Narration in Jeanette Winterson's *Gut Symmetries*

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1. Introduction

The aim of this Pro Gradu thesis is to study the narrative methods and techniques employed by Jeanette Winterson in her fiction, and in her 1997 novel *Gut Symmetries* in particular. Winterson as an author has expressed a special interest in developing narration in literature (*Oranges: 1991 Introduction*), and for this reason her experiments in finding new ways of representing human thought in a literary form provide a favourable basis for the study of narrativity from a reader-oriented point of view.

The main interest of this study lies with both the techniques utilised by the author to provide cues for the reader and therefore guide his or her attention, and the active perception on the part of the reader in constructing narrative, causal relations, and meanings from the information flow of the text. In other words, the basic assumption underlying the approach and the methods chosen is that *how* a text is read affects the result of that reading. Jeanette Winterson's *Gut Symmetries* has been chosen as the main object of analysis not only because it is fairly recent but also because the variety of narrative methods used offers the opportunity to examine different aspects of narrativity through one novel rather than several.

1.1 Approach and Methodology

The baseline for this Pro Gradu thesis is the assumption that a reader is not a passive recipient of a text that has been written earlier (and is therefore a 'finished whole'), but instead the reader is an active participant in the event of narration, contributing to the meanings that are created during the event from the cues provided by the text. Of course, the text is indeed a finished whole in the sense that once it has been printed and published the author cannot jump in and change the contents; but as far as the topic of constructing narrative and meaning is concerned, the text can only direct the reader into making certain conclusions about each.

This thesis can be divided into two perspectives on narrative, illustrated through analysis of *Gut Symmetries*. These perspectives are, first, how a text contributes to the event of narration, or how the text guides the reader, and secondly, how the reader constructs the story, creates meanings, and picks up and utilises the cues supplied by the text. For the purposes of the present thesis the reader is defined as both a general 'anyone' reading the text, but also as an example case of one reading of this particular text, *Gut Symmetries*. The chapters dealing with focalisation, temporality, and discursive roles approach the sphere which contains the more structural (or text-oriented) elements, wheile the chapters dealing with extra-textual elements, context building, the acts of fictionalisation, and cognitive perception are closer to the sphere that contains a more reader-oriented approach. These spheres are not entirely distinct from each other, but (to borrow a term from the world of Information Technology) fuzzy logic is applied so that one complements

the other. Thus, for example, the discussion about extra-textual elements includes both the textual devices featured and also the reader's process of utilising the given features in the construction of the story and meaning.

The central concepts of narration that are examined in this Pro Gradu thesis are: the structuring of narrational levels and discursive roles; temporal ordering and its influence on the perception of the story; the use of extra textual elements in creating an analogy through a *meta-text* (this definition is somewhat more accurate than the more familiar term *intertextuality*, but the concepts are related); the *act of fictionalisation* to explain in part how the signs of a text do more than denote a given world; and *focalisation*.

The various levels on which a text operates involve different roles assumed by the reader and the author of the text, and the roles which one assumes with regard to the other. Recognising these discursive roles makes it easier to distinguish between, say, a reader and an addressee, or to keep implied author and omniscient narrator apart. Discursive roles are discussed and illustrated in greater detail in section 5.1, 'Discursive Roles'. As for touching the subject of discursive roles, section 5.2 draws a more focused distinction between the implied author and the main narrator of *Gut Symmetries*. The novel features an interesting use of a narrating agent whose narration is based on an extra-textual reference which seems accessible to both the story world and the reader of the novel. The use of an extra-textual reference (The Tarot) as a meta-text is observed in section 4.1, 'Extra Textual Narration and Intertextuality: The Tarot', where the focus is on the manner in which the references to The Tarot function both as contributing factors in the reader's constructing an

image of the characters, and also in the manner in which the story itself is analogous of 'The Fool's Journey' – a description of a person's route to enlightenment (Douglas 1972: 46).

In defining the basic building blocks of a narrative text, much is owed to the Formalist and the Structuralist schools of cultural theory. Russian Formalism differentiated between *fabula* (story) and *suyzhet* (plot) and the French Structuralists took the ideas further with some modifications (Martin 1986: 107-108). Drawing on Genette, the definitions for *text*, fabula, and story used for the purposes of this thesis come mainly from Mieke Bal. During their path from suyzhet through *discouse* to story, text, and fabula, the concepts have undergone a great transformation. While the original Formalist idea was to separate the materials of a story (fabula) from their use (suyzhet) (Ibid.), by the time the elements are re-defined by Bal, although fabula still refers to the same materials of the narrative, the term *story* has taken the place of suyzhet ('plot') (Bal 1980: 6). In addition, Bal distinguishes a third building block: the text. Bal's (1980: 8) three concepts should be seen as "three distinct layers" of a narrative *text*.

These more precise definitions for fabula and story are considered in section 4.3, 'Rhythm and Temporal Ordering'. The term text is used throughout this thesis, and it needs to be defined at two levels: first, the term refers to the whole physical entity built of words and bound in covers which is "the work", and second, Bal (1980: 6-8) defines it as one of three layers of a narrative, as stated above. The latter definition includes such aspects of analysis as the narrator, description, non-narrative comments, and levels of narration (Bal 1980:119-149). In the

present thesis closer attention is paid to identifying and explaining narrators and levels of narration.

Because of the unusual structure of the levels of narration (as discussed in 5.2, 'Implied Author of a "Primary Narrator"?) focalisation is one element in the story layer that calls for some consideration alongside observing the narrational levels in the textual layer. The term *focalisation*, as Bal (1980: 104) defines it, refers to the relationship between the entity that sees and the object which is seen. The reason for keeping narration and focalisation apart is simple: the one who tells is not necessarily the one who sees, or (alternatively) what is seen is given as directly as possible (Ibid.) so that the entity seeing and the object seen cannot be separated. In the latter case Bal (Ibid.) points out that the focalisation is then a part of the story, a "layer in between the linguistic text and the fabula." Every perception is, according to Bal (Ibid.), an activity of focalisation and the subject of focalising (the focaliser) is the "point from which the elements are viewed." The position of the reader is such that upon perceiving the events and the story from this same point, he or she is inclined to adopt the same view. For this reason, if the focalisation coincides with a character (that is, the focalisation of a text is character-bound), the reader will adopt the character's view and will thus be subject to bias and limitation. (Bal 1980: 104-105.)

The very basics of cognitive perception are considered in section 3.1 'Perception, Reception, and Cognition'. These concepts are part of the baseline assumption of how information is processed and as such they are present in the presented reading of *Gut Symmetries*. *Schema*, as a central concept of cognitive sciences, is linked closely to the notion of how pre-existing information is used in the construction of new

information – and how this information is used both by the author (feeding the reader with extra textual cues) and by the reader (building through association when prompted by a cue). As indicated, section 4.1, 'Extra Textual Narration and Intertextuality: The Tarot' aims to illustrate in part how a text utilises pre-existing information and schemata in evoking a process in which a reader tests his or her existing information about the prompted extra textual elements against the context of the text, and how this process then takes the event of narration to include more than the literal text itself.

1.2 Summary of Gut Symmetries

The three central characters to the novel are Alice, Jove and Stella. Jove and Stella are a married couple, and Alice is a younger woman who becomes involved with the couple. First, Alice meets Jove and begins an affair with him. Later she meets Jove's wife and commences a relationship with her as well. The characters are faced with redefining their own outlook on the world and their own lives. This is done through each narrating for their own part in the first person, thereby providing a very up-close illustration of their individual views of the world and their assumptions of how the universe with them in it functions.

After the three-way relationship has begun, the characters decide to take a trip together in order to find some resolution to the situation. The trip does not go according to plans, and Alice is left behind whilst Jove and Stella are alone onboard a boat, adrift after a storm. After the couple have been rescued (by Alice), all three have had to re-think their own position in the universe and why they are the people they are.

2. Characteristics of Winterson's Work

Since the beginning of her career, Jeanette Winterson has published six fiction novels, one collection of essays, a comic book and two television scripts. In her fiction Winterson attempts to develop literary narrative by continuously crusading against restricting a narrative of experience within the bounds of conventional modes of expression and perception.

A common theme throughout Winterson's fiction is a questioning of conventional distinctions between reality and the 'imaginary'. This can be seen in Winterson's first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) which is a first-person account in the form of an autobiography of young Jeanette, who grows up in a strict religious sect in the north of England. Here the 'real' and the 'imaginary' are mixed in the manner in which Winterson juxtaposes fictional elements with factual ones, that is, with the 'real'. In her Introduction to the 1991 Vintage edition of *Oranges* Winterson comments on the question "Is Oranges an autobiographical novel? No not at all and yes of course." (Introduction, 1991: xiv). She rephrases this in a later interview in the *Salon Magazine* (April 1997/WWW), explaining that she invented herself as a fictional character in the novel and that there is something of her in the novel, but as "what really happened" is not a fixed reality, imagination plays a significant role in the creation of *Oranges* as in all her other novels.

The narrative in *Oranges* includes many of the elements which, in later novels, are seen to have become idiomatic to Winterson's style: fragmentation by inserting stories or fairy tales into the main story line, the blurring of a clear time line, and an unfixed narrative point of view. *The Passion* (1987) continues the development of these elements in the

story of Napoleon's cook and a Venetian girl with webbed feet. In this novel the narration shifts back and forth between the cook, Henry, and the girl, Villanelle. *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) represents a leap forward especially in Winterson's handling of time: not only does the narrative voice in this novel shift from one character to another, but now there are also shifts in time and place. *Written on the Body* (1992) employs a single narrative voice, as does *Oranges*, and the two novels do not involve such major leaps in "real" time and space as *Sexing the Cherry* and *Gut Symmetries* (1997) seem to do. However, the novels (*Oranges*, and *Written on the Body*) touch on the subject of an unfixed narrative point of view through the narrating agent's quest to expand her (or his in the case of *Written on the Body*) own perspective. Through such expansion the reader is offered a changing perspective on how the narrating agent orients herself towards her own life.

Gut Symmetries is the most recent novel. It is a story about Alice and her affair with both a husband and a wife (Jove and Stella). The novel combines quantum physics and Tarot cards to approach the issue of the relation of science and the inexplicable and an individual person's quest for defining herself, which has been a unifying theme in one form or another throughout Winterson's career. Winterson has also written the novel *Art &Lies* (1994), a comic novel *Boating for Beginners* (1985) and a collection of short stories *The World and Other Places* (1998). Her collection of essays, *Art Objects* (1995), includes essays about art in general but also discusses Winterson's own work and her position as an artist.

In *Art Objects* Winterson lays emphasis on the important influence some Modernists have had on her work. True enough, similarities between

some general techniques and efforts of the Modernists and Winterson's work can be found, as illustrated later on in 2.2 'Modernist Influences'. Her wide knowledge of literature and particularly the Bible manifests itself in the form of intertextuality in various forms in her work, as is typical of post-modern art. In her Vintage edition introduction to *Oranges* Winterson claims it to be the duty of every new writer to find new forms of expression (Introduction: xv). Along with the Modernist elements, Winterson's narratives include aspects which could be defined as post-modern (see 2.2, 'Post-modernist Characteristics').

Keeping in mind that Modernism and Post-modernism are not concepts commonly agreed upon by academics, the following sections use the concepts as an approach to the historically valid influences that can be identified from Winterson's work. This is to say that the features linked with Modernism and Post-modernism are considered as characteristics of the time periods associated with the terms and not so much as solid characteristics of an artistic movement.

2.1 Modernist Influence

Modernism in literature and other art forms placed new emphasis on subjectivity (Barry 1995: 82). Subjective experience is constantly present and prominent in Winterson's work as well. As the introduction to *Oranges* implies, her attempt is to write the same way as the human brain functions, how it thinks and reads (Introduction: xiii).

