lieber mit Autos.

Today is activity day at the nursery school. Teacher Susi wants to paint pictures with the kids. Christoph likes to be creative, but Paul prefers to play with cars.

Christoph is painting, Paul is not.

- (b) Immer freitags findet in der VHS ein Porträt-Malkurs statt. Christoph und Paul sollen sich gegenseitig malen. Aber Christoph hätte lieber einen weiblichen Partner gehabt.

Every Friday, there is a portrait painting class taking place at the adult education center. Christoph and Paul are supposed to paint each other. However, Christoph would have preferred to have a female partner.

Christoph is not painting Paul.

(2) JANINA BADET NADINE NICHT

Janina bathes Nadine not

- (a) Am Strand von Mallorca ist immer viel los. Janina und Nadine liegen in der Sonne und genießen ihren Sommerurlaub. Während Janina ab und zu ins Meer springt, hat Nadine Angst vor Haien.

At Mallorca Beach, there is always something going on. Janina and Nadine are lying in the sun, enjoying their summer holidays. While Janina sometimes jumps into the sea, Nadine is afraid of sharks.

Janina is bathing, Nadine is not.

- (b) Kleinkinder brauchen noch viel Hilfestellung bei alltäglichen Dingen. So ist die kleine Nadine beim Baden noch auf die Unterstützung ihrer Mutter angewiesen. Aber Janina hat heute leider kaum Zeit und überlegt, wo sie Abstriche machen kann.

Small children still need a lot of help with daily things. This is why little Nadine still relies on the support of her mother when bathing. But Janina hardly has time today and thinks about where to save some time.

Janina is not bathing Nadine.

(3) ANNETTE LOBT CHRISTINA NICHT

Annette praises Christina not

- (a) Bei Maren steht wie jedes Jahr ein wunderschöner Weihnachtsbaum im Wohnzimmer. Annette und Christina haben nur eine kleine Tanne in ihrer WG. Während Annette sich an dem schönen Baum erfreut, kann Christina ihren Neid kaum zurückhalten.

As every year, a beautiful Christmas tree can be found in Maren's living room. Annette and Christina only have a little fir tree in their shared flat. While Annette is delighted by the beautiful tree, Christina is hardly able to withhold her envy.

Annette is praising, Christina is not.

- (b) Die Musikschule lädt zum alljährlichen Sommerkonzert ein. Christina hat ihre beste Freundin Annette zu ihrem Auftritt eingeladen. Annette ist jedoch alles andere als begeistert von Christinas schiefem Geigensolo.

The music school is holding its annual summer concert. Christina invited her best friend Annette to her performance. However, Annette is anything but excited by Christina's off-key violin solo.

Annette is not praising Christina.

(4) LOUIS ANTWORTET BENNY NICHT

Louis answers Benny not

- (a) Herr Schubel hat die Nachbarskinder Louis und Benny beim Grasrauchen erwischt. Natürlich will er wissen, wer den beiden die Droge verkauft hat. Benny stellt sich taub, aber Louis gesteht unter Tränen.

Mister Schubel has caught the neighbors' children Louis and Benny smoking weed. Of course, he wants to know who sold this drug to them. Benny is acting deaf, but Louis confesses in tears.

Louis answers, Benny doesn't.

- (b) Manuela hat zwei Söhne im Teenageralter. Louis ist älter und hat daher mehr Lebenserfahrung als der jüngere Benny. Als Benny mehr über Louis' ersten Kuss erfahren will, wird dieser ganz rot und versucht das Thema zu umgehen.

Manuela has two teenage sons. Louis is older and therefore has more life experience than younger Benny. When Benny wants to know more about Louis' first kiss, Louis turns red and tries to evade the topic.

Louis does not answer Benny.

(5) SEBASTIAN GEHORCHT ALEX NICHT

Sebastian obeys Alex not

- (a) Stabsoffizier Mayer ist bekannt dafür, besonders rigoros zu sein. Die zwei Soldaten Sebastian und Alex treiben immer gerne Schabernack. Aber bei Herrn Mayer wird Sebastian ehrfürchtig, ganz im Gegensatz zu Alex.

Field officer Mayer is known for being especially rigorous. The two officers Sebastian and Alex like to fool around. However, with Mr. Mayer, Sebastian turns respectful, in contrast to Alex.

Sebastian is obeying, Alex is not.

- (b) Herr und Frau Braun sind heute Abend in der Oper. Um den kleinen Sebastian kümmert sich der Nachbarsjunge Alex. Aber Sebastian hat keine Lust, sich an die Regeln des Babysitters zu halten.

Mr. and Ms. Braun are at the opera tonight. The neighbor's boy Alex is taking care of little Sebastian. But Sebastian does not want to obey the rules of the babysitter.

Sebastian is not obeying Alex.

(6) STEFFI GRATULIERT MARTINA NICHT

Steffi congratulates Martina not

- (a) Xaver veranstaltet eine große Geburtstagsparty. Steffi und Martina sind auch eingeladen, obwohl sie sich letztes Wochenende sehr mit Xaver gestritten haben. Steffi ist nicht nachtragend, aber Martina bleibt stur.

Xaver is hosting a big birthday party. Steffi and Martina are also invited although they had an argument with Xaver last weekend. Steffi does not hold a grudge, but Martina remains stubborn.

Steffi is congratulating, Martina is not.

- (b) In der kleinen Dorfkapelle findet heute eine Hochzeit statt. Die Braut Martina hat auch ihre alte Schulfreundin Steffi eingeladen. Steffi ist jedoch schon lange Single und daher ziemlich verbittert. In the little village chapel, a wedding is taking place today. Martina, the bride, also invited Steffi, her old friend from school. However, Steffi has been single for a long time and is therefore very bitter.

Steffi is not congratulating Martina.

(7) LISA WIDERSPRICHT BIANCA NICHT

Lisa contradicts Bianca not

- (a) Herr und Frau Müller wollen, dass ihre Töchter Lisa und Bianca mehr im Haushalt mithelfen. Um die Aufgaben gerecht zu verteilen, hat Frau Müller einen Putzplan entworfen. Lisa hat keine Lust, sich an den Putzplan zu halten, während Bianca die Idee gut findet.

Mr. and Ms. Müller want their daughters Lisa and Bianca to help more with the housekeeping. In order to distribute the duties in a fair way, Ms. Müller has created a cleaning plan. Lisa does not want to stick to the cleaning plan while Bianca likes the idea.

Lisa contradicts, Bianca does not.

- (b) In Toms Clique gibt's immer viel Zündstoff für Diskussionen. Besonders Lisa und Bianca liegen sich regelmäßig in den Haaren. Aber diesmal bleibt Lisa ganz ruhig als Bianca ihr wieder Vorwürfe macht.

In Tom's clique there are always lots of things to discuss. Lisa and Bianca in particular argue regularly. However, this time Lisa remains quiet when Bianca makes accusations against her again.

Lisa does not contradict Bianca.

(8) ANNE HEIRATET BARBARA NICHT

Anne marries Barbara not

- (a) Letzte Woche fand in der Schule ein 10-jähriges Klassentreffen statt. Anne und Barbara haben sich lange nicht gesehen und fallen

sich freudig in die Arme. Während Anne stolz von ihrer anstehenden Hochzeit erzählt, denkt Barbara traurig an die Auflösung ihrer Verlobung.

A 10-year class reunion took place at the school last week. Anne and Barbara haven't seen each other for a long time and greet each other joyfully. While Anne is talking proudly about her upcoming wedding, Barbara is thinking sadly about the dissolution of her engagement.

Anne is marrying, Barbara is not.

- (b) Die Gay-Community freut sich, dass gleichgeschlechtliche Ehen nun in den ganzen USA legalisiert wurden. Barbara und Anne sind schon lange ein Paar, daher stellt Barbara nun endlich die Frage aller Fragen. Aber Anne liebt Barbara nicht mehr und lehnt den Antrag ab.

The gay community is happy about the legalization of same-sex marriages in the USA. Barbara and Anne have been a couple for a few years. This is why Barbara finally pops the question. However, Anne does not love Barbara anymore and rejects the proposal.

Anne is not marrying Barbara.

(9) SUSI WÄSCHT ANDREA NICHT

Susi washes Andrea not

- (a) Im Luise-Wohnheim gibt es einen großen Wäscheraum. Susi und Andrea treffen sich dort jeden Sonntagmorgen um Wäsche zu waschen. Eines Morgens verschläft Andrea aber leider, weil sie Samstag zu lange auf der Party war.

In the residential accommodation "Luise," there is a big laundry room. Every Sunday morning, Susi and Andrea meet there in order to do their laundry. Unfortunately, one morning Andrea oversleeps because she stayed at a party for too long.

Susi is washing, Andrea is not.

- (b) Im Pflegeheim arbeiten viele freiwillige Helfer. Seit ein paar Wochen ist Susi für Bewohnerin Andrea zuständig. Susi darf aber bisher nur einfache Aufgaben übernehmen, wie z.B. beim Essen helfen.

A lot of volunteers work in the nursing home. Susi has been responsible for resident Andrea for a couple of weeks. So far, Susi is only allowed to do light tasks, like helping with meals, for instance.

Susi is not washing Andrea.

(10) ANTON BETRÜGT MARIA NICHT

Anton cheats (on) Maria not

- (a) Die Geschwister Maria und Anton treffen sich regelmäßig zum Pokern in ihrer Lieblingskneipe. Oft wird dabei auch um Geld

gespielt. Während es Maria wichtig ist, fair zu spielen, versucht Anton immer zu tricksen.

The siblings Maria and Anton regularly meet each other to play poker at their favorite bar. They also often play for money. While it is important to Maria to play fairly, Anton always tries to cheat.

Anton cheats, Maria does not.

- (b) Bei Maria und Anton läuft es schon länger nicht mehr so richtig in der Beziehung. Als sie ihn mit einer anderen Frau in einem Restaurant sieht, ist sie überzeugt, dass Alex eine Affäre hat. Im Nachhinein stellte sich aber heraus, dass es sich bei der Frau nur um seine Schwester handelte.

Maria and Anton's relationship is not what it used to be anymore. When she sees him with another woman at a restaurant, she is convinced that Alex is having an affair. Afterwards it turned out that the woman is his sister.

Anton does not cheat on Maria.

(11) ELIAS HILFT LUKAS NICHT

Elias helps Lukas not

- (a) Auf dem Nachhauseweg werden Elias und Lukas Zeugen eines Zusammenstoßes zwischen einem Auto und einem Radfahrer. Der am Boden liegende Radfahrer schreit vor Schmerzen. Während Elias sofort losrennt, ist Lukas vor Schock wie gelähmt.

On their way home, Elias and Lukas witness a crash between a car and a bicycle. The cyclist on the ground is screaming in pain. While Elias immediately starts to run, Lukas is paralyzed with shock.

Elias is helping, Lukas is not.

- (b) Um versetzt zu werden, muss Lukas mindestens eine 3 in Mathe schreiben. Verzweifelt richtet er sich an seinen älteren Bruder Elias. Dieser hat jedoch keine Zeit ihm Nachhilfe zu geben, da er sich lieber mit seiner neuen Freundin trifft.

Lukas has to get at least a C in math in order to go on to the next grade. He desperately looks for help from his brother Elias. However, Elias does not have time to help him because he prefers to meet with his new girlfriend.

Elias is not helping Lukas.

(12) TINE BERÄT OLGA NICHT

Tine advises Olga not

- (a) Tine und Olga arbeiten beide für Mercedes, jedoch in unterschiedlichen Bereichen. Tine ist im Verkauf beschäftigt und hilft den Kunden das passende Auto zu finden. Olga hingegen arbeitet in der Produktion und überwacht dort die Arbeitsabläufe.

Tine and Olga work for Mercedes, but in different departments. Tine is working for the sales department and helps customers to find the right car. Olga, however, works in production and supervises the operations there.

Tine gives advice, Olga does not.

- (b) Am Ende des Jahres will Olga ihre Steuererklärung machen. Da ihre Freundin Tine in einer Steuerberatungskanzlei arbeitet, bittet sie diese um Unterstützung. Jedoch hat sich Tine vorgenommen, Privates und Berufliches strikt zu trennen.

At the end of the year, Olga wants to file her tax return. Tine works for a tax consultancy office. This is why Olga asks for Tine's help. However, Tine wants to keep a strict separation between her private and professional affairs.

Tine does not give advice to Olga.

Notes

- 1 This chapter has benefited from valuable comments from the editors of this volume, Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker, as well as two anonymous reviewers. We are also grateful to the members of the Research Training Group (RTG 1808) and the audience of the "Fragments" workshop at the University of Saarbrücken in 2016 for their feedback and ideas. An additional thank you goes to Kirsten Brock for copyediting the paper. This material is based upon work supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG) under grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426).
- 2 Stripping, frequently also referred to as *bare argument ellipsis*, is defined by Hankamer and Sag (409) as "a rule that deletes everything in a clause under identity with corresponding parts of a preceding clause, except for one constituent." See also Konietzko for different types of stripping constructions.
- 3 Tones and Break Indices (ToBI) is a phonological intonation scheme originally developed for English (Silverman et al.).
- 4 We take trouble detection to subsume the detection of errors and other challenges like ambiguities; likewise, repair is not restricted to errors.
- 5 Both factors are within items factors in the F_2 analysis; see the section "Analysis of Prosodic Phrasing".
- 6 We are aware that a third reading, namely, an OVS structure, is possible. The sentence would thus be understood as *Nadine isn't bathing Janina*. Because this reading is highly dispreferred and not suggested by any of our contexts, we disregard the OVS reading.
- 7 We wanted to ensure that the participants would read both context versions rather than only the highlighted one. Therefore, we asked participants of the Inf-Group to tell us what they were currently doing. That is, while reading context one, participants said something like, "Now, I'm reading context one" or "Text one."
- 8 "[I]nformation-structurally given material is subject to prosodic reduction (*givenness marking hypothesis*) and material that remains must be prosodically highlighted (*contrastive remnant condition*)" (Winkler, "Ellipsis and Prosody" 360; emphasis in original).

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8 Reading Aloud Strategic Ambiguities in Poetic Texts

David Fishelov

Ambiguity, Disambiguation, and Reading Poetry Aloud

In this chapter, I present several kinds of strategic ambiguity found in poetic texts. The term ‘strategic’ is introduced to emphasize that these ambiguities, rather than being accidental, are phenomena introduced by the author to create certain effects.¹ I focus on the reading aloud of such textual ambiguities and discuss possible considerations involved in opting for specific ways of performing such ambiguous passages. Before presenting several strategic ambiguities in poetic texts as well as their readings, I will first examine the use of the term ‘ambiguity’ in linguistics.

In linguistics, the term ambiguity usually refers to a specific phrase structure, that is, syntactic ambiguity, or to specific words, that is, semantic ambiguity. In syntactic ambiguity, a phrase can be construed in different syntactic structures: for example, “*Amor matris*: subjective and objective genitive” (Joyce 34). The meanings of the terms that compose the phrase (love and mother) are the same, but the *relations* between them change: either the mother loves her child, or the child loves the mother. Syntactic ambiguity can also apply to units larger than word pairs, but it will always involve different relations between the units that compose the string of words. In semantic ambiguity, the different meanings are located within a specific lexical unit. There are several variations on the principle of semantic ambiguity, that is, of a word with multiple meanings: polysemy, in which the different meanings of such a word are related to one another (e.g. ‘read’ may denote either the mental process of understanding written texts or reading a text aloud); homonym, in which the word’s meanings are unrelated (e.g. ‘rose’ as a flower or the past tense of rise), with further distinctions between homophones, that is, words that sound the same, but vary in spelling and meaning (e.g. /eit/: ate as to digest or eight as the number); and homographs or heteronyms, that is, words with the same spelling, but different sounds and meanings (e.g. ‘desert’ as arid ground or as to abandon).

Note that the possibility of disambiguating lexical and syntactic ambiguities through reading them aloud is quite limited. In other words, specific semantic and syntactic ambiguities usually cannot be resolved by reading aloud. Reading aloud can disambiguate only in rare cases of homographs: for example, “He was surprised by the buffet” (buffet as a forceful strike or buffet as a meal set out on a table). In most lexical ambiguity, however, reading aloud does not disambiguate: the word ‘read’ can mean either the mental process of understanding written texts or the reading aloud of a text—in whatever intonation it is uttered.² Only textual and contextual clues (i.e. the specific sentence in which a lexical item is embedded or the specific situation in which it is uttered) will disambiguate lexical ambiguities.

As far as syntactic ambiguity is concerned, reading aloud can help to disambiguate in some cases, especially when the two meanings are associated with the different parsing of a string of words. The sentence “John saw the man with a telescope” can mean either that (1) John has a telescope with which he saw the man or that (2) the man has a telescope and John saw him.³ If this sentence is read aloud, and its performer is aware of the two meanings and wants to disambiguate and to express meaning (1), then s/he can try to use a specific pattern of intonation: for example, to introduce a short pause after quickly reading “John saw the man.” If, on the other hand, a performer wants to express meaning (2), s/he will introduce a short pause after “John saw” and will then read the rest of the sentence quickly. Note, however, that not every syntactic ambiguity can be disambiguated through intonation: no matter how one reads aloud the string “*Amor matris*,” it will still mean either the mother’s love for her child or the child’s love for the mother. Thus, disambiguation through reading aloud can only be found in a very few cases of linguistic ambiguity, syntactic and semantic alike.

In addition to specific kinds of ambiguity discussed in linguistics, ambiguity in a more general and sometimes loose sense is often associated with poetic texts. Different schools of criticism and different theories of literature may disagree about the appropriate term for describing ambiguity in poetic texts (e.g. ambiguity, polyvalence, semantic richness, multiple meanings), or about the source of the ambiguity (e.g. the text itself, the interpreter, social conventions), but they all seem to assign an important place to ambiguity (or related terms) in literary, and especially poetic, texts.⁴

Textual ambiguities sometimes emerge from specific ambiguous elements (e.g. lexical or syntactic) in the poem, but they can also emerge from the different weight assigned to different elements or patterns, which are not ambiguous in themselves, in the poem. Different attitudes expressed by a speaker (e.g. Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” in 3.1.55), for example, do not necessarily involve specific ambiguous words or syntax. As far as

the overall interpretation of the text is concerned, such cases, which can be described as based on an ambivalent attitude of the speaker, can be described as constructed ambiguities.

Whereas reading aloud usually does not disambiguate specific lexical and syntactic ambiguities, we can expect that a process of *disambiguation* will take place when reading ambiguous poetic texts aloud, similar to the disambiguation of a dramatic text when it is staged. When, in the concluding scene of *King Lear* (ca. 1608), Lear asks someone not further specified in the company, "Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir" (5.3.283), we can interpret "this button" to be his own (i.e. he is suffocating and needs relief) or, perhaps, it is Cordelia's (i.e. he believes that she is still alive and that she just needs her button to be undone to breathe again). In a specific performance of the play, this textual ambiguity cannot be maintained: "somebody" will undo either Lear's button or Cordelia's. One might argue that Shakespeare, who had the play's performance in mind, did not construct this scene as ambiguous, and that it is simply a problem of our lack of information about how the scene is meant to be staged. Still, as long as all that we have is Shakespeare's text and not one of its original performances, we face an ambiguous text, that is, a text that can be read, understood, and performed in (at least) two different ways. The ambiguity of "this button" in *King Lear* can be applied to many deictic expressions in dramatic texts that go through a process of disambiguation when put on stage (e.g. what specific piece of furniture is referred to when a character in a play says "get rid of *this* piece of furniture").

Textual ambiguity of dramatic texts can also be found on 'higher,' constructed levels of the text, such as different interpretations of a character. Is Cordelia the epitome of selfless love or a prideful young woman who does not want to comply with her father's expectations? Is Shylock a ridiculous comic figure or a diabolical character? Is Hamlet a melancholic young man or a manipulative, calculating schemer? We can argue that Shakespeare's plays leave such issues open or ambiguous, but when *King Lear* or *The Merchant of Venice* (ca. 1596) or *Hamlet* (ca. 1600) is put on stage, the specific director and actors usually (but not necessarily) offer specific answers that disambiguate such overall textual ambiguities. Thus, we need to examine whether, and to what extent, certain kinds of ambiguity in poetic texts undergo a similar process of disambiguation when they are read aloud.

In the following discussion, I will present several types of ambiguity in poetic texts, different possibilities for reading them aloud, and possible reasons for such different readings, and I will discuss to what extent different performances disambiguate certain textual ambiguities. In addition to presenting certain theoretical considerations, I will also refer to actual readings by professional actors and by several students of mine. The

examination of specific choices and tendencies made by actual readers can teach us something important about the conscious and unconscious decisions made by readers when they face textual ambiguities. The decision about what specific way to read poetry aloud depends on many considerations, and, because poetic texts have many interrelated layers of sound and meaning, there is always more than one ‘correct’ way to perform them. While we should favour those readings aloud of poems that actualize important and conspicuous elements of the poetic text, the chapter’s objective is not to recommend *specific* ways of reading aloud but to shed light on the considerations, and the gains and losses, involved in specific choices made by performers.⁵

Before moving on, we should note that certain key terms in this discussion of ambiguity require disambiguation. The term ‘reading,’ for example, can refer to different, though related, meanings: (1) a mental process through which we examine and grasp the meaning of a written text (“she read the instructions and acted accordingly”); (2) an act of reading a text aloud (“please, read me the letter, I forgot my glasses”); or (3) an elaborated, explicit interpretation of a text (“she offered a psychoanalytical reading of the poem”). The term ‘interpretation’ can mean different things, too. Following Beardsley’s distinction (9–10), it can mean either (1) an elaborate explication of the meanings of a text (related to reading #3) or (2) the particular performance of a score or a text (“Glenn Gould’s interpretation of Bach’s ‘Brandenburg Concerto No. 5’ is quite original”; “Laurence Olivier’s interpretation of Hamlet emphasizes the character’s melancholy”). To read a poem aloud (reading #2) is, in fact, an instance of interpretation as performance (interpretation #2).

The different meanings of the term reading—as understanding, performing, or offering explicit interpretation—are also interrelated: a specific understanding of a text (reading #1) will encourage a certain way of performing that text (reading #2) or a specific interpretation of it (reading #3). Accordingly, we are led to understand a text in a certain way (reading #1) by listening to a particular reading aloud of it (reading #2) and, thus, may favour a specific, explicit interpretation (reading #3). In the following discussion, the term ‘performer’ will be used for reading aloud and ‘reader’ for silent reading, and, in case the specific sense of terms such as ‘reading’ and ‘interpretation’ is not clear from the context, I will provide an ad hoc explanation.

In the next two sections, I will examine the two kinds of ambiguity that are mostly found in poetic texts and the challenge they present when reading the poems aloud. I will start with a phenomenon that is uniquely poetic—enjambment—and will then move on to another phenomenon that is typically found in poems—the heterogeneous mini-catalogue. Note that these two kinds of ambiguity go beyond the strict, linguistic

sense of the term (i.e. syntactic and semantic): they are not built on two specific meanings embedded into a word (lexical ambiguity) or string of words (syntactic ambiguity). Rather, the former (enjambment) stems from a tension between syntactic structure and verse structure, and the latter (heterogeneous mini-catalogue) arises from a syntactic parallel structure and contrasting meanings of the words that fill said structure. I will then move on to discuss textual ambiguities that are triggered by heterogeneous elements and patterns interspersed throughout the poem, which can be given different weight in our interpretation. One such textual ambiguity is related to different attitudes of the speaker in the poem (e.g. negative or positive attitude, resolution or resignation, enthusiasm or irony).⁶ Finally, I will focus on cases of textual ambiguities in a loose sense of the term, whereby we face several layers of the poetic text and by giving certain layers prominence, we suppress other, equally important ones. This last phenomenon is on the borderline between ambiguity in the strict sense of the term and what can be described as the richness of competing textual layers and meanings. In each kind of textual ambiguity, I will examine whether, and to what extent, its reading aloud disambiguates it or keeps the interpretative ambiguity alive.

Reading Aloud the Ambiguity of Enjambment

Enjambment presents a discrepancy between syntax and verse structure: the ending of a sentence or a syntactic clause does not end where the poetic line ends. This kind of ambiguity is specific to poetry, and while it does not present ambiguity in the strict lexical or syntactical sense, it does pose two ways of reading, parsing, and sometimes understanding a passage and always calls attention to the specific passage that constitutes the enjambment. Furthermore, enjambment inevitably presents a dilemma for those who want to read poems aloud: should the performer ignore the line-ending and read the syntactic unit in a continuous manner, or should s/he respect the line-ending and signal it. To signal line-endings with a short pause is probably the default of most performers. As Tsur has shown, experienced performers can use additional vocal means to signal a stop in the text continuum, in addition to “punctuational pauses”:

intonation contour, and some more elusive cues, such as the lengthening of the last speech sound or syllable, or overarticulation of the word boundaries, e.g., by inserting a stop release or a glottal stop where appropriate. Such cues may act in conjunction—indicating unambiguous continuity or discontinuity; or in conflict—indicating continuity and discontinuity at the same time.

(Tsur, “Free Verse” 36)⁷

Before I illustrate the dilemma facing a performer and its possible solutions, we should first distinguish between two kinds of enjambment: prospective and retrospective (see Golomb). Prospective enjambment occurs when we know that the syntactic unit is not complete when we reach the ending of a line; we know that we have to ‘run on’ to the next line in order to complete the unit. Retrospective enjambment, on the other hand, occurs when we do not know that the syntactic unit is not complete when we reach the ending of a line; it is only when we read the next line that we realize that the line-ending of the previous line was not the ending of a syntactic unit.

The most conspicuous cases of enjambment are of the prospective type. The first few lines of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), for example, illustrate how the reader may be ‘forced’ to run on to the next line:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
 Memory and desire, stirring
 Dull roots with spring rain.
 Winter kept us warm, covering
 Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
 A little life with dried tubers. (l. 1–7)

Only in lines 4 and 7 do syntactic unit and poetic line coincide; all other lines offer a conspicuous case of prospective enjambment.

A mixture of prospective and retrospective enjambment can be illustrated in the first few lines of William Wordsworth’s sonnet “It Is a Beauteous Evening” (1802):

It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun
 Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity (l. 1–4)

Lines 2 and 3 illustrate a retrospective enjambment: we can stop at the ending of line 2 and take it as an autonomous unit (“The holy time is quiet as a Nun”), only to discover later on that line 3 actually continues and completes it. Lines 3 and 4 illustrate prospective enjambment: when we reach the ending of line 3 (“the broad sun”), we have to move to line 4 to complete the unit, that is, to discover what “the broad sun” actually does.

For a performer, these two kinds of enjambment present slightly different situations: with prospective enjambment, a performer is drawn to ‘run on’ to the next line in order to complete the syntactic unit. If, however, the

performer does not signal (e.g. with a short pause) the line-ending, s/he will miss the *tension* between syntactic and verse structure, between a momentary stop and the urge to continue.

With retrospective enjambment, a performer who ignores the fact that the line can be read (i.e. understood) as a complete unit and ‘runs on’ to the next line will miss something else. To ignore the line-ending in a retrospective enjambment is to ignore the small surprise and sometimes the qualification of meaning awaiting the reader at the beginning of the second line. Retrospective enjambment is an invitation to re-read and re-understand the ending of the previous line in light of the beginning of the following one. In Wordsworth’s “It is a Beauteous Evening,” for example, when we reach the ending of the second line (“The holy time is quiet as a Nun”), we can envision a quiet nun, a nun, perhaps, who has taken the vow of silence. The “Breathless with adoration” at the beginning of the next line, however, introduces a *new* element: we are no longer dealing with quietness as such; rather, reverence now becomes the major characteristic of the nun and of anybody present in the “beauteous evening.”

Out of the several readings aloud of the sonnet available on the Internet, I have chosen two. The first is performed by Leo McKern (in his role as Rumpole of the Bailey), and this reading is presented as part of an everyday situation. Another reading of the sonnet, titled “Evening on Calais Beach” (1802), can be found at classicalpoetryaloud.com.⁸ Neither of these readings pays much attention to the line-ending of line 2, probably because we are dealing with nuances of meaning (“quiet”; “with adoration”) rather than with a dramatic change or qualification of meaning.

Should we formulate specific recommendations for performing enjambment? It is not the chapter’s aim to formulate such specific rules or guidelines, but rather to describe certain poetic ambiguities, the options for performing them, and their possible implications for disambiguation. Still, we can expect performers to identify enjambments and to respect their specific characteristics. In the case of prospective enjambment, we can expect the performer to convey the fact that there is a line-break (e.g. with a very short pause); otherwise, the performance will miss out on the tension between the poetic structure and the flow of syntax and ideas. In the case of retrospective enjambment, we can expect the performer to express the fact that there is a line-break despite of what s/he may already know (i.e. that the syntactic unit does not end), especially in cases in which the second line significantly qualifies the meaning of the first line; otherwise, the performance will lack the surprise and the semantic qualification. How strongly should a performer signal the line-ending in enjambment? A specific answer depends on many particular variables, and no general recommendation can or should be offered.

Reading Aloud the Ambiguity of Pseudo-Parallel Structure

The second ambiguity that I would like to examine is, again, not strictly a linguistic (syntactic or semantic) one. Rather, it is an ambiguity that stems from a clash between syntax and semantics. It consists of a specific syntactic structure that implies semantic equivalence and a semantic ‘filling,’ characterized by differences and contrasts. I suggest calling this case of ambiguity a *pseudo-parallel structure* or a *heterogeneous mini-catalogue*.

Before I explain this kind of ambiguous structure further, let us first consider a straightforward, simple parallel structure. It typically involves a series of words belonging to the same category and playing the same syntactic role: for example, a series of nouns functioning as the subject (“John, Mary, and Albert came to class today”), a series of nouns functioning as objects (“After eating a banana, an apple, and an orange, John drank tea”), or a series of verbs (“In the triathlon, John ran, cycled, and swam”).

There are, however, cases in which some of the specific terms on the list do not constitute similar items; rather, they differ from, or even contrast with, the other terms. Such pseudo-parallels are employed to establish ambiguity between syntax and semantics. These cases present a dilemma for the performer. The opening line of Charles Baudelaire’s “Au Lecteur” (“To the Reader”; 1857) presents an example of just such a heterogeneous mini-catalogue:

La sottise, l’erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps, (l. 1–2)

Stupidity, error, sin, meanness,
fill up our minds and work upon our bodies, (3)

All items on the list in the first line refer to negative behaviour or character traits, but the last two also include a strong moral element; there is a great difference between making a mistake and sinning: while the former is a universal, forgivable human characteristic (*errare humanum est*), the latter involves immoral choices. It is instructive to listen to several readings of this first line, performed by French actors. Michel Piccoli, for example, offers what can be called a decadent reading: he reads the poem very slowly, in a meditative tone, highlighting an atmosphere of moral debauchery. Other readings may put more emphasis on prosodic patterns (metre, rhyme) or offer a quicker, more dramatic and energetic reading accompanied by music, like the one by the French actor and singer Serge Reggiani.⁹ Despite such important differences between the performers, almost all of them read the list of the first line as if the items were (only) similar, without any attempt to express the semantic differences (at the very least, the semantic nuances) between the first and the last two items.

As the poem progresses, Baudelaire introduces additional series of mini-catalogues, some of which are relatively straightforward. The seventh stanza opens with the line, “Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l’incendie” (“If the rape, the poison, the dagger, the arson”), and the eighth stanza consists almost entirely of two series of mini-catalogues, the first of (unpleasant) animals and the second (mainly) of their sounds:

Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les serpents,
Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, rampants,
Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices (l. 29–32)

But among the jackals, panthers, hound bitches
Monkeys, scorpions, vultures, snakes,
The yelping, howling, growling, crawling monsters
In the infamous menagerie of our vices (5)

These mini-catalogues invite the reader to ponder over the similarities and differences between the items that constitute the series: for example, after a row of three verbs that describe horrible voices uttered by the different “monsters”—“glapissants, hurlants, grognants” (“yelping, howling, growling”)—the fourth verb actually describes movement, not voice—“rampants” (“crawling”). The different performers of the poem, however, did not try to offer a differential reading of the semantic variations in the heterogeneous mini-catalogue but adhered to a (relatively) monotonous reading.

Another example of a list of items presented in a syntactic structure of equivalence, but with semantic differences, can be found in line 6 of William Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802”:

Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie (l. 6)

While the first two items illustrate the materiality of the great metropolis of London (“ships”) and its political power (“towers”), the next three refer to buildings closely associated with the city’s cultural and religious life. The last two items refer to culture (“theatres”) and religion (“temples”), while the “domes” in the middle of the list denote an architectural element that clearly evokes religious life through the glorious sight of St. Paul’s Cathedral. There are quite a few performances of Wordsworth’s sonnet available on the Internet. I would like to focus on two of them, performed by two actors: Richard Armitage and Ian McKellen. These two readings differ in several aspects, including the fact that Armitage’s reading is accompanied by

background music (occasionally used in artistic recordings of poetry readings). In this discussion, however, we are first and foremost interested in the reading of the heterogeneous mini-catalogue, and on that front only Armitage—unlike McKellen and several other readings available on YouTube—attempts to highlight the difference between the first two items (“ships, towers”) and the rest of the list by introducing a pause after the first two items. This does not mean that Armitage’s reading is any ‘better’ than that of McKellen. Note also that McKellen, together with most performers of this line, favours a reading that prefers syntactic parallelism over a differential reading that seeks to express semantic variation. Furthermore, as we shall shortly see, there are good reasons for favouring syntactic parallelism in the performance of heterogeneous mini-catalogues.

In order to further examine how a heterogeneous mini-catalogue may be read aloud in poetry, I asked some of my students to read an example of this very structure aloud for me. During the past five years, I have asked about 25 students of mine, who participated in different classes, to perform this reading aloud test. For this task, I chose lines from a poem in Hebrew, my students’ mother tongue, in which they can easily detect semantic differences and nuances. The assignment was to read the first two lines of “You Are Hereby Permitted to All Man” (1973) by the modern Hebrew poet David Avidan. The poem’s title is a quotation from a text the husband speaks to his wife during a traditional Jewish divorce ritual. Thus, the title sets a sober, pessimistic tone for the rest of the poem, suggesting that the life of this married couple (and possibly many others) will inevitably lead to divorce. The poem’s first two lines read:

A man lives with a woman for months and years
 There is between them love and joy and animosity and knives (author’s translation)

There is a marked contrast in the second line between the first and the last two items (“love and joy” vs. “animosity and knives”).¹⁰ Despite this clear difference between the positive and the negative pairs of terms, my students, when asked to read these two lines aloud, mostly opted for an equivalent reading of all four terms in the second line (in terms of pace, intonation, emphasis, etc.).¹¹

The professional readings of Baudelaire and Wordsworth, as well as a number of readings of Avidan’s lines performed by my students, show a clear tendency to favour syntax over semantics: that is, to read a heterogeneous list (even if it includes marked contrasts) as if it contained equivalent terms. In other words, performers tend not to opt for a differential reading aloud that expresses or highlights semantic differences. This tendency can be explained in two complementary ways: a possible general linguistic explanation and a literary-interpretative one. According to a view shared

by some linguists, syntactic structures have a more basic role in language processing, especially in the parsing of strings of words.¹² Thus, even when there is a discrepancy between the syntactic structure that connotes equivalence and the specific heterogeneous content, we tend to stick to the logic of the syntactic structure when reading it aloud.

There may also be a specific literary justification for a reading that ‘neutralises’ semantic differences in pseudo-parallel structures. By placing heterogeneous items in a syntactically equivalent structure, the poet may seek to create *the impression* that these items constitute a simple catalogue; thereby s/he creates ‘ad hoc equivalence,’ according to which terms that are not parallel in the general vocabulary become parallel in the vocabulary of the poem. Avidan’s poem, for example, creates the impression that regardless of the specific kind of exchange between a man and a woman within a marriage, it will inevitably result in their separation, as if moments of love and joy were not that different from moments of hostility: they are all part of a relationship doomed to end.

Nevertheless, the performer can attempt to express the semantic differences because s/he believes that these differences are an important part of the poem’s strategic ambiguity and because, without highlighting them, they would be lost to a listener who hears the poem only once.

The next example, line 138 from Canto One of Alexander Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock” (1714), illustrates a pseudo-parallel structure, too, but one that differs in one important aspect from the preceding examples:

Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux (l. 138)

The line describes a series of items on the night table of Belinda, the poem’s heroine: they are listed in a structure of equivalence but contain a strong semantic contrast, that is, that between “Bibles” and everything else on the list, notably “Billet-doux.” Should we read the line according to its syntactic structure of equivalence, or should we offer a differential reading that attempts to express the semantic contrast by using a pause and/or by changing our intonation? At least one reading available on the Internet offers a differential reading.¹³ The performer calls attention to the contrast between “Bibles” and the rest of the list by introducing a pause after “Bibles” and changing tone in the reading of “Billet-doux.” What could be the logic behind such a differential reading?

