resulted in a slight injury to his younger brother, my (then five year old) son replied: ‘There was a nip’. This is an interesting experiential strategy because it satisfies the question ‘what happened’ while simultaneously avoiding any material process that would support an explicit Actor role. It manages in other words to sidestep precisely the configuration displayed in example (1) above, ‘I nipped Daniel’, where the role of Actor is conflated with the speaker. Another strategy might have been to create a passive, as opposed to active, construction, wherein the Goal element is brought into Subject position and the Actor element removed from the clause entirely (‘Daniel was nipped’). However, because the passive still supports the question ‘by whom?’, this configuration retains a degree of implicit agency. The general point is that transitivity offers systematic choice, and any particular textual configuration is only one, perhaps strategically motivated, option from a pool of possible textual configurations.

The core processes of transitivity, arranged so as to capture their interrelationship to one another, are summarised in Figure A6.1. The transitivity model has proved an important methodological tool in stylistics and in more general investigations of text. The remainder of this strand surveys some developments in this area and goes on to examine patterns of transitivity in a variety of texts. The thread concludes with a reading by Deirdre Burton (D6) which applies the model to a passage from Sylvia Plath’s novel *The Bell Jar*.

Figure A6.1 A model of transitivity

![Diagram of transitivity model]

(style and point of view)

The *perspective* through which a story is told constitutes an important stylistic dimension not only in prose fiction but in many types of narrative text. Much of the feel, colour or texture of a story is a direct consequence of the sort of narrative framework it employs. A story may for instance be told in the first person and from the viewing
position of a participating character-narrator whose account of actions and events is the one we must as readers share. Alternatively, the story might be narrated in the third person by a detached, invisible narrator whose ‘omniscience’ facilitates privileged access to the thoughts and feelings of individual characters. Yet further permutations are possible. We may encounter a kind of ‘restricted omniscience’ where a third-person narrator, although external to the action of the story, comes across as unable or reluctant to delve at will into the thoughts and feelings of characters. These issues of narrative organisation are very much at the heart of story-telling and, as noted in A5, function as an important index of characterisation in fiction. The umbrella term reserved for this aspect of narrative organisation is *point of view*.

**Point of view in fiction**
Much has been written on point of view by stylisticians and narratologists, such that there is now a proliferation of often conflicting theories, terms and models. In these circumstances, the best way to develop an introduction to point of view will be by going straight to a textual example from which can be garnered some basic categories and principles. Below is a passage from Iain Banks’s novel *The Crow Road* which raises a number of interesting general issues concerning point of view in fiction. Kenneth McHoan, one of the novel’s central characters, has just returned from university to his home town of Gallanach, and this episode details his arrival in the rural village station.

He rested his arms on the top of the wall and looked down the fifty feet or so to the tumbling white waters. Just upstream, the river Loran piled down from the forest in a compactly furious cataract. The spray was a taste. Beneath, the river surged round the piers of the viaduct that carried the railway on towards Lochgilpead and Gallanach.

A grey shape flitted silently across the view, from falls to bridge, then zoomed, turned in the air and swept into the cutting on the far bank of the river, as though it was a soft fragment of the train’s steam that had momentarily lost its way and was not hurrying to catch up. He waited a moment, and the owl hooted once, from inside the dark constituency of the forest. He smiled, took a deep breath that tasted of steam and the sweet sharpness of pine resin, and then turned away, and went back to pick up his bags.

(Banks 1993: 33)

A good general technique for the exploration of point of view in a piece of narrative is to imagine it as if you were preparing to film it. That is, try to conceive a particular episode, as a director might, in terms of its visual perspective, its various vantage points and viewing positions. There are often clear textual clues about where to point your camera, so to speak, and about how a visual sequence should unfold. This passage works extremely well in this respect insofar as it abounds in point of view markers that work to structure the panoramic sweep of the narrative camera. There will be more on these markers shortly, but a feature of more general interest is the way this passage offers an almost model explication of a core distinction in point of view theory. This is the distinction in a story between *who tells* and *who sees*. It is clear from this passage that whereas a detached, omniscient narrator *tells* the story,
it is a particular character who sees the unfolding scene described. Although this is not the pattern for the whole of Banks’s novel – most of it is written in the first person, in fact – there is a marked limiting of narrative perspective, in this instance at least, to that of an individual character within the story. We see what McHoan sees, and we see it in the gradual and accumulative unfolding of the focal points that are reflected in his visual purview. Following the relevant terminology, that makes the character of McHoan, even if momentarily, the reflector of fiction.