Another characteristic of Modernism is the movement away from omniscient, external narration and fixed narrative viewpoints, which earlier were used to create an illusion of apparent objectivity (Barry

1995: 82). In *Sexing the Cherry* in particular the narration is constantly moving from one place or time to another, and the first person narrator changes without warning. The story line thus seems fragmented, which is also a characteristic of Modernism (Barry 1995: 82), and instead of linear causal relations the story line is in fact takes the form of a network of individual elements.

Blurring the distinctions between genres is one method used by the Modernists to broaden the scope of expression (Barry 1995: 82). A famous example is James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), where the style and the layout of the chapters vary from something that looks like newspaper headlines to stream of consciousness. Some Modernists attempted to produce a mimesis of subjective perception by using the "stream of consciousness" technique. Winterson does not follow this process in such detail, but concentrates on the manner in which the human brain organises experiences and on how different stimuli in the present evoke an association with a moment in the past. In a way this can be seen as freedom from the boundaries of physical time and place.

In *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) Virginia Woolf uses Mrs Dalloway's perception as the vehicle for the focal point in the story line, from one moment to another or from one character to another. Winterson does something analogous in *Oranges* when she employs the associative tendency of human thinking to insert a fairy tale into the main story line:

> One day, I learned that Tetrahedron is a
> mathematical shape that can be formed by stretching
> an elastic band over series of nails.
> But Tetrahedron is an emperor…

> The emperor Tetrahedron lived in a palace made
> absolutely from elastic bands.
> (*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit:* 47).

The narrator associates 'Tetrahedron' with what she has made the word mean in her imagination. The focus in the narrative shifts from the unimaginative "reality" of the school world to the fairy tale built around the word 'Tetrahedron'.

Consequently, the narrator does not need to draw the reader's attention to the shift by stating it directly, but the association prompts the story, and the borders of the two different sections of the text are thus incorporated as a seamless flow.

Fragmentation in *Sexing the Cherry* is partly achieved by different narrators physically distanced from each other in time and space. Together these offer a coherent narrative of the experiences of the characters. This is a major difference between Winterson and many of the Modernists in handling the associative tendency. A close mimesis of a thought process, such as direct stream of consciousness in *Mrs Dalloway*, arranges information flow to the reader because of the extremely introspective narrative which concentrates only on the characters' inner thoughts in the order of experience. The "wider" perspective used by Winterson continues to concentrate on such inner experiences, but the focus is not necessarily on the experiences of one character, or if it is, then the narrative itself attempts not to be an omniscient mimesis of the character's mind but an even more subjective mimesis of the experiences. Whereas Modernists look inside their characters' mind and arrange the stories according to the Aristotelian doctrine of character being the plot (meaning that plot is constructed by

the characters behaving according to their individual nature), Winterson expands the characters into being more than one mind and one possible behavioural pattern. Additional characters (inserted fairy tales, for example) operate as extensions or alter egos of the narrator.

Winterson crosses over genre borders in the same way as Gertrude Stein did in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* (1922) (Winterson 1995: 49). This is done in order to present a fictional an autobiography which relies upon its ability to manipulate reader response on the assumption that texts are read according to the presupposed genre of the text. James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) does more or less the same thing by writing a fictional biography to represent his own life. Winterson has done something similar in the way *Oranges* masquerades as an autobiography and has taken the blurring of the literary genre borders even further by inserting the fairy tale fragments. (Winterson 1995: 53).

2.2 Post-modernist Characteristics

As a contemporary writer Winterson is part of the Post-modern period. Her influences include writers of the Modernist period and a vast array of other arts and texts (characteristic of post-modern art). Jeremy Hawthorn has outlined differences between Modernists and Post-modernists and suggests that the most prominent difference can be found in the mood (Hawthorn in Barry 1995: 83). Both periods give prominence to the characteristics described earlier (subjectivity, generic crossover, fragmentation and movement away from apparent objectivity) but there is a shift in the mood in which those characteristics are presented (Hawthorn in Barry 1995: 83). Hawthorn's view is , in short,

that Modernists experienced their age as fragmented and almost chaotic after the still and somewhat stable Victorian period. Their work shows nostalgia for an earlier age when there still was strong faith and authority. In contrast to this, Post-modernists celebrate for liberation from a fixed system of beliefs. (Hawthorn in Barry 1995: 84)

It is, however, difficult to imagine the likes of Virginia Woolf lamenting over the loss of a period of male dominated storytelling in fixed form by writing novels like *Orlando* or *Mrs Dalloway*. It seems more likely that the Modernists started the celebration which artists in the Post-modern period continue and take further by including a type of self-awareness in their work as part of an attempt to efface the gap between the reader and the artwork. Winterson's narration draws attention to itself by not attempting to be inconspicuous, using "a complicated narrative structure-[…] a very large vocabulary and beguilingly straightforward syntax" (*Oranges: 1991 Introduction*: xiii).

Post-modern writers have expanded the narrative to include more than the text itself, that is, other texts and the context of the reading situation. One of the tools available for crossing the gap is addressing the reader directly through the narrative voice. For example in *Oranges* Winterson uses Deuteronomy as a forum to question some traditional concepts of western identity formation and thought process (*Oranges*: 91-93).

Post-modernism is also often associated with "the loss of the real". Jean Baudrillard claims that constant image flow from television, film and advertising has led to a loss of the ability to make a distinction between what is real and what is imagined, what is surface and what is depth. (Baudrillard: *Simulations* 1981, in Barry 1995: 87). Jeanette Winterson

can be seen as a fiction-writing post-modernist theorist. Her work constantly questions the distinction between "real" and "imaginary" This is clearly illustrated in Jeanette's school experiences in *Oranges*: "Just because you can't tell what it is, doesn't mean it's not what it is." (*Oranges*: 43.)

2.3 Significance of Sexual Orientation

Winterson's work is often approached from a gender or queer theory point of view because of her style which shakes up assumptions about conventional literary realism and even more because of her subject matter and personal orientation (Barry1995: 146 – 147). However, there is more to Winterson's work than "coming out" or establishing homosexuality as an equal form of sexuality in a traditionally homophobic Judaeo-Christian society. Although the main characters or the narrators are members of sexual minorities, this is not the main concern of Winterson's novels as such but forms part of the framework Winterson builds to draw attention to the problems her novels do deal with.

The sexual ambiguity (as in *Written on the Body*), homosexuality (as in *Oranges*) or bisexuality (as in *Gut Symmetries*) can be read in at least two ways. On the one hand, taking the subject matter from a marginal culture draws attention to it and thus invites the reader to see the story primarily as an enforcement of marginal groups. On the other hand, the same elements emphasise the universal nature of Winterson's themes, which are independent of mere physical reality. To connect love only with gender and thus with sexual orientation limits the scope of human

experience and undermines the potential of the human mind to transcend its physical boundaries. Furthermore, Winterson comments on this issue in *Art Objects*:

> The Queer world has colluded in the misreading of art as sexuality. Art is difference, but not necessarily sexual difference, and while to be outside of the mainstream of imposed choice is likely to make someone more conscious, it does not automatically make that someone an artist. A great deal of gay writing around the Aids crisis, is therapy, is release, is not art. […] all art, including literature, is much more than its subject matter.
> (Winterson 1995: 104.)

3. Creating Meaning

This chapter is interested in the ways a text becomes to carry meaning and narrative causality. In the first section 3.1, 'Cognition and Perception,' the basic assumptions concerning reader's information processing is charted through a cognitive model presented mainly by Edward Branigan. His theory and model were created primarily for the purposes of the study of cinema, but some of the aspects are universal enough to be applied to the study of literary narratives as well. Section 3.2, 'Fictionalising Acts,' approaches the process of creating meaning from a more reader-response theory direction and the theory base comes from Wolfgang Iser. This section is concerned with how a denoted 'real world' is transposed into a fictional one. Section 3.3, 'Context-building

in 'Prologue',' illustrates the way in which the general framework of the story and narration is set. In other words, the section shows how the text defines the concepts and themes early on, before the actual story begins, and in this manner guides the reader's association later.

3.1 Perception, Reception, and Cognition

An interest in the way narratives are constructed flows as an undercurrent throughout this Pro Gradu thesis. The reader's activity in creating meaningful wholes from various strings of information which are not only reorganised temporally but which play with causality and points of view can be examined both from one end as an activity which is guided by the narrative techniques applied by the author and at the other end as an extremely subjective and individual act of personal information processing. As explained in the Introduction, this present thesis aims to include both of these aspects of narrativity. The purpose of the current chapter is to provide the general basic building blocks of the underlying concept of an active human tendency of processing information and constructing meanings and structures rather than adapting to and assuming these as given from a text.

According to Branigan (1992: 3) a narrative is an activity of perception and its function is to organise spatial and temporal data into causal chains of events which in turn include some judgement as to the nature of the given events. At the core of explaining the process of constructing meaning in terms of cognition is the concept of schemata. What is remembered from a story, as Branigan (1992: 13) explains it – or is indeed forgotten about it – is not random, but there are specific methods used to search for properties in the information that are universal. A

narrative schema is the term used in referring to such a search process, which is used in looking for a narrative pattern (Ibid.). More generally *schema* refers to the arrangement of already acquired knowledge that is used in evaluating, predicting, and organising new information (Ibid.).

A schema tests received information and categorises it according to previous experience. This test phase causes recognition of global patterns, which are then associated with that particular information by the perceiver. As a shape, schemata are a hierarchical structure, ranging from what are known as tentative and contingent conclusions concerning the data at one end to "increasingly general and invariant specifications governing a class of data at the other extreme." Schemata are only one type of mental structure and a narrative schema only one type of schema used in processing the everyday information flow. Schemata are used to automatically complete structures that seem to have something missing, for example an unfinished circle is still a circle because most people have the schema of what circles are (figure 1). An unexpected feature in a text, something that does not fully adhere to a schema that has been evoked originally, may cause the need to re-orient the given schema; it is then possible to come up with a variation in the approach to the given topic. (Branigan 1992: 13-15).
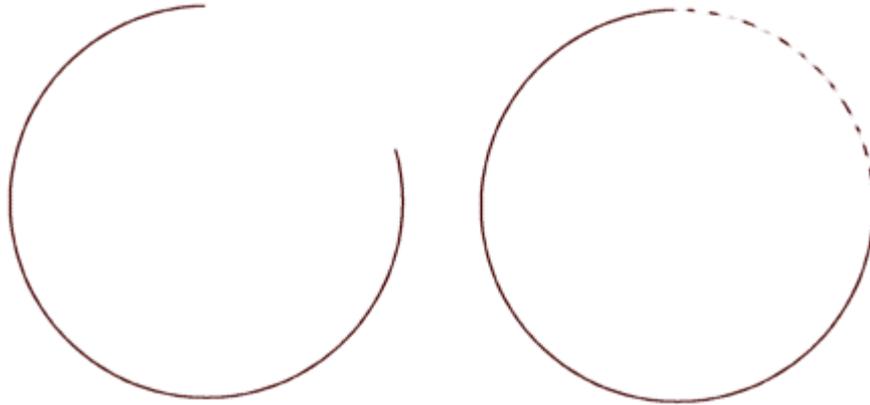
Figure 1.

Figure 1⸗Perception of a circle. The circle on the left is incomplete, but it is still perceived as a circle. The dotted line on the circle on the right further illustrates how the missing section is completed by the viewer: the original (incomplete) circle (left) does not generally come across as a different shape even when placed next to a more complete one (right).

Digression from an assumed schema results in surprise and the need for the reader to re-evaluate his or her expectations; anticipating the future events in a given text becomes more difficult. For example, the reader needs to keep comparing and testing his or schema of relationships and of a *mènage-á-trois* in particular when he or she is constructing the plot of *Gut Symmetries*. The reader's notion of a typical development and outcome of a three-way relationship is compared to the proceedings of the three-way relationship in *Gut Symmetries*, and each digression then calls for the reader to test the earlier schema and perhaps come up with a new approach, forcing the reader– as Branigan (1992: 16) points out – to extract the important from the superficial.