A differential reading aloud seems justified in this case because Pope’s text contains two perspectives: according to Belinda (as imagined by Pope), the vain and charming heroine, all of the items on her night table have the same significance (hence the parallel structure), but according to Pope (and the audience), there is a marked contrast between Bibles and everything else. Unlike our previous examples of pseudo-parallel structure, in which the poet probably wants to create the impression that dissimilar things

become equivalent in the poem's special vocabulary, here, the poet wants to emphasize the ironic contrast between the perspective of Belinda and that of the poet (and of the reader).

To conclude this section, there seems to be a tendency to opt for an equivalent, monotonous reading when reading a pseudo-parallel structure aloud. Such readings can be justified by general, linguistic considerations as well as specific literary and interpretative ones. Sometimes, however, there are good reasons to offer a differential reading, especially in cases in which the poet introduces different perspectives associated with different voices or characters, as we have seen in the case of Pope's line from "The Rape of the Lock." Note also that both monotonous and differential readings do not disambiguate the ambiguity inherent to pseudo-parallel structure. A monotonous reading might weaken the semantic tension that characterizes this phenomenon, so that a careless listener might even miss the tension. An attentive listener, however, will be able to recognize and appreciate the semantic tension, even when the performer does not express this tension in a differential reading. A differential reading, on the other hand, might weaken the textual ambiguity by emphasizing the semantic difference and relegating the syntactic parallelism to the background, but it cannot erase or hide the syntactic parallelism or the tension between syntax and semantics that is the hallmark of a pseudo-parallel structure. In both variations of pseudo-parallel structure (either the poem superimposing parallelism on semantic differences or this superimposition being assigned to a character in the poem), and in both kinds of performance (either monotonous or differential), the basic strategic ambiguity is maintained, that is, the listener cannot ignore the discrepancy between syntax and semantics.

The strategic ambiguity of enjambment is a phenomenon peculiar to poetry (because it relies on verse structure), and pseudo-parallel structures, too, are mostly found in poetic texts (because verse offers an apt framework for such compact structures). In the next section, I will focus on a different kind of textual ambiguity: one that, unlike the specific, delineated nature of enjambment and pseudo-parallel structure, is triggered by disparate elements and patterns throughout the poem, that is, words, sentences, stanzas, and constructed elements like the speaker in the poem. While these kinds of 'holistic' ambiguity can be found in non-poetic texts, the richest examples are still those found in poetry.

Reading Aloud the Ambiguity of the Speaker in the Poem

An interesting case of overall textual ambiguity involves the attitude of the speaker of the poem towards its addressee (e.g. commanding or begging the addressee) or towards the subject matter of the poem (e.g. mild joy

or total elation with regard to a beautiful sunset). This kind of ambiguity is sometimes described in terms of the “tone” of the speaker of the poem (Brower; Brooks and Warren), although the term is used by critics metaphorically as it is applied to a written text rather than an actual speech situation. Sometimes, a performer has to choose between different options that highlight different attitudes of the speaker of the poem, and in doing so s/he disambiguates an overall textual ambiguity. Sometimes they can try to maintain different options that express different attitudes, thus retaining the textual ambiguity (e.g. performing the poem in a tone that hovers between commanding and begging).

As an example, let us examine the overall textual ambiguity of the speaker’s attitude in Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” (1922), that is, what does the speaker think and feel towards what s/he describes:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there’s some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

(224–225)

Why does the speaker stop by the woods? Does the speaker’s description of the “lovely, dark, and deep” woods imply a fascination with death? Does the poem express a mood of depression or even a suicidal wish? Or, perhaps, the poem expresses the overcoming of such a longing for death, that is, it presents a struggle between what can be described as the superego, and the id, in which the former triumphs because of a sense of duty and social obligation (“But I have promises to keep/And miles to go before I sleep”).

When reading the poem aloud, we can signal our preference for one of these two possible interpretations, especially in the way in which we read the poem's concluding lines. We can read them with a soft, melancholic tone, and even accompany the reading of the word "miles" with a sigh and "I sleep" with a longing tone. Such a reading will emphasize the fascination-with-death interpretation. Alternatively, we can adopt a resolute, emphatic tone in reading these same lines, especially the words "promises" and "and miles to go," to express the speaker's triumph over depression and his/her decision to cling to life and to social obligations.

What option should a performer choose, what option does s/he actually choose, and what are the justifications for opting for a specific choice? Luckily, we can find several readings of this famous poem on the Internet, including two by Frost himself [let us call them Frost-1 ("Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening") and Frost-2 ("Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost")]. While we can hear the verse structure (metre, rhymes) in both of Frost's readings, there are also differences between the two: Frost-2, for example, puts less emphasis on verse structure and creates the impression that we are listening to "the voice of the poet talking to himself" (Eliot, "Three Voices" 96), that is, the poem as an interior monologue with varying intonation.

As for the ambivalence in the speaker's attitude (which is responsible for creating the overall textual ambiguity)—longing for death vs. overcoming this longing—neither Frost-1 nor Frost-2 offers a decisive answer. Frost reads the concluding three lines in a relatively monotonous tone that keeps both interpretative options alive. In other words, Frost's performances of the poem do not disambiguate its interpretation (i.e. the way we understand and explicate the speaker's attitude). In this particular case, the poet's two performances seem to maintain the strategic ambiguity of the text, but we should be careful not to treat a poet's own performance of the poem (where such performance is available) as the 'authoritative' reading, lest we commit just another variation of the intentional fallacy. After all, not all excellent poets are also excellent performers of their own poems.

When we detect textual ambiguity regarding the attitude of the speaker in a poem, we can assume that a performer has to choose between the different, competing attitudes. Frost's readings, however, can teach us one important lesson: sometimes reading aloud can maintain a textual ambiguity regarding the attitude of the speaker in the poem, allowing us to escape the need to side with one interpretation over another.

Textual Ambiguities and Styles of Reading Aloud

Whereas Frost's readings illustrate the possibility of bypassing the need to choose between two interpretations of overall textual ambiguity, the next three readings aloud of Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That

Good Night” (1947) can tell us that, at least on some levels of nuanced, overall ambiguity, a performer has to make a decision:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(193)

The first reading to be considered is Thomas’s own. Thomas was not only a gifted poet but also an outstanding performer of poetry. His reading highlights the rhythm and the constant repetitions that are characteristic of the form of the villanelle, using intonations that turn the reading into something that evokes the chanting of a spell. Thus, we can call Thomas’s reading the ‘Incantation’ reading. The second reading is that of the excellent actor and experienced performer of poetry Richard Burton. Burton reads the poem as if it were a scene in a play: the son confronting his dying father, and the son’s urgent psychological need to shake his father from the lethargy into which he is sinking. Let us call Burton’s reading the ‘Dramatic’ reading.

Finally, we consider the reading of another renowned Welsh actor, Anthony Hopkins. Hopkins’s reading is very different from the other two: it is much slower and is spoken in a very low voice, almost like a whisper. There is a marked contrast between the repeated, urgent, and hortatory

statements of the text and the tone in which they are uttered. When first listening to Hopkins's reading, one might be puzzled: has this talented actor missed his mark? Has Hopkins decided to go against certain conspicuous elements of the poem? Upon reconsideration, Hopkins's reading, though less expected, reveals its merits: the son, who is trying to invigorate his dying father, to persuade him to adopt a vital state of mind, finds himself instead empathizing with his dying father and expresses his empathy in tone. If this is indeed the logic behind Hopkins's reading, we can call it the 'Empathetic' reading.

Out of the three, which reading should we choose? I do not believe that we *have to* decide. Each one of us has, of course, his or her personal taste and preferences. There is no one reading that is necessarily and inherently superior to the other two: all three readings offer a feasible interpretation (i.e. performance) of the poem, and all three express meanings consistent with the poem's words and form. All three readings pay their dues to central aspects of the poem, and they do that without *denying* other important aspects of it: Thomas's 'Incantation' highlights the poem's rhythm, which is definitely an important part of the poem; Burton's 'Dramatic' reading highlights the poem as a dramatic monologue, which also forms a dominant element of the poem; and Hopkins's 'Empathetic' reading emphasizes the intimacy between father and son, which forms yet another essential part of the poem.

One can, at least in principle, perhaps try to integrate or reconcile Burton's 'Dramatic' reading with Thomas's 'Incantation.' It is much harder, however, to reconcile a 'Dramatic' performance with an 'Empathetic' one à la Hopkins. A performer can alternate between the two, but it is almost impossible to read the same words simultaneously with both forceful urgency and in an empathetic and soft tone. Thus, sometimes a performer must choose between different aspects of the poem. By choosing between a forceful and a soft tone, the performer chooses between two aspects or levels of the speaker's complex psychological state: the speaker may be psychologically very close to his father (hence the empathy), while also being frustrated by his father's attitude and trying to change it. The complex human psyche can maintain both aspects, but when one tries to express this complexity vocally, only one aspect can be given prominence. Note that a reader, unlike a performer, can describe all important aspects of the poem without having to choose between them. In fact, a responsible interpretation (meaning #1 of 'interpretation' in the opening section "Ambiguity, Disambiguation, and Reading Poetry Aloud") of the poem should acknowledge all important aspects, including competing ones.

Hopkins's reading of Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" also offers a case of a performance that brings to life a central aspect of the poem that might have gone unnoticed without that particular reading aloud. Thus, reading aloud sometimes not only realizes certain

meanings and disambiguates between competing meanings but it also plays an active role in foregrounding certain meanings that would otherwise remain dormant. The different ‘styles’ of performance discussed in this section—incantation, dramatic, empathetic—do not necessarily give vocal expression to truly opposing, contradictory meanings; rather, they often express different shades of meanings, of mood, of attitude, and of atmosphere that are evoked by the printed poem.

Concluding Remarks

In the first section of the chapter, I argued that we should favour those readings aloud of poems that actualize important and conspicuous elements of the poetic text. At the same time, I have pointed out that poems are complex, multi-layered texts, with many interconnected aspects of sound and meaning, and hence there is always more than one form of a faithful reading aloud. The way to reconcile these seemingly conflicting statements is to acknowledge that, as long as the performer realizes several conspicuous elements of the poem and does not go *against* other important elements, the reading can be considered a legitimate performance.¹⁴ Thus, for example, all three readings aloud of Thomas’s “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”—by Thomas, Burton, and Hopkins—can be described as different, legitimate *styles* of reading.¹⁵ Each of these three performances leans towards specific important elements of the poem at the expense of other equally important elements, and in that sense they can be described as disambiguating a multi-layered, complex poetic text with several competing aspects to some degree, and they are of course still legitimate (in fact, outstanding) performances because they do not work specifically *against* important elements of the poem.

Poetic ambiguities can be found, as we have seen, on different levels of the text: from specific lexical or syntactic ones, to ambiguities that stem from an incongruity between syntactic structure and verse structure (enjambment), or between syntax and semantics (pseudo-parallel structure), or between different attitudes of the speaker in the poem, or in even a more loose sense between different competing layers of the poetic text (e.g. conspicuous prosodic patterns against life-like speech). We can return now to the question introduced at the beginning of the chapter, that is, whether reading aloud a poem disambiguates it in a similar way that a stage production disambiguates a play. Based on the examples discussed in the preceding sections, the answer is far from being simple and seems to depend much on the *kind* of textual ambiguity involved. In the following table (Table 8.1), the different kinds of ambiguity, that is, the sources from which different interpretations emerge, are presented schematically in the left column, and whether, and to what extent, reading them aloud disambiguates them is briefly described in the right column:

Table 8.1 Different Kinds of Ambiguity From Which Different Interpretations Emerge

<i>The kinds of textual ambiguity</i>	<i>Does reading aloud disambiguate them?</i>
Lexical ambiguity	Usually does not disambiguate
Syntactical ambiguity	Disambiguates only in specific cases with alternative parsing of clauses
Enjambment (i.e. competing syntactic and verse structure)	Readings aloud that ignore verse structure and follow syntactic contiguity disambiguate this kind of ambiguity
Pseudo-parallel structure (i.e. competing syntactic parallelism and semantic contrast)	Both monotonous and differential performances do not disambiguate this kind of textual ambiguity, but rather represent it with different emphases
Competing constructed attitude of the speaker in the poem (e.g. full of pathos against ironic tone)	Reading aloud can and often does disambiguate this kind of textual ambiguity, but not necessarily; it can try to maintain this kind of textual ambiguity (e.g. like Frost's two readings)
Competing overall layers of the text (e.g. conspicuous prosodic patterns against life-like speech)	A certain degree of disambiguation will be witnessed in many cases; performers will tend to give prominence to certain textual layers at the expense of others

We are now in a better position to return to the analogy between performing a poem and staging a play, and we can argue that said analogy works best with the last two kinds of textual ambiguity: with competing attitudes of the speaker in the poem and with competing overall layers of the poetic text. This should not surprise us as the performer of a poem functions in many ways as both actor and director of a play production: just like the former, the performer interprets the speaker of the poem as if s/he was a character in a play, and just like the latter, the performer of a poem decides what aspects of the text should be highlighted and foregrounded at the expense of others.

Notes

- 1 For a systematic introduction of the term 'strategic ambiguity' from a linguistic and communicative perspective, see Winkler 1–12.
- 2 For the different levels of intonation and their functions, see the concise discussion in Crystal.
- 3 See also Remmele et al., Chapter 7 in this volume.
- 4 For example, from *New Critics*, like Empson's classical study *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), to empirical studies of literature that emphasize polyvalence (Hauptmeier; Meutsch, and Viehoff).
- 5 For a lucid discussion of what every reading aloud can add to our experience of a poem, see Abrams.

- 6 For a nuanced analysis of specific linguistic ambiguities that build different attitudes of the speaker in Shakespeare's Sonnet 138, see Bade, Bauer, Beck, Dörge, and Zirker.
- 7 In his 2015 article, Tsur offers a detailed analysis of the vocal means used by experienced readers to indicate line-endings in Yehuda Amichai's "Rain in the Battlefield," written in free verse. For a meticulous description of the performance of enjambment of poetic lines written in metre, such as the move from "express" to "A flowery tale" in lines 3 and 4 of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820), see Tsur, "The Performance."
- 8 The name of the performer is not given.
- 9 Reggiani's reading is not available on the Internet; see Reggiani.
- 10 There is also a difference between the first three abstract nouns and the last, concrete one. Furthermore, in the original Hebrew, the list has an additional interesting feature: the first three nouns (love, joy, animosity) rhyme (*Ahava-Khedva-Eyva*).
- 11 This finding was highly predominant when the students saw the text for the first time just seconds before they were asked to read it aloud. When the students were given more time to prepare, however, some of them offered a differential reading, but even then, most of them still offered a monotonous reading.
- 12 For a summary of the structure-first model in language processing, see, for example, Samar (331), who cites some empirical evidence and also refers to challenges to this view (332).
- 13 A reading by David Hart.
- 14 Such legitimate performances should be distinguished from deconstructive performances that work against important elements of the text, in the same way that there is a distinction between legitimate and deconstructive interpretations (as explicit formulations of textual meanings). For the latter, see Fishelov.
- 15 In addition to such legitimate general styles of reading, we should also acknowledge changing norms of reading aloud, just as we can detect different norms of acting and different schools of acting (e.g. Stanislavski vs. Brechtian) in the history of theatre.

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9 Does Reanalysis Need Ambiguity?

Ulrich Detges

The notion of reanalysis, as understood here, captures change on all levels of language: the phonological (Andersen; Langacker; Ohala, “The Listener,” “Sound Change”; Labov et al.), the morphological (Wurzel; Haspelmath, “The Growth”; Fertig), and the syntactic (Langacker; Timberlake; Lightfoot, *Diachronic Syntax*, “Shifting Triggers”; Harris and Campbell), as well as the lexical-semantic one (Detges and Waltereit). In the classical syntactic definition proposed by Langacker, reanalysis entails “change in the structure of an expression . . . that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation” (58). A case in point is the Spanish presentational construction [see (1); see also Waltereit and Detges]. This construction introduces new protagonists into the discourse and is impersonal in Standard Spanish. Originally, the noun phrase (NP) to the right of the verb finds itself in the syntactic configuration of a direct object. This is made explicit by, among other things, cases such as (1b), in which the verb form remains singular while the NP in question appears in the plural. In many dialects of both Peninsular and American Spanish, however, the status of the NP has changed to assume the role of subject in the construction. This becomes manifest when a plural form of the NP in question triggers a plural form of the verb (1c). However, in the singular, the syntactic status of the NP in question remains unresolved [see (1a)]. Here, both analyses are possible, that is, the NP can be interpreted as subject and as direct object. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the reanalysis of the NP from direct object to subject occurs in singular contexts. Moreover, in these contexts, the change goes unnoticed because the latter do “not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of [the] surface manifestation [of the expression]” (Detges and Waltereit 153).

- (1a) Hab-ía un soldado en el patio
 There-was.SING a soldier in the courtyard
 ‘There was a soldier in the courtyard.’

- | | | | | |
|------|---|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| (1b) | Hab-ía | soldados | en el patio | |
| | There-was.SING | soldiers.DO | in the courtyard | Direct Object |
| | 'There were soldiers in the courtyard.' | | | |
| (1c) | Hab-ía-n | soldados | en el patio | |
| | There-were.PLUR | soldiers.SUBJ | in the courtyard | Subject |
| | 'There were soldiers in the courtyard.' | | | |

One of the numerous questions surrounding the concept of reanalysis is the role of ambiguity. According to the classical view, “[r]eanalysis is made possible by *the potentially ambiguous* character of surface output” (Timberlake 168; emphasis added; see also, among many others, Anttila; Harris and Campbell; Hopper and Traugott). Thus, the reanalysis of the direct object in (1a) is only possible because *un soldado* has the same form as both the subject and object of the expression (see, however, the section to follow, “Syntactic Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity”). This view has been challenged by Detges and Waltereit and by Waltereit, who have argued that (1a) is ambiguous only *as a result of reanalysis*. Before the change, the NP to the right of *había* is a direct object; only after the reanalysis has taken place can it be treated as a subject. This more recent view, according to which ambiguity is the outcome of reanalysis rather than its origin, has been dominant (see, e.g., De Smet, “Analysing Reanalysis,” “Innovation”; Combettes). To clarify the intricate relationship between reanalysis and ambiguity, six different cases of reanalysis will be scrutinized in this chapter (see the sections that follow), taking into account three different linguistic levels, namely, lexical semantics (see the sections “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity” and “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Caused by Underdetermination”), morphology (see “Morphological Reanalysis Without Ambiguity” and “Morphological Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity”), and syntax (see “Syntactic Reanalysis Without Ambiguity” and “Syntactic Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity”). For each of these three levels, I will discuss two cases in point, one of which will be shown to be influenced by some sort of ambiguity (see “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Caused by Underdetermination,” “Morphological Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity,” and “Syntactic Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity”), while the other one clearly is not (see “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity,” “Morphological Reanalysis Without Ambiguity,” and “Syntactic Reanalysis Without Ambiguity”). As will become apparent, the notion of ambiguity in its generally accepted definition is too narrow and, therefore, fails to capture relevant aspects of the topic. Hence, my discussion will also take other types of “*interpretative uncertainty*” (Winter-Froemel 132) into account that are usually set apart from ambiguity (for an overview, see Sennet). Most prominent among these is *pragmatic underdetermination*, a concept I will develop in the following section. Drawing on

a usage-based model of reanalysis (see “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity”), I will then show that reanalysis can, but need not, be triggered by ambiguity or underdetermination.

Code Ambiguity and Pragmatic Underdetermination

In its most rigorous definition, the notion of ambiguity is restricted to cases like (1), in which a given linguistic form (word, phrase, or sentence) conventionally allows for more than one interpretation. This type of interpretative uncertainty is inherent in the language system and often manifests itself as a coexistence of diverging or even conflicting truth conditions (Kennedy). Hereafter, ambiguity of this kind will be referred to as *code ambiguity*. Besides this constellation, some authors also propose to include various forms of discourse ambiguity (Kerbrat-Orecchioni; Bauer et al.), defined as a “characteristic of utterances that can be assigned two (or more) distinct interpretations” (Winter-Froemel and Zirker 290). As a case in point, consider the dialogue in (2), in which both utterances—despite their unambiguous literal meanings—require further interpretation in order to make sense in the respective situations. As is shown in (2), the relationship between what is literally said (meaning) and what is really meant in the situation (implicature) is basically undetermined and, therefore, represents a kind of ambiguity.

- | | | |
|--------|---|------------------------|
| (2) A: | <i>Tomorrow is Wednesday!</i> | Said/Meaning |
| Sit. 1 | [So let’s watch the match together.] | Meant/Implicature (1a) |
| Sit. 2 | [So please do not forget to pay the rent.] | Meant/Implicature (2a) |
| B: | <i>OK, but my TV stopped working last weekend.</i> | Said/Meaning |
| Sit. 1 | [We’ll have to watch the match at your place.] | Meant/Implicature (1b) |
| Sit. 2 | [I would prefer not to spend my money on the rent.] | Meant/Implicature (2b) |

Note that in situation 1 (Sit. 1), only implicature (1b), but not (2b), is an appropriate reaction to the assumption of implicature (1a). Thus, in a given situation, each utterance normally licences only a restricted set of implicatures. Nevertheless, as effects which are non-detachable and cancellable (see Grice), implicatures by nature have an uncertain relationship to what is explicitly said. According to modern theories of pragmatics, underdetermination of this kind is extremely common and even useful in many situations. As a case in point, consider (3).

- (3) I’m driving down the highway. All of a sudden, I get a flat tire.

In order to interpret this example as a coherent text, the hearer has to flesh it out with further information. Thus, a maximally explicit variant of (3) is (3'). The additional information accommodated in (3') is given in italics.

- (3'a) *I was driving down the highway.*
- (3'b) *On a highway, you normally use your car or motorbike.*
- (3'c) *Cars and motorbikes have wheels.*
- (3'd) *The central feature of a wheel is a tire filled with air.*
- (3'e) All of a sudden, *my vehicle got a flat tire.*

Most of the information accommodated in (3') can be inferred from general world knowledge. Other information can be retrieved by means of context-dependent discourse rules. Thus, in the context of activities like driving or parking, the pronoun of the first person singular, *I* (as in *I got a flat tire*), typically refers to the speaker's vehicle rather than to the speaker him/herself (whereas, in the context of a board game, *I* may just as well refer to the speaker's game pieces, e.g. *I got kicked out by Sally!*). Moreover, the utterance in (3) skips over contingent information such as, for example, the brand, colour, or age of the speaker's vehicle. Obviously, the explicit mention of all of this information would not make the utterance any "better." On the contrary, (3'), unlike (3), is extremely unnatural and redundant. This impression is cogently captured by the notion of relevance. According to relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson, *Meaning and Relevance*), the cognitive relevance of a given utterance can be measured as the ratio between the strength of its cognitive effect and the effort necessary for its processing. Thus, (3') produces exactly the same cognitive effect as (3), but it is harder to process because of its large amount of irrelevant information. This explains the intuition that non-explicit and non-literal communication—as in (2) and (3)—is usually more efficient than maximally explicit information (Wilson; Carston, "Lexical Pragmatics"; Sperber and Wilson, "Deflationary Account"). In other words, under normal conditions, a certain amount of non-literalness and non-explicitness is a prerequisite for successful communication. As seen in (2) and (3), the number of implicatures is potentially unlimited, as is the amount of unspecified information associable with the wording of a given utterance. The notion of *pragmatic underdetermination* seems more appropriate for describing this situation than that of discourse ambiguity. However, I concede that pragmatic underdetermination can be viewed as a form of extreme ambiguity that arises in discourse. For the sake of simplicity, I will therefore subsume both pragmatic underdetermination and code ambiguity under the general label of ambiguity. In the section "Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Caused by Underdetermination" that follows, I will argue that pragmatic

underdetermination—more so than code ambiguity—is a potential source for reanalysis.

Underdetermination and code ambiguity belong to different levels of linguistic analysis. Code ambiguity is a conventional property of linguistic items and is therefore located at the level of the language system. Underdetermination, by contrast, is a defining condition of language use. In a Gricean approach, underdetermination is captured by the difference between “what is said” and “what is meant” (implicature). In this model, code ambiguity is something to be avoided for communication to be successful (“avoid obscurity of expression,” “avoid ambiguity”; Grice 46). Relevance theory, in contrast, proposes the notion of explicature (see Nicolle 406), which is explicitly designed, among other things, to account for code ambiguity (Wilson and Sperber 260–261). A hearer trying to make sense of (3) not only has to infer all of the implicit information given in (3′) but also has to decide that the tense in (3) is the narrative present—a conventional value of the (code-ambiguous) present tense—and, accordingly, that the recounted events took place in the past (for more details, see Carston, “Explicature,” “Relevance Theory”; Wilson and Sperber; Sperber and Wilson, *Meaning and Relevance*).

With respect to ambiguity, relevance theory models the perspective of the *hearer* more consistently than does Gricean pragmatics. Underdetermination (i.e. the relationship between what is said and what is really meant) *can* be of concern for the speaker, depending, among other things, on her/his specific intentions (see “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity”). However, code ambiguity is not a problem from this perspective because the speaker always knows beforehand what s/he intends to communicate. By contrast, both underdetermination and code ambiguity are *always* a problem for the hearer. This difference in perspective is captured in Table 9.1b. In the remainder of this chapter, I will keep both perspectives separated.

Relevance Theory and Gricean pragmatics have greatly inspired attempts to explain language change. In a ground-breaking article, Traugott and König describe semantic change as a process whereby an implicature that

Table 9.1a Implicature and Explicature

<i>Grice</i>	<i>Relevance Theory</i>
Said	Linguistic form
	Inference of explicatures
Implicature	Inference of implicatures

Table 9.1b Implicature and Explicature

<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Said	Linguistic form
	Inference of explicatures
Implicature	Inference of implicatures

is originally a conversational implicature is gradually conventionalized. Despite basically sharing this view, I will depart from Traugott and König's classical account on at least two major points. Firstly, I will distinguish between the speaker's and the hearer's perspectives. This will result in a novel, usage-based definition of reanalysis. Secondly, I will show that the central pragmatic motivation of reanalysis is not about conventionalizing conversational implicatures. Most notably, although ambiguity—defined as underdetermination or code ambiguity—is not a prerequisite for reanalysis, it does play an important role in certain types of reanalysis. Moreover, the usage-based view proposed here will show that reanalysis is not an exclusively syntactic phenomenon. In the literature, this has been tacitly accepted for phonological change, where the notion of reanalysis has a long-standing tradition (Langacker; Blevins; Labov et al.). In the two following sections of this chapter, I will argue that reanalysis also plays a key role in lexical semantics.

Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity

The central example discussed in Traugott and König's seminal article is the evolution of English *while* from a temporal meaning ('at the same time as' or 'simultaneously with') to an adversative one. According to Traugott and König, the change begins in situations in which a speaker uses temporal *while* to convey the implicature of an adversative comparison. The same effect can be observed in present-day English for temporal expressions such as *at the same time* and *simultaneously*, or for a simple coordination of two states of affairs occurring concomitantly.

- (4a) Peter was lazing in the sun. *At the same time*, Susy assiduously washed the dishes.
- (4b) Peter was lazing in the sun. *Simultaneously*, Susy assiduously washed the dishes.
- (4c) Peter was lazing in the sun, and Susy assiduously washed the dishes.

In Gricean terms, the effect of an adversative comparison is still a conversational implicature in cases such as (4a), (4b), and (4c). For the expression *at the same time*, this is shown in Table 9.2.

For the English *while*, the adversative comparison is no longer a mere implicature but rather a conventional meaning. This can be shown by the fact that adversative *while*—unlike *at the same time* or *simultaneously*—can be used in contexts like (5c), in which an interpretation as temporal co-occurrence can be excluded.

- (5a) Peter got a tan *while* he was lazing in the sun.
- (5b) Peter was lazing in the sun *while* Susy washed the dishes.
- (5c) Peter is going to be a pop star, *while* his father was a brain surgeon.

In the case of *while*, the original conversational implicature has turned into a conventionalized new meaning as a consequence of frequent repetition. Thus, *while* now has acquired two meanings, a temporal (5a) one and an adversative one [(5b) and (5c)]. Both meanings can appear in mutually exclusive contexts [(5a) and (5c)]. Moreover, in contexts such as (5b) and (5c), the original implicature ‘adversative comparison’ now has the status of an explicature. Both situations, that is, *while* before and after the change, are represented in Table 9.3a. The situation before the change is similar to that of *at the same time* in Table 9.2. The arrow indicates—in a simplified fashion—the direction of the change.

Table 9.2 Lexical Meaning and Conversational Implicature

Linguistic form	<i>at the same time</i>
Lexical meaning	“simultaneously”
Effect in usage	ADVERSATIVE (Implicature)

Table 9.3a From Temporal to Adversative Meaning




	Stage 1		Stage 2
Linguistic form	<i>while</i>		<i>while</i>
Lexical meaning	“simultaneous”		“adversative”
Effect in usage	ADVERSATIVE (Implicature)		ADVERSATIVE (Explicature)

Table 9.3b From Temporal to Adversative Meaning

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Linguistic form	<i>while</i>	<i>while</i>
Lexical meaning	'simultaneous'	'adversative'
Effect in usage	ADVERSATIVE (Implicature) 	ADVERSATIVE (Explicature) 

As can be seen in (4), presenting two conflicting events as occurring simultaneously is a rhetorically efficient way of construing an adversative comparison. We also see in (4) that this argumentative move is not very original; it is a rhetorical schema that is part of cultural (i.e. extralinguistic) knowledge. Nevertheless, its linguistic implementation shown in (4) is a vaguely creative act of conceptual accommodation. The direction of the change represented in Table 9.3a—from “simultaneous” to “adversative comparison”—is determined by an argumentative intention by the *speaker* (cf. Detges and Waltereit).

(6) Argumentative schema (speaker)

In order to efficiently construe an adversative comparison between two states of affairs, present them as occurring simultaneously.

The impact of (6) on language use is reflected in parallel changes in many different languages [see (7); cf. Traugott and König 199].

(7a) German *während* < *währen*, v. ‘to last’

(7b) English *while* < *while*, n. ‘duration,’ ‘while’

(7c) French (*ce*)*pendant* < *pendre*, v. ‘to hang,’ ‘to last’

(7d) Spanish *mientras* (*que*) < Latin *dum interim* ‘as long as’

In all the cases in (7), the direction of the change is determined by (6), that is, by the *speaker*’s strategy. The change itself, however, is brought about by the *hearer*, who infers that what is meant in contexts like (4) is not the simultaneity of the events in question but an adversative comparison. Repeated inference of the same implicature will lead the hearer to build up an abstract representation that will eventually turn into a new meaning (see Table 9.3b). This step is an instance of reanalysis.

In this scenario, the change produces a “shortcut” from linguistic form to frequent usage effect. What originally was inferred ad hoc as an implicature now becomes a code-determined explicature. Put more generally,

the change brings about an adaptation of the code (the item *while*) to the discourse habits of the hearer. As a consequence of this reanalysis, the need to resolve underdetermination is now replaced by a necessity to resolve code ambiguity.

This scenario qualifies as an instance of semantic reanalysis, because a reinterpretation of a given linguistic item has been produced by a hearer. The hearer proceeds by using a simple semiotic principle, termed “*principle of reference*” (155–156) in Detges and Waltereit and adapted here in a slightly modified form under the more appropriate denomination of the Principle of Relevant Usage Effect. This principle stipulates (8a), reformulated in a more constrained way as (8b). In a further step of logical abduction (Andersen; Deutscher), the hearer turns this principle around in the fashion of (8’). Note that the Principle of Relevant Usage Effect (8) is not a pragmatic principle operative in communication, that is, in identifying the relevant context effect of a given utterance. As discussed previously (“Code Ambiguity and Pragmatic Underdetermination”), the relevant interpretation of an utterance is usually not the literal one in everyday communication (Sperber and Wilson, “Deflationary Account”); therefore, I consider (8) a semiotic principle modelling the relationship between the conventional meaning of a given linguistic item and its potential effects in usage.

(8) Principle of Relevant Usage Effect (hearer)

(a) The relevant usage effect observed in a given situation is attached to the literal meaning of the linguistic item involved either as an implicature or as an explicature.

(b) In the simplest case, the inferred relevant usage effect is an explicature (rather than an implicature).

(8’) Abduction (hearer)

The easier it is to infer the relevant usage effect, the more likely it is that this effect is an explicature (rather than an implicature).

Applied to *while*, this means “assume that the interpretation ‘adversative comparison’ is an explicature (and hence expresses a literal meaning),” because this is the relevant effect with which the hearer has become familiar over time as a consequence of repeated usages such as (4’). The Principle of Relevant Usage Effect (henceforth also referred to as the Usage-Effect Principle) and its abductive variant (8’) guarantee that the relevant usage effect observed by speaker and hearer is the same under both analyses. Nothing changes but the way in which it is processed: it is an implicature for the speaker but an explicature for the hearer. Hence, at no point does a misunderstanding between speaker and hearer occur—reanalysis takes place despite successful communication (exceptions to this rule will be discussed at the end of the section “Morphological Reanalysis Caused by

Ambiguity”). This, in turn, explains why the change goes unnoticed in the situation in which the reanalysis takes place.

Even though the Usage-Effect Principle is not the only principle effective in reanalysis, it is the most important one. Its abductive variant is a processing mechanism designed to successfully interpret a given linguistic form (see Detges and Waltereit). In the example discussed here, its application is driven by the frequency of a given implicature or, more precisely, by the frequent matching of a particular linguistic form with a given usage effect. However, as we shall see later, there are other types of reanalysis that can be motivated by low frequencies. What all types of reanalysis have in common is that they are brought about by hearers who attach a new representation to a linguistic item. Moreover, the Principle of Relevant Usage Effect is pervasive in every type of reanalysis—whether lexical-semantic, morphological, or syntactic.

In the scenario just sketched, the change results in (code) ambiguity. Ambiguity is not involved here otherwise, apart from the fact that, in a trivial sense, the implicature construed by the speaker in Table 9.2 is licensed by underdetermination as an abstract possibility. However, the specific form of the implicature—which motivates the direction of the change—is shaped by the argumentative schema (6), that is, by the *speaker's* strategy. But simply using a linguistic item as part of an argumentative schema will not automatically result in language change, as can be seen in (4). The change will only take place if hearers reinterpret the original implicature as a new meaning. Although motivated by a speaker's strategy, the change is only completed or “ratified” (Detges and Waltereit 180) by a reanalysis on the part of the hearer. From this perspective, any change, whatever its motivation, is ratified by hearers (Detges and Waltereit; for phonological change, see Ohala, “The Listener,” “Sound Change”). As I will show in the following sections, this stipulation does not turn the notion of reanalysis into a diffuse or meaningless concept.

Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Caused by Underdetermination

A type of lexical change regularly triggered by pragmatic underdetermination is semantic narrowing. As a case in point, consider the shift from Latin *fabrica* ‘workshop’ to French *forge* ‘forge, blacksmith’s workshop.’ As a result of this change, the linguistic item in question turned into its own hyponym—a BLACKSMITH’S WORKSHOP is a special kind of WORKSHOP. Change of this type occurs in situations in which the speaker believes the original explicature of the expression to be sufficiently explicit for the hearer to identify the referent in question (see Table 9.4a). In this situation, the information conveyed by *fabrica* (workshop) is correct insofar as a forge is a kind of workshop (see Gévaudan, *Typologie* 103), but it

Table 9.4a Reanalysis Based on Semantic Underspecification

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Linguistic form	<i>fabrica</i>	<i>fabrica</i> (> <i>forge</i>)
Lexical meaning	‘workshop’	‘blacksmith’s workshop’
Effect in usage	BLACKSMITH’S WORKSHOP Explicature	BLACKSMITH’S WORKSHOP Explicature

is imprecise insofar as the item *fabrica* could also refer to other kinds of WORKSHOPS. However, as argued previously (section on “Code Ambiguity and Pragmatic Underdetermination”), inaccuracies of this kind can be pragmatically appropriate. This is systematically the case in situations in which the differences between a BLACKSMITH’S WORKSHOP and other kinds of WORKSHOPS are irrelevant (for example, in a village universe in which the blacksmith’s workshop is the only kind there is). With respect to the item’s original lexical meaning (‘workshop’), the reference to a BLACKSMITH’S WORKSHOP is an explicature. Repeated usage of the linguistic item in this sense can lead to a change in which the relevant usage effect (reference to a BLACKSMITH’S WOKSHOP) is reinterpreted as the item’s new meaning.