Even working from so short an extract, there is much more that can be said on the general dynamic of point of view in narrative fiction. We have established that the third person narrator is external, detached, situated outside the story as such. In the sense that its narrator is ‘different’ from the exegesis that comprises the story, this makes the narrative heterodiegetic. However, had the events described been narrated directly in the first person by McHoan himself, the narrative would be homodiegetic. A homodiegetic narrator is one who is internal to the narrative, who is on the ‘same’ plane of exegesis as the story.

The distinction between heterodiegesis and homodiegesis can be explored by transposing the text between first-person and third-person modes of narration. This is a very useful exercise in terms of what it can reveal about point of view, and it is often surprisingly easy to carry out a transposition in those instances where a third person narrative employs a reflector of fiction. Converting the character of McHoan into an internal, homodiegetic narrator requires very little alteration to the text. Indeed, most of the passage can stay exactly as it is, as this checklist of third-to-first-person transpositions shows:

I rested my arms on the top of the wall [. . .] I waited a moment [. . .] I smiled, took a deep breath [. . .] and went back to pick up my bags.

The smoothness and facility of transposition shows just how strongly in the reflector mode the original passage is; in effect, nothing is narrated that has not been felt, thought or seen by McHoan. (Indeed, the passage reverberates with references to its reflector’s senses of taste, sight and hearing.) However, a first person version makes for a very different narrative in other respects. For a start, it brings us psychologically much closer to the central character. In consequence, it loses much of the space, the often ironic space, that can be placed by a writer between the narrator of a story and a character within that story. There will be more on this issue later in this strand, but for now it is worth developing yet further features of general interest in the passage.

Throughout the Banks extract, as noted above, there are stylistic cues about the viewing position it privileges. These cues are a result of the combination of two levels of language: the semantic principle of deixis (see unit A2; and further B7) and the use of certain types of grammatical Adjunct (see units A3 and B3). The first of these, deixis, works primarily by situating the speaking voice in physical space. In the passage, the reflector of fiction forms a deictic centre, an ‘origo’, around which objects are positioned relative to their relative proximity or distance to the reflector. Notice, for instance, how certain verbs of directionality express movement towards the
speaking source: eg. ‘[A grey shape] zoomed . . .’. Alternatively, movement *away* is signalled when, near the end of the passage, the reflector ‘turned away’ from the scene and when he ‘went back’ (not ‘came back’) to pick up his bags. This deictic anchoring is supplemented by groups of Adjuncts which express location and spatial relationship. These units of clause structure are normally expounded by prepositional and adverb phrases indicating place and directionality, of which a selection from the passage includes but is not restricted to:

- [looked] down
- Just upstream
- [piled] down
- Beneath
- across the view
- from falls to bridge
- into the cutting
- on the far bank of the river
- from inside the dark constituency of the forest.

The umbrella term *locative expression* is used to cover grammatical units, such as those listed, which provide an index of location, direction and physical setting in narrative description.

Lastly, there is in the passage an occurrence of a particular, specialised point of view device which merits some comment. The term *attenuated focalisation* refers to a situation where point of view is limited, even if temporarily, to an impeded or distanced visual perspective. Lexical items which signal that such a restricted viewing has occurred are nouns with generalised or unspecific reference like ‘thing’, ‘shape’ or ‘stuff’. Consider this sequence from the passage:

A grey shape flitted silently across the view . . .

McHoan sees something which (at that point) he can’t make out, and that blurring of vision is relayed as attenuated focalisation. However, the restriction in point of view is only temporary and, as is often the case when this technique is deployed, is soon resolved. Interestingly, whereas most attenuation is resolved when an indistinct object comes into shaper focus visually, the status of the shape is resolved here by recourse to another mental faculty, through auditory and not visual identification:

. . . the owl hooted . . .