Reading is an event that takes place in time, as do the events in a given text. Causality and temporal ordering have a central role in the construction of story, plot, and meaning. According to Branigan (Ibid.), a reader does not distribute his or her attention evenly through a text but

rather reads both backwards and forwards, thereby creating hierarchical patterns "which represent a particular story as an abstract grouping of knowledge based on an underlying schema." On a more practical level, the very choice of tense may assist this phenomenon of reading both backwards and forwards simultaneously, as Jonathan Culler (Culler in Martin 1986, p. 127).

For example, in *Gut Symmetries* the first-person use of past tense as the primary tense in narrating the story results in the reader's looking forward and backward at the same time. Causality (based on the preceding events, what will happen next) is perceived forwards, but the meaning is constructed backwards: every new detail learned about the story or the characters contributes to the construction of the meaning and the theme of the narrative. (Martin 1986: 127). The duality of the construction of theme is present not only in the reading but in the narration as well, as is clearly visible from the way narration rearranges its elements temporally. (Martin 1986: 128). Thus in a way two types of causality function in a text: causality of events (which functions forwards) and thematic causality (constructed backwards).

However, it is not only the order of events that employs the "double reading" in narratives. The use of tenses seems to have a strong influence on where the reader places himself or herself in terms of temporality. The first-person narration in past-tense indicates that the narrator is in the present, looking back on what happened before. Thus the reader expects an explanation for the "present": since there is a present situation, where did the process (the story) that leads to that present situation begin and why has it shaped into its present form? Thus reading forwards takes place within the present notion of the thematic causality.

So both are causal, but they do not explain the same things: reading forwards is projective, it describes the process of predicting future events or possible outcomes. Reading backward is also causal, but it is concerned with the construction of meaning, the theme. The reader knows the ending, and in doing so he or she is able to look back to the events and characters and pick out those factors that really contributed to the ending – and thus deduce the theme.

The projective nature of such a thematic deduction requires schemata. The scope of options available for anticipating the outcome of an event is limited because of existing schemata. If, for example, a tree is falling, it is reasonable to expect it to fall according to its trajectory. Without the schema of "how things fall" there would be no basis for estimating where the tree is likely to land. Similarly, once the outcome of a given situation is known, it is possible to evaluate which elements or events influenced it. When the events do not conform with the existing schema, the reader must (as explained earlier) re-evaluate the relationship between the pattern in the text and his or her own schema and expectations. From a phenomenological point of view, Wolfgang Iser (1976: 109) notes that "the literary text, however, takes its selected objects out of their pragmatic context and so shatters their original frame of reference; the result is to reveal aspects (e.g. social norms) which had remained hidden as long as the frame of reference remained intact." In other words, on a general level, a text relies upon the digression from a familiar pattern to cause a change in the way a reader perhaps from there on views the themes considered in a given text.

3.2 Fictionalising acts

A fictionalising act (Iser 1991: 2) deals with the fictional representation of a factual world: actual places or events can be taken into a fictional story, but to do so does not make them fictive. Iser (Ibid.) argues that whenever realities are transported into a fictional text, they turn into signs of something else. More precisely, the fictionalising act converts the reality reproduced into a sign which in turn allows the reader to conceive the imaginary form it points to. The fictionalising act is therefore a guided act, a signpost, which directs the reader into seeing the imaginary which in itself cannot be pinpointed: the imaginary, as Iser (1991: 3) sees it, is "flash-like […]and manifests itself in a diffuse form". The fictionalising act outstrips the determinacy of the real and in doing so, provides the imaginary with the determinacy it lacks (Iser 1991: 3). The fictionalising act, then, can be seen as a process and, according to Iser (1991: 4), the elements should be studied as relations rather than positions.

Iser (1991: 4-12) distinguishes three specific acts of fictionalisation: selection, combination and self-disclosure. What is common to all of these acts is the crossing of boundaries, that is, extending beyond the text itself. Selected items form fields of reference which will all be considered as the context when the reader recognises a selected item. Furthermore, when a selection has been made, even those elements that were not chosen (those absent) will also be considered. Thus selection extends the meaning of the text to include more than was literally said. For its part combination in a way achieves the same effect, when two (or more) elements together create a new reference field and new meaning without losing their original, individual meaning. Both of these acts

therefore contribute in explaining how the meaning of a given text can be more than the sum total of its parts. The last act distinguished by Iser is self-disclosure, meaning that a fictional text allows the reader to recognise it as fictional. The significance of this is that the reader will be able to set the actual world referred to aside, and read the fictionalised, the represented world, "as if it were real" (1991: 14). This 'as-if' function allows the flexibility required for amalgamating the represented reality with the imaginary one of the fiction. The significance of such self-disclosure is dual in its nature: first (as said above), it allows the reader to recognise the text as fiction and thus explore further in creating meaning, and secondly, through the 'as-if' aspect of perception, it is possible to take the represented world as something other than itself. (Iser 1991: 14-20.)

An interesting aspect of the function of self-disclosure is the timing of when the reader is allowed to recognise a given text as fiction. It is not an uncommon method on the part of writers to exploit the human tendency of reading according to generic expectations and evoke particular (perhaps even surprising) reactions in the reader. The *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), "the ultimate Trojan Horse" as Winterson (1995: 49) defines it, was read and interpreted quite differently while it was viewed as an "authentic" autobiography than after it was established as a work of fiction. Such generic cross-overs rely on the reader to assume a certain attitude and also guide the process of building up expectations about coming events or the outcome of the story. Only when it is revealed to the reader that the text in question is indeed fiction is the act of self-disclosure able to pass beyond the text itself and allow the reader to add all the "parts" together and end up with more than the sum total of the parts.

Gut Symmetries carefully constructs a representation of a world that seems not altogether different from what could be considered the real world. The difference is that elements which are clearly fictional are introduced as the basis of the reality in the novel, implying that the world of the novel is a representation of the real world. There is an echo of an ancient philosophical debate embedded in this: do we observe the shape of reality as it is, or is the shape a result of our means of observation By introducing a world that functions according to the powers of the stars and the planets and in which advanced cosmology directly influences the characters' lives beyond the almost mundane Newtonian physics, and by suggesting that this fictional world is a representation of the real world, Winterson turns the fictionalising act around and asks the reader to create the real world in the image of the fictional world of the novel.

This twist in the process of representation is achieved through delicately presenting the fantastical as mundane and vice versa. In the novel Stella explains that she has a diamond in her hip and that it somehow got there when her mother had a craving for diamonds while she was pregnant with Stella. The incident as it is described is incredible, but also possible and even natural. The twist in the "realities" comes through Jove's scepticism. He, as a scientist with a strong faith in the universe as he himself has described (and therefore created) it through science, cannot accept that a diamond could be embedded in Stella's hip:

> Physics cannot rig evidence, either it is honest science or it is not science at all. Call it alchemy, astrology, spoon-bending, wishful thinking. All of which my wife enjoyed, along with a mystical

> disposition that sadly, some of my colleagues share.
> There is nothing mystical about the universe. There
> are things we cannot explain yet. That is all.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 191).

Jove holds on to his understanding of the world even where it involves aspects he does not understand, and denies the mystical. For Stella, on the other hand, the universe is a much clearer place precisely because she does not try to explain it. She mocks Jove's scientific approach when they begin to fear that no one is looking for them (*Gut Symmetries:* 180). Stella suggests that they have sailed into a parallel universe and that is why they cannot be found. For Jove this is almost blasphemy: quasi-science which is not based on evidence and therefore wrong and idiotic.

> He turned to me in a fury. 'Stupid, stupid, stupid.
> The probability is beyond calculation. A large
> quantum transition such as that is virtually
> impossible.'
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 180).

The scientific world view, the "reality", is contrasted with the fantastical – and proven wrong. The story of the diamond is like a fairy tale injected into a representation of "reality". The reality is constructed in this novel through extensive use of physics, mathematics and cosmology, and in the end, the fairy-tale turns out to be true. In a "real" world it would have been something else embedded in Stella's hip, but here the fantastical is real, and the scientific real does not necessarily apply.

The difference between these very different views of the world and how it functions becomes very clear when Stella and Jove are adrift in a boat. Both of their perspectives are shown in the chapters where they narrate, Stella first ('The Moon'), then Jove ('Knave of Coins'). At this point the

narrations overlap: the reader is presented with two differing accounts of the same events. Setting the repetition to one side, since it is discussed more closely in 4.3 ('Rhythm and Temporal Ordering), in terms of the two world views meeting the interesting point is the way in which the two characters present their different perspectives on the diamond in Stella's hip. To Stella it is natural and she asks Jove to make sure the diamond is returned to its rightful owner after she has died and they have been rescued (*Gut Symmetries:* 181). She describes Jove's reaction and is aware that he still does not believe that there is a diamond. On the other hand, Jove, in 'Knave of Coins', shows and explains his position and argues his case against "the impossible" and decides that Stella must be mad and hallucinating (*Gut Symmetries:* 191).

In the end, the diamond turns out to be real. Against all the scientific arguments, the fantastical is real and the scientific has no more authority over the functions of the universe than alchemy or astrology. The sequence of being adrift is the only one where two narrations overlap and therefore repetition (Genette in Bal 1980: 77-79) occurs. Through such repetition attention is drawn to this particular event and a natural outcome is that the event becomes a defining point in the story. On other occasions two different narrations that cover the same time sequence do not repeat the same information as they do in the chapters 'The Moon' and 'Knave of Coins.' Instead they provide additional information in relation to each other, as for example in the accounts of Alice's father's life in New York (*Gut Symmetries:*53 – 56, 217). As a result of the additional attention to the boat sequence, the two opposing views of the world are necessarily contrasted and compared, and the reconstruction of reality draws attention to itself.

Stella's narrative (*Gut Symmetries:* 165-187) in particular circles around the question of the subjectivity of reality. As the maritime bulletin (*Gut Symmetries:* 165) announces that Jove and Stella are presumed dead, Stella begins to question what difference there is between the world thinking they are dead and the two of them actually being dead since they are unable to argue their case. Furthermore, when Stella recognises that Jove thinks she is mad, she questions this by asking whether it is enough to classify someone as insane simply because someone else thinks so:

> Jove considers me mad. Does that make me mad?
> The authorities have declared us dead. Does that
> make us dead? Where is the Archimedean point?
> Inside? Outside? What is the proper perspective for
> my existence?
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 181).

In terms of reconstructing the reality, the world portrayed in the novel is one that looks like it operates under certain rules of physics (gravity applies, etc.) but in the events that do take place (there is something in Stella's hip and the possibilities are that it either is a diamond or it is not) the fantastical is realised. Through such counterpoint the reader is, thus, asked to reconstruct the fictional world as an image of the "real" world and then to accept the mystical and fantastical as basic and 'real' elements of that world. After this the fictionalised world with these additional elements is mirrored against the original reality that functioned as the starting point and through such adding and comparing the reader is offered an alternative perspective on reality. In Winterson's view, according to the 1997 *Salon Magazine* interview (*Salon Magazine*, April 1997/WWW), what separates literature from "confessional" is the ability of the imagination to expand the experience beyond what is

actually there, the "real" world. Furthermore, for Winterson topical reality is arguable, as she emphasises in the same interview:

> After all, what did really happen? What is real now? What is happening here at this moment? The best writers, the best painters, the best musicians, in the end, are the ones who can predict a world which is outside of the world in which they live.
> (Winterson in *Salon Magazine*, April 1997/WWW.)

3.3 Context Building in 'Prologue'

The main situation, the context of the novel, is set up in 'Prologue'. Read within its meaning of an introductory scene, containing the main action of the work, all essential themes are introduced in the prologue of Gut Symmetries. The narrator opens with a description of Paracelsus (*Gut Symmetries:* 1-2), whose character combines the search for answers about the universe through science (alchemy) and astrology (his birth sign governing his life to a certain degree). In addition, his physical appearance is described as somewhat androgynous, which in view of the bisexuality of the female characters of the novel would link Paracelsus with Stella and Alice. Furthermore, the way in which Paracelsus's characteristics seem to combine characteristics of both Alice and Stella, it seems reasonable to read his character as an embodiment of both of the characters and their development.