In cases of semantic narrowing, pragmatic underdetermination goes hand in hand with semantic underspecification (which, as a consequence of the change, is eventually levelled out). However, pragmatic underdetermination and semantic underspecification belong to different levels of analysis and are therefore two different things. This becomes particularly clear in cases of semantic widening. For example, *pájaro*, the Spanish word for ‘(small) bird,’ goes back to the Latin item *passer*, meaning ‘sparrow.’ Somewhere on the way from Vulgar Latin to Old Spanish, the form **passeru(m)* turned into its own hypernym (Blank, *Prinzipien* 204–205). In Europe, the SPARROW is the prototype of the SMALL BIRD. Specimens of the species SPARROW are by far the most frequent members of the category SMALL BIRD. Therefore, in certain situations, speakers may use the word for the prototype but tacitly include members of other, more peripheral categories (for an account of prototype effects in lexical change, see Koch; Blank, *Prinzipien* 384–388, *Lexikalische Semantik* 86–88). From the speaker’s perspective, fuzzy referentialization of this kind can be a matter of cognitive economy. This, of course, only holds for situations of non-expert communication in which the difference between SPARROWS and other SMALL

BIRDS is irrelevant. Thus, when uttered in a situation where several kinds of small birds, among them sparrows, are assembled, (9) will be understood by a hearer as a call to chase away all of the small birds present. Utterance (9) is semantically *overspecified* insofar as the information conveyed is too precise to faithfully match all the referents involved (see Table 9.4b). However, this mismatch will go unnoticed because of the prototype status of the SPARROW. In spite of being semantically overspecified, the use of the term *passeros* in (9) is pragmatically underdetermined in the sense that what is meant (and understood) is different from what is literally said.

- (9) Fugemus *passeros*!
 ‘Let’s chase away the sparrows!’

Before the change, *passeros* has the lexical meaning ‘sparrows.’ Therefore, the specimens referred to in (9)—SPARROWS and other SMALL BIRDS—are a mix of explicature and implicature. As a consequence of reanalysis, this fuzzy categorization is replaced by a simplified representation. Once again, the reanalysis is brought about by a hearer who proceeds upon the Usage-Effect Principle (8)/(8’). S/he assumes that the relevant effect in usage (i.e. reference to both SPARROWS and SMALL BIRDS) is the meaning of the linguistic form involved. As in the example discussed in the section “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity,” this reanalysis is favoured by high frequency—in this case, the high frequency of situations such as (9).

Even though in modern Spanish *pájaro* means ‘bird’ and not ‘sparrow,’ it is not implausible to assume that, for some time, the old and new meanings coexisted in a situation of vertical polysemy (Gévaudan, *Typologie* 104). As in the case discussed in this section, the reanalysis of *passeru(m)*, triggered by underdetermination, will normally result in code ambiguity for the reanalyzed linguistic item.

Table 9.4b Reanalysis Based on Semantic Overspecification

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Linguistic form	<i>passeros</i>	<i>passeros</i>
Lexical meaning	‘sparrows’	‘(small) birds’
Effect in usage	SPARROWS and other SMALL BIRDS Explicature/implicature	SMALL BIRDS Explicature

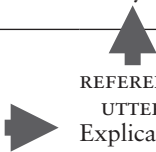
Morphological Reanalysis Without Ambiguity

A type of change often found in morphology is boundary loss (Langacker 61), that is, loss of morphological transparency. Words like *shepherd* or *cupboard* are originally compound nouns (*scaepherde* [sheep][herd] and *cupboard* [cup][board]; see also Gévaudan, “Semantische Relationen”). Due to frequent usage, these have undergone reanalysis and consequently turned into monomorphemic words (Detges and Waltereit). A similar case in point is the French deictic *aujourd’hui* ‘today,’ which was brought about by a reanalysis of the syntactic phrase *au jour d’hui* ‘on-the day of-today.’ Originally, this expression was a semantically heavy paraphrase of the meaning ‘today.’ For some time, *aujourd’hui* functioned as an expressive alternative to the simplex word *hui*, which in Old French was the common expression for ‘today.’ As a consequence of the lexicalization of *au jour d’hui*, its internal syntactic structure [au [jour [d’[hui]]]] was simplified to [aujourd’hui] (for more details, see Lüdtke, “Sprachwandel,” “Esquisse”; Blank, *Prinzipien* 363). From the twelfth century onwards, *aujourd’hui* successively replaced *hui*. In the orthographic form of modern *aujourd’hui*, *hui* is preserved but reduced to a meaningless sequence. The decisive prerequisite for the boundary loss within *au jour d’hui* was the latter’s successive entrenchment caused by frequent usage. In the reinterpretation leading from *au jour d’hui* ‘on-the day of-today’ to *aujourd’hui* ‘today,’ the Usage-Effect Principle was involved insofar as the relevant usage effect under both analyses served as reference for TODAY (see Table 9.5).

As the semantic reanalysis described in the sections “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity” and “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Caused by Underdetermination,” the instances of morphological reanalysis discussed here seem to have been caused by a high frequency of usage. There is no reason to assume that they were caused by any sort of ambiguity. Moreover, spread of the new analysis within the speech community

Table 9.5 Boundary Loss Based on the Principle of Relevant Usage Effect

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Linguistic form	[au [jour [d’[hui]]]]	[aujourd’hui]
Lexical meaning	‘on the day of today’	‘today’
Effect in usage	REFERENCE TO DAY OF UTTERANCE Explicature	REFERENCE TO DAY OF UTTERANCE Explicature



led to the loss of the old interpretation. Thus, unlike the lexical-semantic reanalyses discussed in the previously mentioned sections—which entailed a coexistence of old and new meanings—morphological reanalysis does not create a lasting situation of code ambiguity.

Morphological Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity

In the literature, it has been repeatedly observed that reanalysis is a non-directional mechanism of change (Haspelmath, “Grammaticalization”). This is particularly evident for morphological reanalysis. Apart from frequent cases of boundary loss, discussed in the preceding section, reanalysis can also create new boundaries (Langacker 64). This happens when originally opaque words are rendered semantically transparent. However, reanalyses of this kind are not merely the reverse of the processes described in the preceding section; rather, they involve a second semiotic principle.

In colloquial Spanish, the word *vagabundo* [ba.ɣa.βun.do] ‘vagabond, tramp’ is sometimes pronounced *vagamundo* [ba.ɣa.ˈmun.do]. What at first glance looks like a simple confusion of the voiced bilabial fricative [β] with the voiced bilabial nasal [m] turns out to be an instance of morphological reanalysis. While the standard form [ba.ɣa.βun.do] is an opaque item, that is, morphologically isolated and non-analyzable [vagabundo], the colloquial item *vagamundo* can be interpreted as a compound form [vaga] [mundo], consisting of the word forms *vaga* (← *vagar* ‘to roam around’) and *mundo* ‘world.’ In this analysis, the word is part of a highly productive compound pattern in Spanish, the class of verb-object compounds of the type *sacacorchos* [saca][corchos] ([pull.out] [corks], ‘bottle opener’), *abrelatas* [abre][latas] ([open][cans], ‘can opener’), or *portaaviones* [porta][aviones] ([carry][aircrafts], ‘aircraft carrier’). Importantly, the morphological change goes hand in hand with a semantic reanalysis, because the new structure interprets the concept of VAGABOND as a PERSON WHO ROAMS AROUND THE WORLD (see Table 9.6). This change instantiates a second semiotic principle operative in reanalysis, termed the Principle of Transparency (158–59) in Detges and Waltereit. Like the Usage-Effect Principle, the Principle of Transparency is a mechanism of interpretation.

(10) Principle of Transparency

Compare the form of a given item with other forms of your code and look for potential form-function matches.

The application of this principle to [ba.ɣa.βun.do] will yield a relation to both the individual lexical items *vaga* and *mundo* as well as to the abstract VO-compound pattern underlying numerous other items of the speaker’s code. The Principle of Transparency can involve any level of linguistic analysis. The

Table 9.6 Boundary Creation Based on the Principle of Transparency

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Phonol. form	[ba.ɣa.βun.do]	[ba.ɣa.'mun.do]
Morph. form	[vagabundo]	[vaga][mundo]
Lexical meaning	'vagabond'	'vagabond'
Comparable items		<i>vagar</i> 'roam around,' <i>mundo</i> 'world,' [VO] _N
Effect in usage	VAGABOND (Explicature)	VAGABOND (Explicature)

change *vagabundo* > *vagamundo* is not simply driven by a superficial similarity in form; rather, what triggers the change is a semantic motivation of the item's originally unanalyzable linguistic form. Before the change, its meaning is non-compositional. After the change, it is derived from an underlying morphological structure. Change triggered by the Principle of Transparency systematically exploits the linguistic item's openness to meaningful analyses when matched with other items. In this view, the Principle of Transparency systematically involves some kind of ambiguity in the original item.

Whereas the cases of pragmatic underdetermination discussed in examples (2)–(3'), (4)–(7), and (9) must be resolved for successful communication to take place, the reanalysis of the morphologically opaque form has no effect on its potential reference. In other words, it refers to the concept VAGABOND both before and after the change.¹

Even though the direction of the reanalysis from [vagabundo] to [vaga][mundo] is determined by the Principle of Transparency (i.e. by the word's potential relationship to the linguistic items *vagar* and *mundo* and to the VO pattern), the Principle of Relevant Usage Effect—the more important principle of the two—also plays a central role in this change. In our example, both the lexical meaning and the possible explicatures of the reanalyzed item are the same before and after the reanalysis has taken place. Put more generally, when the Principle of Transparency is applied, its potential effects are usually constrained by the Usage-Effect Principle. Transparency-based reanalyses are licenced, if the relevant usage effect is the same, under both analyses. Thus, the Usage-Effect Principle is satisfied if the hearer who understands [vaga][mundo] refers to the same individual as the speaker who utters [vagabundo].

While reanalyses based exclusively on the Usage-Effect Principle are often favoured by a high frequency of usage (see previous sections),

transparency-based reanalyses—in stark contrast—are more likely to occur if the hearer is not familiar with the linguistic item in question.

The observation that the relevant usage effect is the same in both analyses describes the default case. However, under certain conditions, this rule no longer seems to apply. Thus, wordplay is frequently based on semantic reinterpretation (accompanied by morphological and/or syntactic reanalyses) that is intentionally created by *speakers*. Their very purpose is to produce relevant effects that are different from those of the original analysis (e.g. *the importance of being earnest* > *the importance of being Ernest*). And occasionally, reinterpretations may arguably also be caused by genuine misunderstandings (a candidate for this kind of change is German *Bären-dienst* [bear's][service] 'disservice' > 'great favour'² possibly also influenced by *Bärenhunger* [bear's][hunger] 'great hunger'). However, in everyday communication, wordplay and unresolved misunderstandings are not the norm. Moreover, even when they occur, hearers assume that their novel interpretations correspond to what they identify as relevant usage effects.

Syntactic Reanalysis Without Ambiguity

An example of reanalysis often discussed in the literature (Harris and Campbell 66; Haspelmath, "Grammaticalization"; Waltereit; Detges and Waltereit) is the rise of the interrogative particle *-ti* in certain French dialects [see (11a) and (11b)]. The diachronic origin of *-ti* is the subject pronoun *il* placed immediately after the verb. In standard French, inversion of the subject pronoun is still a conventional form of interrogative sentences [(12a) and (12b)]. In this construction, the inverted pronoun agrees in number and gender with full subject NPs. Therefore, as long as it is a pronoun, *il* will be used exclusively after a masculine subject NP in the singular (12a). If the subject NP is feminine, as in (12b), the form of the inverted pronoun will be *elle* [(12b)].

(11) After reanalysis

(a) Pierre vient-*ti*? [pjɛʁ.vjɛ̃.'ti]

Peter comes-*PART*
'Will Peter come?'

(b) Marie vient-*ti*? [ma.ʁi.vjɛ̃.'ti]

Mary comes-*PART*
'Will Mary come?'

(12) Before reanalysis

(a) Pierre vient-*i(l)*? [pjɛʁ.vjɛ̃.'ti]

Peter comes-*he*
'Will Peter come?'

(b) Marie vient-*elle*? [ma.ʁi.vjɛ̃.'tɛl]

Mary comes-*she*
'Will Mary come?'

In colloquial French, the masculine *il* is usually pronounced [i]. In comparison to the feminine *elle* [ɛl], it is much more frequent. This is arguably the reason why it was reanalyzed (together with the *liaison* consonant *-t-*) as an interrogative particle. In cases in which the subject is a masculine singular full NP, as in (11a) and (12a), the change does not manifest itself, because the surface form [pjɛʁ.vjẽ.'ti] is the same in both analyses. The change is only noticeable if the subject, as in (11b), is feminine. Thus, the reanalysis discussed here is not brought about by ambiguity of any sort. Once again, it is an adaptation of the code to the discourse habits of speakers and hearers. The most frequently used surface form [ti] is selected from among other possible forms and turned into an entrenched particle. The change itself is a reanalysis in the sense that it is brought about by a reinterpretation of the code on the part of the hearer. This operation is guided by the Usage-Effect Principle (8)/(8') insofar as the relevant usage effect—interrogative function—is the same before and after the reanalysis [see (11a) and (12a)]. A situation of ambiguity between (11a) and (12a) will only last within the speech community as long as the innovative construction is not completely spread throughout the dialect affected by the change (see Table 9.7).

The syntactic change discussed in this section bears many similarities to the reanalyses sketched in previous sections (“Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Not Caused by Ambiguity” and “Lexical-Semantic Reanalysis Caused by Underdetermination”). In what follows, I will discuss an instance of syntactic reanalysis involving both the Usage-Effect Principle and the Principle of Transparency.

Table 9.7 Syntactic Reanalysis Based on the Usage-Effect Principle

	<i>Speaker</i>		<i>Hearer</i>
Linguistic form	[(t)i]		[ti]
Convent. function	Pronoun		Interrogative particle
Effect in usage	INTERROGATIVE (Explicature)	➡	INTERROGATIVE (Explicature)

Syntactic Reanalysis Caused by Ambiguity

In (1), repeated here for convenience as (13), the reanalysis of the Spanish presentational construction was discussed, with an emphasis on the reinterpretation of the NP to the right of the verb [*un soldado* in (13a)] from

the direct object in (13b) to the subject in (13c). As I will show, it is not the morphological indeterminacy of the form *un soldado* in (13a) that triggers the reanalysis from (13b) to (13c), but a more complex configuration of competing syntactic coding principles.

- | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| (13a) | Hab-ía | un soldado | en el patio | |
| | There-was.SING | a soldier | in the courtyard | |
| | ‘There was a soldier in the courtyard.’ | | | |
| (13b) | Hab-ía | soldados | en el patio | Impersonal |
| | There-was.SING | soldiers.DO | in the courtyard | Direct Object |
| | ‘There were soldiers in the courtyard.’ | | | |
| (13c) | Hab-ía-n | soldados | en el patio | Personal |
| | There-were.PLUR | soldiers.SUBJ | in the courtyard | Subject |
| | ‘There were soldiers in the courtyard.’ | | | |

As the literature has shown, presentational constructions are problematic in several respects (Lazard; Lambrecht, “Status of SVO Sentences” 226–231, “Presentational Cleft Constructions,” *Information Structure* 177–181). As constructions especially designed to introduce new referents into the discourse [e.g. the SOLDIER in (13a)], they normally licence a single core argument [*un soldado* in (13a)], which represents focal information. Despite a superficial similarity, presentational constructions deviate from the coding preferences normally underlying transitive constructions. The transitive construction—the most frequent sentence pattern in Spanish—is governed by two general principles (that are operative in other languages as well). The first, (14a), specifies the relationship between the number of arguments and their syntactic representation, while the second, (14b), concerns the relation between information structure and syntactic representation. Both principles are language-specific instantiations of universal constraints, known in the literature as “preferred argument structure” (e.g. Du Bois 15).

(14) Coding principles of transitive constructions

- (a) Single core arguments are preferably coded as subjects.
- (b) Focal information is preferably coded by non-subjects (i.e. by direct objects).

As marked constructions with a special discourse function, presentational constructions systematically violate at least one of the two coding principles in (14) (for a cross-linguistic survey, see Lazard). Thus, the syntactic representation of *un soldado* as a direct object in (13a) implements (14b) but violates (14a). By the same token, the reanalyzed version (13c) implements (14a) while violating (14b) (Waltereit and Detges 26; Brown and Rivas 322; Poplack and Torres Cacoullous 270). The English presentational

construction (*there is a soldier in the courtyard*) solves the problem by representing the argument in question as a pseudo-subject, that is, as a subject-like argument lacking central properties of typical subject constituents (see Givón 191–192).

The reanalysis leading from (13b) to (13c) via (13a) is triggered by hearers who rank (14a) over (14b), and thereby invert the relative weight of both coding principles realized in the traditional analysis of the construction. This, of course, is an instance of the Principle of Transparency, because (14a) [as well as (14b)] is operative in other items of the hearer’s language. Once again, the Usage-Effect Principle is respected in this reanalysis because the relevant usage effect is the same before and after the reanalysis.

This change is not simply triggered by the morphological indeterminacy of the form *un soldado*. In the normal transitive construction, direct objects are not easily reinterpreted as subjects (and vice versa), despite their superficial similarity. In contrast, the change from subject to direct object (but also from direct object to subject) is relatively common in presentational constructions (Lazard).³ Thus, the driving force behind the reanalysis in Table 9.8 is the competition between the two coding preferences in (14a) and (14b). This situation can be characterized as one of ambiguity (see also Bauer et al.; Winter-Froemel 144). But, unlike most other cases of ambiguity, there is no information *missing* in the case discussed here. Rather, regardless which analysis is chosen by the hearer, there is always one condition which remains unsatisfied. Consequently, the change represented in Table 9.8 is characterized by heavy *overdetermination*.

The change described here—which appears in many varieties of Peninsular and Latin American Spanish—seems to have affected past tense uses of the presentational construction (above all, uses in the *imperfecto*;

Table 9.8 Syntactic Reanalysis Based on the Principle of Transparency

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Hearer</i>
Linguistic form	Había <i>un soldado</i> _{DO}	Había <i>un soldado</i> _{SUBJ}
	▲	▲ ▲
	Focal information ≠ subj.	Single core argument = subj.
Convent. function	Presentational construction	Presentational construction
Effect in usage	THERE WAS A SOLDIER (Explicature)	THERE WAS A SOLDIER (Explicature)

Bentivoglio and Sedano 72) far more than the present tense variant. The standard explanation for this asymmetry is that the presentational present tense form *hay* is not the regular third-person singular present of the auxiliary verb *haber*.⁴ Therefore, the present tense *hay* NP does not have a regular plural counterpart. However, certain Latin American dialects do have sporadic plural forms built on *hay*, such as *hayn* or *haen* (Montes Giraldo 384). This means that the preference for reanalysis to occur in non-present tense presentationals probably cannot be explained by morphological considerations. In light of the Principle of Transparency, it is more plausible to assume that the change from direct object to subject is favoured in low-frequency contexts. Unsurprisingly, the *imperfecto* is the less frequent of the two Spanish past tense paradigms (Berschin et al. 214).

Conclusion

Reanalysis is a multi-faceted type of change which can be meaningfully defined as change brought about by the hearer. Formally, reanalysis is characterized by the Principle of Relevant Usage Effect (8)/(8'), which I have described as a mechanism of interpretation. This stipulation allows us to also include lexical-semantic change under the label of reanalysis. There is a second interpretive mechanism sometimes involved in reanalysis, namely, the Principle of Transparency. This principle, however, is secondary with respect to the Usage-Effect Principle. As I have shown, the application of both principles is rooted in usage.

The relationship between reanalysis and ambiguity is complex. In two of the six examples discussed (i.e. both examples of lexical-semantic reanalysis in Table 9.9), (code) ambiguity is a *consequence* of reanalysis rather than its trigger. However, in three of the cases treated here (Spanish *passer* > *pájaro*, Spanish *vagabundo* > *vagamundo*, and Spanish *había soldados* > *habían soldados*), ambiguity plays a role in *bringing about* the change. In two of these cases—*vagabundo* > *vagamundo* and *había soldados* > *habían soldados*—the Principle of Transparency is involved. Moreover, my survey has shown that ambiguity is an insufficiently defined concept. In the case of *passer* > *pájaro*, the change is motivated by pragmatic underdetermination. In the example *vagabundo* > *vagamundo*, ambiguity takes the form of an interpretable similarity of the *signifiant*. And in *había soldados* > *habían soldados*, it is motivated by grammatical overdetermination. All things considered, one cannot justify the claim that reanalysis is necessarily brought about by ambiguity nor the opposing view that ambiguity plays no role in bringing about reanalysis.

Despite the apparent difficulties in pinning down a systematic one-to-one relationship between ambiguity and reanalysis, the latter can nevertheless be captured by the unified account proposed here: reanalysis is change

Table 9.9 Ambiguity: A Trigger for Reanalysis?

	-Ambiguity	+Ambiguity
Lexical-semantic	<i>while</i> simultan. > adversative	<i>passer</i> sparrow > <i>pájaro</i> bird
Morphological	<i>au jour d'hui</i> > <i>aujourd'hui</i>	<i>vagabundo</i> > <i>vagamundo</i>
Syntactic	<i>vient-i(l)</i> > <i>vient-ti</i>	<i>había soldados</i> > <i>habían</i> <i>soldados</i>

brought about by the hearer. As shown in the example of *while* simultaneous > adversative, this also applies in cases in which the direction of the change is determined by some other motivation on the part of the speaker. In this view, any change from A to B is ratified by a hearer who understands B rather than A (see Detges and Waltereit). This means that reanalysis is an all-encompassing concept that is central to understanding language change.

Notes

- 1 This example may appear to refute an important stipulation in Langacker's definition (58), namely, that reanalysis does not involve any immediate change in the reanalyzed item's surface appearance (see previous discussion). In the case discussed here, reanalysis manifests itself in the replacement of [β] by [m] (*vagabundo* > *vagamundo*). However, Langacker's definition is still valid insofar as the phonological alteration goes unnoticed by the hearer.
- 2 I am indebted to Maj-Britt Hansen (personal communication) for this example.
- 3 Psych verb constructions are another example of a precarious mapping of syntactic form and function (see, e.g., Croft).
- 4 More specifically, it is the idiosyncratic diachronic outcome of a fusion of *ha* "have-3sg" and *y* "there" in the thirteenth century (Penny 162).

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10 Are Hearer Strategies Strategic?

Relevance Theory and the Strategicness of Hearer Action in Everyday Language and Language Change

Gesa Schole and Carolin Munderich

Introduction

In the last decades, many linguistic studies have dealt with the detection of linguistic strategies in different communicative settings.¹ These studies have focused on the speaker² and largely ignored the role of the hearer in interactions. In addition, linguistics differentiates between intentional and automatized strategies. The linguistic studies carried out so far, as well as the differentiation of those strategy types, are, however, not based on a clear-cut definition of the term strategy.

According to the definition proposed by Knape, Becker, and Böhme, which is applied in the Tübingen Interdisciplinary Corpus of Ambiguity Phenomena (TInCAP; see Hartmann, Ebert, Schole, Wagner, and Winkler, Chapter 14 of this volume) and in a number of contributions in this volume, linguistic strategies often have to be classified as techniques rather than strategies: a rhetorical strategy is the relation between a communicative goal, the resistance that the speaker anticipates on part of the audience, and the means that the speaker employs in order to overcome this resistance (Knape et al. 153–154). By contrast, a technique is an experience-based routine or automatism that one can acquire during a learning process (Knape et al. 154). Whereas a technique is situated on the level of action, a strategy is limited to the planning phase of interaction. Frequently, what is called a *strategy* in linguistic research refers to a conversational routine as it describes speaker action in an on-going conversation in which a potential planning phase is inherently short. In order to overcome this terminological confusion and the disregard for the hearer's role in communication, we propose a definition of strategy (see the section “Strategy” to follow) based on the perspective of the comprehension theory brought forward by Sperber and Wilson (see section “Conversational Maxims and Relevance

Theory”). In two case studies from everyday language and language change, we examine the strategic character of intentional and automatized hearer actions (see sections “Case Study I: Hearer Action in Everyday Language” and “Case Study II: Hearer Action in Language Change”). Our findings show the advantage of the pragmatic definition of the term *strategy* over previous applications of the term.

Conversational Maxims and Relevance Theory

The Forerunner of Relevance Theory: Grice’s Logic and Conversation

H.P. Grice (“Logic and Conversation,” *Way of Words*) assumes that all rational communication is based on the Cooperative Principle, which states that language users are driven by the fundamental urge to cooperate with each other in communicative situations, and on the following four conversational maxims: the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relevance, and the maxim of manner. The maxims themselves are subdivided into (several) submaxims.³ According to Grice, the meaning of an utterance or *what is meant* exceeds the literal meaning of a sentence or *what is said*. *What is meant* by an utterance can be derived via so-called conversational *implicatures* when applying the Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims. Simply put, we can define the term *implicature* as “what speakers mean without explicitly saying so” (see Detges, “Implikaturen,” Section 1, para. 1, translation by the authors).

Grice’s theory is a seminal contribution to the linguistic subfield of pragmatics and has made it possible to analyze natural human communication in a systematic and detailed manner. Nevertheless, it has also been criticized. For the sake of brevity, we are going to list only a few exemplary points of criticism in the following.

Criticism of Grice’s Approach

Various scholars (e.g. Levinson; Sperber and Wilson; Bach) note that Grice’s strict division between semantics and pragmatics is hardly tenable. Particular pragmatic enrichment processes (such as disambiguation and reference resolution) are indispensable to complete the proposition of a sentence or *what is said*. In this regard, Levinson speaks of a “pragmatic intrusion” (188) into the field of semantics.

Additionally, certain pragmatic theories, Relevance Theory among others, reject Grice’s Cooperative Principle, stating that “[although] cooperation in Grice’s sense is quite common. . . , it is not essential to communication” (Wilson and Sperber 613), and/or reduce the number of maxims needed to analyze communication (see, e.g., Levinson; Wilson and Sperber). It is important to note, though, that Grice thought of his

conversational maxims not as moral norms trying to prescribe “good” communicative behaviour but as descriptors of how to behave rationally in communicative situations to ensure successful communication (see Grice “Logic and Conversation,” *Way of Words*; Meibauer, *Pragmatik*).⁴

Furthermore, the Gricean theory is primarily a speaker-based approach, because both the Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims explicitly address the speaker (“Make your conversational contribution such as is required”; Grice, “Logic and Conversation” 45). Nevertheless, to a certain degree it still takes into account the perspectives of both the speaker and the hearer, because Grice assumes communication to be a cooperative action (see his Cooperative Principle). Hence, according to Grice, the contributions of the speaker and the hearer are usually inter-coordinated:

[E]ach party should, for the time being, identify himself [*sic*] with the transitory conversational interest of the other. . . . The contributions of the participants should be dovetailed, mutually dependent.

(“Logic and Conversation” 48)

Moreover, Grice’s maxims are also continuously applied by the hearer to derive *what is meant* from *what is said*. However, the Gricean approach still exhibits a certain degree of asymmetry when it comes to the roles of the speaker and the hearer in communicative processes, because it does not explicitly address the hearer and does not take into consideration the process of comprehension itself, although—as Ehrlich and Koster indicate—the speaker and hearer play equally significant roles in the communication process: “Therefore, any theory of language production will also have to take into account the basic principles of a comprehension theory” (170). As Detges (“Implikaturen,” Section 3, para. 4, translation by the authors) points out, the interpretation of *what is said* is usually not a problem for the speaker because she knows which meaning(s) she wishes to convey. Rather, the inference of the relevant meaning—the meaning that was intended by the speaker—is an important task for the hearer that cannot be excluded from a pragmatic theory that focuses on human communication. When one analyzes the strategic character of speaker and hearer actions in everyday communication—the research question at hand—it is even more important to work with a theory that does not primarily focus on the speaker, but includes the hearer and the process of comprehension itself.

Relevance Theory

One model that analyzes communicative processes from a pragmatic perspective and puts the hearer at the centre of its investigation is Relevance

Theory, as developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (see Sperber and Wilson; Wilson and Sperber).⁵ This cognitive-linguistic approach builds on Grice's theory to some extent but, at the same time, rejects certain key concepts of the Gricean model. Relevance Theory is a hearer-based approach that analyzes language comprehension and works under the assumption that all communication is based on inferences.

According to Wilson and Sperber (608), the search for relevance is one of the basic features of human cognition. As there are a multitude of potential stimuli at any given moment, but only a limited number of cognitive resources to process these inputs, we have to select an input that is likely to be more relevant to us than all of the other stimuli available in the same situation (see Wilson and Sperber 609). As Wilson and Sperber put it, there are "constant selection pressures toward increasing efficiency" (610). Human communication exploits this universal principle of human cognition. Resting on these basic assumptions, Relevance Theory rejects the Gricean Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims in favour of the two principles of relevance: the Cognitive and the Communicative Principles of Relevance.

Cognitive Principle of Relevance

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.
(Wilson and Sperber 610)

Communicative Principle of Relevance

Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance.
(Wilson and Sperber 612)

The question that remains to be asked is "What is it that makes an utterance relevant or, at the very least, *more* relevant than other possible stimuli in the same situation?" According to Relevance Theory, relevance results from the combination of a positive cognitive effect and low processing effort (see Wilson and Sperber 609). A positive cognitive effect is a "worthwhile difference to the individual's representation of the world" (Wilson and Sperber 608). In communication, this comparison of the relevance of different stimuli can help language users to "predict and influence the cognitive processes of others" (Wilson and Sperber 626). In detail, this prediction and influence of the cognitive processes of other language users can be modelled as follows:

[P]roduce a stimulus which is likely to attract [the percipient's] attention, activate an appropriate set of contextual assumptions and point [him] toward an intended conclusion.

(Wilson and Sperber 611)

In contrast to the Gricean approach, Relevance Theory does not primarily focus on language production; it explicitly includes the perspective of the percipient and focuses more precisely on the comprehension process. From a relevance-theory point of view, the comprehension process can be modelled as follows.

Relevance-Theory Comprehension Procedure

- (1) Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. Test interpretive hypotheses (disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility.
- (2) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied (or abandoned) (Wilson and Sperber 613).

To complete this rather complex process of comprehension, Wilson and Sperber introduce a list of subtasks that hearers have to perform to determine *what is meant* from the “logical form”⁶ (in Grice’s terms, *what is said*).

Subtasks in the Overall Comprehension Process

- (1) Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content (EXPLICATURES) via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes.
- (2) Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (IMPLICATED PREMISES).
- (3) Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS).

(Wilson and Sperber 615)

It is important to emphasize the fact that, according to Relevance Theory, the process of comprehension takes place online, which means that the subtasks just mentioned are processed not sequentially but simultaneously.⁷ Wilson and Sperber also introduce the term *explicature* into pragmatic theory. According to Relevance Theory, there is an important distinction between EXPLICATURES and IMPLICATURES (in relevance-theory terms: IMPLICATED PREMISES and IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS). An EXPLICATURE is

an ostensibly communicated assumption which is inferentially developed from one of the incomplete conceptual representations (logical forms) encoded by the utterance.

(Carston 377)

Following this definition given by Robyn Carston, EXPLICATURES are always directly linked to the logical form of an utterance (Sperber and

Wilson 182) or—in Gricean terms—to *what is said*.⁸ By contrast, an IMPLICATURE is defined as

an ostensibly communicated assumption which is not an explicature; that is, a communicated assumption which is derived solely via processes of pragmatic inference.

(Carston 377)

Nevertheless, both IMPLICATURES *and* EXPLICATURES can be derived via a process of inference, which is guided by the Communicative Principle of Relevance. Thus, Relevance Theory provides a uniform approach for the resolution of EXPLICATURES and IMPLICATURES and, therefore, stresses the importance of inferences not only on the pragmatic but also on the semantic level:

In relevance theory, the identification of explicit content is seen as equally inferential, and equally guided by the Communicative Principle of Relevance, as the recovery of implicatures.

(Wilson and Sperber 615)

It is important to emphasize the fact that a hearer's inferences, that is, his hypotheses about what could be meant by the speaker (see Detges, "Implicaturen" Section 1, para. 7, translation by the authors), do not necessarily match the explicatures and/or implicatures intended by the speaker. As Wilson and Sperber put it,

[The hearer's] hypothesis may well be false; but it is the best a rational hearer can do.

(614)

Thus, it is obvious that the roles of the speaker and the hearer in communicative processes are quite different, although we always need to analyze both communicative situations. It is especially important to consider the speaker and the hearer when analyzing communication, because in communicative processes the roles of speaker and hearer are interchanged with every turn: the former speaker of an utterance becomes the hearer of the following utterance and vice versa.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the different strategies speakers and especially hearers employ in communicative processes. Therefore, in the following sections, we will first give a brief description of previous uses of the term *strategy* in linguistics, before proposing a pragmatic definition of the term that is based on central notions of Relevance Theory and can be applied to both speaker and hearer strategies in everyday language and language change.

Strategy

The term *strategy* appears in many linguistic studies without being defined at all. The fact that it is used as a synonym for *decision* and *selection* (see Linde and Labov) and for *principle* and *mode* (see Ullmer-Ehrich; Ehrich and Koster), amongst others, indicates that its meaning is not clearly distinguished from those of related phenomena. In fact, these so-called *strategies* are actually conversational *routines*; nevertheless, it makes sense to determine systematically what these communicative strategies and rhetoric strategies have in common in order to account for the past applications of the term by well-known researchers.

In language production and processing research, the category *strategy* subsumes reference resolution, turn-taking, the introduction of new information in a particular sentence position (Du Bois), and the linearization and formulation of spatial information (Linde and Labov; Ullmer-Ehrich; Ehrich and Koster). On a more general level in language processing research, Detges and Waltereit suggest a strategy of understanding and pragmatic strategies (155–156). In contrast to the fuzzy application of the term in these subfields, foreign language learning research provides distinct definitions—these, however, are equally diverse, especially concerning communication strategies (Dörnyei and Scott, “Second Language”), which results in a general incomparability of L2 studies (see Zimmermann). In the following, we combine the definition of *strategy* as proposed by Knape et al. with approaches to communication strategies to offer a pragmatic definition of the term that includes the hearer’s role in communication.

Towards a Pragmatic Definition of Strategy

According to Knape et al., a strategy is considered to be the relation between a communicative goal, the resistance that the speaker anticipates on the part of the audience, and the means employed to overcome this resistance. As the definition given by Knape et al. has its origins in the field of rhetoric, it inherently focuses on a speaker who tries to persuade a hearer. Thus, the anticipation of resistance to the speaker’s action during communication presupposes a longer or shorter planning phase. However, in spontaneous speaker-hearer interactions, both the speaker’s and the hearer’s potential planning phases are quite short; it is questionable whether one may speak of planning at all. Furthermore, the speaker’s planning phase points to the conscious (analytic) application of strategies (Knape et al.). Such consciousness is hard to prove in spontaneous interactions. For this reason, Færch and Kasper define communication strategies as

potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal.
(“Processes” 81)

Originally, the concept of communication strategies was applied to problem-management techniques that non-native speakers developed in foreign language learning contexts (Dörnyei and Scott, “Second Language”). This differentiation between L2 problem-management efforts and other mainly L1 problem-solving devices, such as meaning negotiation and repair mechanisms, was blurred by Tarone’s interactional perspective on communication strategies. Tarone conceptualizes them as the “tools used in joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal” (420), while Dörnyei and Scott equate strategic language use with general problem-solving behaviour in communication (“An Empirical Analysis,” “What Are They”).

A second major point is that the application of a strategy by an individual requires a *problem* within the particular communication. Hence, the problem is not necessarily anticipated but may come up spontaneously. Bialystok points out that “strategies are used only when a speaker perceives that there is a problem which may interrupt communication” (3). Assigning *resistance* to the hearer’s role appears to be somewhat complex. By contrast, a communicative *problem* may be both anticipated by the speaker (Bialystok) and perceived spontaneously by the hearer.

Another issue raised in the definition by Færch and Kasper is the *potential* consciousness of plans, which is advantageous over other approaches (Bialystok; Dörnyei) as it can be transferred easily to the role of the hearer. *Consciousness* is hard to prove in language data and needs to be regarded as a continuum due to evolutionary aspects: the initial consciousness of strategies might disappear step by step because of evolutionary assertiveness which transforms strategies into routines (Jäger; Dörnyei). Færch and Kasper (“Processes”) do not understand automatic processes, such as sticking to grammatical rules, as parts of a strategy but consider only those acts that, in theory, may be consciously manipulated, such as the choice of specific words or a particular syntax.

Therefore, strategicness may be a question of anticipated or perceived communicative problems rather than a question of the conscious application of particular linguistic means. In sum, the advantage of communication strategies over the definition sketched earlier lies in the inclusion of the hearer’s role in conversation, the choice of the term *problem*, and the emphasis on the potentiality of consciousness (see Færch and Kasper, “Two Ways”; Edmondson and House).