Attenuated focalisation often works subtly in relaying the impression that we are momentarily restricted to the visual range of a particular character. As always in point of view analysis, transposition exercises will accentuate the technique and its stylistic effect. Consider, for example, how the impact would be nullified had the sequence been reversed in the first instance; that is, had the item ‘owl’ replaced ‘shape’ thus: ‘A grey owl flitted silently across the view’.
In sum, this unit has laid some foundations for a description of point of view in narrative. Working from a single passage, some general categories for a model of point of view have been proposed. Across the thread, the model will be progressively refined and reviewed as further categories are added and further passages analysed. The reading which informs this unit is Mick Short’s study of narrative viewpoint in Irvine Welsh, a reading which given its breadth of coverage ‘doubles up’ for both units 5 and 7.

REPRESENTING SPEECH AND THOUGHT

An important preoccupation of modern stylistics has been its interest in the way in which speech and thought is represented in stories. In other words, stylisticians are keen to examine the methods which writers use for transcribing the speech and thoughts of other people, whether these people be imagined characters in a novel or, in the case of everyday ‘social’ stories, real individuals. While it is true that a great deal of what makes up a story is action and events (see A6), it is also the case that stories contain a great deal of reported speech and thought. And this is as true of news reporting as it is of prose fiction – much of what makes up the ‘news’, for instance, is a record of what politicians and other public figures (allegedly) say and think.

The presentation of speech and thought is not straightforward. There is an array of techniques for reporting speech and thought, so it makes sense as stylisticians to be aware of and to have at our disposal a suitable model that in the first instance enables us to identify the modes used, and in the second, enables us to assess the effects in the ways these modes are used. The first step towards the development of this model is taken in the next sub-unit which provides a brief outline of the principal categories of speech and thought presentation.

The speech and thought model

The most influential framework for the analysis of speech and thought representation in narrative fiction is undoubtedly that developed by Mick Short and his co-researchers. Leech and Short’s textbook (Leech and Short 1981) contains the first systematic account of this important narrative technique and their account is rich in illustrative examples. More recently, much work has been carried out by stylisticians on the way speech and thought is presented in discourse genres beyond those conventionally classed as literary. As our chief concern here is to develop a set of tools that can be used relatively comfortably by the student of language and stylistics, the brief summary of the model provided in this unit will of necessity be kept as simple as possible. To this effect, reference will be made principally to the introductory treatments of the subject in Leech and Short (1981) and Short (1996).
Beginning with the categories of speech presentation, the ‘baseline’ form against which other forms are often measured is Direct Speech (DS). In this mode, the reported clause, which tells us what was said, is enclosed within quotation marks, while the reporting clause (which tells us who did the reporting) is situated around it. The following two examples of Direct Speech (DS) illustrate how the reporting clause in this mode may be either put in front of, or, as is more common, placed after the quoted material:

(1) She said, ‘I’ll come here tomorrow.’
(2) ‘I’ll come here tomorrow,’ she said.

Direct Speech stands in contrast to (though is systematically related to) an altogether more remote form of reporting known as Indirect Speech (IS). Here is the equivalent Indirect form of the examples above:

(3) She said that she would go there the following day.

The method for converting Direct forms into Indirect ones requires you to carry out a series of simultaneous grammatical operations. These are summarised as follows:

Stage 1: Make the reported material distant from the actual speech used.
Stage 2: Alter pronouns by shifting 1st and 2nd person pronouns (‘I’, ‘you’, ‘we’) into 3rd person forms (‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’ or ‘they’).
Stage 3: Switch deictic words (see A7) from their proximal forms into their distal forms.
Stage 4: Change the direction of movement verbs.
Stage 5: Place tenses in their ‘backshifted’ forms. For example, if the primary tense is in the simple present (eg. ‘know’) the backshifted tense will be in the simple past (‘knew’). Through this process, a modal verb like ‘will’ becomes ‘would’, ‘does’ becomes ‘did’, ‘must’ becomes ‘had to’, ‘is’ becomes ‘was’ and so on. If the primary tense is already in the past (‘knew’) the backshifted tense will be past perfect (‘had known’).