The prologue also draws attention to the concepts of journey and change in the definition of terms (*Gut Symmetries:* 6):

> Here follows a story of time, universe, love affair, and New York. The Ship of Fools, A Jew, a

diamond, a dream. A working-class boy, a baby, a
river, a sub-atomic joke of unstable matter.
(*Gut Symmetries:* 6).

'Ship of Fools' is defined as "A medieval conceit. Lunatics/saints sailing after something which cannot be found." The obvious reference is to Sebastian Brandt's (ca. 1458-1521) moral allegory *Das Narrenschiff,* and also a painting by Hieronymous Bosch (ca. 1450-1516) (Appendix 2). As in Bosch's painting, the people onboard the QE2 (*Gut Symmetries:* 13) eat, drink, and pursue what cannot be found – eternal youth by means of time travel, for instance (*Gut Symmetries:* 15). A journey or travelling is a basic theme in literature and cinema, used as a vehicle for illustrating change in characters. What was meant by defining Paracelsus as the embodiment of the change in Alice and Stella (Particularly Alice) is that the character of Paracelsus contains what these women are at the beginning of the journey and also what they become in the process of it. Alice, who is pure science to begin with, starts to accept the inexplicable– learns to look also for those dimensions of the universe that are not recognised by physics.

Alice's scientific view of the world also influences her approach to other people, as is explained when Alice realises that in a triangle the three points are not necessarily kept apart:

If you want to know how a mistress marriage works, ask a triangle. In Euclidean geometry the angles of a triangle add up to 180 degrees and parallel lines never meet. Everyone knows the score, and the women are held in tension, away from one another. The shape is beguiling and it could be understood as a new geometry of family life.

> Unfortunately, Euclidean theorems works only if
> space is flat.
>   In curved space, the angles over-add themselves
> and parallel lines always meet.
>   His wife, his mistress, met.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 16-17).

Since the publication of *Gut Symmetries*, a balloon flight around the Antarctic has shown that the universe is in fact flat and parallel lines do not meet (The Times, 27 April 2000), but in the situation established for the story this makes no difference: in the fictional world of the story space is curved. In other words, Alice's reference point is a curved space and she measures her position in the universe accordingly. Curiously enough, this late development in the study of the universe proves the point established in the prologue – today's concept of what the universe is like and how it operates is no more final or absolute than the concept of the world in Paracelsus's time.

In 'Prologue' the building of another definition or context for Alice is started. The list of definitions (*Gut Symmetries:* 6-7) defines 'river' according to the contexts in which the concept is used in the story. However, later on when Alice introduces herself and her background, she also reveals the origin of her name: Alluvia (*Gut Symmetries:* 121, 203). Time has been described as a river, and alluvium is the "deposits collected and jetted by the river" (*Gut Symmetries:* 121). The imagery of time and its flow built up during the narrative gains another aspect when Alice is identified as the "deposits" (fertile soil to be more precise): who and what she is, is a result of growth and accumulation over the years. This notion of accumulation over years is supported by Alice's account of her own anorectic youth (I: 21) By the time she calls herself Alluvia (*Gut Symmetries:* 203) she has reached a point where her emotional

confusion has reached a maximum as she is searching for Stella and Jove. She is simultaneously afraid that one or both are dead, hoping they are both alive, and scared that perhaps they have meanwhile chosen each other and left Alice out of the equation. In this chapter ('The Lovers') Alice sees herself as the captain of the Ship of Fools (*Gut Symmetries:* 203) and realises that she has been trying to pursue something that cannot be found: "I chose to study time in order to outwit it." (*Gut Symmetries:* 20). Alluvium also implies the formation of new land from the deposits, and with that reference in mind it is possible to see Alice as gradually gaining her own individual shape as she comes to terms with herself, her past and her family's past. By the end of the process Alice has come to accept herself as part of the flow of the river.

One of the main themes of the novel, the "dilemma of hard science" and "the inexplicable" is first introduced in 'Prologue' as well. First, the section summarising the search for the location of Hell (*Gut Symmetries:* 3) shows medieval science in an almost fatuous light from a modern perspective. The attempt to find the physical location of Hell, which is a religious (hence spiritual) concept, is based on the assumption that the Bible has it right and that everything in it can be scientifically proved. If science cannot verify the Bible, this only means that science has not evolved enough. As an alternative, 'Prologue' explains another theory (*Gut Symmetries:* 4) which would explain the human longing for the 'Other'. This theory represents a similar (if not identical) scientific optimism of physics and cosmology having the ability (as soon as they evolve enough) to explain also the spiritual side of human life.

4. Textual Devices

The previous chapter concerned itself with the creation of meaning, causality and narrative pattern and with the prompting of associative tendencies. Topics of textual devices an author has at his or her disposal are discussed through analysing the use of some central techniques in *Gut Symmetries*. Section 4.1 looks into the use of extra textual elements and intertextuality. The topic is approached through analysing the use of the Tarot, and Tarot cards referred to are illustrated in Appendix 1. Section 4.2, 'Focalisation' studies the relationships between those who tell and those who see. In section 4.3 'Rhythm and Temporal Ordering' the aim is to illustrate how the reader constructs a unified narrative out of temporally reordered elements of the fabula.

4.1 Extra Textual Narration and Intertextuality: the Tarot

In a broad sense intertextuality means that no text is an autonomous whole and also that the reader's experience of other texts has a significant role in the interpretation of a given text. (Onega & Landa 1996: 32). A writer can take advantage of this aspect of forming impressions and opinions and use the reader's ability to recognise structural and other similarities between texts as a narrational tool. Recognition of intertextual references provides the reader with a number of meta-texts which can function as filters through which the reader will then view the text in hand. In other words, recognised intertextual references have the ability to introduce an extra-textual perspective for the reader.

In her work Winterson has used the Bible and well-known fairy tales (for example) as clear intertextual references. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is an allegory of the first seven books of the Bible, and in *Sexing the Cherry* the story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses is rewritten – which in turn may be read as a reference to Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber And Other Stories* (1979), a short story collection of rewritten fairy tales.

In *Gut Symmetries* the Tarot[1] similarly functions as a meta-text as the Bible and the known fairy tale do in *Oranges* and in *Sexing the Cherry*. The story line is consistently compared with the Tarot and the world of the occult. Two of the three main characters are scientists with apparent knowledge (and belief in that knowledge) of how the universe functions. The third character is also settled in a comfortable idea of order and predictability: as a wife she acts and behaves according to her concept of wives and her husband does the same according to his concept of husbands. The narratives themselves show what the characters do and think and also how they see themselves. Using the Tarot cards to open each chapter functions both as a counterpoint and as an allegory for the character traits the reader is allowed to perceive from the characters' own narratives, and this additional information provides the reader with a wider perspective on the situations and the roles of each of the characters in the story. With the Tarot governing each chapter, the reader is forced to view the certainty of the scientists from a wider perspective than simple scientific comprehension. The title of each chapter, then, suggests the extra-textual world of the Tarot and its interpretation, offering an alternative perspective of the characters and the events.

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[1] For pictures of each of the Tarot cards referred to, see **Appendix 1**.

Individually the cards can be interpreted psychologically as parts of a person's route to enlightenment (Douglas 1972: 46). This route is also known as 'The Fool's Journey' (Bunning 1995-1998, WWW), which describes the growth of personality through encountering various elements and situations in life. In Mieke Bal's (1980: 8-9) view it does not satisfy the conditions of a *narrative text*, but in the Aristotelian sense of having a beginning, a middle, and an end 'The Fool's Journey' does comply with an everyday perception of a story that is perhaps not narrated through language every time, but one that is recognisable as such, and which to some extent functions on a conceptual level. In fact, it would not be too far off to suggest that 'The Fool's Journey' of the Tarot is in itself just another version of the age-old myth of searching for enlightenment, the growth of personality, and the quest to become a more aware and sentient human being. Furthermore, as Douglas (1972: 46) points out, the cards can be interpreted as characterising a person, and as such the references contribute to what Bal (1980: 79) calls character traits.

Alice in *Gut Symmetries* is young and inexperienced when it comes to love and relationships. Through her lack of experience she breaks a solid and predictable (thus in a way a rule-governed) conformity by commencing relationships with both a husband and a wife. The married couple are more or less set in their ways, and in the progression of the story Alice can be seen as the catalyst for the couple's change.

As Douglas (1972: 48) explains it, the Fool is also symbolically both the beginning and the end as the unnumbered card of the Tarot deck. Alice is the beginning, being the first character narrating the story, and she is also present at the end by being the last narrator of the novel. The final

chapter does not directly refer to "The Fool", but as the Fool is the first association with the Tarot, which has been made at the beginning with Alice, the Fool's final position in Alice's final narrative can be taken into account. In the final position, according to Douglas (1972: 117) the Fool has travelled through his troublesome journey and in the end has accumulated wisdom. Furthermore, the Fool is in harmony with the universe and has risen above its physical boundaries (Douglas 1972: 116). At the end of her journey, Alice herself has learned more about the world and she has an understanding of the cosmos which is not fixed in any one possibility:

> If the universe is movement it will not be in one
> direction only. We think of our lives as linear but it
> is the spin of the earth that allows us to observe
> time.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 218.)

A contrast to Alice and her Foolish characteristics is Stella, whose introductory chapter is entitled 'The Tower'. A tower is a fixed, steady and a rather inflexible structure. An out-dated form, as Douglas (1972: 100 – 101) explains it, and without the ability to accept changes, a Tower "loses contact with the dynamism of reality" and when faced with something new it can only collapse. Stella's fixed structure is hit by a "bolt of Jove" (Ibid.) when Jove's affair with Alice is discovered. Accordingly, Stella's world collapses. Stella's narrative includes her direct comparison of her situation to the Tarot card. She names the "bricks" of which her tower was built:

> The Tower. Card XV of the Tarot deck. Two figures
> in identical dress explode from a shattered fortress.

Brick 1 Happiness. I love him he loves me.
Brick 2 Approval. I love him he loves me.
Brick 3 Security. I love him he loves me.
Brick 4 Time. I love him he loves me.
Brick 5 Complacency. I love him he loves me.
Brick 6 Indifference. I love him he loves me.
Brick 7 Apartness. I love him he loves me.
Brick 8 Refusal. I love him.
Brick 9 Lies. He loves me.
Brick 10 Danger. Love? Love?
Brick 11 One straw. One camel. Two backs.
(*Gut Symmetries:* 37-38.)

Stella also wonders about the reasons for the lightning, accepting the possibility that by wanting to live in a tower she was attracting the thunderbolt, as a tall building attracts lightning during a storm.

I built a tower. I lived in it. Now it has been struck
down. Did the lightning come like an indifferent god
or did I draw it?
(*Gut Symmetries:* 38.)

Jove is a central character, but most of the time he is not allowed to give his perspective of the events. His chapter is not entitled according to any of the main cards, but according to one of the lesser cards, "Knave of Coins". In the Tarot the Knave of Coins is "[…]thrifty, conscientious, proud of the responsibilities he carries. He is diligent in the performance of his duties and is essentially honourable." But on the reverse side he is "idle, dull-witted, too meticulous, lacking in humour, full of a sense of his own importance." (Douglas 1972: 158). The last in particular can be seen in the chapter narrated by Jove. His firm belief in the rules of his scientific reality results in a stage of desperation when he fails to convince Stella of it and she turns to a kind of meditation, in his eating a part of her as physical proof that she is still a part of him, and as a

stubborn refusal to give up while there is still something that can be done to avoid death. However, Stella's calm acceptance of the situation seems to have some influence on Jove's self-assurance, as he keeps convincing himself of the correctness of the choice he has made (*Gut Symmetries:* 189, 191, 193, 194, 196). The repetition is considered more carefully in section 4.3, 'Rhythm and Temporal Ordering'.