As a combination of rhetoric and communication strategies, we suggest the following definition:

A Pragmatic Definition of the Term *Strategy*

A communicative strategy is the relation between an individual’s communicative goal, the anticipated or perceived communicative problem,

and the means that the individual employs to reach the goal nevertheless, the latter being a potentially conscious act.

In terms of Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson, the interlocutors' goal in conversation is to exchange information and to convey its context-dependent relevance. At some point during the conversation, the relevance might be anticipated or the hearer perceives the relevance to be concealed from him, that is, he is unable to understand what the speaker *means* to convey with her contribution. He may understand what the speaker says, and he may identify several potential interpretations of what she means as well, or none at all. However, he is not able to identify just one potential interpretation that appears to be relevant in the communicative context. Subsequently, the speaker or hearer engages in manipulating his or her processing effort to convey or identify the concealed relevance. In the following section, we describe intentional and automatized speaker and hearer actions in pragmatic terms and provide examples for each type.

Dimensions of Speaker and Hearer Strategies

In general, speaker-hearer interactions reveal four dimensions of *strategies*:⁹ on the one hand, there is the differentiation between the speaker's and the hearer's roles in communication. On the other hand, both may pursue intentional and automatized actions (see Table 10.1). The speaker's general communicative goal is the conveyance of relevance, that is, transferring new information to the hearer. The hearer's general goal is the adoption of this information. Both are confronted with the potential problem that the relevant information might not be detected easily. To avoid or overcome this problem, they manipulate their own and/or their partner's processing effort(s).

Table 10.1 Intentional and Automatized Speaker and Hearer Actions Applied to Relevance Theory

	IN GENERAL	SPEAKER		HEARER	
GOAL	Exchange of relevance	Conveyance of relevance		Detection of relevance	
PROBLEM	Concealment of relevance	Concealment of relevance		Concealment of relevance	
MEANS	Manipulation of processing effort	Intentional: investment in speaker's and hearer's processing effort	Automatized: reduction of speaker's and hearer's processing effort	Intentional: investment in own processing effort	Automatized: reduction of own processing effort

At this point, it is necessary to underline once more that the classification as intentional or automatized hearer action (and as strategic or non-strategic) is independent of the success or failure of a conversation. Investing in one's own processing effort or making one's partner invest in his effort does not guarantee a successful outcome. An investment (on either side) can also lead to the generation of multiple interpretations, while often the interpretation that is generated first is the one that the partner intended to convey, as partners usually draw on their shared common ground (see Stalnaker). Rather than by the manipulation of processing effort, conversational success is influenced by the pragmatic competence of the communication partners (see Winter-Froemel). In the following sections, we present examples of the four types of speaker and hearer actions.

Intentional Speaker Action

In an intentional speaker action, the speaker phrases a contribution by investing in the hearer's and her own processing effort at the same time:

(1) Winter, the window is open:

Speaker: "There's a nip in the air today."¹⁰

In this statement, the speaker implicates that the hearer should shut the window because it is cold outside. The risk of a potential loss of face supersedes the problem of being misunderstood. To formulate the order in an indirect way and require the hearer to infer what the speaker actually means is an investment in both their processing efforts.

Automatized Speaker Action

Automatized speaker action keeps the processing effort low for both interlocutors instead of adding to it. The speaker relies on well-practised routines that are, most probably, common to all members of a particular cultural group. An example of such well-practised routines can be found in the way in which people give room descriptions:

[R]oom descriptions take the form of a gaze tour, that is, people describe rooms as if they are gazing along the walls.

(Ehrich and Koster 178)

Automatized speaker and hearer actions might at one point have been conscious acts that appeared to be useful and were converted into routines via constant re-use (Jäger; Mintzberg).

Intentional Hearer Action

In intentional hearer actions, the hearer invests in his own processing effort, either to detect the speaker-intended relevance on his own or to detect a speaker-unintended but hearer-intended relevance. The latter is the case in the following example that is taken from a school lesson in physics:

- (2) Jetzt fehlt nur noch, daß das Gummi reißt.
‘All I need now is that the rubber tears.’
(Winter-Froemel and Zirker 320)

The context guarantees the easy detection of the teacher-intended relevance. However, in order to obtain maximal relevance for themselves, the students invest in their own processing effort: instead of interpreting *Gummi* (‘rubber’) as the intended ‘rubber band,’ they infer a sexual meaning (‘condom’).

Automatized Hearer Action

Hearers using automatized actions, by contrast, keep their own processing effort low. Wilson and Sperber understand automatized actions to be spontaneous, intuitive processes. In the following example, the speaker asks the hearer to place two bedside tables next to the bed in a doll’s house (see also “Case Study I: Hearer Action in Everyday Language”):

- (3) Speaker: äh rechts und links vom Ehebett auch an der Wand stehen so Nachttischschränke.
Hearer: die stell ich?
Speaker: die stellst du links und rechts vom Bett auf.
Speaker: ‘uh to the right and left of the bed and against the wall there are sort of bedside tables.’
Hearer: ‘I put them?’
Speaker: ‘you put them to the left and right of the bed.’
(Schole et al. 237)

After having identified the correct pieces of furniture, the hearer reduces his own processing effort by asking the speaker to repeat the information about where to place the bedside table instead of trying to remember it himself. Additionally, by treating the bedside tables and the bed as a functional group, the speaker implicates that their location and orientation conform to cultural common ground (Schole et al.). The hearer infers that

the bedside tables are located at the head of the bed next to the wall and oriented in a synchronous way, that is, their front sides point towards the bed. He does not request more detailed information.

The classification of hearer action as automatized does not necessarily mean that the information provided by the speaker is easy to comprehend; rather, it does not require *additional* effort, that is, more effort than one would usually make under the particular communicative circumstances. In general, this means that the processing effort is not fixed, but is flexible and dependent on the specific context, and that additional effort is relative to potential alternative degrees of effort. Accordingly, automatized hearer action points to the choice of the first plausible interpretation (see Lipton) or to the refusal of generating one particular interpretation without requesting clarification by the preceding speaker. That is, the hearer stops as soon as his expectation of relevance is satisfied, or when he detects several instances of potential relevance. In the following section, we show that the four action types may cause communicative problems as well as occur in unproblematic situations.

The Strategicness of Intentional and Automatized Hearer Action

The distinction between intentional and automatized actions is not equivalent to the distinction between strategic and non-strategic actions in communication. According to empirical research by Malle and Knobe, intentional action

consists of five components (belief, desire, intention, awareness, and skill) that are hierarchically arranged, such that belief and desire are necessary conditions for attributions of *intention* and, given an intention, skill and awareness are necessary conditions for attributions of *intentionality*.

(Malle and Knobe 114; original emphasis)

The hierarchical relationship of these five components is illustrated in Figure 10.1. Intentionality (also called intentional action) is subdivided into the pre-stage of intention and the subsequent stage of the actually performed action that was intended. The pre-stage of intention includes the *belief* to be able to reach a particular goal and the *desire* to do so. The performer of the intentional action is *aware* of this action and has the *skill* as well as the *intention* to perform it.

Broadly speaking, this folk concept of intentionality conforms with Sperber and Wilson's concept of informative and communicative intentions (54–64). In their view, an intention is a mental representation that may be transmitted into an action. They further subdivide intention into first- and

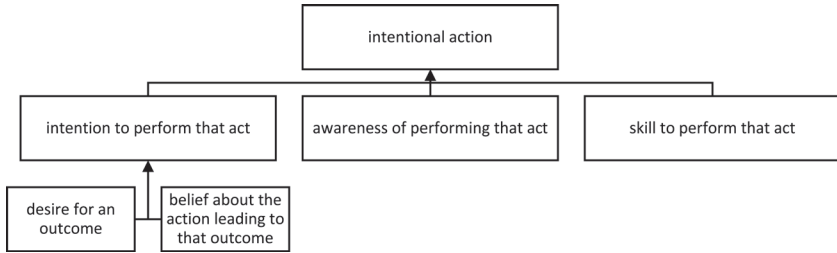


Figure 10.1 The folk concept of intentionality

Source: Malle and Knobe

second-order intentions. The first-order intention is informative in the sense that it involves the desire to make a set of assumptions (more) manifest. Second-order intentions may be termed communicative as they assume the partner's ability to recognize one's first-order intention. Additionally, the partner should realize that one recognizes this intention oneself, which coincides with the self-reflective state of awareness in Malle and Knobe's definition. Thus, Sperber and Wilson imply, in their first-order informative intention, the desire and belief that are necessary for an intentional action, as well as intention and awareness in their second-order communicative intention. Their line of argument does not consider the skill that is necessary to perform an intentional act.

These considerations mean that automatized actions are defined by the lack of awareness (and/or skill) in performing an act: a communication partner may have the desire for an outcome and a belief as to how to reach this outcome, and consequently he may have an intention to perform a particular act. Nevertheless, he may not be aware of what he is doing, and, accordingly, even though he has an intention, his consequent actions are not regarded as intentional. Thus, the distinction between intention and intentional action is important. In Table 10.2, we match the requirement of being aware of one's action for intentionality with an investment in the hearer's processing effort.

Intentional and automatized hearer actions are applied *strategically* whenever the relevance within the speaker's contribution remains concealed to the hearer. Its concealment may be deliberate or non-deliberate; the key aspect is that the hearer is unable to detect relevance, which he conveys in his role as a speaker. In *intentional* strategic hearer actions, the hearer invests in his own processing effort to detect the speaker-intended relevance on his own. For example, he may reflect thoroughly about the speaker's contribution, or he might make explicit (in the role of the consequent speaker) what alternative interpretations he has constructed. We regard the formulation

Table 10.2 Strategic and Non-strategic Application of Intentional and Automatized Hearer Actions

	<i>STRATEGIC APPLICATION</i> <i>Speaker's relevance</i> <i>concealed</i>	<i>NON-STRATEGIC APPLICATION</i> <i>Speaker's relevance</i> <i>detected</i>
INTENTIONAL HEARER ACTION	Investment in hearer's processing effort to detect speaker's relevance	Investment in hearer's processing effort to detect hearer's relevance
AUTOMATIZED HEARER ACTION	Reduction of hearer's processing effort to detect speaker's relevance	Reduction of hearer's processing effort to detect hearer's relevance

of alternatives in the form of a request as the product of an investment in the processing effort as hearer. In *automatized* strategic hearer actions, the hearer reduces his processing effort by asking the speaker to specify the relevant part in her contribution, that is, the hearer requests the speaker to invest in her processing effort and thus reduces his own.

Hearer action is *non-strategic* whenever the hearer *believes* to have detected the relevance that the speaker intended to conceal, regardless of whether he really detected the relevance that the speaker intended to convey or whether he is mistaken in believing so. In *intentional* non-strategic hearer actions, the hearer believes he has detected the speaker-intended relevance but shows a certain interest in detecting a relevance of his own in the speaker's contribution. The relevance is conflictive in example (2): the students assign the teacher's contribution a relevance that is different from the one intended by the teacher, although the context easily conveys the teacher-intended relevance.¹¹ Winter-Froemel and Zirker point out that the hearer may "deliberately choose to insist on the ambiguous or on the alternative (implausible) interpretation" (320) and that this happens frequently with students during puberty.

In *automatized* non-strategic hearer actions, the hearer believes he has detected the relevance intended by the speaker and, accordingly, simply acknowledges the speaker's contribution, in order either to confirm understanding or to keep the conversation going. We assume that an acknowledgement of this kind is usually produced without the hearer being aware of it. The following two case studies of Spanish language data deal with hearer actions in dialogue in relation to the presence of communicative problems and the role that inferences play in language change regarding reanalysis.

Case Study I: Hearer Action in Everyday Language

Case study I is a referential communication task (based on a design by Tenbrink et al.; see Tenbrink, Andonova, Schole, and Coventry for details on

the method and procedure) between two native speakers of Spanish. The participant who is assigned the role of director describes how a doll's house situated in front of her was furnished, and the matcher furnishes a second, empty doll's house according to the verbal information he receives from the director. Afterwards, they switch roles and start over again. For the present study, one dyad was chosen randomly. The two participants stated that they are friends and talk to each other one hour or more per day.

Data Annotation

The dialogue data are analyzed for hearer action relative to communicative problems. The problems evolved due to time pressure¹² and the negotiation of spatial terminology (Dörnyei and Scott, "Second Language"). Independently from these issues, a hearer action was classified as *intentional* whenever the hearer appeared to invest in his processing effort, for example, by formulating and questioning the distinct interpretations that he generated or by adding new information that he inferred from non-linguistic sources such as world knowledge. A hearer action was annotated as *automatized* whenever the particular contribution did not reveal extra processing effort, for example, by requesting information in general (especially in the form of *wh*- questions) or giving general feedback (such as *yes, ok*).

Results

Table 10.3 shows an excerpt from a dialogue in which the director and matcher negotiated the position of a shelf. The annotation includes the distinctions between communicative problems perceived by the matcher and unproblematic parts of the communication (strategic vs. non-strategic), between intentional and automatized (hearer/matcher) actions, and the type of feedback that the matcher provides. The matcher's feedback (as current speaker) was taken as the basis for interpreting his actions as hearer that immediately preceded. This coincides with the usual approach in the respective research literature (see Vollmer; Steinbach et al. 251–252) and is in line with the relation between intentional action and intention as defined earlier (see "The Strategicness of Intentional and Automatized Hearer Action"). However, we are not able to conclude from the matcher's contribution whether he is really *aware* of the action he performs. We assume this to be the case as we can deduce from his actions that he had the *intention* to perform the communicative action and that he realizes this action.

Table 10.4 shows the distribution of intentional and automatized hearer actions relative to their strategic or non-strategic applications in the first and second runs of the study. It reveals that the hearer acts non-strategically about twice as often as strategically across both runs. The correlation of

Table 10.3 Dialogue Excerpt and Annotation of the Strategicness, Action Form, and Type of Matcher's Feedback

SPEAKER	UTTERANCE	STRATEGIC	ACTION FORM	FEEDBACK TYPE
Director	y luego en el medio hay un espacio 'and then in the middle there is a free space'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Director	y allí hay un mueble que tiene como mm varios colores (laughter) 'and there is a piece of furniture that has like hum various colours (laughter)'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Director	como ehmm rojo de arriba y adentro todas las repisas son de diferentes colores 'like uhm red above and inside all the boards are of different colours'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	mhm verde amarillo rojo y azul 'uhu green yellow red and blue'	NON-S	INT	EXPAND
Director	ándale ese 'exactly that one'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	okay 'okay'	NON-S	AUTO	ACKNOW
Director	ese va de cuenta como puerta bueno o sea en medio 'now this is like a door well or rather in the middle'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Director	sí en la mitad pues donde está la pared separando los dos cuartos 'yes in the middle well where the wall is that separates the two rooms'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	ahh y mirando hacia dónde las repisas? 'ahh and where do the boards look to?'	STRAT	AUTO	INFO-REQ
Director	ehhh hacia el lado derecho 'uh to the right side'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	okay ah okay mhm 'okay ah okay mhm'	NON-S	AUTO	ACKNOW
Matcher	y hay una base roja no? esa donde 'and it has a red base right? the one where'	STRAT	INT	EXPAND

SPEAKER	UTTERANCE	STRATEGIC	ACTION FORM	FEEDBACK TYPE
Director	tiene una base roja 'it has a red base'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	sobre el piso no? 'on the floor right?'	STRAT	INT	EXPAND
Director	mmmm tiene una base roja sobre el piso? 'mmmm it has a red base on the floor?'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	no o sea que sí esa va sobre el piso (laughter) 'no or rather yes this is on the floor (laughter)'	STRAT	INT	EXPAND
Director	ahh sí no la grande no es ehmm la chiquita va la pones en la parte de abajo 'ahh yes no the long one is not uhmm the shorter one has to you put this one downwards'	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matcher	ahhh okay ya ya ya ya mhm vale 'ahhh okay yes yes yes uhum okay'	NON-S	AUTO	ACKNOW

Table 10.4 Hearer Action and Its (Non)strategic Application in the First and Second Runs

	FIRST RUN (178 hearer turns)		SECOND RUN (113 hearer turns)	
HEARER ACTION	STRATEGIC	NON-STRATEGIC	STRATEGIC	NON-STRATEGIC
INTENTIONAL	21.9%	2.8%	20.4%	0.0%
AUTOMATIZED	15.2%	60.1%	12.4%	67.3%
SUM	37.1%	62.9%	32.7%	67.3%

intentionality and automatization with strategicness is broadly the same across the runs. The distribution indicates that intentional hearer action mainly follows communicative problems, and that automatized hearer action is mainly applied non-strategically.

In some cases, however, intentional action is applied non-strategically: in five cases in the first run, the matcher suggests new information about object placement, although there does not seem to be a communicative problem (see the matcher's first contribution in Table 10.3). This does not happen in the second run, which implies that the dialogue partners

have learnt from their previous experience with the referential task, and therefore communicative problems are less frequent. In Table 10.4, this decrease in problems is reflected in the decrease in the *strategic* application of actions.

More often, the matcher's action is automatized but strategic according to our definition: in 27 cases on the first run, the matcher provides an automatized reaction towards a communicative problem (see the matcher's third contribution in Table 10.3). In all of these cases, the matcher asks the speaker to introduce new information with *wh*- questions, leaving the extra processing effort to the speaker. In the second run, this occurs 14 times.

Discussion

In the present study, the speaker and hearer act spontaneously and cooperate to succeed in their task. Whenever problems arise, the hearer engages in detecting the speaker's relevance on his own by expanding or specifying the speaker's description or by making explicit conflicting interpretations that he generated to be acknowledged or negated by the speaker (intentional strategic action; see Table 10.5). Alternatively, the hearer repeats a part of the speaker's contribution or asks directly for further information (automatized strategic action). Whenever the language data do not reveal any problems, the hearer simply acknowledges the speaker's contribution in order either to confirm understanding or to keep the conversation going (automatized non-strategic action), or, but to a much lesser degree, he engages in expanding or specifying the speaker's description in order to signal understanding (intentional non-strategic action).

In both runs, the hearer mainly acts in automatized non-strategic (first: 60.1%; second: 67.3%) and intentional strategic (first: 21.9%; second:

Table 10.5 Particular Hearer Actions Relative to Intentional and Automatized Behaviours and Their Strategicness in Case Study I

	STRATEGIC APPLICATION <i>Speaker's relevance concealed</i>	NON-STRATEGIC APPLICATION <i>Speaker's relevance detected</i>
INTENTIONAL HEARER ACTION	– Expansion of description – offering alternative options	– Expansion of description to signal understanding
AUTOMATIZED HEARER ACTION	– Repetition of speaker's description – Information request	– Acknowledgement of speaker's description

20.4%) ways. For automatized non-strategic actions, this means that the hearer frequently finds his expectations of relevance to be satisfied and stops testing interpretive hypotheses. He keeps his (and the speaker's) processing effort low by acknowledging that he has detected the (presumed) relevance. By contrast, the hearer more often applies intentional strategic actions when he is not able to detect relevance. He continues to follow the (relevance-theory) path of least effort and to test interpretive hypotheses. In order to be able to test further interpretations, he invests in his own processing effort and makes the different available hypotheses explicit. The fact that he himself invests effort and requests further information from the speaker means that he takes the path of *least* effort to be the path of least *collaborative* effort, which is in line with previous findings in dialogue research (see Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs).

This is different in automatized strategic actions: here, the hearer takes the path of least effort to refer to his *own* effort and thus reduces his processing effort by requesting further information (without formulating his hypotheses, assuming that he is able to generate any). Table 10.3 shows that the hearer applies this option when the answer can be expected to be short and precise simultaneously (*where do the boards look to—to the right*). In this way, the hearer again is able to keep his own and the speaker's processing effort low.

Rarely are intentional actions applied in a non-strategic way: the hearer detects relevance and informs the speaker about it by making the chosen interpretive hypothesis explicit. The fact that this does not occur often may be due to its low necessity. It is simply more efficient to acknowledge the relevance than to become engaged in formulating it and make the former speaker (as current hearer) acknowledge the successful interpretation.

These findings support the ideas that communication is guided by least collaborative effort (see Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs) and that the hearer is sensitive to the communicative context when choosing among the distinct actions that are available to him in order to signal (mis)understanding. The application of intentional actions furthermore proves that hearers are often aware of communicative problems. Whenever they do not detect problems, they rely on well-practised routines in the form of automatized non-strategic actions.

On a very general level, this case study shows that the distinction between, on the one hand, intentional and automatized actions and, on the other hand, strategic and non-strategic actions is justified, as the primary distinctive features of intentionality and strategy (*awareness* and *problem*) are not concurrent. The following case study of reanalysis in language change examines the strategicness of drawing inferences in more detail from a diachronic perspective.

Case Study II: Hearer Action in Language Change

The main aim of case study II is to show that particular hearer actions can also play an important role in certain processes of linguistic dynamic and language change, namely, in processes of syntactic reanalysis. We will show that these hearer actions can be applied in strategic and non-strategic ways not only in synchronic but also in diachronic processes.

Syntactic Reanalysis

Ronald Langacker defined the term *syntactic reanalysis* as a “change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation” (58). Additionally, according to Richard Waltereit, syntactic reanalysis is primarily a semantic-pragmatic process that is triggered by semantic contiguity between the old and the new meanings of a construction (see 23).¹³ Furthermore, Detges and Waltereit identify two “strategies of understanding” (171) that crucially influence processes of reanalysis: firstly, the Principle of Reference and, secondly, the Principle of Transparency

Principle of Reference

Assume that the conventional semantics of the sound chain you hear corresponds to what seems to be meant in the situation.

(156)

Principle of Transparency

Match the sound chain you hear with other sound chains of the language that you already know.

(159)

Ambiguation via Reanalysis

The first phenomenon at hand is the rise of an ambiguous reflexive construction in Spanish which has only recently been accepted by Spanish normative grammar (see, for example, *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*) and is mainly used in particular informal varieties. On the formal level, this ambiguous reflexive construction is characterized by the fact that the verbal lexeme and the post-verbal noun phrase do not necessarily match with respect to number agreement [see (4)]. On the semantic level, there are

two possible interpretations: a passive interpretation, given in (4a), and an agentive one, paraphrased in (4b):

- (4) Se vende coches.
 REFL sell_{3SG} car_{PL}
 (a) ‘Cars are sold.’ (passive meaning)
 (b) ‘(Some)one sells cars.’ (agentive meaning)

According to Detges and Waltereit, constructions like those in (4) developed via a process of syntactic reanalysis from reflexive-passive constructions [see (5)] that obtain an additional agentive interpretation.¹⁴ It is important to note that in (5), in contrast to (4), the verbal lexeme and the post-verbal noun phrase show obligatory number agreement. Furthermore, in reflexive-passive constructions like that in (5), the sequence VS represents the unmarked word order¹⁵ (see Meseguer, Acuña-Fariña, and Carreiras 772):

- (5) Se vende un coche.
 REFL sell_{3SG} INDEF_{SG} car_{SG}
 ‘A car is sold.’

Reanalysis and Language Contact

In situations of language contact, we can observe processes of syntactic reanalysis that occur under different circumstances. In (6), we find an example of a borrowing process from the fourteenth century¹⁶:

- (6) Italian: l’ alicorno Middle French: la licorne
 DET_{M.SG} unicorn_{M.SG} DET_{F.SG} unicorn_{F.SG}
 ‘the unicorn’ ‘the unicorn’

The French hearer of (6) tries to understand the opaque sound chain [lalikorno] and—in order to do so—analyzes this sound chain in a way that is analogous to other phrases in French. Thus, the primary construction consisting of a male elided definite article (*l’*) and a noun (*alicorno*) in Italian (the source language) is reanalyzed as comprising the French feminine article *la* and a noun (*licorne*), similar to other French elements such as *la ligne* (‘the line’) or *la liaison* (‘the binding’; see Detges and Waltereit 159).

Analysis

As has been stated previously (see “Relevance Theory”), the relevance of an utterance results from the combination of a positive cognitive effect and low processing effort. Both constructions (4) and (5) can be assumed to have a positive cognitive effect, because both provide a worthwhile difference to

the hearer's representation of the world due to new information. Empirical evidence, however, indicates that generally the processing of a passive construction like (5) is more complex than the processing of an active sentence.¹⁷ Therefore, if the hearer infers an agentive interpretation of the construction, as in (4b), he reduces his processing effort, which increases the construction's relevance. The question at this point is whether the hearer's action in this process of reanalysis can be understood as strategic.

Following the pragmatic definition of the term *strategy* given in "Dimensions of Speaker and Hearer Strategies," the hearer's goal in speaker-hearer interactions is to detect relevance (see Table 10.1). At the same time, both speaker and hearer have to face the potential problem of a concealment of relevance. In example (4), one possible means for the hearer to react to this potential problem is to apply an automatized hearer action: if he infers an agentive interpretation of the reflexive construction as in (4b), he reduces his own processing effort and thus increases the construction's relevance. Thus, in this case we are dealing with an automatized hearer action in a non-strategic application.

The hearer assumes he has detected the speaker's relevance, but his own conceptualization of the utterance differs from the speaker's. There are two reasons why these two different conceptualizations do not lead to a misunderstanding: firstly, the passive and the agentive interpretations of the construction are linked via a relation of semantic contiguity (see Detges and Waltereit 167). Secondly, both constructions refer to the same situation in extra-linguistic reality, or, in other words, their communicative relevance is identical in most extra-linguistic situations. Detges and Waltereit coined the term *referential identity* to classify this phenomenon as a "crucial prerequisite for reanalysis" (170).

In (6), we are confronted with a slightly different situation. Although, just as in (4), the hearer's general goal is to detect the speaker's relevance, there is one important difference between the two cases, because in (6) the hearer uses an automatized hearer action in a *strategic* application. At first, the hearer cannot detect the speaker's relevance because the sound chain [lalikorno] is opaque to him. In order to understand the speaker's utterance (to detect her relevance) and to reduce his own processing effort, he applies the Principles of Reference and Transparency in a strategic way: the first of the two principles is applied to detect what seems to be meant in the situation, and the second is used for a morphological analysis of the (formerly) opaque sound chain.

Discussion

In case study II, we have shown how hearer actions can crucially influence certain processes of linguistic dynamic and language change.¹⁸ In particular,

we have seen how drawing inferences during processes of syntactic reanalysis can be termed as an automatized hearer action, which can be applied both strategically and non-strategically.

In (4), the hearer introduces an agentive interpretation of the originally passive construction by drawing (automatized) inferences while processing the speaker's utterance: he applies an automatized hearer strategy in a non-strategic way and thus initiates a potential process of language change. In (6), on the other hand, in a situation of language contact, the hearer modifies the original morphological analysis of an opaque sound chain in order to process it. Thus, in the case of (6), an automatized hearer action is applied in a strategic way to detect the formerly concealed relevance of the speaker and to reduce the processing effort of the hearer at the same time.

General Discussion

We suggested a pragmatic definition of the term *strategy* based on Relevance Theory, with parameters taken from rhetoric and foreign language learning studies: a strategy has been defined as the relation between the exchange of relevance in communication, an anticipated or perceived concealment of this relevance, and the manipulation of the processing effort in order to convey or detect this relevance. Our aim was to investigate whether so-called speaker and hearer *strategies* can really be referred to as strategic.

In our view, strategicness is the consequence of anticipated or perceived (communicative) problems. As such, our definition comprises some of the terminology applied in earlier linguistic research. Linde and Labov (as well as Ullmer-Ehrich; Ehrich and Koster) start from the idea that speakers adopt particular linearization and formulation strategies in order to guarantee a better understanding of the spatial layout they describe. The speakers hereby anticipate potential comprehension problems, so that the application of the term *strategy* in these studies conforms with our definition (as automatized strategic speaker action). Anticipation also reflects the introduction of new information in a particular sentence position (see Du Bois) by which the speaker aims to make clearer where the relevance of the contribution is situated. By contrast, reference resolution appears to take place automatically in both problematic and unproblematic contexts (see Du Bois); thus, a reference can be resolved strategically as well as non-strategically, and this means that both strategic and non-strategic automatized actions exist in general. Therefore, the question of whether an automatized action is classified as strategic or non-strategic is not universal but depends highly on the context in which an automatism occurs.

When it comes to language perception, Detges and Waltereit assume that hearers apply particular pragmatic strategies of understanding. As we

have shown in the context of our dialogue study, hearers use automatized actions in both strategic and non-strategic applications more frequently than intentional actions.¹⁹ Thus, speaker and hearer actions, referred to as strategies in linguistics, provide at least a strategic potential. These hearer actions play an important role in communication because they guide the process of interpreting the speaker's utterance.

Essentially, hearer strategies play a crucial role in everyday language use and language change. Our two case studies indicate that hearers use intentional and automatized actions, both strategically and non-strategically, to detect the speaker's relevance or a relevance particular to the hearer. In everyday communication, hearers seem to apply automatized non-strategic actions most frequently, followed by intentional strategic actions. For the processes of reanalysis, frequencies remain to be investigated. The relevance that hearers detect in the speaker's contribution does not necessarily coincide entirely with the speaker's relevance; case study II proves that such a misalignment may provoke language change. However, case study I shows that hearers are usually sensitive to the communicative context and are often aware of communicative problems, which allows them to adopt appropriate actions in order to solve these problems.

Some aspects of our definition require further examination: the fact that communicative problems are dependent on the perception of an individual (see Færch and Kasper, "Processes") restricts an overall assignment of strategicness to particular language processes, such as decoding, disambiguation, and reference resolution. Additionally, the aspect of problem anticipation requests reliable indication parameters that are unavailable at the moment. The introduction of a measure for processing effort, too, could support cross-study comparability. Finally, the applicability of our pragmatic definition would benefit from the study of uncooperative discourse contexts.

Conclusion

Hearer strategies play a crucial role in everyday language as well as in language change. In general, communicative strategies operate on four dimensions, namely, as either automatized or intentional actions, and on the part of either the hearer or the speaker.

Not all actions that have been termed as *strategies* in linguistics over the last decades are necessarily applied in a strategic way—they can also be applied non-strategically. With our differentiation between actions and strategies based on the question of whether the speaker or hearer (respectively) anticipates or perceives a communicative problem, we hope to clarify the often confusing uses of this term in different (sub)fields and to provide a clearer definition. The advantage of our definition lies in the exclusion

of the planning phase required for a rhetoric strategy, as the hearer's reaction, especially, is usually immediate in speaker-hearer interactions. This step enables an equivalent definition for both the speaker's and the hearer's roles in communication.

Notes

- 1 "Strategicness," as used in this chapter, is the characteristic of being strategic. We regard strategicness as a potential property of an action performed by a language user. In our view, strategicness (of a language user's action) is the consequence of anticipated or perceived (communicative) problems. This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426). We thank the two anonymous reviewers as well as Ulrich Detges and Esme Winter-Froemel for their helpful comments and advice on earlier versions of this chapter.
- 2 For ease of writing, we assume a female speaker and a male hearer as is often done in dialogue research (see e.g. Clark).
- 3 For a more detailed view on Grice's Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims, see Meibauer ("Implicature").
- 4 According to Gricean theory, it is also possible to disregard the Cooperative Principle. However, a deception of the hearer by the speaker is only possible if the former assumes a general observation of the Cooperative Principle.
- 5 There are many neo-Gricean approaches that revise the Gricean theory but cannot be discussed here in detail. For further information, see Horn; Levinson, amongst others.
- 6 Sperber and Wilson define the term *logical form* as "a well formulated formula, a structured set of constituents, which undergoes formal logical operations determined by its structure" (72).
- 7 This is one of the key differences between Relevance Theory and the Gricean approach: the latter represents a systematic philosophical basis for the analysis of communicative behavior, whereas the former can be classified as a theory that builds on psychology, cognitive science, and linguistics to account for the human communicative process in general and the comprehension process in particular.
- 8 In this regard, Relevance Theory also assumes a distinction between the levels of semantics and pragmatics. It is important to stress, though, that it provides a uniform approach to how inferences are drawn both on the semantic and on the pragmatic level in on-line comprehension processes. Additionally, Relevance Theory shows how the levels of semantics and pragmatics are interconnected because, as has been pointed out before, particular pragmatic enrichment processes are indispensable to complete the logical form of an utterance.
- 9 In order to achieve a clearer terminological distinction, we prefer the term *action* for what is usually referred to as speaker and hearer *strategies* in the research literature.
- 10 Winter-Froemel and Zirker give a similar example with the same implicatures: "It is cold in here. The temperature in this room is low" (308).
- 11 Winter-Froemel and Zirker classify the students' behaviour as *socially* strategic: the students pursue a main goal in manifesting themselves as belonging to the group, and this social interest guides them to where they find relevance within the teacher's contribution.

- 12 Time pressure was not part of the study design, but as *describing* spatial positions took less time than *understanding* and *placing* the furniture pieces in the respective positions, time pressure developed on its own at some points in the dialogue for the matcher/hearer. This does not mean that there were pauses in the dialogue which made the director or matcher fill the silence out of politeness. The two participants, as friends, showed very respectful and trusting behaviour towards each other, which allowed them to make any uncertainties explicit without losing face. This may be different in dialogues between other individuals, who are less familiar with one another.
- 13 The question of whether syntactic reanalysis is primarily a syntactic or a semantic-pragmatic process is a very controversial issue. We cannot comment on this discussion here; for the traditional view on syntactic reanalysis, see Langacker. Detges and Waltereit; Smet; and Combettes have developed alternative approaches to reanalysis that regard it primarily as a semantic-pragmatic process.
- 14 For a much more detailed analysis of the interaction between ambiguity and reanalysis, see Detges (Chapter 9 this volume).
- 15 As Bossong (109) and Meseguer et al. have stated, the predominant word order in modern Spanish is SVO. Nevertheless, the word order VS is a perfectly acceptable sequence in modern Spanish, a language which allows inversion much more frequently than other Romance languages (see Bossong 98, 109).
- 16 For a more detailed investigation of this borrowing process, see Wartburg; Detges and Waltereit (159–160).
- 17 Mack, Meltzer-Asscher, Barbieri, and Thompson, who investigate English passive constructions, find a longer reaction time for the processing of passive sentences (compared to active sentences) and increased activation of particular brain regions (namely, the bilateral inferior frontal gyrus and the left temporo-occipital region), both of which indicate a higher complexity for the processing of passive constructions. Yokoyama, Okamoto, Miyamoto, Yoshimoto, Kim, Iwata, Jeong, Uchida, Ikuta, Sassa, Nakamura, Horie, Sato, and Kawashima's comparison of the processing of Japanese and English passive constructions (with L1 and late L2 learners) shows similar results for both languages: "a significant difference [regarding reaction time] between the active and passive sentences for both Japanese and English conditions" (574) and greater activation of particular brain regions for passive sentences when compared to active sentences. Because similar effects occur for two largely different languages such as Japanese and English, it is plausible to assume a higher processing complexity for Spanish passive constructions as well. Furthermore, as Meseguer et al. point out in their psycholinguistic study on particular reflexive constructions in modern Spanish, "[T]he passive 'se' is linguistically very complex because among other reasons, . . . it has postverbal subjects that look like active objects" (783). This linguistic complexity of reflexive-passive constructions, and especially the fact that the post-verbal noun phrase "looks like an active object," is an additional reason to assume a relatively high processing effort for these structures in comparison to active sentences. In this regard, although modern Spanish has relatively flexible word order overall (see Bossong; Meseguer et al.), the sequencing of elements can still be assumed to influence the case of linguistic dynamics at hand in a particular way.
- 18 Although we have been able to show that the usage of the term *strategy* in diachronic linguistics is justified, our definition does not completely correspond to other usages of this term. For example, the "strategy of understanding" (171) introduced by Detges and Waltereit has to be instead defined as a means,

following our pragmatic definition developed in the section on “Strategy.” Nevertheless, these two means that hearers apply in processes of reanalysis to reach particular communicative goals [or, in the terms of Detges and Waltereit (156–159), two strategies], represent two very important general principles to understand natural language. Therefore, the examples given by Detges and Waltereit can very accurately be explained on the basis of the pragmatic definition of the term *strategy* proposed in this chapter. Our definition of the term *strategy* comprises additional advantages compared to other uses of the term in linguistics: on the one hand, it enables a clear-cut distinction between linguistic strategies and day-to-day uses of the term *strategy* and, therefore, enhances terminological clarity in the field. On the other hand, it is open enough to include speaker and hearer actions and to be applicable to intentional and automatized actions.

- 19 It remains to be investigated whether this finding is verifiable for natural conversations.