When these steps are carried out, the following changes are brought about to the report in our Direct Speech example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct form</th>
<th>Indirect form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I’</td>
<td>‘she’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘II’(will)</td>
<td>‘would’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘come’</td>
<td>‘go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘here’</td>
<td>‘there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘tomorrow’</td>
<td>‘the following day’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further operation may be carried out on both the Direct and the Indirect forms above to render them into their corresponding ‘Free’ variants. This involves removing
the reporting clause and removing, if present, any inverted commas. If this operation is only partially followed through, then various intermediate forms present themselves. Here are the ‘Free’ versions, along with possible subvarieties, of both the DS and IS forms introduced above:

*Free Direct Speech (FDS)*:

(4) I’ll come here tomorrow, she said.

(5) ‘I’ll come here tomorrow.’

(6) I’ll come here tomorrow. (freest form)

*Free Indirect Speech (FIS)*:

(7) She would be there the following day.

(8) She would be there tomorrow. (freest form)

The categories available for presenting *thought* in narrative fiction are formally similar to those for speech. Here are examples of the four main types:

Does she still love me? (Free Direct Thought: FDT)

He wondered, ‘Does she still love me?’ (Direct Thought: DT)

Did she still love him? (Free Indirect Thought: FIT)

He wondered if she still loved him. (Indirect Thought: IT)

It is important to note that in spite of their formal similarities, there are significant conceptual differences between the speech and thought modes. Whereas speech could be overhead and reported by any bystander to an interaction, the presentation of thought is somewhat ‘counterfeit’ insofar as it presumes entry into the private consciousness of a character. To this extent, the presentation of thought in stories is ultimately an artifice (see Short 1996: 290).

There is one more important category of speech and thought presentation which we can add to our model. This is manifested in its speech and thought variants as, respectively, Narrative Report of Speech (NRS) and Narrative Report of Thought (NRT). This technique involves a narrator reporting that speech or thought has taken place but without offering any indication or flavour of the *actual* words used. Here are two Narrative Report transpositions, one for speech and one for thought, of the basic examples given above:

(9) She spoke of their plans for the day ahead. (Narrative Report of Speech)

(10) He wondered about her love for him. (Narrative Report of Thought)

Unlike the more explicit modes discussed above, where it is possible to work out the ‘words’ in which something was said or thought, this mode can be used to summarise
whole stretches of reported speech or thought. That is not to say that the NRS and NRT modes are always more ‘economical’ than their more explicit counterparts – in fact, it is sometimes easier to report verbatim what someone has uttered than to try to look for alternative ways of capturing what they have said.

**Practice**

The practical work suggested in unit C8 of this thread is very detailed, requiring some fine distinctions to be drawn between various modes of speech and thought presentation, so this is a good place to begin firming up your knowledge of how the basic speech and thought categories work. Admittedly a departure from the overall format of this introductory section, the remainder of this unit therefore develops a short transposition exercise which is designed to test the categories introduced thus far.

Examples a–e listed below are all written in the Direct mode of speech or thought presentation. Working from these base forms, try to convert the five examples into their equivalent Free Direct, Indirect and Free Indirect modes. Some suggestions on how to proceed are offered below the examples:

a  ‘I know this trick of yours!’ she said. [said to a male addressee]
b  ‘Can you get here next week?’ he asked. [said to a female addressee]
c  ‘Why isn’t John here?’ she asked herself.
d  She said, ‘We must leave tonight.’
e  ‘Help yourselves,’ he urged them.

It is probably most straightforward if you convert them into their Free Direct counterparts first of all. Then, going back to the Direct forms, convert these into their Indirect variants using the five sets of criteria provided in the sub-unit above. It should also be possible to get from the Free Direct variants to their equivalent Free Indirect forms by following these same criteria. That said, there are certain types of grammatical patterns which block some transpositions and you may come up against some them here. If so, try to account for any problems you encounter. Can you construct some NRS and NRT forms for a–e also? For solutions and commentary, go to unit D8.

Across the remainder of this strand, we will see how speech and thought presentation can be aligned with broader issues to do with narrative communication. In B8, additional refinements are made to the speech and thought model. Further along the strand, unit C8 offers a workshop programme which is designed to develop awareness of the way speech and thought presentation can be used in literary narrative. Unit D8 provides solutions relating to the practice material developed in this unit, which is why there is not the space for a selected reading to accompany this strand.