He card "The Lovers" depicts a man and two women, older and younger, with the man standing between them (Douglas 1972: 66)[2]. Alice is faced with the prospect of choice when she hears that the boat that Jove and Stella are on has gone missing. She is unable to make the choice, which is also a part of the card's traditional meaning. The man must choose between the women and if he is unable to perform this independently and maturely, fate, (Cupid flying above the characters, ready to shoot his arrow) will make the decision for him. (Douglas 1972: 68). Alice and Stella discuss the configuration of the three of them in terms of the Tarot, and attention is again drawn to the way in which the women can be seen as the variable and the man as the constant in the equation.

> She looked at the picture. 'I think, perhaps, that the
> women are trying to decide for themselves and the
> man is taking no notice.'
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 201.)

The situation in the extract above is one of those occasions when the narrational layer between the reader and the characters (see section 4.1 'Implied Author or "Primary Narrator?"') shows itself through the story world.

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[2] The particular deck in **Appendix 1** only illustrates a man and a woman, but a third entity is present representing the ideal direction of choice, morality and the righteousness of personal values and beliefs (Bunning 1995-98/WWW.)

Stella has made her decision before sailing out with Jove but Alice remains undecided even when she is looking for the boat:

> If only one of them was alive, which one would I hope for? Champion Jove? Winning Stella? Which one of them did I love beyond the greedy love that we all shared? There was bitterness to this dreadful game because I guessed that neither of them had chosen me.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 200.)

The symbolism of the Tarot cards presents the alternative option in the lives of the characters. They show fate, which was an important part of Paracelsus's life as seen in 'Prologue' and even though the narrators may not realise this and identify their situation as being similar to that of Paracelsus, the inexplicable is still a significant part of their lives.

Gut Symmetries, as a story that includes a strong element of travel, is quite clearly an allegory of 'The Fool's Journey'. Starting from the initial position Alice, the Fool, encounters the same elements as the Fool of the Tarot does, and through these encounters comes growth. The point about the journey is emphasised by repeated references to the medieval concept of 'Ship of Fools'. In the Hieronymous Bosch painting (Appendix 2) the is seen aboard a boat which drifts without direction because all those on it are Fools: eating, drinking, jesting, and pursuing what cannot be found (http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/b/bosch/painting/shipfool.html). Katherine Ann Porter's 1962 novel, of the same name employs the same theme of the world and human experience as a microcosm aboard a boat.

During the journey, the Fool encounters other cards in the Tarot deck. According to Bunning's Online Tarot course (Bunning 1995-1998/WWW), the Fool begins the journey as an innocent and even naive character, with the faith and spontaneity without which the Fool would not be able to undertake the forthcoming journey with an open mind. Every card sets out challenges for the Fool. For example, with the card 'Lovers' the previously self-centred Fool encounters the desire for a sexual relationship, to be a half of a couple. Also, he finds he needs to determine his own values and beliefs. With 'Death' the Fool's task becomes of leaving old habits behind, of clearing out old and outdated ways of thinking. These themes are repeated in Alice's journey of personal growth. With the disappearance of Jove's and Stella's boat, Alice, in the chapter titled 'The Lovers' is forced to come to some resolution about their situation and decide how she would choose between them should it come to that (*Gut Symmetries:* 197-214). The chapter 'Death' (*Gut Symmetries:* 143-164) is Alice's account of her father's death. She is faced with the conflict of what she has always thought her father is, and what she learns of him during and after his death. Through this change in the balance of Alice's family, Alice gains a new perspective of the way all the members of her family have surrounded themselves with some comforting thing that helps them avoid the risk of emotional exposure (*Gut Symmetries:* 162 – 164).

The Tarot, as said above, forms an extra-textual narrative that runs in tandem with the actual narrative. The references provided by the primary narrator are kept to a minimum since the characters or the events are never directly linked together by the primary narrator: it is never pronounced by anyone other than the characters themselves that Alice is the Fool and Stella is the Tower. Furthermore, the narratives by the

characters do not necessarily keep reminding the reader about the Tarot allegory. Nevertheless, unavoidably the meta-narrative, once referred to, is likely to continue influencing the reader's creation of meaning and his or her construction of the imaginary, fictional world of the story.

4.2 Focalisation

Bal defines focalisation as the layer in between the fabula and the linguistic text (Bal 1980: 104). All three central characters of *Gut Symmetries* function as focalisers and also as narrators. As focalisers they are of course character bound. Narrator and focaliser do not necessarily have to occupy the same time and space: the narrator may be relating something focalised by someone else (Cohan & Shires 1988: 94). Of the three character-bound focalisers in *Gut Symmetries* Alice is by far the most prominent due to her dominance of the narrative. A closer look into the distribution of narration by the characters in the novel shows that she is the narrator of seven of the eleven chapters (excluding the 'Prologue'). In quantitative terms this means that Alice's narration covers 129 pages, whereas Stella's covers 61 and Jove's only 7 pages.

Such figures do not say much else about the novel apart from perhaps illustrating that Alice's presence can be experienced as central in the novel. Alice's voice is the one heard most often in the story; her perceptions of the events, her past and her parents' past, all establish themselves as the main point of reference from early on in the novel. Her narrative assumes an air of omniscience and authenticity, which in the light of narrative tradition should be easy for the reader to identify and

empathise with. Early on, Alice as narrator invites the reader to take her as the reference point for the story:

> Any measurement must take into account the position of the observer. There is no such thing as measurement absolute, there is only measurement relative.
> (*Gut Symmetries*: 9).
>
> I cannot tell you who I am unless I tell you why I am. I cannot help you to take a measurement until we both know where we stand.
> (*Gut Symmetries:*11.)

In other words, Alice invites the reader to place himself or herself in the observer's seat according to Alice's position in the story: to know Alice and thus get to know the story. However, at the same time Alice actually reminds the reader of the shifting nature of points of observation. As an observer/narrator of the story she can only see it in a certain way because of where she is in relation to it all. Hence the air of omniscience and authenticity is subtly contradicted by the very act of asking the reader to assume a certain relation to Alice.

Alice the narrator may not seem any more subjective than any other average first-person narrator of any other novel. What is curious, however, is that *Gut Symmetries* has three internal, character-bound (first-person) narrators, each with their own points of view and each focalising independently from each other. Furthermore, excepting the boat trip (*Gut Symmetries:* 165-196), the narrators do not cover the same sections of the fabula or show the same events from different perspectives in their narration. Instead, the fabula is divided between the three characters.

The chapter entitled 'Page of Swords' (*Gut Symmetries:* 51-74) is Alice's account of a section of her family history. Alice tells the story of how her parents met, what her father did in his youth, what became of his career and how she herself was finally conceived. In terms of focalisation, the interest in this section lies in the limitations of the character-actor's knowledge. The style can be classified as typically "all-knowing" on the surface level, but a closer look reveals that the information given is no more omniscient than if any one of us were to start recalling our family histories – as something learned from the older generations. The impression of omniscience is generated by the narrator including such elements as the thoughts of the people she is talking about in her narration. However, on a larger scale the narrative is highly summarising and there are gaps in the story: details which the narrator (Alice) only finds out later on.

> June 8 1960. Liverpool, England. Sun in Gemini.
> I was born in a tug-boat. My mother whelped me in a mess of blankets while my noctivagant father towed in the big ships.
> He was the night vessel, the vessel on oily waters, his was the light shining in the darkness, come home, come home.
> He worked for a shipping company and had done so since he was fifteen. He had started at the end of the war as an office boy and fourteen years later he was to be made a director of the line. To celebrate he made love to my mother and I was conceived.
> By day my father was a smart and increasingly smarter man. By night, or to be truthful, by three nights a week, he manned a tugboat. There he is in a greasy donkey jacket and seaman's balaclava. Spinning the thick cable from the windlass and

> bringing in the banana boats of Turkish silver, and
> the boats full of Irish, shamrocks round their hearts.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 51.)

The above passage is taken from the beginning of the chapter. What makes it interesting in terms of focalisation is not so much the source of the contents (how does Alice know all this or who told her?) but the use of tenses. The narration fluctuates between the present 'now', from which point of view the narrator produces the retroversion of the given events, and the historical present, which takes the narratee back into the defined moment in time (the object of the original retroversion).

First of all, time and place are established as they are in many motion pictures or television programmes. The effect of this is that the reader is immediately taken to this locus and it is introduced as the 'present' moment. The set-up ("June 8 1960. Liverpool, England. Sun in Gemini.") thus grounds the (historical) present into which the narrator slips in the last paragraph of the extract. However, the following paragraph resumes the already-familiar first-person past tense narration which has been established as the governing point of view in the story not only by Alice but by Stella as well.

Although the passage does not mention Alice by name, the previous two chapters have already established that Alice is from England and Stella's marriage to Jove connects her with New York. Furthermore, in the prologue there is a list of definitions for certain key concepts of the novel. There 'baby' is defined, among other things, as "a beginning" (*Gut Symmetries:* 7). Alice's first chapter, 'The Fool', starts with "It began on a boat" (*Gut Symmetries:* 9). As 'The Page of Swords" begins by stating "I was born on a tug-boat" (*Gut Symmetries:*51), it is not

unlikely to associate birth with previous encounters with the concept of 'beginning' and therefore with Alice. In addition, Alice is the one of the two narrators so far who focalises through imagery of ships and sailing, whose narration includes the sea and ships in various forms.

In this manner the novel has built up the narrators' individual frames of reference which are recognisable to the reader. As a result the narrators do not need to identify themselves whenever the narrator changes. Each narrator is, as far as they seem to know, the one and only narrator – if there only is one narrator, there is no need to keep identifying her in verbal terms.

As said above, the tense switches from present to past after the locus has been established. The description of the father begins in the past tense, but suddenly the narration slides from retroversion into historical present: "There he is in a greasy donkey jacket […]" (*Gut Symmetries:* 51). The narrator seems to go back in time and instead of reporting her memories and imagery of her father as something she remembers from the past or as imagery she has constructed over time, she begins to focalise from a perceptual level: as the "eye witness". In Martin's (1986, 141-142) view a first-person narrator employs a tense shift in order to differentiate between the "I" of the present moment of narration and the "I" in the past. Generally – as Martin (Ibid.) concludes from the work of Hamburger, Banfield, and Benveniste – the internal, participating, first-person narrators do not employ a tense shift or gain access to the minds of other characters at all. Alice the participating, character-bound narrator implies access to her parents' minds and also employs a tense shift, as seen in the extract. The effect, albeit that the reader has the option of perceiving the story of Alice's father and her own birth as a

recounting of the history perhaps told to Alice by someone else, is that the focalisation moves closer to the events than would be possible if a simple past-tense retroversion was used: Alice turns herself into a first-hand witness of the events surrounding her own birth.

The change in tense is the first indicator in the change in the focalisation level. The other indicator is the sudden omitting of the personal pronoun "I" which has provided the basis for the conclusion that the focaliser for the chapter is character bound. When the tense changes, the focaliser assumes the language of an external focaliser. The pronoun "I" is no longer used, nor any other pronoun or noun that would help establish the focaliser with its object of focalisation. The person focalised is no longer called "father", let alone "my father", nor does the act of seeing refer to the actor "I". The result of all this is an air of omniscience. As Bal points out, when there is no indication of the agent who is doing the perceiving, the conclusion is that there is an external focaliser, one outside the fabula, at work (Bal 1980:110-111). The characters are able to influence their own points of view and focalisation, that is, they can move either closer to or further away from what they are focalising, depending on the emphasis they wish to give to certain elements. Alice moving so close to the event of her own birth that she becomes an eye witness to it draws the reader's attention to Alice's own pursuit to learn more about her own origin.