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11 Ambiguation as Rhetorical Strategy in *Sermo 38* by Maurice of Sully

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Introduction

Taking the example of a sermon, this chapter will show how ambiguation and ambiguity are used as part of a rhetorical strategy.¹ Sermons often prove to be complex textual entities because of the combination of differing communicative objectives within them. This is, for example, the case whenever preachers want to morally instruct their listeners, but the liturgically used Gospel text for the day does not exhibit an ethical perspective to be exploited in a moralizing fashion. The biblical text then turns out to be resistant to the attainment of the communicative moral aim. Preachers therefore have to look for a means by which they can overcome this textual resistance. The method of allegoresis, which was pervasive in medieval sermons, is exactly such a strategically introduced means by which additional, non-literal interpretations can be introduced. For these reasons, the medieval sermon is well-suited for the examination of the strategic use of ambiguation.

This study combines theological and linguistic perspectives by examining the processes of interpretation within a sermon from a cognitive-semantic and a text-linguistic point of view. The chapter is structured in the following way: a description of the communicative aim of *Sermo 38* of the Parisian bishop Maurice of Sully and the resistance of the biblical text will be followed by an analysis of the different steps for attaining the communicative goal: (1) allegoresis, that is, the ambiguation of the literal meaning of the biblical text; (2) based on the allegoresis an explanation of the ambiguity of death; and (3) a continued ambiguation of different triggers of death. The structure of the chapter is accordingly based on the structure of the sermon analyzed.

Communicative Aim and Textual Resistance in *Sermo 38*

Moral admonitions derived from biblical texts² often appear in sermons, especially during the Middle Ages. These biblical pericopes are themselves,

however, not necessarily of a moral nature. This is also the case with the Old French *Sermo 38*³ from the collection of sermons by Bishop Maurice of Sully, who was active in twelfth-century Paris.⁴ The core message of the sermon is founded upon the exegesis of the Gospel narrative of Jesus raising the widow's son (Lk. 7:11–17), which does not contain any instructions regarding moral behaviour. Yet the sermon on this Bible verse ends with the following moral admonition:

esgardés vers vos meismes, se vos estes u vif u mort par pechié; se vos estes mort, soffrés que Deus vos doinst vie, e li priiés qu'il vos doint faire tels uevres en ceste l mortel vie, que vos puisiés avoir la vie pardurable.

(*Sermo 38* 159.79–82)

Look to yourselves whether you be alive or dead through sin. If you are dead, allow that you receive the gift of life from God and ask him [i.e. God], that he might permit to fulfil such works in this mortal life that you may obtain life eternal.

(translation by the authors)

Not only this sermon but all the rest of the sermons contained in this exemplary collection of homilies attributed to Maurice of Sully close with a moral admonition. This moral focus must be viewed in the context of the twelfth-century church's increasing interest in the laity and the sermons geared towards them.⁵ Orientation toward the needs of the simple Christian led to the desire that those listening to the sermon should primarily be instructed in the ways of proper Christian living. In the case of this collection of sermons, the overarching communicative goal⁶ of the preacher was that those addressed, the Christian churchgoers, should improve themselves morally.⁷

Preachers as communicators must consider how they will reach such a goal while remaining within the prescribed communicative framework. In the specific case of *Sermo 38*, which was conceived for the 16th Sunday after Pentecost, the Gospel of Luke 7:11–17 was to be read:

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. 12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. 14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. 15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. 16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. 17 And this rumour

of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about (Authorized Version).

This text must now be applied within the framework of the sermon, such that the preacher can derive a moral lesson from it. Because the Gospel reading itself contains no moral component, the preacher must incorporate one into it. Such an interpretive adaptation can be defined as a means devised by the preacher in his strategic considerations to overcome a “resistance”⁸ that endangers his communicative goal.⁹ The resistance in this case is of a textual nature, because the communicative goal must be derived from the *text*,¹⁰ which is not possible if this text is understood strictly in accordance with its literal sense. By presenting a comprehensive cognitive-semantic analysis of the interpretive process in *Sermo 38*, this chapter will attempt to clarify the question as to which means Maurice utilizes within his strategy to overcome this textual resistance.

Before beginning with this analysis, we would like to provide a short overview of the structure of *Sermo 38*:

- 1 Interpretation of Lk. 7:11–17
 - 1.1 Explanation of the Gospel text
 - 1.2 Allegoresis of the Gospel text (Allegoresis 1)
 - 1.3 Differentiation of deaths: grief over physical death vs. indifference toward spiritual death
 - 1.3.1 Example: spiritually dead son
 - 1.3.2 Concluding admonition: bewail spiritual death, beg for freedom from sin
 - 1.3.3 Explanation of the correlation between soul – body – life – God
- 2 Interpretation of the three New Testament stories of the dead being raised (Mk. 5:35–42; Lk. 7:11–17; Jn. 11:1–44)
 - 2.1 Summary of the three resurrection stories
 - 2.2 Allegoresis 2
 - 2.3 Concluding admonition: self-examination, request for good works

Sermo 38 is constructed with greater complexity than the majority of Maurice’s sermons, which contain, as a rule, only the explanation and allegoresis of the Gospel text (here 1.1 and 1.2), as well as the concluding moral admonition.

In the following analysis, we will examine more closely those steps which aid the preacher in overcoming the textual resistance. The starting point is the allegoresis as strategic use of ambiguity, that is, the spiritual scriptural interpretation of the Gospel text which forms the basis for the sermon.

Ambiguation Through Allegoresis

Because a non-figurative reading of the Scripture would not support the attainment of the communicative goal, Maurice brings another reading of the text into focus through the medium of spiritual interpretation. The theoretical basis for this is the interpretation according to the three- or fourfold sense of Scripture, which was widespread in the Middle Ages.¹¹ This exegetical process is distinguished by the fact that an analogical relation¹² is shown between the content of the narrative (literal sense), which is assigned to the worldly realm, and a transcendent spiritual sphere.¹³ The spiritual interpretative framework can be specified as follows: Maurice's exegesis unfolds according to the threefold interpretation, which includes an allegorical narrative of salvation as well as a moral or tropological one,¹⁴ that is, one which contains an interpretation directly related to the life of the individual Christian. In this respect, the intended target area of the interpretation is established as soon as the interpretive method is selected. The fact that the interpretation is made following the threefold method does not necessarily mean that every element of the Biblical text must always be interpreted both allegorically as well as tropologically. Thus, apart from the literal reading in *Sermo 38*, only one additional version is presented, which for the most part is tropological, placing the focus on sin. This emphasis upon allegoresis can be understood when one considers the audience to which the sermon is addressed: the sermon is directed at the laity and designed to contain practical instructions for everyday Christian conduct. However, if we look at the interpretation of the widow, one element of the biblical narrative which is interpreted as the Church, we can recognize an interpretation which seems to be more allegorical than tropological.¹⁵ Here we can see that the individual levels of scriptural interpretation (i.e. allegorical and tropological interpretations) are not always able to be distinguished clearly from one another. This has to do with the fact that the tropological sphere and its instructions for Christian living are dependent upon the Christian salvation narrative, that is, the allegorical sphere.

In the following, we will examine exactly how the preacher bridges the divide between the literal reading and the moral interpretation of the Scripture and take a closer look at the individual allegoreses. These are correlations of an element of the biblical narrative with an element on the plane of tropological interpretation, described in Table 11.1.

Table 11.2 contains the various individual allegoreses of the sermon;¹⁶ lexemes A and B are in bold type in the Old French quotes, and the interpretative verbs have been highlighted in grey.

The following links between the biblical narrative and the tropological realm are carried out in the individual allegoreses: the **widow** represents the **church**, the **son** the **wicked Christians**, the **bier** the **evil lifestyle**, and the **pallbearers** the **devils**, and the **cemetery** represents **hell**. The interpretations are not left unsubstantiated, however, and Maurice attempts to make them

Table 11.1 Level of Biblical Narrative vs. Level of Moral Interpretation

Level of the biblical narrative (literal sense)		Level of the moral interpretation
Lexeme or phrase A	Interpretive verb	Lexeme or phrase B

Table 11.2 Individual Allegoreses

WIDOW	La veve feme senefie sainte Eglise. (<i>Sermo</i> 38 157.17)	The widow represents the Holy Church.
DEAD SON	Ses fi ls qui estoit mors sene- fi oit les malvais cres- tiens qui sont en pechié. (157.17–18)	The son who was dead represented the wicked Christians who are in sin.
BIER	La fi ere u li mors gisoit sene- fi e le malvaie acostumance l en coi li pechiere gist. (158.20–21)	The bier on which the dead lay represents the evil lifestyle in which the sinner “lies.”
PALLBEARERS	si portoient un mort en terre, le fil a une veve femme qui n’avoit plus d’enfans; e la gent de la cité aloient avuec li por aidier a enterrer son fil. (157.6–8) Li port eor sont li di able qui le malvais home, qui est mors par son pechié, main ent par grant bruit en terre. (158.21–23)	They carried the deceased to the grave, the son of a widow without other children. And the people of the city came out with her to help her bury her son. The pallbearers are the devils which carry the wicked, who has died as a result of his sins, with much tumult to the grave.
CEMETERY	Li ci mentires u il l’ en main ent <est molt lais e molt his- deus e molt ors e molt eri- bles, quar> co est in fers. En infer sont enterré e enseveli ; li malvais, crestien e les malvaies crestienes, si com nos lison del riche home devan cui porte li lazres estoit <qui voloit est soelés des miees qui cao- ient de sa table, mais nus ne l’ en donoit. Vers ices- tui ci mentire portent li di able le malvais home por lui metre iluekes a tos jors>. (158.23–30)	The cemetery, to which the people carry him, is very horrible, frightening, ghastly and appalling, for it represents Hell. Hell is where the wicked Christians are buried, as we read in the story of the rich man before whose door Lazarus waited, who would gladly have eaten of the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table, yet no one gave him any. It is this cemetery to which the devils bring the wicked in order to bury him there for eternity.

plausible to the listeners. His first step in accomplishing this is a cognitively plausible equalization of the structure of the biblical narrative with the spiritual-tropological realm that comprises the practical comport of a Christian, which should, above all, be defined by the avoidance of sin. The phenomenon we see here can be very accurately described using frame semantics: connections are made between two different frames,¹⁷ that is, collections of concepts,¹⁸ which are jointly stored in the memory as elements of the same cultural context.

A modelling of frames with concepts and their connections based on similarity, contiguity, or contrast (see Blank) will be used here for the analysis of the process of textual interpretation. With the application on the study of the processes of interpretation within a sermon, cognitive-semantic categories are therefore made fruitful for a new domain: a text linguistic analysis.

The linking of the *BIBLICAL NARRATIVE* frame with the *TROPOLOGY* frame is based primarily on similarity. Thus, in some cases, lexemes which are used for the presentation of the literal sense are repeated on the level of moral scriptural interpretation¹⁹ or taken up again in the form of a synonym.²⁰ This is the case with the individual allegoresis of the **dead son**, the **bier**, the **pallbearers**, and the **cemetery**. Regarding the spiritual interpretation of the **widow**, although we can find no analogy in the previously quoted single allegoresis, there is one later in the text of the sermon:

< sainte Eglise plore por la perte d'itels homes.> Les gens plorent por la mort des cors, por la mort a lor amis.

(*Sermo* 38 158.33–35)

[T]he holy church weeps over the loss of such people. People grieve over the death of the body, the death of their friends.

(Translation by the authors)

It can be assumed, therefore, that the preacher sees a structural similarity here, just as in the previously mentioned individual allegoreses.²¹ What we are dealing with are analogous structures of the relationship between individual concepts in the two frames of Figure 11.1, which can be represented as follows: WIDOW/CHURCH makes request to JESUS/GOD²² for DEAD SON/WICKED CHRISTIANS, who is/are on/in BIER/SIN and carried by PALLBEARERS/DEVILS on it/therein to CEMETERY/HELL.

It is peculiar that the central aspect of the biblical narrative, the raising of the dead son, is not specifically interpreted. This may well be a strategic omission because, had he interpreted the resurrection of the dead boy within his allegoresis, Maurice would have jeopardized the achievement of his main goal. The moral pressure upon his audience would have been eliminated had it become clear to them that Jesus helped the dead son, that is,

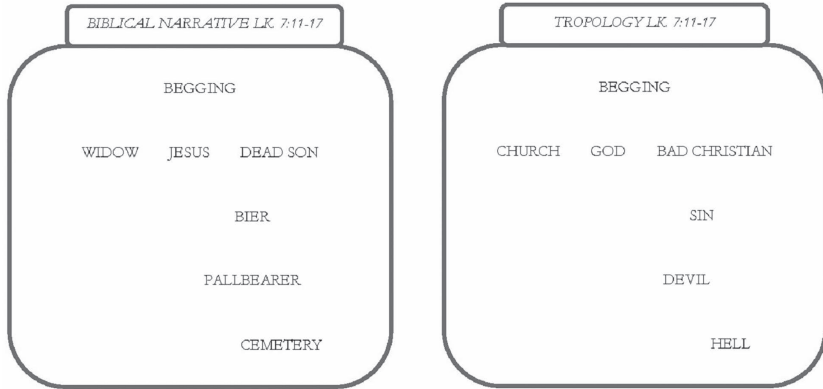


Figure 11.1 *BIBLICAL NARRATIVE LK 7:11–17* and *TROPOLOGY LK 7:11–17*

the wicked Christians, without any moral improvement. The focal point of the allegoresis would have shifted to the unconditional love of God, which would not have furthered Maurice’s agenda either; accordingly, he provides no explicit spiritual interpretation of this central aspect of the Gospel story.

Beyond this, the interpretation of the dead son is accorded special placement, as the preacher here not only points to the structural similarity between the SON and WICKED CHRISTIANS but also uses the allegoresis of the dead son as the starting point for the strategic central communication regarding spiritual and physical death.

In summary, it has been established that the preacher creates an *ambiguation* of the biblical narrative within the parameters of the allegoresis which does not occur arbitrarily but, rather, in accordance with definite rules.²³ This ambiguation is clearly a *strategic* move, inasmuch as it creates the basis for the development of the subsequent stage of his argument. The initial result of our examination establishes that Maurice makes use of the means of ambiguation of the literal sense as a partial step on the way to overcoming the textual resistance.²⁴

Discussion Regarding Physical vs. Spiritual Death

By means of the springboard of the allegoresis, that is, the ambiguation of the literal sense of the resurrection-from-the-dead narrative, the preacher finds the basis for his next discussion point. Within the framework of this discussion, Maurice differentiates between a “physical” and a “spiritual” death. This shows that he assumes an *ambiguity*²⁵ regarding death. He moves quickly to speak of the link between PHYSICAL DEATH and SPIRITUAL DEATH. His concern is not primarily with physical death, the subject of the Gospel text, but rather with the spiritually interpreted death of the

soul caused by sin.²⁶ This becomes clear through the substantiation of the individual allegoresis of the dead son:

Ses **fi**ls qui estoit mors senefloit les **malvais crestiens** qui sont en pechié quar li **pechiés** ço est **la mors**, li **pecieres** ço est li **mors**; si comme la mort ocit le **cors**, ausi ocit li **peciés l'ame**.

(*Sermo* 38 157–58.17–20; emphasis added)

Her son who was dead, represented the wicked Christians who live in sin, which represents death, and the sinners, the dead; just as death kills the body, so sin kills the soul.

(Translation by the authors)

Just as individual elements of the biblical narrative were interpreted spiritually by means of a similarity relationship, Maurice now applies this principle to death. To do this, he must first create a bridge from the DEAD SON to DEATH. As death has caused the SON to be DEAD, this connection can be regarded as based on contiguity. In turn, DEATH is connected with SIN.²⁷ Maurice shows a relation of similarity between these two concepts by expounding that both (physical) DEATH and SIN kill something. On the one hand, it is the body which is killed, and on the other hand it is the spirit, but it should be pointed out that in the first case it is the physical death itself which causes the death, whereas in the second case the sin has to be regarded as the cause. The similarity between DEATH and SIN receives extra emphasis through the comparative conjunction “si comme” and the repetition of the verb “ocire,” which is used in connection with both “mor[t]” and “pechiés.” The two different processes of dying can be observed in the frames *PHYSICAL DEATH* and *SPIRITUAL DEATH* in Figure 11.2, each of which represents a subframe of the *BIBLICAL NARRATIVE LK 7:11–17* and *TROPOLOGY LK 7:11–17* frames.

Only by following the allegoresis do we see physical death (*mort des cors*) and spiritual death (*mort de l'ame*) explicitly named in the argumentative passages. Through this differentiation between physical and spiritual death, Maurice is able, as he progresses through his sermon, to construct an argument in support of his communicative goal: the hearer's moral self-examination.

The relation between physical and spiritual death is portrayed as a multifaceted one, which can be described using the three cognitive associations of similarity, contiguity, and contrast. In his argumentation regarding the ambiguity of death, Maurice does not stop at the allegoresis already shown in the framework of the **similarity relation** between *PHYSICAL* and *SPIRITUAL*²⁸ DEATH. He also points to a **contiguity relation**

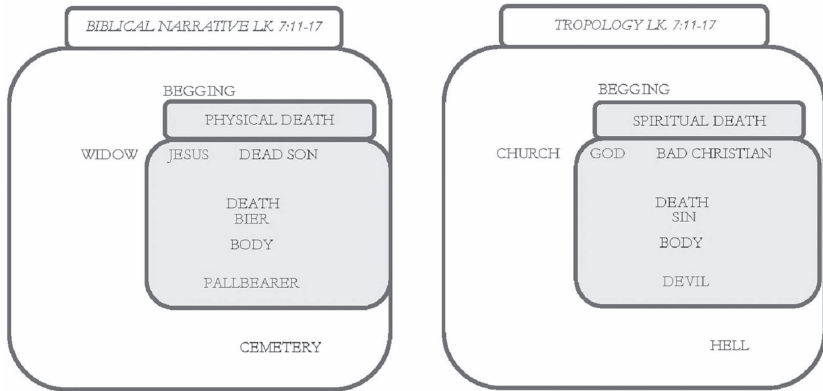


Figure 11.2 BIBLICAL NARRATIVE LK 7:11–17 and TROPOLOGY LK 7:11–17

between both deaths when he shows that physical death immediately follows the spiritual:²⁹

L'ame est la vie au cors, e Deus est la vie a l'ame; quant l'ame s'en va, li cors ciet; quant Dex deguerpist l'ame por son pecié, qui est sa vie e sa bueneeürtés † si muert l'ame.

(*Sermo* 38 158.52–54)

The soul is the life of the body and God is the life of the soul; when the spirit leaves, the body falls over dead; when God who is the life and salvation of the soul, has left it due to its sinfulness, so dies the soul.

(Translation by the authors)

Essential to this view is the notion of the dual nature of man divided into body and soul: sin separates man from God, which leads to God forsaking the soul. The sinner has separated himself from the life of his soul and must necessarily suffer spiritual death. Ultimately, physical death follows.

In his argument, Maurice does not, however, focus too much on the connection between the two types of death; rather, he focuses upon the different reaction each type of death will receive:

Les gens plorent por la mort des cors, por la mort a lor amis; mais quant il les voient morir par la mort de l'ame, ço est par les peciés qu'il font, par coi il sont desevré de Deu qui est la vie a l'ame, ne lor en caut mie grantment.

(*Sermo* 38 158.34–38)

The people weep for the death of the body, the death of their friends, but when they see them die a spiritual death, that is, because of the sin that they commit and through which they are separated from God, who is the life of the soul, they are not much concerned about it.

(Translation by the authors)

The **contrast** thus existing between the two deaths is critical to the accomplishment of the communicative goal. Here Maurice condemns the widespread disregard of spiritual death concomitant with an overestimation of the meaning of physical death. In the argument following this quote, Maurice places the emphasis upon spiritual death, which, he claims, must be avoided; moreover, he notes that indifference towards spiritual death is fatal,³⁰ because the consequence of sin, which brings spiritual death, is the torment of hell.³¹ It is through this frightening presentation of the torments of hell and the fire which is never quenched that Maurice wants to stir his audience into action.

Our analysis, moreover, has established the following: Maurice strategically exploits the ambiguity of death, which on the one hand can be understood as physical and on the other hand as spiritual, for his own purposes. This ambiguity is particularly characterized by the fact that the combination of the two corresponding concepts is established not only by a single association-relation but by similarity, contiguity, and contrast.³²

Continuation of the Ambiguation With Regard to the Concept SIN

Still, even with the demonstration of the ambiguity of death, Maurice has not yet arrived at the final admonition with which he attempts to reach his communicative goal. He inserts an intermediate step, another allegoresis. With this step, he connects the story of the raising of the youth of Nain (Lk. 7:11–16), by means of a similarity relation, with the other two New Testament resurrection narratives: the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:35–42) and the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1–44). Because the stories are similar (in all three cases Jesus raises a person from the dead), we also see a relation of contrast, because each time the raising has to do with different persons and, accordingly, with various types of sin that are thus exemplified. The basis for this is the connection **DEAD PERSON–SINNER** (cf. *Sermo* 38 157–58.17–20), which he shows within his first allegoresis of the Gospel text. Through the use of a short paraphrase, Maurice assigns a certain characteristic to every one of the three dead persons, which then becomes the basis for the interpretation: the **MAID** was **INSIDE** the house of her father, the **YOUTH** was **OUTSIDE** by the city gate, and **LAZARUS** had been dead for a **LONG TIME** (four days). Now Maurice establishes a similarity relation between each of the characteristics described and the various sins:

the MAID is linked with INWARD, HIDDEN SIN, the YOUTH with OUTWARD SIN, because it is not inward and hidden, and LAZARUS with LONG, CONTINUING SIN. This short allegoresis, in turn, has to do with a continuation of the previous ambiguation. By including the two other resurrection narratives, Maurice is able to specify even more precisely the concept of SIN and exemplify it in a more practical application. Therefore, the ambiguation of the Gospel story, the expression of ambiguity regarding death built upon it, and the concluding comparative ambiguation of the three different resurrected dead persons must all be viewed as significant steps in the argument by which Maurice makes the admonition directed at his audience to critically examine themselves with regard to sin and to ask God to give them good works.

Conclusion

Within the framework of his overall strategy, Maurice undertakes various steps in order to reach his communicative goal. He interprets the biblical narrative of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain and, in the course of his interpretation, bridges the divide between a literal understanding of death and one which includes the meaning of spiritual death. The ambiguation of the biblical narrative also provides the basis for unfolding the complexity of the lexeme *mors*. The focus is shifted from the concept of physical death to the concept of spiritual death: the consequence of spiritual, or soul death, is the fire of hell and thereby is the opposite of eternal life, to which the preacher desires to draw his audience. That is why spiritual death is to be avoided.

In summary: Maurice overcomes textual resistance through the strategically productive application of ambiguation and ambiguity. He accomplishes his strategy by introducing the ambiguity of death within the ambiguation of the biblical narrative, in order to exploit it for moral purposes in the rest of his sermon. It is only the ambiguation of the text that allows the preacher to reach his overall strategic goal with the sermon on the Gospel reading for that day: the story of the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain.

Maurice's strategy in *Sermo* 38 can be schematized as follows:

Goal:	The moral improvement of the listeners through self-examination and supplication to God for good works
Resistance:	The literal sense of the text does not explicitly call for moral improvement
Means ¹ :	Exposition of the text's moral dimension through ambiguation
Means ² :	Exposition and moral exploitation of the ambiguity of death

Accordingly, by examining *Sermo* 38, the central role of ambiguation and ambiguity within a speaker's rhetorical strategy becomes apparent.³³

One can expect to find a very similar strategic use of ambiguity and ambiguity in contemporaneous sermons attempting to call hearers to moral improvement on the basis of Gospel texts. These sermons provide a corpus for further investigations of strategies of ambiguity.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426).
- 2 In addition to explicit behavioural admonitions aimed at exemplary moral conduct, including the avoidance of sin, these also encompass critical self-examination and supplication to God that he might effect good works in mankind (see Sigmund 214).
- 3 Maurice's sermons have been passed down in Latin, Old French, and Old English. The following discussion of *Sermo* 38 refers to the Old French version from the Robson edition of 1952. There are varying opinions as to which version (Latin or Old French) is the original (see Zink 33).
- 4 This sermon is part of a cycle of sermons from the Bishop of Paris, Maurice of Sully, written between 1168 and 1175, consisting of 64 sermons which represent an entire liturgical year (cf. Zink 33). A synodic sermon, explicitly addressed to clergy, serves as prologue to the collection of 64 sermons, which were designated for the various Sundays and holidays of the Church calendar (*sermones de tempore* and *de sanctis*). It can thus be inferred that the collection as a whole was directed to clergy, for whom it was to serve as a sort of instruction manual when drafting their own sermons, which, as was the case with the 64 *sermones de tempore* and *de sanctis*, were to be addressed to the people, that is, the laity. Beyond this, the individual sermons demonstrate a very clear structure, and the simple spiritual exegesis seems especially designed for the laity. This collection of sermons is distinguished from other Romance collections in that the existing manuscripts are unusually numerous (see Robson 37, 62–74; see also Zink 21, 36). This, among other reasons, is due to the author's high profile and reputation as a good preacher (see Robson 46; Sigmund 86–87; Spieralska 17).
- 5 The establishment of the two mendicant orders, the Franciscan and the Dominican, both of which place great importance on sermons for the laity, occurs during this time period as well (see Spieralska 17).
- 6 See Knappe, Becker, and Böhme 153.
- 7 This primary goal has far-reaching hermeneutic consequences. If the biblical text is used primarily as a steppingstone to the goal of moral improvement, then the actual intended emphasis of the text recedes from view. This moralizing hermeneutic leads to a domestication of the biblical text. Such a streamlined interpretation would, in the best case, be selective, or it would be over-simplifying the texts, resulting in the loss of their linguistic potential; see Landmesser, who writes about how such a “vereinheitlichende Auslegung ... *de facto* im besten Fall selektiv, wenn nicht gar völlig überformend mit den Texten umgehen [würde]. Die Texte wären mit ihrem Sprachpotential verloren” (Landmesser 39).
- 8 Knappe (58) lists five types of resistance endangering successful communication, among them resistance on the textual level.
- 9 Following Knappe et al. (153), those considerations regarding the planning of a successful communicative act are defined as strategic, which contain as integral components “die Analyse der relevanten Ziel-Widerstand-Mittel-Relationen,” that is, the analysis of the relevant goal-resistance-means relationship.

- 10 By demonstrating that his behavioural admonitions are grounded in the biblical text, Maurice establishes his imperatives upon generally accepted binding authority and can therefore expect that they will be followed.
- 11 The basis for the doctrine of the three- or fourfold sense of Scripture is the differentiation between the literal sense and the spiritual sense. The Pauline juxtaposition of letter and spirit (2 Cor. 3:6), which was actually intended as a juxtaposition of the Works of the Law and the Works of Christ, subsequently developed into “a hermeneutic rule of scriptural interpretation” (Körtner 7). In addition to Augustine’s semiotics developed in *De doctrina christiana*, according to which not only *verba* but also *res* could be interpreted as symbols, this was substantially influenced by Origen with his hermeneutics *Peri archon* (Book IV). He developed the doctrine of the threefold sense of Scripture and thus created the basis for exegesis in the following centuries. The foundation of his hermeneutics is the assumption that the entirety of the Holy Scripture is inspired by God, which also makes a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament possible (cf. Meier 30). The Scripture can be understood on three different levels: physical/historical, psychological/moral, and spiritual/mystical. The Origenic process of exegesis according to the threefold sense of Scripture was applied liberally in late antiquity and during the Middle Ages, and it was also constantly modified and adapted. A very well-known outline of the fourfold interpretation of Scripture is the one by John Cassian (360–430/435), the first known author to use this form of interpretation, one that is described in the following couplets, which were widely published during the Middle Ages: “*Littera gesta docet / quid credas allegoria / moralis quid agas / quo tendas anagogia*” (Augustine of Dacia 256). That which is separately designated as anagogic here is often added to *allegoria* in interpretations according to the threefold method. The moral or even tropological sense, on the other hand, refers to the spirit of the individual person (cf. Ohly 14). Because the interpretation in *Sermo 38* is, at its core, tropological, in this chapter we will differentiate between only two levels of interpretation: on the one hand, between the literal sense of the biblical narrative, which is illustrated here through the incipit of the Latin Bible quote of Lk 7:11–17 and the subsequent Old French translation of the Gospel pericope, and, on the other hand, the level of tropological interpretation. Maurice connects the presentation of the Gospel narrative and the moral interpretation as follows: “*Ço est li grans miracles que li evangiles d’ui nos raconte; or oiés que senefie*” (157.16–17) / “That is the great miracle, which today’s Gospel relates; now hear what it means.” (Translation by the authors)
- 12 See Strauss 85, 87.
- 13 The *similitudo* between the two spheres forms Augustine’s basis for spiritual biblical interpretation (see Strauss 87). He differentiates God as the only *res fruenda* from the *res utendae* of the earthly realm, none of which are to be loved for their own sakes but should rather lead to the knowledge of God (*De Doctrina Christiana* I, IV 4). That is the theoretical basis for the pursuit of learning from a Christian perspective. Consequently, Christian study according to Augustine always pursues the goal of mediating between two levels, between the level which man experiences materially and the corresponding spiritual facts to which the material experience is related. Man attains knowledge of God or the *fruitio Dei* by means of the Holy Scriptures, which he must understand.
- 14 Hugh of St Victor makes reference in his *Didascalion*, a defining scientific theoretical work of the twelfth century, to the fact that the tropological scriptural interpretation shows Christians how to comport themselves: “*quid agendum sit pariter per tropologiam demonstret*” (V, 2).
- 15 Thus, Hugh of St Victor, in the course of his allegorical interpretation, connects elements from completely varied biblical texts with the Church, for example,

- the Ark (interpretation of Gen. 6 in *De Arca Morali* I, 621 D-622 C, PL 176) and cabbage, which is devoured (interpretation of Joel 1:4 in *Adnotatiunculae Elucidatoriae in Joelem Prophetam* 324 A-B, PL 175).
- 16 In the case of PALLBEARERS, an additional quote is presented, taken from the Gospel text quoted at the beginning of the sermon, so that it will be clear that the preacher is using parallel phrasing. The English translation of the individual allegoreses is by the authors.
 - 17 See Minsky; and Fillmore. The critical trait for the classification of differing concepts which are to be assigned to the same storyline, subject, or knowledge is contiguity, that is, simultaneous occurrence or consecutive succession (cf. Blank 87; Koch, "Prototypentheorie zur Historischen Semantik" 29, "Frame and Contiguity" 146–149). The combination of two different frames, that is, a *BIBLICAL NARRATIVE* frame with a frame which entails Christian conduct, chiefly ensues in allegoresis on the basis of a similarity relation.
 - 18 Mental representations, which are cross-referenced by means of a lexeme, are defined as concepts. They are extra-linguistic; see Koch, "Prototypentheorie zur Historischen Semantik" 35, as well as Blank 9; both refer to Raible's semiotic pentagon (1983). In the following, concepts are indicated by small caps, and frames by italicized small caps.
 - 19 This is the case in the interpretation of the bier, as the verb "gisir" is used on both levels. The verb is first used in the literal sense ("to lie on the bier") and then applied in the metaphorical sense ("to 'lie' in wickedness").
 - 20 This is the case in the interpretation of the pallbearers and the cemetery, in which "porter en terre" is used in the literal sense and "mener en terre" on the moral level.
 - 21 Another type of similarity occurs in the linking of CEMETERY and HELL. Besides the structural similarity (the DEAD SON/WICKED CHRISTIAN being brought to the CEMETERY/to HELL), there is also a similarity between concept characteristics. For example, the concept of a ghastly place attaches to both CEMETERY and HELL.
 - 22 Besides the structural similarity which exists between JESUS and GOD in each of the frames, due to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the fact that each is asked for something, a (shared) identity between the two concepts can be assumed. The doctrine of the Trinity, according to which Jesus Christ is entirely man and entirely God, was developed in various Councils between 325 and 675 AD. This doctrine was a self-evident component of Christian dogma during the Middle Ages.
 - 23 On the one hand, similarity as a relation between the biblical narrative and the sphere of spiritual interpretation is preset; on the other hand, the content of the target message is established to such an extent that the preacher refers to a traditional exegesis, which always refers to the same particular target messages (for example, the Christian salvation narrative according to an allegorical interpretation or Christian actions according to a tropological interpretation).
 - 24 Even where ambiguation is not applied strategically, every scriptural interpretation "[hat] immer zumindest auch den faktischen Effekt der Ambiguisierung der biblischen Texte, insofern die Interpretation eine Rekontextualisierung der ausgelegten Textpassagen in einem je aktuellen Zusammenhang bedeutet" (Koch and Landmesser 218; "always has at least the virtual effect of ambiguation of the biblical texts, inasmuch as the interpretation represents a recontextualization of the interpreted passages of text, each in a current context"; translation by the authors).
 - 25 Regarding the different dimensions of ambiguity, see Bauer, Knappe, Koch, and Winkler.
 - 26 The differentiation between physical and soul (or spiritual) death has its roots in a dichotomic anthropology, according to which man is composed of soul and

- body (regarding the beginnings of this dualism, see Plato's *Phaidon*, for example, 114d. 1–6; for application of this concept within the exegesis of biblical texts, see Philo of Alexandria, for example, "Legum allegoriae" 1, 105–108).
- 27 Of note is the linguistic construction of the corresponding sentence, because contrary to the other allegoreses of the biblical narrative, in which the concepts of the *BIBLICAL NARRATIVE LK 7:11–17* are always dealt with first, the preacher here first takes up the concepts of the *TROPOLOGY LK 7:11–17* frame.
- 28 *PHYSICAL* and *SPIRITUAL DEATH* can be regarded as frames (see Figure 11.2) which show structural similarity. Hereinafter, *PHYSICAL* and *SPIRITUAL DEATH* can also be considered as concepts which are—besides similarity—linked by other semantic relations (contiguity and contrast). Depending on the semantic relation, the concepts are to be put in two different frames (this is the case with similarity or contrast) or in a single frame.
- 29 In this case, a frame is to be assumed which contains *PHYSICAL* and *SPIRITUAL DEATH* as concepts.
- 30 "Il ploerroit la mort de l'ame son fil, e le castieroit qu'il ne deservist les paines d'infer, le feu qui ja ne sera estains" (Maurice of Sully, *Sermo* 38 158.45–47). "He would weep over the spiritual death of his son and he would rather punish him so that he doesn't come to deserve the punishment of hell, the fire which shall never be quenched" (translation by the authors).
- 31 "[M]olt i a par le monde de ces mors: molt i a de cels qui gisent mort en pecié, e cui li diable portent en infer quar les uns porte[n]t il en infer par luxure, les autres par covoitise, les autres par plusors pechiés dampnables; e sainte Eglise plore por la perte d'itels homes." (Maurice of Sully, *Sermo* 38 158.30–34)
- There are many of these dead in the world: there are many who lie dead in sin, whom the devils carry into hell, for some they carry due to their lust, others due to their covetousness, and others due to multiple damnable sins; and the holy church weeps over the loss of these people. (Translation by the authors)
- 32 Whereas similarity and contrast from a gestalt psychology point of view are mutually dependent and cannot be clearly distinguished (see Blank 136), similarity and contiguity are to be seen as complementary. Hence, coexistence of these two usually cannot be found in linguistic analysis with a cognitive-semantic focus. However, in this case a coexistence of similarity and contiguity can be stated, because the subject is an argument line which uses all three relations.
- 33 For further analyses of allegoresis in sermons by Maurice of Sully and other collections of Romance sermons, see Sigmund.

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12 “To Define Is to Distrust”

Intertextual Ambiguity in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*

Leona Toker

In the second edition of his seminal book on ambiguity in poetry, William Empson applies the notion of ambiguity to “any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language” (1). Setting the conceptual grid for a discussion of ambiguity in *narrative*, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan represents ambiguity as “a double system of mutually exclusive clues” (12) which create an “impossible” rabbit/duck kind of aesthetic object. For Rimmon-Kenan, as for Empson, ambiguity is not a matter of the readers’ subjective responses; it is anchored in the textual conditions that may underlie different interpretations.¹

Here I shall argue that the choice of response to these conditions, the choice between “the alternative reactions” to the same “piece of language” or the same narrative detail, may be an ethical choice and that it should involve examining the implications of both of the alternatives. If the readers do not allow their subjectivity to distract them from one of the two conflicting options, or even if it is owing to what Wayne Booth (72–77) has called “co-duction” (the input of other readers) that they become conscious of the co-presence of these options, the resulting choice is ultimately an ethical one. This holds true if the readers accept one of them, or if they accept both and imaginatively explore what each of them entails: we have to take responsibility for the construction of the world in accordance with our own vision, assessment, or desire while, ideally, retaining an awareness of that which one excludes from one’s construct. I shall attempt to demonstrate this on the basis of the library episode (“Scylla and Charybdis”) in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), taking a clue from an allusion to Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767) in the “Penelope” episode.