4.3 Rhythm and Temporal Ordering

Temporal ordering and rhythmical devices are central elements in guiding the reader's attention (focalisation) and in establishing the point of view. The latter need not be singular. Winterson for one uses temporal

ordering and shifts in rhythm to fragment the narrative to such an extent that the reader is forced to re-evaluate his or her expectations about the narrative and also his or her own position in relation to the shifting point of view. The present section deals with the reader's active perception and the significance of constructing a coherent whole from the fragments of the narration, but there are critics who argue against the Structuralist claim that the reader has to (or automatically does) reconstruct the chronology of a story (fabula) from the temporally manipulated narration (Martin 1986:109).

The Structuralists start from the assumption that there is a fabula (story) which is an abstract constant, whereas the narrative (that is, how the story is told) is the variant, and the narration deviates from the chronology of the fabula (Martin 1986: 109). This emphasises the construction model, but at the same time the idea of construction seems to contradict itself. First, the way of telling influences the way of reading, and second, the reader is not the only active participant in the event of construction. Assuming there is a fabula which remains constant despite the medium of the narration (Martin 1986: 107), the narration event is a representation of that fabula. It is actively constructed by the narrating party and various techniques and devices are used to convey the story in a given way. However, the reader, as an active constructor, has the freedom to interpret the narrative and construct the story behind the narrative in whichever way he or she desires. Then it is a question of definition whether the fabula is constant or not.

For example, Grimm's fairy tale about Hansel and Gretel can, in its perhaps more conventional form, be read as a story about neglected children who defy evil with their resourcefulness (or at least Hansel's

resourcefulness). A different representation of the chain of events (children are lost in the woods, find a gingerbread house, etc.) could just as naturally influence the reading in an opposite way and the constructed story would no longer be about neglected children who are resourceful but about children who have no manners and therefore are punished because they started to eat someone's house without asking permission.

The fact that most people interpret and construct the fairy tale in its traditional form in the same manner suggests that construction is perhaps culturally bound. Cognitive Psychology and Cultural Studies have charted a number of universal schemata that seem to apply to all people regardless of their cultural origin and surroundings, and also various culturally bound schemata. The schemata are the frame of reference that are used to make sense of what is perceived. Any narrative takes advantage of these schemata to achieve a desired effect. This aspect of the construction process of a fabula is discussed in section 3.1, 'Perception, Reception, and Cognition.'

Mieke Bal distinguishes between *fabula*, *story*, and *text*. Fabula is what happens in the story, story is how the fabula is conveyed and text is the whole thing, the book, which is written by someone. (Bal 1980: 6.) Fabula are constructed from both objects and processes. By objects Bal means fixed elements such as actors and locations and by processes she refers to events ("changes that occur in, with, through and among the objects" Bal 1980: 13). So in all its simplicity, the fabula of *Gut Symmetries* could be written down as: Alice has an affair with Jove, meets his wife Stella, has an affair with her too and Stella leaves Jove. Naturally this does not say much about the whole narrative itself and, to be pedantic about this to the point of splitting hairs, this verbal

realisation of the perceived fabula already forms a narrative – albeit a very incomplete one. Adding any cause-relations to the definition of the fabula of *Gut Symmetries* would approach the process of construction of the fabula and the narrative on which that process is based. In other words, the narrative is the starting point for the construction of the fabula behind it. The textual realisation of the fabula is, as Bal defines it, the story (Bal 1980:6).

As stated above, a narrative is a representation of a fabula in which sequential ordering does not necessarily follow the chronology of the fabula. Deviation from the chronology of the fabula is a form of technical manipulation which influences the meaning indirectly in most cases (Bal 1980: 50). Rearranging the chronological order influences such aspects as point of view and frequency, which in turn affect the meaning. Typical chronological deviations, also known as *anachronies*, are *analepsis* and *prolepsis*: analepsis being a textual point of retroversion and prolepsis its opposite, sometimes referred to as anticipation (Bal 1980: 53-56).

Gut Symmetries uses both. For example in the chapter 'Knave of Coins', which is near the end of the story when Jove and Stella are adrift on a boat in the Mediterranean and which is the only chapter where Jove is the first person narrator, Jove says:

> I had to do it. She was dead. She was nearly dead or
> I would not have done it. If I had not done it she
> would have died anyway. I did it because I had to.
> What else could I have done?
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 189, 191, 193, 194, 196.)

This paragraph anticipates something Jove does onboard the boat, but it is repeated several times before the reader finally learns what it was that he did. The chapter is a combination of different tempi. First of all there is Jove narrating in first person but past tense, a retroversion. In the retroversion Jove looks back on his life before the present situation on the boat, explains his choices, etc. In a way this is a double analepsis. Then there is the anticipation - the realisation of which is only revealed later on when the point of view has already been shifted to that of Alice, who finds the drifting boat. The obvious effect of the anticipation is to build up expectations on the part of the reader and draw conclusions and mostly increase the air of suspense: What did Jove do? Has Stella died?

On a more general level, the following presentation (table 1) serves to illustrate some of the differences between the perceivable chronology of the fabula level and the manipulated narrative level ordering of the events. As explained before, the background for this type of taxonomy comes from the Russian formalists and French structuralists, in the sense that the fabula is assumed to be an independent (even pre-verbal) and chronological whole which can be reconstructed by the reader from the narrative.

Table 1.

Story	Fabula
• ALICE MEETS JOVE • ALICE AND JOVE START AN AFFAIR • STELLA RECEIVES A LETTER FROM ALICE • ALICE AND STELLA MEET • STELLA AND ALICE START AN AFFAIR • JOVE FINDS OUT • THE THREE HIRE A BOAT • ALICE HAS TO GO SEE HER DYING FATHER • JOVE AND STELLA GO OUT ON THE BOAT ON THEIR OWN • THE BOAT GOES MISSING IN A STORM • JOVE AND STELLA ARE ADRIFT AND STARVING • JOVE CONFESSES TO THE WRITING OF THE LETTER • ALICE LOOKS FOR STELLA AND JOVE • JOVE EATS STELLA'S BUTTOCK • ALICE FINDS THE PAIR ALIVE • ALICE MEETS JOVE • JOVE AND ALICE START AN AFFAIR • JOVE WRITES TO STELLA AS ALICE • STELLA AND ALICE MEET • STELLA AND ALICE START AN AFFAIR	• JOVE LOSES CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION • THE THREE HIRE A BOAT • ALICE FLIES TO SEE HER DYING FATHER • JOVE CONCEALS THE REASON FOR ALICE'S TRIP FROM STELLA • JOVE AND STELLA TAKE THE BOAT OUT ON THEIR OWN • THE BOAT GOES MISSING IN THE STORM • JOVE AND STELLA ARE ADRIFT AND STARVNG • JOVE CONFESSES TO THE WRITING OF THE LETTER • STELLA STILL REFUSES TO LIVE IN JOVE'S UNIVERSE • STELLA DECIDES TO LEAVE JOVE • JOVE EATS STELLA'S BUTTOCK • ALICE COMES TO THE RESCUE • STELLA LEAVES JOVE • JOVE IS NOT CHANGED AT ALL • ALICE BEGINS TO REALISE THERE IS MORE TO THE UNIVERSE THAN LINEAR TIME

Table 1. The difference in the ordering of events between story (left column) and fabula (right column).

Clearly these skeletons do not even begin to describe everything that goes on in the story and barely even touch on the many levels on which the story proceeds. These are merely the obvious events that take place, and even at that they are the events chosen by one reader as the main points of significance. In the first one (The Story) the events are listed in the order in which they are revealed or take place in the story. In the second they have been placed in their logical position in the fabula.

By comparing these two skeletons the effect of the manipulation of order becomes apparent. While reading, the overall image of the story and the character traits, etc. are constructed according to the information given. All the information given in this particular novel seems to come from first person narrators. However, there is another narrator at work here, one I will call a primary narrator, the one who decides when to shift the point of view from one character to another, the one who does all the picking and choosing. The characters themselves may be giving a straightforward and open version of their story, but it is the primary narrator who makes sure they do not have the chance to reveal anything and everything, so to speak. Because of this the information the reader needs to construct the characters and the events and the cause-effect relations is either faulty or incomplete. When the missing information (the bits the reader probably never noticed as missing) is given, the whole tone of the story changes, the characters have to be viewed in a different light and the conclusions drawn must be re-evaluated.

 Genette draws attention to the difference between the number of times an event occurs in relation to how many times it is narrated. The

three basic categories here are *singular*, *repeated* and *iterative*. (Genette in Bal 1980: 77-79, Cohan & Shires1988: 85-86). In a singular frequency an event occurs once and it is narrated once. If that one event is narrated more than once, repetition occurs (Ibid.). Jove's anticipation of his eating Stella's buttock is such a repetition. The third distinction is iterative, and it refers to an event which occurs several times but which is only narrated once (Ibid.).

In *Gut Symmetries*, Jove keeps repeating the anticipatory "I had to do it…" paragraph in his narration. The obvious effect on the reader is the building up of suspense: what precisely did Jove have to do? Furthermore, the point of view of the telling suggests that the other characters do not know about the event referred to, or at least do not indicate that they know. The result is the identification of an element of information to which only the reader and Jove seem to have access, while the other two characters do not – especially Stella, who is clearly referred to in Jove's narration. Typically, when the reader has more information than the characters, a sense of threat towards the characters is present in the reader's interpretation of the situation (Bal 1980: 115). Repetition also draws attention to a given event and thus grants it prominence over the surrounding events and makes it more significant.

A conventional method of making some elements or events more prominent than others is to manipulate the ratios of narrational time and story time. The duration of one is compared with another, and the closer they come to each other the more prominent the event is. At its

simplest level, the duration of events merely distinguishes kernel[3] events from satellites[4] (Cohan & Shires 1988: 87). Since it is the convention, some novelists have of course reversed this and paid a lot of attention to the insignificant events by devoting a lot of narrational time to them while mentioning the central events in passing (Bal 1980: 73).

These changes in the relation of narrational time and story time contribute to the rhythm of the narrative as well. The basic concepts in determining duration and the rhythm of a narrative are summary, scene, slow-down, pause and ellipsis (Cohan & Shires 1988:87). Summary speeds up the narrative. Much of the story can be related in a few sentences or words (”Two years passed.”). In a scene the narrational time and story time come closer together, as in dialogue for example. In a slow-down (as is perhaps obvious) narrational time exceeds story time. A pause stops story time altogether, for example when a narrator describes a character or a place and while the description takes place, the story does not progress. In an ellipsis something is left out. If the ellipsis is perfect the reader will not even know it was there, but more typically there is some indication of an element missing when that element has any significance for the story. (Bal 1980: 68-77).

Of these, summary, slow-down and pause emphasise narration over story (Cohan & Shires 1988: 89). They draw attention to the telling rather than to what is told, and are therefore useful tools in manipulating perception. Ellipsis draws attention to narration in a

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[3] Kernel: a central or a 'core' event in a story which advances the transformation of events and whose presence is required in order for the causality of a story to be perceived as complete (Cohan & Shires 1988: 54-55.)

reverse way when the reader will notice that there was something the narrative left out (Ibid.).

In *Gut Symmetries*, as illustrated above, Stella receives a letter which she thinks came from Alice, but which in actual fact came from Jove (as the reader will find out later on). When the letter arrives, Alice never says that she sent it. In fact, she says nothing about the letter. However, Stella says it came from Alice. Before the business about the letter, the reader has spent time with Alice in Battery Park, agonising over the fact that Jove is married. There seems to be no reason to question the origin of the letter. The ellipsis is the result of the primary narrator not allowing the reader any insight into what Jove, for example, thinks of the letter business. All we see is Jove deceiving Stella by actually asking how she found out he was having an affair – but at this point the reader does not know it is deception. Because the origin of the letter is not allowed to become an issue in itself but it is very fluently passed over without too much attention and because the narration shifts between two first person narrators (Stella and Alice), the omission of the origin of the letter is unlikely to be noticed: there is no reason to doubt Stella when she says it came from Alice. The cause-effect constructed by the reader is thus based on false evidence.