“Rachel Thy Younger Daughter”

In the so-called “first sentence” of “Penelope,” Molly Bloom recollects her dialogue with a priest during confession:

I hate that confession when I used to go to Father Corrigan he touched me father and what harm if he did where and I said on the canal bank like a fool but whereabouts on your person my child on the leg behind high up was it yes rather high up was it where you sit down yes O Lord couldnt he say bottom right out and have done with it.

(875)

Molly seems to suggest that Father Corrigan’s interest in the details of her intimacy with a lover is prurient, though it is not impossible that he merely wishes to coordinate the gravity of the offence with the prescription for atonement. The comedy of the passage lies not only in Molly’s impatience with the priest’s mincing euphemisms but also in the combination of the extempore innocence of her younger self with the sarcasm of the mature, adulterous wife. The younger Molly, “like a fool,” misunderstood the priest’s question “where” (where did he touch you?) to pertain to the location where the tryst was taking place (always a big issue for unsanctioned lovers); therefore, she replies by giving an approximate topographical location of the scene—“on the canal bank.” The priest, however, wishes to know “whereabouts on [her] person” her lover touched her; his question is about the body. The word “where” was meant in one way and was understood in another; its potential ambiguity is further explored in Molly’s enjoyment of the memory of this misunderstanding, rather than any other details of her confession.

The potential double meaning of “where” alludes to the play on this conjunction in Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. Widow Wadman wishes to marry Uncle Toby but is worried that the wound in the groin that he received during the siege of Namur might have made him impotent. She wants to know exactly *where* he was wounded “on [his] person,” but Toby Shandy thinks that she is asking him about the geographical/topographical location; he reads her question as a sign of warm-hearted solicitude, a shared interest in the art of fortifications, and the curiosity of a congenial mind. The situation is rife with comic miscommunications and carries obscene overtones:²

—You shall see the very place, Madam; said my uncle Toby.
Mrs. Wadman blush’d—look’d towards the door—
turn’d pale—blush’d slightly again—recovered her natural

colour—blush'd worse than ever; which for the sake of the unlearned reader, I translate thus—

*"L—d! I cannot look at it—
What would the world say if I look'd at it?
I should drop down, if I look'd at it—
I wish I could look at it—
There can be no sin in looking at it.
—I will look at it."*

(IX, 20: 567)

Uncle Toby causes Widow Wadman further embarrassment by literalizing the metaphor of "putting one's finger on it" (as in "identifying the problem"):

—You shall lay your finger upon the place—said my uncle Toby.—I will not touch it, however, quoth Mrs. Wadman to herself.
(IX, 20: 568)

Toby leads the widow to the map and lays her finger on the spot where he was standing when hit by a stone. "Unhappy Mrs. Wadman" evidently realizes her mistake at once, but it takes Trim to disambiguate the matter to Toby Shandy.

We are not told why, after Trim's explanation, Uncle Toby breaks off his courtship of Widow Wadman. Clearly, his idol has crumbled. It may be, however, that what offends Uncle Toby is not so much the widow's transpiring sexual desire as her distrust of him: would he have offered marriage had he not been able to consummate it? In this episode, the quest for the disambiguation of the word "where" stands for a guarantee of sexual potency—which should have been taken on trust.

A case can be made for an allusion (rather than a coincidental similarity or a product of a vague reminiscence) if there is more than one point of similarity between the alluding text and the one alluded to (see Toker, "Between Allusion and Coincidence"). Joyce's interest in Sterne, whether as another expatriate Irish writer or as a precursor of modernist experiments with the genre of the novel, has been often, but not very extensively, commented upon (see Hart for a recent attempt at a systematic comparison). Intra-textual signs of interest, such as the half-spoonerism "Shapland Tandy" in "Proteus" (48, a comic conflation of "Tristram Shandy" and Napper Tandy; see Gifford and Seidman 48) and a passage of pastiche on *The Sentimental Journey* in "Oxen of the Sun," reinforce the justification

for reading the ambiguity of “where” in “Penelope” as an allusion to the Widow Wadman episode in Sterne.³ But as Molly Bloom sends us back to *Tristram Shandy* (almost in the way Tristram sends “my lady” reader to an earlier chapter to look for the statement that his mother was not a Catholic), one of the souvenirs that we may bring along from that excursion is the point about the relationship between ambiguity and trust.

In an earlier episode, Tristram and his friend Eugenius consider the word “crevice” and the material items for which this word may stand, one innocent (“clean”) and the other obscene (“dirty”):

—Here are two senses, cried *Eugenius*, as we walk’d along, pointing with the fore finger of his right hand to the word *Crevice*, in the fifty-second page of the second volume of this book of books,—here are two senses,—quoth he.—And here are two roads, replied I, turning short upon him,—a dirty and a clean one,—which shall we take?—The clean,—by all means, replied *Eugenius*. *Eugenius*, said I, stepping before him, and laying my hand upon his breast,—to define—is to distrust.—Thus I triumph’d over *Eugenius*; but I triumph’d over him as I always do, like a fool.—’Tis my comfort however, I am not an obstinate one.

(III, 31: 196–97; emphases in original)

To define is to distrust. In another famous marriage negotiation, the biblical Jacob engages to work seven years for Laban if afterwards he can marry Laban’s daughter Rachel. Jacob does not simply say “Rachel”; he says “Rachel thy younger daughter” (Genesis 29:18, KJV)—an expression that in modern Hebrew means making doubly sure of the definitions in an agreement, in case of distrust. The marriage settlement of Tristram’s parents (which stipulates that, if the Shandys reside in the country, Mrs. Shandy will be allowed to go to London to “lie in” under professional medical care) is a monumental parody of legal mistrust. It is supposed to be a shield against every liability, or else, in the language of Toby’s hobbyhorical interest in fortifications, an invincible bastion against abuse. One of the puzzles of the novel is that, although Uncle Toby is the embodiment of kindness, he is the one to overprotect the prenuptial bastion by suggesting the possibility of Mrs. Shandy demanding to go to London under false pretences—which leads to the addition of the clause that, in such a case, she would forfeit her next chance. Whether due to her long-unsatisfied wish to have a second child or because that very clause magically conjures up what it describes, Mrs. Shandy goes to London only to discover that her pregnancy is a phantom one. Therefore, when Tristram is about to be born, she is not taken to London but left to the mercies of chance and mistrusted attendants at home, as a result of which Tristram starts his life with a broken nose, one of a series of his multiple vexations and misfortunes. To

define the husband's obligation to seek the best medical attendance for his wife, and to define the wife's good faith (with penalties for the breach), is, indeed, to distrust. Walter Shandy wishes to exclude chance as well as all verbal ambiguities from his life. As a punishment for this verbal version of Babel fortifications, ambiguity comes to haunt him at every turn.

What Does Stephen Intend?

An allusion is "a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts" (Ben-Porat 107). "Unsheathe your dagger definitions," thinks Stephen in the library upon recalling that Plato (not unlike his listeners, including the Platonist Eglinton) "would have banished [him] from his commonwealth" (238): to define is not merely to distrust; it is also to be prepared to fight, to launch or to resist aggression. It is Haines who seeks definitions in "Telemachus," and it is the narrator of "Cyclops" who offers them wholesale, always to everyone's discredit. Molly Bloom evades definitions; Stephen Dedalus mocks them ("Horseness is the whatness of allhorse" 238); Leopold Bloom's definitions are inept; and Joe Hynes is lax about them and slips into mistakes. But a well-supported interpretation of a text is all too often tantamount to a definition, a disambiguation, of the kind that may offer an all too skeptical vision of the novel's world.

A case in point is the 2011 reading of Stephen's experience in the library episode offered by Margot Norris, who eight years previously had published another sober and insightful study, *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's Dubliners*. Norris regards Stephen's discourse to a small and skeptical audience in this chapter as his "maneuver . . . designed to display his intellectual merit and earn him admiration and support from a group of well-respected Irish editors, authors, and intellectuals," but carrying "a high risk because if he fails, he will have lost his best opportunity to make his mark in Irish literary and cultural circles, and may instead stimulate disapproval and possible censure" (*Virgin and Veteran Readings* 43–44). Norris calls this (doomed) "maneuver" Stephen's "gambit." Her view of his conscious motivation also occasionally narrows down what she sees as Stephen's general goal of self-assertion to a hope of proximate pragmatic benefits—to reverse "two disappointments in store for him: his exclusion from Russell's planned book of verses and his exclusion from George Moore's evening soiree" (45); he also seems to hope to place a paper in *Dana* (62–63). Though presented with reservations, this view of Stephen's motives is later reinforced by a hedged suggestion that Stephen may have aligned himself with Moore's political stance regarding the Boer War "to wrangle an invitation to George Moore's soiree" (49).⁴ Norris registers other blows that Stephen's *amour propre* receives in the episode: Russell leaves in the middle of his discourse; the others mention Moore's soiree repeatedly and tactlessly, not caring about Stephen's possible feelings of exclusion; it turns

out that Mulligan and Haines have been invited, along with some obscure young gentlemen; Russell is putting together an anthology of young Irish poets; and none of the people present, except, possibly, Lyster (Norris, *Virgin and Veteran Readings* 51), even wonder at the fact that Stephen is not included. Towards the end of the episode, despite the fact that he seems to have succeeded in casting a spell on the listeners for brief stretches, their lack of enthusiasm for his theory of Shakespeare and Eglinton's hostile thrust against him dash Stephen's hopes. None of his "follies" seem to be forgotten or forgiven in Dublin; they are held hostage (238). Worse, it turns out that a prank of Mulligan's is ascribed to him instead. Does Stephen walk out into the streets to nurse his hurt? Perhaps. We catch only a glimpse of him meeting his sister at a used-book stall before we get to see him again, drinking with the medical students in the maternity hospital in "Oxen of the Sun."

It is fitting that some of Margot Norris's suggestions are formulated as questions rather than as statements. But what Stephen goes through in "Scylla and Charybdis" remains ambiguous in Empson's terms: there is room "for alternative reactions." One does not have to see Stephen's experience in this episode in terms of a practical problem and a failed solution—other responses are possible, and other interpretive avenues demand attention. Norris presents a system of "singly directed clues" (Rimmon-Kenan 52–53) that point to the "failed maneuver," or failed "gambit," reading of the episode. But these clues are partly counteracted by vectors pointing in the opposite direction. One must admit, however, that some of the latter vectors are "doubly directed clues" (Rimmon-Kenan 53–58) which can, in their turn, lend themselves to different interpretations.

One of the things that militates against Norris's "gambit" theory is that her definition of the goal of the failed maneuver is couched in lexis that is foreign to Stephen's own vocabulary: he would not be caught dead formulating his plan as that of "restor[ing] himself to his rightful place among the young poets and intellectuals of Ireland's literary and cultural community" (62) or to earning himself "a place as a rising star with the elite of contemporary Irish culture" (63). True, this clue may be seen as "doubly directed": by analogy, Molly does not place the label "adultery" on her experience of that afternoon, and the concept "exhibitionism" is not even available to Gerty MacDowell.

What enhances the ambiguity is that Stephen's intentions in visiting the library are never defined. Judging by his regret, in "Proteus," about having forgotten to pick up some paper slips in the library, the library is one of his regular haunts. On this particular day [when he will again forget to swipe some paper that is much needed when he is "short taken" (167) by a bout of inspiration], he has a further motive of going there: to seek A.E. and ask him to publish Deasy's letter.⁵ Is this motivation only a pretext for

the "gambit"? Or is it the kind of obligation that, on its own, sets Stephen's course and makes him float on, or against, the current of his consciousness, tacking and veering in a struggle with adverse winds? His thought "[c]ease to strive" just before the coda of the episode (280) may be read as acceptance of defeat in the Dublin cultural arena (cf. Norris, *Virgin and Veteran Readings* 64) or as a decision to let himself be carried where the flow of experience is taking him, half-accepting invitations (rather than waiting for the ones not extended), holding harangues, answering or evading questions, and obeying emotional impulses, while some unstated decision is fermenting, on its own, in his inner world.

The shifts in the narrative focus from Stephen to Bloom and away from either facilitate the withholding of information about the characters' intentions. The technique is not new: in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), we watch Sidney Carton's feverish activity in revolutionary Paris, including his purchase of a substance that an apothecary tries to caution him about. We even listen to his thoughts as he compares himself to an eddy, a mini-whirlpool,⁶ but we are not told that he intends to replace Darnay in prison and die on the guillotine instead of him. The technique creates a surprise reversal, one of the factors in the novel's popular appeal. We come to understand Carton's intentions only retrospectively, after he has successfully implemented them.⁷ In "Scylla and Charybdis," we also learn about Stephen's wish to smooth the publication of Deasy's letter in A.E.'s (George Russell's) *Homestead* only when this intention is fulfilled: that respectable practical intention has been withheld from the reader. By analogy, the more ambitious one (the "gambit") may also have been there all the time, but was likewise elided⁸ and not revealed retroactively because of its unacknowledged failure. As a result, we are free to deny the intention, imagine it as subliminal, or simply attribute its non-registration to an already established, practically naturalized, narrative technique. Indeed, narrative details are not only "instructions" to the reader's imagination (Iser 64–65) but also limitations on the freedom of the reader's imagination: if in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) we are told that Jane Bennet is "handsome," then, playing by the rules, we have no right to imagine her as short and plump, but because nothing is said about the color of her hair or eyes, our imagination may paint them according to our preferences. There is nothing in the narrative of *Ulysses* that would expressly bar any of the preceding three explicative-interpretive options.

In principle, an intention unrecorded in the narrative may be made known retroactively not only when it is fulfilled but also when it is *not* implemented. Yet this does not seem to be a feature of paralipsis as practiced in *Ulysses*, especially not in rendering Stephen's experience. Hugh Kenner (57), for instance, notes that on the morning of July 16, 1904, Stephen, having left his lodgings in the Martello tower apparently forever,

may have “decided, without enthusiasm, to investigate the chances of lodging with Aunt Sara. But he does not, without really deciding not to.” Kenner quotes the reference to Stephen floating by the turning to Strasburg Terrace: “I have passed the way to aunt Sara’s. Am I not going there? Seems not” (50–51). However, this is not really a case of paralytically suppressed unfulfilled intention: though the intention has not, indeed, been stated explicitly, the hesitation about it was registered relatively early in “Proteus”: “Here. Am I going to Aunt Sara’s or not?” (47). A memory of a previous visit replaces decision making; as a result, Stephen floats on the stream of his inner life past the turning towards his aunt’s house. He will drift into the newspaper office and then into the library in a similar lyrical mood, punctuated by the “bullockbefriending” (44) activity pertaining to Deasy’s letter about foot-and-mouth disease. When in “Ithaca” Stephen comments on the mistakes in Joe Hynes’s newspaper report of the funeral, “open thy mouth and put thy foot in it” (752), the words ironically apply to his own exploits throughout the day when trying “to be clever at other people’s expense” (Blamires 76).

Hence, the absence of reference, retroactive as well as *ex tempore*, to the defined intentionality of Stephen’s gambit can be read as a clue to the absence of that conscious plan. True, this kind of evidence is not sufficient: structural features of the text may create ambiguities of their own, in addition to ambiguities of reference.

Clues and Analogies

And yet, the case against the “gambit” interpretation may be reinforced by analogies with other narrative practices in the novel. Like the six heads of Scylla, each of the characters assembled in “Scylla and Charybdis” takes a bite out of Stephen, but he escapes alive to float among “Wandering Rocks.” Had his intentions really been a gambit of self-assertion, the failure would have been likely to rankle with him in a paranoid manner. But this does not happen. The snatches of Stephen’s stream of consciousness in the remainder of the novel and the content of his Q&A in “Ithaca” are free from shadows of Eglinton, Best, Lyster, and even A.E. (“Circe” may be an exception that reconfirms the rule, but more about that later). Nor can one argue that he is repressing painful memories, because he cannot repress the much more painful ones concerning his mother: they keep returning to him, along with questions about his independent self-Bildung as an artist and as a recalcitrant servant of three masters (cf. 24). By analogy, Bloom’s stream of consciousness in the second half of the novel is remarkably free from memories of the minor slights and snubs that he received in “Hades” (episode 6) or of the salient insult that he suffered from the editor Myles Crawford (K.M.A.) in “Aeolus” (episode 8). He remembers the latter only

as a setback in his advertising project; in "Cyclops" he is shown overcoming this setback with the help of Joe Hynes, whose cooperation he buys with an extension on a debt of 3 shillings. In "Ithaca" he recollects the episode not by way of the paranoid teasing of the insult but in the comforting consciousness of having overcome a business obstacle: "overjoyed to set his mind at rest and a bit flabbergasted at Myles Crawford's after all managing the thing, there" (752). The word "insult" is suppressed after "Myles Crawford's"—after all, newsmen are weathercocks and windbags, not to be taken seriously enough to oppress one's mood. The only cold-shoulder case that does embitter Bloom's recollections of the funeral is John Henry Menton's curt "[t]hank you" when Bloom points out to him a disorder with his hat (146–147). This is significant to Bloom—he is "crestfallen" (147) after the brief exchange, and his last thought in the funeral episode is about Menton: "Thank you. How grand we are this morning" (147). In "Aeolus," Bloom is still mulling over this (practically insignificant) injury and how he could have back-answered Menton (154). Later in the novel, we come to understand that Bloom is hurt because Menton's cold politeness contrasts starkly with a much more human past episode, also involving a hat. Bloom's intimate inner claim to distinction is that he was the man to hand a fallen hat to Charles Stewart Parnell on a tumultuous occasion, with Parnell's "Thank you" sounding quite different from Menton's (754). As befits the scene in Hades, the people in the funeral carriage and at the cemetery are all shade-like to Bloom, who, though mourning his friend Dignam, is almost overwhelmingly preoccupied with his own private life and his family. True, his fellow mourners re-emerge to haunt him in "Circe," but that episode cannot be reduced to the dramatization of his subconscious (or Stephen's for that matter)—as Nabokov has put it, "the book itself is dreaming" (350). One of the attractive features of Bloom is his freedom from paranoia: he does not dwell on the signs of his being an alien in his middle-class Dublin environment, does not connect these signs into a system, and does not allow them to prey on him. The down side of this spiritual freedom is that it delays his confrontation with his subliminal anxiety about his being a Jew in an antisemitic environment (or being perceived as a Jew by himself and others, though not by Jewish law); that confrontation is forced on him in "Cyclops," just as the full awareness of the crisis in his private life is forced upon him by Boylan's visit to Molly (see also Hayman 252).

By analogy, the intellectuals assembled in the National Library in episode 9 remain shades for Stephen; the solidifying metaphor of "whetstones" (271) is applied to his brother and his treacherous younger associates, but not to these avuncular figures. Stephen had meant to meet two of his cohorts, Mulligan and Haines, in "The Ship" and perhaps regale them with his theory of Shakespeare, but, when diverted to the National

Library in search of A.E., he celebrated the change of direction by sending his telegram with a quotation from Meredith to Mulligan in “The Ship,” hinting that Mulligan is not reciprocating the *jouissance* which Stephen provides him. With his brother and Cranly not available as whetstones for his wit, fantasy, and “dagger definitions,” and with Mulligan evincing touches of malevolence, Stephen welcomes a different audience in front of whom to practice his verbal art. This audience he does wish to conciliate—not as agents of the Dublin cultural industry but as representatives of the potential broad readership. When he proposes to himself to “[m]ake them accomplices,” this is a comment on his working in all he knows of “[l]ocal colour” (241): the listeners’ imagination must be invited to cooperate with the telling in conjuring up the images. I lean towards the view that Stephen has drifted into the library not with a calculation regarding his standing in Dublin’s intellectual circles, but to take a new opportunity of experience and apprenticeship that has offered itself. He is keenly aware of the slights he receives, but his saying to himself, “See this. Remember” (246), suggests that, like Bloom, he is quite likely to dismiss them from his conscious mind (hence the injunction not to do so). When he is hurt by not even being considered for Russell’s anthology, his momentary pain is registered by the memory of the banished and regretted daughter whose name evokes heartache: “Cordelia. *Cordoglio*. Lir’s loneliest daughter.” Yet the pain is immediately sublimated into a creative string of literary allusions, in which the Shakespearean heroine blends with the young woman turned into a swan in an Irish legend. Stephen’s spontaneous Joycean creativity defuses paranoia.⁹ Towards the end of the episode, moreover, he refuses to think of what has just happened to him as irreparable: “Life is many days. This will end” (275).

An additional clue that might support Norris’s reading of Stephen’s experience is his anxious, tacit response, in the “Aeolus” episode, on hearing J.J. O’Molloy’s reference to Professor Magennis having talked about him: “Speaking about me. What did he say? What did he say? What did he say about me? Don’t ask” (178). Norris comments, convincingly, that “Stephen’s urgency to hear more of what Magennis said about him suggests that his public reputation is beginning to matter to Stephen, perhaps very much so, because a great deal may hang on it” (*Virgin and Veteran Readings* 35). There may, however, be a complementary reading of this detail. Stephen’s sudden anxiety is somewhat reminiscent of Bloom’s troubled wondering in “Hades” about who the person in a mackintosh at the cemetery may be: “Now who is that lankylooking galoot over there in the macintosh? Now who is here I’d like to know? Now, I’d give a trifle to know who he is” (138). If, with Nabokov (320), we read the person in the macintosh as Joyce himself visiting his story world, then Bloom’s agitation on meeting his maker (after the unease upon meeting his prototype, the

"real M'Coy," in the "Lotus Eaters" episode) may be placed on the novel's self-reflexive plane and read as a kind of ontological anxiety. By analogy, Stephen's suppressed eagerness to know what a professor and others have been saying about him can be read as a perturbed apprehension of the townsmen's and the readers' confusion between him and the youngish writer who has created him, partly in his own image. This, however, is not a case of ambiguity but one of overdetermination in the novel's complex interplay between the literal and the figurative planes of meaning.

Forth and Back Down Garden Paths

It must be admitted that, even if the proliferating evidence in support of my reading of Stephen's moods and motivations in "Scylla and Charybdis" is inconclusive, so is Norris's evidence for her "gambit" hypothesis. This, however, is the point: the two options are co-present. In narratological terms, the difference between Norris's and my views amounts to which of the two we consider the narrated one and which the "disnarrated" (what does not take place in the narrative but is suggested as an option that could have materialized; see Prince). One chooses the option that is closer to the kind of world that one wishes to see, in the book and in one's life: Margot Norris wants a world in which the surrogate intellectual father figures would be more appreciative of and sensitive to young talents; I want a world in which the young talents should find in themselves the strength to not depend on such appreciation or sensitivity. The implications of construing alternative kinds of world need to be considered, because if wishful thinking is not conscious, it turns into a self-delusion. Yet the two alternatives may coexist in the same world. Moreover, Norris's and my readings converge in regarding the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode as a turning point in the *Künstlerroman*: one way or the other, like Bloom in "Cyclops," here Stephen has to confront one of the major aspects of his predicament in Dublin.

Lir's loneliest daughter is not the only memory of a person turning into a bird. As Norris notes, towards the end of the episode, Stephen repeatedly thinks about himself as a lapwing (five times on 270–271). This is an allusion to the Daedalus myth in Ovid, and Gifford and Seidman (245) point to another ambiguity: Stephen can be seen as Daedalus's overreaching son Icarus and also as Daedalus's nephew and apprentice, "who showed so much inventive promise that Daedalus grew jealous and threw him from the Acropolis," whereupon Athena caught the boy and turned him into a bird, a lapwing. Norris's view of the significance of this allusion gives prominence to the older artist's jealousy of the unruly young talent. Alternatively, one may bring into relief the connections with King Lear's Cordelia and with Lir's daughter, the victim of a stepmother's jealousy: the lapwing is the

unloved scion, the one who can grow wings not because a father figure devises them for him but precisely because he is expelled. There is, paradoxically, a strange sense of freedom in being, or perceiving oneself as, an unloved one among the siblings, especially if treated unfairly. Stephen is a son who is, on the contrary, favored by Simon Dedalus—which may be one of the reasons why he will not go home. An offer of shelter, affection, and complementary ethical options will later come from his substitute father figure, Bloom, but accepting Bloom's affection would impose a new fetter. Being spurned by the other patriarchs, such as A.E. and Eglinton, is what Stephen *needs* at this juncture of his life; he needs to be chucked out of the Acropolis. "Cease to strive" means cease to struggle against the current that is driving you out of Dublin; allow this current to carry you out to the seas.¹⁰ If at the end of "Eveline" the heroine is paralyzed by the fear that the seas will drown her, Stephen's walk out into the unknown in "Ithaca"—walking towards the consummation of his artistic freedom—is a leap of faith.

So here are, as Tristram says to Eugenius, two roads: the skeptical one and the idealizing one; which shall we choose? And though Tristram will describe his triumph over Eugenius's "clean" choice as "foolish," his carnivalized anti-Lockean statement that "to define is to distrust" might well be taken seriously.¹¹ Jacob's distrustful specification, "Rachel thy younger daughter," helped him but little: the victim of a bed trick, Jacob got Leah, the elder sister, first. Yet he fathered more tribes of Israel than he might have done had his father-in-law stuck to the original definitions in their contract. At the end of *Lolita* (1955), a novel by Joyce's rebellious disciple Nabokov, there is a now famous ambiguity as to whether Humbert's visit to the pregnant Dolly Schiller in Coalmont is supposed to have taken place or was only fantasized by Humbert in prison. If we opt to accept this moving evocation of poetic injustice, we may become Humbert's "accomplices" in constructing a better world than the more real one in which the victim of pedophilia is likely to have met an earlier and more brutal end. And yet we have to acknowledge the real world too, and the harsh fates of its abused children, and accept it as a fact against which we wish to strive, and not cease to strive. Tristram's two roads are more like the forks of a garden-path sentence¹² than the mutually exclusive, yet ultimately converging options in Borges's "The Garden of Forking Paths."

So are the interpretive options conjured up by the ambiguities of *Ulysses*. The slights and snubs endured by Stephen in "Scylla and Charybdis" may be seen as liberating for the experimental and stubbornly independent Stephen Dedalus of my interpretation, but on the basis of Norris's reading they can be seen as potentially destructive for other gifted young intellectuals seeking their debut among heavyweight literary elites. Both interpretive

options should perhaps be followed through, and from the terminus of each of them we might, at a certain point, have to turn back and explore the other alternative. What that point may be, to what lengths each idea or interpretation might be taken, and where it should stop are left to the decision of the reader. Here, too, to define is to distrust.

Notes

- 1 I thank Ruben Borg for useful comments on an early version of this chapter.
- 2 Michael Steinman, who, to my chagrin, turns out to have noticed the similarity of the “Penelope” passage and that of Uncle Toby’s misunderstanding of Widow Wadman 30 years before me, adds that Molly’s answer supplements the “confusion of private anatomy and public location” by “an ambiguity, comic and erotic. . . : ‘the canal bank,’ as an erogenous zone near her ‘bottom,’ clearly has its own sexual resonance” (207). Steinman comments on the novelist’s pointing to “the limitations of words and the difficulty of fully expressing human reality through them” (207); in my view, the ambiguity of the reference actually enriches the options of literary language.
- 3 Let us add some indirect evidence of deliberate intertextuality: as W.Y. Tindall (118) has pointed out, “Daedalus flew; Swift is a kind of bird; but Sterne, Swift’s twin in *Finnegans Wake*, means bottom.” Frank Budgen continues the paronomastic game, remarking that the “Nausicaa” episode is “a stern tale of Swift swiftly told by Sterne. Joyce always held that these two writers ought to change names” (214).
- 4 Stephen’s critique of the Boer War and its concentration camps is, however, too elaborate and well thought through not to represent a genuine attitude (see Toker, “A Semiological Reading”).
- 5 “Probably [Stephen] went to the *Homestead* office . . . and was sent the further few hundred yards to the Library, where AE was to be found in the Librarian’s office” (Kenner 59).
- 6 “[H]e lingered there yet a little longer, watching an eddy that turned and turned purposeless, until the stream absorbed it, and carried it on to the sea.—‘Like me!’” (Dickens 327).
- 7 Similar non-disclosure of a character’s intentions also characterizes numerous narratives by Faulkner, as well as Joyce’s own narratives, such as “The Two Gallants” in *Dubliners* (1914) and several stretches of Bloom’s progress in *Ulysses*.
- 8 This would then constitute a case of what Gérard Genette calls “paralipsis” (195)—withholding of information that is available to the focal character at the moment described.
- 9 Cf. also Kellogg (163): Stephen is
eager to impress and convince his hearers. They, on the other hand, are either rude, irrelevant, or disengaged. . . . We know that Stephen more than gets his revenge on his tormentors in his private thoughts. In objective, social terms, however, he is mild, polite, the offended party.
- 10 Cf. also Goldman (158–159) on the freedom which “the detachment of ceasing to strive would attain.”
- 11 See Toker, *Towards the Ethics of Form* 49–59 and 157–173 on carnivalization in *Tristram Shandy* and in *Ulysses*.

- 12 One of the most famous examples of a garden-path sentence, that is, a sentence that starts in a way that is likely to lead us to an incorrect reading, is “[t]he old man the boat” (we have to backtrack on realizing that “man” is not a noun but a verb here). In the “Wandering Rocks” episode of *Ulysses*, we read that “the very revered John Conmee S. J., reset his smooth watch” and may imagine the priest correcting the hands of his watch, but then we come to the words “in his interior pocket” and have to go back and reread that sentence to mean that he has taken the watch out to see the time (like Russell consulting his “cooperative” watch in “Scylla and Charybdis”) and is now putting it back. However, because the episode starts in the middle of this operation, for all we know Father Conmee may have reset the hands of his timepiece as well.

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13 Sacred Drama, the Law, and Ambiguities of Form in Nineteenth-Century England

Jan-Melissa Schramm

Contrasting attitudes towards ambiguity in any given sentence have long characterised legal and literary hermeneutics. On the one hand, poetry and prose fiction always revelled in the rich interpretative possibilities of language generating more than one meaning or effect; on the other hand, clarity of communication and precision of reception were always regarded as essential to the structures of civil order underpinned by the law. The influential jurist William Blackstone noted in his pioneering *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–1769) that, to qualify as a law, a rule must be clear, certain, and “prescribed” (that is, advertised) to all of the people:

Because a bare resolution, confined in the breast of the legislator, without manifesting itself by some external sign, can never be properly a law. It is requisite that this resolution be notified to the people who are to obey it. . . . It may be notified by universal tradition and long practice, which supposes a previous publication, and is the case of the common law of England. . . . It may . . . be notified by writing, printing, or the like; which is the general course taken with all our acts of parliament. Yet whatever way is made use of, it is incumbent on the promulgators to do it in the most public and perspicuous manner; not like Caligula, who . . . wrote his laws in a very small character, and hung them upon high pillars, the more effectually to ensnare the people.

(Vol. 1, 45)

Despite general consensus amongst Blackstone’s contemporaries that the people should not be entrapped in this way, there was more disagreement than his observations here would suggest as to how this legal “perspicuity” should be achieved. Blackstone was a zealous advocate of the common law which arose from an accumulation of judicial decisions over time, but Jeremy Bentham, his most astute critic, argued (in 1785) that this inherited, labyrinthine law of customary practices failed precisely on the grounds of clarity (4–14). According to Bentham, judge-made law passed in response

to the facts of particular cases ran the risk of deciding *ex post facto* what sorts of behaviour were illegal. Consequently, Bentham spent much of the rest of his life campaigning for the codification of national laws (both in Britain and in continental Europe) and for the elimination of ambiguity and uncertainty in legal language through the use of paraphrasing, a crucial technique in his system of logic which worked to reduce metaphysical and abstract terms to their simplest possible formulation. For Bentham, statutory language should be transparent and self-evident and in need of no glosses or commentary to communicate its meaning to the people, nor should it ever refer to the supernatural, or the forces outside the text, for the generation of effect. Blackstone and Bentham's disagreement on this topic reveals their fundamentally different understandings of the nature of representation and of language itself. For literary artists, ambiguity was central to the creation of poetry and the highest forms of narrative art; for Bentham, in J.S. Mill's famous phrase, "[a]ll poetry was misrepresentation" (136), at best an embroidery on the facts and at worst a fraud.

The tension between these two approaches to interpretation was revealed with particular force when the law sought to regulate literary production for political ends. On the one hand, such occasions of conflict revealed the power of the law to enforce compliance with the threat of state-supported sanctions; on the other hand, censorship and related attempts to exert control over artistic production (such as the laws of blasphemy and obscenity) often encouraged literary experimentation in an effort to avoid the imposition of punishment. As Annabel Patterson has rightly noted of the Tudor period, it is possible to identify an enabling or incentivising aspect of censorship—that is, the way in which it leads writers to explore and exploit the "*functional* ambiguity" (18; emphasis in original) of language in order to minimise the likelihood of potential prosecution (see 18–19). Structures of legal suppression can thus generate fruitful aesthetic side effects as writers work hard to evade them. In this chapter, I will take as my case study the censorship of the public stage in England in the nineteenth century, at least in part because it was the most persistent of the legal efforts to regulate artistic expression. Whilst novels and other artwork could potentially be impugned *after* publication as blasphemous or obscene, by the 1800s drama remained the only form which required vetting *in advance* of production. And theatrical experimentation flourished regardless: for example, in Jane Moody's perceptive analysis, it was the regime of dramatic regulation in the early nineteenth century which compelled the more tightly policed minor theatres to foster the innovations of genre, form, and style in the first place, which the larger patent houses were then in turn keen to emulate despite their greater legal freedoms (see 4–5). The Romantic period was a time of great generic experimentation, and the study of censorship of the stage reveals the role of the law in the production of hybrid

forms: that is, the extent to which legal intervention privileges the survival of some forms rather than others, and then the ways in which aesthetic experimentation and alterations in public opinion in turn generate changes in the law—a symbiotic relationship of mutual innovation.

The Legal Apparatus of Censorship

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, theatres in England were subject to a complex regulatory framework consisting, firstly, of arrangements for the licencing of venues; secondly, indirect pressure applied by the patent houses of Covent Garden and Drury Lane for the protection of their monopoly over spoken drama; and, finally, the direct censorship of dramatic texts (Worrall 1–42; Russell 90–114). This censorship had evolved from the control which the Master of Revels exercised over scripts in the sixteenth century, as well as various Tudor injunctions, and the Abuses of Players Act passed in 1606. In 1737, the enactment of the Licensing Act assigned the work of censorship to an Examiner of Plays based in the Lord Chamberlain's office. As the dramatist Elizabeth Inchbald lamented, by this time (in 1807), drama was alone in the scrutiny it attracted from the law:

The Novelist is a free agent. He lives in a land of liberty, whilst the Dramatic Writer exists but under a despotic government.

(16)

Across the course of the long nineteenth century, four Select and Joint Parliamentary Committees of the British Houses of Parliament met (in 1832, 1866, 1892, and 1909) to consider whether this dramatic censorship should continue, and, in each case, the need for it was affirmed. When interrogated by members of the committees, each incumbent Examiner of Plays asserted the unique properties of dramatic writing and its capacity, when staged, to immerse members of the audience in vibrant, sensual representations of potentially transgressive experiences. To give but one example, Edward Smyth Pigott (in office as Examiner of Plays from 1874–1895) addressed the Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment in 1892:

Compare the influence of a newspaper lying on the table of a club-room, taken up and thrown aside by isolated readers, with the influence of a theatrical representation enhanced by all the accessories of the stage, upon a mixed audience of a thousand or two thousand men and women [of] all classes, to be repeated for nights in succession, and at all the large towns throughout the kingdom. Here you have eyes and ears at once assailed, not by mere dumb printed paper, but by living flesh and blood, by singers of obscene songs, by speakers of obscene or scurrilous dialogue. . . . To the conventional commonplace of the doctrinaire, that

a censorship of stage plays is an anomaly, perhaps it is enough to answer that at any rate it is an anomaly with a most respectable antiquity of custom and tradition at its back.

(328)

Smyth Pigott reveals here a number of the factors which powered Protestant Victorian anti-theatricalism: anxieties about the excitability of working-class audiences and their susceptibility to spectacle, and the risks inherent in theatre's dependence on living flesh and blood, which foregrounded in compelling ways the vitality of the suffering, passionate human body on the stage.

The evidence given by the Examiner of Plays to the parliamentary committees in each generation enables us to trace changes, firstly, in the kinds of material which were considered most likely to require censorship and, secondly, in the willingness of dramatic writers to accept the intervention of the Examiner of Plays in the process of production at all. Whilst it was clear that material categorised as blasphemous or obscene was always going to be excluded from public theatres because of the risk of prosecution in common law (see Marsh 1–21), the staging of orthodox devotional material was equally contentious. Most medieval vernacular drama in England had been sacred (notably the famous cycles of mystery plays based on the broad sweep of Christian history), but this category of dramatic writing had been routinely excluded from the stage since the Reformation, and the Tudor injunctions which prohibited its performance had not been rescinded in the interim. The five cycles of mystery plays known to us today (those titled *Chester*, *Ludus Coventriae/N-Town*, *York*, *Wakefield/Towneley*, and the *Cornish Ordinalia*) were all suppressed in the 1560s and 1570s as Protestant attitudes towards religious drama hardened; they were rediscovered beginning in the 1810s as antiquarians and literary critics encouraged the recovery of the medieval past and insisted on its relevance for the composition of both the scholarly canon and English national identity as a whole. But whilst late Romantic and early Victorian critics edited and published the texts of the cycle plays, there was no suggestion at this stage that they should be recuperated as performative experiences: despite their popular appeal—folk art enjoyed renewed appreciation in the age of democratisation—the mysteries remained too tainted by their Catholic origins for scholars to suggest they should be staged (see Schramm, *Censorship* 49–86). Catholic drama continued to thrive in continental Europe, but successive Examiners of Plays resisted any attempts to import European sacred drama to England. In 1892, Smyth Pigott classed the “proposed representation of the Oberammergau Passion Play at a London theatre” as a scandal to be suppressed, alongside the “dramatization at a provincial theatre of a recent murder, whilst the murderer was actually in the condemned cell awaiting execution” (330). When asked by the Chairman of the Joint

Select Committee on Stage Plays [Report (Censorship)] in 1909, “[I]s it a rule of your office that scriptural plays or plays adapted from Scripture are ineligible for license in Great Britain?” the Examiner of Plays, George Redford, replied, “That has always been the custom and the precedent. . . . It is very generally understood in the theatrical profession” (28). Since the Reformation, then, the English public stage had been a secular space—in Hugh Gazzard’s phrase, “necessarily—verbally—godless” (497).

For 300 years, this censorship of biblical theatre had been highly effective. And in 1832, when the political significance of the battle against the theatrical monopoly of the patent houses of Covent Garden and Drury Lane had seemed most acute, both Houses of Parliament and the Select Committee had given special consideration to the case of sacred drama, using it as a litmus test for the censor’s role in the maintenance of moral standards. As Katherine Brown Downey observes, “The question of biblical material on stage may, in fact, have functioned as the archetypal case for the censorship debate, organizing the issues and sides” (65). Decisions about staging or suppressing biblical drama distilled problems of representation into their purest state: the very act of dramatising the Passion narrative—without blasphemous intent to parody or to pervert its devotional message—was sufficient in itself to invite suppression. The legacy of Protestant anxieties about the body was that physical enactment of a narrative was automatically considered farcical and that the sacred quality of a narrative was more effectively preserved by private meditation (see Schramm, *Censorship* 13–48).

But whilst no one was able to *produce* a spoken play involving scriptural characters on a public stage in nineteenth-century England, wider cultural attitudes towards biblical material expressed in different media were much more complex and nuanced. Enlightenment England had been obsessed with the interrogation of the “evidences” on which the historical “truth” of Christianity depended, but the nineteenth century saw a resurgence in devotional enthusiasm, which was partly the product of the evangelical revival, which stressed spontaneity in worship, and partly the consequence of renewed interest in ceremonial rites (both Catholic and Tractarian) after the enactment of the Catholic Relief Act in 1829 (see Blair 21–50; Prickett 222–247). Apart from the stage, other art forms teemed with scriptural scenes—the novel freely appropriated biblical parables, devotional poetry sought to complement the experience of liturgical worship, Pre-Raphaelite painting depicted biblical scenes (provoking both praise and condemnation in almost equal measure), and religious oratorios like J.S. Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* and G.F. Handel’s *Messiah* drew thousands to the Haymarket and to Covent Garden (though advertisements for oratorios often had to conclude with a caveat that there would be no action upon the stage; Smith 43). All genres of art were intrigued by the Incarnation, the way in which

Christ entered history, embodied in human form, yet drama—the art form pre-eminently positioned to interrogate the relationship between word and flesh, incarnation and impersonation—was precluded by law from contributing to the wider cultural conversation. So it seems that drama's source of cultural offence could easily be isolated—it was the use of costume, props, scripted action, and, above all, impersonation which provoked legal intervention: nineteenth-century sensitivities to the embodiment of sacred ideas in certain aesthetic forms remained acute, and the examiners' attempts to articulate the basis on which they acted reveal much about the changing landscape of sacred representation in nineteenth-century England.

There were several consequences of this suppression of religious drama by law that have implications for the study of ambiguity. Firstly, the complex creative act of authorial self-censorship encouraged allegorical, and thus deliberately ambiguous, descriptions of religious experience: for example, Richard Foulkes notes that, in 1798, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was contemplating the composition of a play called *The Wanderings of Cain*, but, knowing it would be denied a licence, he produced in its place "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"—a text equally preoccupied with guilt and remorse but perhaps involving a felicitous change of form given the density and obscurity of his tortured revenge tragedies *Remorse* and *Orsorio* (Foulkes 27, 203). Likewise, Coleridge's notebooks record his lifelong ambition to produce what he called "the last possible epic," his own "Fall of Jerusalem," but Elinor Shaffer dissects the process by which this became his visionary "epic fragment": "Kubla Khan" (Shaffer 55)—another serendipitous metamorphosis. A second and related consequence of dramatic censorship was the flourishing of sacred expression in all other creative forms—in other words, the explosion of epic poems about biblical characters, the aforementioned paintings of the biblical sublime and the life of Christ, and novels dramatising biblical parables may in fact have been encouraged by the very conditions which sought to restrain the public expression of such religious impulses in any embodied form, that is, by the Protestant enthusiasm for meditation on the Passion but only "in the mind's eye" rather than with all of the sensual splendour of Catholic worship. The appetite for repeated iterations of traditional sacred tropes and motifs stimulated the exploration of new sacred metaphors and parables, as well as the repetition of older ones.

A third response to censorship was that dramatists continued to write sacred drama, knowing it could be circulated in print as "closet drama" even whilst it could not currently be staged. The adherence to dramatic form in these circumstances seems to have continued partly because literary authors responded fruitfully to the complex questions about how to conjure presence from absence which also preoccupied the church. In other words, the attempt to represent the physically absent but spiritually present

body of Christ benefitted from the very ambiguities sustained by closet drama's particular reading practices. Christian drama had long enjoyed a productive relationship with the liturgy, particularly with the suggestive ambiguity of the crucial phrase "hoc est corpus meum" ("this is my body [broken for you]") at the moment in the Mass or Holy Communion in which bread and wine 'stands for' Christ's body in re-enactment or remembrance of the Passion (following the words spoken at the Last Supper as described in the synoptic Gospels: in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, and Luke 22:19). The drama of incarnational art, in which an actor represents Christ on stage, enables the visualisation of Christ's body in much the same way as the Eucharist and reveals with particular precision the vicarious dynamic on which redemption depends. As Sarah Beckwith has observed, in religious drama,

[s]omeone stands in for someone else. Call it a structure of representation, a practice of substitution, a process of authorization or sacrifice—in all events the standing in is doubly descriptive. It describes at once the very economy of Christian redemption, that Christ is a body for us, that he stands in for both God and humanity—in God's place and on behalf of humanity, making possible the founding atonement. And it describes the seminal action of theatre in which someone stands in for, represents someone else.

(3)

Such was the intensity of nineteenth-century anxiety about the status of embodied or incarnational art that, even in print, such closet dramas served as a lightning rod for arguments which had seemed settled at the Reformation. The revival of the public influence of Catholicism reignited sixteenth-century controversies, illustrating the enduring purchase of these questions on the religious imagination. Reformation arguments about theatrical idolatry, the efficacy of the senses as the means by which the divine should be apprehended, the relative merits of word and image at a time of intense competition between representational practices resurfaced in pamphlets, sermons, and novels (Janes 25–34; Wheeler 77–111). The prospect that sacred drama might return to the English public stage reawakened anxiety not only about how "hoc est corpus meum" should be understood but also about how the violent founding acts of the Christian past should be remembered by the Christian "body" of the Church—and then in turn about how communities built on that past should be imagined.

Creative Responses to Legal Regulation

Despite the legal prohibition on their performance, sacred dramas continued to be composed throughout the nineteenth century, with their authors Joanna Baillie, Lord Byron, Digby Starkey, Richard Hengist Horne, and

Henry Hart Milman (amongst others) habitually taking the opportunity in prefaces and epilogues to meditate upon questions of form, genre, and performance. Byron's infamous closet drama *Cain* (1821) is only one of many sacrifice and martyr dramas of the 1820s and 1830s which sought to explore the division of loyalties between church and state at the point when the constitution of the nation was being realigned with the imminent passage of the Catholic Relief Act (which eventually passed in 1829). Sacrifice dramas seemed ideally designed to probe the question of what a Catholic could offer to the Caesar of the British state when his or her primary commitment was to the Pope and the Church in Rome. And as Victoria ascended the throne, dramatists were also fascinated by the role of Judas in the salvific scheme—he too is an agent in the work of redemption, even if (like Cain) he will enjoy no share in its rewards. One of the reasons for the persistence of sacred drama—even in closet form—seems to have been the force with which it could ask questions about the architecture of salvation whilst foregrounding the body of the suffering individual. Does the Christian economy offer salvation to all, or must someone (Cain or Judas, for example) always be excluded in order for others to be saved? Byron's sense that no matter what his protestations, Cain must be made to play the part of a sinner so that death can enter the world and the Word be made incarnate to bring about salvation, speaks to an enduring nineteenth-century anxiety that this predestined plot is deeply unfair. Why must some be cast in tragic roles in what is otherwise the divine *commedia*? The plights of Cain and of Judas appealed to Victorians as ultimate test cases for the reach of mercy: the lack of clear motivating reasons for their behaviour ascribed to these figures in the Bible meant that dramatists and dramatic poets could probe a range of options, amplifying and elaborating upon choices dealt with only summarily in the Scriptures. As Digby Starkey's protagonist cries out in *Judas: A Tragic Mystery* (1843), when he sees Christ crucified as an innocent sacrifice and he understands the true nature of his betrayal, "THIS—THIS IS HELL!—to see the work of God achieved for others, by the very deed/That damns thyself for ever" (136). In Hengist Horne's *Judas Iscariot: A Miracle Play in Two Acts* (1848), Christ is represented as a Chartist or a Socialist: Judas is his most devoted enthusiast, and the parallels with political economy are even more explicitly drawn (14–16). Drama's instinctive valorisation of the body—in the figure of the actor in the spotlight (even when that stage could only be imagined "in the mind's eye")—promoted an ethics grounded in individual experience. And in this way, it participated in literary culture's more general protest against all utilitarian calculations of human value, in which the one was sacrificed for the well-being of the many. For example, in George Eliot's best-selling novel *Romola* (1863), when Savonarola, the fifteenth-century Florentine monk, tries to persuade the eponymous heroine that the cause of one political party can be equated with the cause of God's kingdom, Romola offers up the representative cry of the age: "God's kingdom is something wider—else, let me stand outside

it with the beings that I love” (578.) Increasingly, if the hope of salvation was to be meaningful, it also had to be universal.

Why, then, did Byron and Milman and others retain a dramatic form for these works, knowing they could never be performed? Stephen Greenblatt has argued that a turn away from theatrical performance to the inward digestion of narrative was somehow conceptually inevitable and irreversible—that just as the Renaissance Protestant theatres appropriated and parodied the rituals of the Catholic Church (moving from literal to figurative understandings of sacrifice, for example), so too would dramatic performance in turn be eviscerated and reduced to metaphor by the rise of literacy in the centuries that followed. In the end, he observes,

[T]he theatre itself comes to be emptied out in the interests of reading. In the argument made famous by Charles Lamb and Coleridge, and reiterated by Bradley, theatricality must be discarded to achieve absorption, and Shakespeare’s imagination yields forth its sublime power not to a spectator, but to one who, like Keats, sits down to reread *King Lear*. . . . The commercial contingency of the theatre gives way to the philosophical necessity of literature.

(127–128)

But whilst this might be true of novels like *Romola*, which references throughout its own status as a public performance of a Catholic tragedy imagined in “the mind’s eye” of the attentive Protestant reader, the appeal of sacred drama remained powerful throughout the nineteenth century, and it resisted all attempts to forecast its demise. Even as Greenblatt argued for the eventual dilution of religious ritual, so often for the Romantics and Victorians this same process of reiteration in variegated form seems to have been understood as an amplification—a dissemination of sacred ideas to an ever-expanding audience. As novelists like Eliot and Charles Dickens discovered, strategies of representational ambiguity enabled communication with wider, popular readerships in an age of rapidly expanding literacy (see Schramm, *Atonement* 1–32).

Contrary to Greenblatt’s argument, then, the retention of the dramatic form for the numerous plays about Cain, Judas, and various martyrs appears to be a very deliberate formal strategy of protest—against the law and against the social structures which privilege some lives and voices over others. As Herbert Tucker argues, “[T]he creative summons that accompanied Parliament’s evident purpose to rewrite the terms of participation in the Anglican-British state [in the era of Reform] was in effect a levy on writers to imagine viable forms of open-mindedness” (271), and closet dramas functioned as a type of dress rehearsal for a more open and inclusive polis.

When under Shakespeare’s shadow late-Romantic or early-Victorian literary poets embraced the conditions of dramatic form, they did so not merely in avoidance of stagecraft’s limitations but actively in pursuit

of other virtues that the form enabled. Through a deliberate restriction of mimetic scope—a discrete cast of human figures performing and above all discoursing in the real time of a continuous present of strictly set duration—they purchased a mimetic intensity that downplayed the large-motor activity of epic and put a premium instead on actions of a specifically verbal sort. The deeds favoured by the dramatic medium were those of confession or dissimulation, persuasion or dissent, as these conduced to ethical or political change. In soliloquy and especially dialogue, the representation of a conflict that made for change was drama's distinguishing excellence, one that excelled moreover in engaging the reader as a party directly interested in the issues at play. Even when only closeted, drama was a medium particularly well adapted to displaying, and indeed training, virtues that would be required in an era as conscientiously dedicated to Reform as were the British 1830s.

(Tucker 271–272)

An alternative perspective on this argument, advanced by David Kurnick, is that even attenuated theatrical forms encode “longing references to the public worlds they would seem to have left behind,” thus functioning as “a record of the discontents historically sedimented in [individual] interiority” (3). This suggests that the retention of dramatic form for the representation of religious conflict deliberately records and remembers the communal context of the ecclesiological past. Even the individual reader is then encouraged to identify and reflect upon traces of liturgical form and congregational response buried deep within the text now digested alone and in private.

Ambiguity and the End of Theatrical Censorship

Despite the reaffirmation of the need for censorship of drama by the committee's report in 1892, within less than a decade public opinion was beginning to swing decisively in favour of creative freedom. By this point, the last of the recovered mystery cycles, *York*, had been published to great acclaim, and calls for the revival of all the cycles increased steadily, particularly as a consequence of the extraordinary appeal of the Oberammergau Passion Play which had been staged continuously since 1634 and was now drawing tens if not hundreds of thousands of Victorian tourists and pilgrims to its decennial performances (Shapiro 1–23). In England, William Poel, who founded the Elizabethan Stage Society in 1894, led the way with a highly acclaimed production of the medieval morality play *Everyman* in 1901, which included an on-stage role for the deity. Alice Buckton's *Eager Heart: A Christmas Mystery Play*, a slight but reverential Christmas drama in which a poor young woman extended charity to wandering travellers only for them to finally be revealed as the Holy Family, was licensed in 1907 (probably inadvertently, when the Examiner of Plays failed to identify its allegorical nature), and *Joseph and His Brethren* was well-received at the Coliseum in 1908. On the other hand, two other sacred dramas, Gerhart

Hauptmann's *Hannele* (1893; an English translation of *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* was published in 1908,) and Lawrence Housman's *Bethlehem* (1902), had been rejected almost simultaneously on grounds that seemed arbitrary given the licencing of the other two: both *Hannele* and *Bethlehem* were seen to have overstepped the line between allegory and the direct representation of divine personages, but clearly the dividing line between the two genres was very fine indeed. For example, Housman could see no substantial difference between the scripts of *Eager Heart* and *Bethlehem*:

In both of these plays the Holy Family appear upon the stage, and in both cases two of its members have speaking parts. The main difference appears to be that in "Eager Heart" they come disguised as peasants, and their sacred character is only revealed in the last act. In my own play, aliases were not used.

[Report (Censorship) 1909, 146]

Housman's critique of the cultural climate in which such distinctions could be made was astute:

I suggest that these traditions [of suppression] are merely a survival from a bad time of Protestant ascendancy and Catholic disability; or, rather, I should say, the traditions of Protestant ascendancy have been used to prevent what I think would otherwise lead to a natural revival of religious drama, and that they have only obtained their strength from times when Catholics were denied the right even to have their own places of worship. The old religious drama died with the Reformation, and the subsequent position of Catholics in this country during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made any revival of a Catholic tendency impossible. The revival of religious drama has been shown to be perfectly possible today without any breach of good manners, decorum, or the public peace; but the uncertainty of how the Censor will act in future, after his recent inconsistent record of licensing one play while denying that he has the power even to consider another, is a sufficient deterrent to any author who has to consider his livelihood as well as his art.

[Report (Censorship) 1909, 147–148]

The Joint Select Committee on Stage Plays [Report (Censorship)] was consequently convened in 1909 to ascertain whether public opinion on the subject had changed and, if not, how to ensure consistency of adjudication on the part of the Examiner of Plays. If the rules were to be relaxed, the committee recognised that the two most pressing objections were the nature of the audience of commercial theatres (most manifestly not a "congregation" adhering to shared religious values) and the invention of

fictional speeches attributed to biblical characters: such amplification of, or addition to, sacred dialogue had been anathema to Protestants since the hardening of the idea of “Sola Scriptura” at the Reformation. But ultimately the committee chose not to let anxieties about either audience composition or the qualities of the script keep the stage wholly secular. As the dramatist Israel Zangwill noted in his evidence, censorship tends towards the production of low comic vulgarity rather than any genuine drama of ideas because playwrights are too intimidated by the prospect of the Lord Chamberlain’s refusal of permission:

[*Committee*]: Do you think that no offence may be given by the performance on the stage of religious dramas?

[*Zangwill*]: I think that religious dramas are exceptionally necessary on the stage. At present, for instance, the characters in the Bible can only appear in oratorio, which has the comic effect that Elijah only appears in evening dress. I think this makes more fun of the Bible than anything else. All great art tends to religion, and all religion should tend to great art.

[Report (Censorship) 1909, 327]

The Catholic author G.K. Chesterton agreed and suggested that the only test was whether “really religious people” felt that “the Good Spirit in the universe is being insulted or not” (345). Literature, he argued, has always sought to show the blasphemous spirit in the process of conversion:

What is the good of a backwoodsman, if he is not blasphemous? Read anything of Bret Harte, or anything of Dickens—read anything of the old, sound, romantic literature, and you will see that it was the fundamental idea that the rough fellow in wrestling with his salvation in his repentance should say many wild things against the power of the universe.

[Report (Censorship) 1909, 345]

What Chesterton was identifying was a narrative arc that seemed inherently Christian even when not tethered to the so-called historical record of the Bible and its scriptural biographies, an idea that has been subsequently developed by the French literary critic René Girard. In *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, Girard argues in compelling terms that successful novelistic structure is always predicated on the Christian tropes of recognition and repentance, in which the demands of the egotistic self are disciplined eventually (after many trials) to submit to the greater good of the wider polis (312).

This plotline of ‘recognition’ (from the Greek, *anagnorisis*), repentance, and amendment of life characterised the new specimens of sacred drama

that were written in the early years of the twentieth century. One of the most successful examples of this genre was Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back: An Idle Fancy in a Prologue, a Play and an Epilogue* (1908), in which the dramatis personae were the quarrelling inhabitants of a boarding house, into which a stranger enters in pursuit of a room to rent:

The STRANGER enters; a slightly stooping figure, clothes—if one looks at them closely—somewhat shabby, the long coat somewhat old-fashioned. His hat, his staff, quaintly suggestive of the days of pilgrimage. What age he might be it would be difficult to say; there are moments when the deep eyes seem to speak of many sorrows. But more often—and always when he smiles—it is a face radiant with youth. In some mysterious ways he brings into the room with him an atmosphere of dignity. Yet there is nothing “important” about the STRANGER. If there be anything great about him, it lies in his simplicity, his gentleness.

(3)

The identity of the Stranger is never directly revealed, but as he meets with his fellow residents he gradually encourages them to be true to their better selves, eschewing petty corruption or loveless relationships in pursuit of more noble ideals. Had the Stranger been explicitly identified as Christ, the play would not have been licenced, so the action on stage remains at the level of allegory: it is left to the members of the audience to conclude that each individual character has experienced a moment of spiritual *anagnorisis*. As Jerome's fellow dramatist Oscar Wilde observed, “Once at least in his life each man walks with Christ to Emmaus” (575). Ambiguity on stage permits each member of the audience to participate in the acts of moral discovery and repentance which the characters have themselves undertaken.

In 1909, the committee concluded that, whilst censorship of theatrical texts in advance of performance should remain (and the Christ figure should always be absent from the stage), the representation of scriptural subjects would not of itself result in the suppression or excision of a dramatic text. Within a few years, dramatists were permitted to stage portions of the medieval mystery plays (though without the crucifixion scenes), and, beginning in 1951 (when they were formally revived for the Festival of Britain), the cycles of *Chester*, *Wakefield/Towneley*, and, above all, *York* have been playing again to great critical acclaim (and large audiences) at four-year intervals. Emboldened by the changing climate, sacred drama flourished again on the stage as soon as the threat of prosecution receded. T.S. Eliot's magnificent *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), in which Thomas à Beckett's body lies at the High Altar in place of the Eucharistic wafer after his murder by Henry II's knights, stands as a worthy inheritor of the Catholic medieval treasures of the pageant wagons of York and Chester.

The repetition of the incantatory phrase “hoc est corpus meum” during the Mass or Eucharist made the words central to the cycle of liturgical experience, and their inherent ambiguity gave rise not only to theological controversy but also to great works of art designed to probe the many interpretations to which the phrase gave rise. In Christ’s command that we commemorate and celebrate his sacrifice as the foundation of a social body, the possible meanings of the Incarnation multiply again. In Yvonne Sherwood’s perceptive analysis, Christianity is “the most famously embodied but also acutely body-phobic religion,” insisting on the humanity of the historical Christ whilst simultaneously preferring the soul to the sinful flesh of man (138). Authors and artists in every generation have attempted to grapple afresh with Christ’s call to sacrifice and self-abnegation in the interests of a greater good; the theatre, above all other art forms, was regarded as provocative in its use of human actors to stage the story of God’s drama on earth. And whilst biblical drama was indeed allowed to return to the stage as a pedagogical vehicle for Church dogma by the start of the twentieth century, such was the ambiguity of the term “play” that it also drew attention to the sheer humanity of the suffering Christ figure, his corporeal and actorly qualities, even as it purported to depict the divine singularity of God’s intervention in history. The “hoc est corpus meum,” broken for us, might ultimately be the symbol of bread, the “real presence” of Christ in the sacrament, or the body of the actor playing Christ. The story of the recovery of religious drama, and its eventual release from the restrictions of censorship, tells us much about the negotiation and reconfiguration of these competing tensions, between text and image, culture and body, as they shifted in relation to one another over the course of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

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14 Annotating Ambiguity Across Disciplines

The Tübingen Interdisciplinary Corpus of Ambiguity Phenomena (TInCAP)

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Introduction

The notion of ambiguity can be broadly defined as the availability of multiple interpretations. Such a broad definition allows for the subsumption of different aspects of ambiguity which are under investigation in a number of different disciplines (for general, interdisciplinary overviews, see the collections of Klein and Winkler; Winkler, *Ambiguität*, and references therein). Ambiguity research in linguistics has been interested mainly in the linguistic source of ambiguity in words, sentences, or texts and its distinction from vagueness and other related phenomena (for references, see the overviews by Fries; Kennedy, “Vagueness and Grammar”; Pinkal). This research ranges from the study of word meaning, including the relation between lexical ambiguity and polysemy, to the study of the meaning of a sentence in a given context (Small, Cottrell, Tanenhaus; Gorfein; Pinkal; Deemter and Peters; Ferreira; Bauer, Knape, Koch, and Winkler, “*Disarmed: Ein interdisziplinäres Gespräch*”; Bauer, Knape, Koch, and Winkler, “Dimensionen der Ambiguität”; Piantadosi, Tily, and Gibson; Winter-Froemel, “Ambiguität im Sprachgebrauch”; Winter-Froemel and Zirker, “Ambiguity in Speaker-Hearer-Interaction”; among many others). These ambiguities are often resolved without any effort, so that potential ambiguities may go unnoticed (see Traxler and Tooley for an overview). Ambiguity research in literary studies has been concerned with different forms of ambiguity and their effects in literary texts (cf. Rimmon-Kenan; Bode; Mittelbach; Bauer and Zirker, among others). Here, the relationship between forms of ambiguity and the term *ambivalence* is relevant (see Berndt and Kammer; as well as Bauer, Berndt, and Meixner for recent discussions), a term which is also important in psychological investigations on ambiguity (see Ziegler for an overview and references). Rhetoric is interested in the strategic use of ambiguity to initiate a debate, counter

an argument, or achieve a specific rhetorical effect (see, e.g., Knape; Knape and Winkler).

Thus, different disciplines focus on different aspects of ambiguity. The RTG 1808 “Ambiguity: Production and Perception” has brought these different perspectives together in an interdisciplinary endeavour to further our understanding of ambiguity. TInCAP is one aspect of this collaborative research.¹ It is a collection of manually annotated instances of ambiguity; an instance can be a word, phrase, sentence, or other unit, ranging from literary texts, newspapers, legal texts, and radio shows to other types of media, such as advertisements, illustrations, and pictures. Accordingly, we assume a broad notion of corpus, as not only comprising a collection of words, phrases, and sentences (see McEnery and Hardie) but also including larger units and non-linguistic material. The aim of TInCAP is to collect a diverse set of instances of ambiguity in a thematic corpus which reflects the interdisciplinary approach of the RTG. Up until this point, these instances have stemmed from the projects upon which the members of the RTG are working. While many projects consider language-based data (written and spoken), some focus on other types of data, such as ambiguity resulting from combinations of language and images, in images, and in human interactions.

TInCAP has three related objectives. Firstly, it aims to provide an interdisciplinary scheme for annotating instances of ambiguity with a shared set of terminology. Secondly, the collection of data provides the opportunity to investigate the commonalities and potential systematic differences in the analysis of ambiguity phenomena across disciplines. Thirdly, it facilitates the collection and archiving of the data in a sustainable, text-based format (xml) and can be made available to the international research community.² In this chapter, we concentrate on the central part of the corpus: the annotation of instances of ambiguity. Each instance also contains bibliographic information for the primary (and secondary) source, the mode of expression (audio-visual, pictorial, pictorial and written, spoken, written), and the respective expression type(s), which is dependent on the mode (e.g. dialogue or monologue as a type of the spoken mode of expression), as well as information about the language (where applicable). The details of these categories can be found in the user manuals. (see Hartmann, Achimova, Ebert, Elxnath, Klenk, Lahrswow, Metzger, Schole, Stegemann, Titt, Vollstedt, Wagner, and Winkler, *TInCAP User Manual, Version 1.0*; Hartmann, Achimova, Ebert, Ebert-Rohleder, Elxnath, Geiger, Hofmaier, Klenk, Lahrswow, Metzger, Stegemann-Philipps, Titt, Vollstedt, Wagner, and Winkler, *TInCAP User Manual, Version 2.0*)

Ambiguity Across Disciplines

This section provides the general theoretical background for the annotation scheme used in TInCAP. The features of the annotation will be discussed

in more detail and illustrated with more examples to follow (see section “Annotation of Ambiguity”). The starting point for the interdisciplinary annotation in TInCAP is the Ambiguity Model developed at the University of Tübingen, as explained in Winkler (“Exploring Ambiguity”) and illustrated in Figure 14.1.³ Different phenomena of ambiguity can be located in a three-dimensional system that connects the language system (dimension 1), which provides a range of different sources of ambiguity (e.g. lexical ambiguity vs. syntactic ambiguity), with the effect/use of the ambiguity in discourse—or more broadly in a communicative situation. Within a communicative situation, ambiguity can be perceived from the point of view of production or perception (dimension 2), and whether it is used strategically (dimension 3). The combination of dimensions 2 and 3 results in four subclasses: (i) non-strategic production (PS-), (ii) strategic production (PS+), (iii) non-strategic perception (RS-), and (iv) strategic perception (RS+).⁴

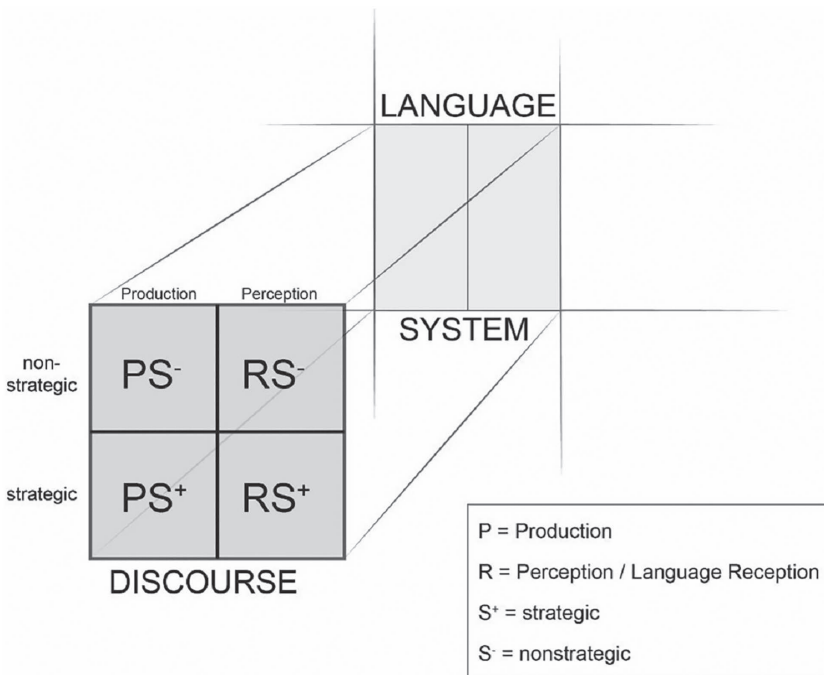


Figure 14.1 Three-dimensional ambiguity model

Source: Winkler (“Exploring Ambiguity” 6)

The relevance of the strategic use of ambiguity can be illustrated with the following two examples discussed in Winkler (“Exploring Ambiguity”). The first is taken from P.G. Wodehouse:

(1) A: “Yes, my dear wife, I am glad to say, continues in the pink. I’ve just been seeing her off on the boat at Southampton. She is taking a trip to the West Indies.”

B: “Jamaica?”

A: “No, she went of her own free will.”

(Wodehouse 8; cited from Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity” 10, and Bauer 142; TInCAP ID bam010002 by Matthias Bauer)⁵

The pronunciation of *Jamaica* is very similar to the fused pronunciation of *Did you make her?* /dʒə meik hɜː/ [see example (6) below for a detailed discussion]. Speaker B intended the first reading, *Jamaica*, as indicated in the written source, but speaker A reacts to the alternative interpretation based on the fused pronunciation. Thus, P.G. Wodehouse strategically uses the potential for ambiguity of *Jamaica* in this exchange to produce a specific effect (for details, see Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity” 10–14).

Similarly, ambiguities can also be strategically perceived in the sense that the ambiguity potential of an utterance is exploited by the addressee in a situation in which the original speaker did not intend it. This is illustrated in our second example. The following advertisement is reproduced in a comedy show, and the original (presumably unintentional) ambiguity is strategically reused to entertain its audience.

(2) This is from the BBC news websites, and it’s sent in by Ben Lodge. It says: “Casting directors are searching Dorset for bearded men to appear as extras in a BBC adaptation of a Thomas Hardy novel. **Men who can shear sheep and women with long hair are also in demand for the production.**”

(“Friday Night Comedy”; cited from Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity” 12; TInCAP ID haj040002 by Jutta M. Hartmann)

The example contains a syntactic ambiguity: either the casting directors are looking for men who can shear sheep and for women with long hair, or they are looking for men who can shear both sheep and women. The original advertisement on the BBC news website does not produce this ambiguity strategically. Yet, the comedy series exploits this ambiguity when it quotes the ad to achieve a comic effect for its audience.

We added three major extensions to this Ambiguity Model in our annotation scheme. First, we implemented a further option to annotate the *level of communication*. To describe and analyze the strategic use of ambiguity, such a distinction of levels in a communication is necessary. Consider example (3).

- (3) *Draw the drapes when the sun comes in*, read Amelia Bedelia. She looked up. The sun was coming in. Amelia Bedelia looked at the list. “Draw the drapes? That’s what it says. I’m not much of a hand at drawing, but I’ll try.” So Amelia Bedelia sat right down and she drew those drapes.

(Parish; cited from Wagner 55; TInCAP ID waw190065
by Wiltrud Wagner)

The imperative *Draw the drapes when the sun comes in* is ambiguous due to a lexical ambiguity of the verb *draw*. The two relevant readings here are (i) “to pull (a curtain, veil, cloth, etc.) over something so as to cover or conceal it, or aside or off from it so as to disclose it” [*Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*: “draw, *v.*” 11.a.] or (ii) “to represent (an object) by a drawing or picture; to delineate, depict” (*OED*, “draw, *v.*” 60.b.). While both the person leaving the note for Amelia Bedelia and Amelia Bedelia herself each have just one reading available, the reader (and author) of the novel can access both readings. The phrase is perceived as ambiguous only on the outer communicative level (of the reader), not on the inner level of the main characters in the story. Hence, it is used strategically only on the outer level, not on the inner level. In order to analyze these kinds of examples adequately, it was necessary to amend the original model of +/-strategic production/perception, as illustrated in Figure 14.1, so that it is possible to distinguish these levels of communication. While this is an obvious feature of literary communication [interacting characters vs. (implied) author/reader], we also find this in other communicative situations, especially when ambiguity is strategically exploited in order to achieve a comic effect, as the radio show example in (2) displays.

An aspect central to RTG 1808 is its interdisciplinary approach. In order to make room for interdisciplinary analysis, two more extensions to the annotations based on the model presented earlier have been added.

The second extension concerns the source of the ambiguity and its effect. We added two categories that specify the size of the ambiguity trigger as well as its range. These categories answer the questions: on which level does the ambiguity arise, and on which level does it still play a role in the communicative situation itself. For example, the trigger can be a small linguistic unit such as a word, giving rise to a lexical ambiguity. Yet there are differences as to whether the ambiguity is relevant only during online processing of the respective word or the sentence containing this word, or

whether it might have an effect for larger units, such as paragraphs, longer passages, or the text as a whole. This differentiation is an important analytical tool for investigating the sources and effects of ambiguity and disambiguation in TInCAP. It allows the testing of the following two hypotheses: (i) the smaller the trigger, the more likely it is that the ambiguity is based in the language system, and (ii) the larger the range, the more likely it is that the ambiguity is dependent on the communicative situation.

The third extension has been made specifically to allow for the inclusion of pictures and other media. This requires at least the option of defining points of comparison. We established these for the classification distinguishing trigger and range by developing a hierarchical model which provides correspondences for language-based studies (these are linguistics and literary studies, as well as rhetoric, law, and theology) and relates them via correspondences to the analysis of pictures in media studies. Further disciplines can develop their own correspondences in order to make the possible “building blocks” of ambiguity visible and comparable. How this is done will be discussed in more detail below (see also Hartmann et al., *TInCAP User Manual, Version 1.0*; Hartmann et al., *TInCAP User Manual, Version 2.0*).