5. Narrational Layers

The textual devices charted in the previous chapter provide a basis for a structural pattern for the text itself and illustrate how the form of a text influences the construction of narratives. Central aspects of the study of

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[4] Satellite event: events whose function is to amplify the story; also considered as 'secondary' events because leaving a satellite out will not interrupt the causality of a story (Cohan & Shires 1988: 54-55.)

narratives involve the narrating agents and their placement in the text. The current chapter is divided between 'Discursive Roles' (Section 5.1) and 'Implied Author or a "Primary Narrator?" (Section 5.2). In the former typical classifications of the different layers that are involved in narrating and in receiving a narrative are charted. The latter section studies the layers in more detail in *Gut Symmetries* and discusses the possibility of a discursive role whose function resembles that of both a focaliser and the implied author combined.

5.1 Discursive roles

The communication that takes place in a narrative, from the author conveying the story to its construction by the reader, involves several levels, as shown in 5.0 (Narrational Layers). There are different ways of describing these levels or layers. Winterson, for example, calls her structure "spirals" (*Oranges: 1991 Introduction*: xiii), Onega & Landa (1996: 9-12), on the other hand, have charted a generalised view of the identifiable levels and their interaction. These levels are also known as discursive roles (Ibid.) and they can be perceived as a continuum ranging from the actual author to the actual reader who occupy these roles. With the author at one end and the reader atthe other, the roles are located between them, as can be seen from the following, simplified, illustration (Figure 2).
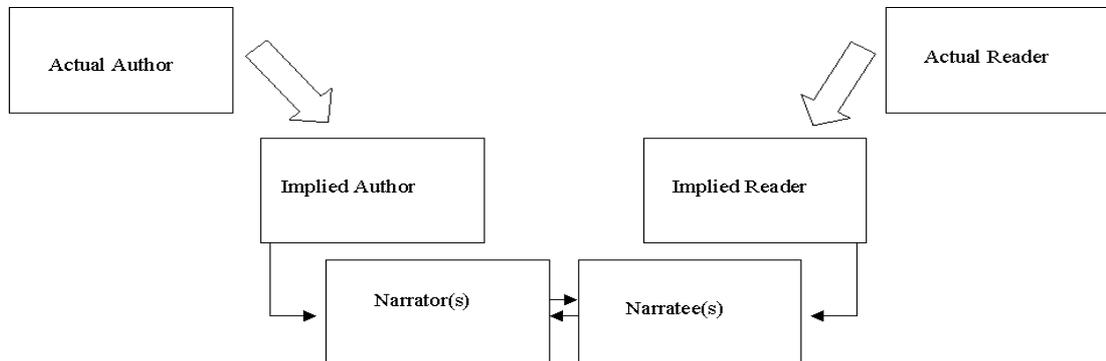
Figure 2.

Figure 2: Discursive roles. The model is adapted and modified from Onega and Landa (1996: 9-12).

However, as Onega & Landa point out (1996:12), the process of interpretation is not linear, starting from the author and ending with the reader. In between the two the different roles interact both with each other and with the text itself before a literary statement is finally formed. Wolfgang Iser (1976) is interested in the reader's part in the construction of the final literary statement. Iser (1976: 38) defines the implied reader as "a transcendental model which makes it possible for the structured effects of a literary texts to be described." Thus, the "implied reader" is not a role assumed by the actual reader but a concept used by literary criticism to denote the reader's role on a general level. The concept provides a standpoint where the reader has the means of observing those perceptions he or she is guided towards by the text, and where he or she also has room for combining his or her own world with the guided perceptions in order to create something that did not exist before. In

other words, "The concept of the implied reader offers a means of describing the process whereby textual structures are transmuted through ideational activities into personal experiences." (Ibid.). There are several ways in which this process can be explained, one of which is the cognitivist approach to perception, discussed in closer detail in chapter 3.1, 'Perception, Reception, and Cognition.'

For a definition of the concept of the implied author, Mieke Bal (1980: 119-120) refers to Booth (1961). Bal's interest lies in the balance between narrator and focaliser: linking these two too closely would be failing to separate the textual agents from their purpose, and the narrator should be kept apart from the focalising agent (Bal 1980: 120-121). If only a textual utterance (always spoken by *someone*) is considered as narration, then focalisation strictly speaking cannot be classified as such. However, if a literary text is seen as a particular type of speech act (Iser 1976:61), a narrative and its perception are communication involving all discursive roles and layers mentioned, and communication does consist of more than only textual utterances (for example the context of the utterance and the individual *and* shared frames of reference of both the writer and the reader) (64-68). The problem of distinguishing between the implied author and an external narrator in *Gut Symmetries* is discussed in greater detail in section 5.2, 'Implied Author or a "Primary narrator?"'.

As discussed in 5.0, 'Narrative Layers', distinguishing different layers (or roles) and their function is not very practical if the attempt is to identify the communicative aspects of *Gut Symmetries*. The primary narrator's function of creating the shared context for both the story and its perceiver is realised through the act of focalisation just as much as it

is through the textual guideposts (the chapter titles), if not even more so. Keeping in mind a reader's ability to actively use textual elements in individual interpretation, the fictional context (in the case of *Gut Symmetries* set up to a great extent in 'Prologue'), the extra textual world and his or her experiences of it – not to mention any reader's individual experience of literature and narratives in general – separating focalisation from narration undermines the interaction that takes place between textual and contextual items. The latter refers to those items which are not directly denoted by sign in the text, but which altogether exist through the reader's connotation (Iser 1976: 66). For example, 'The Fool' as a title of a chapter provides an allusion to a Tarot card and the meanings that card carries. This provides the reader's first impression of the following character, Alice. When reading, the characteristics found in the narrative are compared with the first impression, which in fact is an existing schema of the Tarot card 'The Fool'. The mental image (imaginary object) the reader builds up of the character (Alice in this case) is a result of the testing and comparing which again are, as Iser (1976: 66) sees it, "guided by the signs of the text."

The interesting aspect of discursive roles in *Gut Symmetries* is their inbuilt hierarchy: who allows whom to relate the story. The question of the implied author and the primary narrator has already been discussed, but the roles of the character-bound narrators have not received enough attention. These character-bound narrators (Alice, Jove, and Stella) tell their part of the story in the first person, as seen and experienced by themselves. The primary narrator manipulates the amount and placement of the attention given to each narrator's account. Within the individual narrations of the characters another character may be allowed to speak. In the chapter 'Page of Cups' of *Gut Symmetries* Alice is the narrator and

also a focaliser. It is Alice whose narration then contains the subnarrative provided by Stella. This narrative – sub-narrative structure is seen in particular in the use of pronouns to indicate that Stella's words do have an identifiable listener, a narratee. There is quoted dialogue with Alice focalising Stella's utterance: "'Every day with Papa', she said." (*Gut Symmetries:* 122.)

From quoting Stella, Alice soon hands the forum over to Stella completely: "I said, 'Tell me." (*Gut*: 122). What follows is Stella's account of how her family acquired a Jackson Pollock painting (*Gut Symmetries:* 122-123) but as soon as the story is told, Alice brings the narrative back into the present from Stella's family history. The first sentence in the following is still told by Stella, but the second is a step back into the present situation where the characters were before Alice asked Stella to talk about the painting:

> When I came back to New York in 1970, it was with
> the rest of his property, left to me, in the fading old
> offices of his attorney. We unrolled it together and
> even the dust shone.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 123.)

Blurring the border between the two characters who are telling engendersa sense of intimacy and togetherness: there seems to be no need to indicate here that the speaker has changed. Only the two characters are there, within the exciting action of unrolling an old Jackson Pollock painting and no one else is immediately involved. In other words, the narration gently slips from a quoted summary (Alice focalises Stella's story which is in her own words) into a scene of action ("We unrolled it together.").

Identifying the speakers is relatively straightforward in *Gut Symmetries*, but identifying the receiver, the narratee, can be complicated. Naturally, the narratee need not be addressed directly and thus can remain unspecified, but in *Gut Symmetries* Alice occasionally addresses an unspecified 'you' in her narration, and this 'you' is not one specific identifiable person. Throughout her narrative she invites the narratee to join her point of view by asking "Walk with me." (Gut 20, 24, 25, 157, 215, 218, 219). These are defining points in Alice's experience, moments when she tries to understand her own position or learns something about either herself or the life she lives.

> Walk with me. Hand in hand through the nightmare
> of narrative, the neat sentences secret-nailed over
> meaning.
> […]
> The story of my day, the story of my life, the story
> of how we met, of what happened before we met.
> And every story I begin to tell talks across a story I
> cannot tell. And if I were not telling this story to you
> but to someone else, would it be the same story?
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 24.)

The paragraphs also touch on the subject of who is listening (or reading). The 'you' addressed is not identified as any one person either here or later on, and the recipient's role in the construction of the story is brought to light as well. This brings us back to Iser's (1976) point about the reader constructing the story (as discussed earlier in this chapter). However, the question "would it be the same story?" may equally well refer to the role of the narrating agent: are stories told according to who is reading/listening to them? What this paragraph mainly achieves is not so much to do with the origin of this particular chicken and egg, but its function is to remind the narratee (and the reader as well) that what Alice

is telling is her subjective version of what is to follow. The self-reference
is repeated later on, as a reminder:

> Walk with me. Hand in hand through the nightmare
> of narrative. Need to tell a story when no story can
> be told.
> […]
> The 'I' that I am, subjective, hesitant, goaded from
> behind, afraid of what lies ahead, the drop, the
> space, the gap between other people and myself.
>   Hear me. Speak to me. Look at me.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 157.)

The first time Alice addresses a 'you' is in the chapter 'The Fool'.
However, there is no clue as to who this 'you' is, or whether it is a
general 'you' meaning the reader and anyone at the receiving end (the
other characters, the reader, and the primary narrator). In another
occurrence Alice addresses herself (*Gut Symmetries:* 26), as if in front of
a mirror, but in this case the context makes it clear that the 'you' being
addressed is Alice herself. An ambiguous 'you' appears as the addressee
in Stella's narration as well (*Gut Symmetries:* 167), but again, it is not
clear whether she is addressing another character or just any recipient.
Stella, in addressing a 'you', draws a clear line between 'us' and
'others':

> 'How did he die?' Alice had asked me, when we
> were stacking up our life histories as a bulwark
> against the world. That which is shared by us. That
> which is not shared by you.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 167.)

Of course, it is possible to read the characters as each other's narratees,
but nothing in the text absolutely calls for that. It is the fluidity of the
direct addressee that allows the reader a more mobile position in terms of

distance from the narratives. This fluidity begins with the primary narrator addressing the universe as 'you' in 'Prologue' (*Gut Symmetries:* 2), thus indicating that the reader has the option of either identifying himself or herself as the 'you' or alternatively constructing the 'you' as a separate, observable entity.   In other words, the ambiguity of the identity of the narratee who is addressed directly (as opposed to the more conventional unidentified, general narratee), which is occasionally used in *Gut Symmetries*, allows a certain amount of freedom for the reader to place himself or herself in relation to the text. The guideposts that Iser (1976) talks about are still there in the narrative, but the reader is not tied to following them as the single narratee: instead he or she has the ability to identify himself or herself as *one* of many possible narratees and thus, possibly, gains a wider range of perspective.

The narratee as a discursive role thus has a function similar to that of the primary narrator at the narrating end of the continuum. In fact, the two occupy (at least partly if not altogether) the same layer between the character-bound narrators and the reader, overlapping in places. Identifying the primary narrator would be the easy and simple answer, possible but not entirely accurate. Instead, the narratee and the primary narrator, if pictured as fields rather than levels, can be seen as overlapping each other in places, thereby maximising the interaction between the text and the reader, as suggested in terms of the primary narrator in 5.2, 'Implied Author or a "Primary Narrator?"'.