While these additions are relevant for the modeling of ambiguity in general, there are two other features in the annotation that allow the corpus to be used more generally for the (interdisciplinary) study of ambiguity. The first feature is the ability to annotate the relationship between paraphrases. In discussions of the defining properties of ambiguity in linguistics, a major question is how to distinguish ambiguity from vagueness (see the overviews in Kennedy, “Ambiguity and Vagueness”; and Pinkal for discussion and references). Another issue is the relationship between lexical ambiguity and polysemy (see Deane; Tuggy; Dunbar; Winter-Froemel and Zirker, among others). One distinction is that ambiguity shows two or more independent meanings, whereas a core feature of vagueness is that the interpretation is fuzzy, especially at the edges (on this kind of vagueness and the related Sorites Paradox, see Kamp, “A Theory of Truth”; Lasersohn; Graff; Gaio; Rooij; Sattig; and Kennedy, “Ambiguity and Vagueness” and references there). Polysemy is characterized by meanings that are related: for instance, *the church* can refer to a building, the institution, or representatives of the institution. While the distinction may be easy to draw in some cases, it is less obvious in others. In order to be able to use TInCAP for the investigation of such unclear cases, we added the ability to annotate different relationships between paraphrases, namely, *Related* [in cases of (potential) polysemy], *Unrelated* (regular cases of ambiguity), and *Open* (cases of vagueness). Hence, the different concepts are based on linguistic terms (polysemy, unrelated interpretations, vagueness with fuzzy edges) and generalized for non-linguistic situations. The terminology that we have developed is innovative

Table 14.1 Annotation of Example (2) Provided in TInCAP by J. M. Hartmann

<i>TInCAP ID [haj040002]</i>	<i>Annotation I</i>	<i>Annotation II</i>
RELEVANT PART	men who can shear sheep and women with long hair	
PARAPHRASES	[men who can shear sheep] and [women with long hair] are also in demand for the production men who can [shear [sheep] and [women with long hair]] are also in demand for the production	
TYPE OF PARAPHRASE RELATION	Unrelated	
PHENOMENON	Syntactic ambiguity	
COMMUNICATION LEVEL	Production: innermost level Perception: innermost level	Production: outermost level Perception: outermost level
DIMENSION PRODUCTION	Non-strategic (PS-)	Strategic (PS+)
DIMENSION PERCEPTION	0 [unsolved]	0 [unsolved]
TRIGGERING LEVEL	Complex element (phrase)	
RANGE	Group of elements (sentence)	

in the sense that it bridges the gap between the different disciplines and thus enables, as well as ensures, interdisciplinary collaboration.

Besides the primary concern of analyzing interdisciplinary aspects of ambiguity, the annotation scheme also includes an analysis of the phenomena discussed in the respective disciplines under the label *Phenomenon* (cf. Bauer et al., “Dimensionen der Ambiguität”). This label comprises a collection of discipline-specific terms and their respective definitions. It allows the user to collect and search for ambiguities on the basis of a specific phenomenon (such as idioms, ellipsis, anaphora).

In sum, the annotation part of an instance of ambiguity consists of the various categories just discussed and collected in Table 14.1 for example (2). In order to show how the specific instance is interpreted, the annotation starts by providing the relevant part (the minimal part that gives rise to the ambiguity), and it provides two or more paraphrases for the instance of ambiguity that are considered in the annotation. As discussed earlier, the strategic use of the ambiguity in example (2) depends on the level of communication; thus, these parts are doubled, that is, the instance has two annotations, one for each relevant level. We will discuss the individual categories and multiple annotations in more detail in the next section.

Annotation of Ambiguity

This section presents the interdisciplinary annotation scheme of TInCAP, and we discuss ambiguous examples to illustrate how the annotation scheme is to be used. The development of the annotation categories is a

contribution to the interdisciplinary research of ambiguity in its own right. Interdisciplinary research allows for the adaptation of models useful in one discipline to the needs of another by extending the original models. In order to reflect on the interdisciplinary character, we strive to address these adjustments in a terminology that is transparent for the different disciplines.

We discuss the relevance of annotating different “Levels of Communication” in the section of that name and propose a new classification that works for both literary and non-literary texts/communications. Examples of ambiguity with more than one level of communication often show differences with respect to the two dimensions *Production/Perception* and *+/-Strategic*. These dimensions are further defined and discussed in the section “Dimensions of Ambiguity.” The classification of trigger and range is provided in the section “Trigger and Range of Ambiguity.” The twofold meaning-related classification includes interdisciplinary categories for the relations between paraphrases, as exemplified in the section “Relations Between Interpretations,” as well as the more fine-grained classifications within the individual disciplines under the label “Phenomenon,” discussed in that section. Lastly, the section “Connected Annotations and Connected Entries” illustrates how several independent annotations for one and the same corpus entry, as well as complete entries, may be connected.

Levels of Communication

To distinguish different levels of communication in a given example is often useful for the annotation of ambiguity in literary communication and beyond, especially when it comes to the question of strategic uses. In dramatic texts, for instance, the respective levels of the characters, on the one hand, and the readers and the author (or implied author), on the other hand, can be identified (see, e.g., Pfister for a standard model). In (4), taken from William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595–1596), this distinction is highly relevant concerning the strategic production of ambiguity. Unnoticed by himself, the head of the fictional character Bottom has been magically transformed into that of a donkey:

- (4) SNOUT: O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?
 BOTTOM: What do you see? you see an asshead of your own, do you? . . .
 QUINCE: Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated.
 [Exit]
 BOTTOM: I see their knavery: **this is to make an ass of me**; to fright me, if they could.

(Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 3.1.96–100;
 TInCAP ID eblXX0002 by Lisa Ebert)

In his conversation with Quince, Bottom uses the idiomatic expression *to make an ass of [him]*, which means “to cause (someone) to appear absurd or foolish” (OED, “ass, *n.*” 1. P2.a.) and may be paraphrased as “to make a fool of somebody.” In the specific context of the play, the compositional interpretation of the phrase also emerges for the readers of the text, who at this point know that the fairy Puck has not only figuratively but also literally *made an ass of* Bottom by turning his head into that of a donkey.⁶ This ambiguity between a non-compositional and a compositional meaning cannot be intended by Bottom himself, who is not aware of his transformation, yet it is employed strategically on another level of communication (that of the reader/audience) in order to create a comic effect.

While the distinction of different communication levels is common in literary discussions, the classification is also useful for non-literary communication, and it is especially productive for the analysis of the strategic use of ambiguity. In example (2), repeated here as (5), we observe that the ambiguity in the original newspaper ad is not strategic. But on the level of the communication of the comedy show, it is brought up to reach a comic effect.

- (5) This is from the BBC news websites, and it’s sent in by Ben Lodge. It says: “Casting directors are searching Dorset for bearded men to appear as extras in a BBC adaptation of a Thomas Hardy novel. **Men who can shear sheep and women with long hair are also in demand for the production.**”

(“Friday Night Comedy”; cited from Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity” 12; TInCAP ID haj040002 by Jutta M. Hartmann)

The annotation scheme is designed in such a way that a distinction between individual communicative levels is possible in our corpus. We started out with Pfister’s model of communication,⁷ which distinguishes four levels: S1/E1⁸ corresponds to fictional characters, S2/E2 to the narrator and a fictional listener, S3/E3 to the implied (or “ideal”) author and reader, and S4/E4 to the author and the readership or audience. While this model is certainly useful for the analysis of literary texts, we encountered two difficulties with respect to our interdisciplinary approach. Firstly, the role of the implied author/implied reader (originally going back to Booth) is used—and controversially discussed—in literary studies.⁹ Thus, a strict division between the level of the implied author/implied reader and the actual author/actual reader may impede the interdisciplinary and even intradisciplinary comparability of annotated examples. Secondly, the terminology is specific to literary studies and may accordingly be difficult to use for examples from other disciplines. Therefore, we adjusted the model by implementing trans-disciplinary terminology distinguishing only three levels: *Innermost Level*, *Mediating Level*, and *Outermost Level*, as illustrated in Figure 14.2.



Figure 14.2 Levels of communication used in TInCAP

Fictional characters in literary texts, such as Bottom in example (4), are, for instance, situated on the Innermost Level, as are participants in dialogues [see example (7) below and its analysis in Schole et al.]. In example (2)/(5), the original advertisement searching for “[m]en who can shear sheep and women with long hair” is also situated on this level.

The category Outermost Level can be used, to give an example, for authors/readers or implied authors/implied readers in literary texts, directors/audiences in stage performances or movies, and for observers of dialogues [cf. example (7)]. In example (2)/(5), this is the level of the comedian who quotes the ad on the BBC news website to produce a comic effect. The category Outermost Level, thus, has a broad range of possible applications. For this reason, TInCAP allows for this level to be specified more exactly by choosing from a fixed list of tags in an extra field (e.g. *Director*, *Implied Author*) if the annotator wishes to do so.¹⁰

Some examples may additionally include mediation processes between the Outermost Level and the Innermost Level, for example, by narrators in prose texts. In our model, they are situated on the Mediating Level, which by definition can only apply if the example also has an Innermost and an Outermost Level. Since a distinction between several Mediating Levels may, in some cases, be crucial for the description of ambiguity, TInCAP allows for a subspecification in the form of Mediating Level x of n , where x stands for the current level and n for the number of distinct levels. In Emily Brontë’s novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847), for instance, narratives of the housekeeper Nelly Dean are embedded in the narrative of the main narrator Lockwood. Accordingly, the level of the narrator Lockwood would be assigned the number 1 and that of the embedded narratives of Nelly Dean the number 2, and further narratives embedded in her narrative would be given the number 3.¹¹

To specify the levels of communication in TInCAP may reveal connections between seemingly different examples across various disciplines. While examples (2)/(5) and (4) are different with respect to the type of text (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a dramatic text, while the "Friday Night Comedy" show is a satirical radio program), and the source of the ambiguity is also different (lexical ambiguity vs. syntactic ambiguity), they occur in comparable communicative situations. The production of ambiguity is non-strategic at the Innermost Level of communication (i.e. Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the casting directors quoted in the radio program), but the potential ambiguity is exploited strategically to entertain the audience/the readers on the Outermost Level (see the following section "Dimensions of Ambiguity"). The main goal of this overall approach is to be able to reveal parallels between different instances of ambiguity from various disciplines.

Dimensions of Ambiguity

The communicative settings in which ambiguity arises can be distinguished with respect to the dimension *Production/Perception*, on the one hand,¹² and *+/-Strategic* on the other. To define these four possible combinations, we will first provide a definition of the term *strategy* and then discuss examples of ambiguity production and perception with respect to their (non) strategic application.

In rhetoric, a strategy is a plan developed in order to overcome anticipated resistance by interlocutors, who may not share goals with the plan in question (see Knappe, Becker, and Böhme). To overcome such resistance, one may choose a particular means to persuade the interlocutors. Therefore, strategy is seen as the relation between *goal*, *resistance*, and *means*. In the following, we define these three parameters with respect to their relevance for the classification of (non)strategic production and perception of ambiguity within TInCAP.

Goal: Every communicative act pursues a particular goal (see Clark), which may range from persuading the communicative partner of one's personal opinion to exchanging information or simply being polite, etc.

Resistance: Resistance may at least be *anticipated* in every communicative act. In everyday conversations, a speaker may anticipate the recipient's resistance to believe or to think about a particular piece of information, or the recipient's inability or unwillingness to understand what the speaker is attempting to convey (see, e.g., *audience design*; cf. Traxler, *Introduction to Psycholinguistics* 312–15).

Means: The parameter *means* refers to the verbal and non-verbal instruments that are applied in a communicative act to overcome (anticipated) resistance and reach the (personal) communicative goal.

On the basis of these parameters, we stipulate that the application of ambiguity in a communicative act is strategic whenever the ambiguous item is utilized as a *means*, that is, whenever ambiguity is primarily applied to reach a particular communicative goal,¹³ which is the case when two potential interpretations are exploited on purpose. In other words, ambiguity is *produced strategically* whenever the producer wishes to disclose two or more interpretations; it is *produced non-strategically* whenever the producer wants to disclose one interpretation, but a second—and potentially further—interpretation is present inadvertently. Ambiguity is *perceived strategically* whenever the recipient aims to disclose two or more interpretations in the communicative act.¹⁴ The following examples illustrate the four possible combinations of the two dimensions of ambiguity in more detail.

The strategic production (*Production S+*) of an ambiguous item serves a particular purpose of the producer, such as causing a humorous effect, increasing the artistic value of some creative work, or even outwitting others (cf. *strategy as ploy* in Mintzberg). Amusing the audience may be one of the goals that authors of literary texts have in mind (Bauer 142). In this vein, Wodehouse makes the character Lord Ickenham in the novel *Uncle Dynamite* (1948) mishear the word *Jamaica* in the following conversation with his nephew's old friend Bill Oakshott [example (1), repeated here for convenience].

(6) “Yes, my dear wife, I am glad to say, continues in the pink. I've just been seeing her off on the boat at Southampton. She is taking a trip to the West Indies.”

“Jamaica?”

“No, she went of her own free will.”

(Wodehouse 8; cited from Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity” 10, and Bauer 142; TInCAP ID bam010002 by Matthias Bauer)

The specific pronunciation of *Jamaica* creates a potential phonetic ambiguity between the perception intended by the producer (Bill Oakshott), that is, a reference to the island country Jamaica /dʒəˈmeɪ.kə/ or the phonetically closely related question “Did you make her?” /dɪdjuːmeɪkɪz:/, especially in connected speech where /dɪdjuː/ can be fused to /dɪdʒə/ or even reduced to /dʒə/.¹⁵ While Bill Oakshott's question refers to the island, as the written text evidences, Lord Ickenham's answer is only compatible with the question

of the enforcement of Lady Ickenham's absence. The incongruity of the written question and its answer suggests that Wodehouse implemented the phonetic ambiguity on purpose so that we are dealing with a strategic production of ambiguity on the Outermost Level of communication (cf. section "Levels of Communication").

At the same time, Lord Ickenham's known idiosyncrasies indicate that we are dealing with a strategic perception (*Perception S+*) of ambiguity on the Innermost Level of communication: the shrewd Lord Ickenham realizes the potential second perception of Bill Oakshott's question and functionalizes this potential by referring to the voluntariness of his wife's departure. According to Bauer (142), Lord Ickenham hereby aims to signal that both Lady Ickenham and the Ickenhams' marriage are *in the pink*, and that this is exemplified exactly by the fact that she has left for the West Indies *of her own free will*. The ambiguity arises due to the deliberate mishearing by Lord Ickenham (Winkler, "Exploring Ambiguity" 10). In general, the perception of ambiguity is strategic whenever several potential interpretations become obvious to the recipient, and the recipient reacts to the ambiguity.

In the following empirical study, ambiguity is produced and perceived non-strategically (*Production/Perception S-*). In a referential communication task (Tenbrink et al. "Negotiating Spatial Relationships in Dialogue," "Communicative Success in Spatial Dialogue"; Schole), one person (the *matcher*) was asked to arrange furniture pieces in an empty doll's house according to the verbal description given by another person (the *director*), who was sitting in front of a pre-furnished doll's house. The goal was to create a precise copy of the pre-furnished house via verbal information exchange. Given this context, the dialogue partners assumedly were cooperative in their conversation and tried to be unambiguous about furniture placement (cf. Grice's Cooperative Principle and the maxim of manner, especially "avoid ambiguity"). The following example, however, shows that they sometimes did not notice ambiguity in their information exchange:

(7) matcher: und der steht dann jetzt direkt an dem Schrank dran? [and it is now placed directly against the wardrobe?]

director: genau, so daneben dann. [exactly, sort of beside it.]

(example cited from Schole et al. 238;

TInCAP ID scg170011 by Gesa Schole)

The ambiguity concerns the word *daneben*¹⁶ ("beside it"). On the level of the language system, it is questionable whether this word could be considered polysemous. However, as Figure 14.3 exemplifies, the context offers exactly two reasonable interpretations for the furniture piece being beside the wardrobe, which is why we are dealing with an instance of context-dependent ambiguity (for a detailed analysis, see Schole et al.).



Figure 14.3 The bedside table beside the wardrobe as seen from two different perspectives

Source: Tenbrink et al. “Negotiating Spatial Relationships in Dialogue”, “Communicative Success in Spatial Dialogue”; Coventry; Schole et al.

In sum, the four combinations are defined as follows:

Strategic Production: Ambiguity is functionalized as a means to reach a particular communicative goal within the current communicative act.

Non-strategic Production: Ambiguity is produced—which often goes unnoticed—but does not serve the function of a means to reach the communicative goal.

Strategic Perception: Ambiguity or unambiguosness is taken up by the recipient and functionalized as a means to reach one’s own communicative goal. Strategic perception comprises (a) ambiguating an item that was produced unambiguously before [the Innermost Level in example (1)/(6)], (b) functionalizing a potential ambiguity [the Outermost Level in example (2)/(5)], and (c) interpreting a functional ambiguity in a different way from the intention of its producer (e.g. in political debates). In all of these cases, the recipient shows an explicit reaction to the ambiguous item, which can be taken as evidence for the strategic perception.

Non-strategic Perception: Ambiguity is not perceived as a means to reach a particular communicative goal or is not perceived at all.

The definitions show that it suffices to *anticipate* resistance in order to classify the application of ambiguity as strategic, and that its strategicness does not rely on the *actualization* of the anticipated resistance. The decisive criterion is whether ambiguity is used as a means to reach a particular goal in communication (*Production/Perception S+*) or whether it is not

(*Production/Perception S-*). In addition to these four combinations, TInCAP offers the ability to mark cases of ambiguity for which this question is impossible to answer as *unsolved* (*Production/Perception S0*).

Trigger and Range of Ambiguity

One step further towards an interdisciplinary comparison is the introduction of a classification that regards the size of the instance of ambiguity itself and the extent to which the ambiguity exerts an effect. This feature allows us to determine the scale of the (linguistic) trigger of the ambiguity (*Trigger*) as well as the scale of its extent (*Range*). The combination of both permits the transdisciplinary comparison of examples with respect to the cause and effect of ambiguity. If, for example, a figure within an image is the ambiguity trigger in a TInCAP entry from media studies, and a single phrase is the trigger of ambiguity within a paragraph in a TInCAP entry from linguistics, these two triggers are categorized as being on the same level and allow us to compare such examples.

The possible levels for this classification are shown in Figure 14.4. The structure of the levels mirrors the division of the human body (biological perspective), with the inner levels being part of and building up the outer levels. The names of the levels were chosen to be applicable across disciplines, that is, to not be rooted exclusively in one of the participating fields.

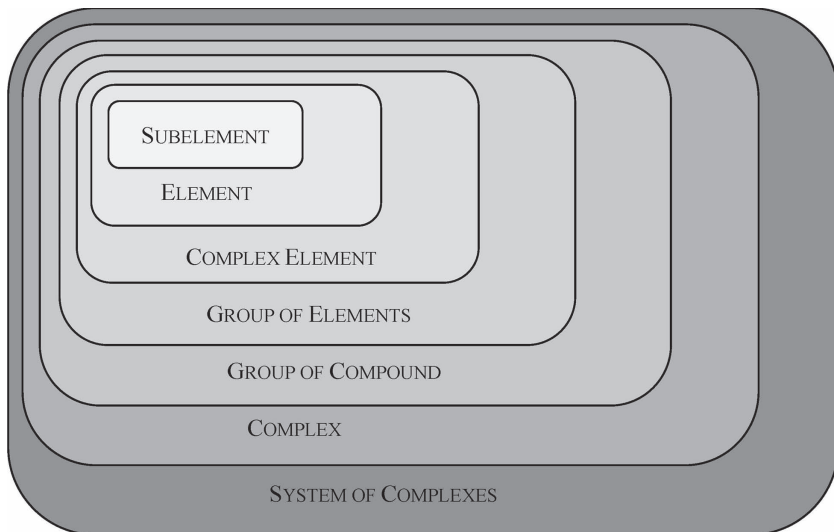


Figure 14.4 Levels for the classification of trigger and range

Each discipline can develop its correspondences, which is illustrated for language studies in Table 14.2. The correspondences for other disciplines are part of ongoing research, and Table 14.2 provides an empty column to indicate this work in progress. Because we identify trigger and range manually for individual instances, we work with simplified notions which are useful for comparison in an interdisciplinary setting. The core units are word, sentence, and text/discourse/speech, with an additional category in between each pair. We work with the syntactic notion of a word (see Bußmann, *Routledge Dictionary* 1285); a phrase, the category between word and sentence, is a larger constituent consisting of several words and other phrases (see Bußmann, *Routledge Dictionary* 902); and a sentence is a root clause (i.e. it is not embedded) that consists of a finite verb with its arguments and modifiers (see the definition in Zifonun, Hoffmann, and Strecker for discussion). A text is a coherent sequence of sentences which is complete and self-contained (see Bußmann, *Routledge Dictionary* 1187).¹⁷

For every instance of ambiguity that is annotated, we have to determine the trigger as well as the range of the ambiguity. The trigger refers to the root of the ambiguity, determining the size of the item that causes the ambiguity. The range of an ambiguity refers to the level up to which a particular ambiguity has an effect. Consider example (4) again. The trigger of the ambiguity is *make an ass of (me)*, which has the potential to mean two different things. The trigger is a phrase, and as such it is considered a *Complex Element*. The ambiguity of *make an ass of (me)* is relevant beyond the sentence in which the phrase occurs. It influences this section of the dramatic text, but it is not relevant for any of the other scenes nor the play as a whole. Therefore, we choose *Group Compound* as the range of this ambiguity.

With this classification of the trigger and the range of ambiguities, TInCAP offers a suggestion for how it is possible to compare ambiguous examples across disciplines as well as across different types of media. Determination of both the level of the trigger and the level of the range allows for the analysis of potential systematic relations between the two.

Relations Between Interpretations

Besides the classification of trigger and range, it is desirable to be able to compare instances of ambiguity with regard to the relation between their distinct meanings. We distinguish three types of semantic relations between paraphrases: the interpretations are either *Open*, *Related*, or *Unrelated*. We will illustrate each type with an example.

(8) The coffee in Rome is expensive.

(cited from Winter-Froemel and Zirker 77; TInCAP ID wie210003 by Esme Winter-Froemel, see also Kennedy 518)

Table 14.2 Levels for the Classification of Trigger and Range With Regard to Their Size

Category	Biology	Language Studies	Pictures (in progress)
System of complexes <i>a theoretically indefinite number of thematically, structurally, and/or functionally comparable complexes</i>	Organ system	Thematically, structurally, and/or functionally linked texts/discourses/speeches in comparison	
Complex <i>a network of thematically, structurally, and/or functionally linked subunits (groups of elements, group compounds), separated and independent from other complexes, and complete in itself</i>	Organ	Text, discourse, speech	
Group compound <i>the part of a whole which carries a message; thematically essentially self-contained, and structurally and/or thematically separated from the whole to which it belongs</i>	Tissue	Section of text/discourse/speech	
Group of elements <i>composed of one or more elements and/or complex elements which may be structurally linked; it forms a self-contained unit of meaning</i>	Cell	Sentence	
Complex element <i>consisting of two or more elements, a complex element forms a structure which is not self-contained and therefore expandable; it may be composed ad hoc or be an established component</i>	Molecules	Phraseme, single phrase	
Element <i>independent elements which are clearly distinguishable from each other, carry meaning, and may consist of sub-elements</i>	Atom	Word	
Sub-element <i>dependent elements which differentiate between meanings or carry meaning themselves</i>	Nucleus, electrons	Phoneme, grapheme, morpheme	

The meaning of the vague expression *expensive* depends on both the context of the utterance and its fuzziness at the edges. Winter-Froemel and Zirker argue that there are no *clearly distinct* interpretations (77; but see Hartmann for an alternative view separating context-specific interpretation from vagueness). All entries that generate multiple but not clearly disparate interpretations or variations are annotated as *Open*.

When an ambiguous item has two (or more) clearly distinct interpretations, it is possible that the paraphrases are either *Related* or *Unrelated*. In the former case, one of the interpretations is derived from the other. The relation may be based on similarity, a part-whole relationship, or figuration, for example. Figuration is illustrated in example (4) from Shakespeare: the interpretation “stupid fellow” is a figurative derivation of the literal interpretation.

In the case of unrelated paraphrases, the interpretations are independent. For example, referential ambiguities fall into this category, as do homonyms or the phonetic similarity in example (1)/(6). The interpretation “Did you make her” is not semantically related to the interpretation “island country of Jamaica.”

Phenomenon

More fine-grained differences between instances of ambiguity can be made with the field *Phenomenon*, where annotators can use discipline-specific terminology and enter more than one phenomenon for each example. Currently, a glossary of phenomena is provided in the manual (see Hartmann et al., *TInCAP User Manual, Version 2.0*). All members of the RTG list the ambiguity phenomena for their own projects and propose a definition for the respective term. New phenomena and their definitions are accepted for the glossary after approval by the TInCAP team and researchers within the RTG. The glossary is thus expandable; an exemplary *Phenomenon* from the glossary of the second version of the TInCAP user manual is the following:

Syntactic ambiguity. Syntactic ambiguities arise when it is possible to assign more than one logical form to a sentence (Sennet 2016). This can take the shape of several subtypes such as coordination or attachment ambiguities. In coordination ambiguities, a modifier or a complement can associate with only one or both parts of a coordination. In attachment ambiguities, a modifier has several different possible attachment sites.

Example:

The murderer killed the student with the book.

- (a) The murderer used the book as a weapon.
- (b) The student was holding a book when the crime was committed.

(TInCAP ID brk530008 by Katrin Brück)

The duality of the classification of *Phenomenon* and *Type of Paraphrase Relation* ensures TInCAP's usefulness both within and across disciplines. The division by means of the relations (*Open*, *Related*, *Unrelated*) is independent of individual disciplines and therefore promotes interdisciplinary comparability. The discipline-specific terminology (*Phenomenon*) facilitates the retrieval of similar instances of ambiguity within one discipline and guarantees that subtler differences can be captured. Furthermore, this allows the users to see whether one phenomenon tends to occur within one type of relation, for example, whether all ambiguity that is based on figurative language use has related interpretations.

Connected Annotations and Connected Entries

Within the amended Ambiguity Model described earlier, it makes sense to analyze some entries multiple times, for the reasons discussed next. TInCAP provides a feature that connects the annotations and makes the relationship between them overt through labeling. So far, two types of connected annotations have been implemented: "Change of Communication Level" and "Addition." Furthermore, it is possible to connect whole entries ("Connected Entries").

Change of Communication Level

The most prominent reason for connecting annotations is the distinction of different levels of communication. Example (2)/(5), repeated here once more for convenience, can be used to illustrate this point.

- (9) This is from the BBC news websites, and it's sent in by Ben Lodge. It says: "Casting directors are searching Dorset for bearded men to appear as extras in a BBC adaptation of a Thomas Hardy novel. **Men who can shear sheep and women with long hair are also in demand for the production.**"

("Friday Night Comedy"; cited from Winkler, "Exploring Ambiguity" 12; TInCAP ID haj040002 by Jutta M. Hartmann)

As has been pointed out, the ambiguity between the two readings [[men who can shear sheep and women] vs. [[men who can shear sheep] and women]] is non-strategic on the Innermost Level (the level of the advertisement) and strategic on the Outermost Level (the level on which the communication between the radio show participants and the audience takes place on site and on air), where it serves to achieve a comic effect. Thus, this example is annotated twice, once for each *Level of Communication*. The relationship between the annotations is made explicit by connecting them and labelling them as *Change of Communication Level*.

Addition

A second type of connected annotation occurs when a larger entity such as a paragraph or picture contains interacting instances of ambiguity. Consider the following example (discussed in Wagner 112–114).

- (10) We broke cover and sprinted across the lawn to the side of the house. Our shadows reached it first. There was nobody in sight, but now I could hear the sound of a piano drifting out of one of the windows. I recognized the music—but only just. It was Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata,” but played very badly. It occurred to me that the pianist might be missing a finger.
 “Listen!” I nudged Tim.
 “Is it a **record**?” Tim asked.
 “Yes. Nobody’s ever played it that badly.”
 Tim’s mouth dropped open. “Charon!”
 “It figures. He killed McGuffin. And now **he’s murdering Beethoven.**”
 (Horowitz 111; cited from Wagner 112;
 TInCAP ID waw190064 by Wiltrud Wagner)

The paragraph contains two different types of ambiguity: the first concerns the word *record*, which is lexically ambiguous with the following paraphrases: “Is it a recording?” or “Is it the best/worst/most remarkable performance ever?” The same paragraph contains another ambiguity, namely, the two readings of *he’s murdering Beethoven*, which can either mean “and now he’s killing the person called Beethoven” or “and now he’s spoiling the music written by Beethoven.” Connecting the two annotations and labeling them as *Additions* enables research about the interaction of ambiguities in larger sections of texts: does the likelihood of an ambiguity being used strategically increase when it occurs close to other ambiguities? Is the likelihood of an ambiguity being detected by the recipients higher if it occurs close to other ambiguities?

Connected Entries

Besides connecting annotations, it is also possible to connect individual entries whenever a series of ambiguities in a text leads to an ambiguous interpretation of a larger entity as, for example, a full text or a character in a play. This feature is intended to make such larger ambiguities visible in the corpus. In the following interaction between Polonius and his daughter Ophelia (*Hamlet*), Shakespeare makes Polonius appear as either a “cunning character who strategically uses ambiguity to manipulate his daughter Ophelia,” “a concerned father who strategically uses ambiguity to teach his daughter,” or “a character unaware of the ambiguity he uses” (cf. the

paraphrases in brm020001 and the discussion in Bross, *Versions of Hamlet* 181–189).

- (11) Polonius: Marry, I will teach you. Think yourself a baby
 That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay
 Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly
 Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
 Running it thus—you'll tender me a fool.

(Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.3.105–9; cited from Bross, *Versions of Hamlet* 183, TInCAP ID brm020001 by Martina Bross)

The different potential characterizations of Polonius go back to the ambiguity of the phrases *tender yourself* (“take care of yourself” vs. “offer yourself”), especially in combination with *more dearly* (“take better care of yourself” vs. “offer yourself at a higher rate”) and *you'll tender me a fool* (“you will sell me as a fool” vs. “you will sell yourself to me as a fool”). Bross (“Wordplay and Ambiguity,” *Versions of Hamlet*) discusses these text-level agglomerations of ambiguous interpretations, which lead to an ambiguous interpretation of the characters of Polonius and Hamlet, in detail.

Conclusion and Outlook

This chapter has presented details of the Tübingen Interdisciplinary Corpus of Ambiguity Phenomena (TInCAP) and the pertinent annotation scheme developed within Research Training Group 1808 at the University of Tübingen. The annotation scheme for TInCAP was developed on the basis of the Ambiguity Model (see Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity”). This model includes three dimensions: discourse vs. language system, production vs. perception, and strategic vs. non-strategic use of ambiguity. The latter two dimensions were directly included in the annotation scheme, while the first was further specified with respect to different levels of communication. The annotation furthermore includes the size of the ambiguity trigger as well as its range. Additionally, the relationship between paraphrases can be defined in order to include the differentiation between related meanings (as, for example, in polysemy), unrelated meanings (as, for example, in homonymy), and open cases (as, for example, vagueness). Though based on language-centered disciplines (more specifically, linguistics, literary studies, and rhetoric), the annotation explicitly aims to foster interdisciplinary research by using terminology that guarantees interdisciplinary transparency and by defining correspondences (see, for example, Table 14.2). At the same time, the resource allows for the use of discipline-specific terminology so that it can be used for discipline-specific research as well.

The long-term goal of TInCAP is to provide a resource for the investigation of interdisciplinary questions in the study of ambiguity. The more entries it contains, the more useful it will be for investigating correspondences across different instances of ambiguity. Accordingly, it will be possible to analyze in greater depth to what extent ambiguities based in the language system are similar to other types of ambiguities or in what way(s) they may play a role in discourse. For instance, we can observe for language-based ambiguities that the trigger of the ambiguity is smaller than the range. Whether this can be upheld for ambiguities in other disciplines (for example, in visual ambiguities) is unclear as yet, and research into this question may uncover new perspectives. Additionally, system-based ambiguities such as homonyms and polysemous items are often disambiguated via context. By contrast, ambiguities in discourse might arise more often through underspecification, indeterminacy, and ellipsis. This potentially correlates with the strategic use of ambiguity: lexical ambiguities can be intentionally used to reach a specific effect, while this might be more difficult with underspecification. Similarly, a cursory look at the BBC examples in the corpus of the type discussed here suggests that there is a correspondence between layered communication and strategic use of ambiguity—a hypothesis which the corpus will help to verify or falsify. In sum, TInCAP offers a resource and tool to study ambiguity in different communicative situations from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on work that was funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) grant RTG 1808 (project number: 198647426). The annotation categories presented here have been developed primarily by the authors and discussed within the extended group during the period of October 2013 to August 2016. TInCAP, in the version reported here, is an outcome of the first funding period from October 2013 to March 2018. Thanks to the members of the RTG between 2013 and 2018 for their comments and contributions. For the current website, where more than 600 entries are in the public domain, see <https://tincap.uni-tuebingen.de>.
- 2 The RTG works with a web interface which allows for adding new entries, viewing and editing existing entries, and searching. The details of the web interface are described in the version 1.0 (Hartmann et al.) and version 2.0 (Hartmann et al.) manuals; technical details are reported in Hartmann, Sauter, Schole, Wagner, Gietz, and Winkler (TInCAP—ein interdisziplinäres Korpus). For long-term storage, the data can be exported in total or in smaller sets in xml format. These subcorpora can be referenced within the infrastructure provided by CLARIN-D (see www.clarin-d.de). This chapter concentrates on the theoretical background of the interdisciplinary annotation scheme developed and used within the RTG.
- 3 In fact, the model is the result of a series of interdisciplinary discussions: “The ambiguity model was developed by Matthias Bauer, Joachim Knape, Peter

Koch, Christof Landmesser, Jürgen Leonhardt, Thomas Susanka, Susanne Winkler, Esme Winter-Froemel, René Ziegler, and Angelika Zirker during intensive discussions from 2009–2013” (Winkler, “Exploring Ambiguity” 6). For various interdisciplinary perspectives, see the contributions in Klein and Winkler, “Ambiguität.”

- 4 The abbreviation P stands for German *Produktion* translated as *production*, whereas R stands for German *Rezeption*, translated as *perception*. Note that, despite speaking of perception, we refer to the perceptive audience as *recipients* as this term is used more frequently in the literature.
- 5 The TInCAP ID “bam010002” is the unique identifier of the annotated entry in TInCAP. Examples from TInCAP will be cited by providing the original source and reference to the discussion in the research literature (where applicable), the TInCAP ID with reference to TInCAP [see Hartmann et al. (this chapter) and Hartmann et al. (*TInCAP Annotation Manual*)], and the reference to the owner of the entry and annotation, in this case Matthias Bauer. The owner of an entry is the person who provided the example and who is responsible for its annotation in TInCAP.
- 6 Similarly, the term *ass-head*, which Bottom mentions earlier in the example, takes on a literal meaning for readers, in addition to the figurative meaning of “[a] stupid or foolish person; an idiot” intended by Bottom (*OED* “asshead, *n.*”).
- 7 Pfister’s assumptions are based on the model outlined in Ralph Fieguth’s article “Zur Rezeptionslenkung bei narrativen und dramatischen Werken” (1973), which describes up to five levels of communication, with a sender and a recipient on each level as “broad consensus about the main features of a model of literary communication” (Fieguth 186; translation by the authors).
- 8 S stands for sender, E for German *Empfänger* (“recipient”).
- 9 Literary scholars Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller note in their study *The Implied Author* (2006) that

the concept [of the implied author] has been eliciting responses ranging from devastating criticism to passionate advocacy for over four decades, and, if the range of recent work on it is anything to go by, the controversy is unlikely to end in the foreseeable future.

(63)

- Compare also Nünning, who argues that the concept should be abandoned.
- 10 This specification provides opportunities for those working on text and performance, as they can annotate and search for examples of how directors or screenwriters deal with ambiguities in the texts on which theater performances or film adaptations are based.
 - 11 Compare Lisa Ebert’s *Ambiguity in Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights* (especially 98–121 and 244–245) for a detailed discussion of ambiguity and embedding.
 - 12 The integration of both perspectives on ambiguity, production and perception, points to the bilateral approach to communication as put forward by Grice; Clark; Levinson; Sperber and Wilson, among others.
 - 13 It is often not trivial to isolate the communicative goal beyond a “mere” exchange of information. In some contexts the intention is clear, for instance, the comic effect in example (2); other cases are less obvious. Therefore, we decided to label the existence of a goal reached by means of ambiguity, but we did not include the annotation of the goal itself. Ideally, TInCAP is a resource that can be used to explore the set of relevant communicative goals on the basis of the examples tagged as strategic.

- 14 Apart from this, TInCAP allows for the annotation of vagueness, which would not generate distinct interpretations from a general viewpoint. When enriched with contextual information, the variation in the meaning potential of vague expressions can be specified, while that of others remains fuzzy. More generally, this is the distinction between context-dependent interpretation and vagueness discussed extensively with respect to relational adjectives such as *expensive* in Kamp (“Two Theories about Adjectives”), Siegel; Kamp and Partee; Kennedy (“Vagueness and Grammar”); Hartmann.
- 15 As a reviewer points out, the analysis of such an ambiguity requires specialist knowledge by the annotator. This expertise is guaranteed within the RTG, as each researcher manages the annotations of ambiguity instances from his or her own project.
- 16 Deictic expressions like *da* are at least vague (cf. Ehrich) and may result in pragmatic ambiguity (cf. Winter-Froemel, “Introducing Pragmatic Ambiguity”; Schole). However, in the present interaction, *da* in *daneben* does not give rise to such additional ambiguities.
- 17 We refrain from discussing different notions of “sentence” or “text.” The main aim here is to work with a useful, shared notion.

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