5.2 Implied Author or a "Primary Narrator?"

The layer between the character-bound narrators and the reader (the narratee) would at first glance suggests that there was another narrator, a

higher-level one, functioning very much like a film editor, picking and choosing what the reader sees and in which order – in effect, a focaliser. The character-bound narrators would then be left to their own devices to just tell the story and not notice which bits of their story the "editor" cuts out and where in the final story it places the material. However, this model ignores the interaction that takes place between the character-bound narrators and the reader via the narrational layer between the two. Furthermore, it limits the placement of the narrators and the narratee in the sense that the character-bound narrators are confined to their "slot" as focalised objects that have no ability to interact with the various other narrational levels of the novel. However, the narrators do address something and someone more specific than a general conceptual addressee, and they also show awareness of the textual devices used by the higher-level narrator in activating the reader's associative tendencies.

Whether to identify the higher-level narrator as the implied author depends, to some degree, upon the definition of what or who is the implied author. In the view presented by Onega & Landa (1996: 9) the implied author is a projective concept in the sense that is an abstract collection of those underlying attitudes and opinions the reader may find in a text which cannot be directly linked with the narrator or the characters. Such an implied author can be found in *Gut Symmetries* as the source of 'Author's Note' which precedes the first chapter of the novel, 'Prologue.'

> AUTHOR'S NOTE:
> Until the discovery of Pluto in 1930, the sign of Scorpio was ruled by Mars. Since Paracelsus assumed Mars as his Ruler, I have used his system where he is concerned.
> (*Gut Symmetries:* 'Author's Note'.)

With the 'Author's Note' the implied author indicates that what is about to commence is a story constructed by someone. This self-referentiality, calling attention to the text as a product, has a two-fold effect. It is, for one, an act of fictionalisation (this is discussed in more detail in section 3.2, 'Fictionalising Acts'). Secondly, it affects the process of interpretation by drawing attention to the relativity of individual frames of reference in terms of what each character considers his or her own defining element (physics for Jove and the stars for Stella, for example).

The 'Author's Note' is followed by the first chapter of the novel, 'Prologue' (*Gut Symmetries:* 1-5). This is where the higher-level narrator sets the general frame of reference for the rest of the narrative. The 'Author's Note' implies a hierarchy of levels to follow: the Author states that 'Prologue' is already a part of the narrative, and by doing this the 'Author's Note' claims an external position in relation to the rest of the text. This separation makes it impossible to identify the implied author and the narrative voice talking about Paracelsus as one and the same. Furthermore, if the implied author is the projection of what the reader cannot connect to the narrator or the characters, the implied author is not a narrator at all. Having separated the image of the author from the highest textual level of narration and focalisation, the entity referred to at the beginning of this section as "the layer between the reader and the character-bound narrators" will be called the primary narrator from here on in discussing the narrational levels and discursive roles in *Gut Symmetries*.

 The primary narrator's influence extends well beyond 'Prologue.' The titles of the chapters, the Tarot cards, seem to function primarily as

intertextual references to an additional characterisation of the characters and the contents of each chapter. By knowing the background and meaning of a given card, the reader will build up expectations about the chapter which is about to begin. This aspect of the chapter headings and the intertextual references of the Tarot is discussed in more detail in section 4.1, Extra Textual Narration and Intertextuality: the Tarot.'

Stella recognises herself as the Tower in the corresponding chapter. Later on Alice refers to the corresponding card in 'Page of Cups', stating that it is her "identity card" (*Gut Symmetries:* 118). This suggests that the primary narrator that exists between the character-bound narrators and the narratee is perhaps doing more than merely conveying the story-world to the reader. Instead the primary narrator seems to provide a common frame of reference for both the reader and the characters, allowing the character-bound narrator to extend their narrations beyond the story-world and make use of the same references that are also familiar to the reader.

 'Prologue' in itelf can be read as an element outside the actual story of Alice, Jove and Stella because of, first of all, the plain meaning of the word 'prologue', and secondly, because there are other markers that associate the chapter entitled 'The Fool' as a beginning. One of these markers is the placement of the corresponding Tarot card in the Tarot deck, and the characteristics associated with a Fool (see 4.1, 'Extra Textual Narration and Intertextuality: the Tarot'). One effect this external position may have is that the primary narrator's voice is left in the background, almost unnoticed.

The introduction of Paracelsus is a device used by the primary narrator to set up a particular point of view. As a result, any science or any views of the universe are necessarily compared with Paracelsus's equivalent versions not only by the reader but also by the character-bound narrators as well. Alice for one refers to Paracelsus in her narrative (*Gut Symmetries*: 102) when she finds that her science cannot supply satisfactory answers or even expectations of explanations to her experiences which are more than the sum total of their physical and spiritual parts. The function of 'Prologue' in establishing a context and as a summary of the story that is about to begin is discussed more closely in 3.4, 'Context Building in 'Prologue'.

 After the 'Prologue' the primary narrator is hidden behind the titles of the chapters as if she was not there at all: chapter headings function as markers of a change in time, place or point of view, and they can be seen as originating from the implied author. However, the chapter titles (which are loaded with intertextual meaning) originate from the primary narrator and are a part of her narrative layer, open to both the character-bound narrators and the reader. For a reader who is familiar with Winterson's earlier work, it comes as no surprise that conventional chapter division has not been employed in *Gut Symmetries:* for example in *Sexing the Cherry,* switches from one narrator, place or time are indicated with a small fruit icon and even at its clearest, naming chapters has carried an additional intertextual purpose, as the Biblical allegory in *Oranges*).

By loading the titles with intertextual reference, the primary narrator provides a simultaneous meta-narrative the reader constructs for himself or herself while reading the character-bound narratives, but the only

textually visible action by the primary narrator is focalisation. In terms of focalisation, as Bal (1980: 111) defines it, the primary narrator is an external focaliser who focalises the action from the outside. Typically such external focaliser presents the view of a typical omniscient third-person narrator. In *Gut Symmetries*, the acts being focalised happen to be first-person narrations which in themselves contain focalisation (both internal end external). It is the duality of the primary narrator's role that makes the layer between the reader and the character-bound narrators so unique: there is a narrator whose presence is detectable, whose narration is achieved mainly through the use of a meta-text, but who at the same time appears as unidentifiable as the external focaliser. Nevertheless, the primary narrator is not a character or a participant in the *story*, nor is she as disembodied and distant as an external narrator because she does not try to appear as objective and pretend she is not there at all.

The function of the primary narrator as a silent focaliser who also provides the explained common frame of reference in-between the story world and the reader seems to be an unconventional modification of the narrational layer in question. Such a model seems uncharted by critics, but keeping in mind Winterson's ambition to reinvent story telling (Introduction: xv), encountering an unconventional narrative structure or function should not come as s surprise.

6. Conclusion

In view of the original assumption of Jeanette Winterson's *Gut Symmetries* providing a suitable ground for analysing narration because of her special interest in developing literary narration, a positive result has been achieved: not only does a close reading of the novel reveal

various aspects of narration and creating narratives, but it also provides material for an even more detailed study of a number of narratological topics: the naming of characters and the intertextual effects that follow, how exactly many intertextual references rely on a common cultural background, and how ideologies work in a text loaded with such references are all research topics worth looking into.

The significant findings of this paper involve the process of a reader responding to cues distributed throughout the text in order to guide the reader's attention and thus prompt desired associations. Furthermore, one significant aspect is the way in which these associations are used in expanding the scope of a narrative to involve more than the literary text itself. Through using the reader's associative tendencies and prompting meta-texts Winterson succeeds in liberating the meaning of a text from the story: the reader has the freedom to use the results of combining the meta-texts with the actual text in the process of creating meaning whilst the story itself remains the same.

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Appendix 1: Tarot Cards Referred to in *Gut Symmetries*.

I

Card 0 of the deck. Represents youth, spontaneity and even folly. The Fool adds an element of the unfamiliar to a situation. (http://www2.dgsys.com/ ~bunning/maj20.htm)

II

Death represents ending or transition from the known to the unfamiliar. The card also represents eliminating the unnecessary and excess, and indicates inexorable forces: of being caught in something more powerful that changes the situation. (http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj13 .htm).

III

The Knight of Pentacles is the same as the Knave of Coins – depending upon which Tarot deck is used. The card represents a duality of a person: the qualities can be seen as either positive or negative. The Knave of Coins is stubborn or unwavering, thorough or obsessive, realistic or pessimistic, and cautious or unadventurous. The Knave does not like change and will not admit to being wrong. (http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj13.htm)
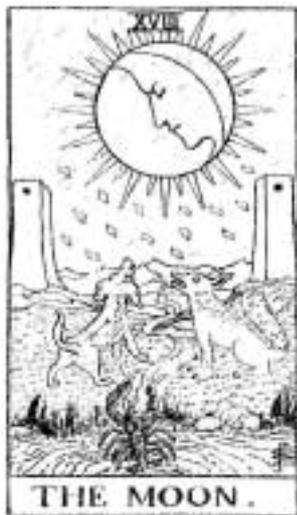
IV

Along with judgement, the card also represents absolution, inner calling, and rebirth. It is judgement without condemnation and enables a rebirth. It represents a moment of a decision which has to be made when all aspects of a matter have been thought over.
(http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj20.htm)

V

The moon represents fear, illusion, imagination, and bewilderment. Losing grasp of reality and entering new amazing extremities is at the core of the experience of The Moon.
(http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj18.htm)

VI

Relationship, sexuality, personal beliefs and values are the central elements of The Lovers. In other decks the card illustrates a man between two women and as such represents a crossroads of right and wrong. To be able to choose, the subject must know where he or she stands in terms of morals and values.
(http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj06.htm)

VII

The Page of Cups is really Cupid bringing the opportunity of love. (http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/cpg.htm)

VIII

The Star represents hope, inspiration, generosity, and serenity. The Star brings hope and faith at a moment of despair and hopelessness. (http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj17. htm)

IX

The Page of Swords is a messenger bringing challenges. The challenge then enables personal growth. (http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/spg.htm)

X

qÉå=çÑ=pï çêÇëK=qÜÉ=Å~êÇ=ëÜçï ë=íÜÉ=ãÉåí~ãáíó=çÑ=ÄÉáåÖ=~
îåÅÅÄíáãä=~åÇ=Ü~ë=~å=ÉåÉãáñ=çÑ=ÜÉíÖÉ~åö=~êíóêÉ~íÄíÑ=Ñí=ÉÉ ã=~
~áëëÉê=ÄäÉ=Å~êÇ=çÑ=Äí=ëì MMÉ êáåÖ=çÑ=åëñ=ÇÜÉ=êáåÖ Ñ=Ñ=íÜÉ=Éñ ÄÉ=Å=Å=Ñ=ÉÉ
ëï çêÇëW=çåÉ=ï çì äÇ=ÄÉ=Ñåçì ÖÜ=ïÜÉíÜÉ=íÜÉ=Å~ ÉÉÉÉíÖ
ãåÉÑçêíî åÉë=íÜ~í=íÜÉ=Éñ=ÖÖÉ=êÉñ~êK
EÜííÑÉWWLíï ï OKÇÖÉóóëåÅ~êäíFìÄ~å NMKÜí~=F

XI

The Tower represents sudden change, downfall, release and revelation. This change is abrupt and unexpected, but it is also release from emotions or situations that the subject has been holding back. It is the fortress built around the subject's self, and the demolition by the Bolt of Jove (seen as a lightning) strikes down the person who has thought he or she was the king or the queen, the ruler, of their own life. (http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning/maj16.htm)

Reference: http://www2.dgsys.com/~bunning (date of reference 14.07.2000)

Appendix 2: **Hieronymous Bosch (ca.1450-1516), 'Ship of Fools' (oil on wood).**

(Source: http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/b/bosch/painting/shipfool.html)